

## ADMINISTRATION

VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK AND CEMETERY are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and Territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that non-renewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 349, Vicksburg, Miss., is in immediate charge of the park and cemetery.

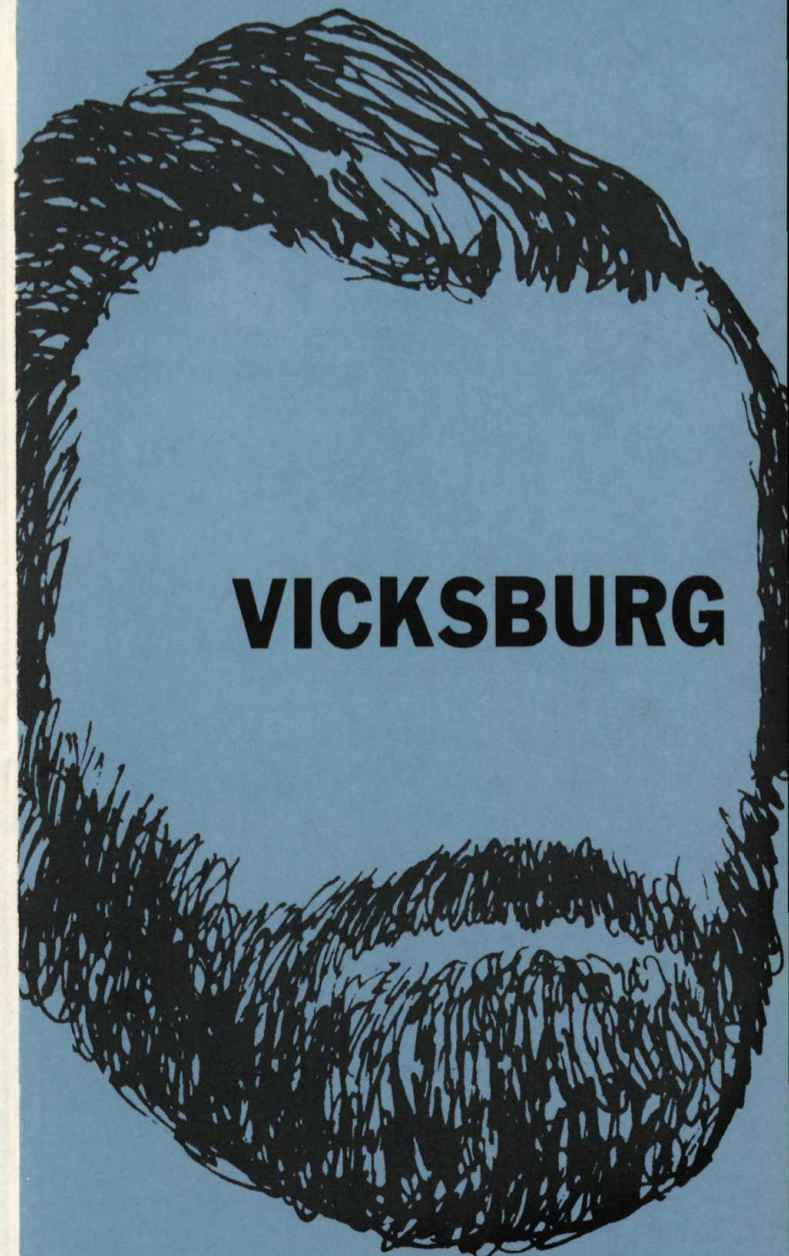
## MISSION 66

MISSION 66, scheduled for completion in 1966, is a dynamic conservation program that will assure maximum protection of the areas within the National Park System.

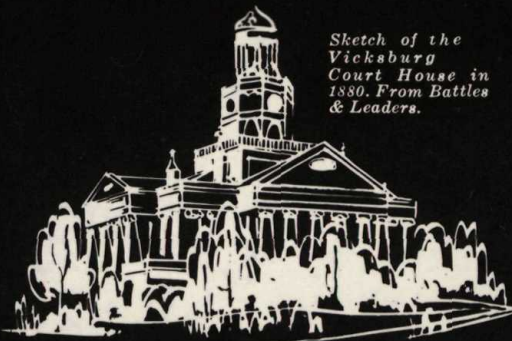


UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

*The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of the people.*



National Military Park, Mississippi



Sketch of the Vicksburg Court House in 1880. From Battles & Leaders.

*"The eyes and hopes of the whole country are now directed to your army."*

General-in-Chief Henry Halleck to Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant—March 20, 1863

## THE FALL OF VICKSBURG

on July 4, 1863, gave Union forces control of the Mississippi River. The long fight for mastery of the river began almost 2 years earlier. The eastern theater of the American Civil War saw tens of thousands of soldiers moving back and forth between Washington and Richmond, striking no decisive blows and generally settling down to a struggle for opposing capitals.

But in the West warfare was more aggressive: large-scale movements, continental in scope, took Northern armies across the heartland of America; Union forces moved southward and captured Forts Henry and Donelson; after Shiloh, Northern troops closed in on Memphis and Corinth; and huge amphibious operations moved Union forces up the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and down the Mississippi. Union strategy for dividing the Confederacy along the line of the Mississippi appeared to be moving toward a successful culmination.

In the Gulf of Mexico, Flag Officer David G. Farragut's ocean-going fleet battered coastal defenses and steamed inland in April and May 1862, capturing New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Natchez. The huge ocean fleet rendezvoused with river-going ironclads above Vicksburg, but failed in its attempt to hammer the city into submission. Failing also to cut a canal across DeSoto Peninsula in front of the city, Farragut took his fleet back downriver to New Orleans. The gunboats withdrew to Memphis. Thus the naval squeeze on Vicksburg in the summer of 1862 recoiled, showing clearly the need for a land army to assist in taking this Confederate stronghold.

## GRANT'S WINTER CAMPAIGN

Although most of the river had fallen under Union control, Vicksburg was still in Confederate hands. Bristling guns perched along the waterfront and on the sides of the bluffs stoutly guarded the prized river below. The winter part of the Union drive for Vicksburg was a series of combined land and amphibious movements. All of them failed.

### The winter defeats

In the first of these thrusts, Grant moved 40,000 men from Grand Junction (east of Memphis) southward along the Mississippi Central Railroad. Early in December he occupied the town of Oxford. Incorporating a second leg into his plan, he sent Gen. William T. Sherman back to Memphis to move a powerful force down the Mississippi, utilizing naval support from Adm. David D. Porter's gunboats. Grant intended to pin down Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton's Confederate Army in northern Mississippi while Sherman struck at Vicksburg.

Savage cavalry raids by the Confederates dictated the failure of this first thrust. As Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry swept across the Tennessee River cutting Grant's supply line, Gen. Earl Van Dorn took 3,500 cavalymen around Grant's left flank, capturing and burning Union magazines at Holly Springs. His links to the rear cut and his magazines destroyed, Grant was forced to return to Memphis. Sherman's amphibious force was also repulsed at Chickasaw Bayou, 5 miles north of Vicksburg. Reaching Memphis, Grant moved his army down the Mississippi to operate directly against Vicksburg.

By the end of January 1863, thousands of soldiers were camped on the lowlands along the Louisiana side of the river. The major problem was to place these soldiers on the bluffs east of the Mississippi and the Yazoo, either north or south of the city. Yet Grant held little hope of gaining a favorable position from which to strike before spring.

Mainly to keep his troops busy during the winter, he tried several amphibious thrusts through the swollen bayous that flowed in the lowlands above and below the city.

### In the bayous

After a fruitless renewal of the Union effort to cut a canal across the DeSoto Peninsula, Federal troops labored to cut another one from the river into Lake Providence, with some hope of sending troops to assist in the reduction of Port Hudson. An attempt was also made to send an amphibious force down the chain of waterways into the Yazoo River to take Fort Pemberton. Both efforts failed, as did a third push through the treacherous and murky waters of Steele's Bayou where Porter's ironclads were almost lost to Confederate infantry.

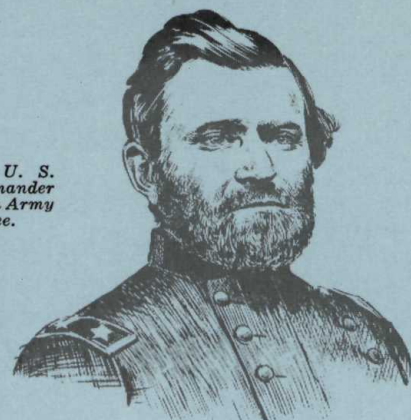
Although Grant himself had not placed great hope in these amphibious strikes through the twisting bayous, back east they added up to repeated failures in the public eye. Grant's military career plunged to its nadir. Things also looked black for the Union elsewhere. At Fredericksburg 13,000 Federal soldiers had been killed or wounded. Another 13,000 were lost at Stones River. In Northern eyes Grant seemingly was floundering in the swamps. But Lincoln, answering the critics, decided to "try him a little longer."



Porter's gunboats running the Vicksburg batteries on the night of April 16, 1863. A painting by James E. Taylor. Library of Congress.



Maj. Gen. U. S. Grant, commander of the Union Army of Tennessee.

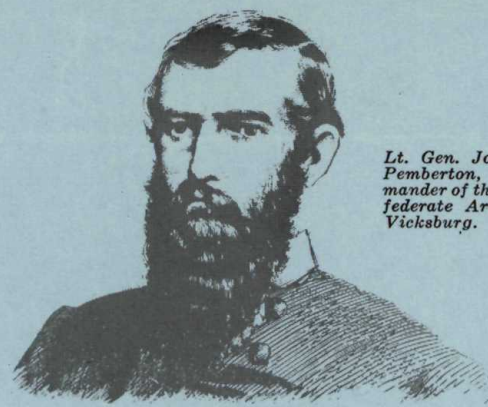


## SPRING AND A NEW CAMPAIGN

Grant considered three choices that spring of 1863: he could go back to Memphis and renew his drive down the Mississippi Central Railroad; he could attack Vicksburg from directly across the river; or he could march his army southward down the west bank of the river and cross at some point below Vicksburg. He chose to move south.

Spearheaded by the XIII Corps, the Union army moved from Milliken's Bend through the fertile delta lands of Louisiana. Opposed by only a handful of Confederate troops, Grant easily established his army on the Mississippi south of Vicksburg. For the river crossing he needed cooperation from the Union navy. In two night excursions, Porter ran eight gunboats and nine transports past the Vicksburg batteries, losing only two vessels. Now Grant not only had troops south of Vicksburg, but also the means for ferrying them across the river. To insure the success of an amphibious landing on the east bank, he had earlier set in motion a series of diversions to pull the Confederates away from his beachhead.

To draw attention to the north, he sent a division up the river to Greenville with orders to land and march inland. Sherman took another force up the Yazoo River and made a diversionary demonstration near Snyder's Bluff, northeast of Vicksburg. Far to the north, Col. B. H. Grierson rode out of La Grange, Tenn., with 1,700 Union troops, and swiftly struck southward into Mississippi toward Baton Rouge. Riding 450 miles in 16 days, Grierson's cavalry cut Southern railroads and telegraph lines across the State. More important, the swift action pulled Confederate strength away from Big Black



Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, commander of the Confederate Army of Vicksburg.

Bridge. Chasing the will-o'-the-wisp cavalrymen, the Confederates dissipated their strategic reserve.

These diversions took place during April. On April 29 the Union ironclads attacked the Confederate forts at Grand Gulf, but were repulsed. Undaunted, Grant marched his army a little farther south, his gunboats passing Grand Gulf under cover of darkness. Next day the Union army stormed ashore at Bruinsburg.

Striking rapidly eastward to secure the beachhead, the Federals met Pemberton's forces near Port Gibson. The Southerners fought a gallant holding action, but were overwhelmed and fell back toward Vicksburg. Moving into the area between Big Black River and Bayou Pierre, Grant halted and waited for Sherman to join him with the XV Corps. By May 7 he was ready to break out of his bridgehead.

Unlike many 19th-century soldiers, Grant was thinking of winning a total victory. Besides capturing Vicksburg, he planned to destroy Pemberton's army. He therefore drove northeastward to break the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. Then he planned to pivot to the west and drive on Vicksburg. But after meeting and defeating a small Confederate force at Raymond, Grant changed his plan. Learning that Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, coming from Tullahoma, Tenn., planned a juncture of Confederate forces, Grant decided to pivot to the east and capture the rail center of Jackson. Placing his army squarely between two strong enemy forces was a gamble, but it paid off. On May 14, almost unopposed, the Union Army took the city, scattering Johnston's army to the winds.



Vicksburg after the surrender. In a mighty bend the river swept first north and then south past DeSoto Peninsula (to the left) and the city. Library of Congress.

## GRANT TURNS ON VICKSBURG

Grant then turned his army westward and moved against Vicksburg, defeating the Confederates in the crucial battle of Champion Hill and again at Big Black Bridge. Unable to hold, Pemberton's shattered army fell back into the city and occupied its strong fortifications. Pressing hard on the Confederates' heels, advance contingents of the Union army, by May 18, were in front of Vicksburg.

### Attacks on the city

Convinced that the battles of Champion Hill and Big Black Bridge had broken Confederate morale, Federal officers immediately scheduled an attack on Vicksburg. Though only one of Grant's three corps was in position to strike, the attack was ordered. Rushing into the heavy abatis, the Union troops were thrown into confusion. Some reached the ditch in front of Stockade Redan, but most were pinned down short of their goal. Many Union soldiers fired all the ammunition in their cartridge-boxes as the opposing troops blazed away at each other throughout the long, hot afternoon. Among volunteers who raced to the rear for ammunition was 14-year-old musician Orion Howe, one of the youngest persons ever to receive the coveted Medal of Honor. After dark, Sherman's troops fell back.

### Synchronized watches

Three days later, Grant launched an all-out attack on Vicksburg. Scheduled to attack at 10 a.m., Union officers set their watches to time the forward movement—first battle on the American continent to be started by watches instead of the usual signal gun. Careful timing, however, did not prevent the Confederates from repulsing the initial thrust, and renewed attacks during the afternoon also failed. At nightfall, the Union troops fell back, having lost 3,100 men in their second vain attempt to storm Vicksburg.

## THE SIEGE

### The city falls

For the beleaguered defenders, time was running out. Soldiers were eating mule meat instead of the usual salt pork. Ground peas had replaced cornmeal. Their only hope for assistance was that General Johnston might break through Union siege lines or that reinforcements from Louisiana could gain possession of DeSoto Peninsula across the river. As the weeks passed and no help came, hope died.

Pemberton met Grant on the afternoon of July 3 to talk over terms for the surrender of Vicksburg. Grant demanded unconditional surrender; Pemberton refused. The meeting broke up. Grant, however, agreed to submit new terms in writing.

During the afternoon, the Union General agreed to let the Confederates sign paroles not to fight again until exchanged; officers could retain sidearms and a mount. Pemberton accepted these liberal terms, and at 10 a.m., the Confederates marched out and stacked their arms. The Union troops marched in and took possession of Vicksburg.

Five days later, the Port Hudson Confederates, on learning of the fall of Vicksburg, also laid down their arms.

Dugouts in the Union siege line. Shirley House in the background is the only surviving wartime building in the park. Library of Congress.







VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK forms a semicircle around the city of Vicksburg, Miss., which lies at the intersection of U.S. 80 and 61.

You can see the whole length of the defensive fortifications (along Confederate Avenue) and the main part of the investment line (along Union Avenue). Extensive remains of trenches, gun emplacements, rifle pits, Confederate forts, and Federal approaches to the Confederate lines are clearly visible, as are numerous memorials and markers.

For historical background, go first to the visitor center, located on Confederate Avenue near U.S. 80.

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

### SELF-GUIDING TOUR

Numbers are keyed to those on the inset map.

- 1. The Great Redoubt.** One of the major earthworks along the Confederate line. An unsuccessful Union attack was launched against this position on May 22.
- 2. Stockade Redan.** Here Confederates on May 19 threw back the first assault against the Vicksburg defense line. On May 22 the defenders were called on to repulse a second Union drive.
- 3. Fort Hill.** This position anchored the left flank of the Confederate defense line. From here Confederate gunners assisted the river batteries in sinking the gunboat *Cincinnati*. After the fall of Vicksburg, this earthwork was reshaped for use as a Union fort.
- 4. The National Cemetery.** This serene spot is the final resting place for over 16,000 Union soldiers, more than 12,000 unknown. The Confederate dead are buried in the city cemetery.
- 5. Thayer's Approach.** Here on the afternoon of May 22, Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele's blueclad legions stormed up the hill to your right, only to meet a bloody repulse. Subsequently, Thayer's Approach trench was pushed toward the Confederate line. The tunnel beneath this road was used by Thayer's pioneers to avoid exposing themselves when crossing the ridge.

- 6. Grant's Headquarters.** The equestrian statue of General Grant stands in the area where the general maintained his headquarters during the siege. Near Grant's statue are five State memorials: Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire. Troops from these States helped man Grant's siege line.
- 7. Battery DeGolyer.** From this position Union artillerists hammered the Great Redoubt. At one time during the siege there were 22 guns mounted here.
- 8. Fort Garrott.** In front of this well-preserved stronghold, also called Square Fort, you can see numerous markers showing Brig. Gen. Alvin P. Hovey's approach. Confederate Gen. Isham Garrott was killed inside this redoubt on June 17, 1863.
- 9. Railroad Redoubt.** The purpose of this redoubt was to protect the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. On the morning of May 22, Maj. Gen. John McClernard's troops assailed this strongpoint and forced the Confederate defenders to fall back a short distance. A detachment from Waul's Texas Legion later counter-attacked and recovered the work.

