

Engineers

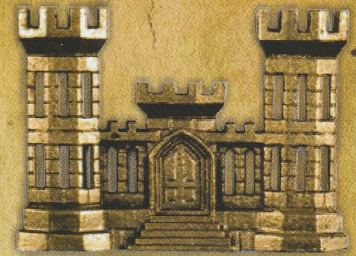
At Vicksburg

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Vicksburg National Military Park

Engineers on both sides performed many essential tasks throughout the Vicksburg Campaign. Commanders relied heavily upon the skill and ingenuity of their engineering corps for the construction of fortifications, roads, and bridges. Engineers were also responsible for the demolition or reduction of fortifications and obstacles by explosives and approach trenches.



Insignia badge for the
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

An Instrumental Role

1863



Pontoon Bridges

Armies in every campaign of the war traveled over roads and bridges built by their engineers. Bridging materials included wagon-mounted pontoon trains that carried wooden or inflatable rubber pontoon boats like those pictured here. This allowed troops to bridge rivers in hours. Maj. General William T. Sherman's XVII Corps used these bridging assets and made relatively quick work of the rivers and streams surrounding Vicksburg. This also greatly enhanced the logistical support enjoyed by Union forces.

Road Building

Confederate engineering efforts at Vicksburg centered on counter-mobility by denying Grant's army the use of roads, streams, and bayous around the city.

In fact, the Union engineers labored constantly in the construction of sixty miles of roads opposite Vicksburg in the low-land swamps of Louisiana. Many of these roads were corduroy roads made from miles of logs laid side by side to allow passage of heavy supply wagons and field artillery over muddy terrain. Pictured here Union troops construct a corduroy road.



Sappers

Following the failure of the initial Union assaults, Grant again turned to his engineers. Over the next 47 days, Union sappers (engineers specialized at reducing fortifications), supervised thousands of Union troops as they constructed approach trenches to within feet of the Confederate line. Pictured here are Union sappers digging an approach trench. The *sap-roller* was made of bundled sticks wrapped in a cane basket. It offered limited protection for the diggers.





Fort Hill on the Confederate line in Vicksburg 1863.



Maj. Samuel H. Lockett (1837 - 1891)

Samuel H. Lockett served with great distinction as he planned and directed the Confederate defenses that surrounded Vicksburg in late 1862 - 1863. Under his guidance, over nine miles of trenches and fortifications, and thirteen river front shore batteries, made Vicksburg the "*Gibraltar of the Confederacy*."

Following the Civil War, Lockett went on to serve as a colonel of engineers in the Egyptian Army, he taught at Louisiana State University and University of Tennessee. He was also involved in the construction of the Statue of Liberty in New York City and projects in Chile and Colombia. Lockett is credited with the invention of the *odograph*, an survey instrument that led to the development of the odometer and pedometer.



Union troops (miners from Illinois), used picks and shovels to dig a 200 foot tunnel from Union lines to a location under the Confederate line. On June 25, 1863, two thousand pounds of black powder were detonated by Union engineers in the end of the tunnel. The resulting explosion destroyed a portion of the Confederate defenses, though the subsequent Union assault proved a failure after bogging down in the crater.

Eyewitness sketch of the mine explosion



**Confederate
Defenses**

**Union Siege
Lines**