

# VICKSBURG

National Military Park  
Mississippi

UNITED STATES



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OF THE INTERIOR

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## THE COVER

Columbiad on Ramparts of South Fort

# Vicksburg National Military Park

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PARK

THE Vicksburg National Military Park was established in 1899 to preserve the site of the decisive battle of the western campaign during the War between the States. The park is noted among the world's battlefields for its distinctive topography and for its extensive remains of trenches and earthworks which render the military operations of the area readily comprehensible. Remains of 9 major Confederate forts, 10 Union approaches, many miles of breastworks, gun emplacements, and rifle pits are still to be found in the park in varying degrees of preservation.

Greatly assisting in the interpretation of the battlefield are the 1,599 memorials, monuments, and markers which serve to commemorate and establish the various troop positions on the field. Covering an area of 1,323.63 acres, the park, rugged and hilly in its topography, consists of two generally parallel ridges which surround the city of Vicksburg like a great crescent on the north, east, and south sides. The battlefield is traversed by two main roads: Confederate Avenue, which runs the length of the park along the Confederate or inner lines of fortifications; and Union Avenue, which follows along the greater portion of the Union or outer investment lines.

Administered by the War Department until 1933, the park, with the adjoining cemetery, was at that time transferred to the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.

## THE CAMPAIGN AND SIEGE OF VICKSBURG

STRATEGICALLY located on high bluffs that commanded a great bend of the Mississippi River, Vicksburg, early in 1863, became the storm center of the western campaign. The epic struggle for the possession of the city constitutes a thrilling chapter in the history of America. The Vicksburg batteries formed a strong link in the chain of Confederate fortifications that stretched along the Mississippi River from Columbus, Ky., to New Orleans,

La. While in the East the attention of the Northern States was centered on the capture of Richmond and the blockade of the southern coastline, in the West it resolved itself into a struggle for the mastery of the Mississippi River.

The early efforts of the Union forces in this theater of the war were directed to the control of the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers. The capture of Forts Henry and Donelson on February 6 and 16, 1862, respectively, marked the first important Union success of the war. These victories had important strategic results, for they forced the Confederates to evacuate Nashville and western Tennessee, permitting a Federal advance of 200 miles into southern territory.

Following this defeat, the Confederates, under Albert Sidney Johnston, retreated to Corinth,

*The Louisiana State Memorial. This hill crest was occupied by the Confederates*





*Equestrian statue of Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, Commander of the Federal forces at Vicksburg*

Miss., a very important point since it controlled the railroad from Memphis to Chattanooga. In the bloody battle of Shiloh, April 6-7, Johnston was killed, and the Confederates were forced to withdraw from Corinth.

Meanwhile, attention was centered on the Mississippi River. Following the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson, the Confederates had strengthened their fortifications on the upper Mississippi at New Madrid and Island No. 10. With the aid of gunboats, however, General Pope in March and April succeeded in capturing these positions. The gunboats then moved against Fort Pillow and Memphis, forcing their surrender 2 months later.

While Grant, ably assisted by the fleet, had been successful in opening the upper Mississippi River, Farragut was now assigned the task of opening the lower Mississippi. Successfully running the barrier

of a great chain across the river and the fire of two strong forts, Farragut forced the surrender of New Orleans, April 25, 1862. The fall of the city was a serious blow to the Confederacy for it greatly simplified for the Union navy the problem of enforcing an effective blockade, at the same time depriving the South of its largest city and principal seaport.

Following the fall of New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Union attention was focused on Vicksburg. It was quite clear by this time that as long as Vicksburg could be held the Mississippi River would be blocked to Federal traffic; the Confederacy would remain undivided; and the Alabama-Vicksburg Railroad, which served as an important connecting link between the eastern and western parts of the Confederacy, would remain intact.



*Statue of Lieut. Gen. John C. Pemberton, Commander of the Confederate forces at Vicksburg*

The capture of Vicksburg thus became the chief objective of the Union army in the West.

The first attacks against the city were made by Farragut on May 22 and June 28, 1862. The failure of both of these attempts demonstrated the necessity of the cooperation of both land and naval forces in order to effect the reduction of the city. No further attempts were made against Vicksburg until December 1862. At this time a joint attack was planned by Grant and Sherman, by means of which Grant was to move down the east side of the Mississippi from Grenada and attack the city from the rear, while Sherman, by use of transports, was to descend the Mississippi from Memphis and attack Vicksburg from the north at Chickasaw Bayou Bluffs.

This well-formulated plan likewise proved a failure, largely as the result of the destruction of the Union base of supplies at Holly Springs by Van Dorn in a daring cavalry raid, which forced Grant's return to Memphis. Sherman's attempt to execute his part of the expedition resulted in a severe repulse December 29. Following his defeat at Vicksburg, Sherman, in cooperation with McClernand, went on an expedition into Arkansas which resulted in the capture of Arkansas Post, with its garrison of 5,000 Confederates.

On January 29, 1863, Grant arrived and assumed personal command of the Army of the Tennessee which was then stationed 27 miles above Vicksburg, at Milliken's Bend, on the Louisiana shore. Immediately, preparations were made for an attack on the city. Realizing the strength of the river batteries, Grant determined to turn either the Confederate right or left flank and attack the city from the rear. This objective he hoped to accomplish by a series of bayou expeditions in full cooperation with the Union fleet under Admiral Porter. By the Delta Point and Duckport canals and the Lake Providence route, Grant hoped to turn the left flank of the Confederates, while by the Yazoo Pass and Steele's Bayou expeditions, he planned to turn their right flank.

Failing in these objectives largely because of the baffling maze of bayous and swamps which protected the Vicksburg heights, rendering them almost impregnable, and confronted by political pressure which demanded either a victory or his removal from command, Grant finally decided upon the dangerous expedient of running the fleet past the batteries. Such a daring plan necessitated the operation of his army without a base of supplies, but its very boldness was later to prove one of the chief factors in its success. On the night of April 16, in a dramatic passage, a portion of the fleet succeeded in running the batteries with the loss of but one transport. The rest of the fleet ran the batteries on April 22, and 7 days later joined in the bombardment of the fortifications at Grand Gulf.

Unable to reduce these works, Grant decided to effect a crossing at a favorable point farther south. The army, which had advanced rapidly along the Louisiana shore despite great difficulties, was ferried across by the fleet to the Mississippi side at Bruinsburg on April 30.

Events now moved with lightninglike rapidity. The battles of Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson,

Champion's Hill, and Big Black River followed in quick succession. Like Stonewall Jackson in the valley campaigns of Virginia, Grant, following the defeat of the Confederates at Port Gibson on May 1, succeeded in dividing the forces of his opponents so as to enable him to strike at them separately before they could unite. The failure of Pemberton to effect a junction with Joseph E. Johnston near Jackson afforded Grant an opportunity to press his advantage. In the battles of Raymond, and of Jackson, May 12 and 14, the army of Johnston was defeated and forced to withdraw. Two days later the Confederates under Pemberton felt the full force of the Federal attack at Champion's Hill. After a stubborn engagement they were decisively defeated and driven back to Big Black River. Here they made a brief stand on May 17 and then retreated into the defenses of Vicksburg.

Thus, within 17 days Grant had concluded one of the most successful campaigns of the war. He had marched over 200 miles, defeated the Confederates in five pitched engagements, and had succeeded in separating the armies of Johnston and Pemberton.

Hastily retreating from the Big Black, Pemberton established his line along an inner series of parallel ridges which ran in a great semicircle in the rear of

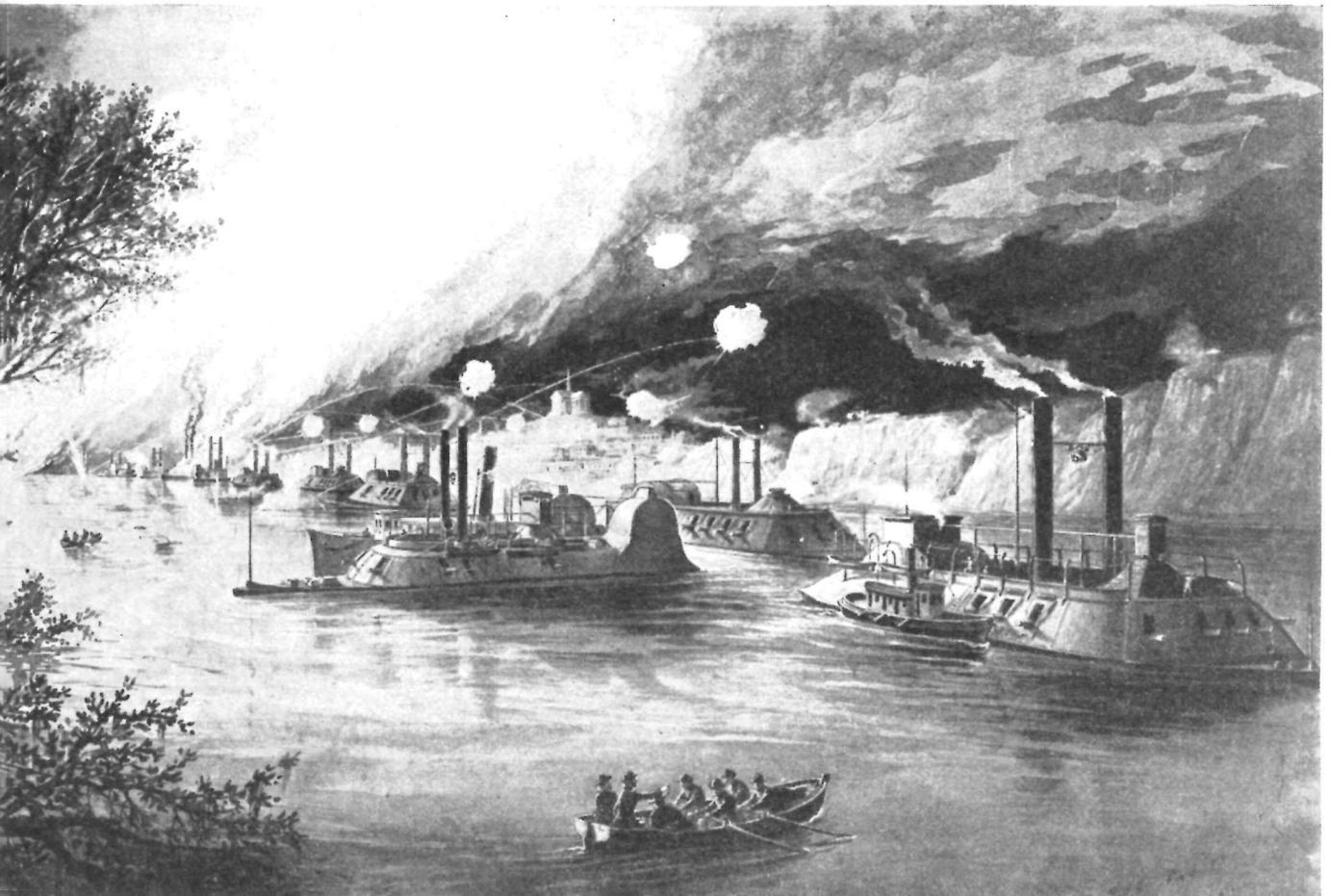
the city. Both ridges offered admirable positions for defense, but having only 18,500 effective troops he felt it necessary to occupy the inner and shorter ridge. The Confederate position was well chosen for along each of the six main roads that entered the city strong fortifications had been erected to command their approach. The rugged topography of the area with its sharp ravines and deep gorges made the Federal advance, other than along these roads, necessarily difficult and slow.

Fresh from five victories in the field the Federal troops advanced against the Confederate positions on May 19 fully confident of carrying them by assault. The storming columns, however, were met with a stonewall defense and hurled back. Twice again on May 22 Grant formed his lines in desperate assaults, and though in some instances the Federal advance carried to the very ramparts of the fortifications they were turned back with heavy losses.

Failing to take the city by storm, Grant settled down to siege operations which consisted of digging approach and parallel trenches to the main Confederate fortifications in an effort to destroy them by mining operations.

During this period Grant was constantly receiving reinforcements so that by the end of the siege his army numbered about 75,000 effectives as opposed

*Reproduction of a contemporary sketch showing Porter's fleet running the Confederate batteries at Vicksburg, April 16, 1863*



to Pemberton with 18,500. The Confederates, with their rear exposed to the constant bombardment of the Federal fleet, their front assailed by ever-increasing numbers, their men decimated by disease and exposure, their supplies cut off, continued to hurl back every Federal thrust for 47 days. Desperately they held their lines against insuperable odds, expectantly awaiting relief from Johnston that never materialized. Finally worn by exposure, exhausted, half-starved, realizing the futility of further resistance, the Confederates surrendered on July 4.

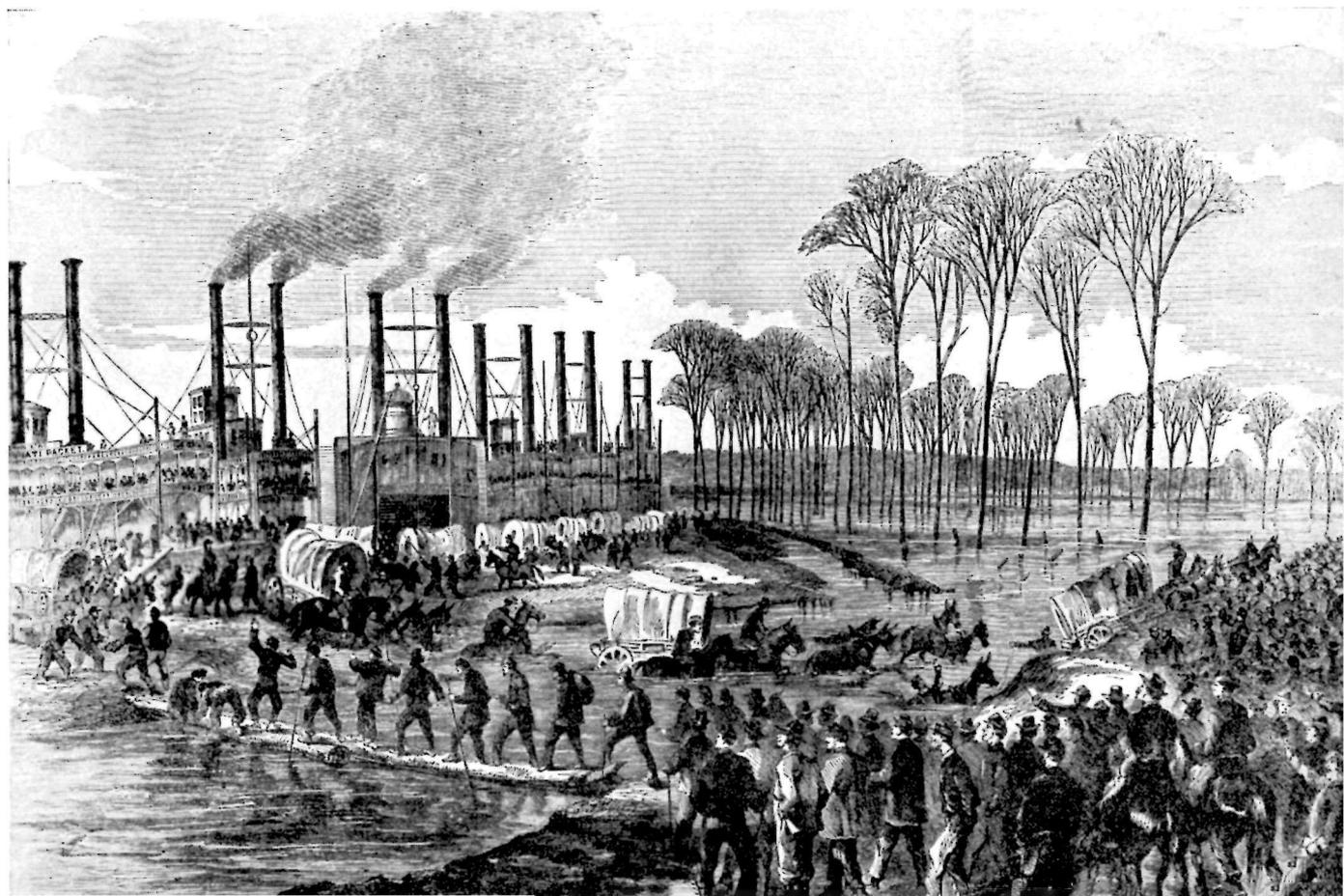
With the fall of Vicksburg and the surrender of Port Hudson 5 days later, the chief objective of the western campaign had been won. The Confederacy was divided and the Mississippi was opened through its entire course to Federal control. The fall of Vicksburg, together with the repulse of Lee at Gettysburg on July 3, served to mark the turning point of the war. Though the South fought with desperate courage for 2 years longer, the end was all too obvious. The backbone of the Confederacy had been broken—Chattanooga, the Atlanta campaign, and Appomattox followed in inevitable succession.

On the ruins of Confederate hopes at Vicksburg, Grant was to rise to the supreme command of the

Union armies and ultimately to the Presidency of the United States. After an arduous campaign he had won a signal victory, a victory made possible by the full cooperation of the Union navy. That Grant appreciated the significant role it played in the success of the campaign may be seen by his following statement: "The navy under Porter was all it could be during the entire campaign. Without its assistance the campaign could not have been successfully made with twice the number of men engaged. It could not have been made at all, in the way it was, with any number of men, without such assistance." Though its services were many and varied, it was chiefly in the transportation of supplies, ammunition, and ferriage for the army that the navy made its greatest contribution.

In the defense of Vicksburg the South had realized that the stakes were high, yet conditions were such as to necessitate a gamble on three fronts. To have relieved Vicksburg would have forced the withdrawal of large reinforcements either from Bragg in central Tennessee or from Lee, who was at that time invading the North, and would have materially weakened their positions. Though reinforcements were sent to Johnston until he ultimately commanded a force of approximately 30,000

*Troops landing near General Grant's headquarters  
above Vicksburg*





*Interior of South Fort, showing the heavy type of Columbiads and mortars which made up the battery here*

men, he was never in a position, because of the strength of Grant's exterior line, to effect the relief of Pemberton. The decision partially to strengthen Pemberton was a fatal one for the South, for ultimately it meant defeat on all three fronts.

Had Johnston and Pemberton effected the junction of their forces the issue might have been different. Ordered by Jefferson Davis to hold Vicksburg at all costs and by Johnston, his immediate superior, to abandon it, Pemberton was in a difficult position. To Jefferson Davis it was obvious that the fall of Vicksburg would seal the fate of the Confederacy in the West; Johnston felt the city was already doomed, and its fall was inevitable.

From Vicksburg the conquering tide of Federal advance was to sweep on to Chattanooga and ultimately, in the Atlanta campaign, to the sea. While in the East the theater of the war was confined to approximately a 200-mile radius in northern Virginia, in the West the Federal advance was to cover a distance of nearly 3,000 miles—a campaign the tremendous scope of which finds few parallels in modern history.

## *POINTS OF INTEREST IN THE PARK*

ON A HIGH BLUFF rising majestically 250 feet from the water's edge stands Fort Hill, the guardian sentry of the river's great bend since the colorful days of Spanish occupation. Nowhere else in the park does the picturesque past blend into the present with more absorbing interest. Established first as Fort Nogales, a military outpost of the Spanish, it has witnessed, with changing fortunes, some of the most romantic periods of American history. Five flags have flown over this area—the French, English, Spanish, Confederate, and American. This fort was the scene of the first settlement in Vicksburg and the site of the first printing press established in Mississippi. Later, during the War between the States, it proved an impregnable stronghold on the extreme left of the Confederate line. For months the fort, together with other

Confederate batteries, successfully blocked the Federal advance. On May 27, 1863, the Federal gunboat, *Cincinnati*, engaged the river batteries, including those of the fort, in single combat, only to be sunk in an engagement which lasted but 30 minutes.

Recently protected by erosion correction, Fort Hill today commands a magnificent view of the rich Mississippi delta land, and the waters of Lake Centennial and the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers. It offers a never-failing point of interest to visitors.

#### RAILROAD REDOUBT

SITUATED on a high ridge commanding the approach of the Alabama-Vicksburg Railroad into the city is Railroad Redoubt, a former stronghold of Confederate defense. Here occurred the heroic exploit of Sergeant Griffith and his 13 comrades of the Twenty-second Iowa, who during one of the assaults succeeded in entering a breach in the redoubt and for a short time maintained their position within it. Though all of Griffith's comrades were killed, he, single-handedly, captured 13 Confederates, who had just discharged their last shots, and returned with them to the Union lines to become the hero-of-the-day. This redoubt is the only fortification on the Confederate line that was breached by the assaults of the 19th and 22d. Though the work was held by the Union forces for a few hours, a Confederate counterattack drove

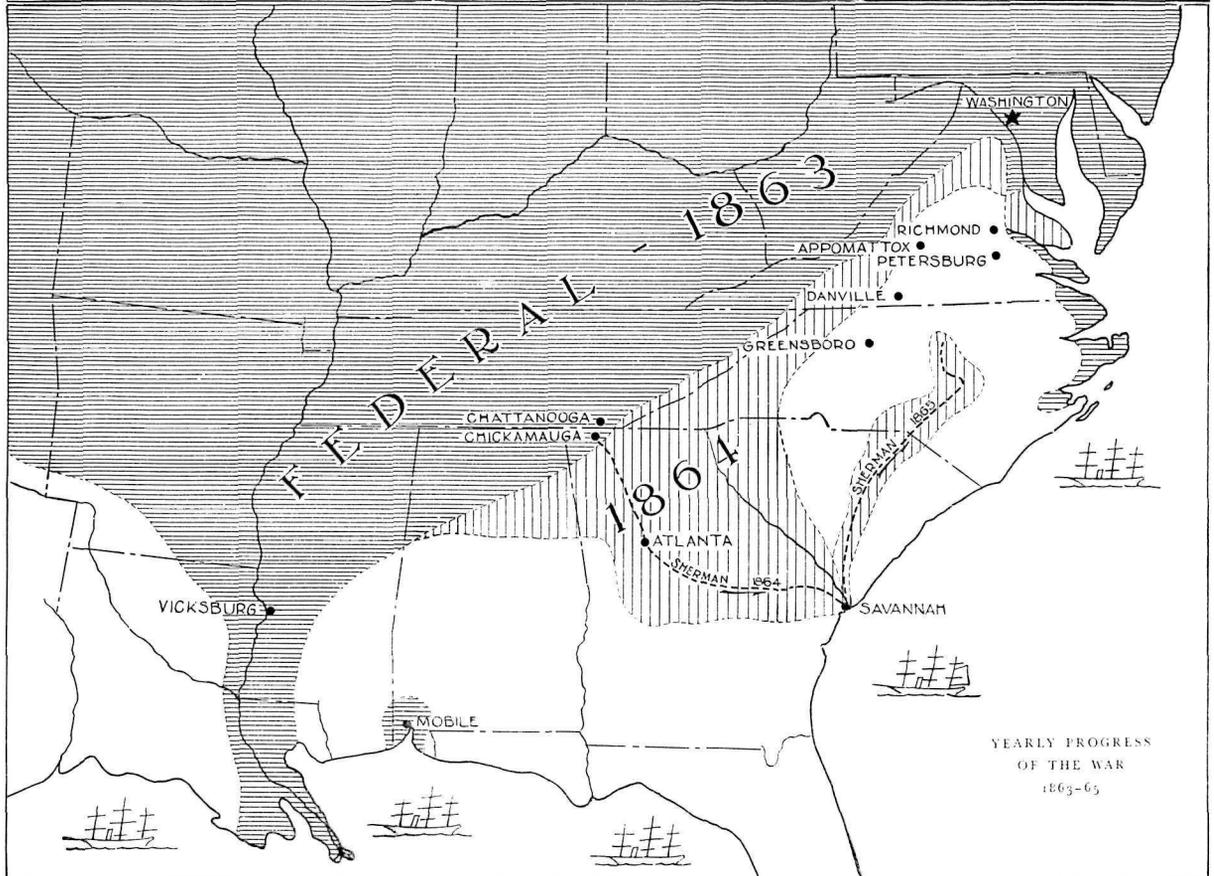
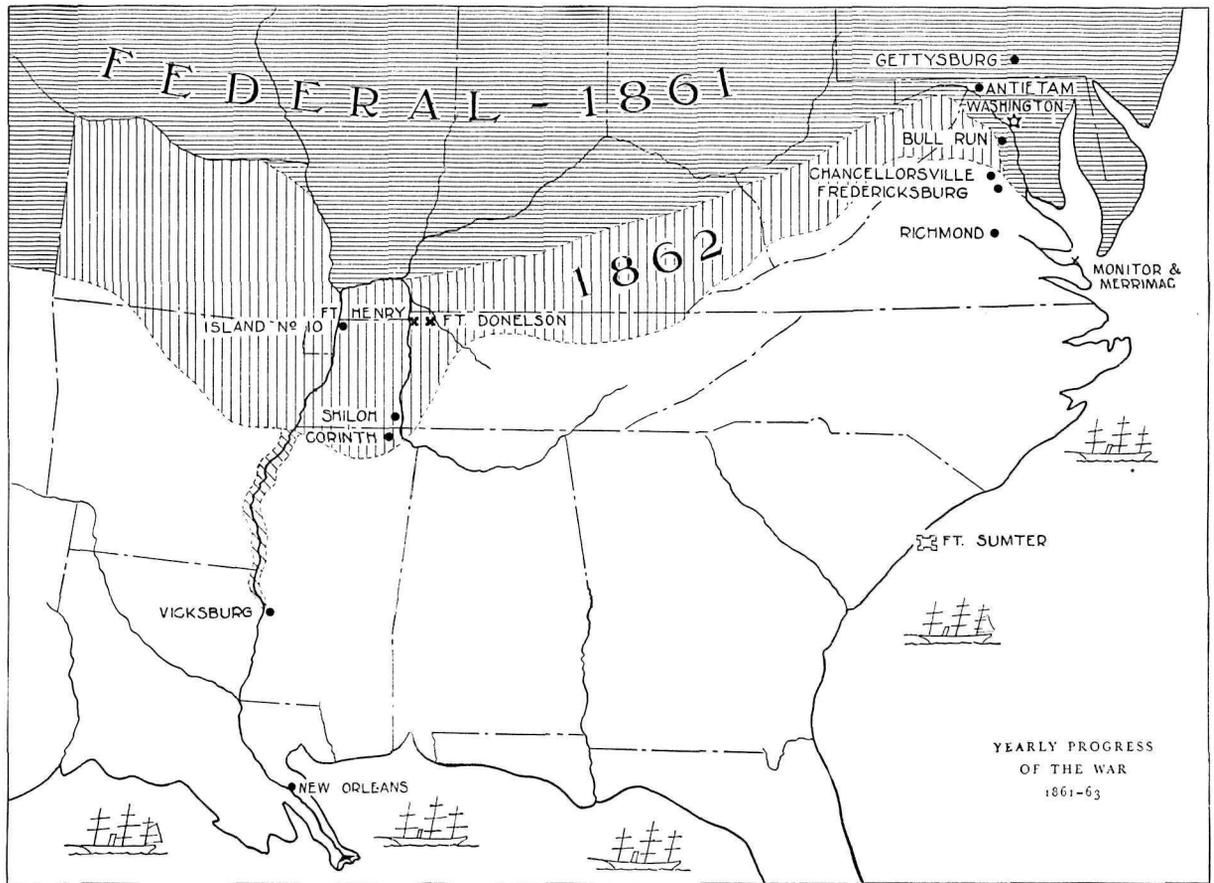
them out. Later Federal approaches were pushed forward to within a few yards of the redoubt. Portions of its parapet, ditch, and glacis, and the line of the Federal approaches are still visible.

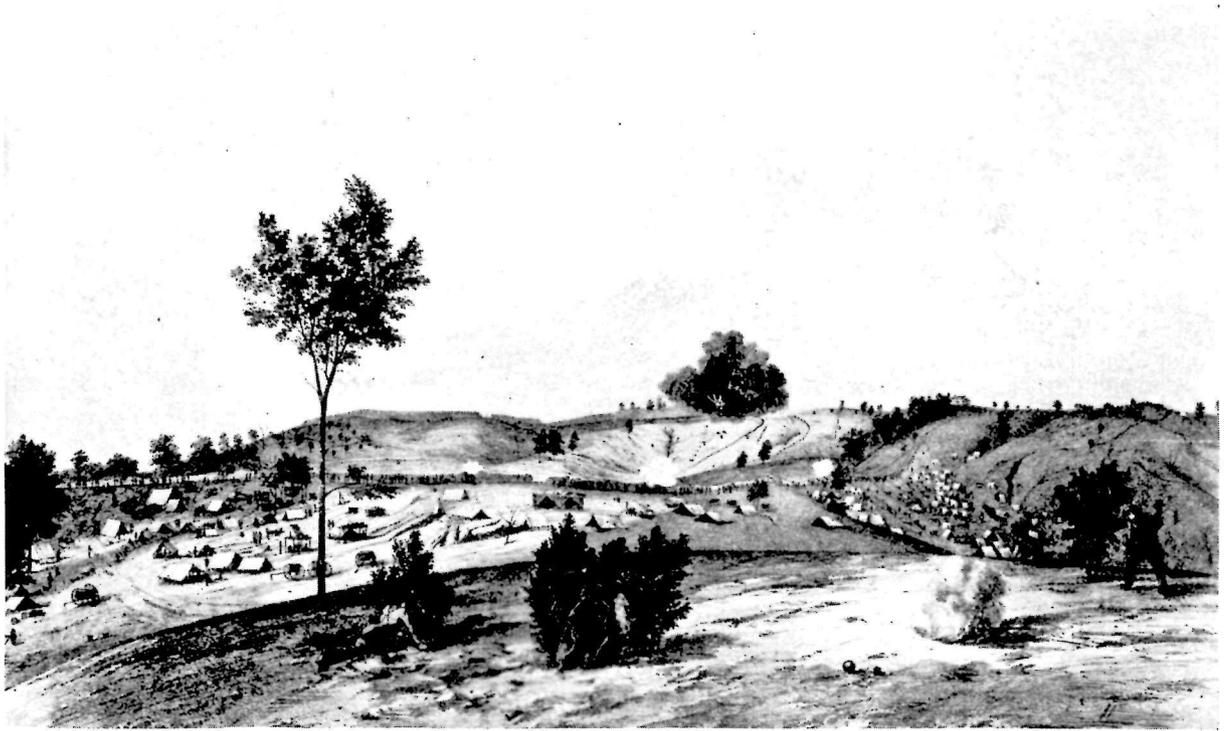
#### THIRD LOUISIANA REDAN

LOCATED on the crest of the ridge in the center of the Confederate defense, the Third Louisiana Redan guarded the approach along the Jackson Road, one of the main entrances to the city. Its name was derived from the regiment which defended it during the siege. Having twice failed to capture the work by assault, the Federals constructed a sap before it, dug a mine beneath the parapet, and blew it up with a charge of gunpowder. The explosion opened a large crater into which rushed wave after wave of Federal troops, who for 3 days strove desperately to carry the position by storm, but all in vain. As a result of the bloody hand-to-hand fighting in the narrow confines of the crater, it later came to be known as the "slaughter pen."

*This view from Fort Hill, at the extreme northern end of the park, shows Lake Centennial and the Yazoo Canal. At the time of the Civil War the Mississippi River made a great bend immediately north of Vicksburg. The dotted line indicates the approximate location of the river channel during Civil War times and illustrates the commanding position of Vicksburg on the historic bend of the river and the difficulties experienced by the Federal gunboats in running the Confederate river batteries*







*This reproduction of a contemporary sketch shows the explosion of the mine under the Third Louisiana Redan along the crest of the ridge, right center, looking from the rear of the Federal lines*

*The Shirley House and the encampment of the Fifth Illinois during the siege of Vicksburg. Reproduction of a wartime photograph*



## SHIRLEY HOUSE

PROMINENTLY located on the Jackson Road near the center of the battlefield, the Shirley House stands today as the only historic building within the park area. Erected in the late 1830's as a typical southern plantation home, it was approximately a quarter of a century later to be involved prominently in one of the most famous sieges of history.

As the forces of Grant pushed rapidly into Vicksburg on May 18, 1863, McPherson's corps of the Union Army took up its position on a ridge immediately east of the Shirley House, while on a ridge just west of the building stood the Third Louisiana Redan, one of the strongest fortifications along the Confederate line. Thus the Shirley House was caught in the cross-fire of the two armies. Following the repulse of the two Federal assaults on May 19 and 22, this sector of the battlefield became one of the most important points against which siege operations were directed for 47 days. One section of Logan's trench, which constituted the main approach to the Third Louisiana Redan, ran immediately in front of the building. The Shirley House, or the "White House" as it was frequently called, became a landmark of both armies and was used frequently by the officers in their reports as a

*The administration and museum building follows the design of Montaigne, an ante-bellum mansion of Natchez*

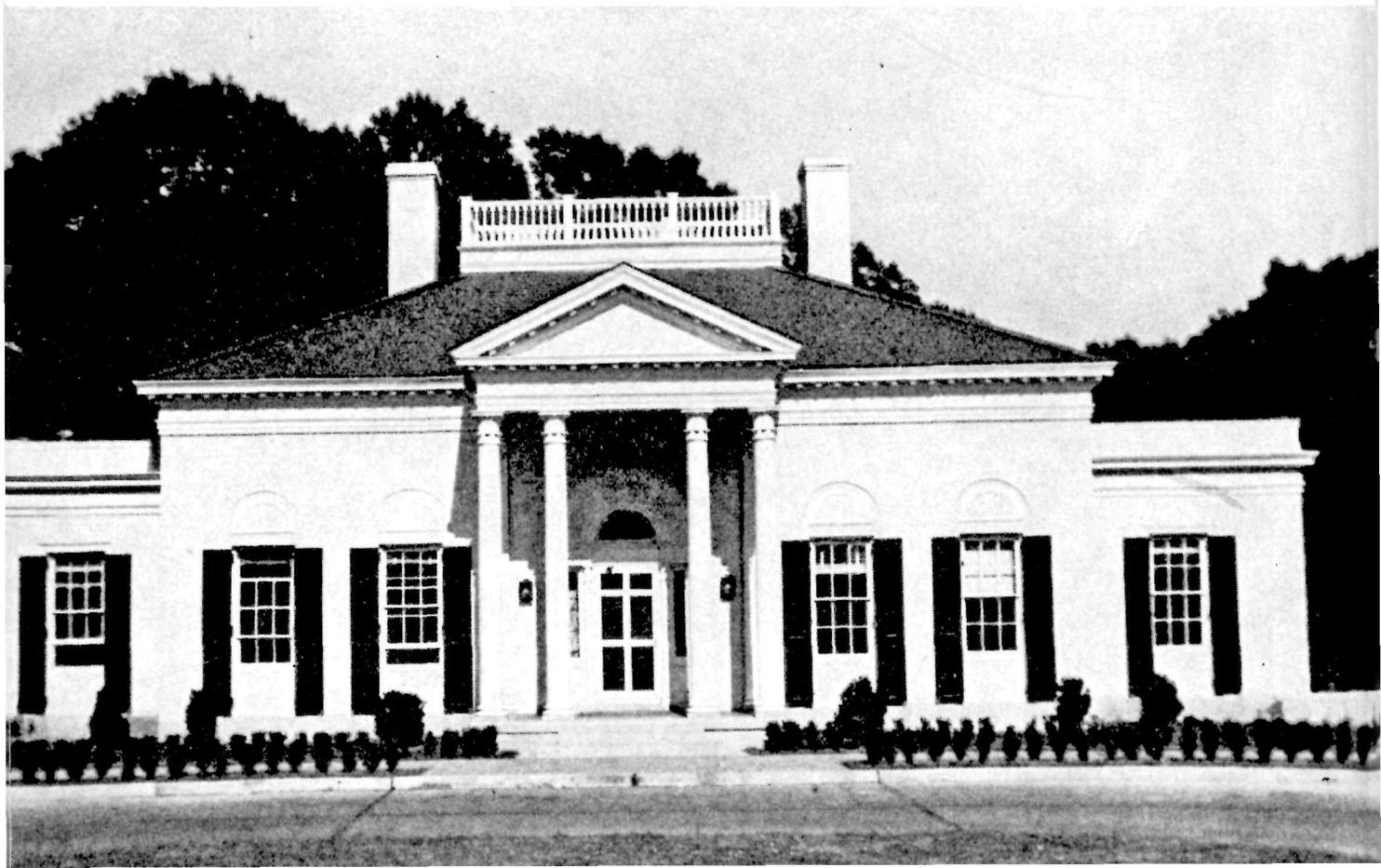
point of designation. A Federal battery, which was located just southeast of the building, was known as the White House battery. Throughout the siege Union soldiers occupied the building, while some were wounded within its walls.

The house as designed by its original owner, Nicholas Gray, consisted of a structure a story and a half high, with large, high-ceiling rooms on either side of a wide central hall, an upper and lower porch, and a veranda in the rear. The property was finally purchased by Capt. James Shirley, of New Hampshire, in 1851, from whom it took its name.

On May 20, 1902, the Secretary of War authorized its restoration. It was further repaired and modernized in 1931, and now serves as the home of the superintendent.

## ADMINISTRATION AND MUSEUM BUILDING

THE administration and museum building, situated in a historic valley against a background of stately oaks, is but a short distance from the scene of the surrender. Architecturally, the building is a good example of the ante-bellum period, possessing charm, dignity, and grace of line. It is modeled after Montaigne, in Natchez, formerly the home of Maj. Gen. William T. Martin, a Confederate officer. Here are located the administrative offices of the park and the historical museum.



# ★ WEAPONS ★

## DIFFERENCES IN LOADING CIVIL WAR MUSKET



## THE MINI-BALL CARTRIDGE CALIBRE .58



## 'BALL' CARTRIDGES



## SPRINGFIELD CARTRIDGE CALIBRE .30



## CLIP OF CARTRIDGES



## DIFFERENCES IN LOADING MODERN ARMY RIFLE



**The Civil War Musket**

The Civil War musket was a smooth bore weapon having a diameter of one inch. It was loaded from the muzzle and fired by means of a percussion cap. The bullet was a lead ball of .58 caliber. The musket was a muzzle loader and was used in the Civil War. It was a simple and effective weapon of its time.

**The Modern Army Rifle**

The modern army rifle is a breech loader and has a diameter of .30 caliber. It is loaded from the breech and fired by means of a cartridge. The bullet is a pointed bullet and is fired by means of a firing pin. The modern army rifle is a more powerful and accurate weapon than the Civil War musket.

### TRAJECTORIES OF ARTILLERY

**MORTAR**

TO FIRE FROM A POSITION IN THE REAR OF THE BATTLES

**HOWITZER**

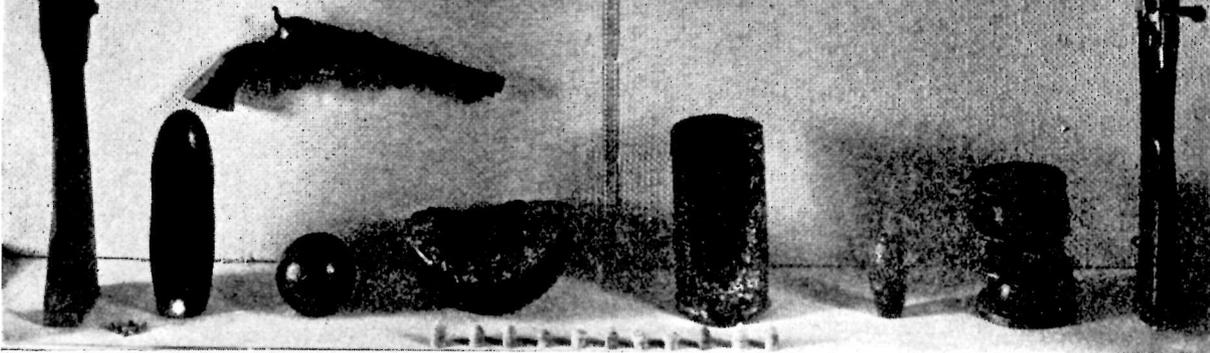
TO FIRE FROM A POSITION IN THE REAR OF THE BATTLES

**FIELD GUN**

TO FIRE FROM A POSITION IN THE REAR OF THE BATTLES

**SEIGE GUN**

TO FIRE FROM A POSITION IN THE REAR OF THE BATTLES



*An exhibit case in the historical museum illustrates weapons, ammunition, and trajectories of artillery, and gives related information of the Civil War period. It also contrasts the Civil War musket with the modern rifle*



*At Fort Hill the ranger historian explains to park visitors the strategic location of the fort*

The museum represents an interesting departure from the conventional type, its purpose being chiefly the interpretation of events rather than simply the display of relics. Numerous exhibits, consisting for the most part of colorful maps, charts, pictures, and relief models, help to portray graphically the history of the area from the geological period to the rise of the New South. The periods represented in this portrayal are: Geological, Indian, European Exploration and Colonization, American Territorial, Ante-bellum, War between the States, Reconstruction, and Emergence of the New South.

The museum serves to complement the work of the historical staff in presenting a clear, comprehensive picture of the Vicksburg operations. A visit to the museum, has been incorporated as an integral part of the park tour. The enthusiastic reception accorded it by visitors from all sections of the country serves to emphasize the value of this method of presentation.

A fee of 10 cents for admission to the historical museum is charged visitors over 16 years of age, with the exception of members of school groups who are admitted free up to 18 years of age. Free guide service is available to all visitors. Organiza-

tions or groups will be given special service if arrangements are made in advance with the superintendent.

All communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, Miss.

#### VICKSBURG NATIONAL CEMETERY

SITUATED on the crest of one of the historic bluffs of Walnut Hills at the old bend of the Mississippi River, the Vicksburg Cemetery comprises an area of unusual picturesque beauty and charm. Formerly the site of a part of the fortification of Nogales barely three-quarters of a century later it was again to attain a position of great military importance with its occupation by the right wing of the investing army of Grant.

Established in 1866 as a Federal Cemetery, it has later been used for the burial of veterans of the Spanish American and World Wars. The cemetery, with its 17,500 dead, is the second largest in the United States from the standpoint of interments. Of this number 12,912 are unknown.

The cemetery has been recently increased by the purchase of 80 additional acres, which will provide much needed burial space and serve greatly to enhance both the natural beauty and historic value of this interesting area.



*Typical scene in present-day park; earthworks and markers in background*

*Scene in Vicksburg National Cemetery. Numerous evergreens contrast with the white burial markers on its terraced landscape*



