

A 2020 BGES Weekend Warrior Program:
Unlimber the Guns: Key Role of Artillery
Leadership from Fredericksburg to Chancellorsville
With Greg Mertz
September 11-13, 2020, from Fredericksburg, VA

While infantry understandably dominates the analysis of an overwhelming majority of Civil War engagements, artillery played a key role on several Fredericksburg area battlefields. The Confederate artillery, in particular, was stellar at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. This program examines some of the well-known and not so well-known artillerymen of both armies. Here on these familiar battlefields, the fortunes of the battle and the armies rested with the “Long Arm.”

Friday, September 11, 2020

7:00 PM. Meet for a pizza party and adult beverages at the headquarters hotel. Afterward, at 7:30 PM, Greg will open with a discussion about artillery and the unique elements of its range and impact on military operations. This primer on artillery will discuss the different types of ammunition and the different types of cannon that were used in combat. We will enter the head of the battery commander as he determines under what conditions the artillery will be best employed, and which type of guns and ordinance to use. We also will look at the organization of the artillery units and how command and control affected the responsiveness, firepower, and expected effectiveness of the battery. We will break for the evening by 9.

Saturday, September 12, 2020

The December 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg is memorable for many things, and it is much lamented as a wasted mismanagement of fine infantry. That said, much of what made this a Federal disaster resides within the management of the Confederate artillery. We will start with an examination of the controversial orders to Gen. Henry Hunt to use the Federal artillery to aid in the Federal lodgment on the south side of the Rappahannock River.

As the Federals prepared to advance, we will see the singular performance of a young Alabama artilleryman, John Pelham, who held up an entire Grand Division of the Union army and compelled the Federal commanders to change their plan of attack. Once that obstacle was cleared, we then will see how the Federals used their artillery to support an ill-fated attack across the open Slaughter Pen Farm. After regrouping, the artillery helped open a gap in the Confederate line that imperiled the Confederate artillery along Prospect

Hill. Our walk then moves along the southern part of Jackson's line to examine Capt. Willie Pegram and Greenlee Davidson ordeals. The day ends with an examination of the impregnable Confederate positions along Marye's Heights through the eyes of the most famous Confederate artillery commander, E. Porter Alexander. If time permits, we may even be able to take you to a forgotten Union artillery site to discuss its short-lived opportunity. This is a day of enlightenment some of which you will have known and others which will make the fighting at Fredericksburg a good deal more interesting. Lunch is provided, and dinner is on your own.

Sunday, September 13, 2020

Sunday opens with a trip to the infamous Kelly's Ford, where the Gallant Pelham is killed. He wasn't supposed to be there, and on March 17, 1863, the Confederacy lost a man of much promise—a daring and talented gunner.

Kelly's Ford also is the site of Gen. Joseph Hooker's famous turning movement that would result in the bloody Battle of Chancellorsville. As we migrate into that operation, the question arises why artillery wasn't the force multiplier that Hooker needed to make this dramatic movement successful.

At Chancellorsville, elements of Hooker's reorganization of the army came back to haunt him with his artillery chief, Henry Hunt, relegated to an administrative function that cost Hooker his practiced eye. With Hunt neutralized, the Confederate artillery had another excellent day, with Willie Pegram crowing, "A glorious day, colonel, a glorious day!"

A drive around the battlefield today reveals lines at Hazel Grove and Fairview. We will spend a fair amount of time looking at how the Federals used Hazel Grove to interdict Jackson's legendary flank march. Ironically, we then will use the same position to talk about the Federal decision to abandon the same position on May 4 and how the Confederates exploited that decision to produce a decisive "bulge" on the enemy defenders. The new Federal position at Fairview proved an ineffective fallback position, and we will climb in the head of Federal XII corps artillery commander, Capt. Claremont Best, to learn why the Federal artillery failed.

Our program closes at the Chancellorsville Inn to discuss the last stand of the Federal army and the actions of Brig. Gen. Edmund Kirby and Medal of Honor recipient Chase F. Chase.

This is a really interesting and unique program planned and executed by one of the park's most informed historians—he has spent more than 30 years at the park. This is a look inside his many years of living with the battlefields and the subtle nuances that make it unique. Hope you will join us.

About the Faculty:

Greg Mertz is the supervisory historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP, where he has trained literally hundreds of permanent and seasonal workers, plus volunteers and interns. Over a career of 39 years, Greg started at Gettysburg, where he was assigned to the Eisenhower Farm site. He has contributed four feature articles on the Overland Campaign to *Blue and Gray Magazine*. In addition, he is the author of *Attack at Daylight and Whip Them: The Battle of Shiloh, April 6-7, 1862*. Greg is the founding president of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table and past president of the Brandy Station Foundation.

Hotel Information:

The headquarters hotel, to be announced on this website, will be at Exit 126 off interstate 95 in Fredericksburg. We will not set up a block but rather will let you make your own best deal, as online sites usually offer better prices than we can gain by holding a block of rooms off the market.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Charlottesville (CHO). The nearest major airports would be Richmond (RIC) and Washington Reagan (DCA). The departure point is centrally located and easily accessible via I-95 and US-1. Fredericksburg is serviced by Amtrak and the Virginia Railway Express. There is a train station near DCA.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with maps of the different battlefields 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.

L. Vanloan Naisawald: [*Cannon Blasts: Civil War Artillery in the Eastern Armies*](#)

Francis A. O'Reilly: [*The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock*](#)

Stephen Sears: [*Chancellorsville*](#)

Jennings C. Wise: *The Long Arm of Lee: The History of the Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia*, [*Volume 1 \(Bull Run to Fredericksburg\)*](#) & [*Volume 2 \(Chancellorsville to Appomattox\)*](#)

Registration Form

Unlimber the Guns

A 2020 BGES Weekend Warrior Program

Presented by Greg Mertz

September 11-13, 2020, from Fredericksburg, VA

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

_____ Registration \$550

_____ Current BGES member \$495

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