

A BGES Civil War Field University Program: Longstreet's Command Audition: Tennessee in the Fall of 1863

James Longstreet was a Joe Johnston man. He had been so since the start of the war. Strong early performance in leadership roles rapidly advanced him in the Army of Northern Virginia and when promotions were made Longstreet was always senior. When the organizational structure called for the creation of Corps, Longstreet was promoted to Lieutenant General and command of Lee's First Corps. Lee called him his "Old War Horse."

In the early part of the war, Joe Johnston depended on Longstreet and indeed he was given a leading role in the Confederate attack at Seven Pines in late May 1862. When Johnston was wounded in the battle, Robert E. Lee assumed the command of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Johnston recovered in Richmond and when he was ready to return to the field in October 1862, he was tapped to take the late Albert Sydney Johnson's command of the western theater. Before he assumed command, Longstreet wrote him a fawning letter urging him to be careful and offering to serve him in any capacity that he could be useful. This from a man who had already achieved acclaim for his sledge hammer blows at Second Manassas. Longstreet had opinions and he was not reluctant to express them. After the December 1862 battle at Fredericksburg, Lee assigned Longstreet the command of Southeastern Virginia and Eastern North Carolina.

In semi-independent command Longstreet was slow to respond to Lee's call to return to the army and advocated in April 1863 that he be sent with two divisions to augment Braxton Bragg's command thus releasing troops to confront US Grant's moves against Vicksburg. But with the death of Stonewall Jackson and Lee's plans to move into Pennsylvania Longstreet's ambition was thwarted. Perhaps flattered by Lee's attention, Longstreet fancied himself Lee's confidant and perhaps his equal.

After the Gettysburg campaign, Longstreet wrote a letter to Senator Louis Wigfall asking his assistance in getting him released to go to the west—noting that he was suffocating under Lee's yolk. Weakened by his first major failure, Lee released Longstreet and two of his divisions to go west where the unpopular Braxton Bragg was under harsh criticism for his leadership style. Officers were calling for Bragg's relief—Longstreet was an outside solution—over the next three months he would cement his destiny as a Lieutenant General—nothing more. This is the record of his performance.

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

6 PM: Arrive at the headquarters hotel for registration and to meet your fellow students. Norm will talk informally about Longstreet and his record before arriving in Tennessee. He will also recap the operations between Rosecrans and Bragg to date. Expect a spirited discussion so be prepared to engage.

Thursday, August 2, 2018

8:15 AM: Longstreet arrives with his troops as the battle of Chickamauga has been joined. He is welcomed and given immediate command of a wing of Bragg's army. It will be a long night.

We will travel to pick him up at Catoosa Station and travel on to Bragg's headquarters. We will set up his command and discuss immediate problems he faces in placing and commanding his troops. As the day dawns he strikes only to have the war gods smile on him. An ill timed shift in the Union lines allows his forces to split the Union army in two. While half the Union army is routed, the day will be spent on the hard fought grounds that lead to Snodgrass Hill. We will examine how the critical wounding of John Bell Hood affected his options and command. The day ends with us in McFarland Gap. This is a great battlefield—perhaps the largest and greatest in the western theater. Lunch is provided. Dinner is on your own.

Friday, August 3, 2018

8:00 AM: Bags out as we prepare to head towards Knoxville. Today we will pick up the siege of Chattanooga and the intrigues and criticism that brought President Davis west to determine why the army is falling apart from all the command bickering. We will spend time looking at the Confederates terrain advantage. Today we feature the Battle of Wauhatchie which does Longstreet no credit. Stops will include the National Cemetery, the site of the Walker painting of the "Battle Above the Clouds," and Point Park on Lookout Mountain to consider Longstreet's thoughts and actions at the night fight at Wauhatchie.

We will next stop at the Confederate cemetery at Graysville and discuss Bragg's detachment of Longstreet to challenge Burnside in northeastern Tennessee—did he do it to challenge Burnside or did he do it to get rid of a man whom he had found disingenuous and disloyal? Regardless of the reasons—Longstreet has failed his audition and there will be no 4th star for him.

We continue on to Knoxville and our hotel that is included in your fees. Lunch and dinner will be provided.

Saturday, August 4, 2018

Bags out at 8, depart at 8:15 AM: Perhaps the most overlooked and disappointing Civil War experience has been the battle of Knoxville between Burnside and Longstreet.

Dwarfed by the massive University of Tennessee campus most tours bypass this modern city but it is a mistake. There is much to learn there as we consider what to make of James Longstreet's independent command.

We start the day at David Farragut's Monument. This great southerner stayed loyal to the Union and became its greatest sailor. Known as the hero of New Orleans, he would earn laurels in Mobile Bay as well the next year. We will then move to the opening shots of the Battle of Knoxville. We will visit a nice Civil War Museum on the UT campus that fortunately will not be in session at this time of the year.

The key terrain is Fort Sanders and we will visit the site along with other key positions in Longstreet's attempted conquest—he failed. We will then visit the oft overlooked Union and Confederate cemeteries before heading to forgotten sites on the east side of the Tennessee River. En route back to Chattanooga we will stop at the Sultana Monument in Knox County—a very sad story at the end of the war. Lunch is included. We will dismiss before dinner. You will have a pretty fair and unbiased look at Longstreet's capacity for higher command. History of course tells us he returns to Lee's army to be dreadfully wounded in the Wilderness fighting and after his recovery he is with Lee at Appomattox. James Longstreet is a complicated and ambitious man who is fully deserving of this hard look at his potential.

About the Faculty:

Norm Dasinger is a Land Title executive in Alabama whose lifetime passion for the Civil War has made him an expert on the war in Georgia and Alabama. Leading tours on his free time, Norm has an insightful understanding of the nuances of seemingly simple events and he helps clients develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject. This is a man who you will instantly like and will find yourself probing during the breaks—he is a real teacher of history!.

Hotel Information:

This program will be headquartered at a hotel in or near Dalton, GA with one overnight in the Knoxville area. They will be announced on this site. You can expect a rate around \$110 per night plus tax. You will need ground transportation to reach the headquarters.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Chattanooga (CHA). Other airports with much better airfares and schedules are Nashville (BNA) and Atlanta (ATL). I believe if you fly in you will need a rental car. Amtrak goes into Atlanta. I am not aware of any limo or shuttle services to Dalton. Perhaps you can find a dirt cheap rental car on www.priceline.com. The program is easily accessed by car.

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. If you purchase through Amazon Smile, BGES can benefit from your purchases—thanks for considering us.

Jeffrey Wert: **General James Longstreet, The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier**

David Powell, **The Chickamauga Campaign: Glory or the Grave**

David Powell, **The Chickamauga Campaign: Barren Victory**

Judith Hallock, **Braxton Bragg and the Confederate Defeat Volume 2**

Thomas L. Connelly: **The Politics of Command, Factions and Ideas in Confederate Strategy**

Registration Form

Longstreet's Command Audition:

Tennessee in Fall of 1863

A BGES Civil War Field University Program

Presented by Norm Dasinger Jr.

August 1-4, 2018 from Dalton, Georgia

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes three lunches, one dinner, one breakfast, one night of lodging in Knoxville area, a reading book with maps, the academic program, support of a professional historian & 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 \$650*

_____ Current BGES member \$575*

_____ Teacher/full time student with identification \$500*

***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)

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$200 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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