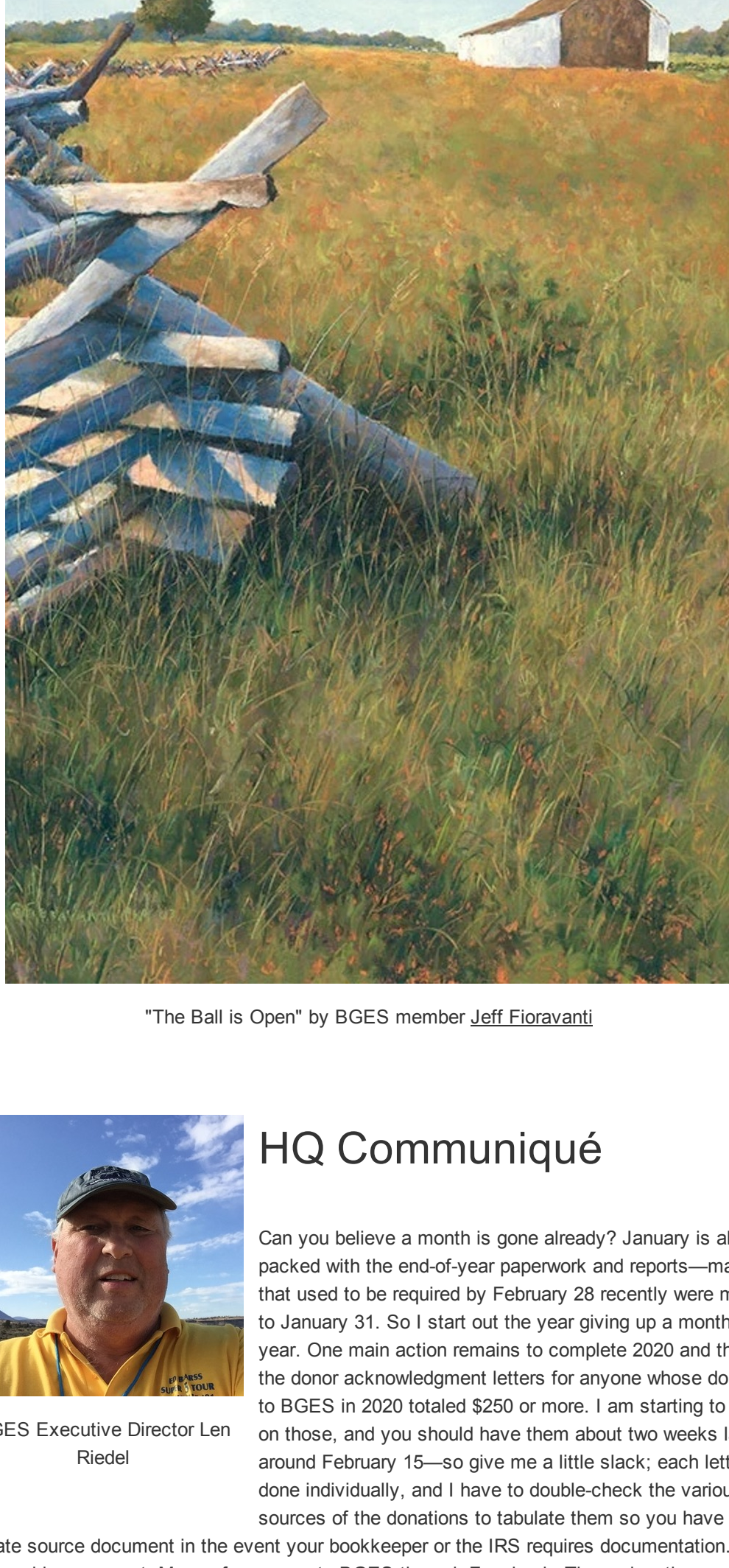
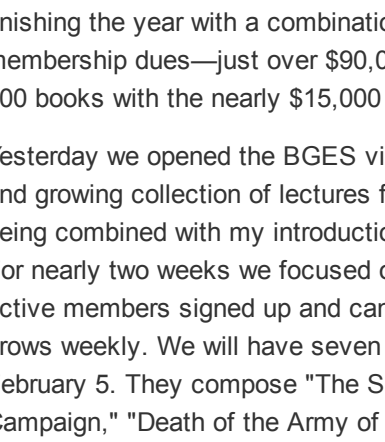




February 2021



"The Ball is Open" by BGES member [Jeff Fioravanti](#)



BGES Executive Director Len Riedel

HQ Communiqué

Can you believe a month is gone already? January is always packed with the end-of-year paperwork and reports—many that used to be required by February 28 recently were moved to January 31. So I start out the year giving up a month to last year. One main action remains to complete 2020 and that is the donor acknowledgment letters for anyone whose donations to BGES in 2020 totaled \$250 or more. I am starting to work on those, and you should have them about two weeks late, around February 15—so give me a little slack; each letter is done individually, and I have to double-check the various sources of the donations to tabulate them so you have one accurate source document in the event your bookkeeper or the IRS requires documentation. I do want to add one caveat. Many of you gave to BGES through Facebook. Those donations are also tax-deductible, but you didn't make them directly to BGES, so they are not in our books. We got consolidated checks of multiple donations during some of my personal fundraisers, and a limited number through the BGES Facebook page. The consolidator of those donations is Network for Good. They send me a check without taking any fees out, but without the names. So by all means, deduct them, but know you most likely would need to use your credit card statements as the documentation. Regardless, thank you. We had a huge response to the Covid challenges, finishing the year with a combination of more than \$160,000 in donations; and a record amount of membership dues—just over \$90,000! Special donations made up the rest. We also sold nearly 400 books with the nearly \$15,000 gross exceeding 2019 by 1000%! Wow.

Yesterday we opened the BGES video archives with a lock on the front door. Access to this robust and growing collection of lectures from more than 25 years of BGES tours and symposiums are being combined with my introductions and recollections of the people, programs, and fun stories. For nearly two weeks we focused only on active BGES members, and about 40 percent of our active members signed up and can now go to our website, log in, and watch a collection that grows weekly. We will have seven complete programs composed of about 60 lectures online by February 5. They compose "The Seven Days Battles," "Campaign for Vicksburg," "The Overland Campaign," "Death of the Army of Tennessee," "Sherman's March to the Sea," "Snapping the Lifeline of the Confederacy (Shiloh and Corinth)," and our 2007 Massachusetts School of Law, "The North in the Civil War—Lincoln and His Generals." In the coming month we will add four more programs: "Gettysburg," "The 3rd Day, Antietam, America's Bloodiest Day," "From Petersburg to Appomattox," and the VMI Conference, "The Leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia." We plan to add a new symposium a week until we reach about 350 total lectures sometime in the fall of 2021. If you are a member, I encourage you to stay current; the key steps working the day after your renewal is due and has to be manually reset. If you are past due to renew, your renewal and your signing up will allow me to grant you access for a year until your next renewal. If you are not a member, then I encourage you to join and then sign up on our website. We will get you access quickly, and you will appreciate the quality of the information provided.

As we are talking online stuff, Scott Hartwig was interviewed last night about his career and forthcoming program: "Reflections on Gettysburg, Day 1." We have 71 people registered for this one, and I will be sending invites to the RSVPs I received. The first four programs have been well-received (Mertz—Shiloh; Smith—Grison's Raid; Severance—The Seven Days; and Jenkins—Dalton and Resaca). Next week Gordon Rhea will talk about his forthcoming two-year comprehensive Overland Campaign tour. After that, Scott Patchan and Gary Ecelbarger will address their forthcoming Saratoga and Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne tour. All of these interviews are free, and if you miss them the subsequent week's invitation will have a hotlink to the previous week's interview. We will also link the historian's interviews with the registration information about their tour. This is a great perk open to all. If you aren't a member, please know we need your consideration and membership. Each interview costs us about \$175 to process—since we have 25 planned running into late May or early June and more will follow, this will cause us to have to raise another \$10,000 just to pay from that. That is 100 new members at \$100 on average. Thank you. Remember, while we are offering them for free, nothing is really free, and there is a processing cost tied to the production of the video and the sound engineer.

Finally, many of you are interested in our seminar program, and that is the \$200,000 question. Seminars constitute about 55 percent of our annual revenues, and the shutdown from last March was testing. We had hoped to restart in January, but we have now lost the first quarter. Not unexpected. We have plans to create hybrid transition programs in April—a caravan self-drive, socially distanced tour of "Shiloh" with Greg Mertz, based out of Savannah, Tennessee, on April 8–11; "The Seven Days" with Dr. Paul Severance from Sandston, Virginia (the Richmond Airport), on April 14–17; and "The Atlanta Campaign, Part I, Dalton" and "Part 2, Resaca" out of Dalton with Robert Jenkins on April 21–25. Each will be priced to recognize your partnership role in allowing us to do these programs. I will post registration forms for each by February 20. I would like to note that each is subject to rescheduling depending upon the guidance of the federal, state, and local authorities and the willingness of folks to participate. We have agreed on back-up dates for each and will make a call no later than March 15. Registrations are fully refundable and can roll to the next date if we need to reschedule.

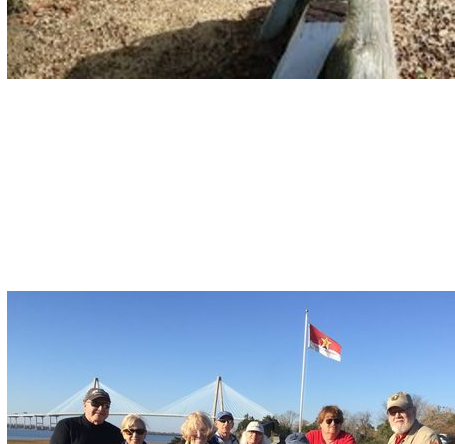
Strong registration for Scott Hartwig's "Gettysburg Day 1" program (31 registered to date) on April 30 to May 2 from Gettysburg, and Gordon Rhea's "Overland" tour May 16 to 21 (29 to date) require us to use a full-sized bus, and that may not be possible due to social-distancing requirements. The big question is the national guidance as we proceed through the inoculation process and the guidance for mixing and masking for immunized people. You will see elsewhere in this newsletter the current guidance from our insurance underwriters. I heard the question asked today about who and what should be the social interactions with folks who have their shots and those who do not. More to follow. I raise this point because Scott has agreed, if needed, to move his program to mid-July or early October. Gordon has agreed to move his program if needed to mid-September or late October. So, my point is we believe we are coming back, and we are just adjusting until we are cleared in hot.

In the meantime, we are reacting like we did last year. We are assuming that we will need to make adjustments and seek your support, but I believe we can see the light at the other end of the tunnel. I will keep you posted and hope you can see from all this that we are working harder and in different ways to keep you focused and educated. Thank you for your support. See you next month.

Len Riedel
BGES Executive Director

February Happenings: The Winter Campaign

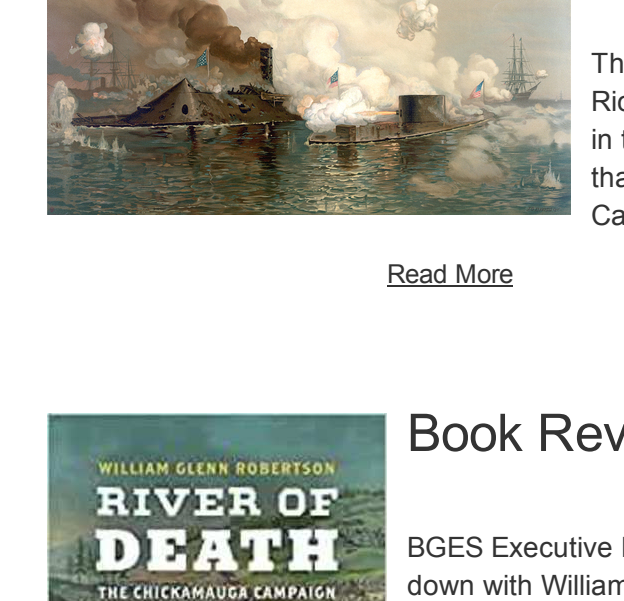
Welcome to the February 2021 issue of *Holding the Line*! This month we hear from Gordon Rhea and his take on the Overland Campaign. His tour is slated for May 16–21, 2021. We also chatted with Mike Bunn, the director of operations at Fort Blakeley, providing an insider's look at this little-known but nationally important battle site. For those ready to hit the trail in an outdoor, socially distanced way, follow our self-guided tour of the Peninsula Campaign, taking in sites along the peninsula between the York and James Rivers involved in the Union's 1862 attempt to capture Richmond. We delve into the hard-faced reality of insurance implications as we start thinking about getting back out into the fields in a post-Covid world. Executive Director Len Riedel recently read William Glenn Robertson's *River of Death, The Chickamauga Campaign* and he reviews it for us. What is his verdict? And last but not least, we meet up with a fascinating BGES member who has written two acclaimed books. You've read some of his excerpts in the BGES Dispatches ...



Tour Talk: Gordon Rhea & the Overland Campaign

Historian Gordon Rhea has spent 26 years directing tours of the Overland Campaign for various tour operations including BGES. See what he has to say about walking the Virginia battlefields, Grant the Butcher, and the overall importance of the Overland Campaign—and be sure to take part in his upcoming tour.

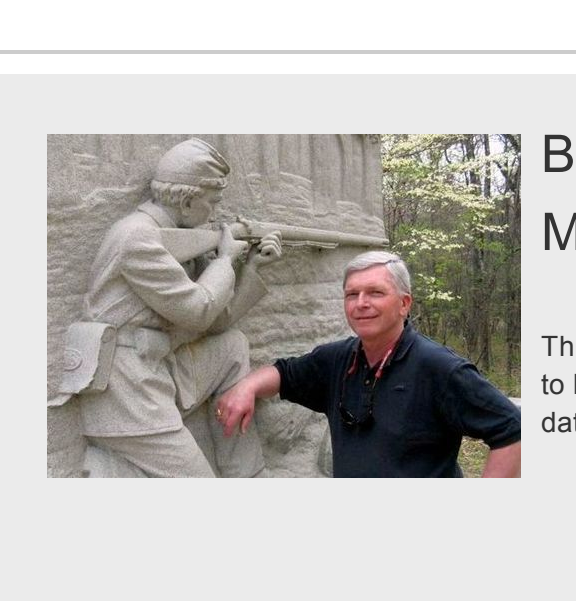
[Read More](#)



An Insider's Look at Fort Blakeley, with Mike Bunn

This fort along the Gulf Coast in Alabama may seem tucked away and forgotten, but Mike Bunn shares how the Civil War battle that unfolded here is part of the broader shared national story.

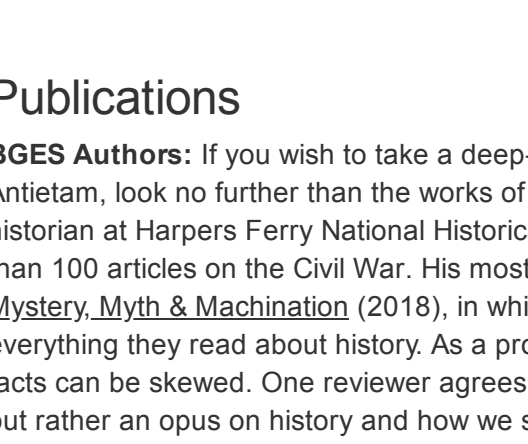
[Read More](#)



What If You Get Covid on a BGES Tour?

BGES is going to extraordinary lengths to ensure Covid protocols when we finally get back in the field. But there's always the risk of Covid. Our insurance broker provides the ins and outs of negligence and liability.

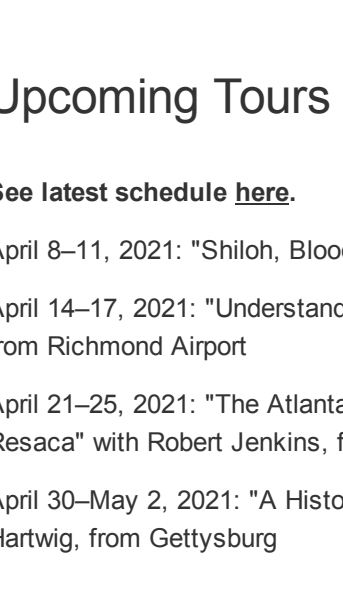
[Read More](#)



Travel Guide: Peninsula Campaign

The Union attempted to take Richmond in 1862—and failed. Follow in the footsteps of the various battles that comprised the Peninsula Campaign.

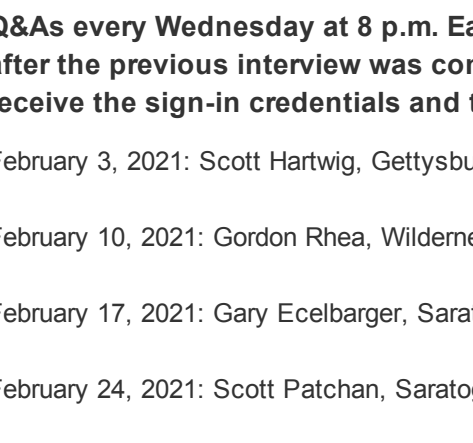
[Read More](#)



Book Review

BGES Executive Director Len Riedel recently sat down with William Glenn Robertson's *River of Death, The Chickamauga Campaign* and offers a review. Robertson has been called the world's foremost expert on the Chickamauga Campaign. But did his book meet Len's expectations?

[Read More](#)



BGES Members Making a Difference

This BGES member didn't grow up wanting to be a Civil War author—but he has to date two acclaimed books under his belt.

[Read More](#)

Publications, Upcoming Tours, & News

Publications

BGES Authors: If you wish to take a deep-dive into the Maryland Campaign and Antietam, look no further than the works of Dennis Frye. The recently retired chief historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has authored 11 books and more than 100 articles on the Civil War. His most recent include [Antietam Shadows: Mystery, Myth & Machination](#) (2018), in which he warns readers of believing everything they read about history. As a professional historian, he is aware of how facts can be skewed. One reviewer agrees: "This is not your average Civil War text, but rather an opus on history and how we see and remember it. While the Maryland Campaign of 1862 and the battle of Antietam are the historical basis of the book, the insights and key understandings are applicable to all areas of history." Another reviewer states: "Anyone who thinks they know what happened in Antietam in September 1862 must read this book." [Confluence: Harpers Ferry's Destiny](#) is Frye's most recently published book (2019), delving into Harpers Ferry's long history as a gathering point of explorers, innovators, warriors, and reformers and all the stories within.

In Camp Along the Monocacy: Look for the next newsletter in mid-February! If you are a BGES member and you are not getting this bi-monthly electronic newsletter, email BGES Communications at communications@blueandgrayeducation.org and ask to be added to the list. You can review archived copies about six months after they are released to the membership.

Upcoming Tours

See latest schedule [here](#).

April 8–11, 2021: "Shiloh, February April" with Greg Mertz, from Savannah, Tennessee

April 14–17, 2021: "Understanding the Seven Days Campaign" with Dr. Paul Severance, from Richmond Airport

April 21–25, 2021: "The Atlanta Campaign on the Weekends, Part I, Dalton" and "Part 2, Resaca" with Robert Jenkins, from Dalton, Georgia

April 30–May 2, 2021: "A Historian's Reflections on the First Day at Gettysburg" with Scott Hartwig, from Gettysburg

Upcoming Zoom Presentations

Get to know the historians we have selected for our 2021 programs via lively Q&As every Wednesday at 8 p.m. Each program will be announced the day after the previous interview was conducted and will require registration to receive the sign-in credentials and the instructions.

February 3, 2021: Scott Hartwig, Gettysburg Day 1 Interview

February 10, 2021: Gordon Rhea, Wilderness, Spotsylvania Lecture

February 17, 2021: Gary Ecelbarger, Saratoga Lecture

February 24, 2021: Scott Patchan, Saratoga Interview

Investors' Reports

Detailed reports for donors and prospective donors are available for download from our website on [Our Mission](#) page.

BGES Recruiting Station

Membership

As a member of BGES, you will be part of a community devoted to saving our Civil War. You will receive our e-newsletter, updated info on upcoming tours, and access to some of our greatest historians. [Join here](#).

Already a member? Don't let your membership slip. [Renew here](#).

Quarter Guard Program

We would also like you to consider joining the [Quarter Guard Program](#), which supports BGES on a monthly or quarterly basis.

BGES Major Gift and Legacy Program

What Will You Be Remembered For? Be part of BGES's future by making an endowment or legacy gift. [Contact us](#) if you would like to make an endowment or legacy gift.

