

*A 2020 BGES Weekend Warrior Program:
The Battles Around Resaca—Chapter 2 of the
1864 Georgia Campaign
With Robert Jenkins
Nov. 13–15, 2020, from Dalton, GA*

For many years, the pivotal Atlanta Campaign has been presented in the shadow of the great Eastern showdown between Grant and Lee, yet the capture of Atlanta widely is regarded as the final nail in the Confederacy's coffin. It provided the national morale lift needed to propel Lincoln to be the first president to be reelected since Andrew Jackson. Several notable historians have undertaken campaign studies, but none has shown more fresh scholarship than Dalton attorney Robert Jenkins.

The unfolding of the campaign quickly uncovers the vulnerability of the Confederate forces. Unable to detect movements screened by terrain, the Federals seize on the opportunity to fall on Johnston's supply lines to Atlanta. The terrain is both a friend and enemy to each army, and the challenges each commander faced were real and thought-provoking, which demanded dramatic and decisive action to maintain the relative security of their forces. This uncovers the first great Confederate mistake of the campaign. Properly exploited, the Atlanta Campaign could have been won in Dalton. This is one of the most important and enjoyable studies in this multi-year program, and the preservation and opening of the new Resaca State Battlefield Park offers a real chance to walk the grounds.

Friday, November 13, 2020

6:00 PM. We will meet at the headquarters hotel to pick up maps and to meet and greet your fellow students at a reception with adult beverages. Bob will follow with a discussion overviewing the second phase of the Georgia Campaign, the strategies of each side, the significance of the Resaca, and the challenges faced by army commanders William Sherman and Joe Johnston. We will break so you can have dinner on your own.

Saturday, November 14, 2020

When you have three armies, as Sherman had, and access to other troops, it is easy to feint in many directions while obscuring your real intention. Confederate general Joe Johnston was about to find this out in real time, and the ramifications for his mountainous defensive position were fatal. When Sherman sent Maj. Gen. James McPherson's army around Johnston's western flank and into his rear, he exposed a chronic flaw in the Confederate chieftain's leadership—he was sloppy in his geographic awareness. At

Resaca, the mountains broke and a formidable passageway named Snake Creek Gap provided the means to bring a large force onto the Confederates' very vulnerable line of supply.

This morning we will ride along the screened route to Villanow, retracing McPherson's route, and then penetrate Snake Creek Gap. Here the 35-year-old Army of Tennessee commander clutched and pulled up short of his objective. That McPherson was talented is undeniable, but at 35, he had rapidly ascended the chain of command, and now his inexperience showed. He was not ready for prime time and was unable to go for the kill.

What resulted was uncertainty that allowed Johnston to recover his mistake, cover his supply base, and withdraw his forces across the Oostanaula River. We will enter the new Resaca State Battlefield Park and discuss the events between May 8 and 13, then hike the May 14 attack on Leonidas Polk's corps. After a catered lunch on the battlefield, we will hike the Federal attack on Hardee's Corps. The day will finish as we place the Federal troops of the Armies of the Cumberland and Ohio. Lunch is provided, but dinner is on your own.

Sunday, November 15, 2020

Bob is a walker, and he will continue that today. Having left the Confederate forces under duress yesterday, we will start early today and move back toward the Confederate line. After the war the state wanted to commemorate the Atlanta Campaign, and they built a series of "pocket parks" along the U.S. highway at regular intervals. Those waysides included interpretation and permanent maps that are works of art today. We will head to Resaca's pocket park and use the resources there to summarize the situation for the Confederates before commencing our combat stops.

While the majority of our visits on Saturday were on the battlefield park, the battlefield is sadly bisected by I-75, and so much of the continuity of those combat actions gets lost in the modern engineering set up through the battlefield. It is an illusion that the battlefield has moved to the east. What we do see today as we move closer to the points of Confederate vulnerability and Union success are the counter thrusts. We will examine Confederate Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. John Bell Hood's counterattack on the Federal left, and fighting in and around various artillery positions as soldiers struggle for the prizes the artillery pieces represent. We will conclude the morning with Hooker's XX Corps attack and a visit to the Confederate cemetery.

Following lunch at Denny's, you will see how the Federal crossing of the Oostenaula River at Lay's Ferry compels the abandonment of all the positions north of the river by Johnston and sets the two armies in motion for a new landing point measurably closer to Atlanta. In so much as Atlanta is a campaign of maneuver and the rivers are major obstacles, you will spend some time on the bank of the river overlooking the railroad crossing of the Western and Atlantic Railroad—that single thread of transportation will be the centerpiece of all the military operations for the next five months, including Hood's post-Atlanta move to the north. The afternoon will include a visit to an unknown

and rarely visited site—Fort Wayne. This location was ideal for artillery overlooking the Oostenaula River—indeed, it helped control crossings. It also was a staging area for Confederate troops and supplies coming northbound. It's a nice park that complements your study of Resaca. We will return to the hotel by 5 PM. Lunch is included.

Chapter 1 in the series is April 24–26, 2020 from Dalton. Chapter 3 covers Cassville, New Hope Church, Pickett's Mill, and Dallas in April 2021. Chapter 4 will be Kennesaw Mountain in November 2021.

About the Faculty

Bob Jenkins is a practicing attorney in Dalton, Georgia. An active preservationist, he has played a significant role in expanding the story of the prelims of the 1864 Atlanta Campaign that you will see on this program. He has completed two outstanding books on the campaign: *The Battle of Peachtree Creek, Hood's First Sortie July 20, 1864* (2014) and *To the Gates of Atlanta: from Kennesaw Mountain to Peachtree Creek 1-19 July 1864* (2015). Bob is an animated and detailed interpreter, and you will be regaled with new and thought-provoking information and stunning vistas.

Hotel Information

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

Transportation

The servicing airport is Chattanooga (CHA). Atlanta (ATL) is perhaps 85 miles south. Nashville (BNA) also is a possibility. Both have excellent airfares. In every instance, you would need a rental car. For people driving in, the hotel will be convenient to Interstate 75.

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.

Albert Castel: [*Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign 1864*](#)

Jacob D. Cox: [*The Greatest Civil War Battles: The Atlanta Campaign*](#)

Joseph E. Johnston: [*Narrative of Military Operations during the Civil War*](#)

Jim Miles: [*Fields of Glory: A History and Tour Guide of the War in the West, The Atlanta Campaign, 1864*](#)

Lawrence K. Peterson: [*Decisions of the Atlanta Campaign: The Twenty-One Critical Decisions that Defined the Operation*](#)

Registration Form
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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 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 \$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.