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## Spotsylvania Undercover: An Interview with Dr. Keith Bohannon

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# Spotsylvania Undercover: An Interview with Dr. Keith Bohannon

## **Abstract**

Dr. Keith Bohannon, one of this summer's Civil War Institute Conference speakers, is an Associate Professor dealing in the subjects of the American Civil War, Reconstruction, Southern U.S. History, and Georgia History at the University of West Georgia. During the upcoming Institute Conference, Dr. Bohannon will be speaking on Sherman and the Atlanta Campaign and giving the tour for the Wilderness & Spotsylvania battlefields. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

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## **Disciplines**

History | Military History | United States History

## **Comments**

This blog post originally appeared in [The Gettysburg Compiler](#) and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

# THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

## ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

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### Spotsylvania Undercover: An Interview with Dr. Keith Bohannon

April 18, 2014

By: Sarah Johnson, '15

Dr. Keith Bohannon, one of this summer's Civil War Institute Conference speakers, is an Associate Professor dealing in the subjects of the American Civil War, Reconstruction, Southern U.S. History, and Georgia History at the University of West Georgia. During the upcoming Institute Conference, Dr. Bohannon will be speaking on Sherman and the Atlanta Campaign and giving the tour for the Wilderness & Spotsylvania battlefields. Let's see what Dr. Bohannon has in store for us:



**I see that your lecture will be on Sherman and the Atlanta Campaign. What is it about this controversial campaign that keeps drawing generation after generation of Civil War enthusiasts in?**

The Atlanta Campaign was highly significant because of the impact it had on the 1864 U.S. presidential campaign. Lincoln and the Republicans badly needed a victory on the battlefield to boost Northern morale and support for the war. As many readers will know, Lincoln wrote a private memorandum on August 23, 1864, stating that "it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected." The fall of the city of Atlanta to Sherman's Army on September 1, 1864, provided a much needed military victory for Lincoln and contributed to his reelection. I think many enthusiasts also equate the Atlanta Campaign with the classic novel and 1939 film *Gone With the Wind*, which has enduring international popularity. Although some aspects of the film, particularly its depiction of African-Americans, are offensive to our 21st century sensibilities, the film's climactic scene of the burning of Atlanta is one that most Civil War enthusiasts recognize. Lastly, the officers commanding the armies in the Atlanta Campaign, Confederate Generals

Joseph E. Johnston and John Bell Hood, as well as Union General William T. Sherman, were controversial and important figures in 1864 and remain so today.

**What are you most looking forward to for this year's Civil War Institute Summer Conference?**

I look forward to conversing with people I've met at past CWI conferences, hearing outstanding lectures by some of the country's leading Civil War scholars, and taking some morning jogs out of my dorm room onto the July 1, 1863, battlefield. (My home in Carrollton, Georgia, is an hour's drive away from the closest Civil War battlefields.)

**Without giving away too many surprises, what will your advanced Wilderness & Spotsylvania tour entail?**

The Wilderness and Spotsylvania tour will feature some hikes to places on the battlefields that very, very few visitors ever see. Heth's Salient, for example, features some of the best preserved earthworks on the Spotsylvania battlefield, but there are no current hiking trails that lead to the site and few tour groups ever make it out there. We will also be going to a position at Spotsylvania defended by the famed Texas Brigade where Union troops achieved a temporary breakthrough on May 12, 1864. The combat at this position was intense and included some hand-to-hand fighting, but it takes a bit of hiking to get there. Our tour stops will also feature readings from unpublished and obscure accounts by participants. Most Civil War enthusiasts will probably agree that few things are more evocative than reading soldier accounts while standing on the ground where those men fought.

*Thank you to Dr. Keith Bohannon for answering student questions in anticipation of the 2014 Civil War Institute Summer Conference. We look forward to his participation in this year's Summer CWI Conference, "The War in 1864."*

*This year's Institute will take place from June 20-25, 2014. Registration can be done by following this link: <http://www.gettysburg.edu/cwi/conference/> See you there!*