



Spring, 1998 Meeting

On the Civil War Trail

Natchez  
Vicksburg  
Jackson

A Tour Primer

Edited By  
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## JOHN ANTHONY QUITMAN

(09-01-1799 –07-17-1858)

President: 1847 — 1848

Soldier and fifteenth governor of Mississippi, he was born at Rhinebeck, NY, son of Dr. Frederick Henry and Anna Elizabeth (Huecke) Quitman. Quitman's father intended him for the ministry and he studied at Hartwick Seminary, Otsego Co., NY. After graduating in 1816, he became a tutor in its classical department and later taught at Mount Airy College, Germantown, PA. In 1819 Quitman moved to Ohio to study law. Two years later he moved to Natchez, MS. A successful planter, Quitman soon developed considerable repute and influence.



John Anthony Quitman  
Courtesy of the Schultz Collection

From the outset, he identified himself with those opposed to dueling, gambling, and other vices. He became southern to the core, adopting throughout the rest of his life the views of his adopted state. Elected to the legislature in 1827, Quitman later served as Chancellor of the Superior Court (1828-1834), member of the Constitutional Committee (1832), and in 1835 President of the Senate and for a short time acting Governor. He fought for the independence of Texas in 1836, was afterwards a Major-General of the Mississippi militia and in 1839 elected judge of the court of errors and appeals.

Commissioned a Brigadier-General of volunteers by President Polk, July 1, 1846, he rendered gallant and noble service during the Mexican War under Generals Taylor and Scott. He was in the Battle of Monterey and marched from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, during which time he was engaged in many daring exploits. On the morning of September 13, 1847 his division assaulted the castle at Chapultepec.

Dashing across the plain carrying the artillery they found on their route, Quitman's troops forced their way up the side of the steep hill on which the ancient fortress was built in the face of destructive fire. Having gained the summit, they carried the castle by assault thereby securing the key to Mexico City. In the afternoon of that day, Quitman led his division in an attack on the Belen Gate, which they carried at the point of the bayonet. His troops were the first within the city walls. He received the surrender of the citadel and was appointed by General Scott civil and military governor of the city — "the only American who ever ruled in the halls of the Montezumas". For his distinguished services in the Mexican War Congress voted him a sword and he received a brevet to Major-General.

While Scott assumed responsibility for overall occupation policy, the administrative responsibility for implementing the policy fell on Quitman's shoulders. After restoring order to the City, Gen. Quitman was able to concentrate on administrative tasks: burial procedures, prison security, replacing window glass on the palace, setting exchange rates, processing restaurant applications, and handling leave-of-absence requests.

Resistance persisted into October as thousands of enemy troops besieged the American garrison at Puebla. Reinforcements from Vera Cruz came under attack from both organized enemy units and guerillas. Quitman volunteered to Scott to lead two thousand men and clear the

National Highway to the coast.

"...[H]e gave further vent to his own imperialistic emotions. If the Mexicans refused a peace, he wrote Eliza, then perhaps the only alternative would be to 'make this beautiful & rich country a portion of the United States.' Again inviting public attention to his views, he sent [Senator] Henry Foote an exuberant burst of manifest destiny: 'I speak to you boldly, as we spoke when the Texas question arose, hold on to this country. It is destiny, it is ours.'

Quitman advocated annexation for both economic and geopolitical reasons. 'Take the mines, & the sugar & coffee plantations, the olive groves, the vineyards, the bellowing herds & bleating flocks that slake their thirst in the snows of Orizaba and Popocatepetl, and lie down at night beneath the cocoa groves of the vallies [sic].' If the United States did not seize the moment, anarchy would make Mexico a 'waif' vulnerable to seizure by England, which had considerable mining interests in the land. Could the United States afford, moreover, to concede to other nations control of transit between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans across Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec? Such transit would one day provide 'the power to tax the commerce of the world.' Significantly, Quitman avoided mention of Mexico's meaning for slavery expansion, and argued that Foote need not worry that annexation would pose a danger to the Union."<sup>1</sup>

Quitman believed patience was the most promising means to accomplish annexation. He ruled out military conquest of the entire nation, stating that it would require 50,000 men to garrison every state capital and important city. He opposed the policy promoted by John C. Calhoun and others that the army should simply evacuate the capital and retire to a defensive line in northern Mexico and wait. Rather, Quitman recommended that 10,000 troops be committed to continued occupation of the capital and Vera Cruz.

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<sup>1</sup> May, Robert A. John A. Quitman. Old South Crusader. Louisiana State University Press. Baton Rouge. 1985. p197. Citing John A. Quitman's letter to Henry S. Foote, October 15, 1847, Quitman Family Papers. Southern Historical Collection. University of North Carolina.



John Anthony Quitman  
Courtesy of the Ron Riches Collection

It seems that despite his beliefs about annexation, Quitman desired no active role in it. Meeting with Scott in Puebla, he requested a command suited to his rank. He had written Sen. Foote that he would openly and boldly advocate annexation were he by his side in Washington. Yet, Gen. Scott stated he needed all the officers he had and would allow relief only in severe cases. Perhaps getting restless of his mundane tasks as Military Governor, on October 25 Quitman wrote Scott's headquarters, again asking for a suitable command. He asked permission to report personally to Secretary of War Marcy for a new permanent assignment. Scott granted permission and endorsed Quitman for a command he merited by rank. He left Mexico City on November 1, 1847.

President Polk reacted cautiously to Quitman's petition for active division command. He agreed to designate Quitman for Gen. Taylor's former command, but tied his support to Congressional approval of a then pending ten-regiment bill. While awaiting word on his command, Quitman became the subject of some political speculation. There were rumors that he would receive the nomination of the Democratic party for either President or Vice President. Meanwhile, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago was finalized and, as the need for new regiments no longer existed, his hopes for new command vanished.

Upon his return to Mississippi, Quitman was elected governor in November, 1849. Because of deficiencies in the Compromise of 1850, Quitman believed states had the constitutional right to secede though for the present he declined to actively encourage it. He wrote and spoke of southern grievances against the North while arguing that inflexible insistence on southern constitutional rights provided only "the mode of preserving the Union of the Constitution". He served from January, 1850 to February, 1851 when he resigned having become embroiled in controversy over annexation of Cuba.

Favoring annexation of Cuba, Quitman was indicted in Federal Court for violating Federal neutrality laws, having favored Gen. Narciso Lopez's attempt to seize control of that country. Lopez had previously offered Quitman command of the army he intended to lead in the revolution, which Quitman declined. The proceeding was a farce prosecuted by unionists suggesting the Cuba movement was really a conspiracy to set up a southern empire after secession. After three hung juries, all defendants were released.

It was suggested by the states-rights Democrats that Quitman again run for governor. He participated in a series of debates leading to the party's nominating convention, but declined to run when convention delegates overwhelmingly supported pro-compromise candidates. He had been unable to convince Mississippi River planters, who had the most at stake in slavery, that northern aggression posed an immediate threat to their survival. The effect of the sudden pro-compromise stance of Mississippi was a watershed event in the looming secession crisis. South Carolina, about to hold its state convention, was close to secession but, with no hope that Mississippi would follow its lead, its delegates endorsed secession in principle but decided it was not timely to then do so. The secession movement had collapsed throughout the south.

During 1856-1858 Quitman served as a member of the 34<sup>th</sup> Congress and was Chairman of its Military Committee. James Buchanan named him Commander-in-Chief of the military cortège for his upcoming inauguration. In February, 1857, while staying at the National Hotel in preparation of Buchanan's inauguration, Quitman became seriously ill. Varying accounts suggest he contracted National Hotel disease, akin to the more recent Legionnaire's disease known in recent times. During the frigid winter, the plumbing at the hotel had frozen, causing a backup of sewage into its kitchen which reportedly contaminated food. Others suggest abolitionists had tainted the hotel's food with poison in an effort to eliminate Democratic leaders. In either case, Quitman became seriously ill and never fully recovered. After returning to his home, Monmouth Plantation, he endured months of sickness. Despite his lack of full recovery, he returned to Washington in December, 1857 for the next Congress. Over the next many months his health see-sawed between fair and poor.

In early June, 1858 Quitman's health began failing rapidly. Returning home following the close of Congress on June 14, he required assistance to move. He died on July 17<sup>th</sup>.

Asserting the right of secession and the desirability of forming a confederacy of the slave-holding states, Quitman anticipated by nearly ten years the action which led to the Civil War.

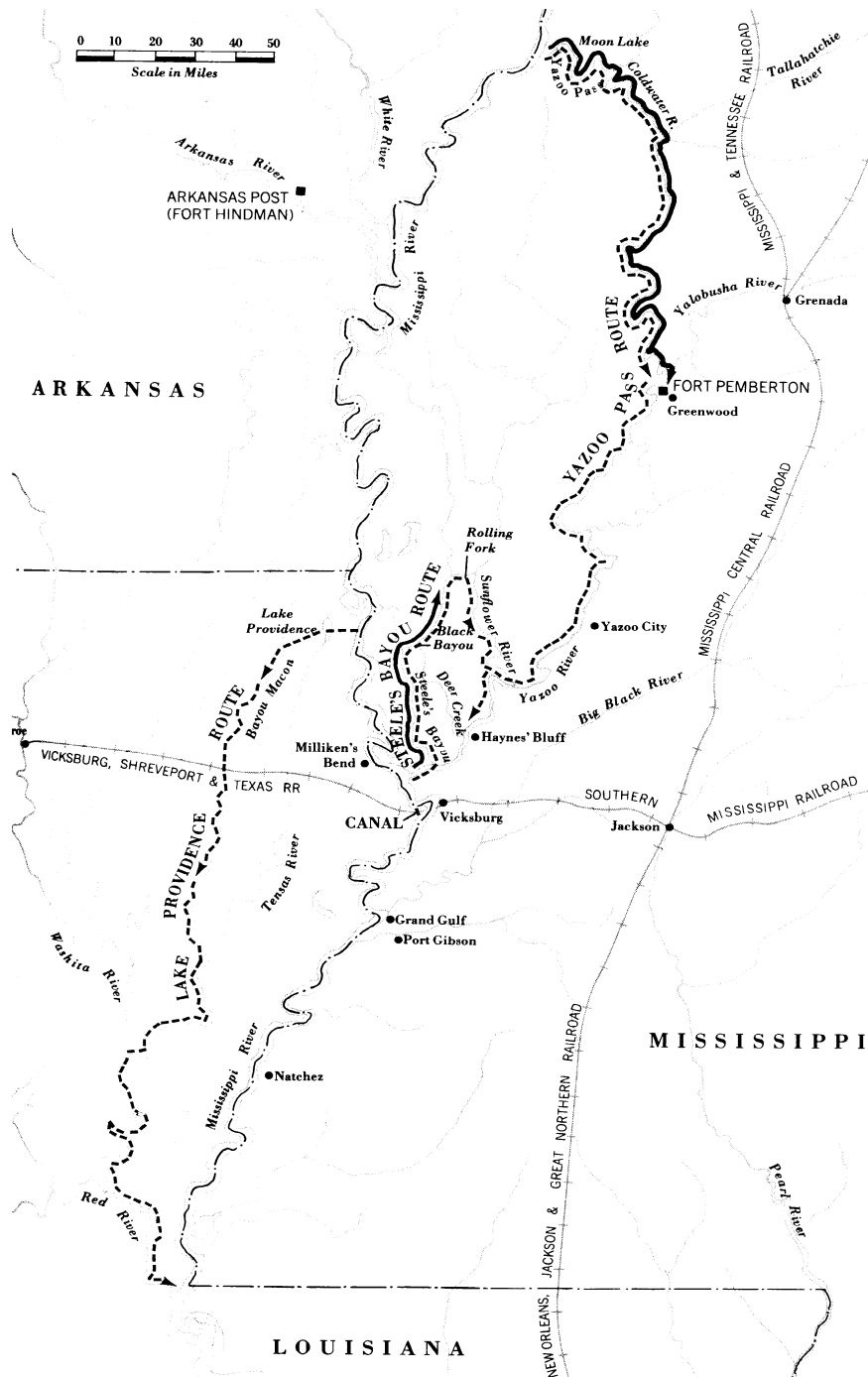
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### The Vicksburg Campaign

The Mississippi River, in its lower course, winds like a mighty serpent from side to side along a vast alluvial bottom, which in places is more than 40 miles wide. On the eastern bank, these great coils here and there sweep up to the bluffs of the highlands of Tennessee and Mississippi. On these cliffs are situated Memphis, Port Hudson, Grand Gulf, and Vicksburg. The most important of these from a military point of view was Vicksburg, often called the "Gibraltar of the West". Situated 200 feet above the current, on a great bend of the river, its cannon could command the waterway for miles in either direction, while the obstacles in the way of a land approach were almost equally insurmountable.

The Union arms had captured New Orleans, in the spring of 1862, and Memphis in June of that year; but the Confederacy still held Vicksburg and Port Hudson and the 250 miles of River that lies between them. The military object of the Federal armies in the west was to gain control of the entire course of the great Mississippi that it might "roll unvexed to the sea", to use Lincoln terse expression, and that the rich states of the southwest, from which the Confederacy drew large supplies and thousands of men for her armies, might be cut off from the rest of the South. If Vicksburg were captured, Port Hudson must fall. The problem, therefore, was how to get control of Vicksburg.

On the promotion of Halleck to the command of all the armies of the North, with headquarters at Washington, Ulysses S. Grant was left in superior command in the West and a great task before him was the capture of the "Gibraltar of the West".



Vicksburg might have been occupied by the northern armies at any time during the first half of 1862, but in June of that year General Bragg sent General Earl Van Dorn with a force of 15,000 to occupy and fortify the heights. Like Grant, Van Dorn was an original member of the Aztec Club. He was a man of prodigious energy. In a short time he had hundreds of men at work planting batteries, digging rifle-pits above the waterfront and in the rear of the town, mounting heavy guns and building bomb-proof magazines in tiers along the hillsides. All through the summer, the work progressed under the direction of Engineer S. H. Lockett, and by the coming of winter the city was a veritable Gibraltar.



Earl Van Dorn

From the uncompleted batteries on the Vicksburg bluffs, the citizens and the garrison soldiers viewed the advance division of Farragut's fleet, under Commander Lee, in the river, on May 18, 1863. Fifteen hundred infantry were on board, under command of General Thomas Williams, and with them was a battery of artillery. Williams reconnoitered the works, and finding them too strong for his small force returned to occupy Baton Rouge. The authorities at Washington sent Farragut

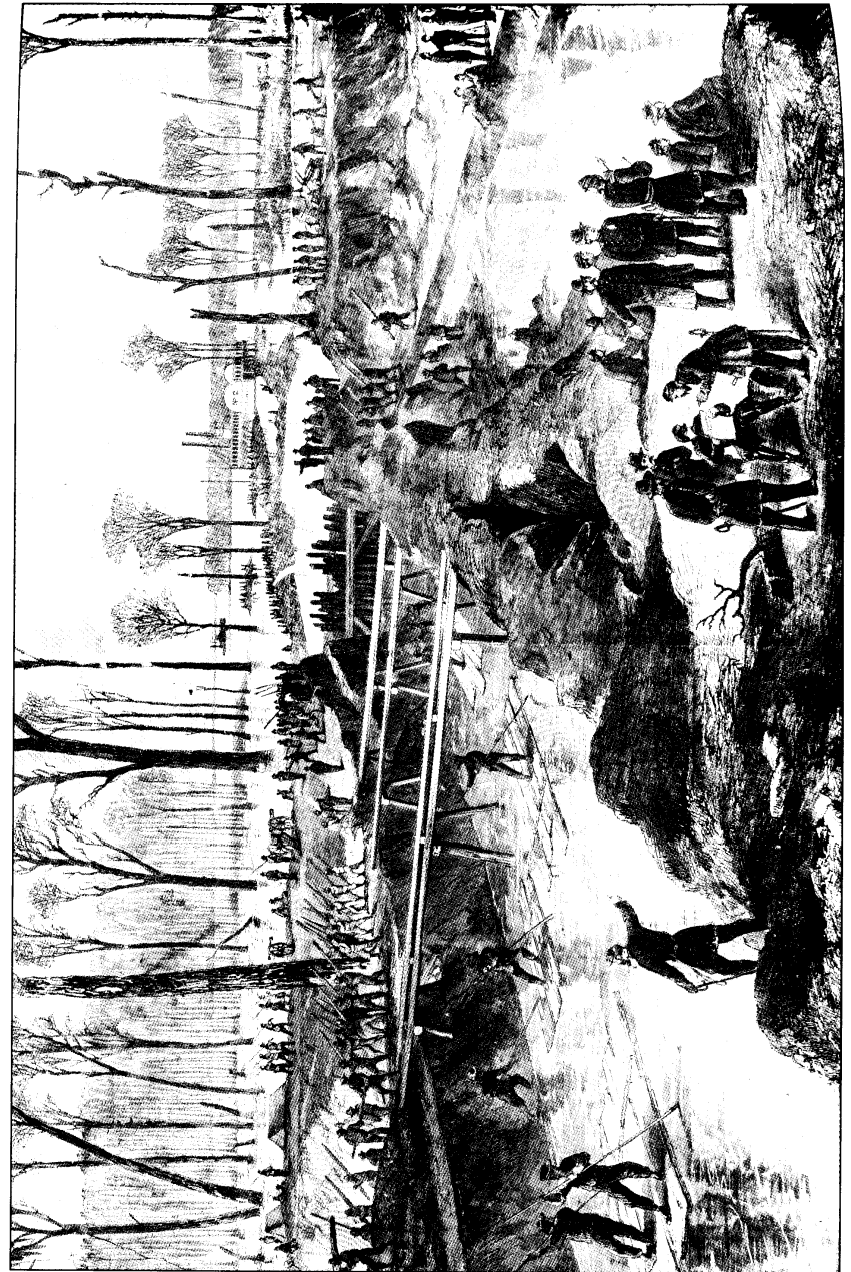
peremptory orders to clear the Mississippi and accordingly about the middle of June, a flotilla of steamers and seventeen motor schooners, under Commander David D. Porter, departed from New Orleans and steamed up the river. Simultaneously Farragut headed a fleet of three war vessels and seven gunboats, carrying 106 guns, toward Vicksburg from Baton Rouge. Many transports accompanied the ships from Baton Rouge, on which there were 3,000 of Williams' troops.

The last days of June witnessed the arrival of the combined naval forces of Farragut and Porter below the Confederate stronghold. Williams immediately disembarked his men on the Louisiana shore, opposite Vicksburg, and they were burdened with implements required in digging trenches and building levees.

The mighty Mississippi, at this point and in those days, swept in a majestic bend and formed a peninsula of the western, or Louisiana shore. Vicksburg was situated on the eastern, or Mississippi shore, below the top of the bend. Its batteries of cannon commanded the river approach for miles in either direction. Federal engineers quickly recognized the strategic position of the citadel on the bluff; and also as quickly saw a method by which the passage up and down the river could be made comparatively safe for their vessels, and at the same time placed Vicksburg "high and dry" by cutting a channel for the Mississippi through the neck of land that now held it in its sinuous course.

Williams began the tremendous task of diverting the mighty current across the peninsula. Farragut's bombardment by his entire fleet failed to silence Vicksburg's cannon-guards, although the defenders likewise failed to stop the progress of the fleet. The Federal naval commander then determined to dash past the fortifications, trusting to the speed of his vessels and the stoutness of their armor to survive the tremendous cannonade that would fall upon his flotilla.

While Farragut stormed the Confederate batteries at Vicksburg, Williams and his men, including 1,000 African Americans, labored like Titans to complete their canal, but a sudden rise of the river swept away the barriers with a terrific roar, and the days of Herculean labor went for naught.



Again Williams' attempt to subdue a stronghold was abandoned, and he returned with his men when Farragut did, on July 24, to Baton Rouge. Williams met his death there on Aug. 5 when General Breckenridge made a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to drive the Union forces from the Louisiana capital.

Early in the morning of June 28 the thrilling race against death began. After two hours of terrific bombardment aided by the mortar boats stationed on both banks Farragut's fleet, with the exception of three vessels, passed through the raging inferno to the waters above Vicksburg, with a loss of fifteen killed and thirty wounded. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July Flag-Officer Davis with his river gunboats arrived from Memphis and joined Farragut.

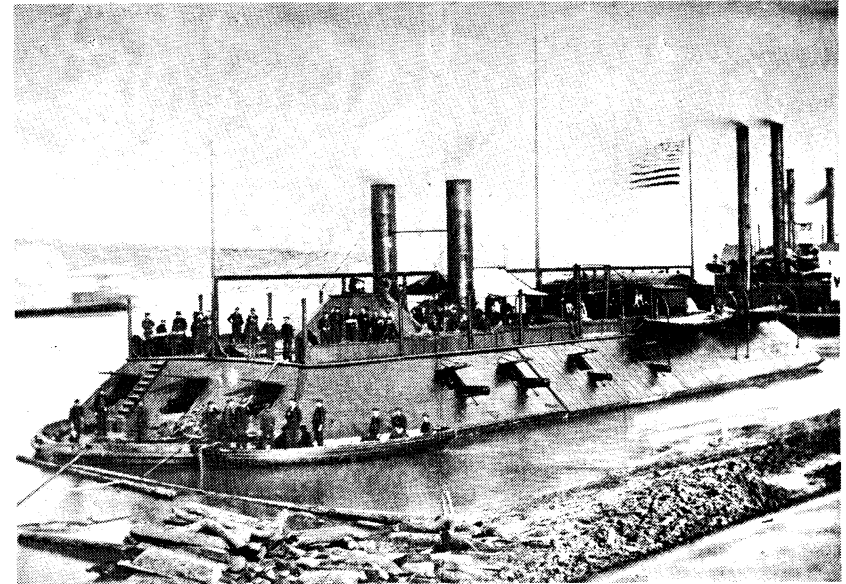
#### Eads' Turtles — The Ironclads

On August 7, 1861 James B. Eads of St. Louis was given a contract by the War Department to build seven shallow-draft ironclad gunboats for service on the western waters. These vessels — the Cairo, Carondelet, Cincinnati, Louisville, Mound City, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis — formed the core gunboat flotilla supporting the Union army in breaching the defenses of the central Confederacy. Because of their humpbacked silhouettes, they are often referred to as "Eads' Turtles" or "Pook's Turtles", after Constructor Samuel M. Pook, USN, who was responsible for their design.

These "city class" ships, each named for a western river port, were wooden, flat-bottomed light draft and low freeboard center-wheelers measuring 175 feet in length. Each gunboat was armed with ten 8-inch shell guns. With slanted casemates covered with 2½-inch armor, they were similar in appearance to the Confederate ironclads. These ironclads had defects found on nearly all of the armored vessels of this type built by both sides during the war — they were underpowered, too heavy, and vulnerable to high, arched "plunging fire" directed at their roofs. Nevertheless, they saw more service than any other class of river ironclads.

The Cairo, a 512 ton ironclad, mounting six 42-pounders, six 32-pounders, three 8-inch guns and one 12-lb. howitzer, was under the command of Lt. N. C. Bryant on the Cumberland River in February, 1862. At Clarksville with the gunboat Conestoga, the Cairo engaged three forts and captured the town. On May 10, it participated in the action at Fort Pillow and the river combat with the Confederate "River

Defense" fleet. The Cairo was again engaged on June 6<sup>th</sup> with four other ironclad gunboats and two Ellet rams engaging the Confederate flotilla off the city of Memphis.



Farragut urged upon General Halleck the importance of occupying the city on the bluff with a portion of his army; but that General gave no heed; and while even then it was too late to secure the prize without a contest, it would have been easy in comparison to that which required a year later.

In the meantime, the river steamers took to an important part in the preliminary operations against the city. Davis remained at Memphis with his fleet for about three weeks after the occupation of that city on June 6<sup>th</sup>, meanwhile sending four gunboats and a transport up the White River, with the 46<sup>th</sup> Indiana Regiment, under Colonel Fitch. The object of the expedition, undertaken at Halleck's command, was to destroy Confederate batteries and to open the communication with General Curtis, who was approaching from the west. It failed in the latter purpose but did some effective work with the Southern batteries along away.

The one extraordinary incident of the expedition was the disabling of the Mound City, one of the ironclad gunboats, and the great loss of life that it

occasioned. When near St. Charles the troops under Fitch were landed and the Mound City, moving up the river, was fired on by concealed batteries under the direction of Lt. Dunnington. A 32-pound shot struck the vessel, crashing through the side and passing through the steam-drum. This steam filled the vessel in an instant. Many of the men were so quickly enveloped in the scalding vapor that they had no chance to escape. Others leaped overboard, some being drowned and some rescued due to the efforts of the Conestoga which was lying near. While straining every nerve to save their lives, the men had to endure a shower of bullets from Confederate sharpshooters on the river banks. Of the 175 officers and men of the Mound City only 25 escape death or injury in that fearful catastrophe. Meanwhile, Colonel Fitch with his land forces rushed upon the Confederate batteries and captured them. The unfortunate vessel was at length repaired and returned to service.

For some time it had been known in Federal military and naval circles that a powerful ironclad similar to the famous Monitor of eastern waters was being rushed to completion up the Yazoo River. The new vessel was the Arkansas. She and a sister ship were building at Memphis when the capture of that city was anticipated by the destruction of one of them. The work on the Arkansas was far enough advanced for her to be taken to Yazoo City for the finishing touches. The Union fleet was not unduly terrified by tales of the monster, but nevertheless Farragut and Davis determined to find out what they could about her. Three vessels were chosen for the reconnaissance: the ironclad Carondelet, the wooden Tyler, and the Ellet ram Queen of the West. Bravely they steamed up the Yazoo on the morning of July 15<sup>th</sup>, but before they had gone more than six miles they encountered the Arkansas, under the command of Captain Isaac N. Brown, coming down the river.

The Carondelet, though supported at a distance by the Tyler, fled before her stronger antagonist, being raked from stem to stern, struck several times with solid shot, and saved from destruction only by running into shallow water where the Arkansas could not follow. The Arkansas was injured also and her brave captain was twice wounded; but, not being disabled, she steamed on and out into the Mississippi, driving the Tyler and the Queen before. A few miles above Vicksburg the Arkansas ran into the midst of the Federal fleet. She steamed slowly through the maze of hostile vessels, and the tempest of broadsides, returning them with the utmost steadiness, until she was safely lodged under the guns of Vicksburg.

But the day's events were not ended. In the dusk of the evening, all of Farragut's fleet accompanied by the ram Sumter stole down the river to finish the plucky Arkansas. But she changed her position as soon as it was dark and the Union vessels had difficulty in finding her. They came down the river amid the roar of cannon, but only one 11-inch shot struck her as the fleet went by, and down the river, and the broadsides from the Arkansas killed 5 and wounded 16 of the union crews. None of Farragut's fleet was ever seen above Vicksburg again. It returned in Orleans on July 24<sup>th</sup>.

The month of July had not been favorable to the Federal hopes. Farragut had returned to New Orleans. General Williams had gone with him as far as Baton Rouge. Davis now went with his fleet back to Helena. Halleck was succeeded by Grant. Vicksburg entered upon a period of quiet.

#### On to Vicksburg

But this condition was temporary. The city's experience of blood and fire had only begun. During the summer and autumn of 1862, the one thought uppermost in the mind of General Grant was how to gain possession of the stronghold. He was already becoming known for his bull-dog tenacity. In the autumn, two important changes took place, but one day apart. On Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>, another original Aztec Club Member, General John C. Pemberton succeeded Earl Van Dorn in command of the defenses of Vicksburg, and on the next day David D. Porter succeeded Davis as commander of the Federal fleet on upper Mississippi.



John Clifford Pemberton

So arduous was the task of taking Vicksburg that the wits of General Grant, and those of his chief adviser, General William T. Sherman, were put to the test in the last degree to accomplish the end. Grant knew that the capture of this fortified city was of great importance to the Federal cause, and that it would ever be looked upon as one of the chief acts in the drama of Civil War.

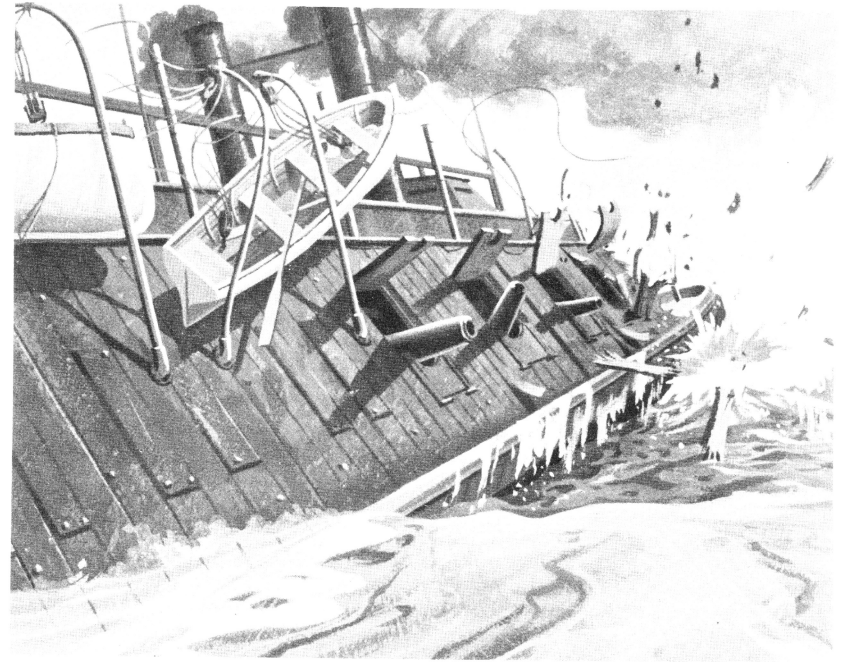
The first plan attempted to divide the army, Sherman taking part of it to Memphis and down the Mississippi on transports, while Grant moved southward along the line of the Mississippi Central Railroad to cooperate with Sherman, his movements to be governed by the efforts of the scattered Confederate forces in Mississippi to block him. But the whole plan was destined the failure, through the energies of General Van Dorn and others of the Confederate army near Grant's line of communication.

The authorities at Washington preferred the river move upon Vicksburg, as the Navy could keep the line of communication open. The stronghold now stood within a strong line of defense extending from Haynes' Bluff on the Yazoo to Grand Gulf on the Mississippi, 30 miles below Vicksburg. To prepare for Sherman's attack across the swamps of the Yazoo, Admiral Porter made several expeditions up that tortuous stream to silence batteries and remove floating mines, called "torpedoes". In one of these expeditions he lost one of the Eads ironclads, the Cairo, blown up by a torpedo, and in another the brave Commander Gwin, one of the heroes of Shiloh, was mortally wounded.

Lieutenant Commander Thomas O. Selfridge was in command of the Cairo on an expedition up the Yazoo River to destroy torpedoes when he was sunk by one of the "infernal machines" and Selfridge reported:

"The Cairo sunk in about twelve minutes after the explosion, going totally out of sight, except the top of her chimneys, in six fathoms of water."

The Cairo was the first of some forty Union vessels to be torpedoed during the Civil War. The torpedo which destroyed the Cairo was a large demijohn fired with a friction primer by a trigger line from torpedo pits on the river bank.



USS Cairo Sunk by Torpedoes

Porter later observed:

"It was an accident liable to occur to any gallant officer whose zeal carries him to the post of danger and who is loath to let others do what he thinks he ought to do himself."

Despite the loss of the Cairo, Porter wrote:

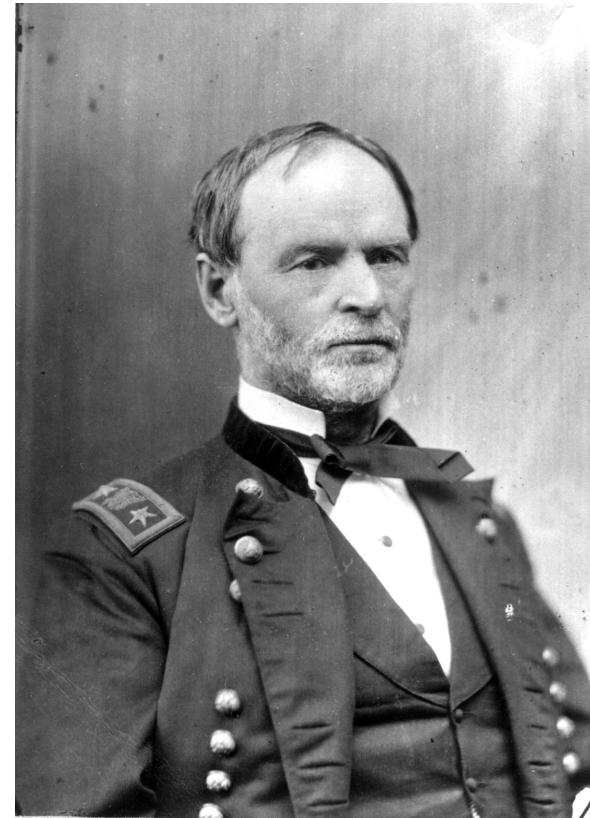
"I gave Captain Walke orders to hold Yazoo River at all hazards . . . We may lose three of four vessels, but will succeed in carrying out the plan for the capture of Vicksburg."

Sherman, with an army of 32,000 men, left Memphis on December 20<sup>th</sup>, and landed a few days later some miles north of Vicksburg on the banks of Yazoo. On the 29<sup>th</sup> he made a daring attack in three columns on the

Confederate lines of defense at Chickasaw Bayou and suffered a decisive repulse. His loss was nearly 2,000 men; the Confederate loss was scarcely 200.

Two hundred feet above the bayou, beyond where the Federals were approaching, towered the Chickasaw Bluffs, to which Pemberton hastened troops from Vicksburg as soon as he learned Sherman's object. At the base of the bluff, and stretching away to the north and west were swamps and forests intersected by deep sloughs, overhung with dense tangles of vines and cane-brakes. Federal valor vied with Confederate pluck in this fight among the marshes and fever-infested jungle.

One of Sherman's storming parties under General G. W. Morgan, came upon a broad and easy enlargement of the bayou, McNutt Lake, which interposed between it and the Confederates in the rifle-pits on the slopes and the crest of the bluff. In the darkness of the night of December 28<sup>th</sup>, the Federal pontoniers labored to construct a passage way across the lake. When morning dawned the weary pontoniers were chagrined to discover their well-built structure spanning a slough leading in another direction than toward the base of the bluff. The bridge was quickly taken up, and the Federals recommenced their labors, this time in daylight and within sight and range of the Confederate regiments on the hill. The men in blue worked desperately to complete the span before driven away by the foe's cannon; but the fire increased with every minute, and the Federals finally withdrew.



William Tecumseh Sherman

Another storming party attempted to assail the Confederates from across a sandbar of the bayou, but was halted at the site and prospect of overcoming a 15-foot bank on the farther side. The crumbling bank was surmounted with a levee three feet high; the steep sides of the barrier had crumbled away, leaving an overhanging shelf, 2 feet wide. Two companies of the 6<sup>th</sup> Missouri Regiment volunteered to cross the 200 yards of exposed passage, and to cut a roadway through the rotten bank to allow their comrades a free path to the bluff beyond. To add to the peril of the crossing, the sandbar was strewn with tangles of undergrowth and fallen trees, and Confederate shells and bullets were raining upon the ground. From the very start, a line of wounded and dead Missourians marked the passage of the volunteers. The survivors reached the bank and desperately sought to dig the roadway. From the

shrubbery on the bank suddenly appeared Confederate sharpshooters who poured their fire into the laboring soldiers; the flame of the discharging muskets burned the clothing of the Federals because the hostile forces were so close. Human endurance could not stand before this carnage, and the brave Missourians fled from the inferno. Sherman now found the northern pathway to Vicksburg impassable, and withdrew his men to the broad Mississippi.

Earlier in the same month had occurred two other events which, with the defeat of Chickasaw, go to make up the triple disasters to Federals. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, General Nathan Forrest, one of the most brilliant cavalry leaders on either side, began one of those destructive raids which characterize the Civil War. With 2,500 horsemen, Forrest dashed unopposed to the country north of Grant's army, tore up 60 miles of railroad and destroyed all telegraph lines.

Meantime, on December 20<sup>th</sup>, the day on which Sherman left Memphis, General Van Dorn pounced upon Holly Springs, Mississippi like an eagle on its prey, capturing the guard of 1,500 men and burning the great store of supplies, worth \$1,500,000, which Grant had left there. Through the raids of Forrest and Van Dorn, Grant was left without supplies and for eleven days without communication with the outside world. He marched northwards to Grand Junction, Tennessee, a distance of 80 miles, living off the country. It was not until January 8, 1863, that Grant heard, through Washington, of the defeat of Sherman in his assault on Chickasaw Bluffs.

Grant and Sherman had no thought of abandoning Vicksburg because of this failure. But a month of unfortunate military dissension over rank in the command of Sherman's army resulted in General John A. McClernand, armed with authority from Washington, coming down from Illinois and superseding Sherman. On January 11, 1864 he captured Arkansas Post, a stronghold on the Arkansas River. But Grant, having authority to supersede McClernand in the general proceedings against Vicksburg, did so, on January 30<sup>th</sup>, and arguments on military precedence were forgotten.

Grant was determined to lead his Army of the Tennessee below Vicksburg and approach the city from the south, without breaking with his base of supplies up the river. Two projects, both of which were destined to fail, were underway during the winter and spring months of 1863. One of these was to open a way for the river craft through Lake

Providence, west of the Mississippi, through various bayous and rivers into the Red River, a detour of 400 miles.

Another plan was to cut a channel through the peninsula of the great bend of the Mississippi, opposite Vicksburg. For six weeks thousands of men works like marmots digging this ditch. All the while the river was rising and, on March 8<sup>th</sup>, it broke over the embankment and they had to run for their lives. Many horses were drowned and a great number of implements submerged. The "Father of Waters" had put a decisive veto on the project and it had to be given up. Still another plan that failed was to cut through the Yazoo Pass and approach from the north by way of the Coldwater, the Tallahatchie, and the Yazoo rivers.



Ulysses Simpson Grant

Failure with Grant only increased his grim determination. He would take Vicksburg. His next plan was destined to bring success. It was to transfer his army by land down the west bank to the Mississippi to a point below the city and approach from the south and west. This necessitated the running of the batteries by Porter's fleet — an extremely perilous enterprise. The army was divided into four corps, commanded respectively by Sherman, McClernand, McPherson, and Hurlbut. The latter was stationed at Memphis. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, the movement of McClernand from Milliken's Bend to a point opposite Grand Gulf was begun. He was soon followed by McPherson and a few weeks later by Sherman. It required a month for the army, with its heavy artillery, to journey through the swamps and bogs of Louisiana.

While this march was in progress, something far more exciting was taking place on the river. Porter ran the batteries of Vicksburg with his fleet. After days of preparation the fleet of vessels, protected by cotton bales and hay about the vital parts of the boats, with heavy logs slung near the water line. Seven gunboats, the ram General Price, three transports, and various barges were ready for the dangerous journey on

the night of April 16<sup>th</sup>. Silently in the darkness, they left their station near the mouth of the Yazoo, at a quarter past nine. For an hour and a half all was silence and expectancy. The bluffs on the east loomed black against the night sky. Suddenly, the flash of musketry fire pierced the darkness.

In a few minutes every battery overlooking the river was a center of spurting flame. A storm of shot and shell was rained upon the passing vessels. Not one escaped being struck many times. The water of the river was lashed into foam by the shots and shells from the batteries. The gunboats answered with their cannon. The air was filled with flying missiles. Several houses on the Louisiana shore burst into flame and the whole river from shore to shore was lighted with vivid distinctness. A little later, a giant flame leaped from the bosom of the river. A vessel had caught fire. It was the transport Henry Clay. It burned to the water's edge, nearly all its crew escaping to other vessels. Grant described it seen as "magnificent, but terrible"; Sherman pronounced it "truly sublime".

By three in the morning, the fleet was below the city and ready to cooperate with the army. One vessel had been destroyed, several others were crippled; thirteen men had been wounded, but Grant had the assistance he needed. About a week later, six more transports performed the same feat and ran the batteries; each had two barges laden with forage and rations in tow.

Grant's next move was to transfer the army across the river and secure a base of supplies. There, on the bluff, was Grand Gulf, a tempting spot. But the Confederate guns showed menacingly over the brow the hill. After a fruitless bombardment by the fleet on April 29<sup>th</sup>, it was decided that a more practical place across the river must be sought below.

Meanwhile, Sherman was ordered by his chief to advance upon the formidable Haynes' Bluff, on the Yazoo River, some miles above the scene of his repulse in the preceding December. The message had said, "Make a demonstration on Haynes' Bluff, and make all the show possible." Sherman's transports, and three of Porter's gunboats, were closely followed by the Confederate soldiers who been stationed at the series of defenses on the range of hills, and when they arrived at Snyder's Mill, just below Haynes' Bluff, on April 30<sup>th</sup>, several Louisiana regiments under the command of another original Aztec Club member, General Paul Octave Hébert, were awaiting them. On that day and the

next the Confederates fiercely engaged the Union fleet and troops, and on May 2<sup>nd</sup> Sherman withdrew his forces to the western bank of the Mississippi and hastened to Grant. The feint had been most successful. The Confederates had been prevented from sending reinforcements to Grand Gulf, and Grant's crossing was greatly facilitated.

The fleet past the batteries of Grand Gulf and stopped at Bruinsburg, six miles below. A landing was soon made, the army taken across on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and a march to Port Gibson, twelve miles inland, was begun. General Bowen, Confederate commander at Grand Gulf, came out and offered battle. He was greatly outnumbered, but his troops fought gallantly through most of the day, May 1<sup>st</sup>, before yielding the field. Port Gibson was then occupied by the Union army, and Grand Gulf, no longer tenable, was abandoned by the Confederates.

Grant was now prepared for a campaign into the interior of Mississippi. His first intention was to cooperate with General Banks in the capture of Port Hudson, after which they would move together upon Vicksburg.

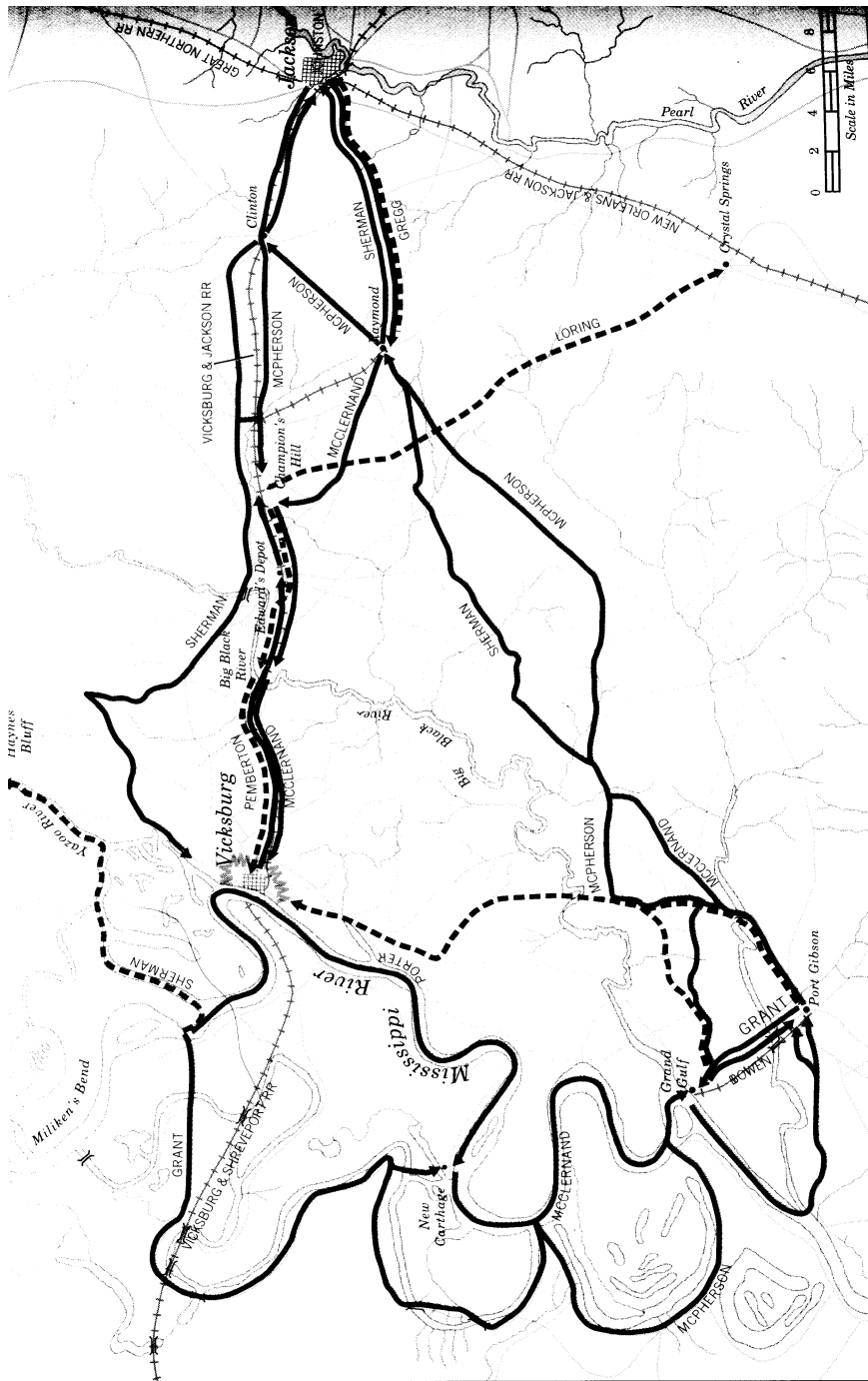
But, hearing that Banks would not arrive for ten days, Grant decided that he would proceed to the task before him without delay. His army at that time numbered about 43,000. That under Pemberton probably 40,000, while there were 15,000 Confederate troops at Jackson, Mississippi, soon to be commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston, later a President of the Aztec Club, who was hastening to that capital.

Grant now determined on the bold plan of making a dash into the interior of Mississippi, beating Johnston and turning on Pemberton before their forces could be joined. Many consider this campaign the most brilliant of the Civil War. It was truly Napoleonic in conception and execution. Grant knew that his base of supplies at Grand Gulf would be cut off by Pemberton as soon as he moved away from it. He decided, therefore, against the advice of his generals, to abandon his base altogether.



Joseph Eggleston Johnston

A more daring undertaking could scarcely be imagined. With a few days' rations in their haversacks the troops were to make a dash that would possibly take several weeks into the heart of a hostile country. This was certainly defying fate. When General Halleck heard Grant's daring scheme he wired the latter from Washington, ordering him to move his army down the river and cooperate with Banks. Fortunately, this order was received too late to interfere with Grant's plans.



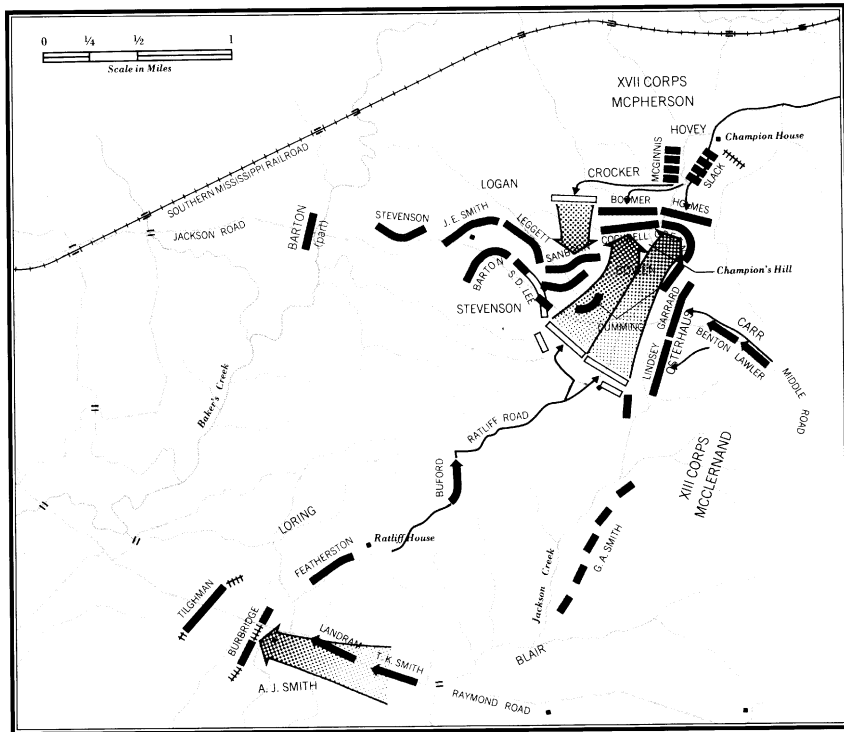
As soon to Sherman's divisions joined the main army the march was begun, on May 7<sup>th</sup>. An advance of this character had to be made with the greatest celerity and Grant's army showed amazing speed. McPherson, who commanded the right-wing, proceeded toward Jackson, Mississippi by way of Raymond and at the latter place encountered 5,000 Confederates, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, who blocked his way and were prepared to fight. The battle of Raymond lasted two hours. McPherson was completely successful and the Confederates hastened to join their comrades in Jackson.

McPherson lost no time. He moved on toward Jackson, and as the last of his command left Raymond the advance of Sherman's corps reached it. That night, May 13<sup>th</sup>, Grant ordered McPherson and Sherman to march upon Jackson next morning by different roads, while McClernand was held in the rear near enough to reinforce either in case of need. The rain fell in torrents that night and, as Grant reported, in places the water was a foot deep in the road. But nothing could daunt his determined army. At 11 o'clock the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>, a concerted attack was made on the capital Mississippi. A few hours' brisk fighting concluded this act of the drama, and the Stars and Stripes were unfurled on the state capital. Among the spoils were seventeen heavy guns. That night, Grant slept in the house which Johnston had occupied the night before.

Meantime, Johnston had ordered Pemberton to detain Grant by attacking him in the rear. But Pemberton considered it more advisable to move toward Grand Gulf to separate Grant from his base of supplies, not knowing that Grant had abandoned his base. And now, with Johnston's army scattered, Grant left Sherman to burn bridges and military factories, and to tear up the railroads about Jackson while he turned fiercely on Pemberton. McPherson's corps took the lead. Grant called on McClernand to follow without delay. Then, hearing that Pemberton was marching toward him, he called on Sherman to hasten from Jackson. At Champion's Hill (Baker's Creek) Pemberton stood in the way, with 18,000 men.

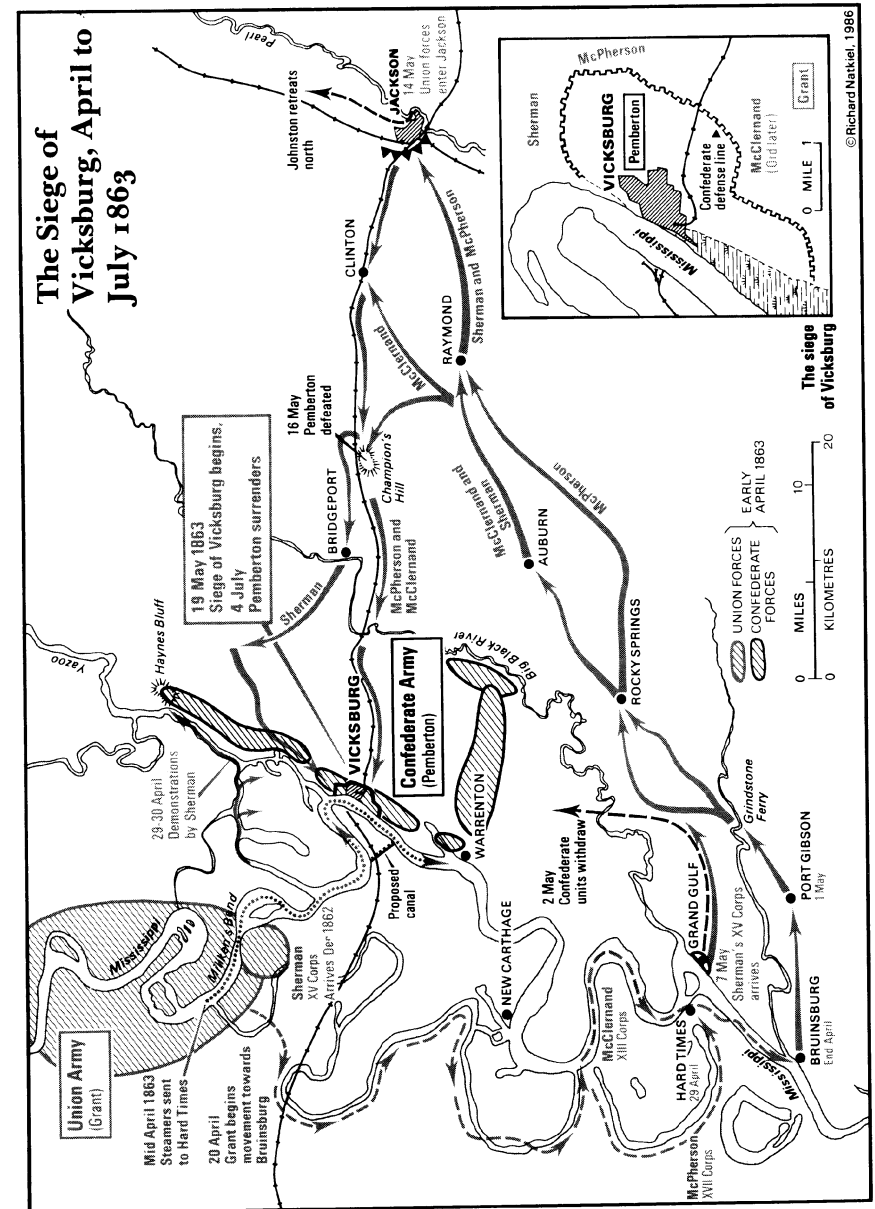
The battle was soon progress -- the heaviest of the campaign. It continued for seven or eight hours. The Confederates were defeated with a loss of nearly all their artillery and about half their force, including 4,000 men who were cut off from the main army and failed to rejoin it. On the banks of the Big Black River, a few miles westward, the Confederates made another stand, and here the fifth battle of the

investment of Vicksburg took place. It was short, sharp, decisive. The Confederates suffered heavy losses and remainder hastened to the defenses of Vicksburg. They had set fire to the bridge across the Big Black, and Grant's army was detained for day — until the Confederates were safely lodged in the city.



Champion's Hill

The Federal army now invested Vicksburg, occupying the surrounding hills. It was May 18<sup>th</sup> when the remarkable campaign to reach Vicksburg came to an end. In eighteen days, the army had marched 180 miles through a hostile country, fought and won five battles, captured a State capital, had taken twenty-seven heavy cannon and sixty field-pieces, and had slain or wounded 6,000 men and captured as many more. As Grant and Sherman road out on the hill north of the city, the latter broke into enthusiastic admiration of his chief, declaring that up to that moment he felt no assurance of success, and announcing the campaign as one of the greatest in history.



The great problem on investing Vicksburg was solved at last. Around the doomed city gleamed the thousands of bayonets of the Union army. The inhabitants and the army that had fled to it as a city refuge were penned in. But the Confederacy was not to yield without a stubborn resistance. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, an advance was made on the works and the besieging lines drew nearer and tightened their coils. Three days later, on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Grant ordered a grand assault by his whole army. The troops, flushed with their victories of the past three weeks, were eager for the attack. All the corps commanders set their watches by Grant's in order to begin the assault at all points at the same moment — 10 o'clock in the morning. At the appointed time, the cannon from the encircling lines burst forth in a deafening roar. Then came the answering thunders from the mortar-boats on the Louisiana shore and from the gunboats anchored beneath the bluff. The gunboats' fire was answered from within the bastions protecting the city. The opening of the heavy guns on the land side was followed by the sharper crackle of musketry — thousands of shots, indistinguishable in a continuous role.

The men in the Federal lines leaped from their hiding places and ran to the parapets in the face of a murderous fire from the defenders of the city, only to be mowed down by the hundreds. Others came, crawling over the bodies of their fallen comrades — now and then they planted their colors on the battlements of the besieged city, to be cut down by the galling Confederate fire. This continued for hours, until darkness. The assault had failed. The Union loss was about 3,000 brave men; the Confederate loss was probably not over 500.

Grant had made a fearful sacrifice; he was paying a high price but he had a reason for doing so — Johnston with a reinforcing army was threatening him in the rear. By taking Vicksburg at this time he could turn on Johnston, and could save the Government from sending any more Federal troops. And, to use his own words, it was needed because the men "would not have worked in the trenches with the same zeal, believing it unnecessary, as they did after their failure, to carry the enemy's works."

On the north side of the city overlooking the river, were the powerful batteries on Fort Hill, a deadly menace to the Federal troops, and Grant and Sherman believed that if enfiladed by the gunboats disposition could be carried. At their requests Admiral Porter sent the Cincinnati on May 27<sup>th</sup> to engage the Confederate guns, while four vessels below the town did the same to the lower defenses. In half an hour five of the

Cincinnati's guns were disabled; and she was in a sinking condition. She was run toward the shore and sank in three fathoms of water.

The army now settled down to wearisome siege. For six weeks, they'd circle the city with trenches, approaching nearer and nearer to the defending walls; they exploded mines; they shot at every head that appeared above the parapets. One by one the defending batteries were silenced. The sappers slowly worked their way toward the Confederate ramparts. Miners were busy on both sides burrowing beneath the fortifications. At 3 o'clock on the afternoon of June 25<sup>th</sup> a redoubt in the Confederate works was blown into the air, breaking into millions of fragments and disclosing guns, men, and timber. With the mine explosion, the Federal soldiers before the redoubt began to dash into the opening, only to meet with a withering fire from an interior parapet which the Confederates had constructed in anticipation of this event. The carnage was appalling to behold; and when the soldiers of the Union finally retired they had learned a costly lesson which withheld them from attack when another mine was exploded on July 1.

Meantime, far down the river, 250 miles from Vicksburg, was Port Hudson. The place was fortified and held by Confederate force under General Gardner. Like Vicksburg, it was besieged by a Federal army, under the Nathaniel P. Banks, of Cedar Mountain fame. On May 27<sup>th</sup> he made it desperate attack on the works and was powerfully aided by Farragut with his fleet in the river. But aside from dismounting a few guns and weakening the foe at a still heavier cost to their own ranks, the Federals were unsuccessful. Again, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, and still again on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Banks made fruitless attempts to carry Port Hudson by storm. He then, like Grant at Vicksburg, settled down to a siege. The defenders support Hudson proved their courage to buy and during every hardship

At Vicksburg, during the whole six weeks of the siege, the men in the trenches worked steadily, advancing the coils about the city. Grant received reinforcement and before the end of the siege his army numbered over 70,000. Day and night, the roar of artillery continued. From the mortars across the river and from Porter's fleet the shrieking shells rose in grand parabolic curves and, bursting in midair or in the streets of the city, spreading havoc in all directions. The people of the city burrowed into the ground for safety. Many whole families lived in these dismal abodes, their walls of clay being shaken by the roaring battles that raged above the ground. In one of these dens, sixty-five people found a home. The food supply ran low, and day by day it

became scarcer. At last, by the end of June, there was nothing to eat except mule meat and a kind of bread made from beans and corn meal.

It was 10 o'clock to the morning of July 3<sup>rd</sup>. White flags were seen above the parapet. The firing ceased. A strange quietness rested over the scene of the long bombardment. On the afternoon of that date, the one, too, on which was heard the last shot on the battlefield of Gettysburg, Grant and Pemberton stood beneath an oak tree, in front of McPherson's corps, and opened negotiations before the capitulation. On the following morning, the Nation's birthday, about 30,000 soldiers laid down their arms as prisoners of war and were released on parole. The losses from a won to the surrender or about 10,000 on each side.

Three days later, at Port Hudson, a tremendous cheer arose from the besieging army. The Confederates within the defenses were at a loss to know the cause. Then someone shouted the news: "Vicksburg had surrendered!".

The end had come. Port Hudson could not hope to stand alone; the greater fortress had fallen. Two days later, July 9<sup>th</sup>, the gallant garrison, worn and weary with the long siege, surrendered the General Banks. The whole course of the mighty Mississippi was now under the Stars & Stripes.