

BGES's A Day of History:
Stonewall Jackson's Greatest Victory

Presented by Dennis Frye

October 18, 2020; from Harpers Ferry, WV

Long before he died, Gen. Thomas J. Jackson was known worldwide. The British and French both had observers in America, and his austere promptitude and battlefield discipline at Manassas, where he stood like a “stone wall,” or in Stonewall’s Valley, where he befuddled three Union commanders with his lightning moves and unexpected strikes, made him legendary in his own time. With his death in May 1863 and his national funeral in Richmond, followed by his quiet return via the James River to his quiet Lexington, he was enshrined as one of the nation’s greatest soldiers.

Time has dulled the patina on his monuments and closer examination has dropped his reputation as a tactical commander. However, there is no doubt his campaigns and battles still command much consideration. So for one day, we will take you to where historian Dennis Frye believes he created his greatest victory—one that has been overshadowed by the great battle of Antietam.

What a great way to spend an October day. Can’t you already taste the ice cream at Nutters in downtown Sharpsburg, and see the colorful maples and oak leaves changing before our eyes?

Sunday, October 18, 2020

8:30 AM. Meet Your tour leader, Dennis Frye, in front of the Harpers Ferry NPS Visitors Center, he will stipulate the thrust of his thesis that Stonewall Jackson’s victory at Harpers Ferry was his greatest accomplishment during the Civil War, and that it is also the least celebrated.

Nothing in Jackson’s tactical career compares to his conquest of Harpers Ferry. In this, his last independent command of the war, Stonewall faces his most difficult natural obstacle, defended by an obstinate enemy, under the pressures of an impossible timeline. Indeed, the miracle of General Lee’s Special Orders #191 were not that they were lost or found, but that they worked. Why? Search Jackson’s actions and his tactical brilliance.

You will spend the morning investigating Bolivar Heights and School House Ridge—both critical to Jackson’s decisions concerning the fate of the forces in the town below. Dennis’s 20 years as the Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry well prepared him to study, consider, and synthesize Harpers Ferry like no one else. We guarantee he will bring you new perspectives about Stonewall and this September 1862 operation.

After lunch, we will move on to Sharpsburg, following Jackson's route as he moves rapidly to Lee, who is consolidating his command in front of the crossings of the Potomac River. After arriving, Jackson is assigned to command and secure Lee's left, where the bulk of the epic fighting on September 17 took place—names like the Cornfield, the East Woods, and the West Woods near the Dunker Church are some of the bloodiest ground in America's bloodiest single day ever. Stonewall's well earned sobriquet would be carved in stone and highlighted in blood as his divisions suffered more casualties than any other Confederate unit as they repulsed three Federal corps, the I, XII, and the II.

This is a day of Stonewall, and the exchanges back and forth will leave you with a new appreciation for the impact of this complicated man. We will finish by 5 PM.

About the Faculty:

Dennis Frye retired after 32 years in the NPS at Harpers Ferry. He also is native to the area and has walked the grounds since his youth. He is a recipient of the Department of Interior's Distinguished Service Award, the highest in the Department. He holds the American Battlefield Trust's Shelby Foote Award and the Nevin-Freeman Award for his leadership in Battlefield Preservation—many may recall he was a founding member of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites and was the second Executive Director of that group.

Today he owns and restored Ambrose Burnside's post-Antietam headquarters, which hosted Abraham Lincoln after the famous 1862 battle.

Hotel Information:

This day program will be based in Harpers Ferry. While there will be no headquarters hotel, you can find accommodations in Harpers Ferry and nearby Charles Town. You can expect to pay \$90 to \$160 per night.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Baltimore Washington International (BWI), located more than an hour east of Harpers Ferry; and Dulles International (IAD), an hour northwest of Harpers Ferry. Trains do service Harpers Ferry and Charles Town—mostly the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC). Check to make sure it services on Sundays. Harpers Ferry is near Frederick Maryland, off Interstate 70.

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.

Dennis E. Frye: [*Antietam Shadows*](#)

Dennis E. Frye: [*Confluence: Harpers Ferry as Destiny*](#)

Dennis E. Frye: [*September Suspense: Lincoln's Union in Peril*](#)

Stephen Sears: [*Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam*](#)

Registration Form

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A BGES Program

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Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Emails: _____

Registration includes lunch, battlefield maps, the academic program, support of a professional historian, tour director, and transportation appropriate to the registration. We also provide snacks and bottled water.

_____ Registration \$225

_____ Current BGES member \$195

_____ 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 \$50. 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 cards to 434-432-0596. You can also register online at blueandgrayeducation.org.