

A BGES Civil War Field University Program: The March: Sherman's Legendary March to the Sea

With John Derden

January 26-30, 2022; from Morrow, Georgia

Take out your calendars now and mark the following dates if you want to study one of the most consequential military operations of the Civil War: January 26–January 30, 2022; February 23–27, 2022; and February 16–20, 2023.

From the fall of Atlanta at the start of September 1864 until March 1865, Gen. William T. Sherman turned to help Gen. U.S. Grant close out the American Civil War. Finding his supply lines vulnerable and his aggressive young opponent, John Bell Hood, attempting to redefine operations in Georgia, Sherman left Hood to be handled by George Thomas and John M. Schofield as he moved to the Georgia coast and then northward to meet the remainder of Hood's decimated forces now again under then command of Joseph E. Johnston.

Three experts will guide you through this epic operation: John Derden on this first one; Stephen Wise on Sherman's March through South Carolina (along with several guest historians); and Wade Sokolsky on "To the Bitter End." By joining all three, you will get the full scope of this controversial, complex, and masterful operation.

Here is part 1 in John's words:

"One of the most important campaigns of the American Civil War occurred in Georgia, when General Sherman's blue-coated soldiers conducted their march to the sea from Atlanta to Savannah. Vilified by some for its deprivations (who can forget the opening to part 2 of *Gone with the Wind: And the Wind swept through Georgia. SHERMAN!*) against the civilian population but praised by others for hastening the end of the war, The March remains controversial. Based upon lessons learned in Mississippi during February and March 1864 (the Meridian Campaign), Sherman established a pattern that would be refined during his operations through the march into North Carolina. Sherman's March to the Sea not only rendered devastating military and psychological blows to the Confederacy, but also continues to maintain itself in southern history. This tour will give you an opportunity to study the March by traveling in the footsteps of Sherman's soldiers and visiting many of the sites and examining the events associated with the campaign"

See Derden's interview about this tour at Blue and Gray Education Society's free YouTube channel or by clicking [here](#).

Special treat—make deposits for all three programs and enjoy a 25% discount on the February 2023 program (provided you attend both parts 1 and 2).

Wednesday, January 26, 2022

6 PM. We will meet at the headquarters hotel, in Morrow, Georgia, where John will provide an overview of the events leading to Sherman's decision to abandon Atlanta following its capture, sever his supply lines along the Western and Atlantic Railroad, and march a slimmed down and refitted army to the coast. Included will be a discussion of Sherman's calculus involving what to do with Hood and his army and the logistics of the planned movement. The period covered here will be September 2 to November 16, 1864.

Hotel is included, but dinner is on your own.

The Road to Tara Museum is just 4 miles from the hotel and is worth a visit. Oakland Cemetery is just 20 minutes from the Atlanta Airport. So, arrive earlier in the day and see a few things before we get started.

Thursday, January 27, 2022

8:15 AM. Have your bags out by 8 with an 8:15 departure. Sherman's forces began their evacuation of Atlanta on November 15 and 16. Dividing his forces into two wings, the right wing consisting of the 15th and 17th Corps (Army of Tennessee) under Gen. O. O. Howard and the left wing, composed of the 14th and 20th Corps (Army of Georgia) under Gen. Henry Slocum, the left wing headed east in the general direction of Augusta and the right wing moving south toward Macon. These movements fixed the meager Confederate forces and obscured Sherman's ultimate destination. During the March, Sherman's cavalry commander, Gen. Judson Kilpatrick, moved from the right wing to the left wing to guard the flanks and screen the army's movements. Sherman's initial objective for this first week was the state capital of Milledgeville, which he reached on November 23. Here, he regrouped and issued the next set of orders.

This morning we follow the right wing and visit the site of Griswoldville, an antebellum industrial village built by Samuel Griswold. Converted to an arms production facility during the war, it was destroyed on November 20 by a detachment of the 9th Michigan Volunteer Cavalry. Nearby is the site of the tragic November 22 battle of Griswoldville, the only "pitched" infantry battle fought during the March.

Next, we will shift to the left wing at Milledgeville. The old governor's mansion and state capital buildings still stand. Sherman held a meeting at the governor's mansion to detail the next phase of the March. We will visit the legislative chamber where the secession ordinance was approved and detail the irreverent visit and "rump" legislature of Union soldiers and their "legislative" actions as the delegates of the New Georgia. Just as Sherman ranged across the state, we will forage for our rations even if we do not destroy any railroads. We will have lunch in Milledgeville, follow Sherman to Sandersville, have dinner, and then a lecture on Camp Lawton, which we will visit on the 28th.

Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and hotel are included.

Today's itinerary covers the March from November 17 to 23, 1864.

Friday, January 28, 2022

8:15 AM. Sherman next targeted the railroad junction at Milledgeville. Its importance was based on several factors. Nearby was Camp Lawton, the Confederate military prison to which many of the Camp Sumter (Andersonville) internees had been transferred. In fact, while at Milledgeville, Sherman had directed Kilpatrick to organize a relief column for Andersonville. But as with all things logistical, it was the railroad junction that brought Sherman to Millen. Occupy Millen and communications would be cut between Augusta, Macon, and Savannah. Of course, once Sherman moved to Millen, he tipped his hand that Savannah was his objective—there was no other logical destination. Sherman arrived at Millen on December 3. The soldiers were inflamed to see the prison camp site, and while it was not Andersonville, the visceral anger common soldiers experienced seeing POW conditions did not augur well for southern communities in their path.

This morning we will visit the Brown house, which Sherman occupied after a brief firefight at Sandersville. Next in line will be Louisville, the first capital of Georgia. Here is the Market House, an antebellum structure that was a public assembly area and where enslaved people were auctioned off. Most notable near Louisville is the Ogeechee River—a formidable obstacle for marching forces. The rural nature of the area will let us ride in the literal footsteps of the Federal soldiers of Frank Blair's 17th Corps as they approached Midville, where they crossed the river. We will also visit Birdsville Plantation and Camp Lawton, where we will walk the grounds and detail the history of the prison camp. We will also make a stop at Big Buckhead Church, where Kilpatrick and Gen. Joe Wheeler's forces skirmished as Wheeler tried to gain intelligence about Sherman's march. As the day winds down, we will follow Sherman's route to Savannah, stopping at Ebenezer Creek as the Union Gen. Jefferson Davis continues to make his own Civil War history.

Breakfast, and lunch are included as are the next two nights hotel near Savannah.

Today we will have covered November 24 to December 10, 1864.

Saturday, January 29, 2021

8:30 AM. We have a slightly later start today and leave your bags in your room—we have another night here. Sherman's forces arrive on the outskirts of Savannah on December 10 and plan to invest the city. Gen. William Hardee has been assigned the task of defending Savannah, but in the face of some 60,000 Federal troops he has neither the manpower nor will to defend the city and risk its destruction. With the capture of Fort McAllister on December 13, Hardee's course was clear, and on December 20, under the

cover of darkness, he evacuated the city. On the 21st, Sherman welcomed the city officials to his lines to accept the surrender of the undefended city.

After the Federals took possession of the city, Sherman engaged in department administrivia and conducted a passive and conciliatory occupation. That was interrupted by the decision to turn north to support Grant and Meade in the coming spring campaign (and which will constitute parts 2 and 3 of this study series).

This morning we will go into Savannah to Sherman's headquarters at the Green-Meldrim House. A historical artifact from the War of 1812, Fort Jackson will be the next stop. Then we will head to Fort Pulaski—not so significant for the 1864 campaign, but a dramatic relic of the evolution of warfare in which brick forts were rendered obsolete. If you have never been, you will be awestruck at the decisive impact of rifled artillery. There is a lot to tell, and it is the main stop of the day. Our day concludes with Fort McAllister. Here in 15 minutes, the power of the Federal movement and the deteriorating firepower of the Confederacy were on full display. The fort withstood seven river assaults, but when faced with infantry, its garrison collapsed like a house of cards.

Hotel, breakfast, lunch, and dinner are included.

Today we will have covered the period from December 10 through late January, 1865.

Sunday, January 30, 2022

8:30 AM. Today we head back to Morrow, Georgia, and the hotel where we started. Having finished the March to the Sea and occupation of Savannah, Steve Wise will pick up the story in February from Beaufort, South Carolina, as Sherman moves through that state. If you fly into Atlanta, you may desire to avoid the road trip back and fly out of Savannah. With Southwest Airlines having opened operations there, you may find some very attractive one-way prices home.

To break up our return trip, we will have two historical stops. The first is Balls Ferry Crossing over the Oconee River. Here, Sherman's right wing was held up for three days by Confederates on the opposite bank whose commanding positions denied the Federals the opportunity to approach the river. But that the Confederates had the manpower to use the rivers like this elsewhere. This stop was out of the way going to Savannah, but a very pleasant option on the way back.

Our second and last stop on the tour is Jarrell Plantation, near Macon, which dates from 1847 and was maintained by the same family until 1974. It was a 600-acre cotton plantation that was worked by 42 enslaved people. Today the state historic site retains much of its character with building representative of the period. Breakfast and lunch are included, but we will release you to have dinner on your own or to get started home. The hotel is not included tonight, but you can make reservations should you wish to get a fresh start home on Monday.

About the Faculty:

John Derden is Professor Emeritus of History at East Georgia State College and is the author of the only full-length documented history of the Confederate military prison known as Camp Lawton. He has conducted tours related to Sherman's March for over 30 years. This will be his first tour for BGES. He will provide a Revolutionary War tour for us in December 2022.

Hotel Information:

Hotel information will be announced here in mid-December and will be sent to registrants prior to the event. Your hotel is included with the registration fee.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Atlanta (ATL) whose primary airlines are Delta and Southwest, although every major airline has some service there. Morrow is 15 minutes by car from the airport and is easily accessed by car. If you fly in, you have the option of flying out of Savannah on the 30th. I cannot adjust your registration fee, but you may find it easier if you are in a hurry to head home.

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 to this purchase but others you may make at other times. Thank you.

Anne Bailey: [*War and Ruin: William T. Sherman and the Savannah Campaign*](#)

Jack K. Bauer ed.: [*Soldiering: the Civil War Diary of Rice C. Bull, 123rd New York Volunteer Infantry*](#)

John Derden: [*The World's Largest Prison: The Story of Camp Lawton*](#)

Joseph Glatthaar: [*The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns*](#)

Henry Hitchcock: [*Marching with Sherman: Passages from the Letters and Campaign Diaries of Henry Hitchcock, Major and Assistant Adjutant General of Volunteers, November 1864-May 1865*](#)

Lee Kennett: [*Marching through Georgia: The story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman's Campaign*](#)

John Marszalek: [*Sherman, A Soldier's Passion for Order*](#)

Noah Trudeau: [*Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea*](#)

Registration Form

The March: Sherman's Legendary March to the Sea A BGES Civil War Field University Program Presented by John Derden January 26-30, 2022; from Morrow, Georgia

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes four breakfasts, four lunches, and three dinners; maps; the academic program; support of a professional historian; tour director; and transportation. We will also provide snacks and cold bottled water.

_____ Registration \$1400 single occupancy or \$1175 double occupancy

_____ Current BGES member \$1325 single or \$1100 double

_____ 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 memberships. Total enclosed is \$_____.

And (If applicable):

_____ I would like to plan to attend all three programs in the series. Please accept my additional deposit of \$600 per person. I understand I will receive a 25% discount on the 2023 culminating program off the full registration fee. If I do not attend the entire series, I will pay the appropriate rate for each program and expect that you will net out the amount paid against what is due and return the balance by check.

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 may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.