

HOLDING THE LINE The Newsletter of the **BLUE & GRAY** EDUCATION SOCIETY

June 2020



"Obstinate Determination" by BGES member Jeff Fioravanti



Len at the historic Menger Hotel, San Antonio, on the Texas Two Step tour in February 2020

HQ Communiqué

People tell me that the "Shut In" has been a long time, and yet it seems time is ripping past. I certainly have not had a lot of down time as we make adjustments to ensure that we remain functional and contributing. May was a decisive month, and I'd like to share a few bits with you.

At the start of the month, I convened a Medical Mitigation Work Group composed of nine BGES medical professionals, including five doctors

and four nurses—two doctors and one nurse are actively involved in the Coronavirus treatment regime. All are BGES tour participants, and I asked them what would it take for us to do for them to feel safe and comfortable going on their next BGES tour? After nearly four weeks of back and forth, the recommendation was stark and clear. At this point, there are too many unknown variables. We have to suspend our seminar and tour program indefinitely. Accordingly, the programs of June, July, and August are either being rescheduled or cancelled outright. We also have developed a contingency if the suspension continues throughout the remainder of 2020. Most of the details are in place for that possibility (see the article on <u>BGES Makes Contingency Plans for 2020/2021 Tours</u>). We also have looked at what we need to do to bridge that gap and sustain the organization so it can continue.

The reasons are both simple and practical. From the medical point of view 80 percent of the fatalities have occurred in adults 65 years of age or older, many with underlying conditions-that is 80 percent of our typical cohort on a tour. The virus is often asymptomatic. You won't know if you have it until you have it, and if you have it and do not know it, you can transmit it to others. Our cohorts are small, and transportation is the choke point-we travel in vans or buses, and that brings everybody through the same portal with the same common surfaces all day long. Our community amenities and group lunches are impacted, driving individual cars to spots severely restricts the mobility, and the social distancing requirements impact the socialization and interactions that are key components of our programs. Absent a vaccine or commonly accepted measure of safety, that would allow all onboard to know that everyone else onboard is virus free, we are stuck. In a legal sense, our insurance will not cover us, and various state restrictions must be assimilated and complied with to ensure we do not break any local laws. I asked the Board to permit me the latitude to work month by month rather than cancel all of 2020 outright, citing the incentive the medical community has to develop the vaccine or updating in the CDC guidelines that might permit us to resume our tour program. They agreed; but, we all accept that it is going to take a bit more time for

society to figure out how we live with this new factor.

This forced me to take a hard look at the BGES and our baseline financial requirements. We found we have spent \$84,000 so far this year and, absent the seminars with some obligations, we need another \$120,000 to complete 2020. We are counting on our membership renewals and new memberships to generate \$55,000, leaving us with the need to generate another \$65,000. We will create some innovative appeals to raise those funds, and we hope all of you who appreciate and support BGES will make a special effort to help us get this boat across the river.

We are anticipating completion of three projects. The Interpretation of Fort Branch, our 20th Monograph, and funding for Fort McNair projects related to the trial of the Lincoln Conspirators. The first two projects are already funded; funding for the third will commence this summer.

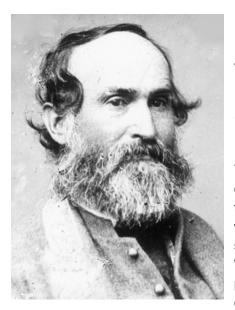
The Civil War was a Nation in Crisis. Today the country is again in crisis. We do not turn to the government for our relief, although we were grateful for some Paycheck Protection Program support, but rather you who believe in us and have supported us over the past 26-plus years. I do not think this will be really painful in the short-term or even if it extends into 2021. I believe in our base of support and candor about our needs, and with that I believe the solution is within our own hands.

See you next month.

-Len Riedel, Executive Director

June Happenings: The Summer Campaign

Welcome to the June issue of Holding the Line! This month you'll read about Shenandoah Valley action during the Civil War. Even though the tour has been postponed until September 2021, it's still an interesting read. We've also provided a travel guide to Shenandoah Valley sights, should you find yourself there traveling through there. We offer an update of where BGES stands with upcoming tours, which have been ravaged by the Coronavirus. On a lighter note, BGES Executive Director Len Riedel gives his candid review of a recently published book that proclaims to offer "a new history of the Civil War." Was he pleased? Read on to find out. And last but not least, we commemorate another BGES member who has used his love of portraying historical figures to teach others about history. Enjoy!



us when we return!

Sheridan Recovers the Valley, with Scott Patchan and Gary Ecelbarger

The story of Philip Sheridan and Jubal Early clashing in the Shenandoah Valley in fall 1864 is full of drama. Scott Patchan and Gary Ecelbarger were set to lead a field study in July 2020 showcasing this fascinating aspect of the Civil War. "Sheridan Recovers the Valley" has been postponted until September 7-11, 2021, but you can still read all about it—and think about joining

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Field Studies Update 2020-2021

Coronavirus has forced us to postpone or cancel many of our tours. Here's the latest.

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The Art of Sign Making

Interpretive signs help our understanding of

historic sites and the history they represent. But who makes those signs? And what does it involve? Here's a behind-the-scenes look at one BGES member's success at interpretive sign making.

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Book Review

BGES Executive Director Len Riedel has reviewed Armies of Deliverance, which posits that Northerners marched to war in 1861 to liberate the South, bringing prosperity, education, and democracy. Is it worth a read?

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Travel Guide: Shenandoah Valley

The strategic, food-rich Shenandoah Valley was hotly contested during the Civil War. Visit the sites that still tell the stories.

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BGES Members Making a Difference

For one BGES member and living history actor, getting into character means getting into costume.

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Publications, Upcoming Tours, & News

Publications

BGES Authors: If you need to read up on the generally unfamiliar 1865 Carolinas campaign, look no further than Col. (Ret.) Wade Sokolosky. The historian has lectured throughout the Carolinas, speaking to roundtables, societies, and organizations—and he is a popular BGES tour leader. Two books that he has coauthored with Mark Smith include "No Such Army Since the Days of Julius Caesar": Sherman's Carolinas Campaign from Fayetteville to Averasboro, March 1865 (2017); and "To Prepare for Sherman's Coming": The Battle of WIse's Forks, March 1865 (2015).

Both books reflect years of meticulous research, including diaries, official reports, newspapers, and letter collections. And as retired military officers, both authors understand the importance of logistics in warfare, which is loud and clear in the narrative. "The clear and crisp writing, supplemented with original maps, photos, and wonderful research, means this book deserves a place on the bookshelf of any student of the Carolinas Campaign," lauds award-winning Civil War historian and author Eric J. Wittenberg on "To Prepare for Sherman's Coming." And on "No Army Since the Days of Julius Caesar," Books Monthly states: What [the authors] bring to the table regarding Sherman and Johnston is remarkable, a revelation" Clearly both books are must-reads.

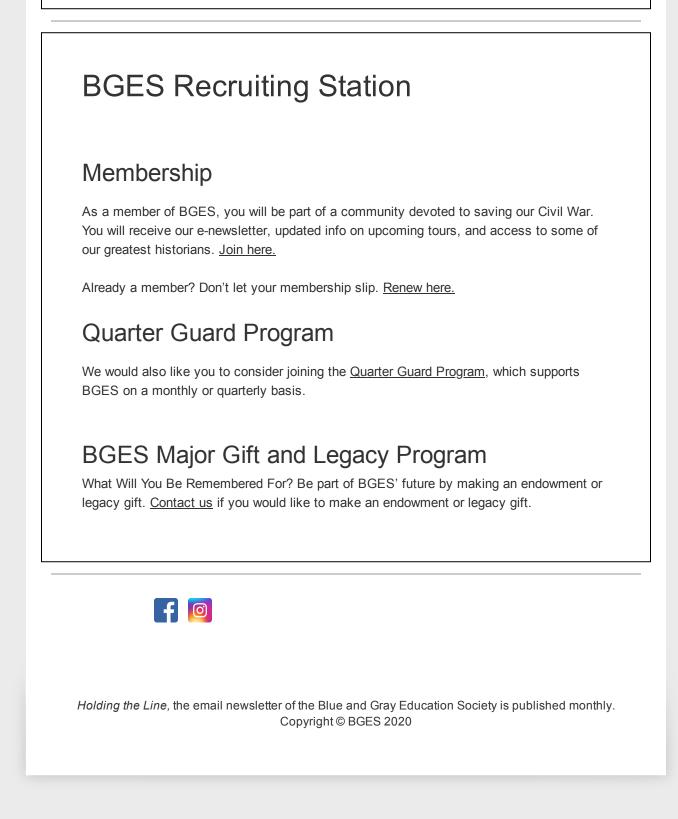
In Camp Along the Monocacy: Look for the next members' newsletter, edited by Len Riedel, in mid-June. The topic probably will be "Reflections on Vicksburg: Pivotal Campaign of the Civil War." If you are a BGES member and you are not getting this bi-monthly electronic newsletter, email BGES Communications at communications@blueandgrayeducation.org and ask to be added. You can review archived copies about six months after they are released to the membership.

Upcoming Tours

Suspended until September 2020. See latest schedule here.

Investors' Reports

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