

# THE STAFF RIDE

A Guide to Planning and Conducting Unit-level Staff Rides



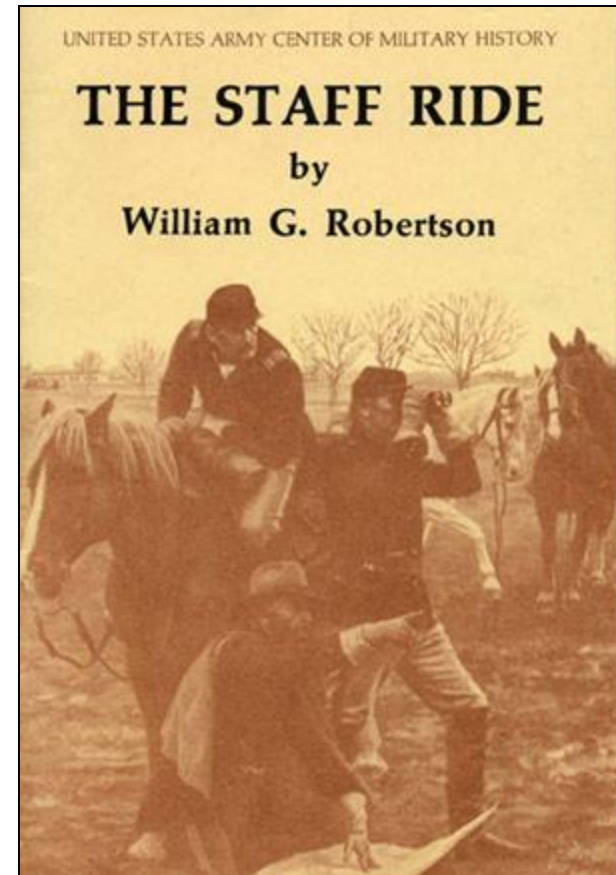
Combat Studies Institute

Staff Ride Team

# REFERENCE



The majority of the information contained in this guide comes from *The Staff Ride*, the US Army Center of Military History's guide to conducting staff rides. The CSI Staff Ride Team uses this pamphlet, and collected TTPs that are also included in this guide, in its execution of staff rides in support of the Army at large.



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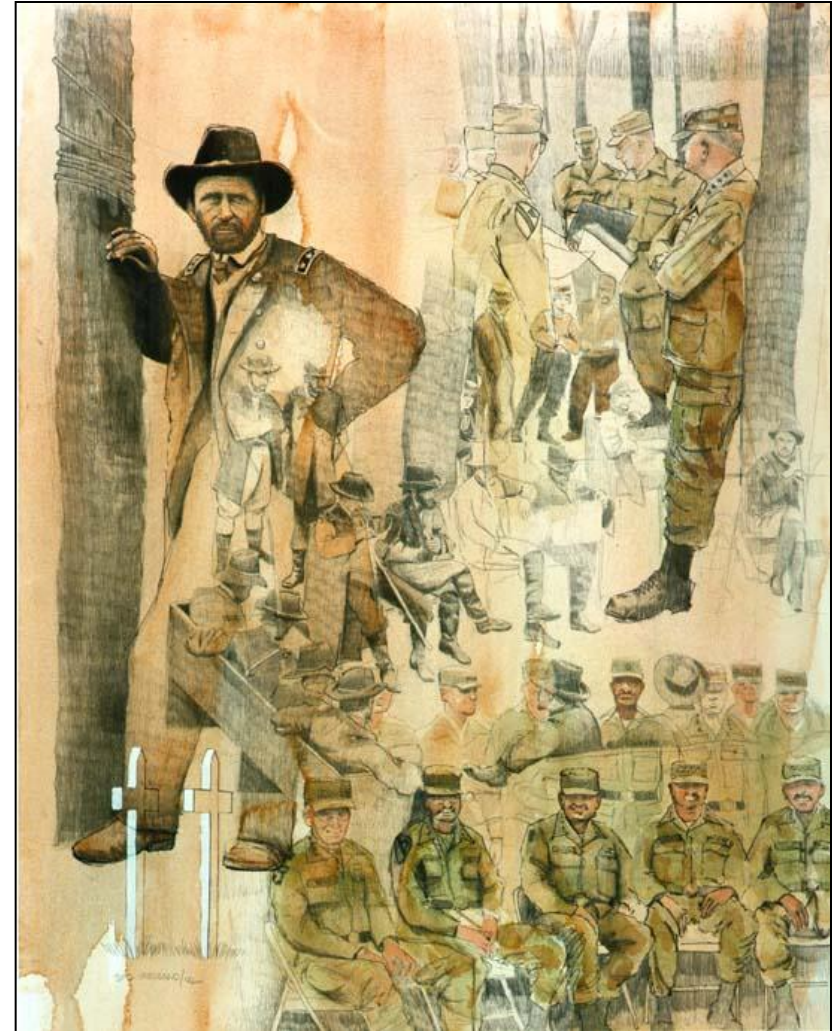


- Introduction
- Purpose and Objectives of a Staff Ride
- Foundations of a Staff Ride
- Instructor Team Requirements
- Site Selection
- Some Types of Staff Rides
- Phases of a Staff Ride
  - Preliminary Phase
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- Integration Phase
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# INTRODUCTION

- A *staff ride* is a historical study of a campaign or battle that envisions a systematic ***preliminary study phase***, an extensive ***field study phase*** on the actual historic site , and an ***integration phase*** to capture the lessons derived from each.
- It is far more expansive than a tour or tactical exercise without troops (TEWT).
- It is a time and resource intensive event requiring a level of planning associated with major training missions.
- Poorly done, it wastes Soldiers' time and taxpayer money.
- Well done, it is a powerful instrument for professional development and education of the Army's leaders.





# PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

- General Purpose:
  - *TO FURTHER THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF US ARMY LEADERS*
- Specific Objectives:
  - Expose students to the dynamics of battle
  - Show the human dimension – the “face of battle”
  - Provide case studies in the enduring principles of war
  - Provide case studies in combined arms operations
  - Show the relationship between technology and doctrine
  - Provide case studies in mission command and leadership
  - Provide case studies in unit cohesion
  - Show how sustainment affects operations
  - Show effects of terrain upon plans
  - Provide analytical framework for battle analysis
  - Encourage the study of US military history
  - Kindle interest in US Army heritage

# FOUNDATIONS OF A STAFF RIDE



- Maximum knowledge by the Instructor Team
- Maximum knowledge and involvement by the Soldiers
- Complete integration of the Preliminary Study Phase and the Field Study Phase



Indicating a skirmish line at Rosebud Creek



Discussing Lee's options before Gettysburg



Integration phase in the National Cemetery, Little Big Horn

# INSTRUCTOR TEAM REQUIREMENTS



- Know the relevant sources
- Understand the organizational, doctrinal, and chronological context
- Understand the operational context
- Know the biographical data on the principals
- Know the orders of battle
- Know the significant movements in chronological order
- Know the significant factors in the outcome of the campaign
- Know the terrain
- Understand current US Army doctrine and operational terms
- Know how to interpret the campaign in terms of current doctrine
- Constantly assess student knowledge and interest levels to maintain student involvement
- Constantly refine the exercise





# SITE SELECTION

- Organization budget
- Proximity to Home Station
- Echelon of command engaged
- Type of terrain
- Type of units engaged
- Integrity of historical setting
- Availability of reference sources
- Availability of logistical support





# SITE SELECTION

## Example – US Civil War Internet Search Engine Tool



### Battlefields of Kansas CWSAC Inventory

- ★ Class A Decisive
- ▲ Class B Major
- Class C/D Other Principal

**FORT LEAVENWORTH**

**FORT RILEY**

Lawrence KS001

Marais de Cygnes KS 004

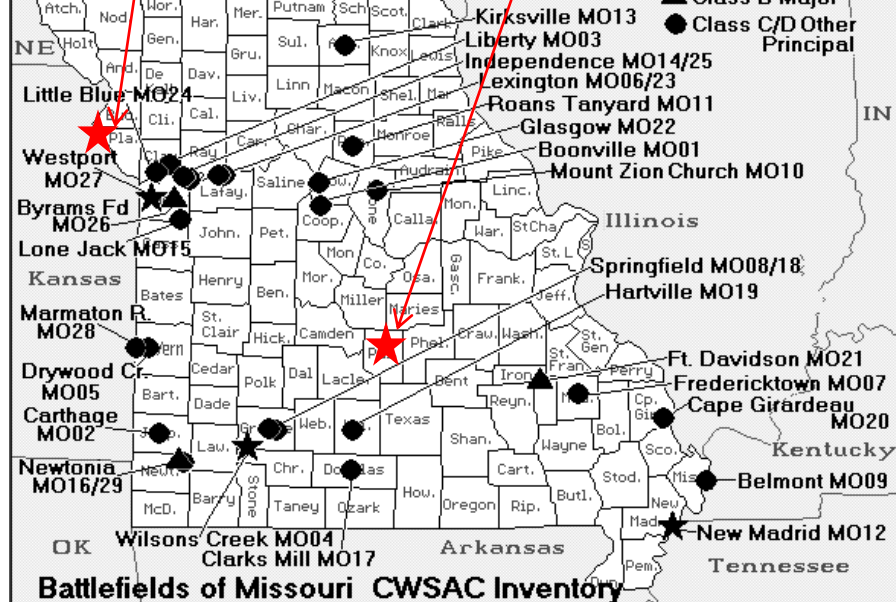
Mine Creek KS003

Baxter Springs KS002

**FORT LEAVENWORTH**

**FORT LEONARD WOOD**

- ★ Class A Decisive
- ▲ Class B Major
- Class C/D Other Principal



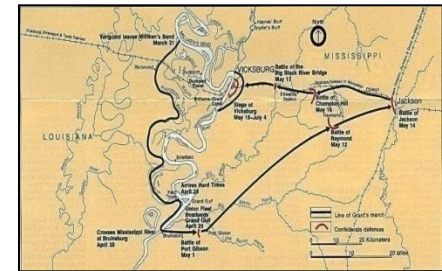
# SOME TYPES OF STAFF RIDES



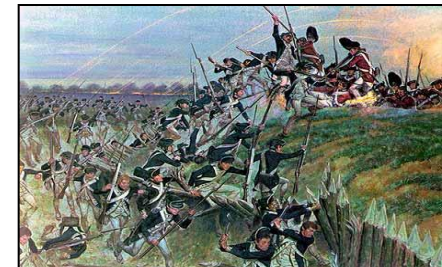
- Battle (Tactical level)
- Campaign (Operational-level)
- Siege
- Evolution of technology and doctrine
- Peacekeeping/Disaster Relief
- Exploration



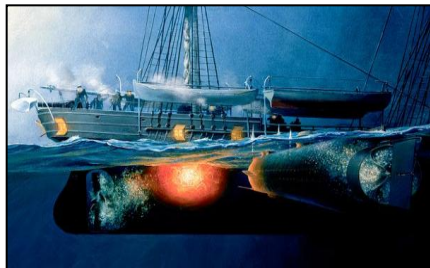
Battle New Orleans



Vicksburg Campaign



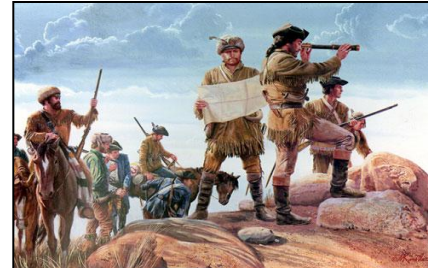
Siege of Yorktown



Employing the Hunley, Charleston



Hurricane Katrina Relief



Lewis and Clark



# PHASES OF A STAFF RIDE

- Preliminary Study Phase
  - This phase that consists of the selection and study of historical references dedicated to a specific historical event, and group discussion of key points, in order to prepare the individual and unit for its visit to the actual terrain of the battle or campaign.
- Field Study Phase
  - This phase incorporates and continues the efforts of the preliminary phase of the historical event by placing the unit on the actual terrain and expanding upon their knowledge and analysis of the significance of the events across the terrain.
- Integration Phase
  - This phase consists of a formal or informal opportunity for individuals and the unit to reflect upon their collective staff ride experience, combining the preliminary and field study experience, in an effort to analyze the terrain's effects and the possible enduring lessons that can be drawn from the event in a contemporary context.



Preliminary Study in the classroom



Field Study Phase at Gettysburg



Integration Phase at Westport, KS





# PRELIMINARY STUDY PHASE

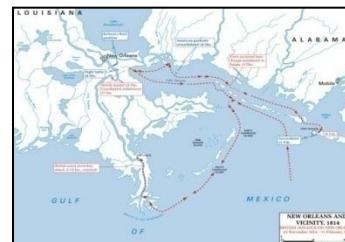
- Individuals must understand the purpose of the exercise
- Individuals must become actively involved
- Individuals must acquire the basic knowledge:
  - Organizations, strength, armament, doctrine
  - Biographical data on leaders
  - Weapons characteristics
  - Terrain and climatic considerations
  - General outline and chronology of events
- Individuals must acquire an intellectual perception of the campaign



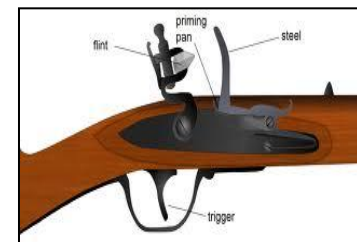
Joshua Lawrence  
Chamberlain



Battle of Westport  
task organization



New Orleans  
Campaign (1814-15)

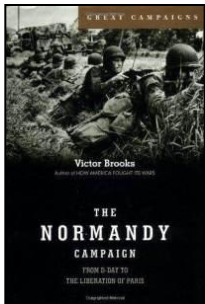


Flintlock Musket

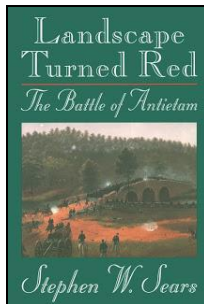


# SOURCES

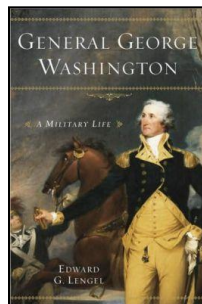
- Secondary Sources
  - *Sources of information that were created later by someone who did not experience first-hand or participate in the events or conditions being researched.*
    - Most useful in establishing an initial mental framework
    - Can provide the “big picture” and tie primary source information together
    - Provides a wide spectrum of subject matters to support research needs (personality, tactics, strategy, technology)



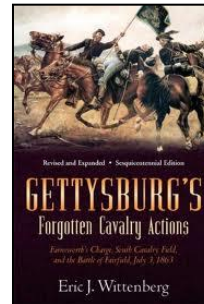
Campaign



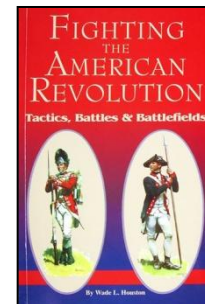
Battle



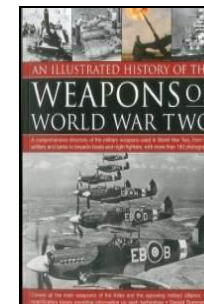
Biography



Branches



Doctrine



Weapons

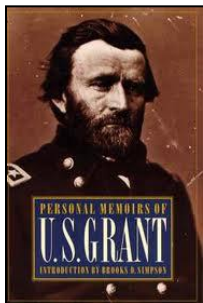


Magazine

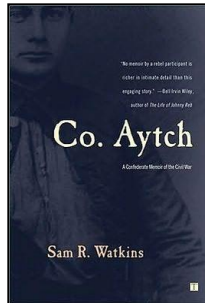


# SOURCES

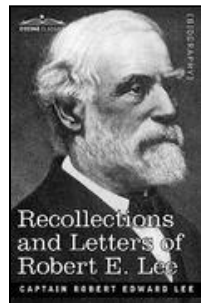
- Primary Sources
  - *Sources of information that provide first-hand accounts of the events, practices, or conditions being researched.*
    - Rich in detail and nuances of the period
    - Provide sense of “how things were”
    - Reveal key aspects of a character’s personality, thought process, and interaction with others



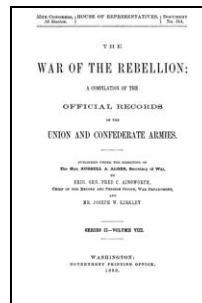
Leader  
Memoir



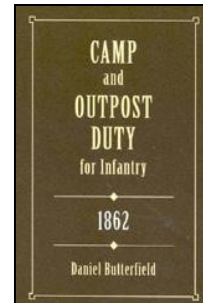
Soldier  
Memoir



Letters



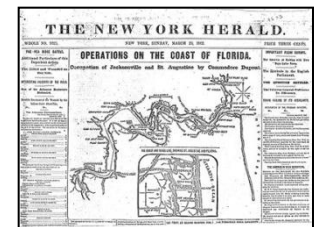
Official  
Reports



Manuals



Operations  
Order



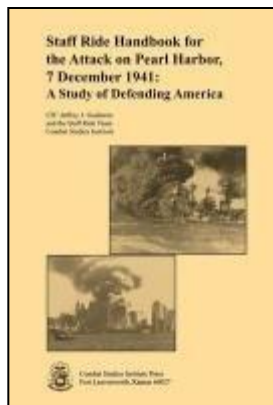
Newspaper



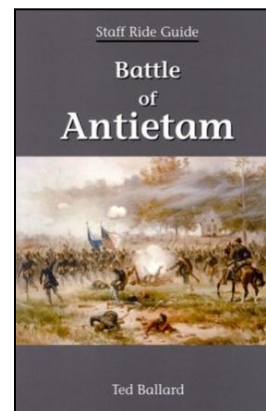
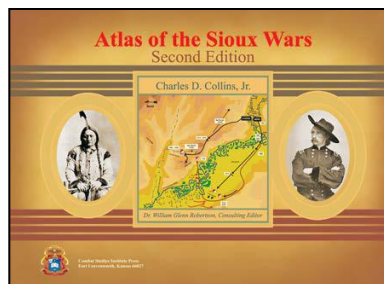
# STAFF RIDE HANDBOOKS/GUIDES



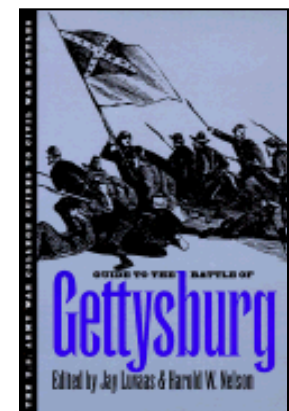
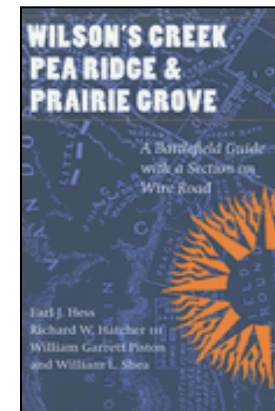
- CSI staff ride handbook collection (request or download)
- Center of Military History (CMH) staff ride guides (request or download)
- Comparable commercial products available for purchase in stores or online



CSI Staff Ride Handbook and Atlas



CMH Guide

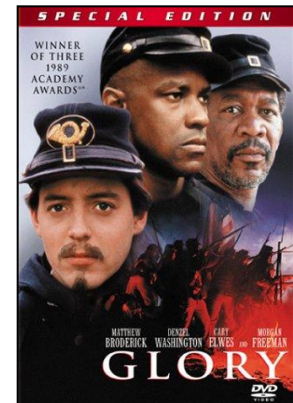
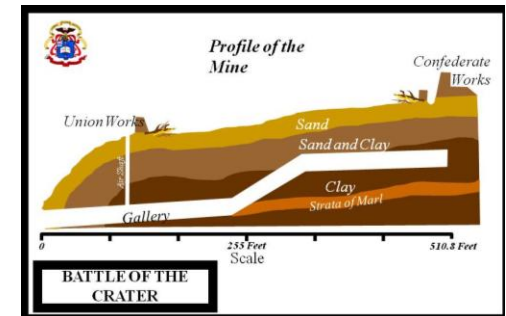
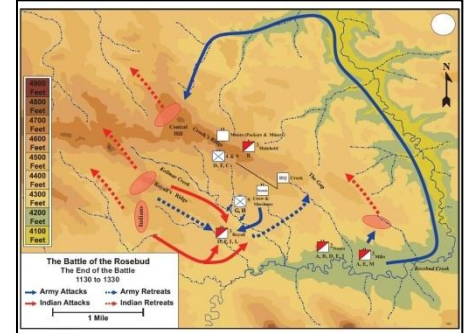


Commercial Staff Ride Guides

# TRAINING AIDS



- Maps
- Photographs
- Paintings, drawings, diagrams
- Movies
- Digital recordings
- Artifacts
- Terrain boards



# FIELD STUDY PHASE PLANNING



- Visit all significant sites
- Visit sites in chronological order (when possible)
- Avoid backtracking (when possible)
- Have purpose for stops
- Be flexible to permit unplanned stops
- Link sources to specific sites
- Traverse route on foot, if possible
- Ease of access not only consideration
- Obtain easements
- Prepare alternate routes
- Check routes carefully before each ride



The Bloody Angle at Gettysburg



The Devil's Den at Gettysburg



Walking the battlefield at Rosebud Creek



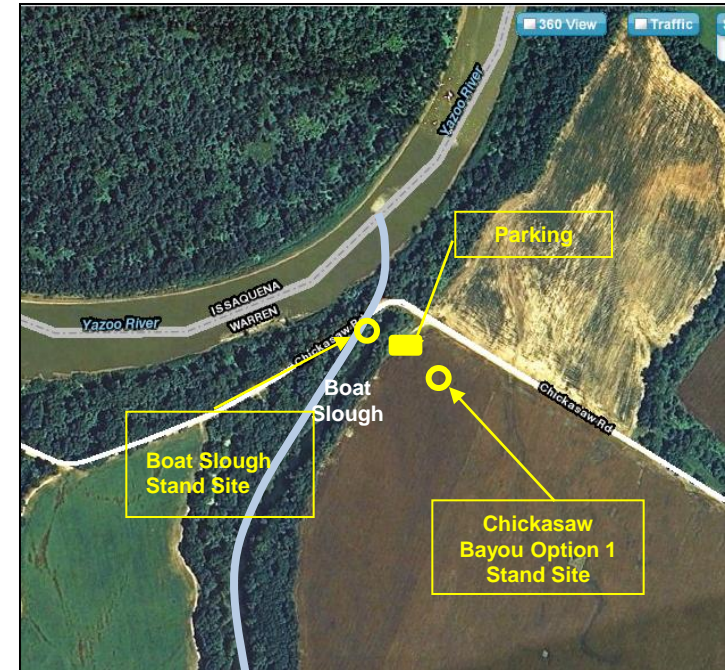
Moving off the beaten path at Gettysburg





# RECONNAISSANCE

- Like all military operations, a deliberate and thorough reconnaissance is critical.
- A good reconnaissance saves time and mitigates possible friction points (getting lost, construction, etc).
- Reconnaissance should take place when developing the staff ride to confirm the plan and just before the execution to make adjustments.
- Weather effects on terrain should always be considered (GO/NO-GO terrain for vehicle and foot).



Maps to support conduct of a staff ride



Verifying routes



Battlefield park maps



Standard driving maps

# FIELD STUDY PHASE

## SUSTAINMENT PLANNING



- Critical to success
- Should not distract from educational process
- Must mesh with Field Study Phase
- Essentials: Transportation, Lodging, Meals



Transportation



Lodging



Meals



# FIELD STUDY PHASE

## GROUND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



- Getting to the site of a staff ride and then transitioning from stands is a critical task.
- Units predominantly attempt to conduct staff rides as close to home station as possible.
- Three factors drive the selection vehicles
  - Group size
  - Location, access to, and terrain around sites visited
  - Available funding



National Battlefield Parks and equally accessible locations



Back road and off road locations



# FIELD STUDY PHASE EXECUTION



- Maintain student involvement
- Maintain student orientation
- Use vignettes
- Stimulate student discussion
- Use PA system on the bus
- Use training aids
- Keep the Instructor/Student ratio low
- Maintain a steady pace
- Be prepared for bad weather



Student interaction



Instructor/Student ratio



Keeping up a steady pace

# FIELD STUDY PHASE

## CONDUCT

### Utilizing Training Aids



- Training aids extend their value from the Preliminary to the Field Study phase.
- They can be visuals (maps, diagrams), student hand outs, battlefield displays, etc.
- Visuals must be easily transportable by vehicle and foot and large enough to be seen by the entire group at a stand.
- Student hand outs can be utilized as copies of instructor visuals or supplemental information.
- Some sites offer such aids as artillery pieces, restored vehicles, and excellent museum displays.



Utilizing a visual (map),  
Gettysburg



Utilizing a visual aid (map),  
atlas, and hand outs along the  
Tongue River



Explaining a howitzer at  
Gettysburg



Remains of the USS Cairo,  
Vicksburg

# FIELD STUDY PHASE

## CONDUCT

### Utilizing Vignettes at Monuments



- Monuments can be tricky training aids because they are erroneous locations or not within the staff ride sequence.
- However, properly placed monuments and those not depicting a approximate position can support a brief stop between walking stands or a single stand itself based on the vignette.
- Monuments should be tied directly to the vignette, the locations, and the moment without breaking the staff ride's sequence.



The story of the death of Brig Gen Benjamin Hardin Helm at his monument at Chickamauga



The story of Father Corby at his statue at Gettysburg



# FIELD STUDY PHASE

## CONDUCT

### Utilizing Key Terrain for a Dramatic View



- Military operations and staff ride predominantly share the same key terrain.
- In some cases the key terrain provides a dramatic view that can be exploited during a staff ride.
- These locations are well suited for an initial stage setting stand with the “big picture” and transition to the site.



The view of Chattanooga from Lookout Mountain



Packers and Miners Rock, Rosebud Creek

# FIELD STUDY PHASE

## CONDUCT

### Illustrating Period Doctrine



- Doctrine is a theme tightly interwoven throughout a staff ride to understand a key aspect of conditions face by Soldiers.
- Understanding doctrine begins during the Preliminary Study phase.
- Once on the actual ground individuals can form into small formations, adhering to the tactical doctrine of the given period.
- Seeing the battlefield as a Soldier “in the ranks” moving and maneuvering through the terrain is critical in understanding decisions and actions taken by those in the event.



Illustrating infantry in line before walking Pickett's  
Assault, Gettysburg



Illustrating cavalry on line, Rosebud Creek

# FIELD STUDY PHASE

## CONDUCT

### Distractions



- Distractions consume valuable time on the ground during execution and degrade the level of audience participation and understanding.
- However, sometimes distractions must be mitigated in a variety of ways because of the site's importance to the overall staff ride.



Trains



Vehicle traffic



Interested onlookers



Park markers en route to a stand



Re-enactors and audience





# INTEGRATION PHASE

- An opportunity to pause and reflect upon the meaning of the exercise
- Can be conducted on the ground at the end of the staff ride or at local indoor venues in an informal environment
- Permits integration of perceptions from previous phases
- Provides an opportunity to crystallize perceptions and organize them
- Generates additional insights through group discussion—the “so what?”
- Focuses on two instructor questions:
  - How does seeing the terrain enhance your previous understanding of the battle/campaign?
  - What enduring insights can be gained from the battle/campaign can still be of use today?
- Sparks continued discussion and education at home station



National Cemetery, Gettysburg



Off site location following the final stand

# VIRTUAL STAFF RIDES (VSR)

- A *virtual staff ride (VSR) follows the same methodology as a field staff ride*, but because travel restrictions preclude a trip to battlefield sites, the terrain is ***replicated in a virtual environment in the classroom***.
- See the CSI Staff Ride Team's VSR overview on our website at <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/CSI/SRTeam.asp>



Setting the stage during the Wanat VSR



Integrating 3D imagery with contemporary materials during the Wanat VSR

# CONCLUSION



- A well developed and executed staff ride is a powerful tool in the advancement of leader development and education.
- However, a great deal of individual and collective work must go into the preparation in order to properly leverage that power.
- Staff rides should be planned and executed like all unit training events.
- The entire process, from beginning to end, offers a great opportunity for Soldiers to:
  - Expand their personal intellectual capacity
  - Relate military history to contemporary issues
  - Increase unit cohesion by sharing in the collective staff ride experience
- The true benefit of a staff ride is participants taking the positive experience with them throughout the rest of their career and passing it on to the next unit or generation of leaders.



*The past is prologue!*

