

The Stones River Campaign

A BGES Field University Program

with Dan Masters

November 20–23, 2025; from Smyrna, TN

In the busy month of December 1862, as the Union suffered resounding defeats at Fredericksburg, Virginia, and along the steep banks of Vicksburg, Mississippi—including the failed Chickasaw Bayou expedition—newspapers in both the North and South carried headlines that alternately sank and lifted morale. Yet amid these high-profile battles, a less-publicized but arguably more significant campaign was unfolding in the heart of the conflict: middle Tennessee.

Federal Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans organized, equipped, and led what could be considered the nation's first modern army, the Army of the Cumberland, south from Nashville, Tennessee, to the railroad town of Murfreesboro, steadily tightening Union control over middle Tennessee and pushing deeper into the Confederacy heartland. In response, Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg moved his Army of Tennessee northward, preparing a surprise winter attack—an unusual choice, as 19th-century armies typically avoided major military operations in that season. Nevertheless, both sides remained highly active throughout December. Bragg's offensive initially met with success, but a determined and resilient defense by elements of Rosecrans' army ultimately turned the tide, securing a crucial Northern victory.

Now, in what promises to be an excellent tour, BGES is delighted to bring author, historian, and rising star Dan Masters to the battlefield at Stones River for an in-depth, three-day tour. We will cover the strategic approaches of both armies to Murfreesboro, the campaign plans of Rosecrans and Bragg, and the intense combat over two days of fighting along the banks of Stones River, a battle that would determine control of middle Tennessee and force one side to relinquish the region.

Author of *Hell by the Acre: A Narrative History of the Stones River Campaign* (Savas Beatie, 2024), Dan Masters brings keen new insights and newly uncovered primary sources to this pivotal engagement, allowing the voices of its participants to speak through his research and lectures. His critically acclaimed book, released in the summer of 2024, is packed with highly detailed maps, down to the regimental and brigade level, offering an unprecedented view of the battlefield.

Join us in July for this unparalleled study of the Stones River Campaign with Dan Masters!

Itinerary

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Meet-and-greet at the headquarters hotel at 6 p.m., where you will receive detailed handouts, including maps and primary source materials. Dan will lead an engaging orientation session, outlining the chronology of the campaign and providing an overview of the key sites and events we'll explore over the next three days in the field.

Dinner is on your own.

Friday, November 21, 2025: The Road to Murfreesboro

We will begin this morning at 8 a.m., following the approach marches of Rosecrans' Federal army as he leads them south from Nashville along a couple of routes.

Following lunch, we will reverse course and pick up Bragg's movements as he led his gray-clad forces north. Along the way, we will visit key preliminary engagements at Knob Gap, Triune, and LaVergne, before concluding our day at Harker's Crossing near the Stones River Battlefield

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Saturday, November 22, 2025: Hell by the Acre: The Fighting of December 31, 1862

Today, we will start on the battlefield's south end (TN96 and Gresham Lane) and work our way north with a granular approach that covers the first day's combat like no tour has ever done before.

As part of this unique tour, we will cover the fighting from 8 a.m. until about noon, when we stop for lunch, mirroring the same timeframe in which the soldiers fought.

After a lunch break, we will pick up the afternoon of fighting, once again aligning our study with the actual sequence of events.

We will end the day at the National Cemetery at 5 p.m.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Sunday, November 23, 2025: The Dramatic Close: Breckinridge's Attack and the Fighting of January 3rd

On our final day, we begin at Bragg's headquarters, where we will examine his critical decision to stand and fight. From there, we will explore the intense combat near McFadden's Ford.

Following lunch, we will discuss the aftermath of the battle and the final engagements on January 3 before concluding our journey at the Hazen Monument in the Round Forest. We'll return to our headquarters hotel, bringing our tour to a close.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

About the Faculty

Dan Masters

A graduate of the University of Toledo, Dan Masters is a dedicated Civil War historian and the descendant of five Union veterans. His passion for the conflict dates back to the late 1990s, and he has since written eleven books, numerous articles, and more than 940 blog posts, many focusing on the war's Western Theater. In addition to regularly writing on his blog, *Dan Masters' Civil War Chronicles*, he recently completed his eleventh book, *Hell by the Acre: A Narrative History of the*

Stones River Campaign, published by Savas Beatie in November 2024. Dan lives in Perrysburg, Ohio, with his wife, Amy, and four of their six children, while his eldest son serves in the U.S. Air Force. He works as a global planning manager for a leading specialty metals company.

Hotel Information

The headquarters hotel is Home2 Suites by Hilton, in Smyrna, Tennessee, 960 Colonnade Drive, Smyrna, Tennessee, 37167. Call 615-821-1550 for reservations and use the group code **BGE**; or use [this booking link](#). The rate is \$110 plus tax. Cutoff date for the block rate is Nov. 6, 2025.

Hilton Honors Members can add their number by signing in first and using the SIGN IN button at the top right of the home page.

Transportation

The servicing airport is Nashville International Airport (BNA). It is 15 miles to the hotel and is easily accessed by Doneson Pike, Harding Pl., and I-24.

Recommended Reading

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

Belcher, Dennis W. *The Cavalries at Stones River: An Analytical History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2017.

Cist, Henry M. *The Army of the Cumberland*. North Haven, CT: Castle Books, 2002 (Chapters 7-8).

Connelly, Thomas L. *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1971 (Chapters 1-4).

Cozzens, Peter. *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Gould, David and James B. Kennedy. *Memoirs of a Dutch Mud-Sill, the War Memories of John Henry Otto, Captain, Co. D, 21st Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regt.* Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2004.

Hess, Earl. *Braxton Bragg: The Most Hated Man in the Confederacy*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Lamers, William M. *The Edge of Glory: A Biography of General William S. Rosecrans*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.

Masters, Daniel. *Hell by the Acre: A Narrative History of the Stones River Campaign*. El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2024.

Watkins, Sam R. *Company Aytch, or a Side Show of the Big Show*. Nashville: TN: Turner Press, 2011.

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Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes three lunches, maps, the academic program, support of professional historian(s), tour director, and transportation. We will also provide snacks and cold bottled water.

_____ Current BGES member: \$825

_____ Non-BGES member: \$875

_____ 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).

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____ Other _____

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