

Vicksburg

National Military Park

MISSISSIPPI



United States Department of the
Interior • *Douglas McKay, Secretary*

National Park Service
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Vicksburg

NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

★ *Here brothers fought for their principles. Here heroes died for their country. And a united people will forever cherish the precious legacy of their noble manhood.*

THIS inscription, on the Pennsylvania monument at Vicksburg National Military Park, aptly expresses the thought that lies behind the establishment of this area, for today a united people find renewed hope here for a firmer and stronger Union.

Vicksburg was one of the many ordeals through which this Nation passed in order to form a more perfect Union. Now both North and South pay tribute to the men who fought and died here, and the bitterness that once lay in the hearts of many has yielded to a feeling of pride in the past history—chaotic and unfortunate as some of it may have been—of a great and united nation.

The Campaign and Siege of Vicksburg was but one of many incidents in the War



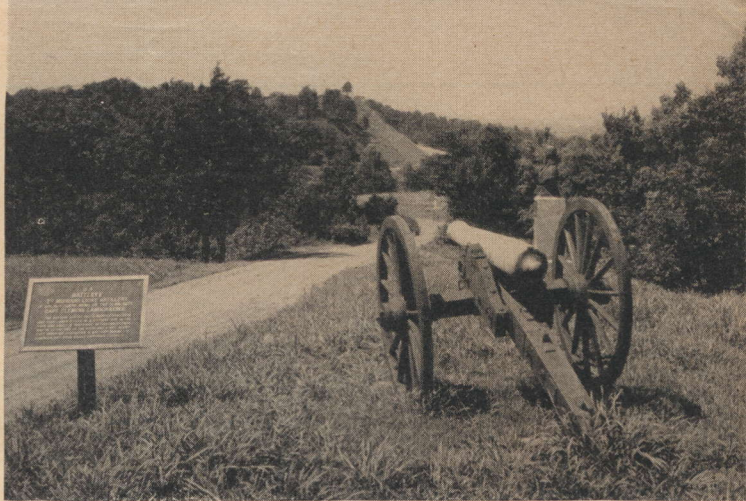
Fort Hill and Vicksburg National Military Park

Between the States, and yet its importance cannot be underestimated. As long as Vicksburg was held by the Confederate States of America, free passage of the Mississippi River was impossible, and supplies, arms, and men could be brought from Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas to be sent by the old Vicksburg and Alabama Railroad to the heart of the Confederacy. Except for the earthworks at Port Hudson, La., Vicksburg was the last stronghold on the Mississippi River in Confederate hands in June 1863. The capture of Vicksburg was vital to the success of the Northern Armies.

The events that transpired in this area in the late spring and early summer of 1863, coupled with the simultaneous action at Gettysburg on the first 3 days of July, directly influenced the course of the war. The South, thereafter, was on the defensive, waging a gallant losing battle for what its people thought right. The outcome of the war was virtually inevitable, even though almost 2 years were to pass before Grant and Lee met at Appomattox Court House.



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Cannon pointing from Federal line toward the Confederate position atop the interior ridge surrounding Vicksburg

The Vicksburg Campaign and Siege

The complete possession of the Mississippi River was one of the main objectives of the Federal forces in the War Between the States. While battles raged in the eastern theater around Washington and Richmond, and while the Federal blockade slowly throttled the economic life of the South, the armies fought furiously for the trans-Appalachian country from Kentucky to Louisiana. By late spring of 1862 the Confederate forces held only that part of the river from Vicksburg to Port Hudson, and the Confederacy was almost cut in two.

Attention was immediately focused on Vicksburg, which stood on high bluffs overlooking a hairpin bend of the Mississippi and thus controlled all river traffic. Admiral Farragut's naval attacks in May, June, and July 1862, proved the virtual impregnability of the city fortifications from the western or river side. General Grant, commanding the Army of the Tennessee, then planned to move down through central Mississippi in order to attack the city from the rear, at the same

time sending General Sherman down the river to attack from the north. Grant was forced to turn back when his base of supplies was destroyed, but Sherman, late in December 1862, engaged in the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou, along the line of bluffs extending northeast from Vicksburg. Sherman was repulsed and the Federal forces learned that in order to take the city they would have to attack from the south or the east.

The campaign that ended in the surrender of Vicksburg was the result of close cooperation between the Federal Army under Grant and the Navy under Admiral Porter. After five attempts to get around the city by means of canals and inland bayous had failed, Grant moved his army through the Louisiana swamps and marshes west of the river to a point 30 miles south of Vicksburg. On April 16 and 22, the Federal fleet ran past the Confederate guns on the bluffs at the hairpin bend of the river, suffering only small losses, and provided the necessary munitions, supplies, and transportation. On April 30, Grant's army at last crossed to the eastern side of the Mississippi, south of Vicksburg.



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The Confederate line overlooking the Yazoo Canal

Operating without a base of supplies, a daring and seldom justified maneuver, Grant faced two Confederate armies at two points—General Pemberton's army at Vicksburg and Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army at Jackson, Miss. If the campaign was to be successful, it was necessary to keep these two armies separated. In the next 17 days, from May 1 to 17, the Federal forces fought five engagements as they went north-eastward to Jackson and then turned west toward Vicksburg. They were completely successful in defeating and pushing back the two Confederate armies, and Johnston was forced to retreat into central Mississippi. May 18 found Grant on the outskirts of Vicksburg, where Pemberton and 32,000 Confederates were hemmed in by the Union Army and Navy.

After two fruitless attempts, on May 19 and 22, to take Vicksburg by storm, the Federal Army turned to siege operations. Grant quickly brought his strength up to 75,000 men and surrounded the city in a ring of cannons and bayonets from the river above to the river below. The two armies lay facing each other at distances of 50 to 600 yards. They

dug trenches, mines, countermines, approaches, and counterapproaches, and bombarded each other's lines for 47 days and nights. With no prospects of reinforcement, with few supplies and little ammunition, the Confederate garrison surrendered the city on July 4, 1863. The Mississippi Valley was once again in the possession of the United States, and the Confederacy was split asunder.

The Park and Cemetery

In order to preserve the field of the siege, Vicksburg National Military Park was established in 1899 and placed under the jurisdiction of the War Department. In 1933, it was transferred to the Department of the Interior. Today there are 1,330 acres of Federal land in the park, through which run two main roads—Confederate and Union Avenues.

Vicksburg National Cemetery, which is in the northernmost section of the park, contains 118 acres. It was established in 1866 for the burial of more than 16,000 Federal soldiers who died during the war, and has since been used for the burial of other veterans.

How to Reach the Park

Vicksburg National Military Park forms a semicircle around the city of Vicksburg, Miss., which lies at the intersection of U. S. 80 and 61.

About Your Visit

While here, you will see the whole length of the defense line of fortifications (along Confederate Avenue) and the main portion of the line of investment (along Union Avenue). Extensive remains of trenches, gun emplacements, rifle pits, Confederate forts, and Federal approaches to the Confederate lines will be clearly visible to you. You will also see many monuments, memorials, and markers which commemorate the actions of individuals and troops.

You will be able to understand these remains more clearly if you first visit the museum, which has been designed to provide a historical background of the campaign and siege. The museum is located in the administration building which is on Confederate Avenue adjacent to U. S. 80.

Those who plan to visit in a group may receive special service if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

Administration

Vicksburg National Military Park and Cemetery are administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 349, Vicksburg, Miss., is in immediate charge.

The National Park System, of which these areas are units, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

Confederate gun emplacements overlooking Mint Spring Bayou



