

A 2019 BGES Weekend Warrior Program:

Bitter Fight on the Banks of Stones River

Abraham Lincoln was looking for fighting generals and, in the wake of the 1862 mid-term election, he vowed to rid himself of political hacks like George McClellan and Don Carlos Buell. U.S. Grant had a troublesome subordinate whose conversion to Catholicism had turned his headquarters tent into a religious revival. William Rosecrans was dissatisfied and was seeking a command and rank commiserate with his battlefield performance thus far and his belief he should be a fairly senior major general. From Rosecrans' position in Nashville, he contemplated taking the field to show the flag and perhaps give the President some political cover for his controversial Emancipation Proclamation, which was due out in January 1863.

In the southern camp two months earlier, Gen. Braxton Bragg may have been suffering a bit of insecurity, given the manner in which his subordinates threw him under the bus after the battle of Perryville and the withdrawal from Kentucky. Bragg, too, considered making something happen just prior to the end of the year. What happened was one of the most unappreciated battles of the war—along the banks of Stones River.

Thursday, December 5, 2019

7:30 PM. Meet at the headquarters hotel for an opening talk with Lee about the events leading to the Battle at Stones River and a profile of the personalities of the commanders. We will break in time for you to have dinner on your own.

Friday, December 6, 2019

8:30 AM departure from the headquarters hotel. Since we actually will head back to Nashville to Fort Negley, we will delay slightly respecting the volume of Nashville traffic headed to work. Once we get there, we will turn back into the march of the Army of the Cumberland, stopping at Nolensville and Triune to discuss the delaying actions of Confederate vedettes. We will then go into Murfreesboro to discuss the arrival of the Confederates into the area and their deployments. The day will end on the banks of Stones River, where we will deal with the bloodless "Battle of the Bands" on the night of December 30. Lunch is included, and dinner is on your own.

Saturday, December 7, 2019

8:00 AM. We have two days of fighting to cover in a day. Fortunately, it is fairly compact action, and unfortunately, the preserved areas of the battlefield are mighty

small despite having a national military park associated. Departing the hotel, we head for the Union Camps on the far right and will commence with Confederate attacks against that portion of the Federal lines even while the Federals are also attempting to initiate a turning movement on the other side of the battlefield. We will work the morning moving progressively closer to the battlefield park as the Union line is pinned back upon itself at the park. After lunch we will head into the park.

The compression of the Federal lines actually improved the Federals' chances, and we will visit and discuss Phil Sheridan's spirited defense of the Slaughter Pen. Despite that hard defense, the Federals continued to be pushed back, and we will head to their next position near the Visitor's Center. The combat continues to be intense as we move to the Round Forest, which is noteworthy for its rock outcroppings. Sadly, tornados in recent years destroyed many of the historic trees that created an ambiance worthy of a trip in its own right. The hard-pressing Confederates have had a good day as the year ends. Inexplicably, both sides stand down on January 1, the day Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation. Bragg reports a victory to Richmond that creates a bitter pill when the final results are known.

Fighting resumed on January 2, 1863, and we will finish out interpretation at McFadden's Ford for an extensive interpretation of the failed Confederate attack there. With the repulse of Breckinridge's forces, Bragg takes subordinate advice to fall back, thus leaving the thoroughly battered Federals to claim possession of the field and a victory. The ramifications to both sides are significantly political, and we will wrap with a discussion of both. All told, a very good analysis of a hard battle of the war. Thanks for coming.

Note: If your schedule permits, you might ride over to Franklin and join us for our Day of History, which walks the restored Franklin Battlefield with Lee White on December 8.

About the Faculty:

Lee White is an interpretative ranger at the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. Lee has participated in two other BGES programs on Hood's 1864 Tennessee Campaign. An active part of the "Emerging Civil War" cohort of new Civil War historians, he has written or co-authored several books including: *Bushwacking on a Grand Scale*, *The Battle of Chickamauga* and the newly released *Let us Die Like Men, The Battle of Franklin*.

Hotel Information:

This program will be based in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and will start at 7:30 PM on Thursday. A headquarters hotel will have a block for Thursday and Friday nights.

The hotel is not included in the fee. We will announce the hotel on this website by the end of December.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Nashville (BNA), which has excellent and easy access to US 41 and I-24 leading to Murfreesboro. A recently opened Nashville bypass road, I-840, goes right through Murfreesboro without any of the Nashville traffic. If you do not drive in your own vehicle, visit www.flynashville.com and look under Ground Transportation for limo and bus service to Murfreesboro. Uber and Lyft also service the area.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with handouts 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.

Thomas Connelly: [*Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862–1865*](#)

Peter Cozzens: [*No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River*](#)

William Starks Rosecrans: [*Report on the Battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee*](#)

Matt Spruill: [*Decisions at Stones River: The Sixteen Critical Decisions That Defined the Battle*](#)

Stephen Woodworth: [*Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West*](#)

Registration Form
Bitter Fight on the Banks of Stones River
A 2019 BGES Weekend Warrior Program
Presented by Lee White
December 5-7, 2019

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes two lunches, a reading book with maps, the academic program, support of a professional historian and tour director, and transportation by passenger van. We also will provide snacks and bottled water.

Registration \$490

Current BGES member \$440

Teacher/full time student with identification \$390

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.