

Section 2

The Vicksburg Campaign

Below: The heavily armed city of Vicksburg was located on bluffs high above a hairpin bend in the Mississippi River. As long as Vicksburg remained in Confederate hands, the river was impassable to Union shipping. General Grant attempted to bypass the city by having a canal built across the neck of the hairpin, thereby opening the river, but the attempt failed.

As you read, look for

- General Grant's daring and successful campaign to capture Vicksburg;
- Sherman's march through Mississippi and, later, through Georgia;
- the ways slaves benefited from the Emancipation Proclamation and the chance to fight with Union troops;
- how Confederate defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg led to the South's surrender in 1865;
- terms: **Grierson's Raid, siege, Emancipation Proclamation.**



On January 29, 1863, General Grant arrived at Young's Point, a landing on the Mississippi River just north of Vicksburg, and established his headquarters there. Having learned from David Farragut that Vicksburg could not be taken from the river, General Grant ordered General Sherman to dig a canal to connect the two main channels of the river where it made a *hairpin* (sharp) bend at Vicksburg. A canal would have allowed Union ships to bypass the batteries of Vicksburg and would have reopened the great river to midwestern trade. However, Sherman's attempt to dig a canal was no more successful than Farragut's had been, and Grant was eventually forced to abandon the scheme.

Yazoo Pass Expedition

After the attempt to dig a canal failed, General Grant set in motion another movement to get part of his army in a position northeast of Vicksburg. Grant ordered his men to dynamite the levee at a place called Yazoo Pass. A break in the levee at Yazoo Pass would divert enough water from the Mississippi River to flood an old channel connecting the Mississippi River with Moon Lake. Grant's troops could be transported from the Mississippi River by way of this old channel into Moon Lake, then down the Coldwater River into the Tallahatchie, and eventually into the Yazoo River. This water route would allow Grant to get his men to the high ground northeast of Vicksburg. On February 3, 1863, the levee was broken. By March 10, Union forces reached the Tallahatchie River about thirty-two miles north of Greenwood. However, General Pemberton deployed his troops in a manner that blocked Grant's advance toward Vicksburg from the northeast.

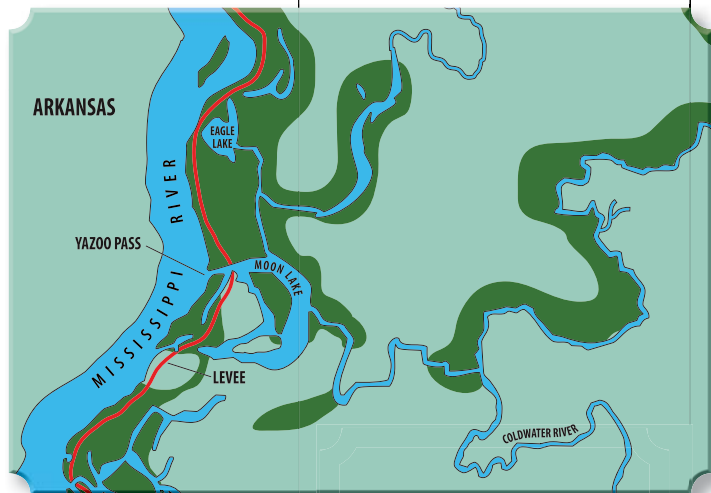
Grant's Bold and Daring Maneuver

After the Yazoo Pass expedition failed, General Grant designed a bold, daring, and dangerous maneuver to capture Vicksburg. The thirty-nine-year-old Union general, without consulting his corps commanders, decided to march his men down the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River and cross over into Mississippi south of Vicksburg. Unlike the low, swampy flatlands of the Delta north of Vicksburg, the terrain south of the city was much higher and dryer. On this high ground, Grant could better use his superior manpower in an overland assault against Vicksburg. It would be extremely difficult, however, for Grant to get his huge army from the Louisiana side back across the river into Mississippi. The only way Grant could accomplish that would be for Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter to run his ships past the Vicksburg batteries and meet Grant south of the city.

General Grant's plan was so dangerous that General Pemberton did not anticipate it, and General Sherman opposed it. He even complained about it

Something Extra!

Yazoo Pass
is now known as
Grant's Pass.



Map 33 Yazoo Pass Expedition

Map Skill: How do you think
Moon Lake got its name?



Above: General John Pemberton took command of the Confederate forces at Vicksburg in 1862. **Below:** Colonel Benjamin Grierson led a series of raids through eastern Mississippi in 1863 to divert Pemberton's attention from Grant's maneuvers.



to higher authorities in Washington. In his memoirs, General Grant recalled his reaction: "When General Sherman first learned of the move I proposed to make [he] expressed his alarm. . . . He said it was an axiom of war that when any great body of troops moved against an enemy they should do so from a base of supplies, which they would guard as the apple of their eye."

The plan was dangerous because, by marching through Louisiana and crossing over into Mississippi, Grant would completely cut off his army from its supply lines. It was also dangerous because Rear Admiral Porter could possibly lose his entire fleet while trying to pass the big guns of Vicksburg. As great

as the risk was, the prize was even greater. If the Union army could take

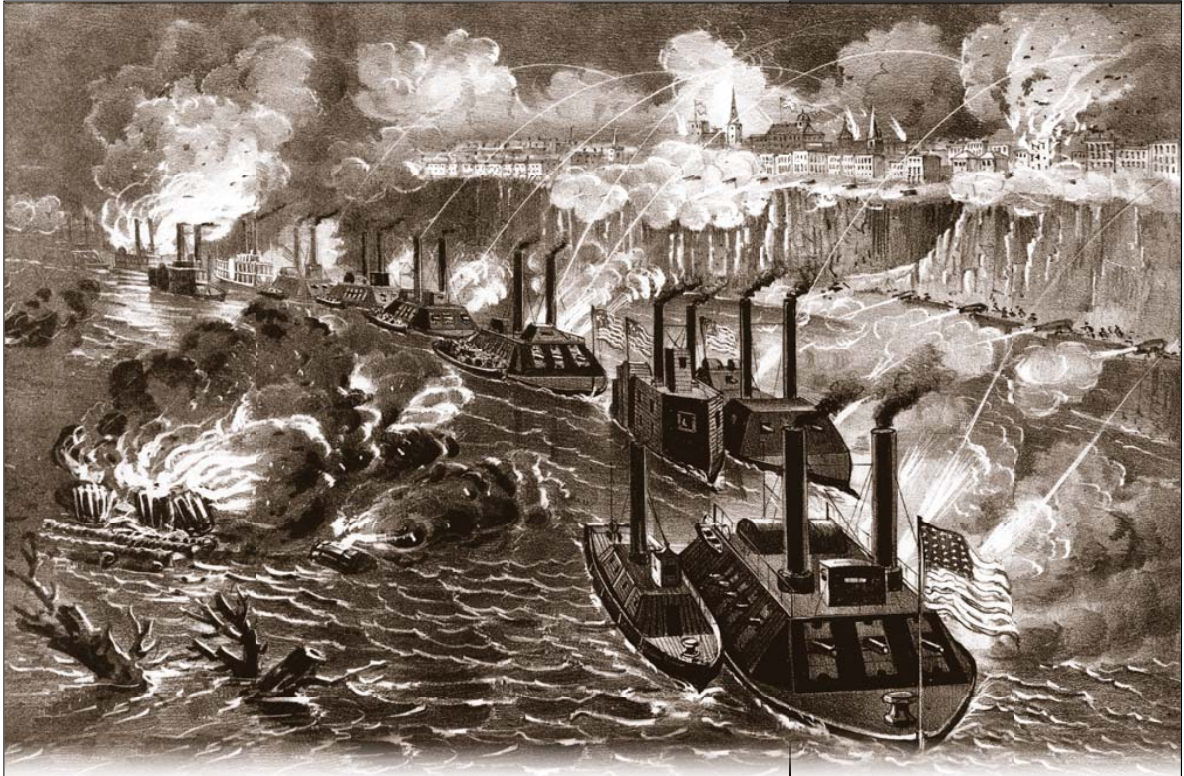
Vicksburg, the Confederacy would be cut in half. The flow of supplies into the Confederacy from the west would be halted. Equally as important, river commerce would be reopened to the Union. Perhaps only so great an incentive as the capture of Vicksburg would have caused General Grant to take such a chance.

Grierson's Raid, April 17-May 2, 1863

Grant's grand maneuver was inaugurated on March 29, 1863, as he began marching his troops down the Louisiana side of the river. To cover himself as well as possible, and to disguise his strategy, Grant devised several diversionary attacks. The most important diversion was a cavalry raid that Colonel Benjamin Grierson conducted from La Grange, Tennessee, down through Mississippi, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The purpose of **Grierson's Raid** was to cause General Pemberton to divert part of his army in pursuit of Colonel Grierson, and to destroy the railroad lines that connected Vicksburg with the eastern part of the Confederacy.

Something Extra!

Over the years, five U.S. Navy ships have been named **USS Porter** in honor of David Dixon Porter and his father, Commodore David Porter. The most recent one, the guided missile destroyer **USS Porter**, was commissioned in 1999 at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula.



Porter Runs the Guns of Vicksburg

In the dark of night on April 16, 1863, Rear Admiral Porter's fleet of eight gunboats and two transports sailed past the big guns at Vicksburg and *rendezvoused* (came together at an appointed place) with Grant's troops south of the city. On April 22, six more Union transports ran the guns of Vicksburg. By April 30, 1863, General Grant had moved his army of twenty-four thousand men and sixty cannons from Louisiana across the Mississippi River at Bruinsburg. On May 2, Grant captured Port Gibson, a small town twelve miles to the east. On May 8, Sherman's army joined Grant, and the push toward Vicksburg began.

Grant Closes in on Vicksburg

In anticipation of a Union assault against Vicksburg, President Jefferson Davis ordered ten thousand Confederate troops under General Joseph E. Johnston to reinforce General Pemberton. When Grant learned that the Confederate reinforcements were on their way to Jackson, he captured the city to prevent General Johnston from linking his troops with Pemberton's forces. After burning several buildings and destroying the railroads around Jackson, Grant and Sherman began marching toward Vicksburg, their major objective.

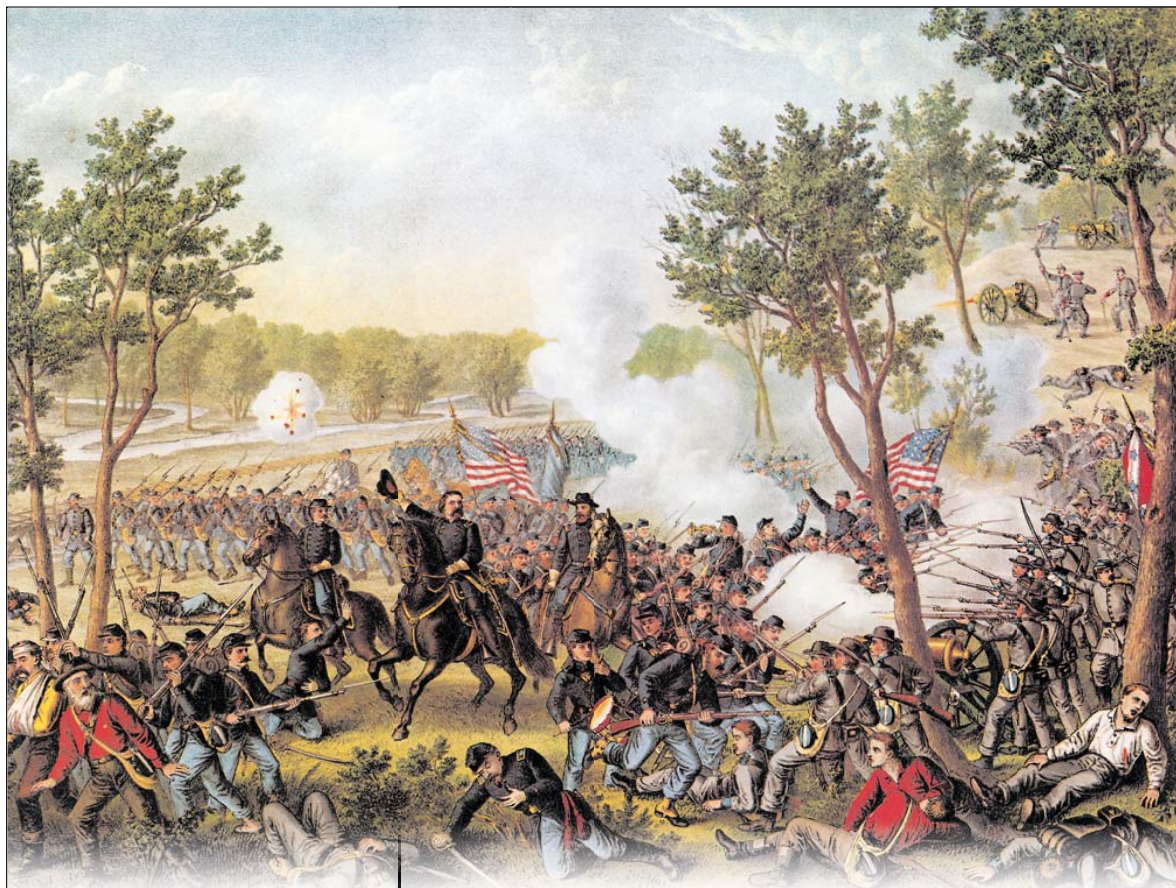
Battle of Champion Hill, May 16, 1863

General Pemberton was ordered to concentrate his troops between Vicksburg and Jackson to prevent Grant from moving into Vicksburg. As the Confederate troops were moving into this position, they encountered

Above: On the night of April 16, 1863, Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter led a flotilla of Union ironclads through a withering artillery bombardment from the guns of Vicksburg, joining Grant's forces south of the city.

Something Extra!

The Bruinsburg landing was the largest amphibious (land and water) operation in American military history until the Allied D-Day invasion of Normandy in World War II.



Above: Marching toward Vicksburg, Grant's army clashed at Champion Hill with a Confederate force sent to intercept them. The Union army was victorious, and the Confederates were forced to retreat to Vicksburg.

Opposite page, below: Unable to take Vicksburg by force, Grant's army laid siege to Vicksburg. The city held out for forty-seven days before surrendering on July 4, 1863. Because of the negative feelings associated with the date, Vicksburg citizens did not celebrate Independence Day until the mid-1940s.

Grant's army marching west toward Vicksburg. On May 16, the two armies met at Champion Hill, a small community southwest of Bolton. In what has been called the decisive engagement of the Vicksburg campaign, the crest of Champion Hill changed hands three times between 10:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Finally, the Confederates were forced to pull back west toward Vicksburg. On May 17, Grant pursued the weary Confederate army as they withdrew into the protective *redoubts* (defended positions) of Vicksburg.

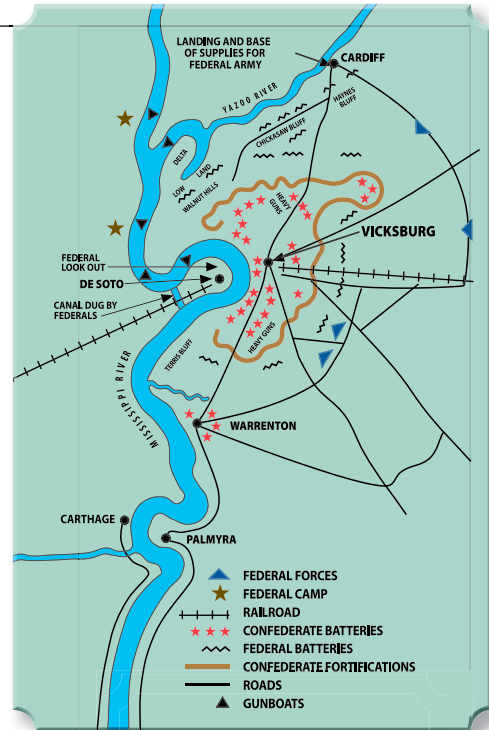
What Sherman Learned at Vicksburg

On the late afternoon of May 19, 1863, from the high dry ground of Haines Bluff, Grant and Sherman observed the Union army *investing* (surrounding with troops to prevent escape or entry) the city of Vicksburg. In his memoirs, Grant remembered that, as the two of them stood atop Haines Bluff, Sherman "turned to me saying, up to this minute he had no positive assurance of success. This, however, was the end of one of the greatest campaigns in history, and I ought to make a report of it at once." Sherman had learned during the nineteen-day march from Bruinsburg to Vicksburg what Grant had learned at Oxford. The Union army could live off the bountiful southern land. For the remainder of the war, Grant wrote, General Sherman lived off the land "while marching through four States of the Confederacy with an army more than twice as large as mine at this time."

The Siege of Vicksburg, May 23-July 4, 1863

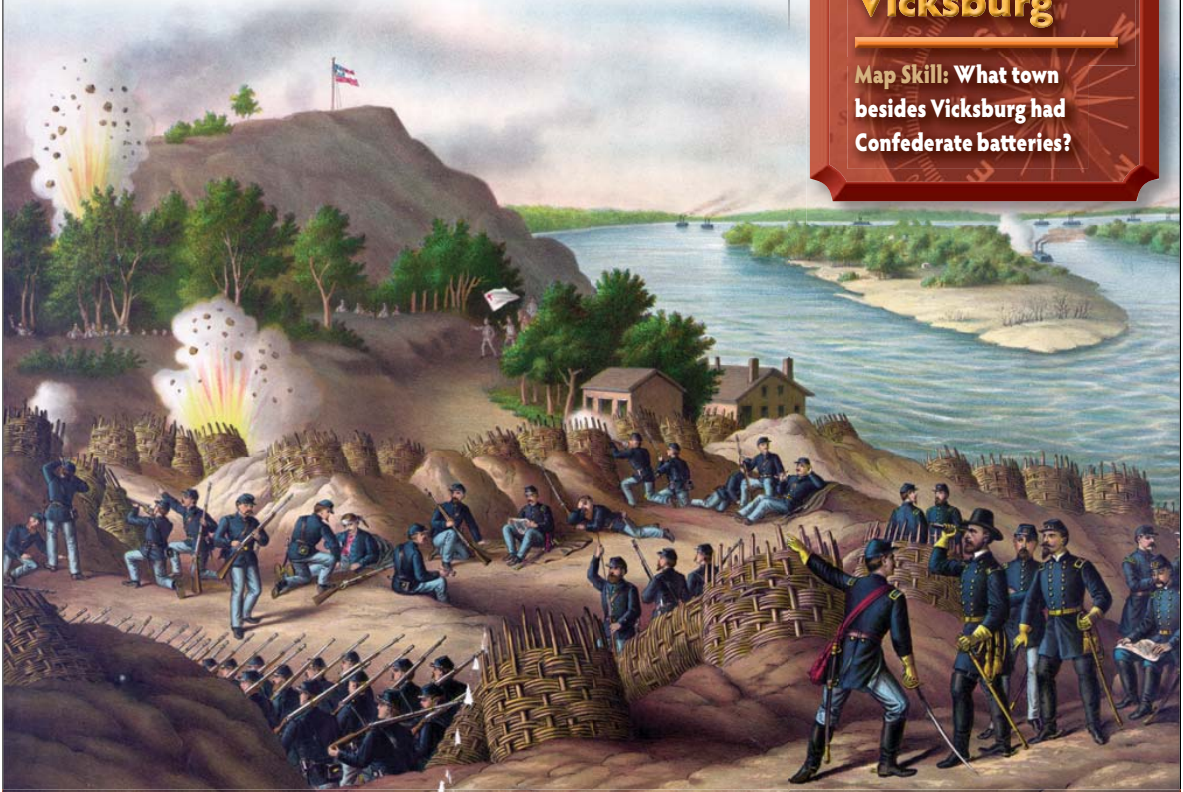
When Pemberton withdrew his army into the city, he made a fatal mistake. General Grant concentrated his forces on the outskirts of the city and placed Vicksburg under siege. A **siege** is a tactic where armed forces try to capture a fort or fortified town by surrounding it and preventing supplies from reaching it. Grant simply waited for the soldiers and the citizens of Vicksburg to exhaust their resources and their will to resist. The siege of Vicksburg lasted forty-three days.

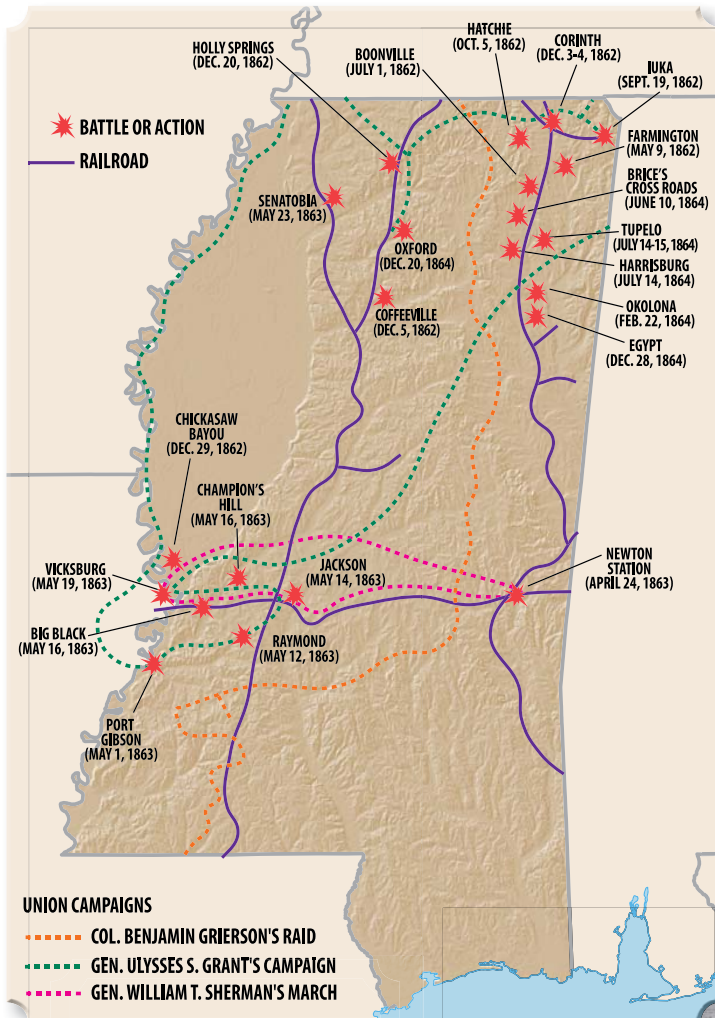
Finally, on July 3, 1863, General Pemberton met with General Grant, who demanded unconditional surrender. After General Pemberton refused the terms of unconditional surrender, Grant assembled his corps commanders and other subordinates. After discussing the situation, Grant advised Pemberton that his commanders had recommended more favorable surrender terms. It was agreed that all the Confederate troops would be *paroled* (set free with conditions) upon signing an oath that they would not fight against the Union until they were formally exchanged for Union prisoners. Officers were allowed to keep their sidearms, a horse, and their personal property. All other military weapons, stores, and supplies were to be surrendered. General Pemberton accepted these terms; on July 4, 1863, Vicksburg was formally surrendered to General Grant. After the fall of Vicksburg, Grant and Sherman's troops marched up through north-east Mississippi, through northern Alabama, to Chattanooga, Tennessee.



Map 34 The Siege of Vicksburg

Map Skill: What town
besides Vicksburg had
Confederate batteries?



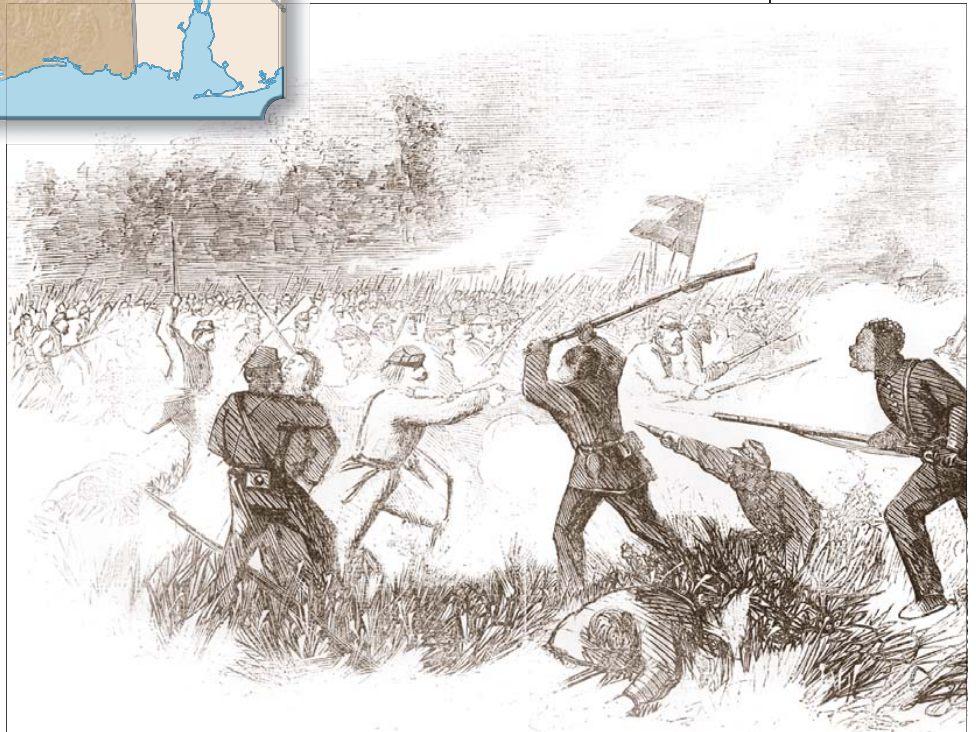


Sherman's March through Mississippi, February 3-March 4, 1864

Federal military leaders realized that Confederate forces in Mississippi were still a threat to Union control of the southeastern United States. Therefore, General Sherman was ordered back to Mississippi and instructed to destroy the railroad from Vicksburg to Meridian and to disrupt other Confederate supply lines. On February 3, 1864, with twenty thousand troops, Sherman began his march across Mississippi. By February 14, Sherman had cut his way from Vicksburg to Meridian, destroying railroads and confiscating food and supplies all along the way. By March 4, his army, part of which had returned by way of Philadelphia, Louisville, Kosciusko, and Canton, was back in Vicksburg. The purpose of this raid was to destroy the resources that enabled the Confederacy to maintain and supply its army. When Sherman had completed this task, he returned to Chattanooga and afterwards made his famous march through Georgia.

Map 35 The Civil War in Mississippi

Map Skill: In which part of the state did the 1864 battles take place?



The Day of Jubilee

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation**, which freed all the slaves in those states in rebellion against the United States of America. Although many slaves in remote parts of Mississippi did not learn of their emancipation until the war was over, those who heard of the proclamation greeted the news of their freedom with jubilation and excitement. It was a Day of Jubilee, a celebration of freedom.

Mississippi Black Troops

As Union forces penetrated into Mississippi in the fall of 1862, agricultural operations were almost totally disrupted, and thousands of slaves were out of work. They soon began following the federal troops who provided them with food and clothing. Over seventeen thousand former Mississippi slaves joined the Union army. Black troops distinguished themselves in the Battle of Milliken's Bend on June 7, 1863, and convinced Union military leaders that they were brave and capable soldiers.

The 3rd United States Colored Cavalry

Among the units formed by these black Mississippians who fought for their freedom was the 3rd United States Colored Cavalry. This unit fought several engagements against Confederate forces along the Mississippi Central Railroad between Canton and Vaughan in May 1864. Approximately 186,000 blacks served in the Union army and navy. Among them were approximately 136,000 former slaves.



Above: An elderly slave reads the news of the Emancipation Proclamation. **Below:** The Battle of Milliken's Bend was an attempt by Confederate forces led by General Richard Taylor to disrupt Union supply lines and lift the siege of Vicksburg. Black soldiers fought bravely on behalf of the Union.





Above: Wilson Brown earned his Medal of Honor during the Battle of Mobile Bay, while serving on Farragut's flagship, the USS *Hartford*. **Below:** The defeat at Gettysburg, the day before the surrender of Vicksburg, dealt the Confederacy a double blow.

Wilson Brown, Congressional Medal of Honor Winner

Two young former Natchez slaves, Wilson Brown and Thomas Gates, boarded David Farragut's flagship *Hartford* while it was anchored off Natchez in the spring of 1862 and joined the United States Navy. They were enlisted and sent to New Jersey for training. Brown was later assigned to the *Hartford*. For his acts of uncommon courage and by putting himself at great personal risk during the Battle of Mobile Bay on August 4, 1864, Wilson Brown won the praise of his skipper and the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Something Extra!

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force that can be given to an individual serving in the U.S. armed services. It is generally presented by the president of the United States in the name of Congress.

The War Ends

The surrender of Vicksburg was a great psychological loss to the Confederacy. Vicksburg had become the focal point of the war, and the Rebels considered it an "*impregnable* (unconquerable) fortress." They had come to believe that the survival of the Confederacy depended upon holding Vicksburg. When it fell to the Union, the South suffered a severe blow to its morale.





Making the shock of the fall of Vicksburg even more disheartening was the news of General Lee's defeat at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863. Long considered an "invincible general," Robert E. Lee had suffered a devastating defeat and had almost lost his entire army. The impregnable fortress and the invincible general had fallen within a day's time.

In the summer of 1863, after the fall of Vicksburg and the defeat of Lee at Gettysburg, many southern leaders called for an end to the war. But the war continued for two more years at a frightful cost to the South's manpower, industry, and agriculture. On April 9, 1865, General Lee surrendered his army to General Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. General Richard Taylor surrendered the Confederate armies in Mississippi and Louisiana to General Edward R. S. Canby on May 4, 1865. After peace was restored, the long painful process known as Reconstruction began.

Above: Confederate General Robert E. Lee (seated on the left) surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant (seated next to him) at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865, effectively ending the Civil War.

Something Extra!

General Richard Taylor's father was Zachary Taylor, the twelfth president of the United States.

Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: Grierson's Raid, siege, Emancipation Proclamation.
2. Why was it a dangerous move for General Grant to march his men down the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River?
3. What were the terms of Pemberton's surrender?