

A 2019 BGES Day of History Program: The Federals Meet Robert E. Lee, The Battles of Mechanicsville and Gaines Mill

In early June 1862, Confederate President Jefferson Davis tapped his trusted advisor, Robert E Lee, to assume the command of the Confederacy's primary army, which had retreated to the shadow of the Confederate capital of Richmond. Lee immediately looked for ways to minimize the manpower advantage of the Army of the Potomac and, after being advised of the vulnerability of the Federal supply line and of the Federal right wing, he devised a plan to hold the attention of the primary body of the enemy while isolating and destroying the Federals under the command of Gen. Fitz John Porter. Anticipating the arrival of Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" from the valley, Lee maneuvered to trigger his plan. This program crisply addresses the operation that initiates what is today known as the Seven Days Campaign.

Sunday, February 24, 2019

8:15 AM. We will meet at an easily accessible and designated location near the Richmond International Airport, just off I-64. You can leave your vehicles there all day as we head in Lee's footsteps for the stepping off point near Mechanicsville. Ironically, McClellan had initiated the Seven Days of battle very near the meeting spot at the airport—indeed Lee's lines cut through the airport grounds. Our first stop will be Lee's field headquarters, where he encounters President Davis and anticipates the initiation of the action with Jackson's attack—it doesn't happen, but troops under A.P. Hill do start the battle. We will move into Mechanicsville and over to Ellerson's Mill, where the Federals hold the Confederates along Beaver Dam Creek. We will finish Mechanicsville with the only place that the Confederates broke the Federal line.

The rapid withdrawal of the Union troops to a strong position in front of Grapevine Bridge at Gaines Mill set the stage for Lee's only clear battlefield victory. This really interesting battlefield will present you with an opportunity to visit a number of sites recently acquired and otherwise not open to the public. This really special day will end around 4 PM, having taken you to the scenes of some of the most severe fighting of the war. This is a really full day that stands on its own or as a great bridge into the Seven Days following BGES' [Peninsula Campaign program \[add link\]](#).

About the Faculty:

Bert Dunkerly is a National Park Service interpretative ranger at the Richmond National Battlefield. He frequently is seen at the Cold Harbor Unit and is one of the NPS's most experienced battlefield analysts. Bert is widely known for his

Revolutionary War books and his work at Southern Campaign Revolutionary battlefields. More recently, he has served at Appomattox Court House and Morristown National Historical Parks. He has completed books on the Confederate surrender at Greensboro and was tapped by the National Geographic to do a guidebook on Revolutionary War sites. A first-rate historian whom you will enjoy immensely.

Hotel Information:

This one-day program does not require a hotel, but we will depart from a designated location near the Richmond International Airport, where you may leave your car for the day.

Transportation:

The servicing airport of Richmond (RIC) is served by Southwest Airlines. Alternate airports include Norfolk (ORF) or Washington Reagan (DCA). The departure point is centrally located and easily accessible via I-295, I-95, and I-64.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with a handout 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.

Brian Burton, [*Extraordinary Circumstances: The Seven Days Battles*](#)

Clifford Dowdey: [*The Seven Days, The Emergence of Robert E. Lee and the Dawn of a Legend*](#)

Douglas S. Freeman: [*Lee's Lieutenants Volume 1*](#)

Registration Form

*The Federals Meet Robert E. Lee, The Battles of
Mechanicsville and Gaines Mill*

A 2019 BGES Day of History Program

Presented by Bert Dunkerly

February 24, 2019

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes lunch, handouts, the academic program, support of a professional historian, and transportation by passenger van. We will also provide snacks and bottled water.

_____ Registration \$250

_____ Current BGES member \$200

_____ Teacher/full time student with identification \$100

_____ 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 \$100 per person and or 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, PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531, or fax credit card registrations to 434-432-0596. You may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.