

VICKSBURG





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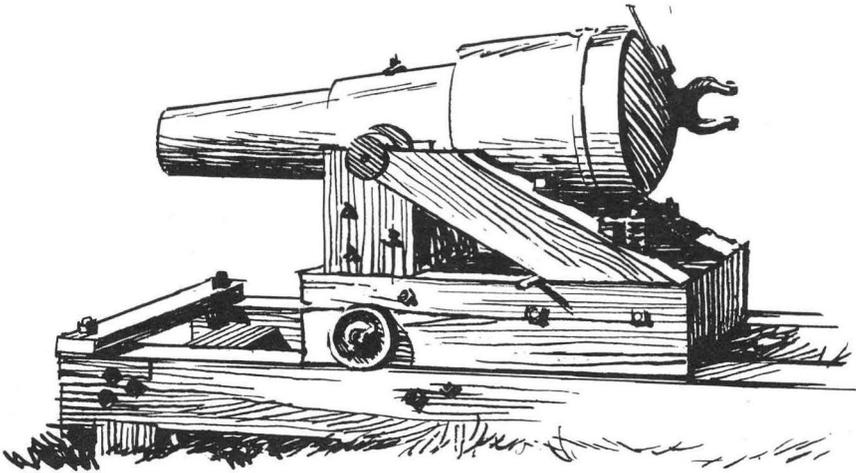
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VICKSBURG

National Military Park, Mississippi

by William C. Everhart



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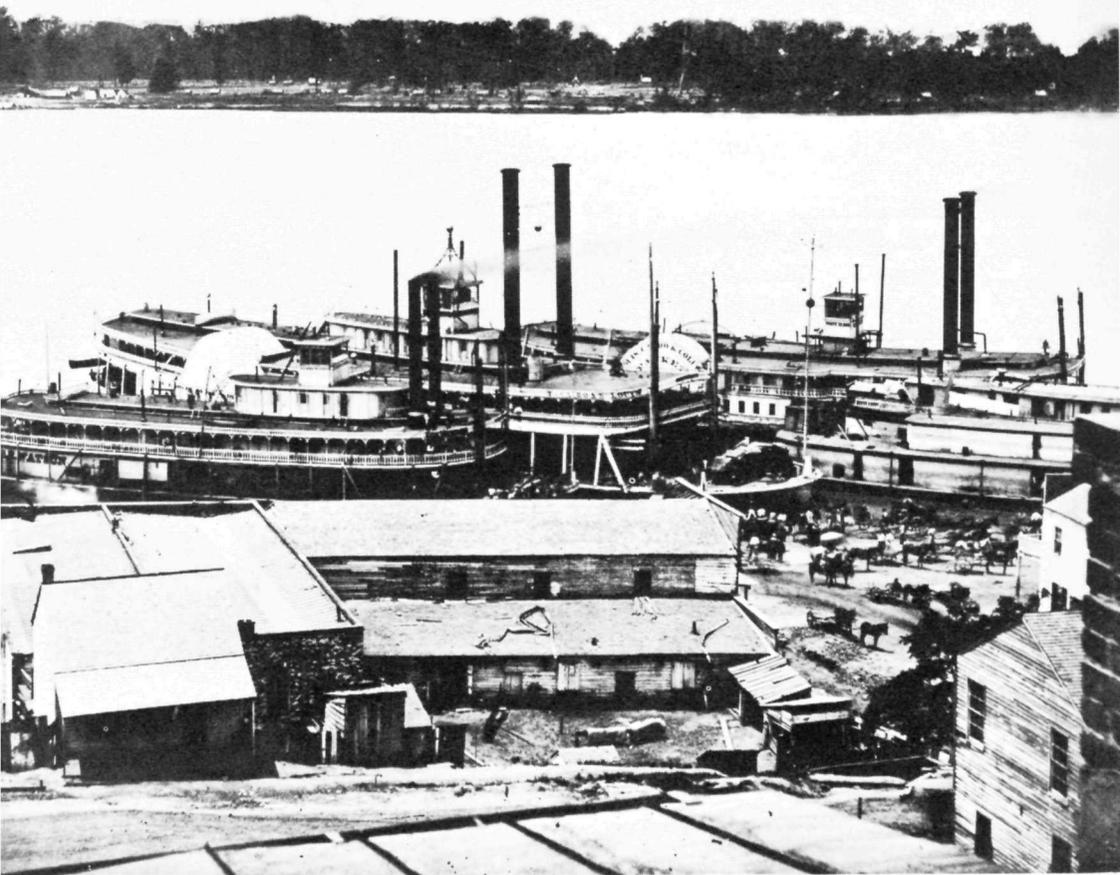
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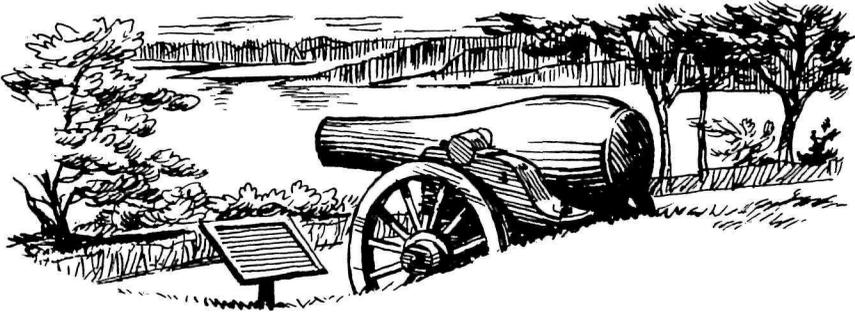


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Merchant steamers unloading supplies at Vicksburg after the surrender. Courtesy Library of Congress.



ACROSS THE IMPERISHABLE CANVAS of the American Civil War are vividly recorded feats of arms and armies, and acts of courage and steadfast devotion which have since become a treasured heritage for all Americans. Among the military campaigns, few, if any, present action over so vast an area, of such singular diversity, and so consequential to the outcome of the war, as the great struggle for control of the Mississippi River. Seagoing men-of-war and ironclad gunboats engaged shore defenses and escorted troops along river and bayou; cavalry raids struck far behind enemy lines as the armies of the West marched and countermarched in a gigantic operation which culminated in the campaign and siege of Vicksburg. Protected by heavy artillery batteries on the riverfront and with land approaches to the north and south guarded by densely wooded swamplands, Vicksburg defied large-scale land and river expeditions for over a year. Finally the tenacious Grant, in a campaign since accepted as a model of bold strategy and skillful execution, forced the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, splitting the Confederacy in two and securing for the North its great objective in the Western Theater.

VICKSBURG AND THE MISSISSIPPI. Control of the Mississippi River, whose course meandered over 1,000 miles from Cairo, Ill., to the Gulf of Mexico and divided the Confederacy into almost equal parts, was of inestimable importance to the Union from the outbreak of hostilities. The agricultural and industrial products of the Northwest, denied their natural outlet to markets down the great commercial artery to New Orleans, would be afforded uninterrupted passage. It would provide a safe avenue for the transportation of troops and their supplies through a tremendous area ill-provided with roads and railroads; the numerous navigable streams tributary to the Mississippi would offer ready routes of invasion into the heart of the South. Union control would cut off and isolate the section of the Confederacy lying west of



"Johnny Reb." A volunteer soldier of the Confederacy. Courtesy Confederate Museum, Richmond.

the river—Texas, Arkansas, and most of Louisiana—comprising almost half of the land area of the Confederacy and an important source of food, military supplies, and recruits for the Southern armies. Forcefully emphasizing the strategic value of the Mississippi was the dispatch of the General in Chief of the Union armies to Maj. Gen. U. S. Grant on March 20, 1863, as Grant prepared to launch his Vicksburg campaign:

The great objective on your line now is the opening of the Mississippi River, and everything else must tend to that purpose. The eyes and hopes of the whole country are now directed to your army. In my opinion, the opening of the Mississippi River will be to us of more advantage than the capture of forty Richmonds.

To protect this vital lifeline, the Confederacy had erected a series of fortifications at readily defensible locations along the river from which the Union advance could be checked. Pushing southward from Illinois

by land and water, and northward from the Gulf of Mexico by river, Union army and naval units attacked the Confederate strongpoints from both ends of the line. They captured post by post and city by city until, after the first year of the war, Vicksburg alone barred complete Union possession of the Mississippi River. From the city ran the only railroad west of the river between Memphis and New Orleans. Through the city most of the supplies from the trans-Mississippi were shipped to Confederate armies in the East. The city's batteries on the bluffs, commanding a 5-mile stretch of the river, effectively prevented Union control of the Mississippi. Vicksburg was indeed the key, declared Lincoln, and the war could not be brought to a successful conclusion "until that key is in our pocket."

THE FIRST MOVES AGAINST VICKSBURG. David Farragut, first admiral of the United States Navy, early in May 1862, headed his Western Gulf Squadron of oceangoing vessels up the Mississippi. In a spectacular

"Billy Yank." A volunteer soldier of the Union. Courtesy Library of Congress.



engagement he passed the forts protecting New Orleans and captured the South's largest port city. Proceeding 400 miles up river, Farragut received the surrenders of Baton Rouge, capital of Louisiana, and Natchez, Miss., arriving before Vicksburg on May 18, just 1 year before Grant's army invested the city from the rear. At the same time, Flag Officer C. H. Davis was moving down the Mississippi River from the north, commanding a flotilla whose striking power was largely provided by a ram fleet under Col. Charles Ellet, Jr., and the seven "Pook Turtles"—ironclad gunboats, built on the Northern rivers, which mounted 13 guns in an armored casemate resting on a flat-bottomed hull.

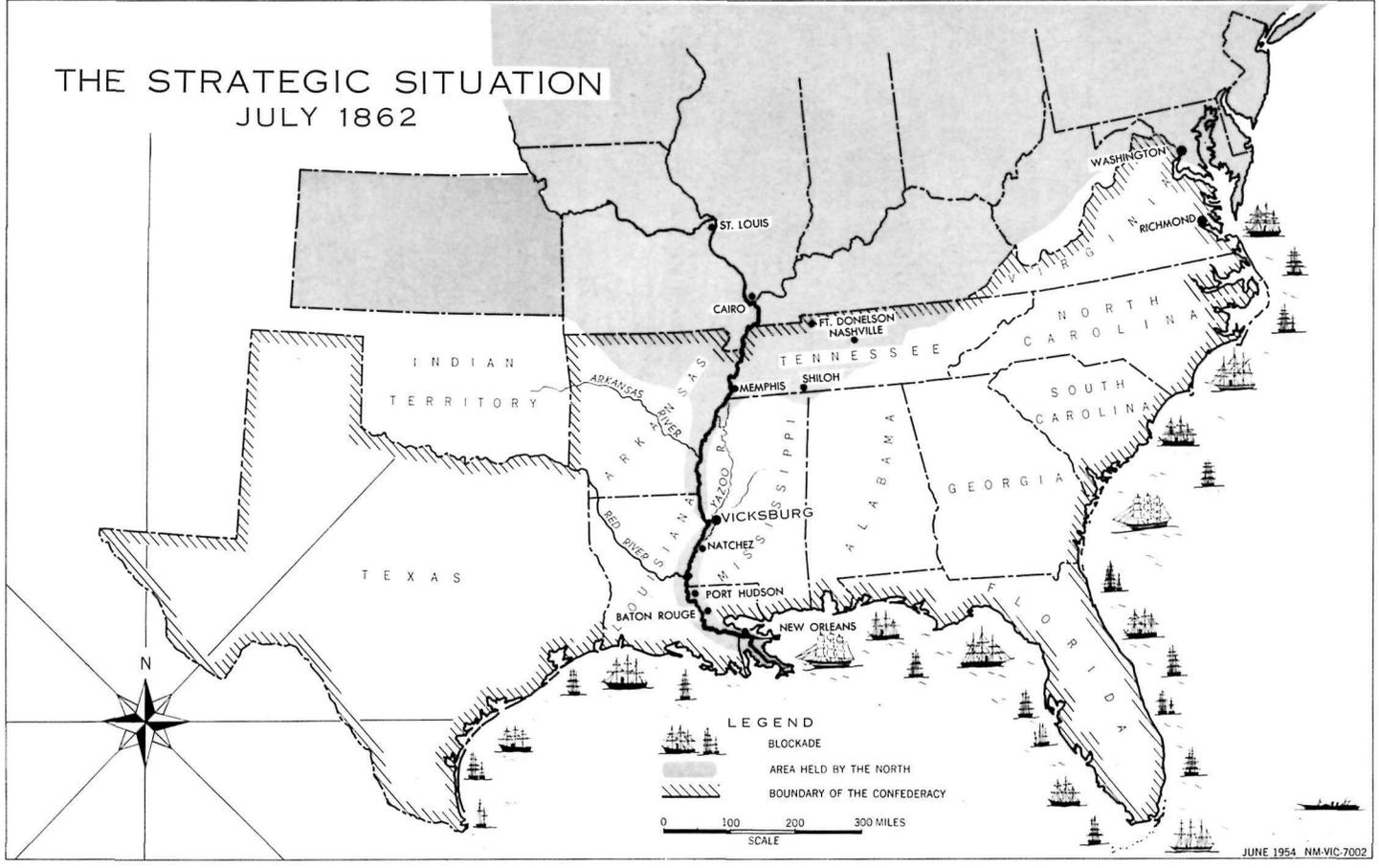
After capturing Memphis in June 1862 and completely destroying the Confederate fleet of converted river steamboats, Davis pushed southward and on July 1 dropped anchor beside Farragut's fleet just north of Vicksburg. All of the Mississippi River was now in Union possession, except for a section at and below Vicksburg.

The batteries of Vicksburg had been passed for the first time on June 28. On that day Farragut blasted the city and its defenses with broadsides from his ships and a devastating fire from Comdr. David Dixon Porter's mortar boats in an unsuccessful attempt to reduce the city by naval attack. It was clearly evident from this experience that a powerful land force would be required to capture fortress Vicksburg. Only 3,000 troops under Brig. Gen. Thomas Williams had accompanied the expedition, and they were put to work with pick and shovel to dig a cut off which might permit river traffic to bypass the Vicksburg batteries. As the fleets idled above Vicksburg, the sweltering monotony was spectacularly interrupted by the short but battle-filled career of the Confederate ironclad ram *Arkansas*, which performed at Vicksburg one of the great feats of arms on the Western waters.

The energy and skill of Lt. Isaac N. Brown, who commanded the *Arkansas*, had enabled the ram to be readied for action despite almost impossible handicaps in securing materials. Routing the Union vessels sent to apprehend her, the venturesome man-of-war stood for the two Federal fleets lying at anchor just above Vicksburg and, with guns blazing, passed entirely through the massed flotillas to safety under the Vicksburg batteries. Here the *Arkansas* withstood all attempts to destroy her and presented a formidable threat to Farragut's wooden ships.

By the end of July, conditions indicated to Farragut that a withdrawal from Vicksburg was necessary. In the hot, fetid atmosphere of the river the disease rate had so increased that only 800 of Williams' 3,000 men were fit for duty. At the same time, the steadily falling waters threatened to maroon his deep-draught vessels. Farragut, with Williams' troops aboard, moved down river to New Orleans, while

THE STRATEGIC SITUATION JULY 1862





Scene of Sherman's assault against the Bluffs at Chickasaw Bayou. From Battles and Leaders of the Civil War.

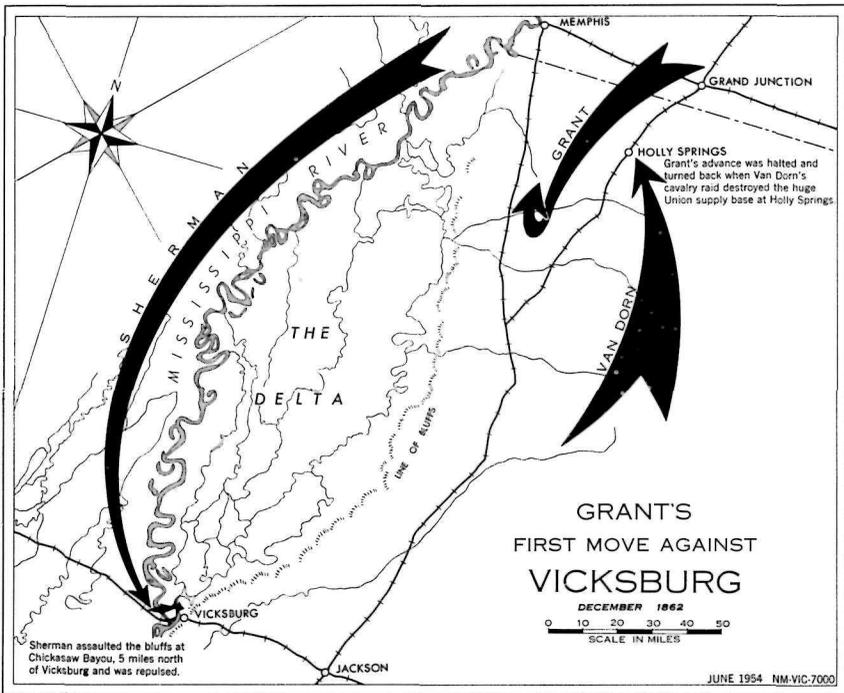
Davis steamed up river, leaving Vicksburg unopposed. The initial expedition against Vicksburg had failed.

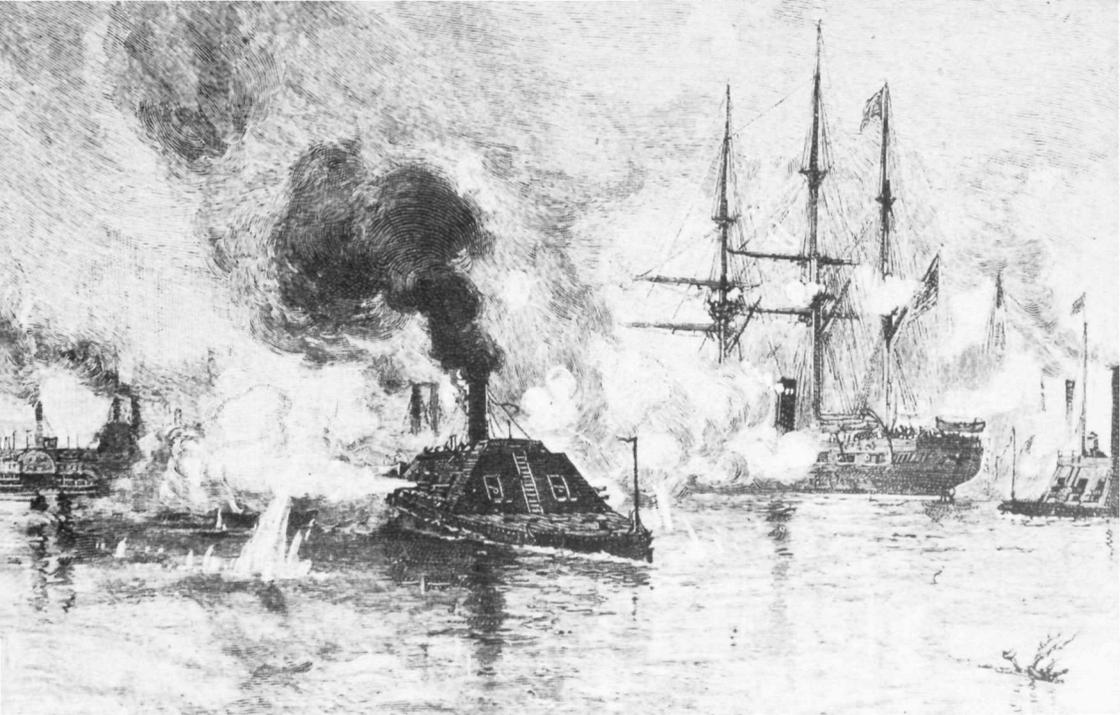
With the Union withdrawal, communications between the sections of the Confederacy east and west of the Mississippi, which had been temporarily curtailed, were resumed. From Vicksburg to Port Hudson, a distance of 250 miles by river, the Mississippi was now in Confederate hands. Into the Mississippi, just above Port Hudson, emptied the Red River which drained much of the trans-Mississippi South, and down which great stores of food were being floated to supply the armies of the Confederacy. It was imperative for the North to close off this important supply route.

GRANT'S FIRST FAILURE AT VICKSBURG. In October 1862, Grant, who had won the sobriquet of "Unconditional Surrender" at Fort Donelson and had rallied his army from near defeat at bloody Shiloh, was placed in command of the Department of the Tennessee with headquarters at Memphis; his objective—to clear the Mississippi River. The same month, Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, a West Pointer, born and raised in Pennsylvania, who had served with Grant in the Mexican War, was placed in command of the Confederate troops defending the Mississippi; his objective—to keep the Southern supply line open and prevent loss of the river. Vicksburg would be the focus of military operations for both commanders.

The first full-scale expedition against Vicksburg was initiated in December 1862, with Grant pushing southward through the State of Mississippi to strike Vicksburg from the rear as Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, with an army of 32,000 men aboard 60 transports, proceeded down river from Memphis. Grant anticipated that his advance would pull Pemberton's army away from Vicksburg, permitting Sherman to make a lodgment on the bluffs immediately north of the city against a greatly reduced garrison. On December 20, Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn, with a striking force of 3,500 Confederate cavalry, swung in behind the Union line of march, capturing and burning \$1,500,000 of military goods at Grant's supply base in Holly Springs. Unwilling to wage a campaign without a base of supply, Grant abandoned his campaign and returned to Memphis.

Sherman made his assault on December 29 at Chickasaw Bayou, 5 miles north of Vicksburg. The land here was a low, swampy shelf lying between the Yazoo River and the bluffs. The few dry causeways over which the Federal infantry could advance were completely covered by Confederate rifle and artillery fire from the bluffs 200 feet above. The Union Army lost nearly 2,000 men against Confederate casualties of less than 200. Tersely, Sherman reported his defeat: "I reached Vicksburg at the time appointed, landed, assaulted and failed."





The Confederate ironclad ram Arkansas engaging the combined Union fleets at Vicksburg. From *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*.

The Bayou Expeditions: Grant Moves Against Vicksburg— and Fails

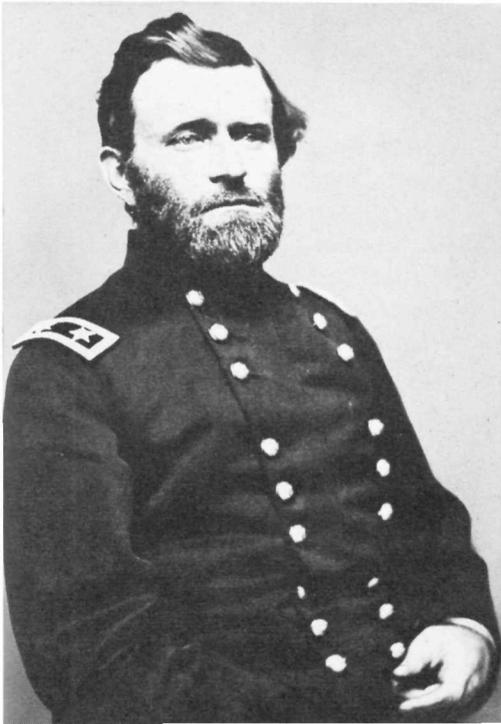
By the end of January, Grant had arrived at the Union encampment at Milliken's Bend, 30 miles north of Vicksburg, and assumed leadership of the operations against Vicksburg. His army, numbering about 45,000, was divided into three corps under General Sherman, Maj. Gen. John McClernand, and Maj. Gen. James Birdseye McPherson. Cooperating with the army, and providing aid without which the bayou expeditions would not have been possible, was the Western Flotilla under Porter. This fleet consisted of 11 ironclads, 38 wooden gunboats, rams, and sundry auxiliary craft mounting over 300 guns and carrying a complement of 5,500. The war in the West now hinged upon the effectiveness of this combined land and naval force. Under Grant's direction it maneuvered over hundreds of miles of river and bayou seeking to outflank Vicksburg. The capture of the city would result not from great battles but from a war of movement.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL PROBLEM OF VICKSBURG. The capture of Vicksburg proved difficult partly because of the topography of the area, which so favored defense of the city as to render the fortress almost impregnable

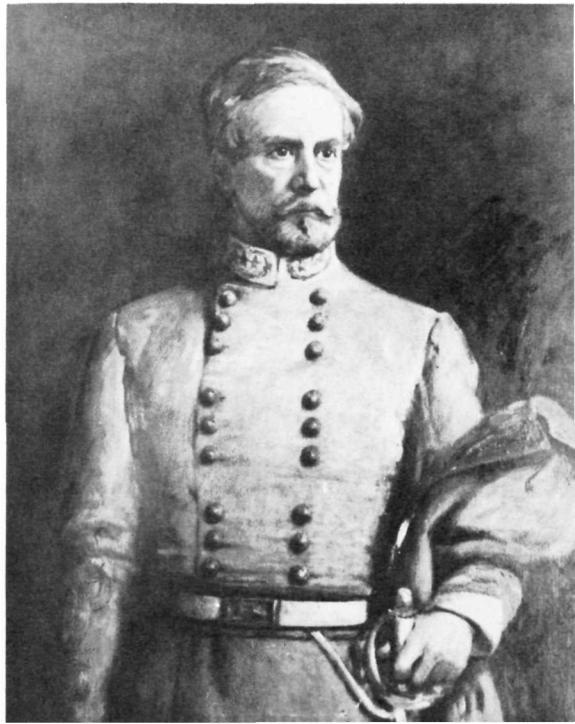
to attack. To move against the city it was necessary to reach the bluffs which extended north and south and on which Vicksburg had been built. Behind the bluffs, to the east, lay dry ground on which an army might maneuver; below the bluffs, on both sides of the river, flooded swamplands prevented ground movements. With his army behind the bluffs, either above or below, Grant might come to grips with Pemberton's Army of Vicksburg. Unless he reached the bluffs, capture of the city would be impossible; it could not be assaulted from the river.

The line of bluffs which marks the eastern boundary of the Mississippi Valley leaves the river at Memphis, curves in a great 250-mile arc away from the river, and then swings back to reach the river again at Vicksburg. Enclosed between the bluffs and the river is the "Delta"—a strip of land averaging some 60 miles in width, which is now a fertile, well-drained, cotton-growing region. In 1863, it was a swampy bottom land containing numerous rivers and bayous, subject to incessant floods. It was covered with thick forests and dense undergrowth, a condition, which, according to Grant's engineer officer, "renders the country almost impassable in summer, and entirely so, except by boats, in winter." This impenetrable swampland, lying before the bluffs, effectively guarded Vicksburg's right flank. Unless the waterways of the Delta might provide a passage to the bluffs, operations against Vicksburg to the north were hopeless.

Maj. Gen. U. S. Grant, commanding the Union Army of the Tennessee. Courtesy National Archives.



Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, commanding the Confederate Army of Vicksburg. Courtesy Flohr Studio, Vicksburg.



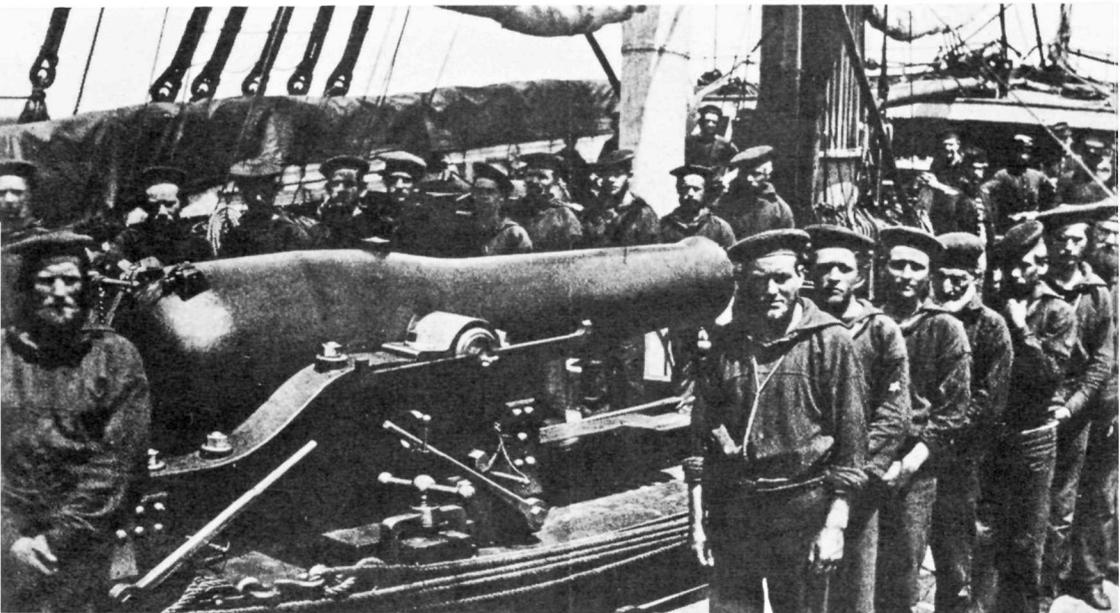
South of Vicksburg the prospect for the Union Army was equally dismal. After meeting the river at Vicksburg, the bluffs follow the river course closely to the south and were accessible, therefore, to troops from the Mississippi River. But the river batteries of the city prevented passage of transports to the river below; for troops to get below the city it was necessary to move through the Louisiana lowlands west of the river. This region was like the Delta north of Vicksburg—flooded bottom lands interspersed with bayous, rivers, and lakes. It would prove equally obstinate to land movements.

To increase Grant's difficulties, his campaign against Vicksburg was begun during the wet season when streams were overflowing and lowlands impassable. The winter of 1862-63 was a period of unusually high water, the Mississippi cresting higher than its natural banks from December until April. Had Grant reached Vicksburg during the dry season, his problem would have been less formidable.

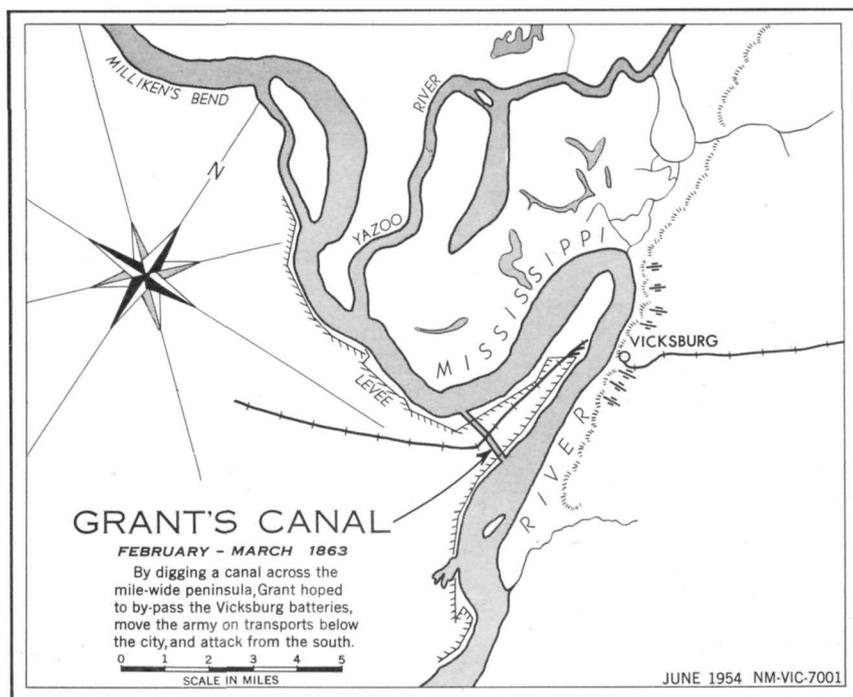
Until the bottoms were dry enough to permit land movements, the Union commander felt himself compelled to keep the army active. Even if success along the water routes seemed unlikely, he reasoned that prolonged idleness would be injurious to the health and morale of his troops. Grant had come to believe that military success was won by the aggressive. To Grant's critics, who demanded that he open the Mississippi without delay or be replaced by someone who could, Lincoln replied, "I can't spare this man; he fights."

As Pemberton prepared to defend Vicksburg he was beset by difficulties rivaling those of his opponent, despite the topography which was friendly to his defensive purpose. Vicksburg would be secure only so long as the Confederate Army could prevent Grant from achieving a foothold on the high ground above or below the city. Yet, to prevent such a lodgment, it was necessary for Pemberton to defend a wide front extending 200 miles above and below Vicksburg, at any point along which Grant might strike. To cover this large area the Confederate commander would have to disperse his limited garrison dangerously and at the same time retain sufficient troops to protect the city—his primary responsibility. Under such conditions it was essential for Pemberton to receive information of Federal movements in order to concentrate his troops rapidly to meet the advance. Yet Pemberton was almost wholly lacking in cavalry and had no navy to interfere with and report Union progress through the rivers and bayous. Both Pemberton and Grant faced exacting problems in command during the Vicksburg operations.

GRANT'S CANAL. Vicksburg's location on the horseshoe bend of the river had suggested a solution to the Vicksburg problem the previous summer. By digging a canal across the peninsula below Vicksburg and diverting the river through it, unarmored transports could bypass the



*Pivot-gun and crew of the Union warship **Wissahickon**, which fought the **Vicksburg** batteries. From *Photographic History of the Civil War*.*

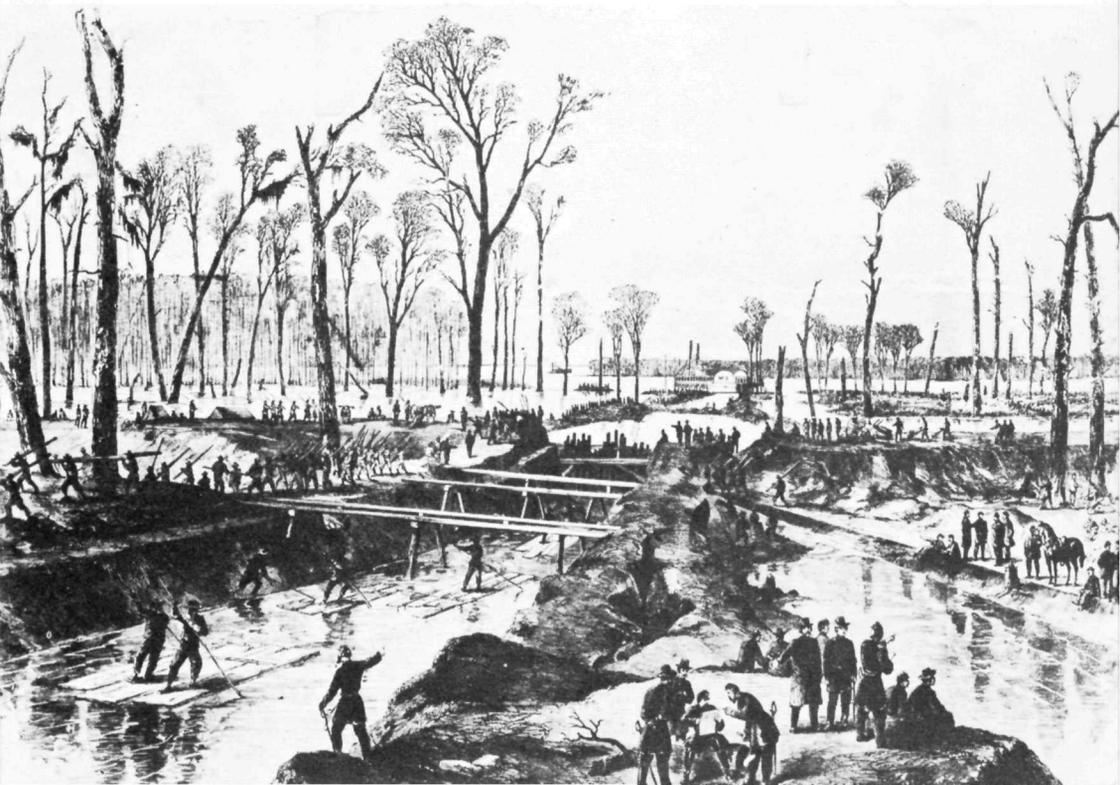


city batteries and deliver troops safely to the bluffs below. In January, Sherman's Corps, assisted by dredging machines, began excavation of the mile-long canal. This project continued until March when a sudden rise in the river flooded the peninsula, driving the troops to the levees, and destroying much of their work.

DUCKPORT CANAL. A similar effort to turn Vicksburg's left flank was essayed by cutting a canal at Duckport, between Milliken's Bend and Vicksburg. By this avenue it was hoped vessels might leave the Mississippi above Vicksburg, pass through a series of circuitous bayous and emerge again on the Mississippi 20 miles below the city. The route was laboriously opened for navigation and one small steamer safely passed to the river below. Then the level of the river fell and blocked the Duckport attempt.

LAKE PROVIDENCE EXPEDITION. While the canal work was in progress, McPherson's Corps was assigned the opening of the Lake Providence route. The objective of this activity was the turning of Vicksburg's left flank by passing southward through the Louisiana waterways to reach the bluffs below the city. A canal was cut to provide entrance from the Mississippi into Lake Providence, 75 miles above Vicksburg. From Lake Providence a route was surveyed through the labyrinth of

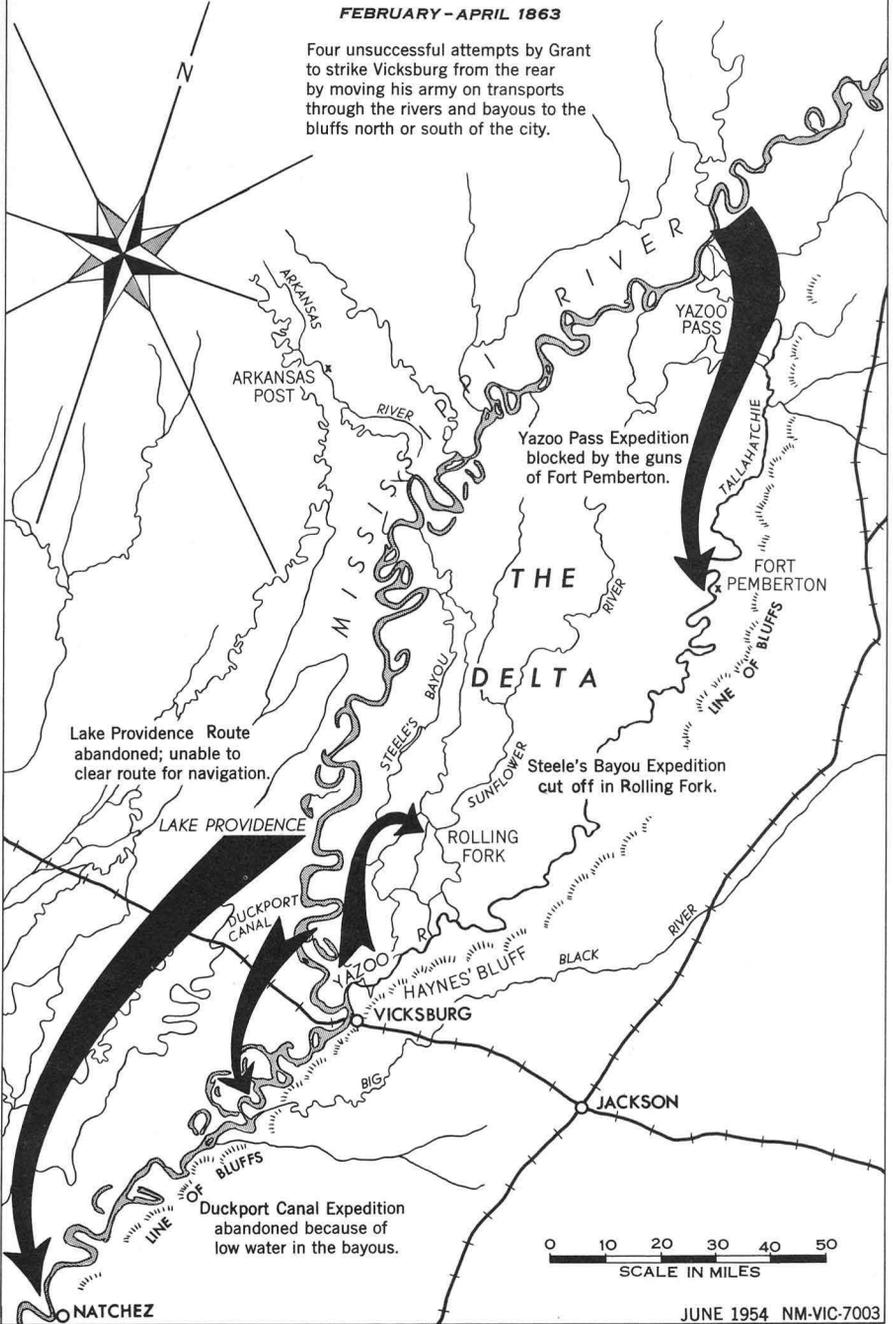
Union soldiers at work on Grant's canal opposite Vicksburg. From a wartime sketch.



THE BAYOU EXPEDITIONS

FEBRUARY - APRIL 1863

Four unsuccessful attempts by Grant to strike Vicksburg from the rear by moving his army on transports through the rivers and bayous to the bluffs north or south of the city.



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bayous, lakes, and rivers by which a fleet might emerge again on the Mississippi 200 miles below the city and move on Vicksburg from the south. While presenting great difficulties to navigation, the entire 400 miles would be safe from enemy action. By the end of March 1863, McPherson's men had almost cleared the route for navigation. The dredging of shoals and the sawing off of trees far enough below the water to permit passage of the transports proved the most severe obstacles. Before this long and extremely difficult route could be completed, however, other, more likely, plans were formulated, and the Lake Providence expedition was recalled.

THE YAZOO PASS EXPEDITION. The Yazoo Pass project, which sought to turn the right flank of Vicksburg by sending an expedition through the Delta waterways to the bluffs north of the city, was for a time the most promising of the bayou attempts. By exploding a mine in the Yazoo Pass, 325 river miles north of Vicksburg, access from the Mississippi into the rivers of the Delta was secured. With paddle wheels reversed against the roaring current which surged through the crevasse, and suffering extensive damage in collisions with trees and floating debris, the gunboats and transports carrying a division of infantry began the hazardous journey. Almost a month was required to reach the calmer waters of the Coldwater River.

Notified of the threat, Pemberton dispatched Maj. Gen. W. W. Loring's Division to halt the Union advance. Fort Pemberton, overlooking the Yalabusha River 90 miles north of Vicksburg, was quickly constructed of earth and cotton bales. The land surrounding the fort was completely flooded, permitting approach by water only. On March 11, the Union gunboats began an artillery bombardment and were promptly greeted by a heavy return fire as "Old Blizzards" Loring gained his nickname by pacing the parapet and urging his gunners to, "Give them blizzards, boys! Give them blizzards!" Grant had planned to send 30,000 men through the Yazoo Pass; but Loring's gunners blasted back every attempt to pass the fort, forcing the fleet to withdraw. The Yazoo Pass expedition was one of the great flanking attempts of the war—the route from Milliken's Bend to the rear of Vicksburg through the pass was over 700 miles, yet it was only 30 miles direct from Milliken's Bend to Vicksburg.

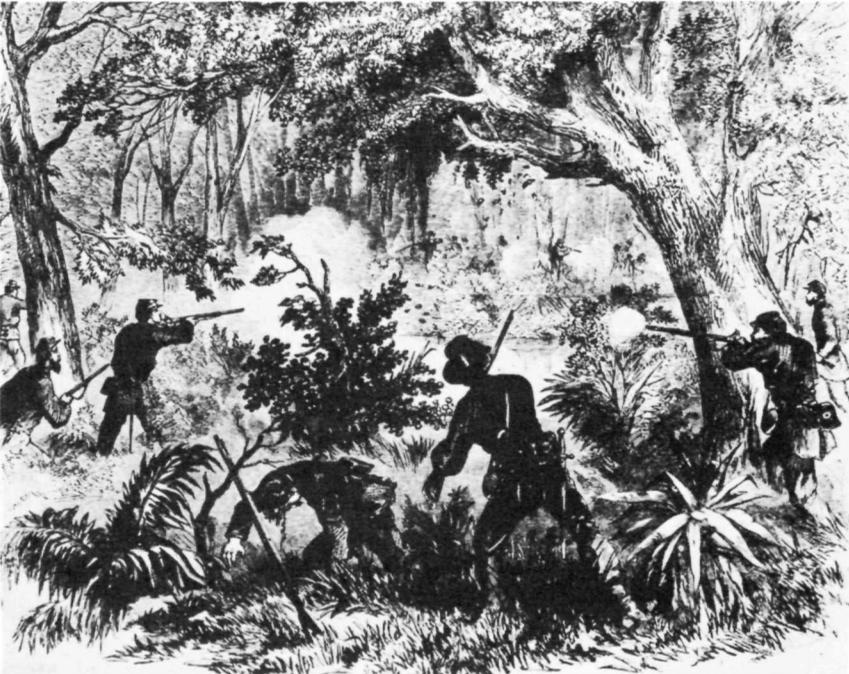
THE STEELE'S BAYOU EXPEDITION. The last and most extraordinary of Grant's unsuccessful attempts to reach Vicksburg was the Steele's Bayou expedition through 200 miles of narrow, twisting bayous north of Vicksburg. Like the Yazoo Pass operation, it was an effort to turn the city's right flank. This shorter route had been originally scouted in order to send aid to the Yazoo Pass expedition when that column seemed in great danger of being cut off and captured. Further explora-

tion suggested the route to the bluffs by way of Steele's Bayou might prove the best of all possible approaches to Vicksburg, and Porter himself commanded the squadron of 11 vessels which entered Steele's Bayou from the Yazoo River on March 16.

The route was heavily obstructed by natural hazards, but Porter, warned by apprehensive officers who feared that superstructures would be carried away in crashing through the closely overhung waterways, answered with the declaration, "All I need is an engine, guns, and a hull to float them." Progress was slow through winding streams barely wide enough to admit passage of the gunboats. This time alert Confederates, aided by treacherous obstructions in the mouth of the Rolling Fork, nearly succeeded in shutting up and capturing the entire fleet by felling huge trees across the bayou to block Porter's retreat.

Sherman, following behind the fleet with infantry, received word of Porter's danger, and an eerie night march ensued. By the flaring light of candles held in the muzzles of their rifles, the Federal soldiers splashed through the canebrake hip deep in water and arrived in time to drive off the Confederates who had moved in behind the Union fleet. Three days were required to back the fleet to safety on the Mississippi, which was reached late in March. Grant had now tested

Skirmishing in the heavily wooded and flooded bottom lands during the bayou expeditions. From a wartime sketch.



all possible approaches to Vicksburg as he attempted to swing wide around its flanks to the north and south. Every effort had failed. In April, the Union Army was no closer to Vicksburg than it had been in December. The Southern bastion on the Mississippi had successfully withstood Union land and naval attacks for almost a year.

The Vicksburg Campaign: Grant Moves Against Vicksburg— and Succeeds

In the eyes of many in the North, Grant's Army had floundered in the swamps for months with nothing to show for it except a steadily mounting death list from disease. Criticism of the Union commander mounted. "I don't know what to make of Grant, he's such a quiet little fellow," said Lincoln, thinking of the more flamboyant leaders who had led his Eastern armies, "The only way I know he's around is by the way he makes things *git*." Lincoln had grown increasingly fond of Grant, whose army, while ineffective, had never been inactive. Now he declared to Grant's critics, "I think we'll try him a little longer."

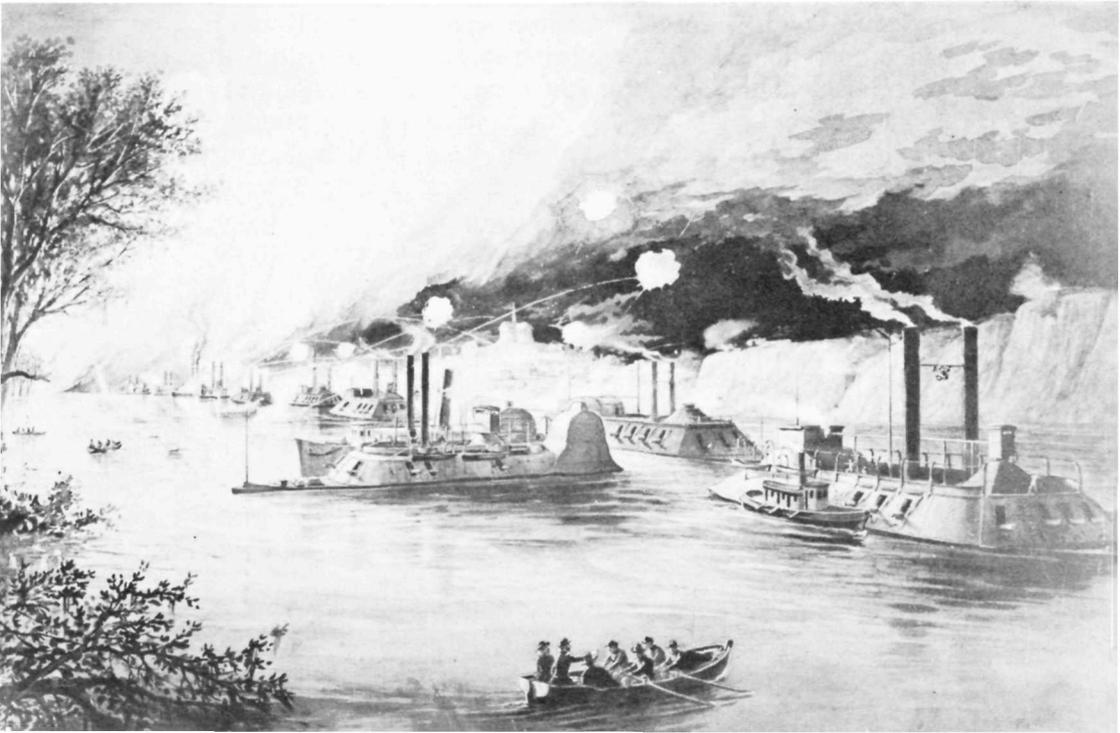
Although Grant had made every effort to navigate the bayous and reach Vicksburg, he was later to record that little hope had been entertained that success would greet these ventures. While waiting for the dry season which would permit land operations, however, he had determined to exhaust every possibility and to retain the fighting edge of his army by keeping it constantly on the move. As April arrived and the roads began to emerge from the slowly receding waters, Grant prepared to execute the movement which he had believed from the first to be the logical approach against Vicksburg—marching down the west bank of the Mississippi through Louisiana, crossing the river south of the city, and laying siege to it from the rear.

PORTER RUNS THE VICKSBURG BATTERIES. Grant's Vicksburg campaign officially began on March 29, 1863, when he ordered McClernand's Corps to open a road for the army from Milliken's Bend to the river below the city. Considerable work had been done previously when it was contemplated that a canal from Duckport to the river below Vicksburg might offer passage to the fleet. Falling waters had finally defeated this plan and, during April, McClernand's engineers labored to bridge streams, corduroy roads, and build flatboats to cross areas still covered by flood waters. During that month also, elements of the Army of the Tennessee accomplished the 70-mile march and assembled at a small hamlet appropriately named, Hard Times, in view of Grant's unpleasant bayou experiences. Here they were across the river from the Confederate stronghold of Grand Gulf, 25 miles below Vicksburg.



Admiral David Dixon Porter, commanding the Union naval operations on the inland waters. Courtesy National Archives.

Porter's gunboats running the Vicksburg batteries on the night of April 16, 1863.
From a wartime sketch.





This remarkable wartime photograph, taken by a Confederate Secret Service agent, shows Grierson's cavalrymen near the end of their 600-mile raid behind the Confederate lines. From Photographic History of the Civil War.

To ferry the Union Army across the Mississippi, it was necessary for Porter's fleet, in anchorage north of Vicksburg, to run the batteries and rendezvous with Grant below. While naval craft singly and in groups had, on occasion, passed these batteries successfully before, it was still a formidable undertaking for which careful preparation was required. As protection against shellfire, each vessel had its port side, which would face the Vicksburg guns in passage, piled high with bales of cotton, hay, and grain. Coal barges were lashed alongside as an additional defense.

Shortly before midnight, April 16, Confederate pickets in skiffs at the bend of the river above Vicksburg saw the muffled fleet bearing down upon them and quickly gave the alarm. Tar barrels along the bank were ignited and buildings in the small village of De Soto across the river were set afire. The blinding light of a great flare helped illuminate the river and outline the fleet for the Confederate gunners. Tier upon tier of the river batteries thundered down on the Union vessels. In return, these boats delivered their broadsides into the city as they passed so close that the clatter of bricks from falling buildings could be heard on board.

Through this "magnificent, but terrible" spectacle—one of the most fearful pageants of the war—steamed the fleet in single file. "Their heavy shot walked right through us," related Porter. Every one of the 12 boats was hit repeatedly. Many went out of control and revolved slowly with the current. Despite the furious bombardment, only one craft was sunk; within a few days damages were repaired and the fleet joined the army at the village of Hard Times. Because of the difficulty of supplying the army by wagon train over the wretched road from Milliken's Bend, 6 transports and 12 barges loaded with supplies ran the batteries a few nights later with the loss of 1 transport and 6 barges.

THE RIVER CROSSING. Grant's plan was to make an assault landing at Grand Gulf, a fortified road junction on the bluffs at the mouth of the Big Black River. On April 29, the Union gunboats pounded the Grand Gulf fortifications for 6 hours, seeking to neutralize the defenses and clear the landing for 10,000 Federal infantry aboard transports just beyond range of the Confederate cannon. The naval attack failed to reduce the Confederate works, and that night Grant marched southward along the Louisiana shore to a landing opposite Bruinsburg. There he was met by the fleet which then slipped downstream under cover of darkness. By noon of the following day, April 30, Grant was across the Mississippi, experiencing

a degree of relief scarcely ever equaled since. . . . I was now in the enemy's country, with a vast river and the stronghold of Vicksburg between me and my base of supplies. But I was on dry ground on the same side of the river with the enemy. All the campaigns, labors, hardships, and exposures, from the month of December previous to this time, that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one object.

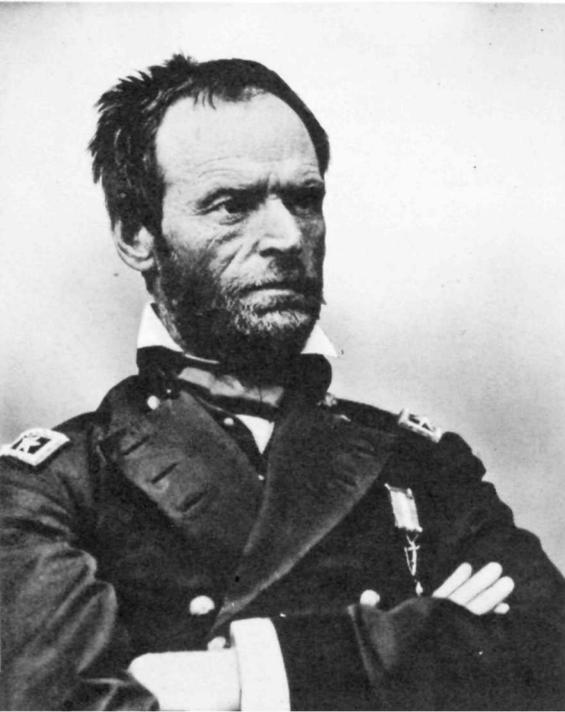
Grant's landing was unopposed, partly because of two diversionary movements and partly because of Pemberton's decision to hold his army close to Vicksburg and fight a defensive campaign. Both diversions were completely successful. On April 17, the day after Porter's running of the batteries had indicated Grant's strategy of striking from the south, Col. R. H. Grierson with 1,000 cavalymen moved out from southwestern Tennessee on one of the celebrated cavalry raids of the war. They rode entirely through the State of Mississippi behind Pemberton's army to a junction with Union forces at Baton Rouge, La. In 16 days Grierson covered 600 miles, interfering with Confederate telegraph and railroad communications and forcing Pemberton to detach a division of infantry to protect his supply and communication lines. Sherman, whose corps had not yet made the march from Milliken's Bend, made an elaborate feint above Vicksburg. Loading his men aboard every available gunboat, transport, and tug, he landed at

Haynes' Bluff, north of Vicksburg, leading Pemberton to expect the real attack from that direction. Both moves helped screen Grant's true objective.

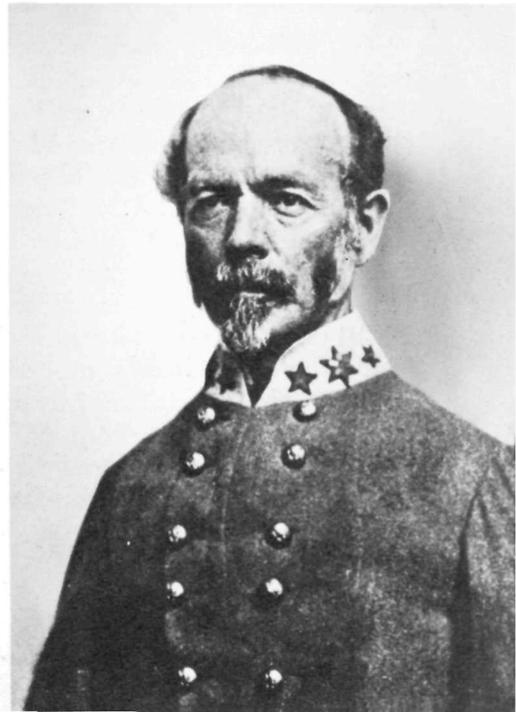
The events immediately following Grant's landing revealed a basic difference in tactical concepts between Pemberton, commanding the Army of Vicksburg, and Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, his superior, who was in charge of Confederate operations in the West. Johnston believed that to defeat Grant it would be necessary for Pemberton to unite his whole force in order to smash the Union Army, preferably before Grant could consolidate his position on the east bank. Accordingly, he wired Pemberton on May 2 "If Grant's army crosses, unite all your troops to beat him; success will give you back what was abandoned to win it."

It was Pemberton's concept that holding Vicksburg was vital to the Confederacy and that he must primarily protect the city and its approaches. To have marched his army to meet Grant "would have stripped Vicksburg and its essential flank defenses of their garrisons, and the city itself might have fallen an easy prey into the eager hands of the enemy." This inability of Pemberton and Johnston to reach agreement upon the tactics that might thwart Grant's invasion seriously affected subsequent Confederate operations and prevented effective cooperation between the two commanders in the Vicksburg campaign.

Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, commanding the Union XV Corps.
Courtesy National Archives.



Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, commanding Confederate military operations in the West. Courtesy National Archives.



THE BATTLE OF PORT GIBSON. McClernand's Corps, immediately upon debarking on April 30, headed for the bluffs 3 miles inland. By nightfall the Federal soldiers had reached the high ground and pushed on toward Port Gibson, 30 miles south of Vicksburg. From this point, roads led to Grand Gulf, Vicksburg, and Jackson. Maj. Gen. John S. Bowen moved his Grand Gulf command toward Port Gibson to intercept the threat, and, at daylight on May 1, leading elements of the Union advance clashed with Bowen's troops, barring the two roads which led to Port Gibson.

The battle of Port Gibson was a series of furious day-long engagements over thickly wooded ridges cut by deep, precipitous gullies and covered with dense undergrowth. While greatly outnumbering Bowen, McClernand was prevented by the rugged terrain from bringing his whole force into action. Slowly forced backward, Bowen conducted an orderly retreat through the town, which he evacuated. The holding action had cost Bowen 800 casualties from his command of 8,000; Union losses were about the same from a force at hand of about 23,000. Pemberton determined not to contest Grand Gulf lest he risk being cut off from Vicksburg and withdrew across the Big Black River. Thus he permitted Grant to occupy Grand Gulf and gave him a strong foothold on the east bank of the Mississippi.

THE STRATEGY OF THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN. Grant's overall strategy, up to the capture of Grand Gulf, had been first to secure a base on the river below Vicksburg and then to cooperate with Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks in capturing Port Hudson. After this he planned to move the combined force against Vicksburg. Port Hudson, a strong point on the Mississippi near Baton Rouge, was garrisoned by Confederate troops after Farragut's withdrawal the previous summer. At Grand Gulf, Grant learned that Bank's investment of Port Hudson would be delayed for some time. To follow his original plan would force postponement of the Vicksburg campaign for at least a month, giving Pemberton invaluable time to organize his defense and receive reinforcements. From this delay the Union Army could expect the addition of no more than 12,000 men. Grant now came to one of the most remarkable decisions of his military career.

Information had been received that a new Confederate force was being raised at Jackson, 45 miles east of Vicksburg. Against the advice of his senior officers, and contrary to orders from Washington, Grant resolved to cut himself off from his base of supply on the river, march quickly in between the two Confederate forces, and defeat each separately before they could join against him. Meanwhile, he would subsist his army from the land through which he marched. The plan was well conceived, for in marching to the northeast toward Edwards Station, on the railroad midway between Jackson and Vicksburg,

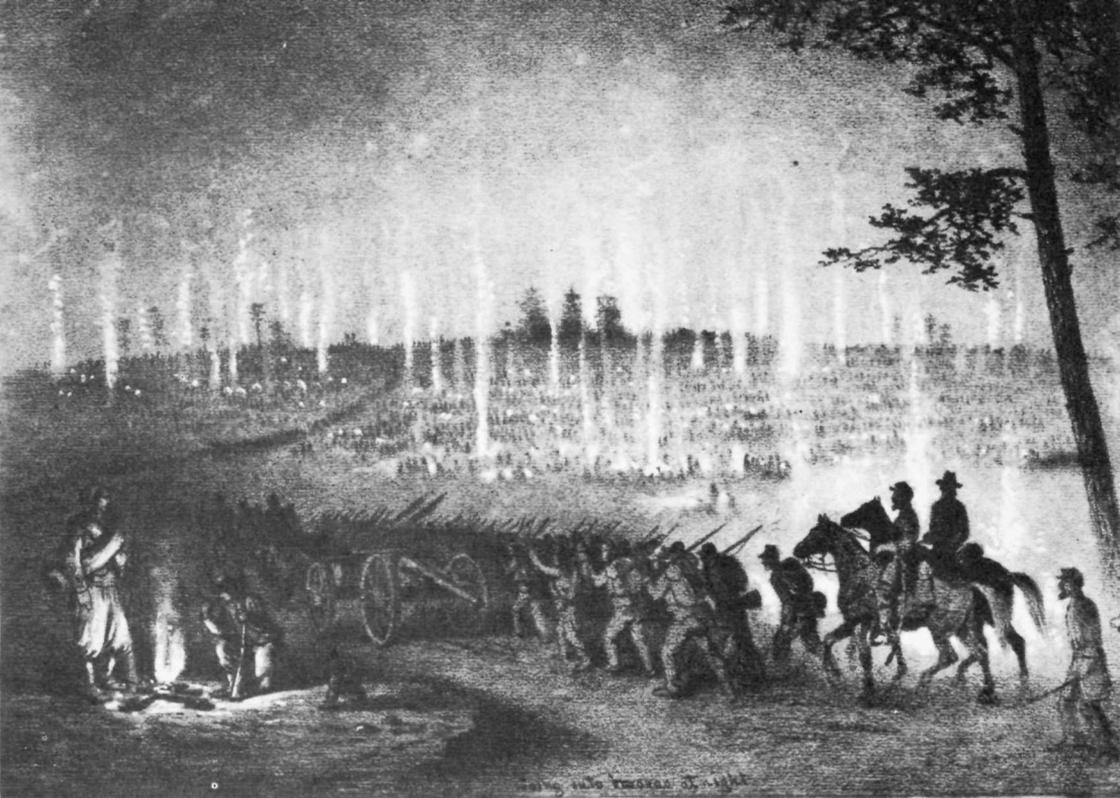
Grant's vulnerable left flank would be protected by the Big Black River. Moreover, his real objective—Vicksburg or Jackson—would not be revealed immediately and could be changed to meet events. Upon reaching the railroad, he could also sever Pemberton's communications with Jackson and the East. It was Grant's belief that, although the Confederate forces would be greater than his own, this advantage would be offset by their wide dispersal and by the speed and design of his march.

But this calculated risk was accompanied by grave dangers, of which Grant's lieutenants were acutely aware. It meant placing the Union Army deep in alien country behind the Confederate Army where the line of retreat could be broken and where the alternative to victory would not only be defeat but complete destruction. The situation was summed up in Sherman's protest, recorded by Grant, "that I was putting myself in a position voluntarily which an enemy would be glad to maneuver a year—or a long time—to get me."

The action into which Pemberton was drawn by the Union threat indicated the keenness of Grant's planning. The Confederate general believed that the farther Grant campaigned from the river the weaker his position would become and the more exposed his rear and flanks. Accordingly, Pemberton elected to remain on the defensive, keeping his army as a protective shield between Vicksburg and the Union Army and awaiting an opportunity to strike a decisive blow—a policy which permitted Grant to march inland unopposed.

With the arrival of Sherman's Corps from Milliken's Bend, Grant's preparations were complete and, on May 7, the Union Army marched out from Grand Gulf to the northeast. His widely separated columns moved out on a broad front concealing their objective. When assembled, Grant's Army numbered about 45,000 during the campaign. To oppose him, Pemberton had available about 50,000 troops, but these were scattered widely to protect important points. On the day of Grant's departure from Grand Gulf, Pemberton's defensive position was further complicated by orders from President Jefferson Davis that both Vicksburg and Port Hudson must be held at all cost. The Union Army, however, was already between Vicksburg and Port Hudson and would soon be between Vicksburg and Jackson.

In comparison with campaigns in the more thickly populated Eastern Theater, where a more extensive system of roads and railroads was utilized to provide the tremendous quantities of food and supplies necessary to sustain an army, the campaign of Grant's Western veterans ("reg'lar great big hellsnorters, same breed as ourselves," said a charitable "Johnny Reb") was a new type of warfare. The Union supply train largely consisted of a curious collection of stylish carriages, buggies, and lumbering farm wagons stacked high with ammunition boxes and drawn by whatever mules or horses could be found. (Grant

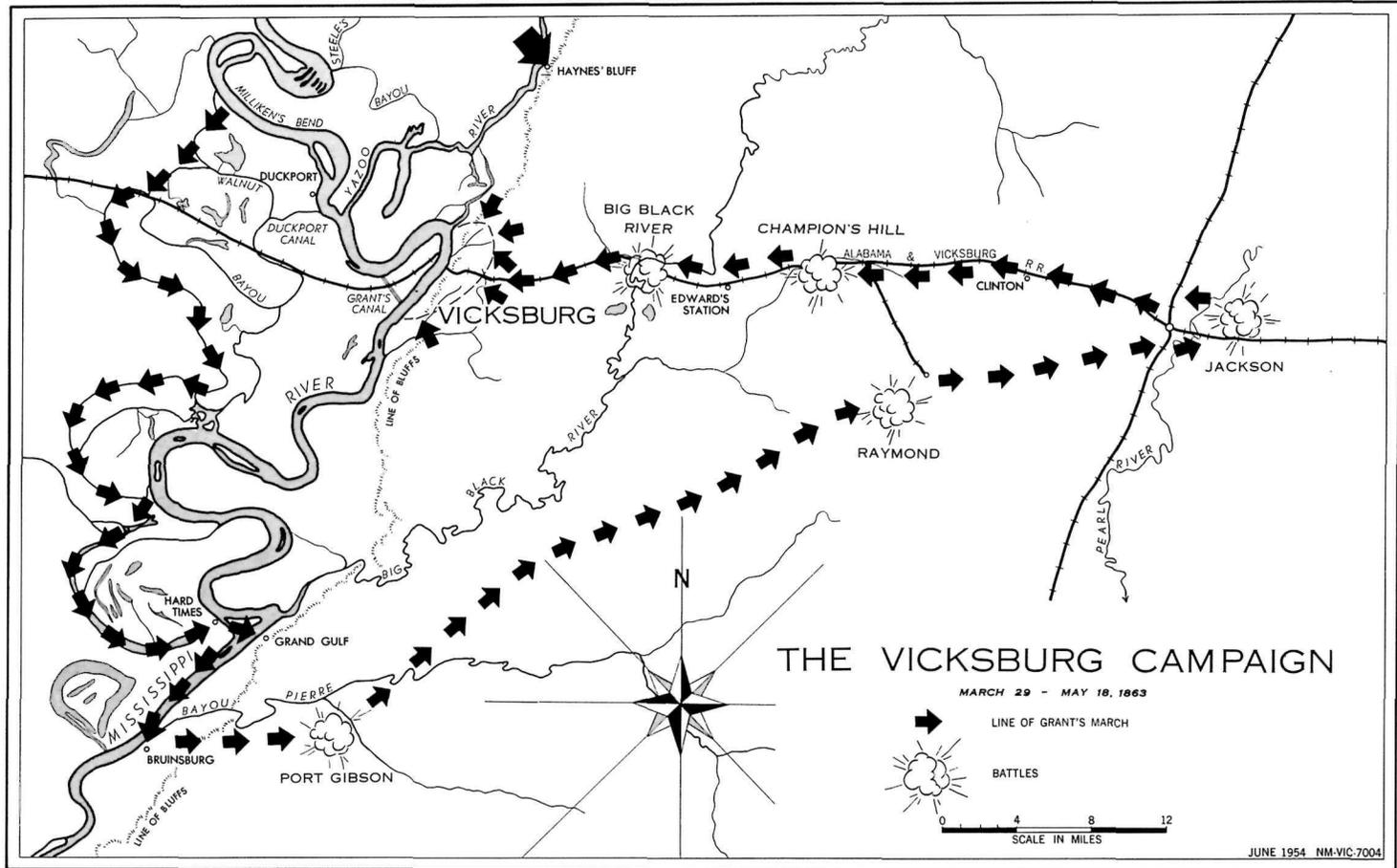


Troops on the march, going into bivouac at night. From a wartime sketch.

began his Wilderness campaign in Virginia the following year requiring over 56,000 horses and mules for his 5,000 wagons and ambulances, artillery caissons, and cavalry.) Lacking transportation, food supplies were carried in the soldier's knapsack. Beef, poultry, and pork "requisitioned" from barn and smokehouse enabled the army which had cut loose from its base to live for 3 weeks on 5 days' rations.

A noted historian described this campaign: "The campaign was based on speed—speed, and light rations foraged off the country, and no baggage, nothing at the front but men and guns and ammunition, and no rear; no slackening of effort, no respite for the enemy until Vicksburg itself was invested and fell."

THE BATTLES OF RAYMOND AND JACKSON. When it became likely that Grant might strike the railroad in the vicinity of Edwards Station, Pemberton moved from Vicksburg toward that point with his main force, leaving a strong reserve in this city. At the same time he ordered the units collecting at Jackson to hit Grant's flank and rear if the opportunity presented itself. Maj. Gen. John A. Logan's Division, in

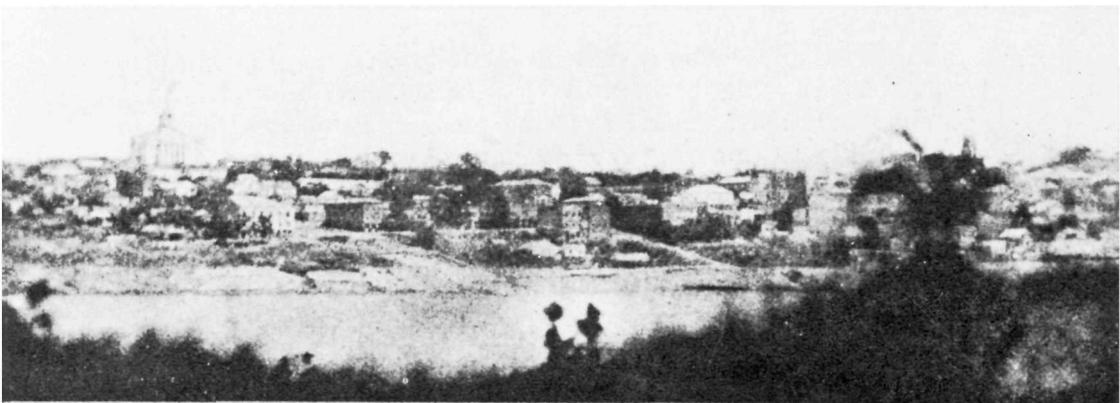


advance of McPherson's Union Corps, reached the vicinity of Raymond, a crossroads village 15 miles from Jackson on May 12, and was there engaged by a Confederate brigade under Brig. Gen. John Gregg. A sharp clash lasting several hours followed, Gregg's outmanned infantry being driven back toward Jackson. Each side lost about 500 men during the engagement. Confederate resistance at Raymond indicated to Grant that Jackson might be held more strongly than had been anticipated, and rumors reached the Union Commander that strong reinforcements under Johnston were expected there. Grant then determined to make sure of Jackson and, on May 13, wheeled his entire army toward the east.

Johnston arrived by rail in Jackson, on the night of the Raymond engagement, in order to take field command of all troops defending Vicksburg, and was notified that Grant's Army was between Pemberton's forces and those in Jackson. About 12,000 troops were at Jackson, against which the entire Union Army was reported to be moving. Johnston telegraphed Richmond, "I am too late."

In a pouring rain, Sherman and McPherson approached Jackson on the morning of May 14. Johnston posted the brigades of General Gregg and Brig. Gen. W. H. T. Walker on the approaches to the city with instructions to hold just long enough for valuable stores to be removed from Jackson northward to Canton where he hoped to combine forces with Pemberton. Delaying their attack until the rain

Photograph of Vicksburg taken from across the Mississippi River by a Union surgeon during a bombardment. From Photographic History of the Civil War.



Vicksburg, taken under fire.



A Union assault during the battle of Champion's Hill. From a wartime sketch.

(which would spoil their powder) slackened, the Union infantry charged the Confederate entrenchments, driving the defenders before them and capturing the city along with 35 guns and much equipment. Having intercepted a dispatch from Johnston to Pemberton ordering a junction of all Confederate troops, Grant put his men on the road toward Edwards Station at daylight the following morning. His plan was to drive a wedge between the Confederate forces before Johnston, circling to the north, could effect a junction with Pemberton. Sherman remained in Jackson to destroy the railroad yards and stores.

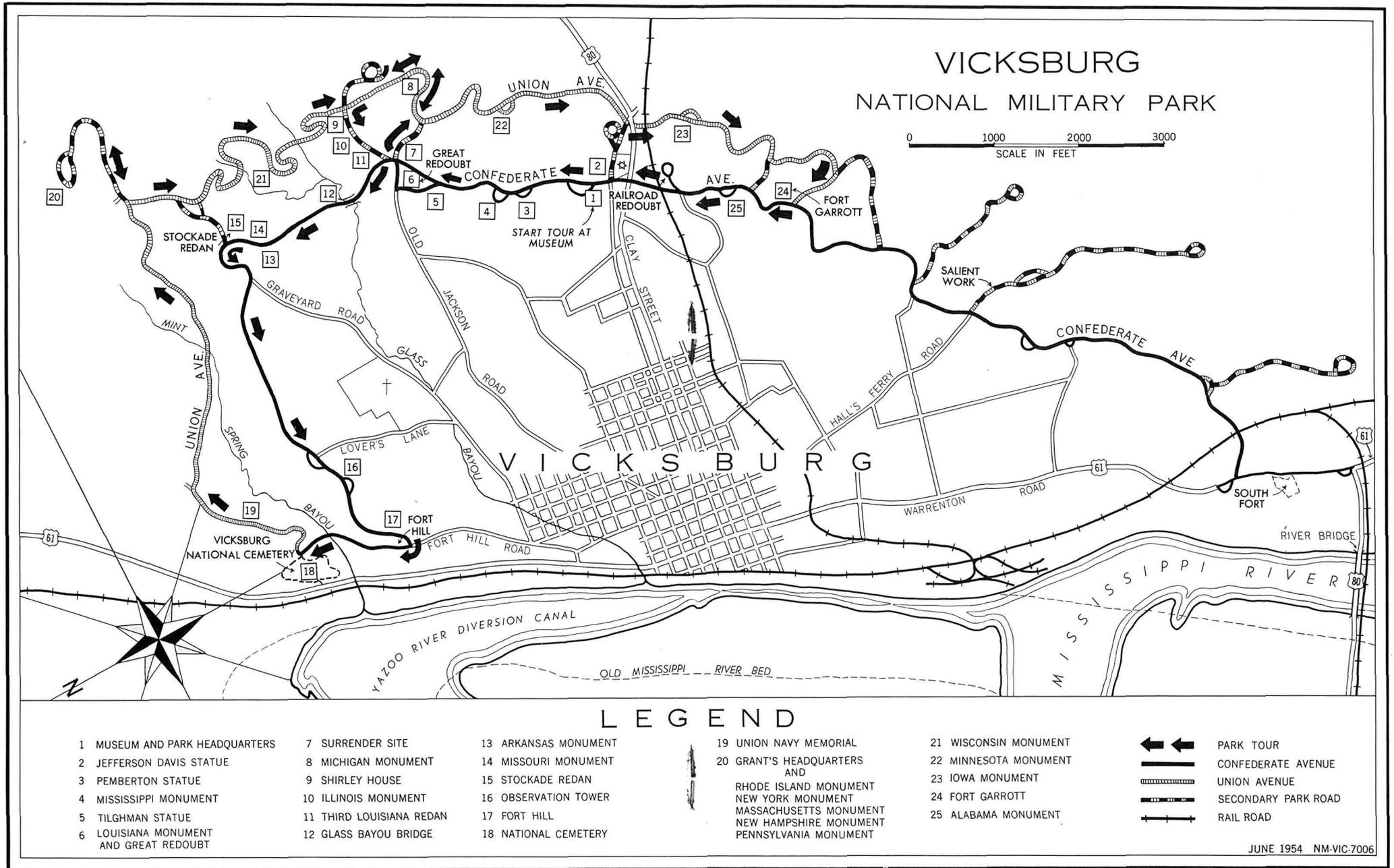
THE BATTLE OF CHAMPION'S HILL. Events preceding the battle of Champion's Hill emphasized the opposing tactical views held by the two Confederate commanders. Pemberton believed the retention of Vicksburg so imperative that no move which might endanger the city should be considered. It was Johnston's view that Admiral Porter's successful passage of the batteries and Grant's approach from the rear had already doomed the city, and that it was consequently valuable only for the military supplies and troops which it contained. Johnston believed that the South's only chance to prevent loss of the Mississippi was for Pemberton and himself to join forces and fight the great battle which might smash and destroy Grant's Army.

On the morning of May 14, Pemberton, at Edwards Station, received the dispatch from Johnston (a copy of which Grant had already intercepted) informing him of the position of Union troops at Clinton, between the two Confederate forces, and ordering him "if practicable, come up on his [Grant's] rear at once." Pemberton considered the order "suicidal." Convinced that Johnston's recent arrival on the field and separation from the main body did not give him sufficient information to survey the situation accurately, Pemberton called a council of war and placed the order before his commanders. Although a majority of his council favored obedience to Johnston's order, Pemberton was unwilling to endorse a movement which might endanger Vicksburg. It was decided to move instead against Grant's supposed communications which were believed essential to the Union Army's existence away from the river.

On May 15, Pemberton marched to the southeast with 17,000 men, his route further separating him from Johnston to the north. Grant, meanwhile, prepared to head westward, his line of march threatening to pierce the gap between Johnston and Pemberton and beat both of them in the race for Vicksburg. On the morning of the 16th, a second order was received from Johnston ordering Pemberton to move to the north and join Johnston. This order was obeyed, but as Pemberton's troops were countermarching they were struck by Union troops.

The battle of Champion's Hill centered around a crescent-shaped ridge of about 75 feet elevation near the Champion plantation home and involved three parallel roads leading from Edwards Station to Raymond. Each of Pemberton's three divisions—led by General Bowen, General Loring, and Maj. Gen. Carter L. Stevenson—covered one of these roads. The battle opened shortly before noon on the 16th when Brig. Gen. A. P. Hovey's Union Division, supported by Logan's Division, attacked along the north road which passed over the slope of Champion's Hill. From the crest of the hill, Stevenson's Confederate Division opened a heavy fire on the advancing Union lines which steadily mounted the ridge, driving the Confederates back and capturing 11 guns. To meet this threat to the Confederate left flank, Bowen's Division was shifted to the north to prevent a breakthrough. Re-forming his lines, Bowen counterattacked the ridge position. He dislodged the Federal infantry, driving them from the slope, and recaptured all but two of the lost guns.

Grant, in turn, was now compelled to reinforce his hard-pressed right, and at 3:30 p. m. massed Union batteries concentrated fire on the ridge. The Federal infantry followed with heavy and repeated attacks along the entire line, and for the third time the hill changed hands. Pemberton was unable to rally his troops against these attacks, and the divisions of Bowen and Stevenson began to retreat toward Baker's Creek. Loring was detailed to hold the road open for the withdrawal of the





Wartime photograph of a Union supply station on the Big Black River in rear of Vicksburg. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Confederate Army. Before Loring could rejoin the main body, after its crossing of the stream, the Union Army secured the crossings. Loring was thus cut off, and he was only able to join Johnston after a long 3-day march around the Union Army. Pemberton retreated toward Vicksburg and that night took position at Big Black River, 12 miles east of the city.

The battle of Champion's Hill (or Baker's Creek) was the bloodiest action of the Vicksburg campaign. The numbers actually engaged were relatively equal, although a large Union reserve was close at hand. Pemberton lost nearly 4,000 men, not counting the entire division of Loring which was lost to his army. Grant listed casualties of 2,500, with Hovey losing one-third of his entire division killed and wounded.

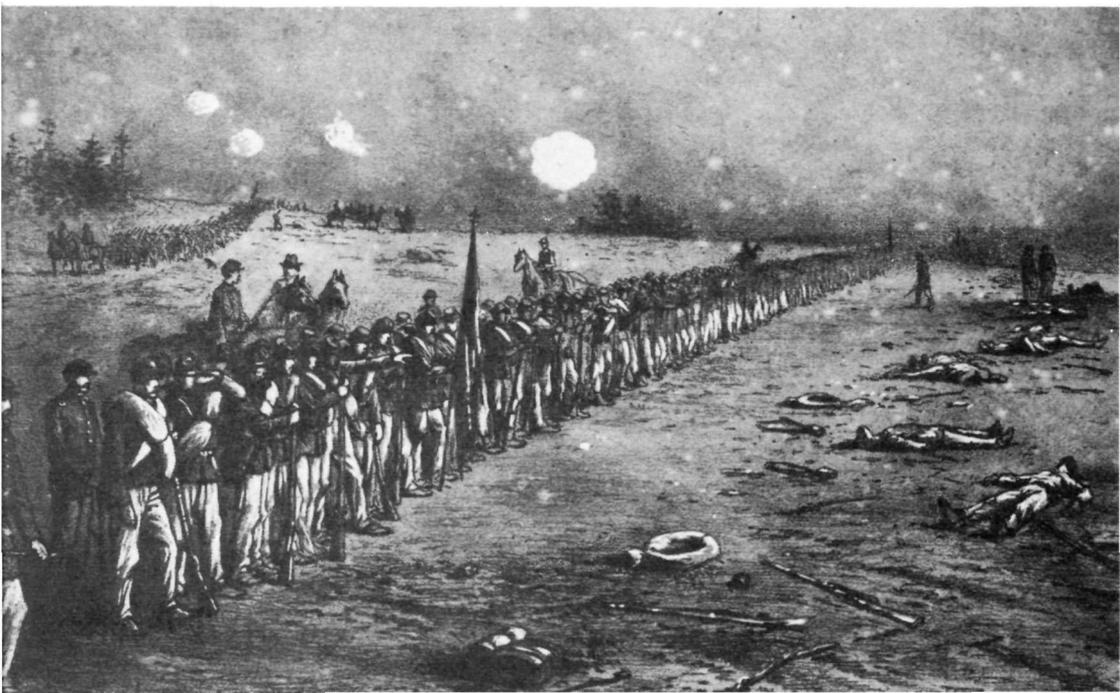
THE BATTLE OF BIG BLACK RIVER. Not knowing that Loring's Division had been cut off, Pemberton made a stand at the Big Black River in order to hold the bridges open for Loring to join the main force. The Confederate entrenchments spanned the river at a readily defensible location where the stream made a horseshoe bend. Across the mile-wide neck of the river the Confederates constructed a line of works, and behind the earthworks, with their backs to the river, were placed 4,000 infantry of Bowen's Division supported by artillery.

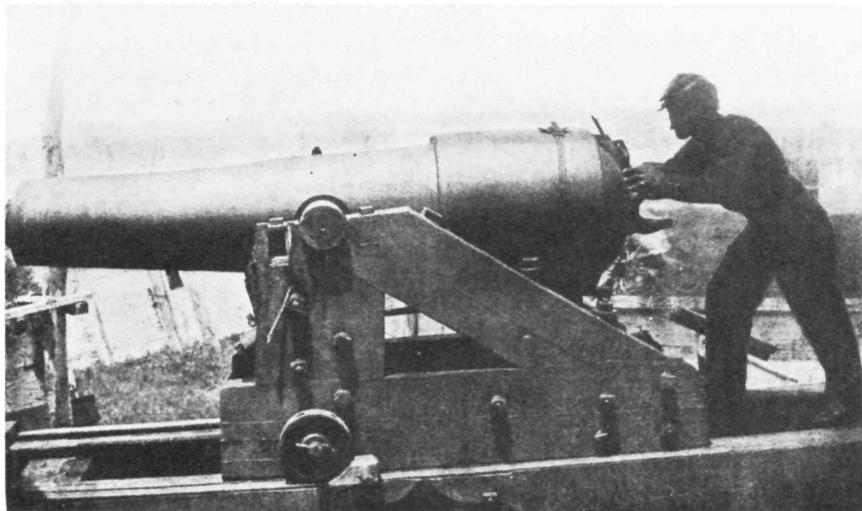
Before dawn on the 17th the Union Army pushed on toward Vicksburg. Grant, still hoping to win the race for Vicksburg, had dispatched Sherman's Corps to the north to pass the retreating Confederate Army as Grant engaged it from the front. At an early hour the Federal troops came in sight of the Confederate line, whereupon they opened an artillery barrage and deployed to assault. Before the deployment was complete, Brig. Gen. Eugene A. Carr's Division charged "with a shout" from the woods fronting the Confederate position. Realizing the danger of their position, where they might be cut off from the crossing to their rear, the Confederate troops broke and headed for the bridges in disorder. After the withdrawal, the bridges were burned, effectively halting Union pursuit. In the confusion, Grant captured over 1,000 prisoners along with 18 artillery pieces.

While Pemberton's Army retreated into the defenses of Vicksburg, Grant's engineers immediately began construction of bridges across the Big Black River, using trees, cotton bales, and lumber from nearby buildings as bridging materials. Sherman's Corps, which had struck the river 11 miles to the north attempting to outflank Pemberton and prevent his retreat to Vicksburg, threw a pontoon bridge across the river at that point. By light of pitch torches, the bridges were completed during the night. On the following morning, May 18, troops crossed en route to Vicksburg.

THE CAMPAIGN ENDED. The Union Army, now within a few miles of its long-sought objective, had, in the 18 days since it crossed the Mississippi, completed one of the most noteworthy campaigns of the war.

A regiment drawn up in line of battle. From a wartime sketch.





"Whistling Dick." This Confederate cannon which guarded Vicksburg gained widespread fame among Union soldiers and sailors because of the peculiar whistle of its projectiles. From Photographic History of the Civil War.

The terrain of the siege of Vicksburg—looking from the Confederate line to the Union position on the far ridge.



Marching deep into enemy territory, the Army of the Tennessee had successfully lived off the country while fighting and winning five engagements and inflicting critical losses in men and equipment, had prevented Johnston and Pemberton from joining forces, and had driven the Army of Vicksburg into the defenses of the city.

By noon of May 18, with Grant's advance expected momentarily, Pemberton believed the defenses of Vicksburg strong enough to stand off the Union Army until Johnston received sufficient reinforcements to raise the expected siege and prevent loss of the Mississippi River. There, while inspecting his defenses, Pemberton received a dispatch from Johnston advising the evacuation of Vicksburg which, Johnston felt, was already doomed. Military necessity demanded that "instead of losing both troops and place, we must, if possible, save the troops. If it is not too late, evacuate Vicksburg and its dependencies and march to the northeast."

Unwilling to yield the city without a fight, Pemberton placed the order before his senior officers. They were of unanimous opinion that it would be "impossible to withdraw the army from this position with such *morale* as to be of further service to the Confederacy." As the council of war reached its decision to remain and fight, Union guns opened on the works. The siege of Vicksburg had begun.

The Siege of Vicksburg

THE CONFEDERATE DEFENSE LINE. From his assumption of command 7 months before, Pemberton had put his engineers to work constructing a fortified line which would protect Vicksburg against an attack from the rear. A strong line of works had been thrown up along the crest of a ridge which was fronted by a deep ravine. The defense line began on the river 2 miles above Vicksburg and curved for 9 miles along the ridge to the river below, thus enclosing the city within its arc. So long as this line could be held, the river batteries denied to the North control of the Mississippi River.

At salient and commanding points along the line, artillery positions and forts (lunettes, redans, and redoubts) had been constructed. The earth walls of the forts were up to 20 feet thick. In front of these was dug a deep, wide ditch so that assaulting troops which climbed the steep ridge slope and reached the ditch would still have a high vertical wall to climb in order to gain entrance into the fort. Between the strong points, which were located every few hundred yards, was constructed a line of rifle pits and entrenchments, for the most part protected by parapets and ditches. Where spurs jutted out from the main ridge, advanced batteries were constructed which provided a deadly crossfire against attacking lines. The Confederates had mounted 128 artillery

pieces in these works, of which 36 were heavy siege guns; the remainder, field pieces.

Greatly strengthening the Confederate position was the irregular topography which resulted from the peculiar characteristics of the region's loess soil. Possessing an unusual tenacity, except when eroded by the action of running water, the loess had over the centuries been cut into deep gullies and ravines with abrupt faces separated by narrow, twisting ridges. This resulted in a broken and complicated terrain which would seriously obstruct the Union movement. To permit a clear field of fire and to hinder advancing troops, all the trees fronting the Confederate line were cut down. Several hundred yards away from the Confederate position and roughly parallel to it was a ridge system not so continuous and more broken than that occupied by Pemberton's Army. Along this line, the Union Army took position and began its siege operations.

On the scattered natural bridges of high ground, which spanned the ravines and provided approaches to Vicksburg, were located the six roads and one railroad leading into that city. Nine forts had been constructed overlooking each of these routes into Vicksburg, their guns completely commanding the approaches—Fort Hill on the river north of the city, Stockade Redan, Third Louisiana Redan, Great Redoubt, Second Texas Lunette, Railroad Redoubt, Fort Garrott (also known as Square Fort), Salient Works, and South Fort on the river below Vicksburg. (All but two of these works are well preserved today.) The Confederate divisions, left to right, were commanded by Maj. Gen. M. L. Smith, General Bowen, Maj. Gen. John H. Forney, and General Stevenson. The Army of Vicksburg, at the beginning of the siege, numbered about 31,000 men, of which Pemberton listed 18,500 effectives as available to man his defense line. Grant gave his strength, shortly after the siege began, as 50,000 effectives; his army was steadily enlarged during the siege by reinforcements from Memphis.

THE ASSAULT OF MAY 19. By midday of May 19, Grant had completed his investment of the city. In the north, Sherman's Corps was in position opposite the Confederate left from the river (at the present location of the national cemetery) to the Graveyard Road, at an average distance of about 500 yards. McPherson's Corps took position on Sherman's left from the Graveyard Road to near the Baldwin's Ferry Road; the front of McClernand's Corps extended from the Baldwin's Ferry Road southward.

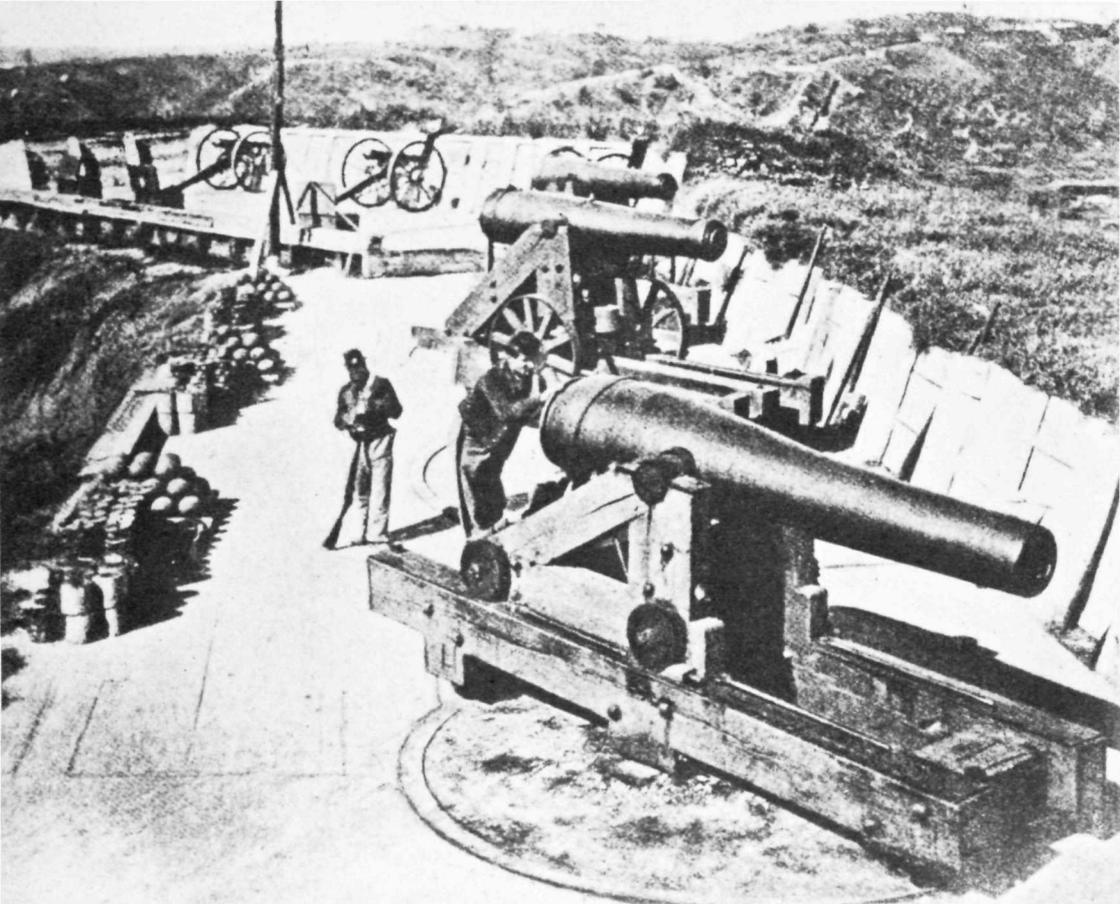
Considerable skirmishing had preceded the Union approach, as the Confederate pickets fell slowly back inside the defenses, thus preventing a close inspection of the Confederate fortifications. Grant determined, however, to attack immediately, before Pemberton had time to post his defenses strongly. The Union general ordered an assault



Confederate Railroad Redoubt. Plaques mark angle where fort wall was breached and entered by Union troops during the assault of May 22, 1863.

at 2 p. m. on the 19th. Sherman's troops, whose early arrival had enabled them better to prepare for attack, moved under heavy fire against the Confederate left. Although they succeeded in making a close lodgment against the walls of the Stockade Redan, they failed to breach the works and were repulsed. McPherson and McClernand, not yet in good position for attack, were unable to do more than advance several hundred yards closer to the siege line. Grant lost 1,000 men testing the Vicksburg defenses and discovered an unyielding army manning the works. Confederate losses were slight.

THE ASSAULT OF MAY 22. While the probing operation of the 19th had failed, Grant further considered the important results which a successful assault would achieve. Such a move, however costly, would save a long siege. In the end, fewer men might be lost, and a growing threat to the Union rear—General Johnston raising troops near Jackson for the relief of Vicksburg—could be eliminated by quickly capturing Vicksburg and throwing the entire Union strength against Johnston. In addition, the Federal troops, spirited by recent victories and impatient to seize the prize for which they had campaigned so long, would not work so zealously in the trenches with pick and shovel unless



The heavy guns of this Union siege battery were borrowed from the Federal gunboats and used against the Confederate siege defenses. From Photographic History of the Civil War.

assault had failed. On the 21st, Grant issued orders for a general assault against Vicksburg the following day.

The Union assault of May 22 was delivered against the center of the Confederate siege line along a 3-mile front from Stockade Redan to Fort Garrott. The felled trees and thick undergrowth, as well as the precipitous faces of the ravines, restricted the scope of Union maneuver. Only a portion of Grant's full strength could be brought into action, reserves being posted to exploit a breakthrough. Careful preparations preceded the attack: field batteries were run forward and emplaced to provide a covering fire for the infantry, and troops were advanced into concealed positions—in places, within 200 yards of their objective. Watches of all Union commanders were synchronized, the attack to begin simultaneously at 10 a. m. in order to prevent Pemberton from shifting his forces from one threatened point to another.

THE SIEGE OF VICKSBURG

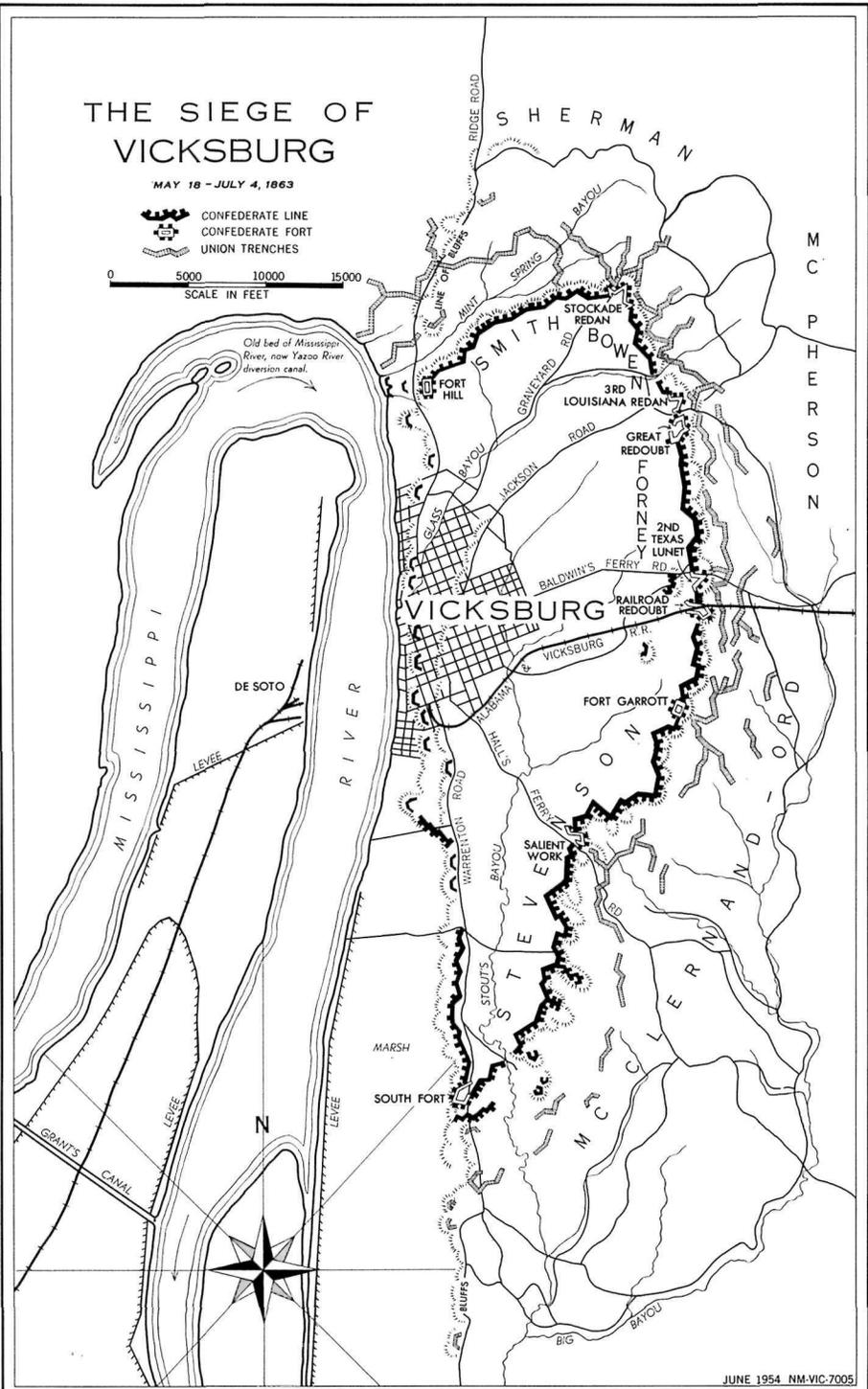
MAY 18 - JULY 4, 1863

 CONFEDERATE LINE
 CONFEDERATE FORT
 UNION TRENCHES

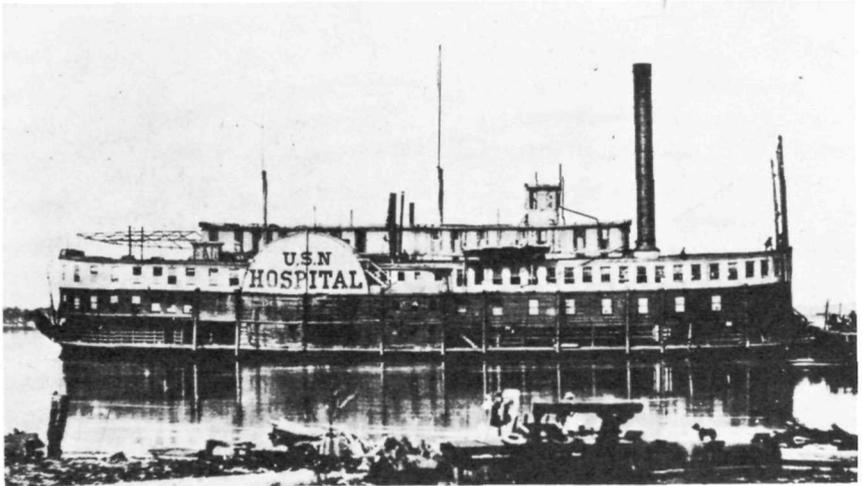


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 SCALE IN FEET



JUNE 1954 NM-VIC-7005



This hospital ship provided medical care for the sick and wounded of Grant's Army during the Vicksburg operations. From Photographic History of the Civil War.

Of the six forts in the area of the grand assault, the Stockade Redan, under attack by Maj. Gen. Frank Blair's Division of Sherman's Corps, exemplified the day's action in method and result. Blair's men were faced with two formidable obstacles: the fort could be reached only by way of the Graveyard Road because of the deep ravines bordering the road, and the road was completely covered by the guns of the fort. In front of the fort was a deep ditch which protected it from attempts to climb the wall and enter the works. The night before, Sherman had decided that a bridge would be needed by his men to span the ditch. Only one source of lumber could be found—a frame house in which General Grant was sleeping. Informed of the need, Grant dressed and watched the house quickly torn down for bridging materials.

At the stroke of 10, the artillery bombardment of the fort ceased and the "Forlorn Hope"—a volunteer company of 150 men—raced from their position over the Graveyard Road toward the Stockade Redan, carrying the planks to bridge the ditch for the regiments to follow. Until the Federal troops almost reached the Confederate line, there was no sign of its defenders. Then the Southern soldiers "rose from their reclining position behind the works, and gave them such a terrible volley of musketry" that the road soon was nearly obstructed by the bodies of the killed and wounded, "the very sticks and chips, scattered over the ground jumping under the hot shower of Rebel bullets."

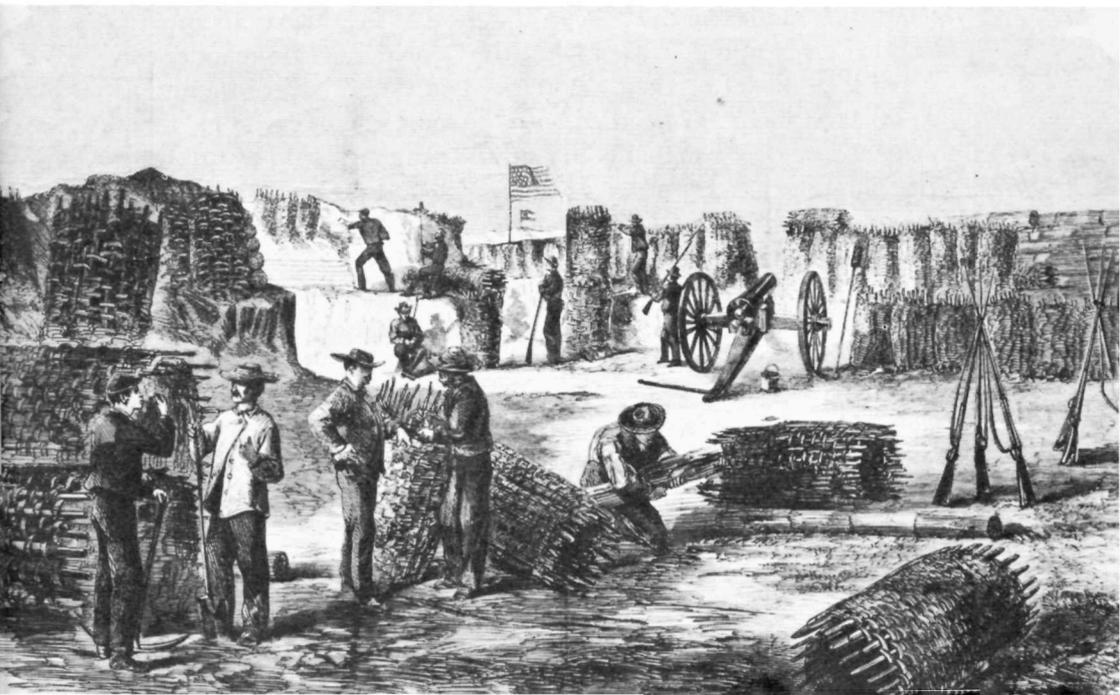
Although two color-bearers climbed the wall of the fort and planted their flags near the crest, the remnants of regiments which reached

the ditch were unable to storm the walls and enter the redan. Attempting to prevent the fort garrison from firing down into the ditch, the Federal infantry swept the top of the wall with rifle fire. The toll was costly among the Confederate defenders, who fought back, using artillery shells as hand grenades and rolling them down among the Union troops in the ditch. After 4 hours of fighting, the attack was stalemated at Stockade Redan.

Union flags were placed also on the walls of the Great Redoubt and Second Texas Lunette, but it was at the Railroad Redoubt that a momentary breach was made in the Confederate defenses. Here, McClelland's men reached the fort in force, and Sgt. Joseph E. Griffith and several comrades of the 22nd Iowa crawled through a gap in the wall, which had been blasted by Union artillery, and entered the outer works. All were shot down but Griffith. He was able to back out through the opening, bringing a dozen prisoners with him. When the Union assault threatened to engulf the fort, there was a call for Confederate volunteers to regain the lost ground. A volunteer company from the Texas Legion counterattacked and drove the Union troops from the outer defenses.

Encouraged by his partial success, McClelland asked Grant for reinforcements and a renewal of the attack which, he felt, would enable his men to break the Confederate line. Grant ordered Sherman and McPherson to commit their reserves and create a diversion in McClelland's favor. The renewed assault was shattered by the resolute Confederate defense. It served only to increase Union losses and to

Union Battery Hickenlooper during the siege, within 100 yards of the Confederate line. From a wartime sketch.



intensify an already bitter controversy over McClelland's military ability, which eventually resulted in his removal from command and the appointment of Maj. Gen. Edward Ord to head the XIII Corps. More than 3,000 Union soldiers lay dead or wounded in the ditches and on the slopes of the ridge. It was the last assault against Vicksburg.

UNION SIEGE OPERATIONS. To bring the Union Army close against the Confederate defense line, construction of protected approaches was begun. As the siege progressed, "saps" or "approach trenches," deep enough to conceal troops, zigzagged their way toward the works protecting Vicksburg. Ten major approaches were carried forward by pick and shovel details, each with a network of parallels, bomb proofs, and artillery emplacements. Over 60,000 feet of trenches and 89 artillery positions, mounting 220 guns, were completed. In the siege of Vicksburg "Spades were trumps."

A Federal infantryman was later to recall that

Every man in the investing line became an army engineer day and night. The soldiers worked at digging narrow, zigzag approaches to the rebel works. Entrenchments, rifle pits, and dirt caves were made in every conceivable direction. When entrenchments were safe and finished, still others, yet farther in advance were made, as if by magic, in a single night. Other zigzag underground saps and mines were made for explosion under forts. Every day the regiments foot by foot, yard by yard, approached nearer the strongly armed rebel works. The soldiers got so they bored like gophers and beavers, with a spade in one hand and a gun in the other.

With an almost limitless ammunition supply, Federal sharpshooters and artillerymen kept up a relentless fire, giving the Confederates little opportunity to pick off the work parties which continued digging operations during the day. Pemberton's ammunition supply dwindled each day. Considering the possible duration of the siege until an effective relief army might be assembled, the Confederate commander considered it "a matter of vital importance that every charge of ammunition on hand should be hoarded with the most jealous care." He therefore issued strict orders that both rifle and cannon should be fired only when absolutely necessary. This prevented the Confederates from keeping up the steady, harrassing fire needed to hold in check the Union siege activities.

Trench life for Grant's soldiers was not so rigorous or dangerous as for the Vicksburg defenders. Food supplies were ample, although lack of pure water was a problem for both armies and resulted in considerable disease. The burning sun and frequent rains made life miserable for both "Yank" and "Reb." Particularly as a result of the low ammunition stores of the Vicksburg army, Union losses during the siege, after the assaults of May 19 and 22, were comparatively light.

After the unsuccessful assault of May 22, only two attempts were made to break through the Confederate defenses, neither of which succeeded. Sherman, holding the Union right opposite the strong Fort Hill position, determined to reduce the fort with naval aid, and on May 27 the gunboat *Cincinnati*, protected by logs and bales of hay, moved into position and engaged the several batteries of that sector. Subjected to a deadly plunging fire which "went entirely through our protection—hay, wood, and iron," the *Cincinnati* went down with her colors nailed to the stump of a mast.

The other attempt to pierce the defense line was by exploding a mine under the Third Louisiana Redan. Logan's approach trench had reached the fort walls and from here a shaft was sunk under the fort and a powder charge prepared for its demolition. The Confederate garrison, hearing the miners' picks at work beneath the fort, began countermines in a grim race for survival. On June 25, as the entire Union line opened fire to prevent shifting of reinforcements, a charge of 2,200 pounds of powder was exploded beneath the Third Louisiana Redan, creating a large crater into which elements of the 23rd Indiana and 45th Illinois raced from the approach trench. Anticipating this result, General Forney had prepared a second line of works in the rear of the fort where survivors of the blast and supporting regiments met the Union attack and drove it back. Still other mines were also being prepared by Union engineers at the time of the surrender.

CONFEDERATE TRENCH LIFE. Siege life for the Confederate soldier was a hazardous ordeal; nearly 3,500 were killed or wounded. Because of the limited number of effective troops available to Pemberton, almost the entire Vicksburg Army had to be placed in the trenches; sufficient numbers were not available to rotate frontline duty as was done by the Federal Army. Never knowing when an attempt might be made to assault the defense line, it was necessary for them to be on guard at all times, enduring sun, rain, mud, poor and inadequate food, as well as the bullets and shells of the Union Army for 47 days and nights. The unending barrage of small arms and artillery fire, one Confederate exclaimed, "can be compared to men clearing land—the report of musketry is like the chopping of axes and that of the cannon like the felling of trees."

Rations were generally prepared by details of soldiers behind the lines and carried to the troops at the breastworks. Coffee, the soldier's staple, was soon unobtainable and an ersatz beverage introduced, the somewhat questionable ingredients of which included sweet potatoes, blackberry leaves, and sassafra. To replace the exhausted flour supply, a substitute was devised from ground peas and cornmeal. When this was baked over a fire, one soldier complained, "it made a



Bombproofs of the 45th Illinois in Union siege line. Shirley House in background is only surviving wartime building in the park. From Photographic History of the Civil War.

nauseous composition, as the corn-meal cooked in half the time the peas-meal did, so this stuff was half raw. . . . It had the properties of india-rubber and was worse than leather to digest." Its effect on the digestive systems of the Confederate soldiers was possibly the equivalent of a secret Yankee weapon. A more famous, although not necessarily a more palatable, item of the besieged soldiers' diet was the mule meat introduced late in the siege. General Pemberton heartily approved of its appearance, observing that mule proved "not only nutritious, but very palatable, in every way preferable to poor beef."

For protection against artillery fire, the Confederate troops dug bombproofs in the reverse slope of their fortified ridge. From these dugouts, bulwarked by heavy timbers, trenches connected with the fortifications, affording the besieged some degree of relaxation in reading or playing cards a few yards from the front line. To defend against surprise night attacks, they were forced to sleep on their arms in the trenches.

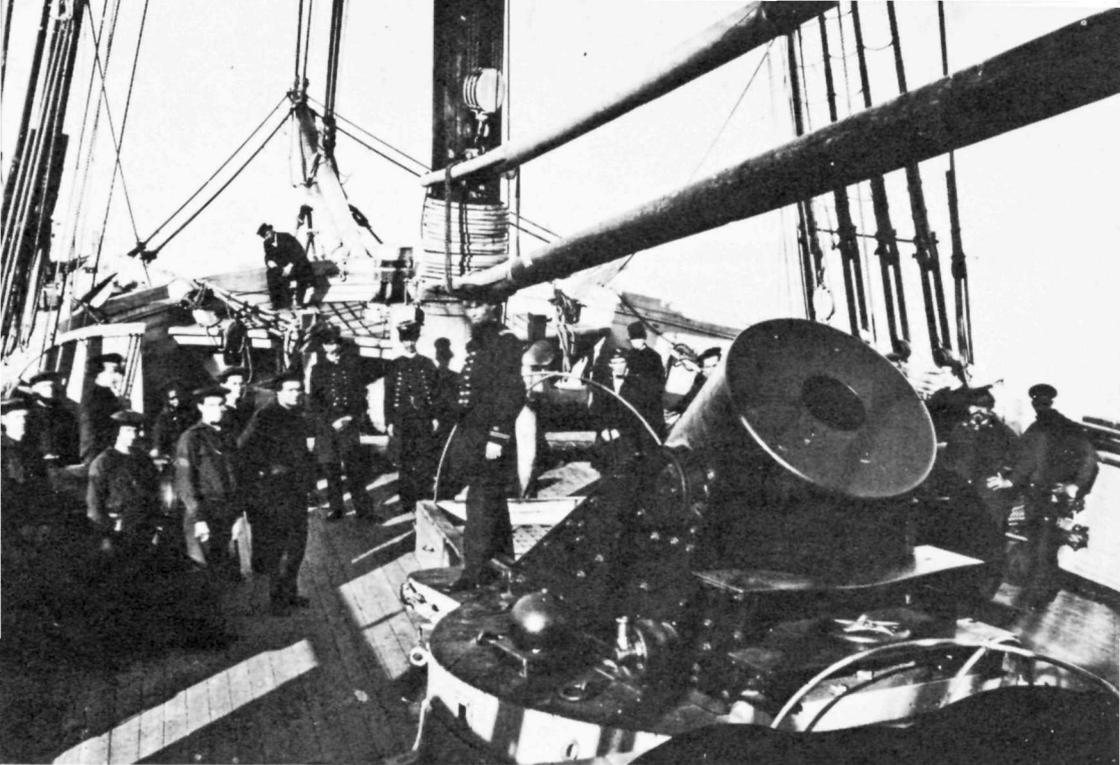
At night the unending bombardment from Porter's fleet provided the troops of both armies with an awesome pyrotechnic display. Especially popular with the pickets were the giant 13-inch mortar



Fort Hill, on the Confederate left flank above Vicksburg, commanding the bend of the Mississippi.

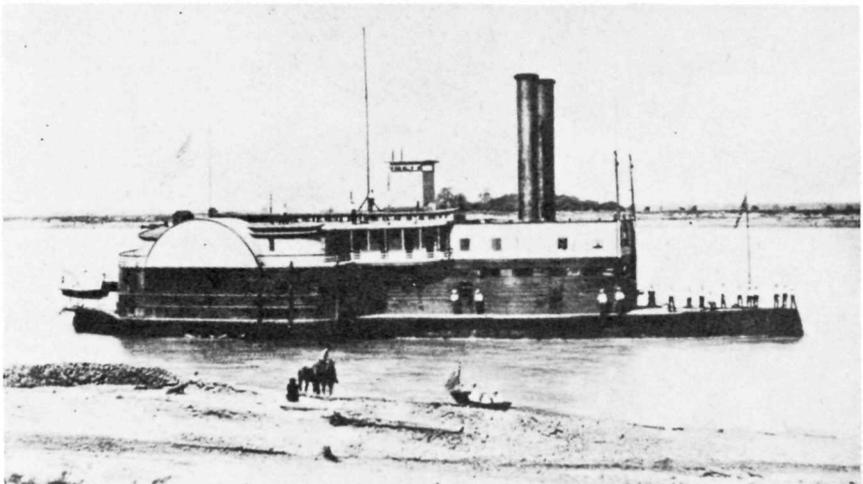
South Fort, on the Confederate right flank below Vicksburg, overlooking the Mississippi.





Each of Porter's mortar boats carried one of these giant 17,000-pound mortars which hurled 200-pound shells into Vicksburg throughout the campaign and siege. Courtesy National Archives.

The General Price. This merchant steamer was converted into a ram by the Confederate Navy, captured by the Union Fleet at Memphis and used as a Federal gunboat against Vicksburg. From Photographic History of the Civil War.



shells whose sputtering fuses described a tremendously high arc in the blackness before disappearing into the city. It was a “wonderful spectacle,” one soldier remembered, “to see the fuse from the shells—and you could see them plainly—the comet or star-like streams of fire and then hear them coming down into the doomed city. We used to watch them while on picket at night.”

Only when the Union trenches approached close to the defensive works were determined efforts made to halt the Union threat. Then the Union sap rollers (woven cane cylinders filled with earth or cotton rolled in front of the open end of the trench to protect the work party) became targets for destruction. Fuses were set on artillery shells which were then rolled down against the sap rollers, or they were ignited by Minié balls dipped in turpentine. Occasional night sallies succeeded temporarily in driving off Union work parties and filling up trenches, but no daylight forays were attempted by the Confederates.

CIVILIAN LIFE IN VICKSBURG DURING THE SIEGE. For the civilian population of Vicksburg, the siege was a grim and harrowing experience. Ordered to evacuate the city or prepare to face siege, many of the townspeople preferred to remain and share the fate of the army. They were joined by refugees accompanying the Confederate retreat into the city. Vicksburg had been subjected to periodic naval bombardment during the year of preliminary action and continuously during the siege. For relief and protection against shellfire, many of the townspeople occupied caves dug into the city’s plentiful hillsides.

To the civilians, as to the Confederate soldiers, there seemed only three intervals during the day when the shelling ceased—8 a. m., noon, and 8 p. m.—when the Union artillerymen ate their meals. However, much of the accustomed social life of the town continued. Men and women passed along the streets despite frequent shell explosions, and the town’s newspaper continued to appear—finally printed on wall-paper. Despite the artillery fire, few civilians were killed, although many dwellings were destroyed or badly damaged. Over more and more buildings, as the siege progressed, the yellow hospital flags floated. Thousands of Confederate sick and wounded were brought into the city, many being cared for by the women of Vicksburg. In the latter stages of the siege the food stores of the city were badly depleted, placing the people of Vicksburg on extremely short rations.

FRATERNIZATION. A unique feature of the American Civil War was the inclination of the private soldier—Union and Confederate—to fight with unrelenting ferocity during the engagements of the war and yet to engage in friendly intercourse with each other once the battle had ended, or even during lulls in the fighting. Swapping of Northern coffee for Southern tobacco was a commonplace picket activity in all



A Civil War drummer boy. From a wartime sketch.

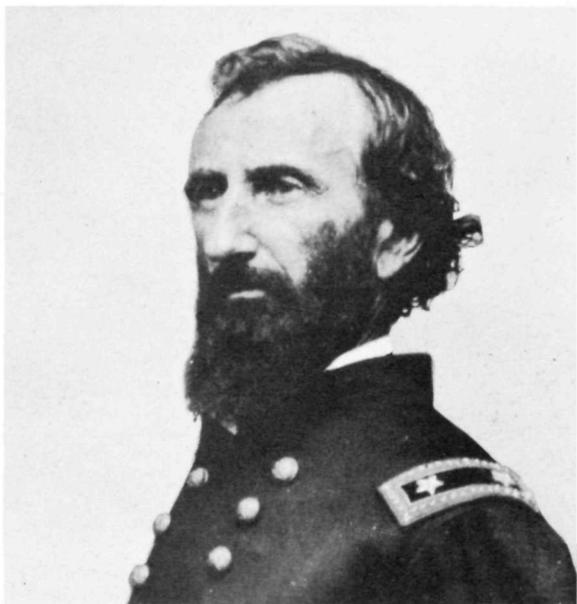
theaters of the war. In the long, weary siege of Vicksburg, the monotony was often lightened by jeers and pleasantries exchanged between lines. Many examples of soldier humor were recorded. The Confederates, taking grim delight in their ability to withstand the onslaughts of a steadily increasing Federal Army, would shout "When are you coming in Vicksburg for a visit?" To which a grimy, sweating Federal private would yell, "Not till you show better manners to strangers."

To prevent surprise attacks, both armies posted pickets in advance of their lines at night. With the lines so close in the latter stages of the siege, pickets would often stand within a few feet of one another, or even side by side. Discussions of good shots and bad officers, or vice versa, helped to pass the long night watches. By common agreement, out of respect for the exposed and unprotected position of the sentinels, there was no firing at men on picket duty.

One Union veteran best remembered the siege of Vicksburg for



Maj. Gen. John S. Bowen, commanding the Confederate troops at the battle of Port Gibson. Courtesy Confederate Museum, Richmond.

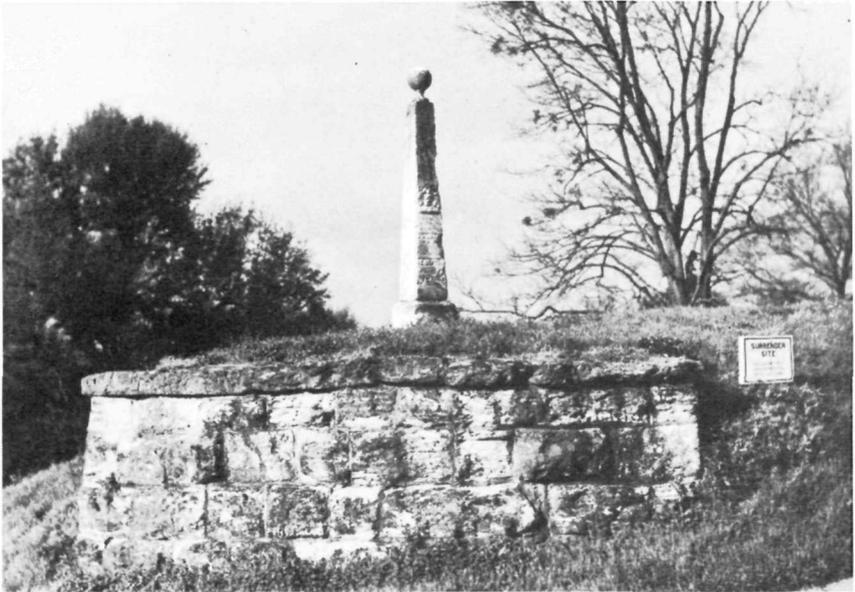


Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand, commanding the Union XIII Corps. Courtesy National Archives.

the nightly verbal exchanges with the “Rebs” when “we used to talk to each other after fighting all day.”

In the evening when everything had stopped for the day, some of our men or some of the Johnnies would yell, “hello Johnnie” or “hello Yank” “how did you enjoy the day?” The other would say “Fine;” then some one would say, “Johnnie, how do you like mule meat?” and they answer “Fine;” then “How do you like beef dried on the bone?” to which they would reply “Not so well; it is too close to the bone to be good.” Then some one would say, “Come over and we will give you some ‘sow belly’ to fry it in.” They would reply, “We can’t eat meat alone;” then the reply was, “We will give you some hardtack.” Then they would reply, “The tack you sent over today was so hard we could not chew it.” So you see how soon those on both sides forgot their troubles when night came, but in the morning about daylight, when the business of the day was about to open, we would say, “Watch out Johnnie, and hunt your hole,” and things were on in earnest for the day.

JOHNSTON’S DILEMMA. Pemberton’s foremost objective in prolonging the siege had been to afford Johnston and the Confederate government time to collect sufficient troops to raise the siege. But shortly after Grant had invested the city, Gen. Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern



The Surrender Site. The monument was erected and inscribed by Union soldiers on spot where Grant and Pemberton met.

Virginia began its invasion of the North, which ended on the field of Gettysburg. No troops could be spared from that point. To have removed troops from Lt. Gen. Braxton Bragg's army in Tennessee would have dangerously weakened that place in a desperate attempt to save the Mississippi. Johnston wired Secretary of War James A. Seddon "We cannot hold both."

During June, General Johnston had succeeded in increasing his force to about 30,000, many of whom were green troops, but efforts to secure adequate weapons, ammunition and wagons to equip the regiments had been only partly successful. Preparing to encounter an expected move by Johnston against his rear, Grant used reinforcements arriving from Memphis to construct and man a strong outer defense line facing Johnston's line of advance. Grant then had two lines of works, one to hold Pemberton in, the other to hold Johnston out. While Seddon notified Johnston "Rely upon it, the eyes and hopes of the whole Confederacy are upon you, with the full confidence that you will act, and with the sentiment that it is better to fail nobly daring, than, through prudence even, to be inactive," Johnston notified his government on June 15 "I consider saving Vicksburg hopeless."

On July 1, Johnston moved his army of 4 infantry and 1 cavalry divisions to the east bank of the Big Black River, seeking a vulnerable place to attack Grant's outer defenses. His reconnaissance during the

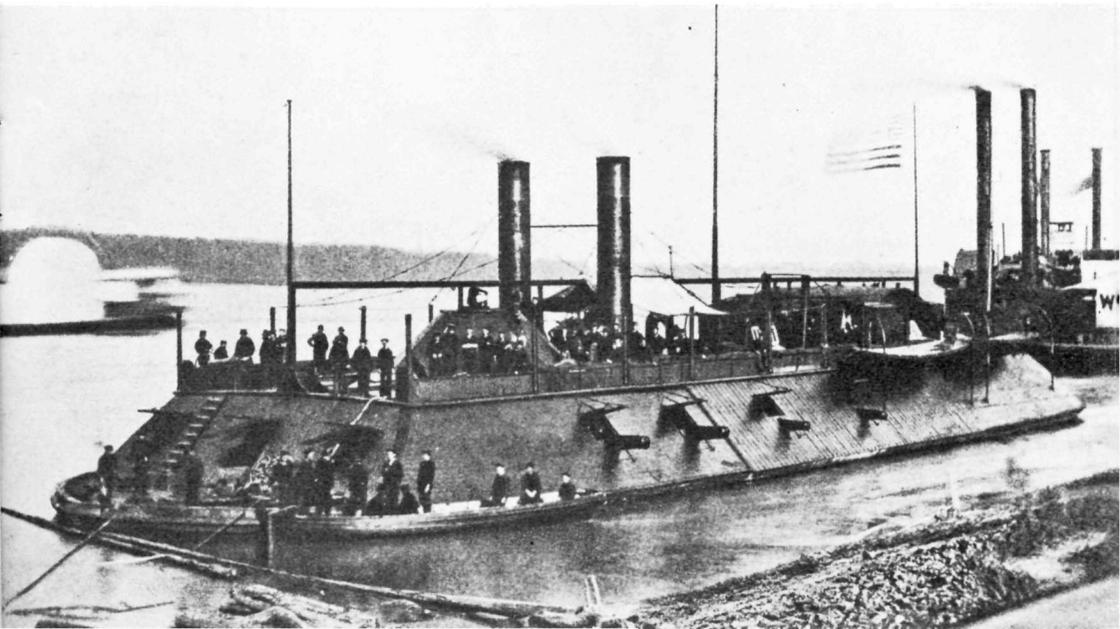
next 3 days convinced him that no move against the Federal position was practicable. Receiving word of the surrender on July 4, he withdrew to Jackson.

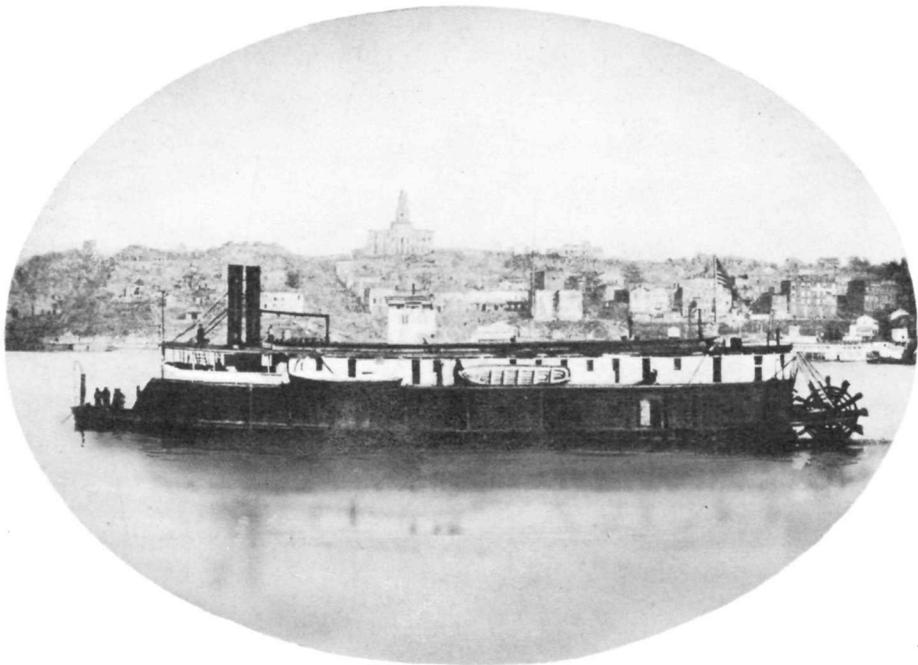
THE SURRENDER OF VICKSBURG. By July, the Army of Vicksburg had held the line for 6 weeks, but its unyielding defense had been a costly one. Pemberton reported 10,000 of his men so debilitated by wounds and sickness as to be no longer able to man the works, and the list of ineffectives swelled daily from the twin afflictions of insufficient rations and the searching fire of Union sharpshooters. Each day the constricting Union line pushed closer against the Vicksburg defenses, and there were indications that Grant might soon launch another great assault which, even if repulsed, must certainly result in a severe toll of the garrison. (Grant had actually ordered a general assault for July 6, 2 days after the surrender.)

General Pemberton, faced with dwindling stores and no help from the outside, saw only two eventualities, "either to evacuate the city and cut my way out or to capitulate upon the best attainable terms." Contemplating the former possibility, he asked his division commanders on July 1 to report whether the physical condition of the troops would favor such a hazardous stroke. His lieutenants were unanimous in their replies that siege conditions had physically distressed so large a number of the defending army that an attempt to cut through the Union line would be disastrous. Pemberton's only alternative, then, was surrender.

Although not requested, Pemberton also received the verdict of his army in a message from an unknown private, signed "Many Soldiers."

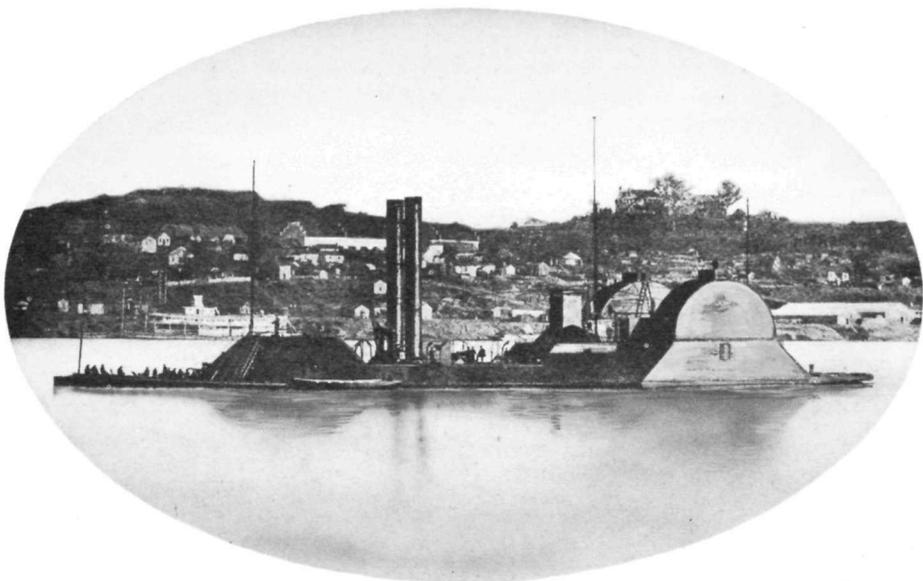
The Union ironclad gunboat Cairo, sunk by a Confederate "torpedo" (mine) near Vicksburg. From Photographic History of the Civil War.





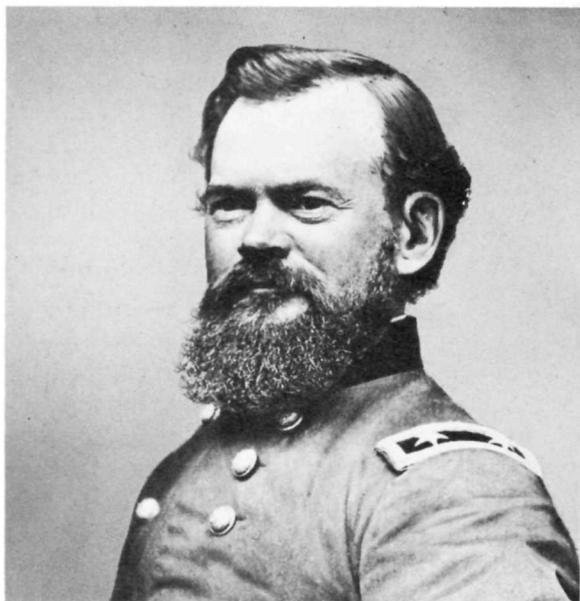
*David and Goliath of the Union fleet, photographed at Vicksburg after the surrender.
Above: A patrol boat, the "tinclad" Silver Lake.*

Below: The powerful ironclad ram Choctaw. From Photographic History of the Civil War.





Maj. Gen. M. L. Smith, commanding the Confederate left at Vicksburg.
Courtesy Library of Congress.



Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, commanding the Union XVII Corps.
Courtesy Library of Congress.

Taking pride in the gallant conduct of his fellow soldiers “in repulsing the enemy at every assault, and bearing with patient endurance all the privations and hardships,” the writer requested his commanding general if he would “Just think of one small biscuit and one or two mouthfuls of bacon per day,” concluding with the irrefutable logic of an enlisted man, “If you can’t feed us, you had better surrender us, horrible as the idea is.”

On July 3, white truce flags appeared along the center of the Confederate works. A few hours later, Grant and Pemberton met beneath an oak tree, on a slope between the lines, to arrange for the capitulation of Vicksburg and its army of 29,500. It had been 14 months since Farragut’s warships had first engaged the Vicksburg batteries, 7 months since Grant’s first expedition against the city, and 47 days since the beginning of the siege. On the morning of July 4, 1863, while Northern cities celebrated Independence Day, Vicksburg was formally surrendered. The Confederate troops marched out from their defenses and stacked their rifles, cartridge boxes, and flags before a hushed Union Army which witnessed the historic event without cheering—a testimonial of their respect for the courageous defenders of Vicksburg, whose line was never broken.

Into the city which had defied him for so long, and which nearly proved the graveyard rather than the springboard of his military career, rode General Grant. At the courthouse, where the Stars and Bars had floated in sight of the Union Army and Navy throughout the siege, he watched the national colors raised on the flagstaff, and then proceeded to the waterfront. With every vessel of the Navy sounding its whistle in celebration, he went aboard Porter's flagship to express gratitude for the work of the fleet.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FALL OF VICKSBURG. Vicksburg, and the simultaneous repulse of Lee's invasion at the battle of Gettysburg, marked the beginning of the end for the Confederacy. Previously, there had been confidence that victory, although demanding desperate measures, could yet be achieved. Afterward, there was only the hope that the North might sicken of the frightful cost of continuing the war and terminate hostilities. The great objective of the war in the West—the opening of the Mississippi River and the severing of the Confederacy—had been realized with the fall of Vicksburg. While in the East the Union armies battled on in bloody stalemate before Richmond, the armies of the West would now launch their columns deep into the vitals of the Confederacy.

Grant emerged from the Vicksburg campaign with a hard-won reputation as a master strategist, which prompted President Lincoln to place him in supreme command of all the armies of the United States. From this position he was destined to direct the final campaigns of the Civil War and to receive Lee's surrender at Appomattox. As for Pemberton, the fall of Vicksburg subjected him to painful criticism from those who held that a more resourceful defense might have saved the city, or his army, or both. Essentially, both commanders had disobeyed orders in like manner—Grant in striking behind Vicksburg alone rather than waiting to combine forces with Banks; Pemberton in deciding to protect Vicksburg at all cost rather than joining Johnston and risking loss of the city. But Grant's gamble had succeeded and Pemberton's had failed; and in war, as a leading Confederate commander had soberly remarked, the people measure a general's merit by his success. "I thought and still think that you did right to risk an army for the purpose of keeping command of even a section of the Mississippi River," President Davis wrote to General Pemberton after the fall of Vicksburg. "Had you succeeded none would have blamed, had you not made the attempt few if any would have defended your course."

In the Confederate capital, Gen. Josiah Gorgas, one of the most able of Southern leaders, confided to his diary the implications of the calamitous change in fortune to the South attending the twin disasters of Gettysburg and Vicksburg:

Events have succeeded one another with disastrous rapidity. One brief month ago we were apparently at the point of success. Lee was in Pennsylvania threatening Harrisburgh, and even Philadelphia. Vicksburgh seemed to laugh all Grant's efforts to scorn. . . . All looked bright. Now the picture is just as somber as it was bright then. Lee failed at Gettysburgh. . . . Vicksburgh and Port Hudson capitulated, surrendering thirty-five thousand men and forty-five thousand arms. It seems incredible that human power could effect such a change in so brief a space. Yesterday we rode on the pinnacle of success—today absolute ruin seems to be our portion. The Confederacy totters to its destruction.

In Washington, a grateful President sat at his desk seeking words to express appreciation to Grant "for the almost inestimable service you have done the country." Explaining the fear he had entertained that the Union Army might be destroyed during its daring thrust in the rear of Vicksburg, which he believed at the time to be "a mistake," Lincoln wrote to Grant, "I wish now to make the personal acknowledgement that you were right and I was wrong."

On July 9, the Confederate commander at Port Hudson, upon learning of the fall of Vicksburg, surrendered his garrison of 6,000 men. One week later the merchant steamboat *Imperial* tied up at the wharf at New Orleans, completing the 1,000-mile passage from St. Louis undisturbed by hostile guns. After 2 years of land and naval warfare, the Mississippi River was open, the grip of the South had been broken, and merchant and military traffic had now a safe avenue to the gulf. In the words of Lincoln, "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."

The Union Army passing the courthouse as it took possession of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863. From a wartime sketch.



Guide to the Area

Vicksburg National Military Park is shaped like a great crescent, enclosing the city of Vicksburg within a 9-mile arc which curves from the old bed of the Mississippi River north of the city to the river south of Vicksburg (from U. S. 61 north of Vicksburg, across U. S. 80 east of the city, to U. S. 61 south of Vicksburg). The two main avenues in Vicksburg National Military Park, Union Avenue and Confederate Avenue—constructed along the siege lines established by the two armies—are parallel. The black markers, on iron standards, indicate the position of the fortified lines and the units which occupied that sector. The remains of artillery batteries, forts (and the ditches in front), and trenches are clearly visible, although, during the 36-year interval between the siege and the establishment of the park, the fortifications and trenches have suffered marked alteration from wind and weather. All the cannon barrels are originals, used during the Civil War; the carriages are replacements. This self-guiding tour begins at the museum, going north on Confederate Avenue. It provides a brief inspection of Union Avenue, proceeds to the national cemetery, a distance of 6 miles, and returns south by way of Union Avenue. The numbered stops of this tour correspond to the numbers on the tour map found on pages 28–29.

I. MUSEUM AND PARK HEADQUARTERS. Located at the center of Confederate Avenue, at its junction with U. S. 80. Here are exhibits illustrating and explaining the campaign and siege of Vicksburg and the outstanding features of Vicksburg National Military Park. A recorded lecture synchronized with lights on a large relief map explains fully the story of the Vicksburg operations.

2. JEFFERSON DAVIS STATUE (in front of museum). Davis was a West Point graduate, Mexican War colonel, Mississippi cotton planter, United States Senator, Secretary of War, and, finally, President of the Confederacy.

As you begin the tour, notice the natural strength of the Confederate position on the crest of the ridge. The ground drops away to your right and, several hundred yards across the ravine, rises to a similar and parallel ridge. From this, the Union Army launched its siege operations against the Confederate line. Before the siege began, all the trees between the lines had been cut down by the Confederate engineers to insure a clear field of fire.

3. PEMBERTON STATUE. Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, a native Pennsylvanian, elected to fight for the South and commanded the Confederate Army of Vicksburg. When a command in keeping with his rank of



Museum and administration building of Vicksburg National Military Park.

three-star general was unavailable after Vicksburg, he voluntarily resigned his commission and served as a lieutenant colonel of artillery for the remainder of the war—a testimonial of his loyalty to the South.

4. MISSISSIPPI MONUMENT. A State memorial to her 4,600 soldiers in the siege, the bas-relief and sculptures around the base of the shaft depict battle scenes. The 9-inch Dahlgren gun at the rear of the monument was one of the largest used at Vicksburg.

5. TILGHMAN STATUE. This is a monument to Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman who was killed at the battle of Champion's Hill, 18 miles east of Vicksburg, as he manned an artillery piece in an attempt to hold off a Union charge. A broken gun carriage lies under his horse's forefeet.

6. LOUISIANA MONUMENT AND GREAT REDOUBT. The largest fort on the Confederate line, its well-preserved walls extend on both sides of the Louisiana memorial. On top is the Eternal Torch. The low marble markers on the slope, below the avenue in front of the fort, mark the farthest advance of Union regiments in the unsuccessful assault of May 22. On the ridge, 200 yards away, is the Union line.

7. SURRENDER SITE. Grant and Pemberton met under an oak tree, midway between the lines, for surrender negotiations. The tree immediately vanished to provide souvenirs of the historic event; notches on this monument erected by Union soldiers after the surrender are the work of latter-day souvenir hunters.

The tour now follows Union Avenue, which parallels Confederate Avenue, for a short distance before returning to the Confederate line.



The Illinois Memorial.

8. MICHIGAN MONUMENT. Symbolic figure of Michigan bringing laurels to her soldiers of the siege. Beyond the monument, left of the avenue, notice the wall which protected the Union artillery.

9. SHIRLEY HOUSE. A siege landmark, and termed the "White House" by the soldiers, it is the lone surviving wartime structure in the park.

10. ILLINOIS MONUMENT. Modeled after the Pantheon in Rome, this Memorial Temple, the largest monument on the field, is dedicated to the 36,312 Illinois men whose names are inscribed on the bronze plaques within. The Illinois Commission specified that no device indicative of war should appear on the memorial.

11. THIRD LOUISIANA REDAN. This Confederate fort, marked by the three artillery pieces at right of the avenue, was reached by "Logan's Approach," a Union advance trench. Federal engineers constructed a mine underneath the redan and exploded 2,200 pounds of powder, which blasted a tremendous crater into which Union infantry raced, only to be driven back after severe fighting.

12. GLASS BAYOU BRIDGE. The precipitous slopes of the ridges and deeply cut ravines protected the city, making Vicksburg a natural fortress. The 75-foot drop from the bridge well illustrates the difficult terrain over which the Union Army moved.

13. ARKANSAS MONUMENT. Site of the Arkansas memorial. The twin pylons are representative of North and South, which were split by the sword of war and reunited by the cross of faith in a restored Union. Depicted on the left are Arkansas soldiers repelling a Union assault; on the right, the Confederate ram *Arkansas*.

14. MISSOURI MONUMENT. A border State, Missouri was divided in sympathy during the Civil War. Her soldiers enlisted in the armies of both the North and the South. By the fortunes of war, in this sector of the siege line, Missouri soldiers of the Union and Confederate armies faced and fought each other. The monument honors both. The plaque on the left depicts Missouri Federals attacking this position; on the right, Missouri Confederates defending it. Between the panels, the prow of the Ship of State symbolizes the divided Union; the figure above is the Republic, emerging from the war with renewed strength.

15. STOCKADE REDAN. For a close view of siege warfare, walk up into the fort, to the artillery piece at the right of the avenue. From the ridge 150 yards away, Union cannon, which are trained on the fort, blasted the Confederate defenders continuously. During the assault of May 22, Grant's infantry reached the wall of the fort. The two black markers in front of the cannon and just below it indicate where colorbearers planted their flags, almost at the top of the wall, before the assault was broken and driven back.

16. OBSERVATION TOWER. Erected by the Vicksburg National Military Park Commission, in 1909, to provide a panoramic view of the park and the city of Vicksburg.

Terraces in Vicksburg National Cemetery.



17. **FORT HILL.** Anchoring the Confederate left flank on the Mississippi River, its guns commanded the Union right as well as the river. The flags of England, France, Spain, the United States, and the Confederate States have flown over this historic site, where the bluffs meet the river, during the centuries-old struggle for control of the Mississippi. Fort Nogales (Spanish) was built here in 1791, and Fort McHenry, 1798, was the first American settlement at Vicksburg. The water below the fort is not the Mississippi River—it changed its course in 1876—but the Yazoo Diversion Canal, bringing the Yazoo water into the old bed of the Mississippi.

18. **VICKSBURG NATIONAL CEMETERY.** Established in 1866 to reinter the remains of nearly 17,000 Union soldiers who had been given temporary burial in scattered locations during the war. The identity of almost 13,000 of the soldiers is unknown. The national cemetery also contains the remains of veterans of the Mexican and Spanish-American Wars, World Wars I and II, and Korea.

From the lower cemetery drive, you may leave the park and emerge 2 miles north of downtown Vicksburg on U. S. 61. If time permits, we recommend your completing the tour of the park by following the “Park Tour” arrows from the cemetery, south on Union Avenue, in order that you may view the Union lines and monuments and the southern portion of the park.

19. **UNION NAVY MEMORIAL.** The 202-foot shaft is a tribute to the achievements of the Union Navy in the Vicksburg operations. Statues of four fleet commanders, Admirals Farragut and Porter and Flag Officers Davis and Andrew H. Foote, surround the base.

20. **GRANT’S HEADQUARTERS.** An equestrian statue of General Grant marks his headquarters location. Impressive monuments, here, of five northeastern States—PENNSYLVANIA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW YORK, and RHODE ISLAND—indicate their troops were on the exterior line of defense against Johnston’s army.

21. **WISCONSIN MONUMENT.** “Old Abe,” the famous Wisconsin war eagle and mascot of the 8th Wisconsin, was carried alongside the regimental colors, on the march and in battle, through 3 years of war. A 6-foot bronze replica atop the State monument now honors his war service. Names of all Wisconsin soldiers at Vicksburg are on plaques around the base.

22. **MINNESOTA MONUMENT.** At the base of the 100-foot shaft, a symbolic figure of Peace holds a shield and a sword, signifying that the soldiers of both armies have placed their weapons in her keeping, and the Union is at peace.



The Alabama Memorial.

23. **IOWA MONUMENT.** In front, a mounted colorbearer with unfurled flag awaits the order to advance. The six bronze bas-relief panels portray scenes of the Vicksburg operations in which Iowa soldiers participated—the bombardment of Grand Gulf, the battles of Port Gibson, Jackson, Champion's Hill, and Big Black River, and the assault on Vicksburg of May 22, 1863.

24. **FORT GARROTT.** Also called Square Fort, its walls are well preserved. The two lines of markers in front of the fort indicate the site of "Hovey's Approach"—a Union trench dug almost against the walls of the Confederate fort.

25. **ALABAMA MONUMENT.** Around the flag—which represents the spirit of Alabama—the group of figures symbolizes the courage and devotion of both the soldiers and women of Alabama during the war. The monument was dedicated in 1951.

This completes the park tour. By continuing northward on Confederate Avenue for one-half mile, you will reach U. S. 80 at Memorial Arch. Turning left, through the arch, you will be in the city of Vicksburg. Colored route markers will guide you over U. S. 61 north and south and U. S. 80 west through the city. You may also reach U. S. 61 south and U. S. 80 west by turning south at the Alabama Monument and following Confederate Avenue through the southernmost portion of Vicksburg National Military Park to U. S. 61, below the city of Vicksburg.

The Park

Vicksburg National Military Park was established in 1899 to preserve the site of the siege of Vicksburg and was placed under the jurisdiction of the War Department. In 1933, it was transferred to the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The park consists generally of the Confederate and Union siege lines, now Confederate and Union Avenues, and the area between. The park's 30 miles of avenues and about 1,330 acres of federally owned land contain 128 artillery pieces and 1,600 monuments, markers, and tablets, as well as 17 State memorials.

How To Reach the Park

The park forms a semicircle around the city of Vicksburg, Miss., which is located at the intersection of U. S. 80 and 61, midway between Memphis and New Orleans.

Administration

Vicksburg National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. Communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Vicksburg National Military Park, Box 349, Vicksburg, Miss.

Related Areas

Other Civil War battlefields administered by the National Park Service, and important to the military operations in the West, are: Shiloh, Stones River, and Fort Donelson National Military Parks, Tenn., and Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, Ga.-Tenn.

Visitor Facilities

The Union and Confederate siege lines are well marked and readily visible from Union and Confederate Avenues. Information and free literature, as well as the service of park historians, are available in the museum which contains exhibits explaining and illustrating the Vicksburg operations. An electrical relief map synchronized with a recorded lecture affords a full explanation of the campaign and siege to each visitor. Educational groups may receive a guided tour of the park.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HISTORICAL HANDBOOK SERIES

(Price lists of National Park Service publications may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents,
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Antietam
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Custer Battlefield
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Fort Pulaski
Fort Raleigh
Fort Sumter
George Washington Birthplace
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Guilford Courthouse
Hopewell Village
Independence
Jamestown, Virginia
Kings Mountain
The Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died
Manassas (Bull Run)
Montezuma Castle
Morristown, a Military Capital of the Revolution
Ocmulgee
Petersburg Battlefields
Saratoga
Scotts Bluff
Shiloh
Statue of Liberty
Vanderbilt Mansion
Vicksburg
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