

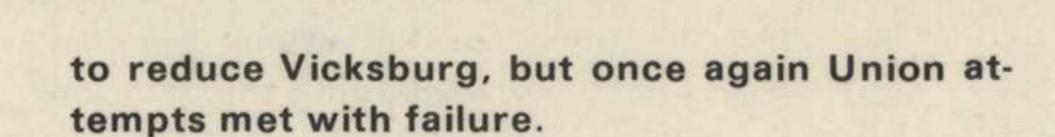
"Vicksburg is the key.... The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket." A. Lincoln

On July 4, 1863, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant put the key in President Lincoln's pocket. Vicksburg fell, and 5 days later Port Hudson surrendered, giving Union forces control of the Mississippi. This victory came because of the type of war Grant chose to fight in the West, as opposed to warfare back East where thousands of soldiers moved back and forth between Washington and Richmond, striking no decisive blows.

Grant's western campaign was more aggressive, more intense, and broader in scope than any in the war up to that time. Massive movements took Federal armies deep into the Southern heartland, opening the Mississippi and cutting the Confederacy in two. Northern forces rolled southward in 1862 and captured Forts Henry and Donelson. After the savage fighting at Shiloh in April, they closed in on Memphis and Corinth. Huge amphibious operations moved Union forces up the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and down the Mississippi. The Union aim of dividing the Confederacy along the "Father of Waters" appeared to be moving rapidly toward success.

Union seagoing vessels gave the North control of the lower Mississippi, as New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Natchez fell in April and May 1862. Although the Federals controlled most of the river, the Confederates occupied strong defenses on the banks, attempting to deny the river to the Federal warships that could interrupt Confederate communications. Vicksburg was the strongest and most important of these. Situated on a high bluff overlooking the mighty Mississippi, Confederate big guns above and below the city controlled the river.

The Union Navy's oceangoing vessels and river ironclads failed to take Vicksburg in the summer of 1862. During the winter, Grant conducted a series of land and amphibious movements



By the spring of 1863 three courses of action were open to Grant. With Memphis as a base, he could advance southward into Mississippi, using the railroads to supply his army and invest Vicksburg from the east. Secondly, he could attack Vicksburg from directly across the river. Or, he could march down the west bank, cross well below Vicksburg, and then swing into position to attack from the south. He had to choose the method that would buy victory at the lowest cost in Northern lives. Direct attack against Vicksburg would probably bring military disaster, and withdrawal toward Memphis would look like a Northern retreat. Grant chose to strike the city from the south after the march downriver.

It was an important and difficult choice for Grant. It meant exposing his army to possible destruction if the Confederates checked his advance out of the bridgehead. But, Grant recalled, the move was "eminently successful."

The Federals marched down the west bank of the river until they were opposite Bruinsburg, well below Vicksburg. Here, Grant's men crossed the river on April 30, establishing a bridgehead on the Mississippi side, but encountering stout resistance from elements of Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton's Confederate forces near Port Gibson. By May 7, Grant was ready to push inland.

His aims were simple. He wanted to capture Vicksburg and destroy the army garrisoning the city's defenses. Grant changed his plan. Instead of marching north he would drive northeast to cut the railroad between Jackson and Vicksburg. Then he would pivot and strike the town from the east.

Stiff resistance at Raymond on May 12 convinced Grant that a strong Confederate force had concentrated at Jackson, the State capital. He now changed his immediate objective and decided to destroy this Southern force before attacking Vicksburg.

On May 14, the Federals took Jackson, scattering the defenders. Grant then turned his army west. Pemberton, meanwhile, brought his field army east from Vicksburg. On May 16, the two forces clashed at Champion Hill. After this hotly contested battle, and one on the following day at Big Black Bridge, Pemberton's army fell back to Vicksburg's defensive works. On May 18, leading elements of Grant's army were approaching the bristling Confederate defense line.

Believing that Southern morale had deteriorated, Grant immediately assaulted the city. The first attack, on May 19, failed, as did the second assault 3 days later on the sector between the 26th Louisiana Redoubt and Fort Garrott.

Realizing it was useless to expend further lives in attempts to take the city by frontal assault, Grant decided to capture the stronghold by siege. Union engineers drove 13 approach trenches toward their adversaries' works, seeking to mine and blow up key points of the Confederate line. Heavy columns of Union infantry waited to storm through the gaps.

The Federals exploded only two mines, both under the 3d Louisiana Redan. The only attack—after the first explosion—failed.

Still, time was running out for the beleagured defenders. Supplies were short. No assistance came from other Confederate forces. On July 3, Grant demanded unconditional surrender; Pemberton refused. Grant then proposed more liberal terms, and on July 4, the Confederates surrendered.

ADMINISTRATION

Vicksburg National Military Park and Cemetery are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 349, Vicksburg, Miss. 39180, is in immediate charge of both park and cemetery.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

A TOUR OF THE BATTLEFIELD

We suggest that you begin the tour at the visitor center.

- Battery DeGolyer. From this position Union field guns hammered the Great Redoubt. At one time the Federals mounted 22 artillery pieces here.
- 2. Shirley House. Once in the thick of battle, this house is the only surviving wartime structure in the park. It has been reconstructed to its 1863 appearance.
- 3. Third Louisiana Redan. Here was one of the major Confederate earthworks guarding the Jackson Road approach to Vicksburg. Two mines were exploded beneath the redan in hopes of breaking the Confederate line.
- 4. Ransom's Gun Path. Dismantling two 12pounder guns, men of the 2d Illinois Artillery,
 aided by Ransom's infantry, dragged the cannon over rough terrain to an earthen parapet
 only 100 yards from the Confederates.
- 5. Stockade Redan Attack. From this and nearby points, Union soldiers on May 19 swept toward the Confederate fortifications surrounding the Stockade Redan, but were repulsed with heavy losses. Three days later the "Forlorn Hope," an advance force of 110 volunteer Federals, attacked from here. Few returned.
- 6. Thayer's Approach. During the afternoon of May 22, Union soldiers stormed up the hill toward their adversaries, then were stopped by geography and Confederate fire. Later, Maj. Gen. John M. Thayer pushed his approach trench toward the Confederate line. His soldiers used the tunnel beneath the road to avoid crossing the ridge where they would be exposed to enemy fire.
- 7. Battery Selfridge. One of the artillery batteries manned by naval gunners. A plaque at the monument tells the story of the Navy's role in the siege of Vicksburg.

- 8. National Cemetery. The final resting place for almost 17,000 Union soldiers, of whom about 13,000 are unknown. Many Confederates who died during the siege lie in Vicksburg City Cemetery.
- 9. Fort Hill, the anchor of the left flank of the Confederate line. Confederate gunners posted here assisted the river batteries in sinking the Union gunboat Cincinnati.
- 10. Stockade Redan. Here on May 19 Confederates threw back the first assault on the Vicksburg lines. Three days later the Federals again attacked and again were thrown back.
- 11. Great Redoubt. On May 22 Union forces launched an unsuccessful attack against this massive earthwork guarding the Jackson Road.
- 12. Second Texas Lunette. A Confederate fortification guarding the Baldwin's Ferry Road entrance to Vicksburg. Union soldiers dug approach trenches to within 15 feet of the lunette before the end of the siege.
- 13. Railroad Redoubt. This redoubt protected the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. On the morning of May 22, Northern troops assailed this strongpoint and forced out the defenders. A detachment of Waul's Texas Legion counterattacked and in a savage fight with bayonets, clubbed muskets, and artillery shells used as grenades drove out the Federals.
- 14. Fort Garrott. Here, on June 17, Confederate soldiers suffered from the highly accurate fire of Union sharpshooters. Confederate Col. Isham W. Garrott picked up a riflemusket to return the fire. A Federal musket ball pierced his heart. He died before he could learn he had been promoted to brigadier general.
- 15. Hovey's Approach. This restoration gives an indication of the construction of Federal approach trenches.

