

BGES Presents: Grant's Road to Destiny: Stop VII The Vicksburg Campaign; Initial Attempts to take Vicksburg

We continue our epic saga of the Vicksburg Campaign, this time we take you to the defenses of the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." As described by Ed Bearss and Parker Hills in their award-winning book, *Receding Tide*:

"Grant wrote in his memoirs [about the events of May 19, 1863]: 'The enemy had been much demoralized by his defeats at Champion's Hill and the Big Black, and I believed that he would not make much effort to hold Vicksburg.' Grant believed the time was right to end the campaign, and he ordered his corps to attack the Confederates in their trenches."

Receding Tide continues with Grant's assessment of the situation:

"The soldiers also want to end it fast. They dread what a long, hot Mississippi summer might do to their army. Yellow Jack—another name for yellow fever— or some other disease just as atrocious might break out. So with little preparation at all, Grant orders an attack on the Confederates that afternoon."

After six preparatory sessions, BGES will now take you to Vicksburg. By now you have learned that the Vicksburg National Military Park is, according to Hills, "the period at the end of the sentence—the sentence being the magnificent campaign honored by the US Army as 'the greatest offensive campaign ever fought on American soil.'" Of course, the period that Hills refers to is the two major and unsuccessful frontal assaults by Grant, followed by a siege that lasted 47 days from 19 May to 4 July 1863. But what a period it was, with plenty of action and intrigue, and we will cover it all.

Brace yourself for this one, for we will experience suicidal assaults and see scores of Medals of Honor being earned over the terrain that Grant once astutely and succinctly described: "The country in this part of Mississippi stands on edge . . ."

Wednesday, February 29, 2012

Check into the Quality Inn, Vicksburg. At 6 P.M. you can check in with our desk at the Hampton Inn and at 6:30 we will open the program with another of Parker's highly-entertaining and informative PowerPoint lectures in a Hampton Inn Conference Room. Afterwards, BGES will take you to supper.

Thursday, March 1, 2012

Rather than cover the approach routes to Vicksburg today, we will go directly into Vicksburg National Military Park, simply because large areas of the park will be closed for much of the day due to a 10K "Run Through History" event in the park on Saturday, 3 March. That's fine, on

the day of the race we stay away from “the maddening crowd” and cover those approach routes, following the historic and scenic routes of Grant’s army to Vicksburg.

So, on Thursday we will have a full day in the magnificent Vicksburg National Military Park, and in the process we will show you the newly-cleared areas south of the Illinois Memorial. Our good friend, Terry Winschel, has been fighting for years to make this happen. But we all know what happens when one dares to cut a tree on federal property. And, we now know how greatly this has benefitted Gettysburg, despite the hue and cry before the tree-clearing was done. Of course, the argument was that clearing trees would destroy the environment; but, now that the Gettysburg park is much more beautiful and understandable, and the city and the landscape are prospering, where are the naysayers now?

On this particular Vicksburg tour please be patient, because Parker Hills, believe it or not, was an art major in college, and he has just completed a manuscript on the art and architecture of the park, to be published by the Vicksburg Convention and Tourism Bureau and to be free to the public. So be prepared to be bombarded with a preview of descriptions of military paraphernalia in bronze, battle action interpretations, and symbolism of Greco-Roman architectural features. This will be a full day of monuments, cannons, and magnificent art in the park. Don’t worry, we will cover the battle actions of 19 and 22 May as Grant tried to tie the ribbon on this campaign, and we will see it up close and personal as few get the chance to do. But forewarned is forearmed about the art.

Afterward we retire to the Hampton Inn and the free Happy Hour in the sumptuous lobby, where we will jawbone about what we have seen over a convivial beer or two. It just doesn’t get much better. We will provide you with lunch but dinner is on your own.

Friday, March 2, 2012

Today we go back into the military park to continue our coverage of the attacks. We will see Sherman’s, McPherson’s, and McClernand’s attacks of 22 May. We will see why those attacks failed, and we will learn who was pettily blamed for that failure. We exit the park and will see key places in downtown Vicksburg, to include headquarters sites and houses, and even where a famed diarist sought refuge in a cave. Today we will provide you with lunch and a banquet dinner—most likely at Rowdy’s, a highly regarded family restaurant known for its Catfish.

Saturday, March 3, 2012

Because there will be a 10K run in the park today, we will do what we normally would do on Day 1—we will follow Grant’s army into Vicksburg, showing you virtually unknown routes and sites along the way. This is the fun part of BGES, that is, being able to go in vans where others dare not go, and being willing to walk into the woods to “feel the experience.” You will understand how Grant’s three corps arrived at the Vicksburg defenses, and you will learn how Grant, with the admirable (no pun intended) assistance of the US Navy, supplied his army. Grant wrote in his memoirs that, on 21 May, his soldiers “had an abundance of food . . . but began to feel the want of bread.” Thus, when Grant’s hungry soldiers saw him ride past, they screamed “Hardtack! Hardtack!” Now, anyone who has ever eaten a C-Ration cracker knows that this is just so much “bovine scatology.” The fact was that the last rations issued to these soldiers were on 17 May, and these men were hungry. We will see how Admiral Porter presciently rescued Grant by getting a supply depot established on the Yazoo River, and, of course, we will take you there. Now, who else takes you to supply depots? But, as even the novice knows, and as Napoleon observed, an army travels on its stomach. We will also follow the entire siege line and show you how Grant sealed off Vicksburg from any possible succor. After an unusual and illustrative day, we will bring the tour to an end. We will get your lunch; however, you can either get on the road

or spend the night having dinner on your own. Thanks for coming.

The Faculty

Parker Hills is a retired brigadier general, Mississippi Army National Guard, and served almost 32 years as a Regular Army and National Guard officer. For years Hills conducted the Military Staff Ride program for the state of Mississippi and is an expert on Mississippi battlefields. Hills conducts tours for Road Scholars (formerly Elderhostel) and is a corporate leadership trainer who founded Battle Focus. He is active in the preservation of Civil War battlefields, and has served as president of Friends of Raymond and of Friends of the Vicksburg Campaign and Historic Trail. He is chair of the Mississippi Civil War Battlefield Commission and a member of the Mississippi Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission. Hills is a graduate of the US Army War College and holds a Master of Education degree in Psychology. He is the author of the BGES monograph, *A Study in Warfighting, Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Battle of Brice's Crossroads*, the co-author of the *Driving Tour Guide to the Vicksburg Campaign*, and co-author of the prize-winning book *Receding Tide, Vicksburg and Gettysburg, The Campaigns that Changed the Civil War*. He has contributed a chapter entitled "Roads to Raymond" for *Vicksburg: Mississippi Blitzkrieg*, edited by Steve Woodworth, and his latest work, *Vicksburg: Art of Commemoration*, is a tour of the art and architecture of Vicksburg National Military Park.

Len Riedel is the Executive Director of the BGES. A retired Air Force officer, Riedel has a Master of Arts degree in history. He is the architect of the BGES' diverse programming and of considerable preservation accomplishments in the nonprofit community.

Meeting Site and Hotel: This program will be headquartered at the Quality Inn, 3332 Clay Street (1-601-636-0804) Vicksburg, Mississippi 39183. This is just off I-20 exit 4B. We have a block of rooms at the special rate of \$70 per night plus 10% tax, you may reserve against the block in the BGES' name until February 15th. You will need to guarantee your room with a credit card. This is a sister hotel of the Hampton, indeed it was the Hampton, and it has been newly renovated with Hampton standard amenities. You will be welcomed at the Hampton Inn's daily happy hour. Very clean, spacious and hospitable.

Airport and Transportation Arrangements: The servicing airports are Jackson (JAN) about 45 miles east of Vicksburg or Monroe (Louisiana) which is about 60 miles west of Vicksburg. Delta, Southwest, American, and Continental all service JAN. Delta is the primary service provider to Monroe. There are no public transportation means to Vicksburg. A rental car will be essential. It is my experience that rack rates for those companies at the airport are very expensive. I recommend going low with Priceline.com. I have gotten as much as 40% off the normal airport rates. Enterprise is also an option.

Key Publications and Recommended Reading (includes shipping and handling)

_____ Ed Bearss, **The Campaign for Vicksburg, 3 volumes, \$125 set**

_____ Edwin C. Bearss with Parker Hills, **Receding Tide: Vicksburg and Gettysburg, The Campaigns that changed the Civil War \$32**

_____ Michael Ballard, **Vicksburg, The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi \$35**

_____ Warren Grabau, **Ninety-Eight Days, A Geographer's View of the Vicksburg Campaign \$50**

**2012 BGES Registration Form
for Grant's Road to Destiny Part VII, The Vicksburg Campaign
Initial Attempts to Take Vicksburg
February 29-March 3, 2012**

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

_____ Registration \$750 _____ Additional Family Member \$700

_____ Deposit only—per person \$300 Net Due on or before February 29th, 2012

_____ BGES member \$700 _____ Additional Family Member \$650

_____ Full time Teacher or student, confirmation may be required, \$650

_____ I am not a member of the BGES send me membership information

_____ Send me the books I've indicated. I've enclosed \$ _____.

Total Enclosed: \$ _____ Make checks payable to BGES and mail to PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531-1176 or call 434-250-9921

Charge my Discover Mastercard VISA American Express \$ _____

_____ Exp: _____

Vin Code: _____ Signature: _____

You may fax your credit card registration to 434-432-0596 or register on line at <http://www.blueandgrayeducation.org/> using a secure PayPal server.