

Sumter to Appomattox



American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter)

www.americancivilwar.asn.au

Patron: Prof the Hon Bob Carr

Number 131 June – July 2025

President's Message

The Sydney Morning Herald recently carried an article decrying the demise of University History Departments and the decreasing number of opportunities for history academics, largely because of the small numbers of history students, attributed to the artificially high costs of arts degrees as compared to science, business and engineering degrees. I was reminded of a decision I made several decades ago in 1970 when I chose to become an engineer notwithstanding that my best performance in the Higher School Certificate was Ancient History and my first love was history generally, all types of history.

And therein lies the problem. The notion of politicians without a knowledge of history is horrifying, but we have many. And the same is true of many other professions, including my own. It was not available then, and is now, but I have often said that if I was eighteen today, I would still do an engineering degree, but I would simultaneously do an arts degree, majoring in history, although the cost of an arts degree today might be seen as a barrier if I was as poverty stricken as I was in 1970. Australia is much the poorer for the loss of the rigorous and professional study of history by our professional people. We will become a culture that does not know its past or from where it came. That is a distressing notion.

Yet, there are many amateur groups, such as the American Civil War Round Table, who, in that context, have an enhanced and important role in our society. We are keeping the study of history alive in our small and modest way, and this group of amateurs is likely to become more important in future years. The same is true of

Continues next column >

Our Next meeting

18 August 2025 – 6.00pm

Chatswood Club

Battle of Chancellorsville - Lee's finest hour

Presenter: Peter Zacharatos

Please book by **11pm Thursday 14th August** using the following link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/DEETG>

At the last meeting we looked at Grant's masterpiece, the Vicksburg Campaign. At the upcoming meeting we will turn East once again and look at Lee's masterpiece, Chancellorsville. This was in many ways the pivotal battle of the Eastern theatre - although it was a significant tactical victory for the Confederacy, in many ways it set the stage for their ultimate defeat.

President's Message cont'd

the many other amateur historians who engage in enthusiastic discussions in their various special interest groups, similar to ours. Long live amateur history groups. Keep the study of history alive.

John Morrison would like to hear from anybody who would like to tell us about their experience of Gettysburg. I know that some of our members grew up nearby.

Do not forget a \$5 and a \$10 note for the door raffles. Our aim is to empty Bruce's garage before he gets another bequest.

See you on 18 August.

Ian McIntyre

Club Parking

The club offers free parking, with ample space for up to 50 vehicles. The parking lot provides direct access to the club.

How to Access the Parking:

The entrance to the parking lot is located at the back of the club, accessible via McIntosh Street.

For GPS directions, enter '12 McIntosh Street, Chatswood.' This will guide you to the general area. Upon arrival, look for the parking complex with signage that reads 'Club Parking' in black lettering. The following image should assist you

parking:



12 McIntosh St

IMPORTANT: You may need to phone the number on the post outside to get the gate opened. There are internal stairs up to the Club (there's a door on the landing on the top level just down from the gate) or you can catch the lift to G, then exit the glass doors and enter through the adjoining glass doors.

This publication is the official newsletter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia (NSW Chapter). All enquiries regarding the newsletter should be addressed to the Secretary of the Chapter by phone on 0411 745 707 or email: secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au

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Report on our last Meeting

Our June meeting was well-attended with two new members welcomed. President Ian McIntyre welcomed everyone and introduced the topics of the presentations.



Our first talk was given by Peter Headley, who spoke about his ancestral relative, Captain Horatio Eaton, who had fought in the Civil War and whose brother had settled in Australia.



CAPTAIN HORATIO EATON 1839-1864

Company E, 6 Connecticut Volunteer Infantry
Died of Wounds 16 May 1864, Drewrys Bluff
Virginia

Peter Headley

I was studying Modern History at School in 1960 when I became acquainted with the American Civil War.

I mentioned this to my paternal grandfather and he told me that we had an ancestor who had fought in that war on the Union side in a Connecticut Infantry Regiment.

He also said that a painting of this ancestor named Horatio Eaton had been in his grandfather's house for many years, but it had become mouldy and was thrown out. I was more than somewhat disappointed by this news.

He also mentioned that my paternal great-grandfather was a 10-year-old boy in 1864 and was holidaying down on the English south coast and he witnessed the sailors rescued from the CSS *Alabama* by English yachts landing them ashore in England and so escaped becoming Union POWs.

So, I have been hunting for any pictures of him or his Regiment ever since and anything in letters from his Regiment which might provide any information on him. The results have been sparse.

Following Horatio's death, his mother applied for a pension as she and his sister were dependent on his income during his life. In 1868 after much argument with the bureaucrats it was granted. She died around 1890 and my last American relative died in the 1990's.

Recently I found a photo of him on a carte de visit of the period in the Library of Congress.
Needless to say, I was more than pleased.

PICTURE 1



This is a carte de visite of Horatio Eaton and William Eaton, his elder brother, who was my great-great grandfather. The picture, or rather daguerotype, was taken in 1848 when Horatio was 17 before he left for the California gold rush (he certainly dressed for the occasion).

The bottom right picture shows William in 1909 in Sydney, the year before he died. (He did find gold at Grenfell in 1868 and 15 years later, sold the mine and invested in brewing and soft drinks.) His wife, Harriet Elizabeth Eaton, whose parents were English, was born on board a ship in Port Melbourne in 1841. William and Elizabeth had 11 children, 4 of whom died on the goldfields. Elizabeth is holding Joyce Wiseman, her great granddaughter and the daughter of the woman along side her, Dora Wiseman (nee Headley), who was her granddaughter.

PICTURE 2



Here are 2 pictures of Drewry's bluff, the objective of the battle in which Horatio was wounded on 15 May and died on 16 May. The top right is his grave, erected by the us government in the old Hartford, Connecticut cemetery. He was buried 4 days after he was killed, no doubt after a visit to the embalmers, who ran a lucrative business behind the lines with the dearly - deceased returned to relatives.

The picture at the bottom right is of the Connecticut war office during the war of Independence and is close to the governor's house in picture 3.

According to family oral history, the family went to the America in the 1600's and ran a shipping service from Connecticut to the West Indies, mainly Cuba, which was Spanish. The family shipped timber and other goods to Cuba and brought back sugar and molasses. Around 1750, one of the Eaton boys brought back a Spanish-Cuban wife, Donna Isabella.

The family had settled around a town called Lebanon in the east of Connecticut near Rhode Island. The cemetery there is full of Eatons. The family served on the American side in the American war of independence, hence the picture of the war office.

PICTURE 3



The top right picture is the governor's house in Lebanon, which dates from 1740. Lebanon today is a quaint backwater that time forgot. The other pictures are of the war office in Lebanon for the war of independence. There is a grave there of a French soldier shot for desertion during that war.

Many thanks to Peter Headley for this fascinating contribution about his family's Civil War connections.

THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN

John Morrison made a terrific presentation to the meeting on the Vicksburg Campaign, and Ian McIntyre also spoke on 'Grant's Canal'. Thanks to both speakers and to John for the following narrative of his talk.

Vicksburg the Turning Point?

Vicksburg's strategic location on the Mississippi River made it a critical win for both the Union and the Confederacy. Confederate defeat ensured Union control of the Mississippi River, cleaving the South in two. The Confederate surrender, together with the Union victory at Gettysburg the previous day, marked a turning point in the fortunes of the Union army.



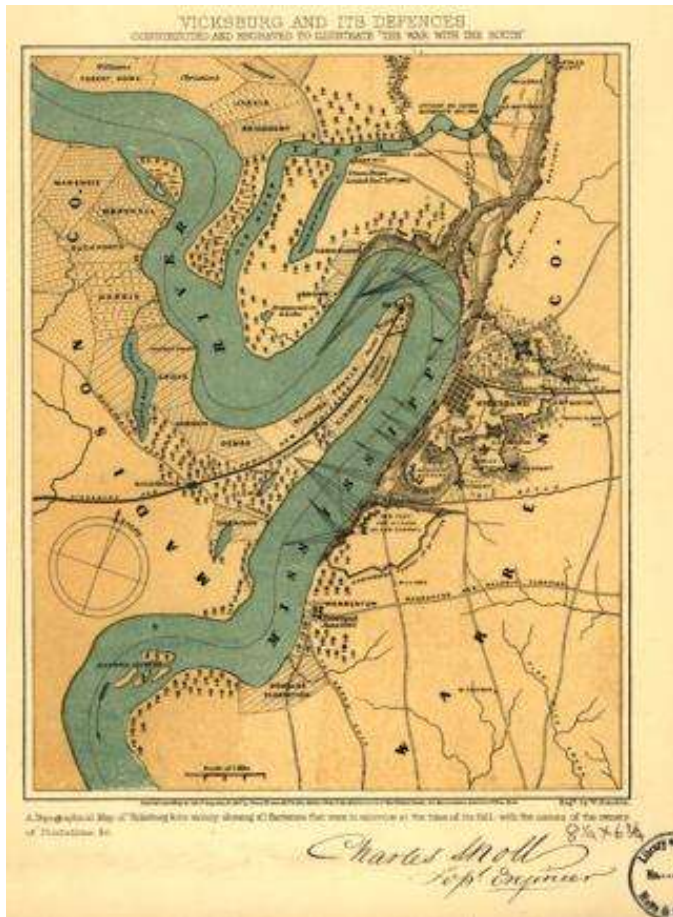
The Union operations against Vicksburg took over a year and fall broadly into three parts -

- I. Operations Against Vicksburg, 29 Dec 1862 – 11 Jan 1863
- II. Grant's Bayou Operations, Jan - Mar 1863
- III. Grant's operations against Vicksburg, 29 Mar - 4 Jul 1863

Introduction

Vicksburg was strategically vital to the Confederates. Confederate President Jefferson Davis described Vicksburg as "The nail head that holds the South's two halves together", while Union President Abraham Lincoln stated that "Vicksburg is the key! The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket."

it blocked Union navigation down the Mississippi; together with control of the mouth of the Red River and of Port Hudson to the south, it allowed communication with the states west of the river, upon which the Confederates depended extensively for horses, cattle and reinforcements. The natural defenses of the city were ideal, earning it the nickname "The Gibraltar of the Confederacy". Vicksburg was located on a high bluff overlooking a horseshoe-shaped bend in the river - De Soto Peninsula. It was almost impossible to approach by ship.



North and east of Vicksburg was the Mississippi Delta (the Yazoo Delta), an area 320 km north to south and up to 80 km across, a complex network of intersecting waterways, some navigable by small steamboats. Between modern rivers and bayous were closed basins called backswamps, untamed wildernesses, utterly impassable by a man on horseback or by any form of wheeled vehicle, and very difficult even for a man on foot. Nineteen km up the Yazoo River were Confederate batteries and entrenchments at Haynes Bluff. The Louisiana land west of Vicksburg was also difficult, with many streams and poor country roads, widespread winter flooding, and it was on the opposite side of the river from the fortress.

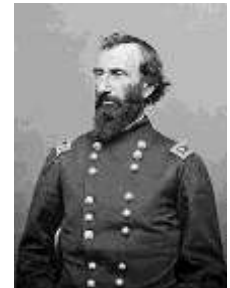
On 18 May 1862 the Union Navy had attacked. Admiral David Farragut moved up the river after capturing New Orleans and demanded Vicksburg surrender. He had insufficient troops to force the issue and moved back to New Orleans.

In June Farragut returned with a flotilla. His attempt to bombard the fortress into surrender failed. He shelled Vicksburg throughout July, fought some minor battles with a few Confederate vessels. However, with insufficient forces to attempt a landing, the attempts to force the city's surrender were abandoned.

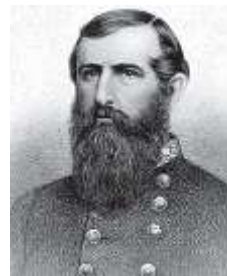
Farragut investigated the possibility of bypassing the fortified cliffs by digging a canal across the neck of the De Soto Peninsula. On 28 June, Gen. Thomas Williams began digging work on the canal, employing local laborers and some soldiers. Many of the men fell victim to tropical diseases and heat exhaustion and work was abandoned on 24 July. Williams was killed two weeks later in the Battle of Baton Rouge.



Ulysses S Grant



John A. McClernand



John C Pemberton



Earl Van Dorn



William T Sherman



James B MacPherson

In the fall of 1862, Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck was promoted from command of the Western Theatre to General-in-Chief (Chief of Staff) of all Union armies. Grant was restored to command of the Western Theatre and on 23 November, Halleck indicated to Grant his preference for a major move down the Mississippi to Vicksburg. Wisely, Halleck left it to Grant to design the campaign, an opportunity that Grant eagerly seized. Halleck has been criticised for not moving promptly overland from Memphis, Tennessee, to seize Vicksburg during the summer when he was in command on the scene. He believed that the Navy could capture the fortress on its own, not realising that the naval force had insufficient ground troops to finish the job. By November this was no longer a practical approach since by this time the Confederates had strongly reinforced

the garrison. Also, reliable navigation on the river was seasonal; the natural fall in the level of the river during the fall and winter limited the utility of shipping, the usable draft of riverboats, and the quantity of men, supplies, and equipment, they could transport.

Grant's army marched south down the Mississippi Central Railroad, creating a forward base at Holly Springs. Grant planned a two-pronged assault in the direction of Vicksburg. His principal subordinate, Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, was to advance down the river with four divisions (about 32,000 men), while Grant would continue with the remaining forces (about 40,000) down the railroad line to Oxford, where he would wait for developments - hoping to lure the Confederate army out of the city to attack him in the vicinity of Grenada, Mississippi.

On the Confederate side, forces in Mississippi were under the command of Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, an officer from Pennsylvania who had chosen to fight for the South. He had approximately 12,000 men in Vicksburg and Jackson, Mississippi, while Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn had approximately 24,000 at Grenada.

Political Forces.

As was often the case, political forces were at work. President Lincoln also envisioned a two-pronged offensive, but one up and down the river. Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand, a War Democrat politician, had convinced Lincoln that he could lead an army down the river and take Vicksburg. Lincoln approved his proposal and wanted Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks to advance upriver from New Orleans at the same time, thus producing a two-pronged attack. McClernand began organizing his Army, sending regiments to Memphis. In Washington, Halleck had serious misgivings about McClernand and gave Grant control of all troops in his own department.

McClernand's troops were split into two corps, one under McClernand himself, the other under Sherman. McClernand complained about the command position but to no avail. Grant appropriated his troops, one of several maneuvers in a private dispute within the Union Army between Grant and McClernand that continued throughout the campaign.

I Operations against Vicksburg

Holly Springs Raid (20 December 1862)

Grant's initial strategy - reach Vicksburg by taking the most straightforward overland route, following the train line - was unsuccessful. The direct approach was too predictable and vulnerable: any threat to the single-lane Mississippi Central Railroad would have disastrous consequences. The Confederate Cavalry of Nathan Bedford Forrest posed a significant threat to this route. Raids by Van Dorn and Forrest disrupted his supply lines and communication networks and destruction of the supply depot at Holly Springs forced Grant to abandon his original plan.

Chickasaw Bayou (26 - 29 Dec 1862)

In Nov 1862, Union forces under Gen. Sherman were assigned to attack the Confederates at Chickasaw Bayou. On 26 Dec Brigades under Col. John F. DeCourcy, Gen. David Stuart, and Gen. Francis P. Blair, Jr. reconnoitred the Confederate defenses at Chickasaw Bayou. On the 28 Dec Gen. Frederick Steele's division attacked the Confederate right flank but was repulsed by artillery fire. The following morning, Union artillery bombarded the Confederate defenses but did only minor damage. At noon Union forces advanced with Blair's brigade moving toward the left, DeCourcy's down the center, and Gen. John M. Thayer's toward the right. Only the 4th Iowa Infantry from Thayer's brigade reached their destination and joined the fight. Unable to make any ground, Sherman ordered another assault under Gen. Andrew J. Smith toward the Confederate center but was unable to dislodge the Confederates. Sherman planned to attack again - not at Chickasaw Bayou, but northeast on Drumgould's Bluff. On 31 Dec. his troops were in position, but combat did not commence due to heavy fog.

Meanwhile, as already noted, Grant's lines of communication were disrupted by Bedford Forrest's cavalry and the Union supply depot at Holly Springs being destroyed by Gen. Earl Van Dorn. Without supplies or reliable communication, Grant called off his overland advance along the Mississippi Central Railroad. Hearing of Grant's withdrawal, Sherman withdrew from Drumgould's Bluff. Large expeditions to take Vicksburg were not recommenced until April 1863.

Chickasaw Bayou - Casualties

Union Forces	Confederate forces
Killed	Killed
208	63
Wounded	Wounded
1,005	134
Captured/MIA	Captured/MIA
560	10
TOTAL	TOTAL
1,776	207

Arkansas Post (9 - 11 Jan 1863)

Also known as the Battle of Fort Hindman, the Battle of Arkansas Post, was fought from 9 - 11 January, 1863, along the Arkansas River at Arkansas Post, Arkansas. Confederate forces constructed Fort Hindman near Arkansas Post in late 1862. The battle was a combined land-river assault by Union forces on Fort Hindman. The Union advance down the Mississippi had passed the mouth of the Arkansas River and thus Fort Hindman outflanked the Federal forward positions.

Confederate ships used the Fort as a base to launch raids on Northern shipping, culminating in the capture of the Blue Wing, a supply ship laden with munitions meant for general William T. Sherman's command. Also in late 1862 rumours abounded that a powerful new ironclad was being built at Little Rock.

As noted, McClernand had begun his move down the Mississippi. Grant and General-in-Chief Halleck through machinations placed this movement against Vicksburg under Sherman before McClernand could arrive. However, Sherman's movement was defeated at the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou, and Forrest's cavalry raids forced Grant to abandon his overland campaign.

When McClernand arrived at Memphis late Dec he found Sherman had left without him. He moved downriver, joined Sherman's force, and took command in early Jan 1863, calling his force the Army of the Mississippi (Morgan and Sherman became Corps Commanders and deeply resented this!). McClernand gathered his Army at Milliken's Bend, just north of Vicksburg. He had 32,000 men in two corps under generals Morgan and Sherman.

Although the main objective was Vicksburg, he decided to capture Arkansas Post first to secure Union commerce on the rivers north of Vicksburg. McClernand was accompanied by Rear Admiral David Porter's flotilla, consisting

of some five ironclads, four steamers and fifty transport ships. The plan was to steam up the Arkansas River, land troops below the post, then have Sherman swing behind the fort while Morgan approached from downriver.

Porter began a bombardment on the night of 10 January. Bombardment continued the following day. Through the afternoon, McClernand's infantry moved toward the fort while the ships passed in front and began firing from the other side of the fort. McClernand's attack was repulsed, but confusion ensued and white flags of surrender began to appear over parts of the Confederate line in uncertain circumstances. Union troops moved up to the Confederate line and swamped parts of it. The Confederate commander, Brigadier General Thomas J. Churchill, agreed to surrender.

When Grant learned of the operation against Arkansas Post, he disapproved and ordered McClernand back to the Mississippi River - although he later realised the wisdom of the operation. Grant relieved McClernand on 30 January and took command of the campaign against Vicksburg personally.

Arkansas Post - Casualties

Union Forces	Confederate forces
Killed	Killed
134	60
Wounded	Wounded
898	~80
Captured/MIA	Captured/MIA
29	10
TOTAL	TOTAL
1,092*	4,791

II Grant's Bayou Operations, January - March 1863

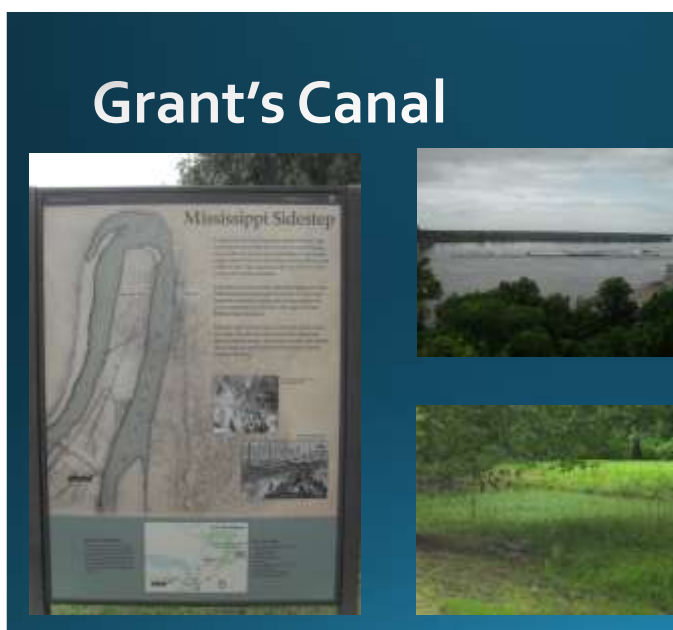
Grant's evolving plan was to get close to Vicksburg without being exposed to Vicksburg's formidable artillery so that in the Spring he could be ready. Essentially, he sought to create alternative routes that could serve as highways for his troops by preparing waterways in the vicinity. This series of seven initiatives, or "experiments", came to be known as Grant's Bayou Operations.

All ultimately failed. But Grant's willingness to explore various possibilities demonstrated his fearlessness in the face of potential failure and it was his creativity and thoughtfulness that

ultimately led to his success. His relentless pursuit of alternative strategies showed his determination to find a solution, even with unconventional approaches.



Photo of Grant taken shortly after Vicksburg



Grant's Canal

This was an attempt to create a canal through De Soto Point across the Mississippi River. As noted, in 1862 Admiral Farragut had explored the possibility of constructing a canal with General Thomas Williams and 3,200 men. However, diseases and falling river levels, prevented successful construction of the canal and the project was abandoned.

In January 1863 the project regained momentum when Grant, supported by President Lincoln, took an interest. Sherman's troops resumed excavation in late January 1863. The project was mockingly referred to as "Butler's Ditch" by Sherman - referencing General Benjamin Butler, who had initially dispatched Williams for the task. The canal was only 6 feet wide and 6 feet deep and the water

in the canal was stagnant, lacking any current. Grant initiated modifications, relocating the entrance upstream to capitalize on a stronger current. The canal was also deepened and widened for the Union Navy ironclads to navigate.

By February 1863 it became evident that the canal project would fail. The water level was only two feet and there was no current (earlier reports of greater depth and width were inaccurate). A sudden rise in the river caused the dam at the canal's entrance to break flooding the surrounding area. The canal began to fill with sediment and backwater. Attempt to salvage the project using the steam-driven dipper dredges, *Hercules* and *Sampson*, were thwarted by Confederate artillery fire from Vicksburg, forcing retreat. By the end of March, all canal work had been abandoned.

(In April 1876 the Mississippi changed course, forming a channel through De Soto Point and Vicksburg became isolated from the riverfront after the oxbow lake formed by the course change became cut off from the river. Not until the completion of the Yazoo Diversion Canal in 1903 did Vicksburg regain its connection to the river).

Grant did manage to alter the course of the Mississippi River, a remarkable feat of engineering. However, this achievement came too late to hold any military significance.

Lake Providence (9-11 Jan 1863)

Grant ordered Gen. James McPherson to construct a canal of several hundred yards from the Mississippi to Lake Providence, northwest of the city, allowing passage to the Red River, through Bayous Baxter and Macon, and the Tensas and Black Rivers. Reaching the Red River, Grant's force could join with Banks at Port Hudson.

On 18 March McPherson reported the connection was navigable, but the few "ordinary Ohio River boats" sent to Grant for navigation of the bayous could only transport 8,500 men. Boats through Lake Providence increased the Union to a force of 30,000, providing the flexibility of a 4:1 advantage - enough to ensure a successful siege of Port Hudson.

Lake Providence was the only one of the bayou expeditions to successfully bypass the Vicksburg defences - although Historian Ed Bearss diminishes this exploit as the "Lake Providence Boondoggle".

Yazoo Pass (3 Feb - 12 Apr 1863)

This was a joint operation of Grant's Army of the Tennessee and Admiral David Porter's

Mississippi River Squadron. Grant's objective was to get his troops into a flanking position against the Rebel defenders of Vicksburg and to bypass the Confederate defenses by using the backwaters of the Mississippi Delta as a route to the Yazoo River. Once on the Yazoo, the Army would be able to cross the river unopposed.

This would require a deep penetration into enemy territory and cooperation between the services was essential. The Union Army forces were commanded by General Leonard F. Ross and the Union Navy flotilla was led by Lieutenant Commander Watson Smith - whose poor health was to be a factor in the failure of the expedition.

On 3 February the breaching of a levee on the Mississippi River allowed water to flow from the river into a former channel that connected with the Yazoo River through a series of other waterways. The attacking fleet passed through the cut into Moon Lake, through the Yazoo Pass to the Coldwater River, and then into the Tallahatchie, which combines with the Yalobusha to form the Yazoo River, which met the Mississippi a short distance above Vicksburg.

From the start, the expedition was delayed by natural obstacles - more serious than Confederate resistance. Progress was as little as ten miles a day.

Because progress was so slow, the Confederate Army under General John Pemberton was able to set up a fort and block passage of the Federal fleet near the town of Greenwood, Mississippi.

Yazoo Pass (3 Feb - 12 Apr 1863)

The Federal fleet did not approach the fort until 11 Mar; Ironclad gunboats of the fleet were repulsed in a series of gunfire exchanges over three days. As much of the ground was under water, the ground troops present could not contribute significantly to the battle.

Following the third repulse on 16 Mar, Commander Smith's health failed him completely and Command passed to Lieutenant Commander James P. Foster. Foster and Ross decided to withdraw to the Mississippi. They were temporarily persuaded to try again when they met reinforcements for the Army, but resumed their retreat when the new army commander, General Isaac F. Quinby, saw the futility of further attacks.

The entire force had returned by 22 Apr, and the expedition was over.

Steele's Bayou

On 14 Mar. Admiral Porter attempted to reach Deer Creek by sailing up the Yazoo Delta through Steele's Bayou just north of Vicksburg. The purpose was to outflank Fort Pemberton and enable the landing of troops between Vicksburg and Yazoo City. However, Confederates obstructed their path once again by felling trees and causing the paddlewheels of the boats to become entangled with willow reeds. This raised concerns that Confederate troops might seize the boats and sailors.

Sherman made a forced march that got to the flotilla on 22 March and easily drove off the Confederate patrols that were blocking the retreat. By 27 Mar, the entire expedition was back on the Mississippi, having accomplished nothing.

Duckport Canal (March-April 1863)

The Duckport Canal was yet another canal project, intended to create a waterway from Duckport Landing to Walnut Bayou, allowing lighter boats to bypass Vicksburg. However, by the time the canal was nearly completed on 6 April, the water levels had significantly decreased. As a result, only the lightest flatboats were able to navigate through the canal, rendering it ineffective for larger vessels.

III Grant's operations against Vicksburg (March - July 1863).

The Plan

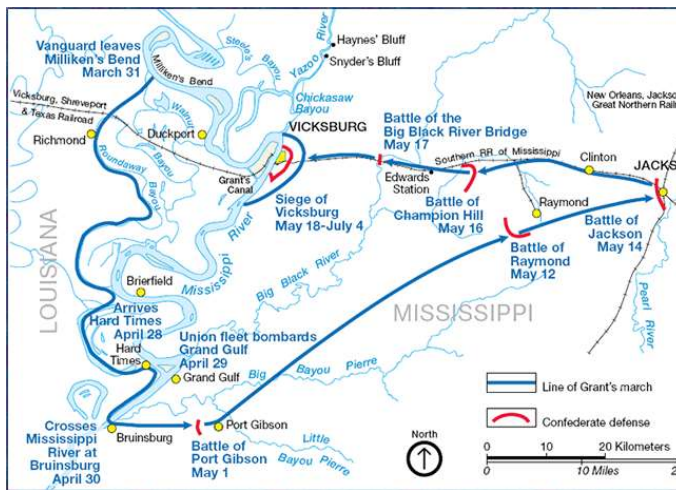
As noted, all of the bayou operations were failures, but Grant was well known for his stubborn determination and would not quit. His final option was bold but risky:

1. March the Union army down the west side of the Mississippi,
2. Cross the river south of Vicksburg,
3. Either attack Vicksburg from the south and the east or join forces with Banks, capture Port Hudson, and then together reduce Vicksburg.

Admiral Porter would have to sneak past the guns to get sufficient gunboats and transport ships south of the city. Once they had completed the downstream passage, they would not be able to return past Vicksburg's guns since the river current would slow them too much.

Grant's senior subordinate Commanders, Sherman and MacPherson, were sceptical, but

they trusted Grant. And importantly, Grant trusted his own judgement!



Diversions - Snyder's Bluff

While moving south with McClernand and McPherson on the west (Louisiana) bank, Grant had Sherman's Fifteenth Corps threaten Vicksburg from the north. On 27 April Grant ordered Sherman to proceed up the Yazoo River and threaten Snyder's Bluff northeast of Vicksburg. On the 29 April, Sherman debarked ten regiments and appeared to be preparing an assault, while eight naval gunboats bombarded the Confederate forts at Haines's Bluff.

Sherman's division remained north of Vicksburg. He led a successful diversionary attack by utilizing a combined naval and infantry operation. Blair's Naval division, consisting of eight gunboats and ten transports, secretly and quietly moved to the mouth of Chickasaw Bayou the night before the operation. At 9 am they opened fire on the enemy forces in the bayou.

One gunboat and the transports moved upstream until approximately 6 pm then crossed Blake's Levee and launched an assault on the artillery near Drumgold's Bluff north of Vicksburg, diverting focus from activities downstream. The attack faced insurmountable challenges - positioning of the batteries on Drumgold's and Snyder's Bluffs, and the course of the Yazoo River that Sherman's forces had to navigate. The terrain of swamps and marshes posed formidable barriers to any progress and heavy casualties were sustained. Sherman eventually retreated to Milliken's Bend after realizing his contingent (a fraction of Grant's overall command), would have failed to capture the bluffs even with a direct attempt. Sherman withdrew on 1 May and hastily followed McPherson down the west bank of the Mississippi. His troops were ferried across the river on 6-7 May.

This diversionary manoeuvre effectively drew Pemberton's attention away from Grant's actual landing site (Bruinsburg). Pemberton sent 3,000 troops that had been marching south to oppose Grant.

Diversions - Grierson's Raid

Grant needed a diversion to deflect attention from his risky crossing of the river below the city. He and Sherman chose Col Ben Grierson to lead a raid into the heart of Mississippi. Grierson's main mission was to destroy the key railhead at Newton Station that supplied John Pemberton's army defending Vicksburg. Grierson led three regiments - his own 6th Illinois, the 7th Illinois and 2nd Iowa - 1,700 troopers and a horse battery.

Between 17 April and 2 May 1863, Grierson's brigade marched 600 miles, disabled two key railroads, captured and paroled 600 Confederates, and destroyed many war supplies. Grierson lost 3 killed, 7 wounded, and 16 captured. Despite being pursued on all fronts Grierson outwitted and outrode his pursuers to emerge in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to the complete surprise of its occupying Federal garrison.

Grierson diverted Pemberton's attention from Grant's army's landing at Bruinsburg on day fourteen of the raid (Grant's landing was unopposed). He used deception and speed (riding over 30 miles daily) to elude his pursuers. He first sent a couple of hundred unfit troopers back to his starting point at LaGrange, Tennessee (near Memphis) on the fourth day - misleading Confederate cavalry into thinking the raid was short-lived. Next day, he sent the 2nd Iowa back to further convince the Confederates that his force was returning to its base.

With only 900 men, Grierson then headed toward his main objective with his "Butternut Guerillas" (scouts disguised as Confederates) in the lead. Grierson's troops lived off the land. They "exchanged" their tired mounts for fresh Southern horses. Riding through rain, swamps, and dismayed Mississippians, Grierson reached Newton Station on day eight. Here he disabled the railhead and destroyed two trains.

Deciding that it would be impossible to retrace his route, he hoped to reach Grant's army at Grand Gulf. When this proved impossible, he headed to Baton Rouge, avoiding fighting his pursuers. He successfully eluded forces sent from Vicksburg and Port Hudson to block his escape. By the time Pemberton finally realized Grierson was headed to Louisiana rather than Tennessee it was too late.



Col Benjamin Grierson



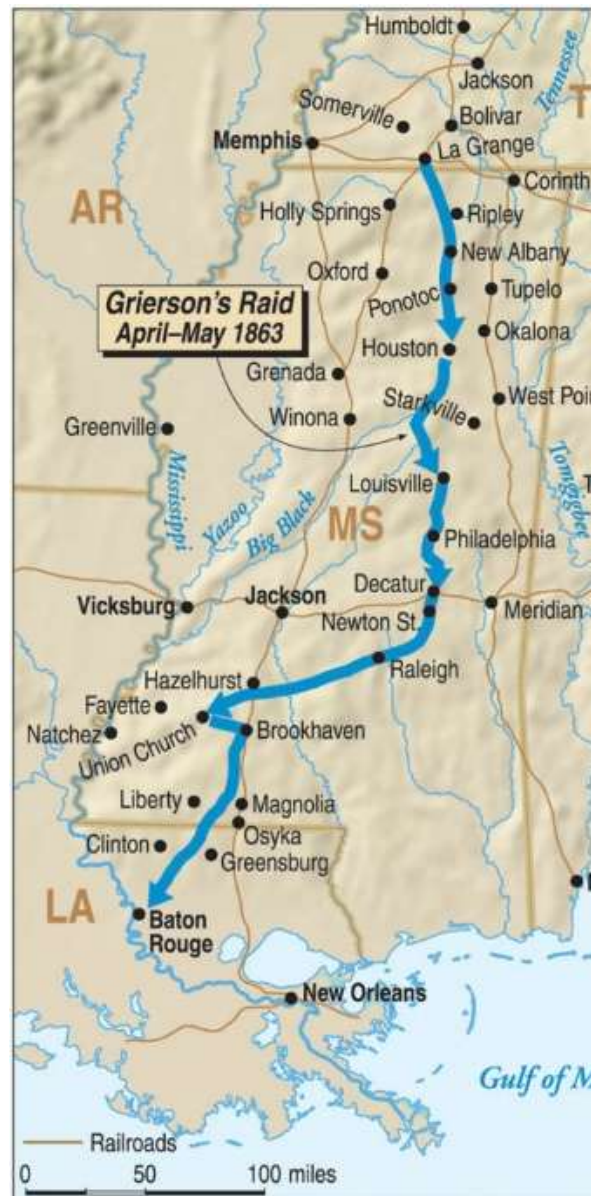
Grierson's Raid historical marker



Our Round Table Members at La Grange

Grant's operations against Vicksburg (Continued)

In the Spring of 1863, Grant marched the Army of the Tennessee down the west side of the Mississippi River to rendezvous with the Union navy who were to provide transport for the river crossing. On the evening of 16 April Adm Porter snuck his Union fleet past the Confederate batteries at Vicksburg to meet up with Grant. As the boats rounded De Soto Point, they were spotted by Confederates.



Each vessel was hit, but Porter noted that they were being hit high up in the rigging and superstructure; surmising that the Confederate guns could not adjust their trajectory low enough, Porter instructed his fleet to "hug the shoreline" closest to the guns. The fleet successfully fought past the Confederate batteries and met up with Grant.

On April 29 Union troops attempted to cross the Mississippi at Grand Gulf. The Union fleet bombarded Confederate defenses for five hours, but Grant's troops were repulsed. Grant moved farther south in search of a better crossing point, and found one in Bruinsburg. On 30 April in the early morning hours, Union infantrymen stepped ashore on Mississippi soil and clashed with Confederates at Port Gibson and Raymond. By 14 May the State capital of Jackson, Mississippi, was in Union hands.



David Dixon Porter



On 16 May Grant encountered Pemberton's army and they exchanged fire at Champion Hill. They clashed again on 17 May at the Big Black River. Both battles were Union victories and forced the Confederates to retreat to their fortifications at Vicksburg with the Federals in pursuit. On 18 May, looking for a quick victory and not wanting to give Pemberton time to settle his garrison, Grant ordered an immediate assault. Of his three corps, only Sherman's

Fifteenth Corps, stationed northeast of the city, was in a position to attack.

On 19 May Sherman's assault focused on the Stockade Redan (named for a log stockade wall across the Graveyard Road connecting two gun positions). Here, the Twenty-seventh Louisiana Infantry, reinforced by Col. Francis Cockrell's Missouri Brigade, manned the rifle pits. Sherman's men moved forward down the road at 2 p.m. but were immediately slowed by the ravines and obstructions in front of the redan. The combat was fierce and bloody. The Thirteenth United States Infantry planted its colours on the redan but could advance no further. Sherman's men pulled back. Undaunted by this failure, Grant made a more thorough reconnaissance of the defenses prior to ordering another assault.

Unsuccessful attacks gave Grant no choice but to invest Vicksburg in a siege. As weeks passed, Pemberton's defenders suffered from shortened rations, exposure to the elements, and constant bombardment from Grant's army and navy gunboats. Reduced in number by sickness and casualties, the garrison of Vicksburg spread dangerously thin. Civilians were especially hard hit forced to live in caves due to the heavy shelling.

On 25 June following Grant's orders to dig tunnels and set explosives under the Confederate works, Union sappers detonated a mine with 2,200 pounds of black powder. After more than 20 hours of hand-to-hand fighting in the 12-foot-deep crater left by the blast, Union troops were unable to advance and withdrew back to their lines. The siege continued.

By 3 - 4 July, the situation for the Confederates was dire. Grant and Pemberton met between their lines. Grant insisted on an unconditional surrender, but Pemberton refused. Later that night Grant reconsidered and offered to parole the Confederate defenders.

On 4 July, the surrender became official. The 47-day siege of Vicksburg ended. At 10:00 a.m. 29,000 Confederates marched out of their lines, stacked their rifles, and furled their flags. With Vicksburg in Union hands and the Mississippi in their control, President Lincoln had great cause for optimism. On 7 July, three days after the fall of Vicksburg and four after the victory at Gettysburg, the President wrote to the General-in-Chief: *"Major Genl Halleck: We have certain information that Vicksburg surrendered to General Grant on the 4th of July. Now, if Gen. Meade can complete his work so gloriously prosecuted thus far, by the literal (sic) or substantial destruction of Lee's army, the rebellion will be over. Yours truly, A. LINCOLN"*

Unfortunately, Lee's army escaped Meade's clutches on 14 July and crossed the Potomac River at Williamsport, Maryland, into Virginia. At a low point, a dispirited President sat down and wrote to Meade "... *my dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war....*" President Lincoln never sent this message to Meade, and the Civil War dragged on for two more years.

Operations against Vicksburg - Casualties

Union Forces		Confederate forces	
Killed	806	Killed	805
Wounded	3940	Wounded	1938
Captured/MIA	164	Captured/MIA	29,620
TOTAL	4,910	TOTAL	32,363*

* Includes Pemberton's Army of 29,000, who surrendered

Aftermath

The aftermath and reaction the Grant's brilliant strategic campaign is perhaps best summed up in the following communique, sent to Grant from President Lincoln;

My dear General

I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do, what you finally did - march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo Pass expedition, and the like, could succeed. When you got below, and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf, and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join Gen. Banks; and when you turned Northward East of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right, and I was wrong.

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln

Evaluation

Vicksburg was a major strategic defeat for the Confederacy. As President Lincoln stated, "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."

Simultaneous with the great tactical victory at Gettysburg PA (in the same week) this represented a major blow to Confederate morale and the Confederate war effort. Defeat of the Confederacy became only a matter of time - although final defeat would require another two years of hard fighting! Vicksburg also proved the value of Joint Operations between Army and Navy, something at which Grant excelled.

Importantly, Vicksburg Made General Ulysses S Grant. Vicksburg was his "masterpiece" and confirming his reputation and the brilliance of his strategic and command approach. His approach was persistent, methodical, and imaginative - it was mathematical, almost algorithmic, even "diagnostic". And in contrast to Lee's "masterpiece" - Chancellorsville - it was a major *strategic* victory, achieved at far lower cost to either the Union or the Confederacy.

Grant's reward was to be promoted to Major General in the Regular Army. And President Lincoln began to see him as the "killer arithmetician" - the man to end the war by winning it.

Grant the "Drunk"?

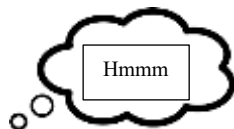
Rumours and accounts have long been given in many sources that Grant drank heavily during the Vicksburg campaign, even going on a true "bender" at one stage.

Grant was accused by Gen Charles S. Hamilton and William J. Kountz for being a "drunkard" and "gloriously drunk" in February and March of 1863. Gen McClelland was alleged to have promoted and secretly spread this rumor in the Union Army. It is worth noting that both McClelland and Hamilton were seeking promotion in the army at the time of these allegations. Cincinnati Commercial editor Murat Halstead railed that, "Our whole Army of the Mississippi is being wasted by a foolish, drunken, stupid Grant".

President Lincoln sent Charles A. Dana to "watch" Grant. Also to save Grant from dismissal, assistant Adjutant General John A. Rawlins, Grant's friend, got him to take a pledge not to touch alcohol.

Authors including Macpherson, Catton, Chernow, and White - while acknowledging that

Grant did, on occasions, drink heavily - all maintain that alcohol never affected Grant's command decisions and leadership during the Civil War.



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Civil War Letters



On June 6, 1863, his regiment engaged in the Vicksburg campaign, **H. H. Penniman, MD**, a surgeon in the 17th Regiment of Illinois Volunteers, wrote a rather whining letter to his 'Dear little wife' complaining about the discomforts of campaigning, his distaste for the soldiers' morals and the propensity of officers to drunkenness. Here are some excerpts:

"The ground here is full of all sorts of insects; and at night, the bugs are plenty, and fireflies so numerous, that it is constant flash, flash, all around..."

War is a dreadful evil, and the army is a school of bad morals; about nine-tenths of the troops entering the army irreligious, become worse and worse. A great crowd of men, without the restraints of society, and no influence from women, become very vulgar in language, coarse in their jokes, impious, and almost blasphemous in their profanity. I have never mingled, you know, with the lower dregs of society, and, every day, the associations are painful. It is dreadful and disgusting. Profanity is

universal – often, and generally common oaths – sometimes dreadfully severe and heaven-daring in its tone... This state of impiety will submit to no check nor admonition...

Drinking is abundant in the army, though this is a luxury denied at these situations except to officers. By liquor time is killed, spirits supported, care dismissed, and thought drowned. Indeed, I had no idea how dreadful are morals in the army... Every other man will get drunk if he can, and every officer is frequently drunk. General John A. L---is stupidly drunk, report says, every night; and officers follow suit, generally. Sabbaths come and go unheeded, no difference; same cannonading, same duties, and all. It is a fact, that the blessed Sabbath has passed more than once, and I did not know it. Marching for weeks, fatigued, no books, no almanacs, no papers, baggage all behind, and up and at it again, hasty meals, and noting to remind us, and not one in a dozen knows the day of the week with certainty. All this is dreadful; but true camp-life is rough and dreadful.

Your Affectionate Husband...

HONEST ABE



Abe is on a break but will be back soon!

Call for short talks

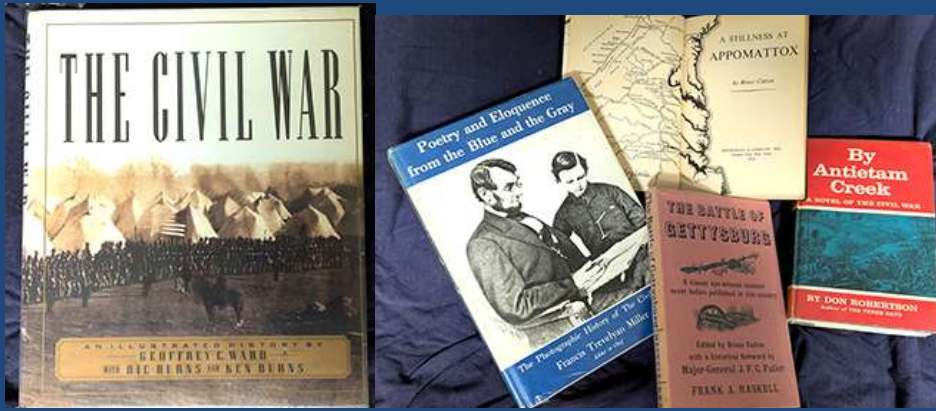
Our short ten-minute presentations on a particular battle or person have been a great success in revealing the depth of talent within our group.

Remember that we are a group of friends and a friendly audience. I know there are several amongst us who have not yet broken cover but who would be interesting and insightful presenters.

Please do not hesitate to volunteer to myself or John Morrison on a topic of your choice, be it short or long.

Ian McIntyre

Book Raffle at next meeting



New members

We are delighted to welcome new members to our Round Table.

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW RECRUITS!

ENCOURAGE A FRIEND TO JOIN OUR ROUND TABLE!

