

A BGES Field University Program
The Bayou Teche and Port Hudson
Campaigns
The BGES' Signature Vicksburg Campaign
Study, Part 8

Presented by Brigadier General James Parker Hills, Ret.
February 16-20, 2022, from Port Allen (Baton Rouge)
Louisiana

For more than 20 years, The Blue and Gray Education Society has owned the Vicksburg Campaign. Heralded by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission Report for the “impressive interpretative potential we have picked up that diamond and turned it every which way culminating in a robust and diverse series of projects and programs that have burnished this stone with a Jeweler’s care culminating with a book published with the National Geographic Society in 2010; however, no achievement is more important than the 8 part, 34 day study of the Campaign as revealed in Ed Bearss’s authoritative trilogy, **The Vicksburg Campaign**. Each program stands on its own but cumulatively contributes to the most detailed and analytic field study to ever support the great man’s historical contributions.

As we finish our third full cycle of the tour, we have crafted a completely new tour that provides missing context to General Nathaniel Banks’s efforts in the spring of 1863 and a better understanding of Grant’s decision to strike inland in May rather than support Banks. At the same time, we contemplate starting the series a 4th time and adding 3 new tours that encompass an improved understanding of the theater this campaign was conducted in.

So now we head to Cajun country for a truly unique and largely unappreciated examination of the actions and plans of General Banks. Along the way, we will see shimmering and wandering bayous, ancient live oaks bearded with Spanish moss, war-scarred antebellum mansions, and cypress swamps with snow-white egrets and dark, gnarly alligators. You really don’t want to miss this one, even if you have done Vicksburg 8 before—this is a new tour.

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

5:00 PM. Check into the headquarters hotel in Port Allen, and get there in plenty of time. At 6:30 we will open the program with a working supper that includes another of Parker Hills' brand-new-for-BGES PowerPoint lectures, "*Port Hudson, March 1863.*" Afterwards, Q & A will no doubt carry beyond the 15 minutes typically allocated for such dialogue.

Thursday, February 17, 2022

General Banks has been in command since December 1862 and he controls the region between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. New Orleans was a city of world class reputation and federal operations were staged and supported from the Crescent City. By the end of the summer of 1862 Federal advances up the Mississippi River had reached as far as Vicksburg only to be compelled to fall back with the falling of the river level. With advanced Federal bases, in Baton Rouge, Confederate forces fell back to establish a strong hold at Port Hudson overlooking the Mississippi River.

Abraham Lincoln wished to show progress in the war effort and sought to reconstruct Louisiana back into the Union if she could be subdued and her commerce restarted. With the Confederates holding open a gate of some 200 river miles from Vicksburg to Port Hudson and control of the Red River, Lincoln was anxious for a decisive campaign that would reopen the Mississippi River to commerce.

Today we will depart with Banks as he moves to tighten the Federal control of Louisiana by taking Port Hudson under close siege. There are many key locations associated with Banks' March 1863 deployment and we will visit many of them often in the very footsteps of the Federal forces. Along the way we will talk about the "thinking" behind Banks' plans. A highlight of the day will be St. Francisville—very much like it was 159 years ago. Our intellectual focus will be on Banks' plan and his efforts to coordinate with Navy Admiral David G. Farragut who controlled the Mississippi River. Absent much combat action, human interest stories, historic architecture and sites will help tell the history of the region.

The days in February are short and we will head back to the hotel for another working supper and PowerPoint presentation on the "*Bayou Teche Campaign and the Siege of Port Hudson.*"

Friday, February 18, 2022

Confederate options were limited and while they controlled large portions of the state the state capitol was in Federal hands as was the state's most important city. With siege operations about to commence in earnest the Confederates would need something dramatic to break Banks's focus and provide relief for General Gardner and his embattled garrison.

General Richard Taylor, son of President Zachary Taylor, initiated a brigade sized raid led by Colonel James Major. We will follow much of that raid to Morgan City (known

during the Civil War as Brashear City) and while in Donaldsonville will discuss Confederate General Tom Green's June 28th unsuccessful night time attack against Fort Butler.

Following lunch at Bubba's Po-Boys in Thibodaux, we will spend time at the site of the Battle of LaFourche Crossing which despite a set back the Confederates continued onto Brashear City. We will examine the tactically interesting attack and capture of Brashear City following an amphibious crossing and successful attack against two Federal forts.

Our day will finish with a trip back in the WayBack Machine over two months earlier and the start of the Bayou Teche Campaign on April 9th. Here Banks intends to marginalize Taylor's influence, gather supplies and perhaps capture the Confederate force in total with a double envelopment at the Battle of Bisland. This pivot from the Confederate efforts to compel Banks to discontinue his siege in June carries us back to the point in which Banks takes the initiative to sweep around behind the Confederates and cut off the communications to Port Hudson from the north.

We then return to the hotel

Saturday, February 19, 2022

Continuing with Banks's Bayou Teche campaign, this morning we pick up Taylor's withdrawal after Bisland and the rearguard action at Centerville. Following Banks's "pursuit" through Franklin and on to the site of the Battle of Irish Bend—another victory for Banks. Only 8 miles from New Iberia was a strategic asset on Avery Island—a Confederate salt mine needed for meat preservation—and Banks had this facility destroyed on April 17. The island rebounded, however, for today Avery Island is the home of world-famous Tabasco sauce. We will have lunch at the Tabasco Restaurant.

Then we continue northward to follow the armies through Vermilionville, today known as Lafayette. We will see where Taylor destroyed the bridge over Vermilion Bayou (hint: not where the historical marker is located), a move which delayed Banks for two days. In Lafayette we will also see the magnificent St. John Cathedral and the cemetery where Generals Alfred Mouton (killed at Mansfield, Louisiana, on April 8, 1864) and Franklin Gardner (commander of Port Hudson, Louisiana) are interred. Our last stop today will be the Federal capture of Fort Burton at Butte La Rose.

Sunday, February 20, 2022

We will start first thing for Opelousas, the Confederate capital from May 1, 1862 to January 23, 1863. Here, at the recently destroyed Mouton house, the capitol building, we will discuss Banks's success in the Bayou Teche Campaign that concluded on April 20, 1863. Now he is on the horns of a dilemma with Grant. It is decision time for Banks in Opelousas, but is he up to the task? As an aside in Opelousas, we will see the Jim Bowie Oak, a 300-year-old tree which stood near the home of the famous frontiersman

Its now time for Banks to get on to Port Hudson and execute his strategic objective—he has been given Grant; but, will Grant be there for him? We will move along from Port Barre to discuss and travel along with the forage train that will support the besieging Federal force at the bridgehead at Bayou Sara.

After lunch at New Roads, we follow two untested brigades of Christopher C. Augur's division of Banks's XIX Corps and Grierson's attached cavalry as they attempt to close the back door at Port Hudson on the road to Clinton at Plains Store on May 21, 1863. At the time, Banks was still west of the Mississippi River at Morganza, Louisiana, approaching Port Hudson from the north with his Bayou Teche divisions, now composed of veteran soldiers. But Banks was still a day away. Thomas W. Sherman (known now as "the other Sherman") was approaching Port Hudson from the south with two brigades on steamboats out of New Orleans. But Sherman was still a day away. We will see what happens.

Then on to old Port Hudson, where we will see what is left of a once thriving river town. We will visit various town and fortification sites, before moving into the military park. In the park we will walk the trails—walks which will require vigor—to see the fortifications and describe the attacks on Fort Desperate, Fort Babcock, Mississippi Redoubt, Bennett's Redoubt, Alabama-Arkansas Redoubt, and Commissary Hill. If one is not up to all of the walks, there is a nice museum and exhibits. After a full day we will return to Baton Rouge, a tad tired but now well-armed with the knowledge of "the rest of the story." The Vicksburg Odyssey ends here.

About the Faculty:

Parker Hills is the nation's leading historian on the Vicksburg Campaign. He has a well-earned reputation for the highest standards of preparation on tours and the exceptional educational value of his content. Being with Hills is like taking a senior military service school course in which you surely will leave with far more knowledge than when you arrived. Parker is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College, and he is in high demand from businesses and military organizations that want his leadership training. Hills is the founder of BattleFocus and is a retired general officer who served on both active duty as a battery commander in Korea, and as an aide to General of the Army Omar Bradley. He was the Director of Public Affairs for the Mississippi National Guard, and he founded the Regional Counter Drug Training Academy in Meridian, Mississippi. Parker is the coauthor of *Receding Tide: Vicksburg and Gettysburg, The Campaigns that Changed the Civil War*. Parker also has published the *Vicksburg Campaign Driving Guide* and *The Art of Commemoration*—a book that reveals the symbolism and beauty of the commemorative memorialization at the Vicksburg NMP. He also is the driving force for Civil War preservation in the state of Mississippi, and largely through his efforts the Raymond Battlefield Park exists. Given this outstanding résumé, his programs cost a little more, but you quickly will see that they are well worth it.

Hotel Information:

Our headquarters hotel will be announced on this site and will be emailed to each registrant. We expect to name Hampton Inn at Port Allen, Louisiana.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Baton Rouge (BTR). You may get a much better airfare flying into New Orleans (MSY) and driving the 90 miles to the program. The Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport is 11 miles to the Hampton Inn. There is no free airport transport. This is a program where driving is a great option.

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. 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. BGES is selling the Bearss book.

_____ Edwin C. Bearss and James P. Hills: *Receding Tide: Vicksburg and Gettysburg, The Campaigns that Changed the Civil War* \$30 **Click here to order.**

Charles East: [*Sarah Morgan: Civil War Diary of a Southern Woman*](#)

David C. Edmonds: *The Guns of Port Hudson* (**Vol 1. and Vol. 2**)

Warren Grabau: [*Ninety-Eight Days: Geographers View Vicksburg Campaign*](#)

Timothy B. Smith: [*The Real Horse Soldiers: Benjamin Grierson's Epic 1863 Civil War Raid Through Mississippi*](#)

John D Winters & T. Harry Williams: [*The Civil War in Louisiana*](#)

Registration Form

*A BGES Field University Program:
The Bayou Teche and Port Hudson
Campaigns*

*The BGES' Signature Vicksburg Campaign
Study, Part 8*

*Presented by Brigadier General James Parker Hills, Ret.
February 16-20, 2022, from Port Allen, Louisiana*

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Registration includes four lunches, two working dinners and two PowerPoint presentations, a map packet, the academic program, support of a professional historian, a tour director, park admission, and transportation. We will also provide snacks and bottled water.

_____ Registration \$1000

_____ Current BGES member \$925

_____ 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 \$300 per person plus full payment for any books 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.