

A BGES Civil War Field University Program: A Campaign of Firsts: Western Virginia In 1861

In the days after the election of Abraham Lincoln the United States split into sections with the Deep South seceding from the Union before the March 1861 inauguration. Upper South states such as Maryland, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina and Virginia among others remained loyal. Within the states debate raged, areas that were less integrated with slavery had little to no interest in the secession debate. In Virginia, in particular, the western part of the state had much more in common with the Ohio Valley than it did with the Old Dominion of the Revolutionary era.

Not surprisingly early encounters pitted soldiers and neighbors against each other. Early fighting in the war took place in western Virginia but as the armies and strategic targets came into focus the newly created state of West Virginia was soon a backwater absent any decisive or important battles. Perhaps it is because of this that Civil War tours in West Virginia are few and far between. Indeed as the BGES enters its 25th year this is our very first tour devoted to West Virginia. Having said that, the sites are very dramatic and for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice no battles were harder fought than those we will cover on this study.

This is a tour of firsts—our first in WV and many of the events were firsts in the Civil War. The scenery is dramatic, the military terrain challenging and the combat deadly—join us for this singular program offered for the very first time by the popular team of Gary Ecelbarger and Scott Patchan.

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

6:00 PM: Check in at headquarters hotel for meet, greet and to pick up your reading books. We will have a pizza party with various beverages and snacks. Gary and Scott will then overview the commencement of the war and why many of the early engagements were in western Virginia. The balance of the talk will overview the next four days. If you are still hungry, dinner is on your own.

Thursday, May 31, 2018

Our 8:15 start will move south towards Weston where we will discuss and preview the early life of one of the greatest figures of the Civil War—Thomas Jonathan Jackson--Stonewall. We will then make a beeline for Grafton where we will spend the remainder of the morning visiting the National Cemetery and talking about the first Union casualty of the war. From there we will stop at the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad that was the most prominent feature of the first campaign. After lunch we will visit the site of the Grafton Hotel—McClellan's HQ and review his plans for what would be the battle of Phillipi. The balance of the day will be involved in the approach and battle—the first land battle

of the Civil War. We will then return to Clarksville. Lunch is included. Dinner is on your own.

Friday, June 1, 2018

We head out at 8 AM where we conclude this first western Virginia campaign by covering actions at Laurel Hill, Rich Mountain and Corrick's Ford. We think you will really get excited at the viewing of weathered signatures of those first veterans that remain on boulders at the mountaintop. As we detail the fighting at Corrick's Ford you will hear the story of the first death of a Confederate general in the war—Robert Garnett. The big value of this day is the insight you will gain about upcoming maneuvers and fighting in western Virginia. Our day concludes with a stop at McClellan's headquarters in Beverly and a discussion about the elevation of George McClellan to General-in-Chief. Was it merited? What do you think? We will return to the hotel. Lunch is included. Dinner is on your own.

Saturday, June 2, 2018

Robert E. Lee was not always great or revered, yet we can learn much about him from this abortive effort. Departing at 8 AM we will focus on Lee and his rocky transition from senior Virginia general to presidential advisor to field commander and peacemaker. Our first stop is at Cheat Mountain—Lee's first engagements in August and September of 1861. At the top of Cheat Mountain you will view preserved fortifications and learn about the only Union officer to beat both Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee in separate Civil War battles—do you know who it is? After lunch we will make our way to the October 1861 engagement at Elkwater and then continue on to Camp Bartow. The last stop of the day is at rather high terrain—the Allegheny Summit that is 4400 feet above sea level. We will discuss the December 1861 engagement there as well as the Confederates' winter encampment that lasted until the spring of 1862. Lunch is included. Dinner is on your own.

Sunday June 3, 2018

The intention of this tour was to focus on 1861 but since we are in the area we cannot resist the urge to jump forward to 1863. We will depart at 8:15 and head to Droop Mountain which was the last significant battle fought in West Virginia. We will spend the day on the battle. The November 1863 fight occurred several months after the creation of the state of West Virginia. You will like the detail and the interpretation of this neat fight on a very unique site. Lunch is included. We will adjourn upon return to the hotel in Clarksburg. Thanks for coming.

About the Faculty:

Gary Ecelbarger and **Scott Patchan** have not only been good friends in Northern Virginia since they were both in their twenties, they have been touring partners for over 20 years and have conducted Civil War and Revolutionary War tours for the

past 13 years. Together they have authored or co-authored nearly 20 books and dozens of articles on 19th century topics; both are culling research for future works relating to the 18th Revolutionary War Philadelphia campaign.

Hotel Information:

This program will be based near Clarksburg, WV. The hotel will be posted on this site. The headquarters hotel room block will likely be in the \$110 a night range.

Transportation:

West Virginia does not have a robust commercial transport system. The servicing airport is Charleston [CRW] that is about 120 miles from Clarksburg. You can drive into Clarksburg via a good interstate system and or the Parkersburg Turnpike (US 250) Amtrak will service Charleston WV along a route that starts in New York and ends in Chicago. Arrival times are around 8:30 AM and 8:30 PM they are Amtrak trains #50 and #51. If you need a rental car, perhaps you can find a cheap rental car on www.priceline.com.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with a reading book and maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program. We recommend you consider purchasing these books through AmazonSmile. A portion of your purchase comes to BGES.

Hunter Lesser: **Rebels at the Gate: Lee and McClellan on the Front Line of a Nation Divided**

Mark Snell: **West Virginia and the Civil War: Mountaineers are Always Free**

Terry Lowry, **Last Sleep, The Battle of Droop Mountain November 6, 1863**

Registration Form

A Campaign of Firsts: Western Virginia in 1861

A BGES Civil War Field University Program

Presented by Gary Ecelbarger and Scott Patchan

May 30-June 3, 2018 from Clarksburg, WV

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes four lunches, a welcoming pizza party, a reading book with maps, the academic program, support of two professional historians, tour director and transportation appropriate to the registration which will be limited to two vans: 19 people. We will also provide snacks, bottled water and a limited selection of sodas.

_____ Registration \$750*

_____ Current BGES member \$700*

_____ Teacher/full time student with identification \$650*

***10% of your registration fee is a tax deductible contribution to the BGES 25th Anniversary Capital Reserve Campaign**

_____ I am not a member but would like to join so that I can get the member's rate or I am a member who is past due to renew. Please accept my donation of

\$_____ (must be \$75 or more which is tax deductible)

_____ Send me the books indicated, I have enclosed \$_____

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$300 plus full payment for any memberships.
Total enclosed is \$

I will pay the balance due before the event.

_____ Check enclosed

Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$_____

Exp: _____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____

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