



Campaign for Vicksburg

From the start of the Civil War, control of the Mississippi River south of Cairo, Ill., was vitally important to the federal government. Controlling it would let Union troops and supplies pass into the South. It would isolate Texas, Arkansas, and most of Louisiana—a region crucial to the South for supplies and recruits. To protect this lifeline the Confederates built fortifications at strategic river points. But Federal naval and military forces fought southward from Illinois and northward from the Gulf of Mexico, capturing post after post. By late summer 1862, only Vicksburg, Miss., and Port Hudson, La., blocked Union control of the Mississippi. Vicksburg was the stronger and more important post.

Set atop a high bluff overlooking a river bend, Vicksburg was protected by riverfront artillery batteries, a maze of swamps and bayous to the north and south, and a ring of forts with 172 guns guarding all land approaches. President Abraham Lincoln called Vicksburg “the key.” He believed “the war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket.” In October

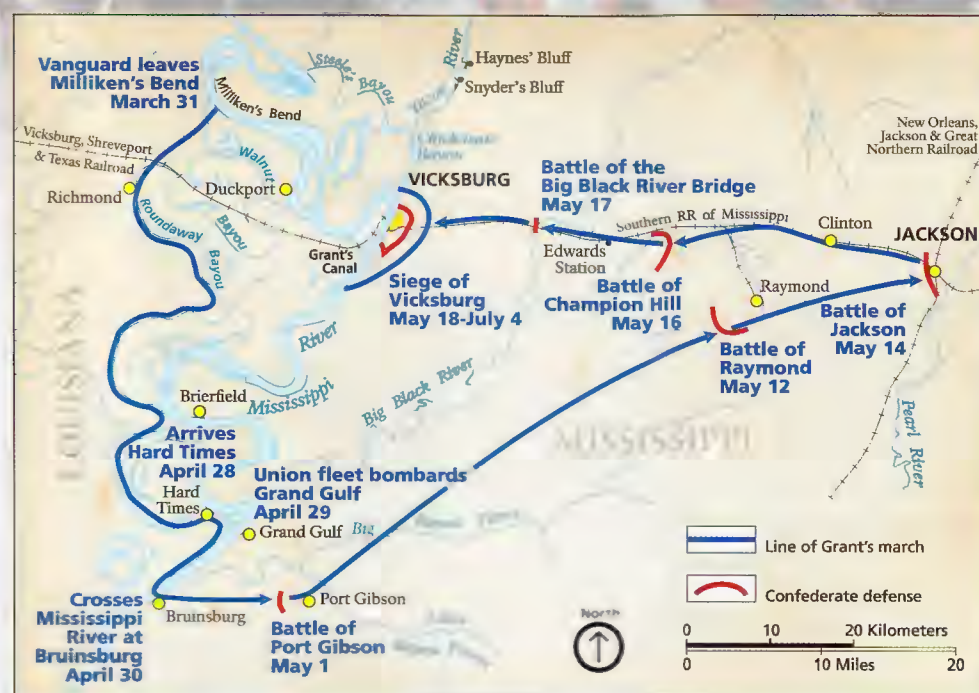
1862, Vicksburg was the focus of operations between Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, ordered to clear the Mississippi of Confederate resistance, and Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton—with 50,000 widely scattered Confederate troops—expected to keep the river open.

After his first operations against Vicksburg ended on December 29 with Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's defeat at the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou, Grant began amphibious maneuvers (called the Bayou Expeditions) to force the city's surrender. All failed, including trying to bypass Vicksburg's batteries by digging a canal across the base of De Soto Point. By spring Grant had decided to march his 45,000-man army down the Mississippi's Louisiana side, cross the river well below Vicksburg, and swing into position to attack the city from the south or east.

On March 31, 1863, Grant started south from his encampments at Milliken's Bend, 20 miles northwest of Vicksburg. By April 28 the

Federals were established at Hard Times, La., on the Mississippi above Grand Gulf. Unable to cross the river at Grand Gulf because of Confederate resistance, Grant went farther south. On April 30, he sent his men ashore at Bruinsburg. Marching eastward, Grant's troops defeated parts of Pemberton's forces near Port Gibson on May 1 and near Raymond on May 12. On May 14 Grant captured Jackson, the state capital, scattering its defenders.

Turning west, Grant marched toward Vicksburg along the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. On May 16, at Champion Hill, his force defeated Pemberton's field army in the campaign's largest, bloodiest, most significant action. The next day, at Big Black River Bridge, the Federals overwhelmed and drove Pemberton's disorganized troops back into the Vicksburg fortifications. By May 18 the Federals were nearing the bristling Confederate defenses. Grant lost no time in assaulting the Vicksburg lines. (See *park map on back*.) The first attack, against the Stockade Redan on May 19, failed. A second



attack, launched May 22 over a three-mile front from Stockade Redan to Fort Garrott, was also repulsed.

Reluctant to expend more lives trying to storm the city, Grant began a formal siege. He set up artillery batteries to hammer the Confederate fortifications from the land side, while Adm. David D. Porter's gunboats blasted the city from the river. Pemberton knew by late June that he must soon “capitulate upon the best attainable terms.” On July 3, after 46 days of siege, he met with Grant to discuss the terms. On July 4, 1863, in the morning, Vicksburg was officially surrendered.

With Port Hudson's surrender five days later a major Federal objective in the war—to open the Mississippi River and to sever the Confederacy—was realized. “The Father of Waters” said President Lincoln, “again goes unvexed to the sea.”

The Occupied City

The 1863 surrender of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, along with the defeat of Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg, July 1–3, marked a Civil War turning point. Fighting continued for 21 more months, but Federal control of the Mississippi River helped to ensure survival of the Union.

For the rest of the war Vicksburg was an occupied city and regional base for Federal operations. In February 1864, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman marched across the state from Vicksburg to Meridian

in his first show of the total war concept that would later “make Georgia howl” in the March to the Sea.

Vicksburg was also a prisoner-of-war exchange point. On April 24, 1865, over 2,300 Union soldiers from prisons at Andersonville, Ga., and Cahaba (Castle Morgan), Ala., left Vicksburg on the steamer *Sultana* headed upriver for home. Three nights later, near Memphis, the overloaded boat exploded and over 1,800 died. It is American history's biggest maritime disaster, but with the surrender of

both Lee's and Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate armies, and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in April 1865, the incident made little news, and it remains a little known tragedy of the Civil War years.

Vicksburg's citizens suffered the ignominy of living in an occupied city from July 1863 through Reconstruction. Civil liberties were suspended, and 5,000 United States Colored Troops patrolled the streets. Loyalty oaths were required of the townspeople, or they could be arrested or ban-

ished. Plantations of persons declared to be an “enemy of the government” were confiscated and then leased to “carpetbaggers and scalawags” seeking fortunes in cotton speculation.

Mississippi would be readmitted to the Union in February of 1870, but Federal troops occupied the city of Vicksburg until President Rutherford B. Hayes removed them in 1877.

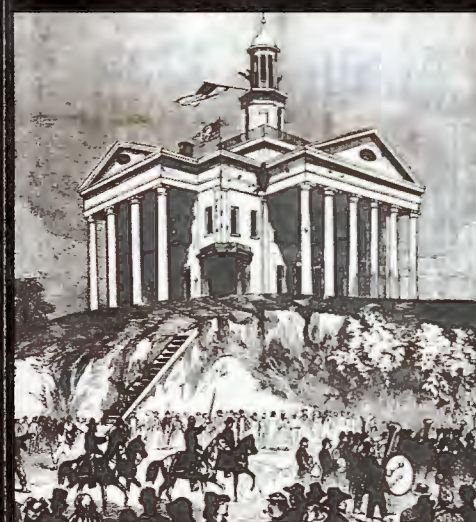
Thousands of blacks poured into Vicksburg to exercise their new freedom. Many enlisted in the Union army.

Skilled artisans among them set up businesses or hired out to rebuild siege-damaged parts of the city. The Freedman's Bureau opened schools to teach blacks of all ages to read and write, tools essential for their new way of life.

Some blacks opened churches or banks, or even entered politics. But many of these freedoms were restricted or taken away when white rule returned at the end of Reconstruction. Not until the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s–1960s was their equality established

by law. Despite the harsh realities imposed by occupation and Reconstruction and by the uncertainties of freedom, life in Vicksburg slowly returned to normal after the city's surrender, as restored river commerce brought economic stability to towns along the Mississippi.

The river changed its course in 1876, moving away from the city, but its muddy water continues to shape Vicksburg history.



A victorious Union army marches by Vicksburg Court House, July 4, 1863. The courthouse is now a museum.

Legacy From the Past

On December 12, 1862, the Union ironclad gunboat *Cairo* and several other vessels steamed up the Yazoo River, north of Vicksburg, to destroy Confederate batteries and clear enemy obstructions from the channel. Suddenly, two quick explosions tore holes in the boat's bottom. In minutes the ironclad lay on the river bottom, only its smokestack and flagstaff tops showing above water.

Cairo was the first vessel ever sunk by an electrically detonated torpedo (today called a mine), but its place

in history comes from what went down with it. Preserved like a time-capsule were information on naval construction, naval stores, armament, and the crew's personal gear.

Artifacts recovered from the *Cairo* before and after its salvage in the 1960s, and the boat's remains, are exhibited at the U.S.S. *Cairo* Museum next to Vicksburg National Cemetery. The artifacts and gunboat give new insights into Civil War naval life.



USS *Cairo* and its commanding officer, Lt. Cmdr. Thomas O. Selfridge Jr., U.S.N. BOTH: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Exploring Vicksburg National Military Park

Vicksburg National Military Park is in the north-eastern portion of the city of Vicksburg, Miss., with three detached units south of the city along Washington St. (U.S. Bus. 61) near the Mississippi River bridges and one in Madison Parish, La. The park entrance and visitor center are on Clay St. (U.S. 80), within one quarter mile of I-20. Both the visitor center and U.S.S. Cairo Museum are open daily, except December 25. Please check with the park staff about special programs and activities.

The map below shows the main area of the park plus the four detached units of Louisiana Circle, site of a Confederate fortification; South Fort, another Confederate defense work; Navy Circle, marking the southern anchor of the Union lines; and a portion of Grant's Canal,



Illinois Memorial



Vicksburg National Cemetery



Shirley House

across the Mississippi in Louisiana. As established in 1899, the park included the entire extent of the siege and defense lines. The lower one-third of the park (highlighted in brown) was later transferred to the city. Many state and regimental markers, monuments, and tablets are on former park property, which, along with the detached units, can be reached via Mission 66 Road and South Confederate Ave.

It is illegal to possess, disturb, remove, excavate, or destroy archaeological, cultural, historic, or prehistoric resources. The possession or use of metal detectors on park property is prohibited. Weapons of any kind are also prohibited within the park. Pets must be leashed or physically restrained at all times. Picnicking is allowed only

at the U.S.S. Cairo Museum and Tour Stop 12. Fires and camping are not allowed. Do not climb on cannon or monuments, and do not disturb plants and animals.

More Information
Vicksburg National Military Park
3201 Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39183-3495
601-636-0583
www.nps.gov/vick

Vicksburg National Military Park is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.

The Battlefield Tour

We suggest that you begin the 16-mile tour at the visitor center, where exhibits and an audio-visual program explain the campaign and siege of Vicksburg. The numbered stops below are keyed to the numbers on the map. During the tour, you will notice either red or blue metal markers. Red markers pertain to Confederate lines or emplacements. Blue markers pertain to Union forces.

- 1 Battery De Golyer** From this position a battery of guns, including those from the 8th Michigan Artillery commanded by Capt. Samuel De Golyer, hammered the Confederate Great Redoubt directly ahead. At one time as many as 22 Federal artillery pieces were positioned here. Captain De Golyer was mortally wounded while directing the fire of this battery.
- 2 Shirley House** Union troops called it "the white house." It is the only surviving wartime structure in the park. During the siege it served as headquarters for the 45th Illinois Infantry, members of which built hundreds of bombproof shelters around it to protect themselves against Confederate artillery fire. It has been restored to its 1863 appearance.

- 3 Third Louisiana Redan** Here was one of the major Confederate fortifications guarding the Jackson Road approach to Vicksburg. Concluding that the fort was impregnable to direct assault, General Grant ordered his troops to dig mines under the work and blow it up. The first mine was detonated on June 25; the second on July 1. Neither succeeded in breaking the Confederate line.
- 4 Ransom's Gun Path** To provide additional artillery support for infantry manning this sector of the siege lines, men of the 2nd Illinois Artillery dismantled two 12-pounder cannon and, aided by Gen. Thomas Ransom's infantry, dragged the guns over rough terrain to an earthen parapet just 100 yards from the Confederate position. There the guns were reassembled and returned to action.
- 5 Stockade Redan Attack** From this and nearby points on May 19, Gen. William T. Sherman launched an infantry attack against the Stockade Redan (Tour Stop 10). The Federals were repulsed with heavy losses. Three days later, as part of a general assault on the Confederate lines, Union soldiers attacked the Redan again. This attack also failed.

- 6 Thayer's Approach** During the afternoon of May 22, Union troops commanded by Brig. Gen. John M. Thayer stormed up this hill toward Confederates dug in at the top. They were stopped by geography and enemy fire. Later, Thayer's men began digging a six-foot-deep approach trench toward the Southern position. His soldiers dug the tunnel beneath the road to avoid crossing the ridge, where they would be exposed to Confederate fire.
- 7 Battery Selfridge** This battery consisted entirely of naval cannon and was manned by sailors of the U.S. Navy. It is named in honor of Lt. Cmdr. Thomas O. Selfridge, Jr., one of the naval officers stationed here and the man in command of the ironclad *Cairo* when it was sunk in the Yazoo River on December 12, 1862. A plaque here tells of the navy's role in the siege of Vicksburg.

- 8 Vicksburg National Cemetery** Of the nearly 17,000 Union soldiers buried here, about 13,000 are unknown. Established in 1866, the cemetery is also the final resting place for veterans of the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, and the Korean Conflict. It was closed to burials in 1961. Many Confederates who died during the siege are buried in Vicksburg's Cedar Hill Cemetery.

- 9 Fort Hill** This fort, which anchored the northern flank of the Confederate lines, was so formidable that no Union attack was ever made against it. Confederate gunners posted here helped the river batteries sink the Federal gunboat *Cincinnati* on May 27, 1863.
- 10 Stockade Redan** The Federal failures on May 19 and 22 to overrun this fortification, the principal Confederate work guarding the Graveyard Road approach to Vicksburg, were major factors in Grant's decision to avoid any more direct assaults.
- 11 Great Redoubt** Like the Third Louisiana Redan (Tour Stop 3), this massive Confederate earthwork guarded the Jackson Road. The Federal attack here on May 22 was repulsed with heavy losses. Union artillery subsequently kept the redoubt under almost continuous bombardment.

- 12 Second Texas Lunette** Manned by the Second Texas Volunteer Infantry, this Confederate fortification guarded the Baldwin Ferry Road approach to Vicksburg. On May 22 it was the scene of furious fighting as Confederates beat back repeated Union attacks. During the

- siege Union soldiers dug approach trenches to within 15 feet of the lunette.
- 13 Railroad Redoubt** Confederates built this work to protect the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. On the morning of May 22 Union troops assailed this stronghold and forced out the defenders. A detachment of Col. Thomas Waul's Texas Legion counterattacked and, in a savage hand-to-hand fight with bayonets, clubbed muskets, and artillery shells used as grenades drove out the Federals.
- 14 Fort Garrott** On June 17 Confederate soldiers of Col. Isham W. Garrott's 20th Alabama Regiment suffered great casualties here from Federal sharpshooter fire. Garrott, exasperated at the damage being inflicted on his men, picked up a rifle-musket to return the fire. He was shot through the heart and died without learning he had been promoted to brigadier general.

- 15 Hovey's Approach** This restored section of the two approach trenches dug by Gen. Alvin P. Hovey's Union troops demonstrates how the siege was conducted. The zigzag design helped to nullify the effects of Confederate enfilading fire and minimized Federal casualties.

Detached Park Sites
Louisiana Circle Confederate cannon here guarded the river approaches to the city and engaged Union gunboats during the siege.

South Fort Southern anchor of the Confederate defense lines around Vicksburg. It guarded the Warrenton Road (Washington Street) entrance to the city.

Navy Circle Southern anchor of the Union siege lines. Rifled cannon mounted here prevented Confederates from escaping the city via the Warrenton Road (now Washington Street).

Grant's Canal This site, located across the Mississippi River in Madison Parish, La., is where Federal troops attempted to cut a canal across the base of De Soto Point to enable gunboats and transports to bypass Confederate batteries at Vicksburg.



For Safety's Sake

Whether driving, hiking, jogging, or bicycling, be alert to potential hazards while visiting the battlefield. Avoid running on steep slopes, and watch for fire ants, poison ivy, and poisonous snakes.

Severe thunderstorms can develop quickly at any time of year; be prepared to seek shelter. Report all accidents to park rangers, who are here to help you.

Relic Hunting Prohibited

0 0.5 1 Kilometer
0 0.5 1 Mile