

# **Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign Tour, Part 2**

*A BGES Civil War Field University Program*

**With Greg Mertz, Scott Patchan, and Phill Greenwalt  
September 17-September 22, 2024; from Richmond, VA**

## **Faculty Announcement:**

**For a number of years, we have been blessed to have historian, author, and attorney, Gordon Rhea, leading our Overland tours—he was scheduled to do this one, but in mid-May, Gordon was named Attorney General for the U.S. Virgin Islands and he is now unavailable. This gives us the chance to showcase new historians whose emphasis has been on aspects of the campaign—we think you will like the substitution.**

Early in 1864, Union General U.S. Grant had been placed in command of all military operations for the North with the rank of Lieutenant General. Grant devised his plan to bring the Confederacy to its knees and end the war by engaging the smaller Confederate forces simultaneously on multiple fronts that would attrit down the southern armies and prevent them from reinforcing each other.

Marching with the Federal Army of the Potomac, Grant met Lee in a bloody but indecisive series of battles at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania. Rather than retreat, Grant determined press Lee and pin him to his capital in Richmond.

Join us as we field three different historians over a 5 day period retracing the footsteps of the two armies as they move from Spotsylvania Courthouse, to Haw's Shop and Jericho Mills, across the North Anna River, then Cold Harbor, and across the James River to Bermuda Hundred and City Point and Drewery's Bluff, and then on to Petersburg. We will also visit Trevillian Station as we spend a day exploring the cavalry operations during this penultimate campaign to end the Civil War.

Tour veterans Greg Mertz and Scott Patchan will team with a new BGES historian, Phill Greenwalt. All three are accomplished and respected presenters.

Greg will be starting off our tour with an orientation on Tuesday evening, setting the stage for the week, and he will continue to lead us on Wednesday and Thursday from Spotsylvania to the North Anna River. On Friday, we will discover Trevillian Station and the cavalry operations with Scott Patchan. On Saturday and Sunday, Phill Greenwalt will take us on an in-depth study of Cold Harbor, and then carry us across the James River and on to Petersburg on our last day of the tour. This is a program we think brings new perspectives on this famous Civil War campaign. You won't want to miss it.

## **Tuesday, September 17, 2024**

Meet at 6 PM at the Holiday Inn Express Sandston (Richmond Airport) Greg Mertz will provide us with an orientation, introducing the campaign and the objectives of both sides. We will also point out the significant events that have occurred during the first half of the campaign, up to the point where our tour will resume the campaign. Dinner is on your own.

## **Wednesday, September 18, 2024**

Even though the May 12 fighting at the Bloody Angle marked the apex of the battle of Spotsylvania Court House that compelled Lee to re-engineer his lines, significant elements of the army continued to maneuver and fight until May 21, 1864. Federals tested the Confederate right in a battle at Spotsylvania's Myers Hill, preserved by the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT), where Federal army commander Gen. George G. Meade barely escaped capture. Some of the same Federal troops tramped back into ground inside of the park to test Confederate Gen. Richard S. Ewell's men to see if they were still unsteady on May 18 after having been overwhelmed on the morning of May 12; they were not. The battle for Lee's Last Line at Spotsylvania demonstrated that the Confederates had in two weeks of digging earthworks nearly perfected the art of building defensive works, handing the Federals a lopsided defeat. General in Chief U.S. Grant added some distinctive reinforcements to his army at Spotsylvania. Troops from Lee's Army of Northern Virginia engaged black troops for the first time at the battle of Alrich Farm when Gen. Thomas Rosser's cavalry clashed with the 23<sup>rd</sup> United States Colored Troops. Heavy Artillerymen fresh from the Washington defenses stood firm as a Confederate reconnaissance turned into an unexpected battle for the men of both sides at Harris Farm, another CVBT protected site.

We will then start on the road to North Anna, with stops at Massaponax Church, where the only known photographs of both Grant and Meade together were taken, the Motley House, where the owner accused Grant of trying to burn down his house with his cigar ashes, and Grant's visit to the site where Gen. T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson had died a year earlier. This day promises to be an action-packed start to your tour.

Lunch is included but dinner is on your own.

## **Thursday, September 19, 2024**

This morning, Mertz will pick up on the road to North Anna as we examine the Battles at OxFord and Jericho Mills. Grant hoped to draw Lee out of the Spotsylvania earthworks by dangling one of his corps far to the east. Not only did Lee not bite at the bait, but failures by Federal Gen. Benjamin Butler east of Richmond enabled the Confederates to send reinforcements to Lee. Ironically those reinforcements accidentally made contact with the detached Federal corps. Lee reached the dominating south bank of the North Anna River, as Federal troops poured across the North Anna River at two points some six miles apart – Chesterfield bridge (following a fight at Hennigan's Redoubt to the east, and Jericho Mills to the west.

As an ailing Lee considered his options, Lee's engineer Gen. Martin L. Smith proposed clinging to a high point on the river between the two Federal crossing points, and bending both flanks of the line back into an inverted V. Grant's forces were primed for destruction in detail. We will discuss why Lee was unable to spring the trap that the Federals had walked into. We will end the day visiting one or more cavalry sites related to the campaign, such as Haw's Shop.

Lunch is included but dinner is on your own.

### **Friday, September 20, 2024**

We start today with a new troop commander, Scott Patchan. We will head west to Trevillian Station, where Wade Hampton led the Confederate Cavalry to victory over Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, in the largest and bloodiest cavalry battle of the war. In doing so, Hampton and his men stopped Grant's effort to sever Lee's Army of Northern Virginia from the railroads and resources of the Shenandoah Valley. Grant had envisioned Sheridan destroying the railroad junctions at Gordonsville and Charlottesville and then crossing the Blue Ridge to operate in the Shenandoah with Gen. David Hunter who was departing from Staunton on a raid through Lexington and on to Lynchburg

At Trevillian Station we visit the ground where the battle began on June 11 and follow Custer's initial charge and his "first last stand" that might have brought him to ruin if not for the timely arrival of cavalry from Torbert's and Gregg's Divisions. We will examine the actions of June 11, which Sheridan he had been successful. However, Hampton turned the tide repelling numerous attacks on June 12, before launching a counterattack that drove Torbert's division from the field and forcing Sheridan to return to Grant army for succor.

After visiting the battlefield, we will travel westward to Gordonsville, the vital railroad junction that figured into several campaigns in Virginia. There we will see why it was important to both sides and visit the Exchange Hotel before heading back to Richmond to close the day.

Lunch is included but dinner is on your own.

### **Saturday, September 21, 2024**

Today welcomes Phill Greenwalt. After the engagements at North Anna, Grant disengaged from the lines facing Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Grant screens while Meade moves his army toward the Pamunkey River. Lee counters at Atlee's Station along the Virginia Central Railroad and orders Confederate cavalry under Major General Wade Hampton to find the enemy.

#### **Salem Church**

Maj. Gen. Hampton will engage the Federal cavalry screen as they try to find Meade's infantry. On May 28 they draw blood at Haw's Shop. Fighting for the vital Atlee Station Road will bring nine brigades into a four-hour engagement. Although the fighting provides no advantage to each other, the action does show the changing style of warfare now practiced by both sides. The

fighting that erupts here marks the bloodiest cavalry battle in the eastern theater since Brandy Station in June 1863.

### **Enon Church**

As the fighting grows, Hampton's line will spread perpendicular to the Atlee Station Road and west of Enon Church. Near the end of the fighting George Custer's Michigan Brigade will use the Atlee Station Road to advance behind the Confederate line. Hampton is forced to withdraw but his objective; gaining intelligence on the Federal's whereabouts is fulfilled. Lee will not try to interdict Grant's maneuver at a place called Totopotomoy Creek.

### **Totopotomoy Creek**

Although much of the Confederate position along Totopotomoy Creek is lost to development, the Federal approaches and trenches are preserved. This stretch was held by General Francis Barlow's Division of the II Corps. The 1670 home "Rural Plains" was occupied by Colonel Edwin Shelton, his wife, and six children when the Civil War broke out in 1861. Shelton is not present at the time of the battle, but his family remains during the fighting in 1864. Major General Winfield Hancock's command will use the property and the house as an observation tower which draws artillery fire on May 30.

Barlow's Division will capture the first line of Confederate defenses but cannot crack the main line. Their comrades, in the Federal V Corps try a turning movement at Bethesda Church on the Confederate right flank but are repulsed. Veaten but not deterred, the IX Corps will engage the center of the Confederate line in the area of Shady Grove Road but make no progress either. After the fighting of May 30, both sides will disengage moving to Cold Harbor.

### **Polegreen Church**

On May 31, Maj. Gen. Winfield Hancock's II Corps will come through the area. Hancock writes that his men "pushed up close to the enemy's line but owing to the unfavorable nature of the ground could effect nothing more." Southern sharpshooters utilized a structure near the church during the battle until Private Denton Lindley of the 106<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry rushed forward, under covering fire from his comrades of the 69<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania and torched the church.

### **Cold Harbor**

After lunch, the afternoon will be spent on the battlefields of Cold Harbor. This includes the engagement at Bethesda Church, along with Totopotomoy Creek fought on the last days of May 1864. Although much of the battlefield is lost to modernization and development, brief stops at historic markers will show some of the story, of where Lee's headquarters was, where the Confederate defenses were. We will also cover the ground of where General Jubal Early, now in charge of the Confederate Second Corps, launches attacks on May 30 and June 2. This latter action is part of the overall Battle of Cold Harbor. We will proceed first to the crossroads and newly preserved land and bring the armies to Cold Harbor.

Around the current location of the visitor center was where the Confederate established their defensive position after the action of May 31 and remained after repulsing the Federal advance on June 1. From the east Major General Horatio Wright's VI Corps advanced on June 3. The

Confederate line will extend four miles to the north and another 1.5 miles approximately to the south from our interpretative stop..

We will then drive the National Park Service tour road, stopping at the earthworks dug by units of Lieutenant General Richard Anderson's First Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. For the fateful Federal frontal assaults of June 3, notice the topography, the ravines will destroy the alignment of Federal infantry and funnel the blue clad soldiers into great fields of fire for the Confederates.

We will then cross to the high-water mark of the Federal advance on June 3, the most discussed day of the entire engagement. We will round out the day with a stop at the national cemetery and the Gathright House to discuss the days after the advance on June 3, the treatment of the wounded, the mindsets and strategic options available to both Grant and Lee, and end with the memorialization and preservation.

Lunch is included but dinner is on your own.

### **Sunday, September 22, 2024**

Grant has run out of real estate. After the engagements around Cold he contemplated his next move. Over six weeks, he had maneuvered and engaged Lee's Confederates from central Virginia to the gates of Richmond. Over 50,000 Federal soldiers had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. What was Grant's next move?

Grant could not retreat so he ordered Meade's to disengage from Cold Harbor and cross the James River. That waterway was approximately 2,000 feet wide and tidal—which allowed Confederate gunboats to maneuver. It was the barrier between Meade's forces and the Federal Army of the James under Butler. If Grant could combine these two armies and capture Petersburg before Lee's veterans could slip in between, Grant could sever Richmond from the rest of the Confederacy and quite possibly end the war.

This last day of the tour will be the pivot between the Overland Campaign and the beginning of the nine-month siege of Richmond and Petersburg. When the latter ended, in early April 1865, the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia had one week of survival left. We will start with a drive to and through the Deep Bottom battlefield of 1864 to the crossing site of the James by the Army of the Potomac on June 20, 1864.

After that, we will venture south of the James River to Drewery's Bluff, a vital part of the defenses of Richmond throughout the war. Rising 90 feet above the water, Federal gunboats could not elevate their guns high enough to return fire. Named for a local landowner and situated on a bend of the James River, the site was ideal for defense.

We will then explore a few portions of the Bermuda Hundred Campaign. Fought in May 1864 by the Army of the James, Confederate forces were able to repel Butler's advance, starting at the Battle of Port Walthall Junction on May 6-7, 1864. When Butler became "bottled up" between the James and Appomattox Rivers in late May, Beauregard was able to send valuable

reinforcements to Lee's army, still engaged around Cold Harbor. We will make a stop at Fort Stevens Historical Park..

Then we will go to City Point on the Appomattox River, this would become the logistical and command center of the Federal movement south of the James River and during the ensuing siege. Situated eight miles behind the Federal lines, Grant arrived on June 15 and established his headquarters on the lawn of Dr. Richard Eppes' plantation.

The final stop will be the main visitor center and portions of the siege lines preserved by Petersburg National Battlefield. A quick walk to one of the batteries gives insight into the type of armament arrayed by both sides during the nine-month standoff.

We will return to the hotel by 5 PM but can drop folks needing to catch a flight off no later than 4:30 PM.

### **About the Faculty:**

**Greg Mertz** is one of the BGES's senior historians, having done his first program for us in 1995. Since then, he has presented a range of eastern programs and most recently a study of Shiloh, his lifelong interest. Always prepared and ready to parlay with participants, he will make you think and come to your own conclusions. As a retired National Park Service historian, Greg was supervisory ranger for the Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania National Military Park. He oversaw the summer intern program in which he supervised college students and teachers during summer jobs. He is the author of *Attack at Daylight and Whip Them, The Battle of Shiloh April 6-7, 1862 (2017)*.

**Scott Patchan** is a graduate of James Madison University and the author of eight books. His latest work is *George Washington in the French and Indian War*. He authored six featured battle campaigns for *Blue and Gray Magazine's* "The General's Tour" and countless articles for other magazines and journals. Scott is a much sought-after tour guide for both Civil War and Revolutionary War sites from New York to Georgia. He brings a "boots- on-the-ground" approach to studying combat and strives to bring his students to seldom- seen spots that shed an illuminating light on events as they unfolded. People love his energetic and dynamic style. Scott is a member of the Board of Directors for the Blue and Gray Education Society.

**Phill Greenwalt** is a full-time contributor to Emerging Civil War and co-founder of *Emerging Revolutionary War* ([www.emergingrevolutionarywar.org](http://www.emergingrevolutionarywar.org)). Phill is currently the Acting Program Manager for the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail based out of Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland. Phill spent six years as a Supervisory Park Ranger at Everglades National Park after seven years as a historian with the National Park Service at George Washington Birthplace National Monument and Thomas Stone National Historic Site. He started with the National Park Service as a historical interpreter intern at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, where Greg Mertz hired and trained him. He has also had the honor to be on official details for the Sesquicentennial of the surrender at Appomattox Court House and the Bicentennial of the Battle of Fort McHenry and the writing of the Star-Spangled Banner. Phill is the co-author of *Bloody Autumn: The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, Hurricane from the*

*Heavens: The Battle of Cold Harbor, and Calamity in Carolina: The Battles of Aversboro and Bentonville* (all three with Daniel Davis). He has also contributed two books to the *Emerging Revolutionary War Series*. He authored *The Winter That Won the War, The Winter Encampment at Valley Forge 1777-1778* and with Rob Orrison, he co-authored *A Single Blow, The Battles of Lexington and Concord and the Start of the American Revolution*. Phill is currently completing a graduate degree in International Affairs and Global Leadership from Arizona State University. He also graduated from George Mason University with a M.A. in American History after attaining a B.A. in history from Wheeling Jesuit University.

**Hotel Information:**

This program will be headquartered at the Holiday Inn Express Sandston at the Richmond Airport, 491 International Center Dr., Sandston, VA 23150. The rate is \$129 plus tax. The block goes away on September 9, 2024. Call 804-222-1499. Tell them the group block is Blue and Gray Education to get the special rate. The hotel has an airport shuttle.

**Transportation:**

The servicing airport is Richmond International Airport (RIC). Richmond is serviced by AmTrak and is easily accessed by I-64 and I-295 as well as an express road Virginia 895 (toll road)

**Recommended Reading:**

You will receive maps and materials that will meet your onsite requirements. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program.

Gordon C. Rhea, *To the North Anna River, Grant and Lee, May 13-25, 1864*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, LA: 2000.

Eric Whittenberg, *Glory Enough for All, Sheridan's Second Raid and the Battle of Trevillian Station*, Brassey's, Washington, D.C.: 2001.

Daniel T. Davis and Phillip S. Greenwalt, *Hurricane from the Heavens: The Battle of Cold Harbor, May 26-June 5, 1864*, Savas Beatie Press, El Dorado Hills, CA: 2014

Gordon C. Rhea, *Cold Harbor, Grant and Lee, May 26-June 3, 1864*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, LA: 2002.

Ernest B. Furgurson, *Not War But Murder, Cold Harbor 1864*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY: 2000.

Gordon C. Rhea, *On to Petersburg, Grant and Lee, June 4-15, 1864*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, LA: 2017.

**Registration:**

This program includes the services of your historians, a tour director, 5 lunches, maps, appropriate transportation for the registration, and light refreshments and snacks.

**Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign Tour, Part 2**  
*A BGES Civil War Field University Program*  
**With Greg Mertz, Scott Patchan, and Phill Greenwalt**  
**September 17-September 22, 2024; from Richmond, VA**

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

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

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

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

Registration includes 5 lunches, all paid admissions, maps, the academic program, support of three professional historians and a tour director, and transportation by passenger bus or van. We will also provide snacks and bottled water.

\_\_\_\_\_ General Registration \$ 1,350

\_\_\_\_\_ Current BGES member \$ 1,280

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 membership donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (must be \$75 or more, which is tax-deductible; see [blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org) for levels).

\_\_\_\_\_ I am sending a deposit of \$500 per person Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. I will pay the balance due by September 16<sup>th</sup>..

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