

**A BGES Premier Field University Program  
War on the Mississippi 1862  
The BGES' Signature Vicksburg Campaign  
Study, A New Part 1**

Presented by Brigadier General James Parker Hills, Ret.  
March 26-30, 2023, from Slidell, Louisiana

Fifteen years ago when BGES first conceptualized a comprehensive study of the Vicksburg Campaign we used Ed Bearss's seminal campaign study, **The Vicksburg Campaign** in three volumes as our foundational document. Now after three full presentations of the series, we have determined that a revision is necessary. Incorporating old scholarship, Ed Bearss' sixty year old book, **Rebel Victory at Vicksburg** and Timothy Smith's recent monograph **The Real Horse Soldiers** about Grierson's raid we have concluded the study should be 10 parts and 40 plus days over 5 years.

We proudly bring you our new part 1 based on Bearss's **Rebel Victory at Vicksburg** which brings the Federal navy into the Gulf of Mexico and up the Mississippi River to capture New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Natchez and make an effort at Vicksburg in cooperation with the Federal fleet moving down from Memphis. This study is inextricably tied to all the campaigning that follows and gives you a better understanding of both the Baton Rouge operations in 1862, Nathaniel Banks and indeed the entire Louisiana operation.

This program is all about context and when you are done you will understand the underbelly of operations that would eventually form a key marker for the operations against Vicksburg in 1863.

**Sunday, March 26, 2023**

5:00 PM. Check into the headquarters hotel in Slidell and get there in plenty of time. At 6:30 we will open the program with a two hour working supper that includes another of Parker Hills' brand-new-for-BGES PowerPoint lectures, "*War on the Mississippi 1862.*" Afterwards, Q & A will no doubt carry beyond the 15 minutes typically allocated for such dialogue.

## **Monday, March 27, 2023**

As the country spun apart in early 1861, New Orleans was the largest city in the South and the center of commerce that reached out to the world. Situated along the wide and fast flowing Mississippi River it received the country's larder from its farms and tributary waterways. Products in Ohio made their way to the Crescent City. The city was international and cosmopolitan. Consulates and international banking marketed the importance of the city, indeed a new customs house was being constructed along Canal Street near the wharves. Multiple shipyards existed to service existing demands and to build new tonnage to meet demand for imports and exports.

With a county about to go to war, the importance of New Orleans was overlooked by the Confederate government but the opportunity and indeed the significance of the commercial center was not lost on President Abraham Lincoln and in early 1861 when General in Chief Winfield Scott proposed an Anaconda Plan the waterways from New Orleans to the world were closed by a Federal warship. Soon plans were made to capture New Orleans and reopen the Mississippi River.

Today we will focus on the defense and battle for New Orleans. Fortifications and infrastructure will be highlights of the April 1862 battle—this will be an aggressive day that takes us to Fort Jackson south of New Orleans, to the old battleground at Chalmette and the various fortifications such as Forts Macomb, Pickens, Camp Parapet, and Fort St. John where a precursor of the submarine Hunley was tested known as the Pioneer, submarine efforts would continue near Mobile and Charleston later in the war. We will also show you where the City was surrendered and where Benjamin Butler hung the insolent William Mumford. Lunch will be included but dinner is on your own. There are some great places to eat and Bread pudding is a quest for many people.

## **Tuesday, March 28, 2023**

With the surrender of New Orleans and the arrival of the Federal infantry under Benjamin Butler, Farragut determined to chase the Confederate and state forces upriver. Having ascended the mighty Mississippi following the battle with his ocean-going vessels, Farragut found little resistance as he took the capital city of Baton Rouge and the residential community of Natchez, Mississippi. He then continued onward towards the town of Vicksburg stopping at the river town of Grand Gulf. The speed of this operation threatened to quickly cut the Confederacy in half less than 3 weeks from the battle for New Orleans.

This day will have us moving along the river to an overnight at Vicksburg. We will see the Pentagon Barracks near the Baton Rouge waterfront and see the impressive antebellum town of Natchez before visiting the now abandoned but important state park at Grand Gulf where BGES restored the 34 sign interpretative presentation back in 2018. Enjoying lunch on the road we will spend the next two nights in Vicksburg at the Hampton Inn.

### **Wednesday, March 29, 2023**

The great town of Vicksburg is not as impressive or important as it was in 1863. The river made a huge hairpin turn above the town and the alignment was well designed for defense by nature. Any would be river navigators would find themselves making a long run against the current along the waterfront that was bristling with artillery mounted on the hills above and at the waterline. Would be operations above the city would have to make a 180 degree hairpin turn with the current only to face the Confederate batteries along a mile of waterfront.

When Vicksburg refused to surrender to Farragut and challenged him to take the city the run off from the winter snow melts had passed and the level of the river hundreds of miles from the Gulf of Mexico began to fall. Farragut could stay only a month or so before he would have to move back downstream to protect his sea going vessels. The downriver successes would not be repeated in front of the defiant rebels at Vicksburg.

This day will focus on the arrival and operations of Farragut against the waterfront of Vicksburg. We will be taking a unique look that I cannot ever recall taking in countless trips to Vicksburg. We will visit the Federal anchorage and check out the Water Battery, the Marine Hospital Battery and the North and South Bluff Batteries.

With the failure to intimidate the Rebels into surrender, Farragut agreed to bring infantry support to the area under the command of General Williams. Later he agrees to bring some of Porter's gunboats to support the besieging fleet. Federal naval forces are brought from the North down the river under Commodore Davis bedding down a robust striking force. We will examine the collection areas where the Federals planned to reduce the defiant city.

### **Thursday, March 30, 2023**

History tells us that Farragut's bluster did not succeed. As the river levels fell the reality of the heavy fleet's weakness showed that there was not enough time or water to turn the heavy ordinance into overwhelming victory. An effort to isolate the garrison caused Williams to attempt to cut a canal across the peninsula the remains of which are part of the National Park Service holdings. As the water fell eventually the Federals withdrew. A unique and potentially devastating weapons system developed by the Rebels in the Yazoo River, an ironclad CSS Arkansas ran into the city passed the Federal fleet and then eventually made its way down to Baton Rouge before it was scuttled outside the occupied capital city.

As we load up to return to Slidell and endex, today we will travel to Yazoo City and follow the Arkansas to the docks at the Vicksburg Waterfront. The Federal focus on the destruction of Arkansas is emblematic of the failure of the Federals in front of Vicksburg in the Spring and summer of 1862. The Defiant Rebels have triumphed and are temporarily secure until William T. Sherman returns in late December.

Like Farragut after lunch we will withdraw from Vicksburg and return to Slidell where our program will end.

### **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 the Hampton Inn, 56460 Frank Pinchon Rd, Slidell, LA 70458. (985-726-9777 ) Your registration fee includes your hotel for the first two nights here and the two nights at the Hampton Inn Vicksburg. **Important Notes:** 1. The registration fee does not include the hotel on the get away night, if you need that night let us know and we will seek our negotiated fee for you 2. If you are an active BGES member you may opt out of the paid hotel portion of your registration and pay a reduced rate; however, you will be responsible for your own hotel reservations and transportation to and from the hotel in both Slidell and Vicksburg.

### **Transportation:**

**The servicing airport is New Orleans (MSY). You may also fly into Gulfport (GPT). NorthShore Airport Transportation offers shuttle service to and from the New Orleans Airport to Slidell—the rates start at \$100 one way and \$20 per person for extra riders. They also offer an option to and from Gulfport. Call 985-445-4544 or email [northshoreairporttransport@gmail.com](mailto:northshoreairporttransport@gmail.com)**  
You may also find rental cars useful.

**Recommended Reading:**

You will be provided with maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program.

Edwin C. Bearss: *Rebel Victory at Vicksburg*

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

Chester Hearn: *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie, Ben Butler in New Orleans*

Chester Hearn: *The Capture of New Orleans 1862*

Charles Dufour: *The Night the War Was Lost*

WA Spedale: *The Battle of Baton Rouge 1862*

**Registration Form**  
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Name:

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Address:

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City/State/Zip:

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

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

Registration includes four nights hotel, 4 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 \$1600 single or \_\_\_\_\_ \$1300 per person double occupancy

\_\_\_\_\_ Current BGES member \$1495 single or \_\_\_\_\_ \$1250 per person double occupancy

\_\_\_\_\_ Program only option for active BGES members \$895 (Please note that you must make and pay for your own hotel and make your own arrangements to get to and from those properties in Slidell and Vicksburg).

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 any memberships. Total enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_. I will pay the balance due before the event.

\_\_\_\_\_ Check enclosed.

Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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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](http://www.blueandgrayeducation.org).