

*A BGES Civil War Field University Program:  
“Fredericksburg, Fredericksburg and More”  
A Walking Tactical Study of Fredericksburg  
December 1862 and May 1863  
With Paul Severance and Greg Mertz*

By November 1862, the Civil War was “fully involved,” the Confederate offensives along a 1000 mile front from Maryland to Mississippi had all disappointed, a gray and butternut surging wave had crested and receded. An election had reduced Lincoln’s governing majority and the ramifications of Lincoln’s announced intention to emancipate slaves on January 1<sup>st</sup> had stirred up the entire country both north and south. McClellanites had been purged from leadership roles and newly appointed commanders of northern armies were assessing their portfolios and the expectations of their political sponsors and overlords.

This tour is as twofer! The central feature being a high level and interesting leadership study of the December 1862 battle of Fredericksburg by Dr. Paul Severance. Paul recently retired as the senior lecturer and leadership studies professor at the National Defense University at Fort McNair. This professional leadership school is the highest level professional education school in the United States government and Paul’s students included general officers and senior government employees. Paul was called upon to integrate his knowledge of military history with strategy and Warfare, logistics, Civil-Military relations, geography—both military and political, geopolitics and adult learning into cogent and relevant leadership experiences. You will be treated to an instructional pattern and matrix that picks apart the battle of Fredericksburg and also gives you a matrix to use in your own studies of other battlefields.

Because it is December and it’s a ways to go and we think you need to treat yourself and because we have the asset right in front of us the final day of this trip will be led by Greg Mertz, recently retired senior historian for the Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Spotsylvania National Military Park who will filet and make relevant the operations in front of Fredericksburg and Salem Church in May 1863. So frequently overlooked and now with the overgrowth of the town on the battlefield an increasing forgotten but key element of the battle of Chancellorsville.

**THIS TOUR WILL INCLUDED A LOT OF WALKING TO VARIOUS SITES ON ALL THREE FIELD DAYS. IF YOU CANNOT KEEP UP YOU MAY WANT TO SELECT A LESS PHYSICAL PROGRAM.**

Click here to see the 2 one hour YouTube interviews that were presented on these two important and interesting themes.

<https://youtu.be/QgOTbegVdH0>

[https://youtu.be/UzQ\\_TiG9ta4](https://youtu.be/UzQ_TiG9ta4)

### **Thursday, December 9, 2021**

7 PM: Eat early as we will take as much as two hours to complete our inbriefing. We are of course not a tour company but rather an educational organization and while you have none of the burdens of a student if you can project yourself back to those days, Paul will establish the grounding for this operation by examining the contrasting views of the sacking of George McClellan and the installation of Ambrose Burnside as the new commander considering the different styles and plans for the coming operations. We cannot and will not forget Robert E. Lee's mastery of the field and his response to the unfolding scenario.

The Fredericksburg Campaign has large political ramifications for the Union party under Lincoln. Our in brief will examine the relative relations between the governments and leadership of the two national armies. The session will close with an assessment of the projected impact of the largest political decision of the year the coming activation of the Emancipation Proclamation.

As a takeaway, Paul will present each participant with his Taxonomy of Analytic Frameworks. In real language it is a cheat sheet to stimulate your thinking and participation. Change a few words on other campaigns and you will have the sort of analytic questions that are triggered for the highest military and civilian leadership—the stuff of decisions at a national level and how they impact military operations.

### **Friday, December 10, 2021**

8:15 AM: Whether you have been here before or not, this study is an orderly progression of strategic thinking juxtaposed against the field of operations and the events we know happened. For more than 120 years the military maintained key battlefields as a convenient training grounds to work modern problems of operational control, logistics and avenues of communications on sites where we knew what had happened. The main purpose was to put contemporary thinking into safe historic situations and to allow current officers to see how terrain, distances and other features such as weather could affect operational effectiveness and the tempo of operations.

We will start at the visitor's center to tell you what we are going to tell you over the next two days and then will head to the Union lines on and around Stafford Heights, a central point of the Union lines will be the headquarters home of General Edwin

Sumner at Chatham. Before leaving there Paul will spend an important segment of time discussing urban engineering and the bridging challenges Union engineers would face in moving men and support equipment across a river under the defiant eyes of Lee and his army. The lecture logically moves into the Federal plans to cross the river in three locations and how it would be covered by suppressing fire support.

Another really interesting element of this study is the reality of an operation in urban terrain, certainly one of the most challenging of operations and one which modern army and special operations forces learned about first hand in the middle east. While in town the overarching dominance of terrain surrounding the river and town will be considered.

Following lunch, we will do a similar analysis of the position occupied by Robert E. Lee beginning with Marye's Heights and the natural fortification associated with the sunken road and the stone wall at the foot of the hill. That the national cemetery is there is both natural and important as the price of gaining the hill was the bodies of the men who now rest there but failed.

The study moves south in which the modern road cut of US 1 gives us a unique look at many of the geographic features that grabbed Lee's attention and which extended many miles down to Hamilton's Crossroads. We will close the day by examining Franklin's Grand Division attack, breakthrough and the restoration of Jackson's line. Lunch is included but dinner is on your own.

### **Saturday December 11, 2021**

8:15 AM: We will pick up where we left off yesterday by going down the Bowling Green Road (Route 2) to look at the assault from the perspective of a Federal Wing Commander—Franklin had a robust challenge in front of him and it was daunting. Sadly Franklin's challenges were further complicated by the intrepid and singularly heroic actions of the boy cannoneer, John Pelham (a site special to BGES as you will see, we have placed a full scale Napoleon cannon at the site).

Our study progresses across the Union front and to the Slaughter Pen to examine the operations of Meade and John Gibbon. This massive field was saved from destructive development by the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust and the American Battlefield Trust.

We will have earned our lunch and afterwards we will move to what 95% of the people visiting the National Park think is the battle and that is the terrible carnage along the Sunken Road. The day was long and bloody and we cannot overstate the reason to spend the amount of the time we spend there—it is ground long paid for by the men we will discuss—Sumner and Hooker earn their stars in the relentless if futile determination to break Lee's impregnable lines.

We reserve the remainder of the afternoon to discuss the reconstitution and actions of the Federal army in the wake of its destructive day at Fredericksburg. The challenge and reward of this will be working with Paul to bring this case study full circle which includes the cascading secondary and tertiary effects such an operation had. You will be able to fully participate using the cheat sheet you received at the inbrief as you follow the sorts of lines of inquiry that anyone seriously studying a battle field should use to answer the question "So what?." Lunch will be provided but dinner is on your own.

### **Sunday December 12, 2021**

8:15 AM, We pivot to April 1863. The two armies still stand in opposition to each other but now Burnside is gone, Hooker has taken command under less than positive circumstances and yet he has reorganized and taken the initiative. The plan is brilliant, armed with a superiority in numbers over a southern commander who has a wing south of Richmond, the distraction of a sickly commander in chief and enemy operations in his rear threatening lines of supply from Wilmington and the symbolically significant city of Charleston.

Hooker wants to use the grounds in and around Fredericksburg to try and hold Lee in place as long as possible while he moves to his rear down stream along the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers. We start today with an examination of the diversionary crossing of Union General John Reynolds 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, Jackson's recommendation to attack it and the reasons Lee left it alone.

Lee suddenly realizes he has been turned and sends word to Jackson to meet him west of Fredericksburg as they determine the objectives of Hooker's move. The residual instructions for Jubal Early are miscommunicated and Early nearly uncovers Lee's rear recovering in time to execute Lee's intentions.

We will then pick up John Sedgwick's orders to rolled up Lee's rear and join him as the hammer against Hooker's anvil like position. We will walk Marye's Heights considering this denuded position and the Federal's greatly simplified and more successful operation against this now much less imposing position. We then move back down to the Slaughter Pen to consider Brooks' engagement against Robert Hoke's Division.

Two other positions, both unbloodied in December, acquire relevance and we will go to both Lee's Hill and a spot north of Marye's Heights where Oliver Wendell Holmes is seriously wounded and documents his experience in a letter home. He was a spot every bit as daunting as those faced by attacking Federals in December.

As the operations wane at Fredericksburg we move west towards Chancellorsville picking up the Confederate force under Cadmus Wilcox who has left his position covering Banks Ford to move to the vicinity of Salem Church to interdict Sedgwick's move to join Hooker. Lee initially sends Wilcox support and the Federals are

stopped in and around Salem Church. Absent an immediate Federal withdrawal Lee gets word of Salem Church and determines that Sedgwick is more of a threat than the forces hunkered down with Hooker near Chancellor's Crossroads. Lee leaves Stuart in front of Hooker and takes two divisions to join up with Jubal Early and hit Sedgwick on May 4<sup>th</sup>. We will go to Lee's headquarters and then walk the battle of Smith Run Battlefield.

In summarizing the day the sites and events will be tied directly to the larger picture of the Chancellorsville Campaign. Granted communications were difficult at best, but these remote actions even confused the participants as to how they fit in. The reality is that Fredericksburg and the engagements east of Chancellorsville were bold adaptations of opportunities that got more attention as the Chancellorsville front grew quieter. You will have had a remarkable interpretation and look at the significance of Fredericksburg, Fredericksburg. Lunch is included and you will be free to depart about dark.

### **About the Faculty:**

**Paul Severance** is a retired professor of history who still conducts leadership tours and studies for high level organizations. A relatively new member of the BGES, Paul is a bundle of energy who is anxious to spread the refreshing testimony of battlefields and campaigns being the optimum test of character and leadership. It is a means of understanding the special relationship of the military and its civilian leadership in a free society. Paul is the lead docent and advocate for the preservation of the Courtroom where the Lincoln Conspirators were tried and convicted at Fort McNair. Paul brings a matrix with him that is a "carry away" benefit for people who wish to understand the nuances and meaning of battlefields or campaigns. You will enjoy the interchange and will find yourself both educated and challenged.

**Greg Mertz** was one of the NPS's hidden jewels and a superb historian. While not a flamboyant personality his presentations are comprehensive, insightful and complete. He commands attention and you are rewarded for the discipline. A preservationist of the first order—he is perhaps not known in the west; however, experience in scouting and a western pedigree (he is from Missouri) led the Emerging Civil War group to invite him to publish a guide book on Shiloh—it is first rate. Greg knows Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville and I am delighted to turn the field over to him. This tandem team will be a singular treat!

### **Hotel Information:**

I expect this program will be based at the Country Inn and Suites, 5327 Jefferson Davis Blvd. (US Route 1) Fredericksburg, Virginia. 22408 (phone: 540-898-1800) We will seek the same rate we had for our Rhea program in October ( \$79 per night

plus tax.) The block will have a cutoff date. After that the rooms will go to their rack rate. Ask for the Blue and Gray Group Rate.

### **Transportation:**

The servicing airport is Richmond International (RIC), with Washington Reagan National (DCA) in play also. Both airports are about an hour's drive from Fredericksburg, so if you fly in, you likely will find a rental car the most convenient; although you can get ground transportation at a cost. Amtrak services Fredericksburg. With Fredericksburg located on Interstate 95 between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, the program also is easily accessible by automobile.

### **Recommended Reading:**

You will be provided with a reading book and maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program. All prices are inclusive of shipping.

Francis A. O'Reilly: **The Fredericksburg Campaign**

Christopher Mackowski: **Simply Murder**

Bradley Gottfried: **The Maps of Fredericksburg**

Jay Luvaas and Harold Nelson, **US Army War College Guide to the Battles of Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg**

Christopher Mackowski and Kristopher White: **Chancellorsville's Forgotten Front: The Battles of Second Fredericksburg and Salem Church May 3, 1863**

## Registration Form

*“Fredericksburg, Fredericksburg and More”  
A Walking Tactical Study of Fredericksburg,  
December 1862 and May 1863  
A BGES Civil War Field University Program  
Presented by Paul Severance and Greg Mertz  
December 9-12, 2021 from Fredericksburg, VA*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration includes three lunches, handouts with maps, the academic program, support of two professional historians, tour director and transportation. We will also provide snacks, bottled water and a limited selection of sodas.

\_\_\_\_\_ Registration \$820

\_\_\_\_\_ Current BGES member \$750

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 \$250 per person 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, PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531, or fax credit cards to 434-432-0596 . You may also register on line at [www.blueandgrayeducation.org](http://www.blueandgrayeducation.org).