

*A 2020 BGES Weekend Warrior Program:
All's Fair in War, Streight's Raid & Forrest's Bluff
With Brian Steel Wills and Norm Dasinger
June 26-28, 2020, from Gadsden, AL*

No Civil War figure has been more polarizing than Nathan Bedford Forrest. Yet, he was a feared and respected military commander who produced some of the great stories and legendary military operations of the war. If you have not read a great biography on the man, Brian Steel Wills' *The Confederacy's Greatest Cavalryman* should be on your list. This program examines one of the unique operations of Forrest's command and opens a discussion on the military impact of the operation on the war.

Streight's Raid is tarred by history for its misstatements and criticism of the Union commander. Mounted on mules, the operation is ridiculed for the logistical difficulties it presented and the open opportunities it created for Forrest. In some circles analogous to falling out of a boat—Forrest had to hit water! Still, what was the impact of two simultaneous raids launched from nearly the same locations, the first being Ben Grierson's move south to distract Confederates attention from U.S. Grant's move along the west bank of Louisiana to cross the Mississippi; the second being Abel Streight's move toward the Confederate Army of Tennessee's line of supply, the Western and Atlantic Railroad, which was supplying Braxton Bragg near Tullahoma? Had Rosecrans and Grant coordinated? What might have happened had Forrest pursued Grierson instead of Streight? Clearly both raids launched near the same dates and ending within days of each other—one successful and the other a failure—are robust themes for examination and discussion.

This is a unique tour that is much more than it appears. No one knows Forrest better than Brian Wills, and Norm Dasinger is second to none in Alabama history with a firm knowledge of the sites and local history. Together, they will produce an interactive and very informative program.

Friday, June 26, 2020

6:00 PM. We will meet at the headquarters hotel to pick up maps and to meet and greet your instructors, Brian Wills and Norm Dasinger, and your fellow students at a reception with adult beverages. Brian and Norm will overview the program and offer comments on the key personnel and the operations that would be conducted. We will break in time for you to have dinner on your own.

Saturday, June 27, 2020

8:15 AM. We will start this morning by departing Gadsden for Moulton, where we visit the restored home of Gen. Joe Wheeler. Wheeler was certainly one of the most storied of Confederate cavalry leaders, and his record and service extend far beyond the Civil War, having served as an American general during the Spanish American War some 33 years later. It is a beautiful property that positions us to pick up Streight's Raid at an early moment in the operation. It was near this spot where Forrest first intercepts Streight's movement. Following lunch at the Old Cookstove Restaurant in Danville, Alabama, we will visit the battlefields of Day's Gap and Hog Mountain.

These two sites are where Streight turned on Forrest, who was pursuing him, and slapped him away from his rear guard. During the engagements, Forrest's brother, Bill, was wounded at Day's Gap. These actions also set the stage for a controversial confrontation between Lt. Willis Gould and Forrest, when Gould spiked two of his cannon, an action Forrest strongly denounced.

After finishing at Hog Mountain, we will return to Gadsden, arriving in time for you to have dinner on your own. Lunch is provided.

Sunday, June 28, 2020

8:15 AM. We will resume our travels, starting with the May 1, 1863, action at the Battle Royal crossing of the Black Warrior River. Here some patriotic southern civilians drugged some Union soldiers and brought them as captives to Forrest's camp. We are then back in Gadsden to show you the most romantic element of the operation, where a young teenager named Emma Sansom climbed onto Forrest's mount with the general to show him where he might ford Black Creek and avoid the damaged bridge over the same water course. The site has not changed since 1863!

Following lunch at Norm Dasinger's house in Gadsden, we head to Blount Plantation, where Streight's deputy, Colonel Hathaway, was killed. As we follow the increasingly desperate Streight, we reach Cedar Bluff, where Forrest bluffs Streight and convinces him to surrender his remaining force of 1,500 men (Forrest has barely 300 men with him), one of the great ruses of the war and yet another story in the rich repository of stories about this remarkable but uneducated military genius. Lunch is included. We will finish by 4:30 PM and return to the hotel, in plenty enough time to let you head home or do a little sight-seeing.

About the Faculty

Brian Steel Wills is a professor of history at Kennesaw State University outside of Atlanta. He also is the director for the Center for the Study of the Civil War Era. In addition to the biography on Forrest, he also is the author of the most recent biography of *General George Henry Thomas, As True as Steel*. Another of his books is *The War Hits Home: The Civil War in Southeastern Virginia*. Last but certainly not least is his entertaining book *Gone with the Glory, The Civil War in Cinema*. Each of Brian's works reveal an expansive view of history and its potential. His interpersonal

interactions show him to be a popular and engaging speaker. You will enjoy your time with him.

Norm Dasinger is an Alabama businessman who has been completely immersed in history for his entire life. Son of a father who was the National Chairman of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and a member of both Union and Confederate heritage/legacy groups and Revolutionary War heritage groups, Dasinger has led numerous tours in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee—often mixing the themes to maximize the experience for his clients. Norm is a member of the Blue and Gray Education Society Board of Directors, with responsibility for Community Outreach and Strategic Educational Programming.

Hotel Information

This program will be based in Gadsden, Alabama, and the hotel will be announced on this site. A block of rooms will be established.

Transportation

The servicing airports are Huntsville (HSV), 73 miles away; and Birmingham (BHM), 61 miles away. Birmingham is served by Southwest Airlines. Both are served by the big three carriers: United, American, and Delta. In every instance you will need a rental car.

Recommended Reading

You will be provided with 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.

General Thomas Jordon and J. P. Pryor: [*The Campaigns of General Nathan Bedford Forrest and of Forrest's Cavalry*](#)

Robert L. Willett: [*The Lighting Mule Brigade: Abel Streight's 1863 Raid into Alabama*](#)

Brian Steel Wills: [*The Confederacy's Greatest Cavalryman: Nathan Bedford Forrest*](#)

Registration Form

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Presented by Brian Steel Wills and Norm Dasinger

June 26-28, 2020, from Gadsden, AL

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes two lunches, all paid admissions, a map packet, the academic program, support of a professional historian, tour director and transportation by passenger van. We will also provide snacks and bottled water.

_____ Registration \$500

_____ Current BGES member \$450

_____ 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 \$150 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, 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.