

# **VOICES OF GREEN SPRING: 220 YEARS OF AMERICAN HISTORY**

## **HISTORIC GREEN SPRING: A BALLOON RIDE PERSPECTIVE**

If you were to lift off in a hot air balloon from Jamestown Island and cruise north, the first large open space you would notice is the fields of a horse farm and croplands on either side of what is known today as “Green Springs Road.” This road bisects the area where the Revolutionary War armies of Generals Lafayette and Cornwallis fought “The Battle of Green Spring” on the steamy afternoon of July 6, 1781.

Moving further north, across Virginia Route 5 (John Tyler Highway), the next major “gap” or open space in the countryside you would encounter is the orchards and fields surrounding the ruins of Governor Sir William Berkeley’s 17<sup>th</sup> Century manor house at Green Spring Plantation. From 1645 to 1676, “Green Springs Road” was Governor Berkeley’s private driveway, leading from the Governor’s mansion to the State House and other official buildings in the colonial capital at Jamestown.

These two large open spaces or “gaps” in the topography of James City County are symbolic of a major gap in our knowledge of Virginia’s colonial history: roughly the period from 1642 to 1699. This “Lost Half-Century” of Early American history remains relatively obscure to most Americans, for a variety of reasons:

- 1). Relatively few documents, artifacts, or buildings from this period have survived to the present day.
- 2). The period is viewed by some scholars as less important because during those years the population of Virginia grew relatively slowly, and it remained a colony of the British Empire.
- 3). It was during this period that White Indentured Servitude was gradually replaced by Black Chattel Slavery—a topic which many Americans are still reluctant to address.
- 4). This period also saw the resettlement, under treaty, of the remaining Native American tribes in eastern Virginia—another controversial issue.
- 5). Many of the lasting political achievements of the period (in particular, the establishment of a bicameral legislature at Jamestown and adoption of the principles of Representative Democracy) have been down-played because they were modeled upon English institutions.