

A BGES Civil War
Field University Program
**Rebel Legend, Stonewall Jackson Stuns the
Valley:**
Part 2: Front Royal to Port Republic
Presented by Gary Ecelbarger
May 29–June 1, 2024; from Harrisonburg, Virginia

From the very start, he was a legend. As a central figure in the first major battle of the war, Maj. Thomas Jonathan Jackson—a not-so-good teacher at the Virginia Military Institute—had overnight become “Stonewall,” and while he would have a very secretive and inexplicable problem in working with people, he was without doubt inspired with a warrior mentality that would overshadow any tactical flaws his battles might display.

Jackson had been given command of Confederate forces in the Shenandoah and Luray Valleys, and he accepted the independence and opportunity it presented. He mapped his command and moved subordinates to spots for reasons known only to him. When the governor of Virginia countermanded one of his orders, he resigned and threatened to go home. Assuaged and assured, he would not be so interfered with again!

In March 1862, Robert E. Lee looked for a distraction that might keep the Lincoln administration from moving its primary army against Richmond. He moved his army to the Peninsula to create a counter-value threat against the Federal Capital, and what emerged was Jackson’s 1862 Valley Campaign. It was an operation unlike any ever seen in modern military experience. Moving infantry like cavalry and with a speed and range that boggled minds, Jackson defeated multi-Federal forces and caused the Federal government to withhold large reinforcements from General McClellan. Today it remains a campaign that commands admiration.

Join us in the second part of this two-part study and see why (Part I took place in March 2023). Both programs complement each other but stand on their own.

Itinerary:

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

Meet at 6 p.m. at the Fairfield Inn in Harrisonburg to greet all the members of the program, as well as to pick up your nametags and handout packets. Gary Ecelbarger will recap the origins of the Valley Campaign and the earlier elements of it through McDowell and the impact of McClellan’s move against Richmond. A Q&A session will close the night.

Dinner is on your own.

Thursday, May 30, 2024

Jackson has a firm grasp of the Shenandoah and Luray Valleys. He has been to observation points within Massanutten Mountain and knows which roads he can maneuver with little or no shadowing by the enemy. Out the door at 8 a.m., we march on to New Market and cross through New Market Gap into the Luray Valley, where Jackson will strike at Front Royal. We will emphasize the Confederates who have the initiative. Stops will include White House Bridge, Hamburg, and Compton's Creek, where we discuss the mutiny of the 1st Maryland, and then Asbury Chapel. A young maiden, Belle Boyd, appears in Jackson's camp to provide timely intelligence about the Yankee deployments. Boyd will get around and is married in London, England, during the war.

While the "battle is brief," there are still many significant sites, and before lunch, we will look at the stubborn Union defense along Richardson's Hill and the dramatic denouement at Fairview on Cedarville Heights. We will then break for lunch.

The essence of the Valley Campaign is the seemingly boundless energy of Jackson and his "Foot Cavalry." After lunch, we will press the initiative with the actions at Middletown and Newtown on May 24 and the first battle of Winchester on May 25. You will appreciate Gary's meticulous tactical narrative of the actions and marvel at his political acumen as he dissects President Lincoln's Telegraph Office blunder on May 24 and how it may have altered the course and length of the Civil War.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Friday, May 31, 2024

While you might suspect that Jackson was the complete master of his actions, he was vulnerable to intelligence input received real time, and, departing at 8 a.m., we open today with his response to intelligence of another fight at Front Royal on May 30. Operating near Harper's Ferry, Jackson perceives he is vulnerable to being trapped by converging Federal forces, and he decides to head back "up" the Valley (heading south). We move on to get in Jackson's boots near Winchester, and head to Newtown, Middletown, and Strasburg as he escapes the closing federal pincers. Indeed, Lincoln's personal interest has affected Jackson's operation, and we will note and discuss how this escape affects Jackson's operations until June 9.

The famous names of the campaign are well known, but not every day resulted in a fight. As you will notice, there is a considerable amount of shoe leather that has to be burned to get to those memorable battlefields. After lunch, we will focus on the unheralded but critical days that made the campaign truly remarkable—June 2–6.

Jackson is not marching without opposition, and the Federals are nipping at his heels. We will follow Bayard's Brigade and their critical performance against Jackson's rear guard and stop to discuss at the site of a bridge over the North River that was burned and, perhaps, saved Jackson's army from complete destruction. Sadly, the day ends with the story of the death of Jackson's ambitious and aggressive cavalry commander, Turner Ashby. We will visit Chestnut Ridge in Harrisonburg to discuss the desperate fight that led to his death. The battle of Harrisonburg sets the stage for the unbelievable conclusion to the campaign.

Back to our hotel. Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Jackson's confident speed had Federals chasing him in both valleys, so the culmination of his campaign was destined and was rather spectacular. We will leave the hotel at 8 a.m. and follow one of his antagonists, James Shields. From Columbia Bridge, we will examine the plans of Shields and James Fremont's Mountain Department to trap and destroy Jackson's force. Departing from Columbia Bridge, we ride in the trail of Col. Samuel Carroll's force, which was on a special mission to raid Jackson's headquarters in Port Republic and perhaps capture the elusive Stonewall. History tells us that, of course, he didn't, but we will discuss the missed opportunity.

Lunch is a great time to digest what we have seen over the past two days, and if you made the program in March, to synthesize it with this faster paced period. We enter Jackson's realm for the final two battles and study the strategy, tactics, and implications of his lightning strikes against two cooperating but separate converging Union forces. The Battles of Cross Keys on June 8 and Port Republic on June 9 are remarkable for their audacity and effectiveness. We culminate at The Coaling—center point of the most severe fighting at the battle of Port Republic. On the crest, we will summarize the campaign and its impact on Richmond operations in 1862 and the great campaigns of world military history. It's a story and legend worth the time you will have devoted to it.

Return to the hotel. Lunch is included. If you are not already registered, take a look at Gary's Part 1, March 20-23*.

*You are not required to attend both parts, and each program stands on its own. But register for both and save \$150 on the pair. See the registration form.

About the Faculty

Gary Ecelbarger is an award-winning author of nine books relating to 19th-century personalities and events, as well as more than three dozen monographs, essays, and articles on Revolutionary War and Civil War-era topics. As a historian, symposium

speaker, and tour guide for the past 26 years, he has led his audiences through complex campaigns and prides himself on crafting well-researched, thought-provoking programs that maintain an intriguing, chronological flow and feature off-the-beaten-path historical sites.

Hotel Information

This program will be headquartered at the Fairfield Inn, Harrisonburg, VA, 1946 Medical Avenue (540-433-9333). We have a group rate of \$109 per night, plus tax. The Blue and Gray Education block expires on May 8. After that, higher rates may apply.

Click [here](#) for a hot link to online reservations.

Transportation

The servicing airports are Charlottesville (CHO), Weyers Cave (SHD), and Roanoke (ROA). This is an off-route location, and so options may be limited—Weyers Cave is the local airport serviced by American, with about two flights a day. Charlottesville has a few more options with American, Delta, and United all flying there. All will likely require a rental car to reach the hotel. Amtrak has limited service into Staunton, which is 23 miles from Harrisonburg.

Recommended Reading

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

Peter Cozzens: [*Shenandoah 1862, Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign*](#)

S.C. Gwynne: [*Rebel Yell: The Violence, Passion, and Redemption of Stonewall Jackson*](#)

Archie McDonald: [*Make Me a Map of the Valley: The Civil War Journal of Stonewall Jackson's Topographer*](#)

Donald C. Pfanz: [*Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life*](#)

Len Riedel, Ed.: [*The Civil War: A Traveler's Guide*](#)

Robert G. Tanner: [*Stonewall in the Valley: Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign, Spring 1862*](#)

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Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

This program includes the services of your historian, a tour director, 3 lunches, maps, appropriate transportation for the registration, and light refreshments and snacks.

_____ Current BGES member \$800

_____ BGES member Double Play (March 20–23 and May 29–June 1 programs) \$1,450

_____ Non-BGES member \$875

_____ Non-BGES member Double Play: Register me for both programs (March 20–23 and May 29–June 1) \$1,600

_____ 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* for levels).

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$300 per person plus any memberships. Net Due on or before March 28, 2024. Total enclosed is \$ _____. I will pay the balance due before the event.

_____ Check enclosed.

Charge my (circle one). MC VISA American Express Discover \$ _____

Exp: _____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____

Mail checks 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.