

The Campaign for Mobile 1864-1865
A 2025 BGES Civil War Field University Program
Presented by Mike Bunn and Paul Brueske
From Mobile, Alabama; June 17-22, 2025

As Ulysses S. Grant took command of all Union armies, he focused on critical points sustaining the Confederate war effort, integrating operations against them into his overall plan. Of his grand design, only one objective—Mobile—failed to go as he intended. Instead, a useless and nearly disastrous operation up the Red River in Louisiana during the spring of 1864 delayed efforts to capture this final Confederate port on the Gulf of Mexico.

Meanwhile, as Sherman advanced, his forces encircled Atlanta in serpent-like coils until the city finally surrendered. Many believed that Mobile would be Sherman's next target, and, indeed, Sherman initially planned to strike Mobile after the fall of Atlanta. However, with Confederate general John Bell Hood threatening his supply lines in northwest Georgia and north Alabama, Sherman redirected his campaign toward Savannah. A different operation would close Mobile Bay from the sea in early August 1864. With the Confederacy teetering on collapse, final actions against the city of Mobile were delayed until the spring of 1865.

This special tour through the stunningly beautiful Mobile Bay region will cover in detail the 1864 and 1865 sea and land campaigns against Mobile. Guided by local experts and renowned historians Mike Bunn and Paul Brueske, we will explore these pivotal Civil War campaigns both by land and water, gaining unparalleled insight into their significance.

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Welcome to our headquarters hotel at 6 PM to meet our historians Mike Bunn and Paul Brueske as we prepare for this unique and interesting program. They will present a program titled "Introduction to the Mobile Campaign."

Dinner is on your own.

Like many locations, the area boasts some neat museums and sites that are not included in our tour but are worth exploring. Consider arriving early or staying late to visit the USS *Alabama* Battleship Memorial Park, home to the iconic Battleship USS *Alabama*, a World War II submarine, and a US Air Force B-52. Don't miss the Mobile Carnival Museum for a glimpse into the vibrant history of Mardi Gras. Additionally, you'll find excellent seafood restaurants along US 90, between Mobile and Spanish Fort, as well as near the hotel.

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Mobile sits at the head of Mobile Bay, which stretches roughly 30 miles from the city to the Gulf of Mexico. The bay's entrance was historically guarded by three fortifications: Fort Powell, which controlled access to the Mississippi Sound to the west; Fort Gaines, located on Dauphin Island at the center of the bay's mouth; and Fort Morgan, located at Mobile Point near the site of Fort Bowyer from the War of 1812.

Leaving the hotel at 8 AM, we will head first to Fort Gaines via the west side of Mobile Bay. This well-preserved and maintained fortification offers a fascinating glimpse into 19th-century coastal defense. Here we will explore the casemates and delve into the land-based operations that targeted this stronghold.

Following our time at Fort Gaines, we will spend 30 minutes looking at some related historical sites on Dauphin Island. From there, we'll board a ferry to cross Mobile Bay to Fort Morgan. During the scenic journey, we will discuss the Spanish Fleet's pivotal role during the Revolutionary War.

Following a fine lunch, we will tour Fort Morgan, focusing on the critical naval and land operations led by Admiral Farragut's fleet during and after the fort's siege.

From Fort Morgan, we'll head back toward our hotel, traveling along the east side of Mobile Bay. Along the way, we'll stop at Marlow's Ferry and the Confederate defenses southeast of the city. As we continue, we will trace Gen. E.R.S. Canby's movements through the charming historic towns of Point Clear, Montrose, Fairhope, and Daphne.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Thursday, June 19, 2025

For many years, Spanish Fort was considered completely lost to modern development until local historians recovered a significant earthwork and meticulously retraced some of the operations against this significant fortification.

Today, we leave the hotel at 8 AM to devote an entire and meaningful day discussing the battle of Spanish Fort and its dramatic siege, culminating in the fort's fall on April 8, 1865—just one day before Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Our morning will be fully filled as we delve into the Federal approaches, the defensive strategies, and the conditions faced by both sides leading to the final assault. Key stops include Deer Park, the Daphne Museum, Montrose Cemetery, Starke's Wharf, and Bayside Academy before breaking for lunch—of note will be the battle at the village and the skirmish at D'Olive Creek.

After lunch, we will continue with a comprehensive, seven-stand itinerary that will take you to Redoubt #2 at Fort McDermott; Redoubts 3 (Battery Blair) and 4 (Red Fort); then Redoubts 1 (Fort Signal Hill) and 5 (Sand Bag Battery). We will then close the day assaulting Spanish Fort from Union Battery #13, where the 6th Michigan launched its assault; and the Hoosier Battery (Union Battery #22). Spanish Fort is an example of a truly remarkable and significant reclamation of historic sites thought lost forever, and we

will have the privilege of seeing it through the eyes of the most knowledgeable historian and guide.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Friday, June 20, 2025

Departing the hotel at 8 AM, we will spend our morning at Fort Blakeley in Spanish Fort. With the fall of Spanish Fort, the campaign reached its climax on April 9, 1865, as the last Confederate fortifications east of Mobile crumbled—at the same time Lee was preparing to meet Grant. It is ironic that a war in which slaves and slavery were never far from the surface, the Civil War would end with a decisive military victory led by the United States Colored Troops (“USCT”).

Thanks to the dedicated work of Mike Bunn and his team, Spanish Fort has become a premier battlefield study and interpretative destination. The USCT earned a starring role, and we will tour the fort along the new USCT Heritage Trail. Following this, we have a special treat on the fort’s newly acquired tour boat—from the river; we will take a 90-minute cruise examining the eastern defenses from the water, revealing areas inaccessible by land and offering a deeper understanding of the battlefield.

We will conclude our explorations of Fort Blakeley before noon, proceeding to Stockton for lunch. From there, we’ll visit a key and emotionally important site from the Creek Indian War some 50 years earlier—Historic Fort Mims. Here, we will delve into the events of the tragic massacre of settlers that so inflamed the territory and propelled Andrew Jackson and his Tennesseans to fame, setting the stage for their destiny at the Battle of New Orleans in 1814–1815. On our way back to Spanish Fort, we will stop at Red Hill Spring and Cliff’s Landing—home to the Ghost Fleet Docks.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Saturday, June 21, 2025

Today, we depart the hotel at 8 AM to take a detailed look at Historic Mobile, guided by Paul Brueske, a seasoned expert who regularly conducts tours of the city. Paul’s expertise will provide an insider’s perspective as we visit Mobile’s most significant sites. Highlights include the cannon salvaged from Fort Powell near Dauphin Island, Admiral Semmes’ majestic and noble statue, the History Museum of Mobile, Fort Conde, Christ Church, and LeVert Hospital—all before lunch.

After lunch, we will head to Battle House and the Hunley Museum Construction Site (yes, the *H.L. Hunley* submarine that is being conserved in North Charleston) to see the site where the town magazine exploded. We will also visit historic Bienville Square. From there, we will walk to several sites for brief interpretations and photo ops that will include Father Ryan’s home (Poet of the Confederacy) and the Mardi Gras Museum.

Mounting up, we will do a windscreen tour of Civil War–era landmarks, including Barton Academy, the Semmes home, the Kennedy Home, the Beehive, and more.

We will finish our most excellent foray by driving to Magnolia Cemetery, the quiet and peaceful resting place of a number of Confederate soldiers, including the controversial General Braxton Bragg. The final stop is the adjacent National Cemetery, which holds the graves of a number of Union veterans and features one of the rare surviving remnants of the earthworks that ringed Mobile in 1865.

Sunday, June 22, 2025

Departing the hotel at 8 AM, we will today visit historic Pensacola, taking in several forts and sites in addition to the city following generally the outline below:

The day begins with a journey to downtown Pensacola, where we'll explore Fort Barrancas and the Advanced Redoubt, delving into their historical significance. From there, we'll visit several Revolutionary War sites, including Fort George, a British fortification that played a key role during the 1781 Siege of Pensacola; the Gálvez Statue, commemorating Bernardo de Gálvez, the Spanish general whose leadership was pivotal during the Revolutionary War; and the Colonial Archaeological Trail, which highlights Pensacola's colonial history. We'll also stop by Plaza de Luna, dedicated to Don Tristán de Luna, a Spanish explorer who established a short-lived settlement in Pensacola in 1559.

A delicious lunch awaits at McGuire's Irish Pub before heading to Fort Pickens for an in-depth tour of this iconic site. The day concludes with a return to Mobile.

You will be back at the hotel by 5 PM. Feel free to depart or have a peaceful night and leave at your leisure.

About the Faculty

Mike Bunn is the Director of the Fort Blakeley State Park. A former interpreter at Fort Morgan Historic Site, he is the author of several books, including [*Fourteenth Colony: The Forgotten Story of the Gulf Coast During America's Revolutionary Era*](#) and [*Civil War Eufala*](#); as well as being coauthor of [*Battle for the Southern Frontier: The Creek War and the War of 1812*](#). Mike has been a public historian for his entire career. He is a frequent speaker throughout Alabama and beyond and is an instructor on Civil War history for local continuing education programs.

Paul Brueske is a lifelong resident of the gulf area who became interested in the Civil War history of the Mobile Bay area, particularly the 1865 Campaign for Mobile. His first book, *The Last Siege*, is a result of his years of researching the subject. He founded and is the driving force of the Mobile Civil War Round Table, and from that has generated continuous buzz and interest in the historic sites in and around Mobile. He is the head track and field coach at the University of Southern Alabama and is a member of the

Friends of Historic Blakeley State Park, the Mobile Historical Society, and the Friends of the History Museum of Mobile. He is working on his graduate degree at the University of South Alabama.

Hotel Information

The headquarters hotel is Fairfield Inn & Suites, Mobile Daphne/Eastern Shore, 12000 Cypress Way, Spanish Fort, AL 36527; 251-370-1160. The rate per night is \$124 plus tax. You can call to make a reservation (be sure to ask for the Blue and Gray Group arriving on June 17, 2025, departing June 22, 2025); or make an online reservation by clicking:

[Book your group rate for Blue & Gray 2025](#)

Note that the cutoff date for reservations is May 25, 2025.

Transportation

The servicing airport is Mobile Regional Airport (MOB), 31 miles away. It is generally more expensive to fly into than, say, Pensacola Regional (PNS), which is serviced by Southwest Airlines; Pensacola International Airport is 52 miles away. Louis Armstrong New Orleans International (MSY) is a bit farther but is all interstate from the airport to Mobile, taking about two hours. The hotel is easily accessible just off I-10 east of Mobile.

Recommended Reading

You will be provided with a map and/or handouts upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program.

Arthur Bergeron: [*Confederate Mobile*](#)

Paul Brueske: [*The Last Siege, The Mobile Campaign, Alabama 1865*](#)

Jack Friend: [*West Wind, Flood Tide: The Battle of Mobile Bay*](#)

Phil Gottchaux: [*In Deadly Earnest: The History of the First Missouri Brigade*](#)

Chester Hearn: [*Mobile Bay and the Mobile Campaign*](#) and [*Admiral David Glasgow Farragut: The Civil War Years*](#)

Stephen Wise: [*Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War \(Studies in Maritime History\)*](#)

Registration Form
The Campaign for Mobile 1864-1865
A 2024 BGES Civil War Field University Program
Presented by Mike Bunn and Paul Brueske
From Mobile, Alabama; June 17-22, 2025

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes: breakfast at the hotel, four lunches, all paid admissions, boat and ferry passage, maps, the academic program, support of two professional historians, tour director, and transportation by mini-bus or van based upon registration. We will also provide snacks and bottled water.

_____ Registration \$1150

_____ Current BGES member \$1075

_____ 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 \$250 per person and/or memberships. Total enclosed is \$ _____. 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 card registrations to 434-432-0596. You may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.