



Dave Chuber USAES Command Historian

"Learning from the Past"

Staff Ride Discoveries in Leadership

USAES COMMAND HISTORIAN offers high-impact Leader Professional Development for Engineer units and government organizations using historic events as training vehicles.

We design our seminars, tours, and training materials to be relevant to your unit's leadership training and organizational development programs. Our historic leader training and tours can complement the curriculum of your professional development programs or serve as a team building event for your staff.



Educational and Training Objectives

USAES COMMAND HISTORIAN works with the unit to use a rich and engaging battlefield experience to address unique educational objectives. Examples include:

- Leadership implications of a rapidly changing environment: how to “create the reality” in an intense, fast paced environment affected by factors beyond the control of the participants.
- Creating conditions for success for your unit.
- Building and sustaining leadership teams.
- Leveraging the power of technological change.
- Understanding the impact of chance and the unexpected.
- Understanding the role of people at every level in an organization and the relative power of individual leaders.
- Communicating and understanding intent; establishing expectations and organizational alignment.

During the staff ride, the group reviews the issues associated with the specified objectives then draws parallels with its own circumstances and experiences. In the course of exploring how historical figures dealt with the challenges thrust upon them and achieved success or failure, the group discovers timeless lessons about leadership.

Staff ride programs are customized to meet your unit’s needs. Our themes and potential benefits to your unit’s participation in a historical leader staff ride include:

- Junior, mid-level, and senior leader development
- Team building
- Management education
- Organizational improvement
- Employee creativity
- Corporate staff training
- Competitive intelligence
- Decision making and risk management
- Change management
- Workplace interpersonal communications
- Strategic planning
- Succession planning

Military Staff Ride

More than a century ago, armies began visiting old battlefields with leaders, staff members, and facilitators to analyze decisions and their consequences. These excursions helped leaders build a team with their staffs by giving them a shared experience focused on the problems encountered in actual battle. The method was expanded to military students in advanced military science schools so that they could think about future battle challenges and contemporary solutions within the context of significant historical events. Later, the training method was applied to very senior civilian leaders who shaped and directed military capabilities but had little military experience. Success with those audiences led to using the method with senior executives who were interested in building stronger teams and promoting leadership qualities within those teams.

The military "staff ride" is used today for specialized military and historical groups. In this type of training we recognize that:

- History is important and we want to "get it right," **but it is only a vehicle for discussion of contemporary concerns.**
- The "staff ride" format is a seminar where participants share views on a broad range of contemporary issues relevant to the unit in a historical setting.
- The team building that results from such an intellectual adventure is often as important as the substantive content of that adventure.

Senior leaders have discovered that staff ride programs are a powerful tool to see their own organization more clearly. They can reflect on their units' vision, values, and strategy; and to think about how to make their vision reality, how to inspire and motivate, and how to foster innovation and growth.

The USAES Historian's intent is to assist each participant to reflect on his or her development as a leader: to help him or her envision effective action, articulate clear and timely instructions, evaluate and develop his or her team, progress from theory to practice, and understand and live with the consequences of decisions.

The Battlefield as a Source for Metaphors

One could examine Napoleon at Waterloo, Eisenhower in Normandy, or any number of other battles and leaders in the U.S. and abroad to study leadership, but the value of the learning experience depends in large measure on the quality of the battlefield sites and the degree to which they have been preserved for study. We are fortunate that there are a number of American Revolution, Civil War and Indian Wars battlefields in which the state of preservation and historical nature of the event lends themselves to staff rides. Battlefields offer superb settings to discuss the following key points:

- Leadership. We find that all of the issues that we confront as leaders are, in some way or another, reflected in those battles: seeing the future and communicating a vision, synchronizing operations, articulating and communicating intent, dealing with “higher headquarters,” interpersonal relationships, use of time, taking risk, resolution, flexibility – the list goes on. Most important, we see the power of individuals, not only men like Washington, Andrew Jackson, Grant, Lee, Patton, and others, whose names we know but also sergeants and junior officers who took initiative, seized responsibility, grasped opportunity, and made a difference to influence the outcome of an engagement. In addition, we can also see the manifestation of organizational learning and how an organization shares critical lessons as it discovers its future.
- Technology. Many conflicts either take place because of or spur technology transition. Consequently, we can draw on the historical experience to better understand the difficulty of making change and the power of a successful transformation during a technological revolution.
- Scale. In the 18th and 19th centuries, warfare remained relatively simple as compared to the complex, expansive undertakings that have characterized struggles of the 20th Century. Battles were generally fought in small geographic settings. Consequently, contemporary observers possessing only basic knowledge of history are able to discern key points of interest. They can visualize the human drama on those tiny battlefields and grasp the context for the decisions that were made in terms of what went right and what went wrong, and why.
- Knowledge. Today we know more about our past than the people who participated in it. We can see and understand the big picture. The soldiers who clashed left diaries, letters and memoirs.

Generations of scholars have mined this mother lode to provide penetrating assessments of the combatants and of the people and their society. Armed with this information, students are able to analyze the actions of individual leaders and the performance of their organizations.

- Values. Finally, the battlefields are, as Lincoln said, hallowed ground. The warriors of both sides struggled and sacrificed for values and ideals they held more dearly than life itself. Standing where these leaders issued their orders and fought deadly engagements and thinking about their decisions is all together different than sitting in a classroom pondering over a case study or listening to a lecture. **The historic Staff Ride is an interactive leadership laboratory.**

Our Instructors / Facilitators

USAES Historians are experts on education, leadership, training, and history. We are prepared to assist the unit in designing a tailored training program and to lead discussions at any location or battlefield. Each of our instructors is a seasoned teacher, leader, and manager. Each is highly knowledgeable of the area selected for the staff ride.

Staff Ride Options ****Are Flagship Programs****

We generally recommend Civil War and Revolutionary War battlefields. For a unit located outside the USA, we can, with advance notification, select a battlefield closer to the unit's location to make the event more affordable. Many staff ride exercises can be studied in one day:

Cowpens, South Carolina (Revolutionary War, 1781)

Cowpens provides an excellent example of a senior leader expertly building a unified team, effectively communicating, and successfully employing diverse organizations to accomplish a common goal. Cowpens commemorates a decisive battle of the American Revolutionary War in the South. On January 17, 1781, Brigadier General Daniel Morgan led his army of tough Continentals, militia and cavalry in a brilliant victory over Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton's British dragoons and British regulars.

****Charleston, South Carolina (Civil War, 1861 - 1865)** The battles for Charleston are great case studies in **joint operations!** They provide excellent examples of leadership under stress, communicating senior leader intent to subordinates, organizing sub-elements to achieve group goals, leveraging technology to achieve objectives, risk taking and decision making under pressure. From April 12 - 14, 1861 Confederate forces under Brigadier General P.G.T. Beauregard fired the opening salvos of the Civil War, laying siege to the Union fortress at Ft. Sumter under the command of Major William Robert Anderson. Union forces were forced to surrender at noon on Sunday, April 14, 1861. This staff ride focuses not only on the opening siege of Ft. Sumter, but also will focus on the Union siege of Charleston and Ft. Sumter until the end of the war.

Antietam, Maryland (Civil War, 1862) Antietam is one of America's best-preserved battlefield sites and offers insight into the distinction between "management" and leadership, the importance of strategic vision, the complexities associated with carrying out senior leader orders, the impact of organizational morale and esprit, and risk taking and decision making under pressure. On September 17, 1862 Union forces led by General George B. McClellan confronted General Robert E. Lee's Confederate forces attacking into Maryland. McClellan squandered an opportunity to achieve a resounding victory over Lee in the single bloodiest day of battle in American history.

****Chickamauga, Georgia (Civil War, 1863)** Provides penetrating insights into developing and communicating a senior leader vision, role of intelligence in preparing plans, logistics planning and use of resources, leveraging technology to achieve objectives, decision making and risk taking under stress, security, technology and communication of leader vision to junior leaders. On September 19, 1863, Confederate General Braxton Bragg attacked Union Major General William Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland in an effort to cut Union lines of communication. Union Major General George Thomas held the Union left flank and prevented a Union route. Although he was victorious, General Bragg failed to exploit success and pursue the retreating Union forces.

****Shiloh, Tennessee (Civil War, 1862)**

Shiloh provides perspectives on the impact of a strong senior leader on achieving organizational goals, developing and implementing senior leader intent, communicating orders to subordinates, delegating authority to subordinates, role of intelligence in preparing plans, and decision making and risk taking under pressure. On April 6, 1862 during one of the earliest major battles of the war, Confederate General A. S. Johnston attacked Union forces under the command of Major General Ulysses S. Grant, who was seeking to join with Union forces under General Don Carlos Buell. Although he achieved surprise, Johnston failed to effectively coordinate his forces, thereby allowing the two Union commanders

to link up and achieve a strategic victory. One month later, the Union Army seized control of the Confederate railway system at Corinth, Mississippi.

****Wilson's Creek, Missouri (Civil War, 1861)** Provides excellent examples of developing and communicating senior leader intent, communications within an organization, obtaining and using intelligence to develop plans, leveraging technology, logistics planning, the impact of chance and uncertainty on executing plans, utilizing terrain, risk taking and decision making under pressure. On August 10, Confederate Brigadier General Benjamin McCulloch joined forces with Sterling Price and the Missouri State Guard, with the intent of conducting a morning attack on Union Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon. Bad weather prevented the poorly equipped State Guard troops from completing their mission. Meanwhile, Union Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon and Union Colonel Franz Sigel failed in their effort to conduct a preemptive attack. Lyon was subsequently killed and the Confederates routed the Union Army leaving the western half of the state open for future attacks.

****Pea Ridge, Arkansas (Civil War, 1862)** Pea Ridge provides penetrating insights into the role of junior leaders, team building, leveraging technology, and risk taking under stressful conditions. In March 1862, a new commander Major General Earl Van Dorn led Confederate forces against Union soldiers under the command of BG Samuel R. Curtis. Inexperienced in command, Van Dorn had poor knowledge of his subordinate leaders and capabilities of his soldiers. As a result, he failed in executing his battle plan and Union forces retained control of the state of Missouri. Note the Engineer works are still viewable.

****Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (Civil War, 1863)** Offers powerful case studies on developing and communicating leader intent, team building, impact of chance and uncertainty on implementing a plan, effect of morale and esprit on team performance, communicating among subordinate leaders, consequences of poor logistics planning, building an empowering organization, and risk taking and decision making under stressful conditions. During 1-3 July 1863, Union forces under the command of General George Meade defended the high ground around Gettysburg against General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The campaign that began as a chance encounter in Pennsylvania proved to be the decisive battle of the Civil War. The site also offers participants an excellent opportunity to avail themselves of numerous recreational activities in Gettysburg and surrounding area.

Vicksburg, Mississippi (Civil War, 1863) Provides case studies on developing and implementing a senior leader vision, communicating intent to subordinate leaders, the impact of chance and uncertainty on implementing a plan, team building, and the roles that morale and esprit plays in achieving organizational

goals. For 47 days in the spring and summer of 1863, Union forces, under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant, laid siege against Confederates entrenched in the city of Vicksburg under General John Pemberton. This strategic site was a fortress that guarded southern control of the lower Mississippi. Its surrender on July 4, 1863, coupled with the fall of Port Hudson, Louisiana, divided the South and gave the North undisputed control of the Mississippi River. This total victory also catapulted General Grant into national prominence.

Chattanooga, Tennessee (Civil War, 1863) You will gain insight into developing and implementing a senior leader vision, communicating orders to subordinates, team building, impact of morale and esprit on achieving organizational goals, and decision making and risk taking under stress. After Confederate General Braxton Bragg's victory over General William Rosecrans at the Battle of Chickamauga, General Bragg laid siege to the Union forces bottled up in Chattanooga. When General Ulysses S. Grant was made Commander of the Military Division of Mississippi, he took personal charge of Union forces in Chattanooga on October 23, 1863. Union Major General Grant routed Confederate forces from Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. As a result, by November 25, 1863, the Union forces gained the strategic initiative in the western theater for the remainder of the war.

****Pilot Knob, Missouri (Civil War 1864)** Leader vision, strategy, use of security, unsurpassed stamina, and the ability to cope with ever-changing situations in a fast-paced environment are exemplified in the events at Pilot Knob. By the summer of 1864, the Confederate army had suffered bitter, large-scale defeats in the east and the death of the Confederacy appeared imminent. West of the Mississippi, there were no great Union armies. The Confederacy desperately needed a victory to boost the morale of its supporters, prompting the invasion of Missouri in the longest cavalry raid in U.S. history under the command of Sterling Price.

Monroe's Crossroads and Bentonville, North Carolina (Civil War 1865) Nowhere else is the importance of communication in extremely difficult situations more vividly displayed than under the command of General Joe Johnston, CSA. Leaders at all levels can learn critical lessons from his organizational, communication and logistical skills. Johnston, believing General William T. Sherman's left and right wings to be widely separated, concentrated on the remnants of several forces against the Union at the Crossroads of Bentonville, the last major engagement of the war. Despite initial success, the arrival of Sherman's right wing forced Johnston to defend and ultimately withdraw on the third day.

Little Big Horn, Montana (Indian Wars) Leadership issues discussed at Little Big Horn include the effects of personality conflict among leaders, understanding cultural diversity, the effect of technological advances, and the importance of recognizing opportunity. This program encompasses the 1866 and 1876 Sioux and Cheyenne Campaigns. Participants visit Fort Phil Kearny, Fetterman's Massacre, Wagon Box Fight, Rosebud Battlefield and Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer's Battle at Little Big Horn. The staff ride takes you over the last 25 miles of the 7th Cavalry's route to the Little Big Horn. You can also have the option of riding horses in period saddles at the Rosebud Fight and at Custer's famous Crow's Nest.

****Centralia Missouri (Guerilla Warfare)** This battle pitted new Union recruits against seasoned guerillas. This unconventional force was in support of a conventional Confederate raid that was one of the largest cavalry forces in US history. The US Soldiers were part of the local militia defense forces that worked out of area support bases. The guerilla bands had years of combat experiences and could pick and choose their target with the support of the local populace. Over 150 soldiers were killed in less than an hour with a well planned ambush. Twenty seven unarmed soldiers on leave were taken off a train and shot in the street. The defense force under a regular army officer fell for decoy and rode into an ambush. [This is a one day tour.](#)

Newly added to our program is the Siege of Lexington Missouri. First done for the Commandant of USAES in 2014

USAES COMMAND HISTORIAN is prepared to meet your Training Needs

Whatever your leadership development needs -- from building a new educational program to augmenting ongoing training activities to providing executives a professional learning experience - USAES COMMAND HISTORIAN stands ready to employ his special skills to help you achieve your objectives.

For more information please call USAES COMMAND HISTORIAN at 573-563-6365 or e-mail david.c.chuber.civ@mail.mil.

