

*A 2019 BGES Civil War Field University Program:
A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg
Part 1*

U.S. Grant had pledged to “fight it out on this line if it took all summer!” By June 1864 the line had changed, and with the summer a scant week away, Grant found himself feinting Robert Edward Lee in front of the earthworks at Cold Harbor while he moved his entire army across the James River to attack the Confederate’s transportation hub at Petersburg. In front of him was a scant force of Old Men and Young Boys under General Pierre G.T. Beauregard. Benjamin Butler had been unable to dislodge him, and now it would be Grant’s turn.

This tour follows the narrative set by A. Wilson Greene in his masterful work, *A Campaign of Giants, The Battle of Petersburg from the Crossing of the James to the Crater* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018) and is the first of three volumes. BGES will offer corresponding tours as each book is released.

This tour will cover the Crossing of the James and attacks against Beauregard (The First Offensive), Cavalry Raids against Confederate Supply lines (The Second Offensive), and the assaults north of the James at Deep Bottom with a simultaneous effort to cut the Confederate line near Blandford Church—the Battle of the Crater (The Third Offensive). Like the historian himself, it is a disciplined but detailed look at the different efforts Grant commenced over the ensuing stage—ultimately conducting some nine offensives.

As with other “Great Books, Great Authors” programs, the author has written the definitive work and will treat us to the fruits of his labors. This program dovetails perfectly with our 2018 inaugural program with Gordon Rhea whose “On to Petersburg” program dealt with the field operations from June 4 to 15, 1864.

The real promise of this program is the expansion of access to lands previously not available to visitation or study on a daily basis. Those hidden nuggets will give an excellent insight into the special challenges each army faced. A special program you will not want to miss.

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

6:00 PM. Meet at the headquarters hotel in Chester to pick up your name tag and reading books. We will go to dinner, where Wil Greene will place the Petersburg Campaign in context and will highlight several critical issues that we will address in the field. You will also will meet the other members of your cohort.

Thursday, September 26, 2019

8:15 AM. This morning we immediately set the stage for the first Federal attacks against Petersburg on June 15. We will pick up Maj. Gen. Baldy Smith as he returns to Butler via Point of Rocks, Broadway Landing, and Baylor's Farm. We then will consider the challenge and the remarkable crossing of Grant's main force. If Flowerdew Hundred is available for visitation, we may take you there; it has recently undergone a change of ownership and the new owners are maintaining their privacy. As the attack unfolded, we will visit familiar sites such as the Battery 5 area, and then follow the action on the rest of the June 15 attack all the way down to Battery 12-13. Be forewarned that today and Saturday will include a large amount of walking off of established paths and deep into areas that are never visited during regular tours of the Petersburg Campaign—IF YOU HAVE MOBILITY CHALLENGES, THIS IS NOT A TOUR FOR YOU. In that light, we'll then do some hiking/bushwhacking along the surviving remnants of the Hagood Line (June 16-17) and finish the day making the attacks on June 18, including the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery's disaster. If there is time left, we might carve out about an hour to tour wartime Petersburg itself. In many ways, this makes sense as there is so much of the 1860s-built environment extant in Petersburg and, after all, our guests should see what all the fuss was about. Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Friday, September 27, 2019

8:15 AM. Load up as we head out for a long look at the Second Offensive that is anchored in cavalry actions. But first we will start with the "lost" battlefields of June 22-23, styled the Battle of Jerusalem Plank Road. Not a sign to read at this major engagement—maybe a future BGES interpretative project? We then will spend the rest of the day on the most visible effort of the effort—the Wilson-Kautz Raid, a week-long operation against the Richmond and Danville Railroad, including the Battle of the Grove, Staunton River Bridge, Sappony Church, and First Reams Station. This was an effort to cut supply lines feeding Richmond and the Confederate soldiers—a constant goal in Grant's expanding presence along the Petersburg front. We also will look at fighting along the Weldon Railroad and at Globe Tavern. A busy day, indeed. Lunch is provided, and dinner is on your own.

Saturday, September 28, 2019

8:15 AM. Today we will bring the focus back to the front, with efforts to draw Lee away from one spot to permit him to strike another. Federal Infantry conducted operations north of the James River and at First Deep Bottom. This will be part of a pattern in which Grant parries in one direction and thrusts in another—usually parrying north of the James and thrusting westerly to cut communications lines.

While there, we will take a look at Samaria Church, which was part of the Second Offensive.

This Third Offensive ultimately resulted in the most famous action of the ten-month siege, which was the mining and attack against Elliot's Salient with the political and social ramifications of the effort. If the weather permits, we will walk the overgrown route of the Confederate counterattacks against the mine, as well as the covered routes of the USCTs and other supporting Union attackers. We will return by 4:30 PM with the cohort being dismissed. We will let you know when Part II is organized and offered. Lunch is included.

About the Faculty:

A. Wilson (Wil) Greene is one of the giants in the preservation movement and a first-rate public historian. He earned his stripes studying under T. Harry Williams at LSU and served a career as a historian for the National Park Service. He was a founding member of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites and masterminded that organization's early successes. Wil was hired to build Pamplin Historical Park—a \$25M+ project where he served as its first Executive Director and CEO until his retirement in 2017. Wil now lives in Tennessee, where he has a large backlog of books he plans to write, of which *A Campaign of Giants* is the first installment. Wil is a popular tour leader and has led tours for Pamplin Park, the Civil War Society, and the Smithsonian Associates. A pied piper for battlefield preservation, Wil will be performing his first tour of his new book for the public with the BGES.

Hotel Information:

This program will be based in Chester, Virginia. The hotel will be posted on this site. The headquarters hotel room block likely will be in the \$100 a night range, plus tax. In the past we have used the Hyatt Place Hotel and it is our choice for a headquarters, but at this point the arrangements are incomplete. We will update the room block on this site and will notify you of the hotel selected and the date open for reservations.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Richmond International Airport (RIC). The headquarters hotel will be in Chester, about 20 minutes from the airport. The hotel is easily served by I-95 or I-295. The airport has commercial vendors who dispatch taxis and limos to spots close to RIC. You may also rent a car to bring you to Chester. Richmond is serviced by Amtrak. Southwest Airlines services Richmond through Atlanta.

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. Amazon.com has a program to support non-profits IF YOU SIGN UP to support Blue and Gray Education Society (EIN 54-1720582) at [AmazonSmile](#). When you sign up there rather than the normal Amazon site, one-half of one percent of your purchase price will be provided to BGES as a donation from Amazon. This will apply not only on this purchase but others you may make at other times.

Edwin C. Bearss and Bryce Suderow: [*The Petersburg Campaign, Volume 1: The Eastern Front Battles, June-August 1864*](#)

A. Wilson Greene: [*A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg*](#)

A. Wilson Greene: [*Civil War Petersburg*](#)

Gordon C. Rhea: [*On to Petersburg, Grant and Lee, June 4–15, 1864*](#)

Registration Form

A Battle of Giants, The Battle for Petersburg Part 1

A 2019 BGES Civil War Field University Program

Presented by A. Wilson Greene

September 25-28, 2019 from Chester, VA

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes three lunches, a welcoming dinner, a reading book with maps, the academic program, all admissions, support of a professional historian, tour director, and transportation appropriate to the registration. We also will provide snacks, bottled water, and a limited selection of sodas.

_____ Registration \$795

_____ Current BGES member \$725

_____ Teacher/full time student with identification \$660

_____ 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 \$250 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: _____

Mail to BGES Seminars, P.O. Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531 or fax credit card registrations to 434-432-0596 . You may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.