

A 2024 BGES Civil War Field University Program:
The Siege and Battles for Chattanooga
With David Powell
November 20-23, 2024; from Chattanooga, Tennessee

The Union Army had been routed from the fields along Chickamauga Creek, its commander reportedly walking in a daze like a duck knocked on its head. The greatest Confederate victory in the west was fresh and ready to be harvested like so much shocked corn. Rather than pursue the seriously wounded army, Bragg sat like a vulture in a tree waiting for its prey to die. The perches were formidable and practically impregnable. Essential supply lines were under the frowning glances of a ring of artillery that would sink any vessel ascending the Tennessee River from Moccasin Bend.

A tenuous and vulnerable supply line was at the mercy of Confederate cavalryman Joe Wheeler. The government had lost confidence in the swagger of Maj. Gen. Rosecrans and Charles Dana, a spy in Rosecrans's camp, sent the intelligence that would bring Gen. U.S. Grant to Chattanooga to relieve both Rosecrans and Ambrose Burnside who was under observation by Robert E. Lee's 1st Corps Commander, James Longstreet, who was on loan to Braxton Bragg's army.

What Grant did and how it worked is the focus of this companion program to historian David Powell's entrée last year at Chickamauga. There are very few historians alive or dead who can match Powell's mastery of operations in this theater. This program stands alone as the definitive presentation of the military operations in November 1863. The result of this operation: Grant is elevated to command of all the United States armies and promoted to lieutenant general, a rank not awarded since George Washington led the Continental Army.*

*Winfield Scott held the rank of Brevet Lieutenant General at the start of the Civil War.

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

Eat early. We will meet at the Fairfield Inn and Suites Hotel at 7 p.m. to meet and greet your fellow students. David Powell will follow with an opening power point lecture that overviews the antecedents and conduct of the Chattanooga Campaign.

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Depart the hotel at 8 a.m. Today we will review the landscape that has created the ensnaring Confederate trap that has shut off food to the Union Army of the Cumberland in Chattanooga. We will look at how deadly the Confederate cover is and the workarounds the Federals have created. Indeed, Grant will arrive to implement a plan to open a cracker barrel line that Rosecrans has conceived.

Our first stop at Cameron Hill is a splendid look from Chattanooga at the encircling terrain dominated by Lookout Mountain and the Missionary Ridge. This was a federal observation post during the autumn siege of Chattanooga. From there we will do an extensive walk of Moccasin Bend. This newly created National Archeological District provided an excellent platform for federal artillery protecting the Federal army in Chattanooga. We will finish the morning opening the Cracker Line at Brown's Tavern and Ferry. Here on October 27, federal forces occupied the landing, driving away Confederates and making it possible for supplies to flow into Chattanooga.

Following lunch, we head to Kelly's Ferry, which was the other end of the strategic transportation node that opened the cracker line. Confederates recognized the significance of the site but never held it in the numbers necessary to choke off federal supplies. Continuing with the strategic provisioning issue, we head to Running Water Gorge, where a massive bridge had been destroyed by Confederates passing into Georgia, but was rebuilt to support Grant's strengthening force. In cooperation with the operations to secure Brown's Ferry, Federals under Joe Hooker marched from Bridgeport, Alabama, via the Running Water Gorge into Lookout Valley. Here Hooker erred and left 1,500 troops under John Geary at Wauhatchie to cover the railroad. Confederates attacked and were only repulsed after reinforcements through the night bolstered Geary's depleted force. The Cracker Barrel Line was secure.

We will return to the hotel, where you can have dinner on your own. Lunch will have been provided.

Friday, November 22, 2024

We depart at 8 a.m. Perhaps the most impressive artwork of the war is the famous "Battle Above the Clouds" by James Walker. This is the perspective of the fight for Lookout Mountain that we will examine up close and personal. We head immediately for Lookout Park and the crest of Lookout Mountain. Words are inadequate to describe the dominance of the position and the sense of absolute mastery of all below, but it was an illusion as the assault up the hill by Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's Corps proved. The actual fight for control took place slightly below the crest on a plateau with a period house—The Craven House. Between these points, you will engage in a battle walk that reveals much of the strength of the position and yet its vulnerability.

Following lunch, the venue changes to the lower points within range of Missionary Ridge. We will start with the Union capture of Orchard Knob and its use as a key observation point. We will then examine how Grant wanted to take Bragg and the ridge. He intended to bring his protégé William Sherman secretly around to the northern end of Missionary Ridge, cross the Tennessee River, and have him sweep the Confederate line. Both Grant and Sherman misread the terrain, and we will finish the day on Billy Goat Hill—an eminence Sherman mistakenly assumed to be the northern edge of Missionary Ridge. In reality, it was a hill with a substantial ravine that needed to be transversed if Sherman was to hit Cleburne's Division.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Saturday, November 23, 2024

Again, we depart at 8 a.m. Our final day brings breathtaking military maneuvers and achievements. On this battlefield, major areas of operations are referred to as Reservations. After visiting the massive National Cemetery, which was a key jumping-off point for operations against Missionary Ridge, we will examine Thomas's orders to take the base of the ridge. We then learn how Thomas's men, inspired by their success, spontaneously and without orders surged to the crest of Missionary Ridge and broke the Confederate line, resulting in a panicky and uncontrolled evacuation of the area and a retreat to Dalton. As we follow the victorious Federals through Rossville Gap and Ringgold Gap, we will have seen the end of Braxton Bragg's tenure as the Commander of the Army of the Tennessee and will see the opening positions of the forces for the coming Spring 1864 campaign.

The consequences of the battles of Chattanooga are tremendous: Grant becomes general-in-chief and goes east. Sherman is given command of a three-army group that will take Atlanta 10 months later and secure Lincoln's re-election. Bragg will be replaced by Joseph E. Johnston, who will in the shadow of Atlanta be replaced by John Bell Hood. And James Longstreet, having failed his command audition, returns to Lee in Virginia in time for Grant's Overland Campaign.

Lunch is included. We will return to the hotel by 5 p.m., and you will be good to go.

About the Faculty

David Powell is one of the western theater's most engaging and prolific historians. A Virginia Military Institute graduate, he has produced a steady stream of comprehensive studies for Savas Beattie books. His study of the Chickamauga Campaign is already heralded as the standard by which that significant campaign will be evaluated. Most recently, Powell has tackled the Atlanta Campaign in a projected multi-volume study. He has also compiled a series of map studies that supplement his narrative studies. If you are lucky enough to own his different monographs, you will appreciate what a treat it is to be on the battlefield or in a bus with him. His mastery of the grounds, its commemoration, and analytic insight will leave you dramatically smarter than you were the first evening of the program.

Hotel Information

This program will be at the Fairfield Inn, 2345 Shallowford Village Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37421. We will stay there three nights and is not included in the registration fee. The rate is \$103 per night plus tax. Call 423-499-3800 and ask for the Blue and Gray Education Society rate.

The block goes away on October 30, 2024, leaving you vulnerable to paying rack rates or staying elsewhere.

Transportation

The servicing airport is Chattanooga (CHA), which is very small. Nashville (BNA) and Atlanta (ATL) require rental cars but may be more affordable for some despite the need to drive a rental car to and from. For people driving in, the hotel is convenient to Interstate 75.

Recommended Reading

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

Peter Cozzens: [*The Shipwreck of their Hopes*](#)

David Powell: [*The Chickamauga Campaign—Barren Victory: The Retreat into Chattanooga, the Confederate Pursuit, and the Aftermath of the Battle, September 21-October 20, 1863*](#)

David Powell: [*The Impulse of Victory, US Grant at Chattanooga*](#)

Brian Steel Wills: [*George Henry Thomas, As True as Steel*](#)

Steven Woodworth: [*Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga/Chattanooga Campaigns*](#)

Registration Form

The Siege and Battles for Chattanooga A 2024 BGES Civil War Field University Program

Presented by David Powell

November 20-23, 2024; from Chattanooga, Tennessee

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

_____ Registration \$875

_____ BGES active member \$795

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$300 per person and/or memberships.

Total enclosed is \$ _____. Net due on or before November 19, 2024.

_____ Check enclosed

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

Exp: _____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____

Mail to BGES Seminars, PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531; or fax credit card registrations to 434-432-0596. You may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.