

2018

## Complete Issue - Vol. 80, No. 1 and 2

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/jmh>

---

### Recommended Citation

(2018) "Complete Issue - Vol. 80, No. 1 and 2," *Journal of Mississippi History*. Vol. 80: No. 1, Article 8.  
Available at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/jmh/vol80/iss1/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Mississippi History* by an authorized editor of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact [aquilastaff@usm.edu](mailto:aquilastaff@usm.edu).

# The Journal of Mississippi History

---

Volume LXXX

Spring/Summer 2018

No. 1 and No. 2

---

## CONTENTS

- Introduction: How Did the Grant Material Come to Mississippi? 1  
*By John F. Marszalek*
- “To Verify From the Records Every Statement of Fact Given”:  
The Story of the Creation of *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S.  
Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition* 7  
*By David S. Nolen and Louie P. Gallo*
- “I am Thinking Seriously of Going Home”: Mississippi’s Role  
in the Most Important Decision of Ulysses S. Grant’s Life 21  
*By Timothy B. Smith*
- Applicability in the Modern Age: Ulysses S. Grant’s Vicksburg  
Campaign 35  
*By Terrence J. Winschel*

COVER IMAGE — Ulysses S. Grant (circa April 1865), courtesy of the Bultema-Williams Collection of Ulysses S. Grant Photographs and Prints from the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana, Mississippi State University Libraries.

Hiram R. Revels, Ulysses S. Grant, Party Politics, and the Annexation of Santo Domingo	49
<i>By Ryan P. Semmes</i>	
Mississippi's Most Unlikely Hero: Press Coverage of Ulysses S. Grant, 1863-1885	67
<i>By Susannah J. Ural</i>	

*The Journal of Mississippi History* (ISSN 0022-2771) is published quarterly by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 200 North St., Jackson, MS 39201, in cooperation with the Mississippi Historical Society as a benefit of Mississippi Historical Society membership. Annual memberships begin at \$25. Back issues of the *Journal* sell for \$7.50 and up through the Mississippi Museum Store; call 601-576-6921 to check availability. *The Journal of Mississippi History* is a juried journal. Each article is reviewed by a specialist scholar before publication. Periodicals paid at Jackson, Mississippi. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Mississippi Historical Society, P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205-0571. Email [journal@mdah.ms.gov](mailto:journal@mdah.ms.gov).

© 2018 Mississippi Historical Society, Jackson, Miss.

*The Department of Archives and History and the Mississippi Historical Society disclaim any responsibility for statements made by contributors.*

## **Introduction: How Did the Grant Material Come to Mississippi?**

*by John F. Marszalek*

During the American Civil War of 1861-1865, Mississippi was a leading state on the side of the Confederacy. It was one of the wealthiest states in what had become the fractured United States, and its wealth was only matched by its political power. For example, the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, was a wealthy Mississippi slave and plantation owner.

Considering its wealth and its strategic location along the Mississippi River, it is no surprise that Union forces quickly turned toward the Magnolia State in their military quest to defeat secession. If the North could curtail the growth and sale of cotton and secure control of the Mississippi River, it could readily gain victory in the war.

Early in the conflict, northern troops began moving south along the river system that pierced the Confederacy and opened the way to controlling the state and the Mississippi River which flowed to its west. If Mississippi could prevent Union control of the river, its chances for survival remained possible. If the river were captured, however, Union forces would soon be able to exert their will throughout the entire state. Prior to July 1863, Mississippians did not worry. Certainly a state, as powerful as it was, had no cause for concern.

Yet there was a Union general destined to make it difficult for the Magnolia State to escape the travails of warfare: Ulysses S. Grant, an unimpressive individual from the Midwest. Grant was a graduate of West Point, it was true; he had fought in the Mexican American War; but he had not been successful in much else. He wanted badly to re-enter the Army from his self-imposed civilian exile when the Civil War

---

*JOHN F. MARSZALEK is executive director and managing editor of the Ulysses S. Grant Association. He is the Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Mississippi State University and a former president of the Mississippi Historical Society.*

began, but the Army did not want him. Finally he gained command over an unruly Illinois regiment and quickly turned it into an efficient unit. Slowly and thanks to his connections with a hometown congressman, Elihu Washburne, he rose in the ranks. He captured Forts Henry and Donelson in Tennessee; then resurrected his seemingly defeated army at Shiloh, only to have his commanding officer, Henry W. Halleck, strip him of his command as the army moved toward Corinth. Past this city lay the prize. Grant would soon arrive where no Union general had ever successfully ventured: the state of Mississippi, the Mississippi River, and the city of Vicksburg.

It was his victory at Vicksburg that launched Grant on his path to greatness. It was in Mississippi that he first was seen as the military hero of the Union cause.

The Grant story is well known to students of the Civil War, but most people do not connect the state of Mississippi with his sterling reputation. Once he captured Vicksburg, he did not tarry in Mississippi. He pushed forward to Chattanooga and then battled Robert E. Lee in Virginia finally vanquishing him at Appomattox. After the war, he served as commanding general of the entire peacetime United States Army from 1869 to 1877 when he became the only president between Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson to serve two consecutive terms. Grant later became the first former American president to make a world tour and to write memoirs that became an important piece of non-fiction American literature. His tragic death from throat cancer in 1885 and his funeral, which was the largest ever on the continent, completed his life. Only once during all that time did he ever return to Mississippi. In April 1880, he passed through Vicksburg and received an enthusiastic welcome from the populace during his brief visit.

In the twenty-first century, however, Ulysses S. Grant has returned to the Magnolia State, and he has been welcomed back as he was in 1880. In 2008, the Ulysses S. Grant Association and its magnificent collection of manuscripts, photographs, copies, and artifacts left Southern Illinois University, Carbondale and arrived in two huge moving vans at the Mitchell Memorial Library on the campus of Mississippi State University (MSU). In 2012, the Grant Presidential Library was born, and in November 2017, it moved into its new magnificent 21,000 square foot facility on top of the Mitchell Memorial Library. The grand opening on November 30, 2017, hosted Frank and Virginia Williams who had recently donated their

magnificent Lincolniana Collection to MSU. Others present were the Archivist of the United States, the Librarian of Congress, the governor of Mississippi, the head of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, and a host of other leaders from throughout the state and nation. Television cameras hummed and still cameras clicked as nearly 1,000 people observed the event.

The nation's and the state's media found it all impossible to understand. Here was the military leader of the Union victory over the Confederate States being honored in the state that once was the wealthiest and most significant state in the South. Grant had not been born in Mississippi nor had he lived in the state during his life. He had won a major military victory here, but Union leaders are seldom honored for defeating Confederates. Yet, Mississippi State University, the state's largest and most significant research university, was welcoming him and expressing pride at his presence. During the now defunct Mississippi Picnic in the Park in New York City, MSU and the Ulysses S. Grant Association featured a sign at their booth proclaiming boldly "New York City has his Tomb, but Mississippi has his heart, at Mississippi State University."

And so it is: Mississippi State University has, what Grant Association officials believe, is a copy of virtually every letter Grant ever wrote and every one ever written to him. The Collection encompasses more than 17,000 linear feet. It is the home of the thirty-two volumes of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, which as huge a mass as they are, represent only twenty percent of the Grant writings preserved in the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University.

Even while it was in temporary quarters, the Grant Presidential Library, became a magnet for visitors from around the nation, and even the world. During the most recent three-year period, visitors came from forty-eight of the fifty states and from foreign nations such as Iceland, Great Britain, Japan, and Thailand. Classes of school children arrived in yellow busses to visit and learn. Famous authors, such as Pulitzer Prize winning/Hamilton play consultant Ron Chernow, leading biographer Ron White, Gilded Age historian Chuck Calhoun, and author Joan Waugh, and other important writers as well as graduate students have come to use Grant material. In-house editors John Marszalek, David Nolen, and Louie Gallo have produced a modern, annotated edition of *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Even today, the belief persists that Grant could never be welcomed in Mississippi because most of the state's white citizens dislike him with a passion and have done so since the Civil War. However, in 1895, Grenville Dodge, a Union Civil War commander, invited John Marshall Stone, governor of Mississippi, a former Confederate colonel, and the second president of Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Mississippi State University) from 1899-1900, to attend a dinner in New York City honoring U.S. Grant on the anniversary of his 1885 death. Stone responded that it was not possible for him to attend, but, he said, "I believe I voice the sentiment of all Mississippians, especially those who are survivors of the late war between the states, when I say that the memory of General Grant is cherished with sincere affection. . . . Next to those officers whom we loved so well, General Grant is first in the hearts of the people of Mississippi."

The essays that are presented here in the *Journal of Mississippi History* reflect the significant role of U.S. Grant in this state's history. Not surprisingly, too, most of these essays concern Grant's role during the Civil War.

The first essay is written by Timothy B. Smith, native Mississippian, doctoral graduate of Mississippi State University, leading Civil War scholar, and faculty member at the University of Tennessee-Martin. Smith points out that Grant almost left the Union army, when it was undertaking the siege of Corinth. Had he done so, Smith argues, the Union cause would have suffered an irreparable loss. Ironically it was in Mississippi that Grant made the decision to stay and fight for the Union cause and go on to his great victory at Vicksburg.

Susannah Ural of the University of Southern Mississippi and the 2017-2018 president of the Mississippi Historical Society offers her analysis of how the Mississippi press covered Grant during the war and after. She argues that Mississippi newspapers expressed confidence in the ultimate victory of the state. Significantly, moreover, they regularly expressed affection for Grant and when he died "Ulysses S. Grant became Mississippi's most unlikely hero."

Terrence Winschel, long time historian at the Vicksburg National Military Park and now retired leading interpreter of the battles in and around Vicksburg, presents an in-depth look at the use of Army Field Manuals FM 100-5 and FM 3-0 in studying Vicksburg. He details how these publications are used to teach twentieth century army personnel about Grant's strategy during the Vicksburg Campaign and what the

modern military can learn from it.

David Nolen and Louie Gallo of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University clearly and effectively present a history of one of the most important books ever written by an American, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, The Complete Annotated Edition* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017). These two scholars along with John Marszalek, point out, among other facts, the irony of a modern edition of Grant's classic being completed in the former Confederate state of Mississippi.

Ryan P. Semmes, coordinator of the Congressional and Political Research Center at Mississippi State University, and archivist of the Grant Presidential Library and the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana, wrote the final essay in this volume. Beginning the process of completing a doctoral dissertation on President Grant's foreign policy, Semmes here discusses Grant's and Mississippi's black Senator Hiram Revels's desires to ensure civil rights for African Americans after the Civil War. Semmes describes the possibility of Santo Domingo's annexation and how this matter influenced domestic politics.

The authors of these essays and the editor are pleased to present this special issue about Ulysses S. Grant in the Magnolia State. As Mississippians, we are proud that one of the leading figures of the nineteenth century has found a home in our state. We believe that the future with Grant as a focus of study will encourage Mississippians to understand the Civil War and Reconstruction better and will cause the rest of the nation to take a fresh look at one of our nation's most underappreciated presidents.





**“To Verify From the Records Every  
Statement of Fact Given”:  
The Story of the Creation of *The Personal  
Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete  
Annotated Edition***

*by David S. Nolen and Louie P. Gallo*

For over 130 years, *The Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* has been considered a classic of American letters. The story of one of the most prominent figures of the Civil War, told in his own voice, became an immediate bestseller in the late nineteenth century. Ever since its publication, Grant’s book has captivated readers and been utilized by scholars seeking insight into the Civil War era. However, questions of accuracy and even authorship have persisted, and many passages that would have been understandable to an audience familiar with the events and people of that time have become more obscure to the modern reader. What was once considered common knowledge of the Civil War has changed. Even though modern readers have access to numerous editions of the *Memoirs*, the lack of a comprehensively annotated edition of the text has created barriers to understanding and appreciating Grant’s work in context.

In an interesting twist to the story, the effort to bring this American classic to a modern audience has taken place in Mississippi, the state where Grant was launched to national prominence in 1863. In this article, the authors will address the dramatic story of the writing of the *Memoirs*, discuss their enduring popularity, and describe the effort at Mississippi State University to create an annotated edition of Grant’s text that is more accessible for a modern audience.

The history of Grant’s *Memoirs* goes back much further than the

---

DAVID S. NOLEN is an associate professor and associate editor/reference librarian at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University. He helped edit *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition* published in 2017.

LOUIE P. GALLO is assistant editor at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University. He helped edit *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition* published in 2017.

actual writing process, as publishers had proposed the idea of Grant writing his own story for many years. One of the earliest serious attempts to persuade Grant to write his memoirs came in October 1881 when author Mark Twain, a close friend of Grant, tried to convince him to write about his life and experiences. Grant brushed off the idea, claiming that he did not consider himself a writer. He asserted that other books about his life experiences did not sell and that anything he wrote would result in the same fate.<sup>1</sup>

Another opportunity for Grant came along in November 1883 when publisher Alfred D. Worthington proposed that Grant write a book about his experiences. Worthington was willing to guarantee at least \$25,000 for his efforts, but Grant declined the offer in a letter, stating, "I feel much complimented by your proposition but I schrinck [sic] from such a task."<sup>2</sup>

Grant's circumstances had changed so dramatically by the summer of 1884, however, that he began to seriously consider other offers to write. On May 2, 1884, nearly three years after his discussion with Twain, Grant received troubling news from his associate Ferdinand Ward. Grant & Ward, an investment firm in which Grant and his family had heavily invested, was in serious financial trouble. Ward, a successful Wall Street financier with a reputation for savvy investing, informed Grant that he needed \$150,000 to secure Grant's investments with the firm and the supporting bank. Grant, who had placed significant confidence in Ward, took him at his word and obtained a personal loan from his wealthy friend William Vanderbilt. According to most accounts, Grant was unaware of the impending danger. In truth, Ward had been running what was essentially a Ponzi scheme, using the same collateral to back up multiple loans. In May 1884, the scheme unraveled. On May 6, Grant made his way into the headquarters of Grant & Ward, where his son Buck was waiting. Buck stated, "Father, everything is bursted [sic] and we cannot get a cent out of the concern."<sup>3</sup> After it was all said and done, Grant lost his initial \$100,000 investment, as well as the \$150,000 he had borrowed

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark Twain, *Autobiography of Mark Twain, The Complete and Authoritative Edition*, ed. Harriet Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 1:71.

<sup>2</sup> A. D. Worthington & Co. to Ulysses S. Grant, November 7, 1883; Ulysses S. Grant to A. D. Worthington, November 9, 1883. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, ed. John Y. Simon (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 31: 163n.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Herald*, May 10, 1884. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 144n.

from Vanderbilt.<sup>4</sup>

After the massive failure of Grant & Ward, Grant was penniless and needed to earn income for his family. Thus, he was forced to start a literary career. In June 1884, he agreed to write four articles about his experience in the Civil War for *Century* magazine's "Battles and Leaders" series. On July 1, Century Publishing issued Grant a \$500 check, his first income from the project.<sup>5</sup> Grant spent most of the summer writing at the family's retreat in Long Branch, New Jersey.

On top of all the family's financial struggles, the first indication of a problem with Grant's health also appeared during this time. One day that summer, while eating a peach, he felt a sharp pain in his throat. At first, his wife Julia presumed he had been stung by an insect inside the peach. She urged him to consult a doctor, but Grant ignored her requests. Instead, he continued to work on his articles, and by August 8, he had decided to write his memoirs.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of his reluctance to visit a doctor, Grant most likely recognized the potential seriousness of his constant sore throat. On September 5, before any confirmed diagnosis, he signed an updated last will and testament. On October 22, he met with leading throat specialist Dr. John H. Douglas, who quickly informed Grant that he had an "epithelial" disease that, in his initial assessment, was "sometimes capable of being cured." Douglas took a tissue sample for testing, but Grant kept the doctor's initial assessment private.<sup>7</sup>

In early November, Mark Twain and his wife were walking out of Chickering Hall in New York City when he overheard Richard Gilder, the editor of *Century* magazine, discussing Grant's Civil War articles and his interest in publishing Grant's memoirs. Twain was stunned by Gilder's statement that Grant was receiving only \$500 per article. He later wrote, "The thing which astounded me was, admirable man as Gilder certainly is, and with a heart which is in the right place, it had never seemed to occur to him that to offer General Grant \$500 for a magazine article was not only the monumental insult of the nineteenth

---

<sup>4</sup> Charles B. Flood, *Grant's Final Victory: Ulysses S. Grant's Heroic Last Year* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2011), 11-13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-58; *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 171n.

<sup>6</sup> Julia D. Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant (Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant)*, ed. John Y. Simon (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), 328-329.

<sup>7</sup> Flood, *Grant's Final Victory*, 83-84; *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 195-199.

century, but of all centuries.”<sup>8</sup>

Twain understood the importance of Grant’s story and could foresee the potential profits the former president could net for himself. The next morning, Twain went to Grant’s house to verify what Gilder had mentioned the night before. Twain asked if any deal had been signed between Grant and *Century* to publish his memoirs. Grant stated that a contract had been prepared, but that nothing had been signed. He proceeded to read the contract out loud. Twain later wrote that he “didn’t know whether to cry or laugh.”<sup>9</sup> According to Twain, the contract made two propositions: “one at 10 per cent royalty and the other offer of *half the profits on the book after subtracting every sort of expense connected with it*, including office rent, clerk hire, advertising and everything else.”<sup>10</sup> Twain told Grant “the *Century* offer was simply absurd and should not be considered.” Twain asserted that Grant should receive “20 per cent on the retail price of the book, or if he preferred the partnership policy, then he ought to have 70 per cent of the profits on each volume over and above the *mere cost of making* that volume.”<sup>11</sup> Twain offered to publish the book for Grant with more generous terms under the auspices of Twain’s own publishing firm, Charles L. Webster & Co. Grant considered the offer but made no final decision that day.<sup>12</sup>

For the next few weeks, while Twain was travelling in the West, his partner Charles L. Webster met repeatedly with Grant. By November 23, Grant was leaning towards Twain’s offer. In a letter to George W. Childs, he wrote, “On reexamining the Contract prepared by the *Century* people I see that it is all in favor of the publisher, with nothing left for the Author. I am offered very much more favorable terms by the Chas L. Webster & Co. Mark Twain is the Company. The house is located at 658 Broadway. I inclose you their card.”<sup>13</sup>

By December 1884, Grant was working diligently on his memoirs, but without a contract in hand. Twain had offered him \$25,000 for each manuscript volume submitted and a \$50,000 advance. According

---

<sup>8</sup> Twain, *Autobiography*, 1:77-78.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Ulysses S. Grant to George W. Childs, November 23, 1884. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 237.

to Twain, however, the offer “seemed to distress him.” Grant did not feel comfortable taking such a considerable sum of money with a chance of the publisher losing out and was thus not ready to decide on a publishing contract.<sup>14</sup> On February 19, 1885, the official results of Grant’s tissue sample revealed that he indeed had throat cancer.<sup>15</sup> Two days later, Ulysses and Julia’s eldest son Fred informed Twain about the cancer diagnosis while Twain was visiting Grant in New York. He told Twain that the physicians considered Grant “to be under sentence of death and that he would not be likely to live more than a fortnight or three weeks longer.”<sup>16</sup>

Six days later, on February 27, Grant signed a contract with Charles L. Webster & Co., and rumors immediately started to spread about Twain’s “scheme” to publish Grant’s book. There were unfounded accusations that Grant declined the *Century* offer because they would not give his son Buck a position.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the deal was in place. Grant spent the next few months writing at his house in New York City. The newspapers regularly reported on Grant’s health to a public who eagerly desired news about his condition. A serious decline in Grant’s health at the end of March resulted in reports that Grant was within days or hours of death, but Grant rallied and those reports proved to be premature.<sup>18</sup> On June 16, Grant and his family traveled to Mount McGregor, New York, to escape Manhattan’s summer heat.<sup>19</sup> By July 20, Fred Grant wrote that his father had finished his work on the manuscript. Just a few days later, Grant passed away around 8:00 a.m. on July 23, 1885.<sup>20</sup> When Twain received the news, he made an entry in his journal:

On board train, Binghamton, July 23, 1885- 10 a.m. The news is that Gen. Grant died about 2 hours ago- at 5 minutes past 8. The last time I saw him was July 1st & 2d, at Mt. McGregor [...] He was still adding little perfecting details to his book- a preface, among other things. He was entirely

---

<sup>14</sup> Twain, *Autobiography*, 1: 80-81.

<sup>15</sup> *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 294n.

<sup>16</sup> Twain, *Autobiography*, 1: 84.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>18</sup> Flood, *Grant's Final Victory*, 131-132, 144-146.

<sup>19</sup> *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: xxxi.

<sup>20</sup> Frederick Grant to William T. Sherman, July 20, 1885. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: xxxii, 427n.

through, a few days later... I think his book kept him alive several months. He was a very great man- & superlatively good.<sup>21</sup>

On August 5, the grand funeral cortège of the former general and president wound through the streets of New York. The procession was seven miles long, starting at the southern end of Manhattan Island and moving northward to Grant's temporary mausoleum in Riverside Park. Grant's popularity and influence were on full display that day, with one of the longest funeral processions in American history. There were approximately 1.5 million people in attendance to pay their respects.<sup>22</sup>

Despite Grant's death, the final steps in publishing his manuscript continued. There were hundreds of thousands of pre-orders before the book was even in print. The first volume was published on December 1, 1885, and the second volume came out on March 1, 1886. Depending on the quality of the binding, the price of the book was between \$7 and \$25. Initially, the book sold over 300,000 copies, and Julia Grant received the largest royalty check ever written up to that point – \$200,000. In all, Mrs. Grant received close to \$450,000 in royalty checks for the *Memoirs*. According to Grant biographer Ron Chernow, the *Memoirs* were one of the best-selling books of the 19th century, right next to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>23</sup>

Initially, the *Memoirs* were well received by nearly everyone other than a select number of detractors who claimed the work was either fatally flawed by errors or stylistically unimpressive.<sup>24</sup> In 1887, approximately two years after the publication of the *Memoirs*, Carswell McClellan, a brevet-lieutenant-colonel and a staff member of Union General Andrew A. Humphreys, published *The Personal Memoirs and Military History of U.S. Grant Versus the Record of the Army of the Potomac*, which critiqued some of Grant's assertions. He stated, "The object aimed at now is to incite investigation which shall decide the historic value of this widely published work."<sup>25</sup> McClellan's book

---

<sup>21</sup> Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals, Volume III: (1883-1891)*, ed. Frederick Anderson et al. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 168.

<sup>22</sup> Joan Waugh, *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 216.

<sup>23</sup> Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 953.

<sup>24</sup> Waugh, *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth*, 209-210.

<sup>25</sup> Carswell McClellan, *The Personal Memoirs and Military History of U.S. Grant Versus the Record of the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1887), 3.

questioned some of Grant's factual assertions which resulted in a critical analysis of Grant's opinion of various generals.

These claims, in conjunction with other critiques of Grant's assertions, inspired Grant's eldest son Frederick D. Grant to publish a second edition of the *Memoirs* in 1895. In the preface of the second edition, Fred stated that he wanted to supplement the first edition by adding marginal annotations based on references to sources that his father had consulted when he wrote his story on his deathbed. The second edition turned out to be extremely useful to readers, because the marginal notes provided brief identifications and references to the documents in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Although the second edition contains many useful marginal notes, it does not comprehensively annotate the text or provide details that would help contextualize the *Memoirs* for the modern reader.

Despite the initial criticism, the *Memoirs* secured a place in the American literary landscape, with additional reprints and subsequent editions of the text produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the *Memoirs* remained widely available after the publication of the second edition, another critically annotated edition did not appear until 1952. Civil War scholar E. B. Long edited that version, which contained more explanatory notes than the second edition. However, the notes did not contain identifications of every person and place mentioned. In 1990, William and Mary McFeely completed an annotated edition of Grant's *Memoirs*, which was published by Library of America. This edition contained selected letters by Grant and his contemporaries, a helpful chronology of Grant's life, and approximately one hundred explanatory endnotes. In 1999, renowned Civil War scholar James M. McPherson compiled an annotated edition of the *Memoirs* published by Penguin Press. He added an introduction along with approximately one hundred explanatory endnotes in addition to parenthetical, in-text identifications of many people mentioned by Grant.

The availability of so many quality editions and the text itself being available in the public domain may initially raise questions of why a new edition of the Grant *Memoirs* is even necessary. While the text itself is readily accessible, for modern readers the context of the *Memoirs* can be a daunting obstacle to fully understanding the work. It is important to note that Grant wrote for an audience that was



familiar with the Civil War in a way that readers 150 years later are not. Many of Grant's readers would have been more familiar than a modern reader with the large and small stars in the galaxy of Civil War personalities. On many occasions Grant, as the narrator of the tale, referenced a participant in the Civil War and simply reminded his reader that he or she should be familiar with that named individual from his service during the Civil War.

A passage in Chapter 10 is an excellent example of this pattern. Grant, in describing his experiences in the Mexican-American War, wrote the following words: "These reconnoissances [sic] were made under the supervision of Captain Robert E. Lee, assisted by Lieutenants P. G. T. Beauregard, Isaac I. Stevens, Z. B. Tower, G. W. Smith, George B. McClellan, and J. G. Foster, of the corps of engineers, all officers who attained rank and fame, on one side or the other, in the great conflict for the preservation of the unity of the nation."<sup>26</sup> In this passage, Grant named a number of both Confederate and Union officers and simply reminded his readers that they should have at least heard of them because of their exploits during the Civil War. But, for the modern, general reader, few of these names pop off the page with instant recognition. In fact, it may be safe to say that very few people (outside of Civil War scholars and historians) would recognize most of the names in that list. Thus, identifying named (and even unnamed but mentioned persons) in the text became a priority in the annotation process.

A similar issue occurs with places that Grant mentioned in his text. Many such towns and other landmarks underwent considerable change in the years between the Civil War and the writing of the *Memoirs*, and those places have undergone even more change in the years since Grant wrote about them.

A final reason for creating a thoroughly annotated edition of the *Memoirs* relates to the claims about the veracity of the text. Grant wrote in his preface, "I have used my best efforts, with the aid of my eldest son, F. D. Grant, assisted by his brothers, to verify from the records every statement of fact given."<sup>27</sup> The fact that Grant aspired to this level of fact-checking and put forth his work as an accurate rendition of the events in question has led to vigorous debate about

---

<sup>26</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition*, ed. John F. Marszalek, David S. Nolen, and Louie P. Gallo (Cambridge: Belknap, 2017), 88-89.

<sup>27</sup> Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, 4.

how reliable the *Memoirs* actually are.

Furthering scholarship on Grant has been integral to the mission of the Ulysses S. Grant Association (USGA) since its founding in 1962. An annotated edition of Grant's *Memoirs* had been part of the plans of the USGA since its early days,<sup>28</sup> but the primary focus of the USGA's work for many years was the collection, selection, transcription, and annotation of letters and other documents to be included in *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, which has become an invaluable source for scholars delving into Grant and his era.

In 2008, the USGA left its long-time home at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale and found a new home at Mississippi State University under the leadership of Dr. John F. Marszalek as executive director and managing editor. Under Dr. Marszalek's guidance, in 2012 the USGA completed the work begun by his predecessor, Dr. John Y. Simon, on the Grant papers project by publishing Volume 32 in the series. The completion of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* was a major milestone in setting the stage for work on the *Memoirs*, making possible the verification of many of the statements about dates, places, and correspondence presented in the *Memoirs*. The text of the *Memoirs* could be cross-referenced with the relevant volumes of the *Papers* in order to provide additional context for Grant's narrative.

Ironically, the completion of both the *Papers* project and the *Memoirs* could not have been achieved without the substantial support provided by Mississippi State University (MSU) and, in particular, the MSU Libraries. The unique partnership between the USGA and one of Mississippi's largest universities made possible the completion of these two significant projects that further Grant scholarship.

One of the pitfalls that the editors sought to avoid in annotating Grant's text was the temptation to interrupt Grant's narrative by intervening unnecessarily. Early on in the process of drafting annotations for the project, the editors found themselves interjecting with annotations in a preemptive manner when Grant would offer a summary description that left out what could be considered an important detail. Often these details would eventually emerge in Grant's telling of the story, and so the editors frequently had to examine placement of annotations to make sure those notes occurred in the best location in the text to preserve Grant's own structure and

---

<sup>28</sup> *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 1: xxx.

narrative flow.

One example of this tension occurs in relation to Grant's references to Union general Edward Canby, who first appears in Grant's narrative in Chapter 46, and then is mentioned in several subsequent passages. However, it is not until Chapter 69, when Grant provides his reflective assessment of Canby's generalship that Grant mentioned his death during the Modoc War.<sup>29</sup> Grant's decision to include those details near the very end of the *Memoirs* forced the editors to choose between either interrupting the narrative flow of the account with interesting details of Canby's later life in his initial identification, or waiting on Grant to introduce those details to provide clarifying annotations once Grant addressed the events at the end of Canby's life. The editors opted to follow Grant's lead in telling Canby's story. The initial identification did not include specific details regarding Canby's death, but the editors instead included those details in Chapter 69 to clarify Grant's first reference to Canby's demise.

In the end, the editors eventually settled on an annotation policy inspired by Robert Underwood Johnson's own instructions to Grant on how to write his memoirs. Johnson was a young editor with *Century Publishing* at the time that Grant began work on his articles for *Century Magazine*.<sup>30</sup> According to Johnson's memoirs, when the first draft of what became Grant's article in *Century* about the Battle of Shiloh arrived at the *Century* office, Johnson and the other editors felt a collective sense of despair because the style of the article rendered it unpublishable from their perspective. According to Johnson's account, the article was a dry, factual report on the battle that read just like the well-known documents included in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*.<sup>31</sup>

Johnson was tasked with speaking to Grant about the article draft and breaking the news to him, so he traveled to visit Grant in Long Branch, New Jersey. He arrived and sat down with the former general and president and began their conversation by simply conversing with Grant about his experiences at Shiloh. Like others of that era, Johnson found Grant to be an engaging and interesting storyteller who was

---

<sup>29</sup> Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, 473, 745-746.

<sup>30</sup> Flood, *Grant's Final Victory*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Underwood Johnson, *Remembered Yesterdays* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1923), 213-214.

anything but dry in his re-telling of the events of Shiloh. He told his story with energy and enthusiasm and included numerous personal details that he had not included in his first draft.<sup>32</sup>

As Grant spoke, Johnson jotted notes on a newspaper in his hand. When Grant finished, Johnson urged him to re-write his Shiloh article employing the conversational style he had used when telling the story. He also urged him to include the personal details of his experiences. Johnson suggested that Grant imagine himself telling about his experiences at Shiloh in an after-dinner speech. He recommended that he envisage himself at a dinner with friends—some of whom knew much about the battle, while others knew very little. In this imagined scenario, Johnson encouraged Grant to focus on his own personal experiences at the battle and share the details of what he had heard and seen.<sup>33</sup>

According to Johnson, Grant was initially skeptical that readers would be interested in those elements,<sup>34</sup> but this conversation appears to have been a watershed moment for Grant as a writer. He then diverged from his traditional no-nonsense writing style, which had produced such clear and precise wartime communications, and instead adopted a more conversational story-telling style that one sees in the *Memoirs* today.

In preparing Grant's *Memoirs* for a modern audience, the USGA editors took this imagined scenario to heart. In an effort to allow Grant to tell his own story, the editors pictured themselves as guests at that dinner, seated facing the audience. If what Grant "said" in the *Memoirs* was accurate, the editors would not intervene and would remain silent. However, if Grant erred in his facts or was vague in his description, then the editors would "speak up" in the form of an annotation and briefly interrupt Grant's story.

Another piece of the overall philosophy behind the annotation policy was the consideration of what to annotate to help a reader understand the context. Because of the advent of web-based dictionaries and maps, the editors decided against intervening in the text when a reader could easily access the relevant information via the web.

With this overall philosophy in mind, the editors set about the work of creating annotations to provide greater context to the *Memoirs* in

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 214-215.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

order to help modern readers understand the text, but also to mark where the text can be trusted factually and where there are mistakes in Grant's memory or source material.

The editors sought to place annotations where the modern reader would naturally pause and question the text. As mentioned above, instances where Grant cited someone or referred to someone (at times without naming that person) were priorities for editorial annotations. Because the editors briefly identify people who appear in the narrative, the reader has the opportunity to appreciate, in a fuller way, Grant's inclusion of each person in his story.

In addition to identifying people, the editors also set out to identify places. The list of named places in the *Memoirs* is lengthy, and, going back to the overarching philosophy behind the annotation policy, many of the towns and cities named in the text still exist and can be easily located through modern web resources. The editors thus limited place identifications to those that were difficult to locate either because their names had changed significantly or because those places simply no longer exist. The latter was a particularly common scenario in the chapters that discuss the Vicksburg campaign: the meandering route of the Mississippi River and its tributaries has left many formerly bustling settlements high and dry in the years since the Civil War, and so those sites are now unfamiliar and difficult to locate.

Another emphasis in the annotation policy concerned instances where Grant wrote about orders given or letters sent and provided enough details for the reader to locate those texts in the *Papers*. Generally, these are main entries in *The Papers* and of sufficient importance that they stand out for their content. The editors developed a policy that if Grant mentioned a letter he had written and 1) the correspondent and the date of the letter were clear from the context and 2) that letter did indeed appear as a main entry in the *Papers*, then the editors did not intervene with a footnote to direct readers to the specific page where that letter appears in the *Papers*. However, if Grant mentioned a letter or orders that he had sent without contextual information, then the editors added a note to explain where to find the correspondence he referenced. Likewise, if Grant mentioned a letter that is in a note in the *Papers* (and does not appear as a chronological main entry), then the editors added a note to explain where to find it.

This approach to annotation prevents interruptions in the sections of the *Memoirs* where Grant is factually accurate and the text can be

relied on. However, it also parses the details that do not match the established facts and timelines clarifying where to find additional information. Grant wrote that he and those working with him (including his sons) had attempted to “verify from the records every statement of fact given,” but he also wrote that “The comments are my own, and show how I saw the matters treated of whether others saw them in the same light or not.”<sup>35</sup> This approach allows modern readers to move more easily beyond the classic questions of accuracy in a memoir and interrogate the sections that are heavy with “comments,” where Grant puts forward his opinions of what happened. To attempt to annotate those commentaries would have been futile: there are entire books that have been or can be written on the debates that Grant weighed in on and there are large historiographical essays that would necessarily accompany any interpretive lens brought to bear on those commentaries. The editors of this edition of the *Memoirs*, published by the Belknap imprint of Harvard University Press, have left those tasks up to the reader, who can now more easily get beyond the initial questions of fact and fiction and dive more readily into the interpretive elements of the *Memoirs*.

The state of Mississippi provided the backdrop for U. S. Grant to become one of the leading military figures of the Civil War. His wartime activities in the state, which form a critical portion of his *Memoirs*, were essential to the Union victory. It is important to recognize that Mississippi has yet again provided the platform for examining Grant's rise to prominence. It has furnished the vital support necessary to carry out the work of the USGA and to make the publication of this new edition of the *Memoirs* possible. The contributions of Mississippi's people and institutions have highlighted Grant's important role in one of the most significant periods in American history.

In providing these annotations, the editors of this edition of Grant's *Memoirs* aim to allow readers to more effectively engage with the text. By using this edition, modern readers can more readily identify where Grant's telling of the story is reliable and where it needs to be more critically interrogated. Readers can more easily parse the facts of the story from the sometimes more intriguing “comments” that Grant offers on his life and times and on the people he encountered. The staying power of Grant's *Memoirs* is a testament to the enduring value of being

---

<sup>35</sup> Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, 4.

able to hear from one of the key players in the events of the Civil War and understand how he viewed those events. One of the goals of this edition is to add to the understanding not just of the Civil War but also of the memory of that time — how the memory was created and preserved, and how Grant's legacy including his contribution to the body of Civil War writings participated in that important process.

# **“I am Thinking Seriously of Going Home”: Mississippi’s Role in the Most Important Decision of Ulysses S. Grant’s Life**

*Timothy B. Smith*

Mississippi is not normally considered the cradle of Ulysses S. Grant history or devotion, as exemplified by the utter surprise expressed when Grant’s official and personal papers, formerly housed in Illinois, were moved to Mississippi State University in the heart of Dixie. But in reality, the state played a significant role in the life of one of the United States’ most important leaders. It was in Mississippi, at Vicksburg, that Grant conducted perhaps the most significant military campaign in American history. Likewise, in perhaps a surprising twist to many, Grant even carried the state in the 1872 presidential election, although the curious pathways of Reconstruction politics had much to do with Grant’s victory. Nevertheless, Mississippi played a major role in making Grant who he was in life.<sup>1</sup>

Less well known than Vicksburg or presidential elections was perhaps the most important professional decision Grant made in his lifetime, a decision he made in Mississippi itself. Grant faced a crucial crossroads in his personal and professional life in June 1862 when, in perhaps the lowest point of his military career during the Civil War, he contemplated going home. If he quit and went north, or even took an extended leave, chances were good he might never have another opportunity for such high rank and authority again. If Grant had left, perhaps even without resigning his commission, he might never have gotten another chance at glory or fame.

Grant came to a crisis point in early June 1862 when he faced the decision that could potentially make or break his entire career,

---

<sup>1</sup> “Grant and the Bulldogs: Union General’s Papers at Home at Mississippi State,” November 17, 2013, *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal*.

---

*TIMOTHY B. SMITH is a lecturer in the Department of History and Philosophy at University of Tennessee at Martin. He has written, edited, and co-edited eighteen books, including the award-winning Champion Hill: Decisive Battle for Vicksburg, Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle Occupation, and Shiloh: Conquer or Perish.*



including all that we now know that came after it. Grant had certainly made important decisions before, including critical ones, such as resigning from the pre-war army, attacking Forts Henry and Donelson, and determining to remain and fight at Shiloh rather than withdraw, as almost all his officers were expecting and counseling. Grant would go on to make other major decisions in his life, such as the decision to forego an evening at Ford's Theatre with President Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865. Still, if there was one potential decision that could have largely changed the course of Grant's personal and professional career, it was this decision about his future, made in Mississippi of all places.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

William T. Sherman was astounded when he heard the news. Having just succeeded in helping capture Corinth, Mississippi, in the spring of 1862, Sherman was elated at the success of the Union's field armies in Mississippi. He had been a major player in that effort; although not seeing heavy action like that at Shiloh, his troops had fought several minor affairs at Russell's House and then later around a double log cabin nearer the Confederate lines. More importantly, Sherman had held the critical right flank of the huge army descending on Corinth, and he had held it well, often refusing the line to protect the flank against Confederate assault from the nearby Mobile and Ohio Railroad.<sup>3</sup>

The good work Sherman performed had lasting repercussions both for his cause and his own personal life. The Federal war machine had captured one of the most coveted locations certainly in the western Confederacy, one that top Union commander Major General Henry W. Halleck termed, along with Richmond, as "now the great strategical points of war, and our success at these points should be insured at all hazards." But the good was not just on the national level. Sherman had earlier been plagued by rumors of a shaky mental state, some even claiming he was crazy or insane. He inadvertently gave credence

---

<sup>2</sup> For some of Grant's decisions, see Timothy B. Smith, *"The Decision Was Always My Own": Ulysses S. Grant and the Vicksburg Campaign* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2018) and Timothy B. Smith, *Shiloh: Conquer or Perish* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman. By Himself*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1875), 1:251-252, 255.

to those rumors when he gave up his command in Kentucky to take a rest. Yet Sherman was back by the spring of 1862, and although surprised beyond any shadow of doubt at Shiloh, he had turned out a solid performance thereafter, which he continued in the successful Corinth campaign. Now, Sherman was fully back, enjoying the victories and the acclaim that went with them.<sup>4</sup>

Not so happy was Sherman's new friend Ulysses S. Grant. Sherman had remained in the background while Grant had made a name for himself at Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862. After that, however, matters had gone downhill for Grant, leading to his contemplation of quitting. He cannot be labeled a quitter per se, given the fact that he at times in his life faced difficult circumstances and overcame them, his education at West Point being one example. But in other activities, Grant was indeed a quitter, such as when he tired of army life on the frontier and began to drink heavily. Having all he could stand, Grant resigned and went home. There, he tried his hand at other jobs such as farming, only to see little success which led him to quit again. By the beginning of the Civil War, Grant had fallen to dependence on his family, working for his father in Galena, Illinois.<sup>5</sup>

While Halleck tried to talk Grant out of leaving, Sherman was not afraid to act more forcefully. A firm believer in the redemption of a tarnished career overnight, something he had experienced in his own life, Sherman went straight to Grant's headquarters when he heard the news from Halleck. He was determined to talk his friend out of resigning and going home.<sup>6</sup>

\* \* \*

Dissatisfaction had been boiling up in Grant for months, and it largely stemmed from a mushrooming personal disturbance with his superior, Henry W. Halleck. "Old Brains" was a rather hard man

---

<sup>4</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1891), Series 1, Volume 10, Part 1: 667. Hereafter cited as *OR*, with series, volume, and part number, if applicable, preceding page numbers.

<sup>5</sup> John F. Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 118; Brooks D. Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph Over Adversity, 1822-1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 124. For Grant, see Ronald C. White, *American Ulysses: A Life of Ulysses S. Grant* (New York: Random House, 2016). For Grant's pre-war life, see Lloyd Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950).

<sup>6</sup> Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 1:255.

to know and like, but Grant was not completely innocent either; he had had personal run-ins with other officers earlier in the war as well, including a nasty feud with Benjamin Prentiss over rank. But Halleck's ire had the potential of derailing Grant's entire career, and while some saw jealously and others Halleck's dissatisfaction with what Halleck considered Grant's sloppy performance, the sum of it was that Grant was under a growing cloud with his superior. In fact, Halleck had already seemingly made up his mind about Grant shortly after taking command of the Department of Missouri in the quiet fall of 1861. In the build-up to the advance along the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers in early 1862, Grant advised Halleck what to do and was rebuffed. Grant famously wrote years later of what he perceived then as Halleck's disdain. Concerning his request to travel to St. Louis to confer with Halleck, he later recalled, "I was received with so little cordiality that I perhaps stated the object of my visit with less clearness than I might have done, and I had not uttered many sentences before I was cut short as if my plan was preposterous. I returned to Cairo very much crestfallen." Halleck biographer John F. Marszalek surmised that "Halleck was, in fact, reacting not to Grant's plan, but to Grant himself."<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between the two men only worsened after Forts Henry and Donelson, when it seemed logical that Halleck would have reveled in his subordinate's victories. Rather, Halleck displayed disdain for Grant, especially when messages became fairly infrequent (through no fault of Grant's) and what messages that did arrive described large-scale thievery and disorder, something that the straight-laced Halleck could not abide. The relationship between the two men became so tense that Halleck chose to shelve Grant by keeping him in district command at Fort Henry while giving the actual tactical command to a much more professional officer (in Halleck's eyes) Charles F. Smith. Word reached Grant in early March like a thunderbolt: "you will place Maj. Gen. C. F. Smith in command of expedition, and remain yourself at Fort Henry." Halleck then openly twisted the knife he had stuck in

---

<sup>7</sup> John F. Marszalek, David S. Nolen, and Louie P. Gallo, eds., *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition*; (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 202; Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies*, 116. For a wide ranging examination of the Grant/Halleck/Sherman relationship, see Carl R. Schenker, Jr., "The Grant-Halleck-Smith Affair" *North and South* 12, 1 (February 2010): 11-12 and "Ulysses in His Tent: Halleck, Grant, Sherman, and 'The Turning Point of the War'," *Civil War History* 56, 2 (June 2010): 175-221.

Grant's back, adding, "why do you not obey my orders to report strength and positions of your command?"<sup>8</sup>

A dumfounded Grant responded quickly: "I am not aware of ever having disobeyed any order from headquarters – certainly never intended such a thing." But he had no choice and in the next few days obediently sent Smith southward with what he no doubt perceived as his army. Over the next couple of difficult weeks, Halleck continued his barrage against Grant, even involving general-in-chief George B. McClellan and secretary of war Edwin M. Stanton in Washington. McClellan and Stanton gave Halleck permission to remove Grant if he thought it necessary. Halleck only criticized Grant again by mentioning to the Washington authorities unfounded rumors that Grant's alleged drinking had resurfaced. Halleck no doubt alerted Grant with grim satisfaction that "unless these things are immediately corrected I am directed to relieve you of the command." He even said that Grant's actions were "a matter of very serious complaint at Washington, so much so that I was advised to arrest you on your return."<sup>9</sup>

By the first week in March, Grant had gathered his thoughts and insisted tersely that he had reported daily to Halleck's chief of staff in Cairo. "It is no fault of mine if you have not received my letters," he declared. But orders were orders, and Grant later admitted, "I was virtually in arrest and without a command." It was during this time that he took a huge step in what was shaping up to be the most momentous decision of his life; he asked to be relieved from duty under Halleck. Grant did not resign or quit, but clearly saw that Halleck was not his guardian. He thus wrote on March 7, "I respectfully ask to be relieved from further duty in the department." It was the first thought in a long process that would lead to the brink of going home for good.<sup>10</sup>

Matters only became worse over the next few days as Halleck continued to scold, at one point writing that "I really felt ashamed to telegraph back to Washington time and again that I was unable to give the strength of your command." Added to that matter were reports of disorder and unruliness in Grant's command. Halleck added snappishly, "don't let such neglect occur again." Grant was incredulous, and over the next four days asked twice more to be relieved: "I renew

---

<sup>8</sup> *OR*, 10,2:3, 17. For Forts Henry and Donelson, see Timothy B. Smith, *Grant Invades Tennessee: The 1862 Battles for Forts Henry and Donelson* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> *OR*, 10,2:4, 13, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 226; *OR*, 10,2:15.

my application to be relieved from further duty” and “I again ask to be relieved from further duty until I can be placed right in the estimation of those higher in authority.”<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps taken aback by Grant’s willingness to respond to him, Halleck soon backed down. Some argue that President Lincoln also became involved and forced Halleck to show evidence of Grant’s drinking and unfitness for command or reinstate him. Either way, Halleck soon took a much more conciliatory approach, dangling at first the chance that Grant would soon retake command from Smith of the expedition southward and then flatly telling him, after Grant’s terse request to be relieved, “you cannot be relieved from your command. . . . Instead of relieving you, I wish you as soon as your new army is in the field to assume the immediate command and lead it on to new victories.” A shocked Grant retook the command, joining the army in Savannah, Tennessee, on March 17, but he was shaken from the ordeal of the last two weeks. Grant wrote his new friend Sherman, now camped at Pittsburg Landing, that he had been “sick for the last two weeks, [but] begin to feel better at the thought of again being along with the troops.” Still, he did issue orders to improve “order and regularity about headquarters.”<sup>12</sup>

\* \* \*

Matters remained civil for the next three weeks as the armies gathered, but the lightning bolt that was Shiloh again opened the rift between Halleck and Grant. Under a cloud already, Grant was never far away from Halleck’s orders, despite being more than 250 miles south of his superior. Halleck was convinced that Grant was sloppy and that he did not pay close enough attention to details, and Shiloh only confirmed that belief in his mind. Halleck had warned Grant to be watchful and entrenched, neither of which Grant did to Halleck’s satisfaction. Grant’s loss of more than thirteen thousand men at Shiloh only added an additional level to Halleck’s ire.<sup>13</sup>

Upset as he was, Halleck hurried southward to take control of what he considered to be an obviously out-of-control situation.

---

<sup>11</sup> *OR*, 10,2:15, 21-22, 30.

<sup>12</sup> *OR*, 10,2:27, 32, 36, 41, 43; John F. Marszalek, *Lincoln and the Military* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 28.

<sup>13</sup> For Shiloh, see Smith, *Shiloh*.

He arrived on April 11 and immediately skewered Grant for his losses and inattention to detail. Almost as soon as he arrived, he scolded Grant that “immediate and active measures must be taken to put your command in condition to resist another attack by the enemy. . . . Your army is not now in condition to resist an attack. It must be made so without delay.” On another occasion the two men sparred over Halleck’s insistence that Grant write a report on Shiloh. Grant “positively declined” because Halleck had all the subordinate reports sent directly to him and then on to Washington. Consequently, Grant never saw them. With his temper no doubt boiling over, Halleck later sent Grant a firm note that displayed his obvious wonder at Grant’s lack of military protocol and discipline: “the Major General Commanding desires that, you will again call the attention of your officers to the necessity of forwarding official communications through the proper military channel, to receive the remarks of intermediate commanders. Letters should relate to one matter only, and be properly folded and indorsed. Where the Regulations on this subject are not observed by officers, their communications to these Head Quarters will be returned.” Sherman, who was friend to both Halleck and Grant, believed that “it soon became manifest that his [Halleck’s] mind had been prejudiced by the rumors which had gone forth to the detriment of General Grant.”<sup>14</sup>

For his part, Grant seemed less concerned with Halleck’s arrival than one would think, at least on the surface. Halleck was, after all, his superior, and that superior had every right to command his forces in person. In fact, Grant wrote his wife Julia soon after Halleck’s arrival, “I however am no longer boss. Gen. Halleck is here and I am truly glad of it.” Later, Grant told Julia not to worry about the cloud he was under because of Shiloh, particularly from newspaper reporters who were not even at the battle. Significantly, Grant laid no blame on Halleck whom he described as “who I look upon as one of the greatest men of the age.”<sup>15</sup>

Despite Grant’s statements, Halleck returned to his former condescending approach. The major blow came on April 30 when Halleck rearranged his entire army command structure. In the

---

<sup>14</sup> *OR*, 10,2:105-106; John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 5:49, hereafter cited as Simon, *PUSG*; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 254;; Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 1:250.

<sup>15</sup> Simon and Marszalek, *PUSG*, 5:72, 102.

intervening two weeks, Halleck had been constantly battling the weather and mud to get his army supplied, reinforced, and prepared to advance on Corinth. With that advance now ready to begin in late April/early May, Halleck dropped yet another lightning bolt on Grant on April 30 by removing him from any major army command and booting him up to an almost unimportant second in command position. Making matters worse, Grant's old Army of the Tennessee was split in two, part of it becoming a reserve. Even worse, the bulk of Grant's old army went to a junior officer, George H. Thomas. All the preparations Grant had made for another climactic campaign went for naught, and he was unceremoniously shelved.<sup>16</sup>

Officially, Grant simply issued orders the next day that he was taking his new position. Unofficially, he was livid, as were some of his officers. Sherman insisted that "General Grant was substantially left out, and was named 'second in command,' according to some French notion, with no clear, well-defined command or authority. . . . For more than a month he thus remained, without any apparent authority, frequently visiting me and others, and rarely complaining; but I could see that he felt deeply the indignity, if not insult, heaped upon him." Grant himself declared: "for myself I was little more than an observer," and used the word "embarrassing." He also labeled the Corinth operation "a siege from the start to close," and one wonders if he was making a play on words; that is exactly what was happening to Grant.<sup>17</sup>

Grant's unhappiness actually stemmed from two issues, which he conflated together. One was the press's continued assault on him because of Shiloh. Yet Grant stayed his hand, although not everyone had such self control. Grant was chagrined to learn that both his father and a staff officer had published defenses in the form of private letters. "Don't he know the best contradiction in the world is to pay no attention to them," Grant wrote Julia in reference to his father and the newspapers.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> *OR*, 10,2:144. For Corinth see Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle, Occupation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012) and Timothy B. Smith, "'A Siege From the Start': The Spring 1862 Campaign against Corinth, Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 66, no. 4 (2004): 403-424.

<sup>17</sup> Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 1:250; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 256.

<sup>18</sup> *OR*, 10,2:154; Simon, *PUSG*, 5:110. For more on Grant after Shiloh, see Brooks D. Simpson, "After Shiloh: Grant, Sherman, and Survival" in Steven E. Woodworth, ed., *The Shiloh Campaign* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 142-158.

Secondly, there was Grant's continuing diplomacy with Halleck. Grant had endured harsh treatment from Halleck but somehow, at least in his outward appearance, he maintained a healthy respect for the general despite another rebuff during the siege that was harsher than warranted. When Grant offered an idea, Halleck would not even listen to it: "I was silenced so quickly that I felt that possibly I had suggested an unmilitary movement." In fact, Grant told one of his staff, upon returning from his meeting with Halleck, that the commander had "pooh-poohed" his idea, "and left me to understand that he wanted no suggestions from me." More importantly, it was this demotion to second in command of the army that caused Grant to begin questioning Halleck, writing him boldly that "I have felt my position as anomylous [sic] and determined to have it corrected, in some way, so soon as the present impending crisis should be brought to a close." He added that "I felt that sensure [sic] was implied but did not wish to call up the matter in the face of the enemy." Continuing, he said that he was writing "now however as I believe it is generally understood through this army that my position differs but little from that of one in arrest." He reminded Halleck that even though officially still in command of the right wing and reserve, few orders came through him. Halleck preferred to send his orders directly to army commanders, or even to division heads.<sup>19</sup>

Grant still showed respect for Halleck, however, and added at least in his private letter to him that "I cannot, do not, believe that there is any disposition on the part of yourself to do me any injustice, but suspicions have been aroused that you may be acting under instructions, from higher authority, that I know nothing of." That brought the news media's role back into play, and Grant at least outwardly surmised that Washington officials had become involved, much like during his miserable few weeks after Fort Donelson. Unknown to Grant, all this controversy was in reality all of Halleck's making.<sup>20</sup>

Grant was so bothered that he began to once more think of leaving the army in Mississippi. He wrote to Halleck on May 11, "I deem it due to myself to ask either full restoration to duty, according to my rank, or to be relieved entirely from further duty." Later in the same letter, he pressed even farther: "In conclusion then General I respectfully ask either to be relieved from duty entirely or to have my position so defined

---

<sup>19</sup> Simon, *PUSG*, 5:114; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 258; Albert D. Richardson, *A Personal History of Ulysses S. Grant* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1868), 257.

<sup>20</sup> Simon, *PUSG*, 5:114; Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant*, 123.



that there can be no mistaking it.” On other fronts, Grant and his staff also worked for him to get a different command, such as that recently vacated on the Carolina coast. Halleck, as always, only lectured Grant in response, disingenuously assuring him that he was exactly where his rank required him to be. Moreover, Halleck amazingly added: “for the last three months I have done everything in my power to ward off the attacks which were made upon you. If you believe me your friend, you will not require explanation; if not, explanation on my part would be of little avail.”<sup>21</sup>

With little chance for restoration to duty and unwilling to leave during an active campaign, Grant settled into a muted role. Halleck often sent orders over his head, although some went through Grant’s headquarters. Still, Grant was miserable. John Pope remembered that Grant lived at his headquarters “in perfect solitude, except for the companionship of his personal staff and a few friends who sought him out in his seclusion. His mortification was excessive . . . He came a number of times to my camp, . . . and would spend nearly the whole day lying on a cot bed, silent and unhappy. I never felt more sorry for anyone.”<sup>22</sup>

In such misery, Grant began to grow warmer toward the idea of going home even if Halleck would not relieve him. He first mentioned the prospect in a letter to Julia on May 4, just four days after his “promotion” to second in command. As the days turned into weeks in front of Corinth, he continued to ponder the thought, writing Julia on May 11 that “I am thinking seriously of going home, and to Washington, as soon as the present impending fight or footrace is decided.” He added, “I have been so shockingly abused that I sometimes think it almost time to defend myself.” Yet he did not fully disclose, even to his wife, his intense dissatisfaction, although hints appeared such as when he noted that the woods where his headquarters in the Mississippi countryside were located “would be a beautiful place for a Picnic but not so pleasant to make home at” and that “my duties are now much lighter than they have been heretofore. Gen. Halleck being present relieves me of great responsibility.” He made similar statements over the next several days in additional letters to Julia, but always with the

---

<sup>21</sup> Simon, *PUSG*, 5:114-115; *OR*, 10,2:182-183; Bruce Catton, *Grant Moves South* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 273.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Cozzens, *General John Pope: A Life for the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 69.

caveat that he was remaining until the present campaign was decided: "I want no leave whilst there are active operations but confess that a few weeks relaxation would be hailed with a degree of pleasure never experienced by me before."<sup>23</sup>

\* \* \*

The capture of Corinth ironically brought on the crisis. When the Confederates evacuated on May 30 and the Federals marched in, the anticlimactic victory was somewhat of a letdown. Sherman later wrote that "there was some rather foolish clamor for the first honors, but in fact there was no honor in the event." It certainly was a letdown for Grant, who had often talked of taking his leave when the operations ended. Now that they were done, in little glory for anyone involved, he was especially let down, describing his place as "a nominal command and yet no command," and he declared it was "unbearable." He was true to his word that he would leave and see if there were better opportunities elsewhere. He informed Julia the next day, "Corinth is now in our hands without much fighting . . . What the next move, or the part I am to take I do not know. But I shall apply to go home if there is not an early move and an important command assigned me." He added that "my rank is second in this Department and I shall expect the first separate command . . . If there is not to be an early move I will apply for a short leave and go home."<sup>24</sup>

Grant evidently gave a short rein for that next move, and by three days later, having heard nothing from Halleck in terms of a command, he officially requested the leave and prepared to go north. He informed his guardian congressman Elihu Washburne, whom he had been keeping advised throughout these dreary times, as much on June 1 and actually started some of his staff moving the next day.<sup>25</sup>

What exactly Grant had in mind is not known. On the surface, he requested and received thirty days' leave, but what he intended after that is speculation. Perhaps he would resign if no orders came for him to take command in the field; Sherman wrote him a few days later that "I hope you have sufficiently felt the force of what I say to

---

<sup>23</sup> Simon, *PUSG*, 5:111, 116, 118, 127, 130; *OR*, 10, 2:189, 205, 222, 228.

<sup>24</sup> Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 1:253; Simon, *PUSG*, 5:134; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 262.

<sup>25</sup> Simon, *PUSG*, 5:137.

join in their [newspaper editors] just punishment before we resign our power and pass into the humble rank of citizens.” Or perhaps he would go to Washington, as he had mentioned before, to try to clear his name with the powers that be. But in reality, the decision may not have been his. Many notable figures in the war were sidelined, some permanently, by either voluntarily taking leave or being sent home from their active commands. Lew Wallace, John A. McClernand, Don Carlos Buell, and many others experienced as much. Either way, there was a strong possibility that Grant would never be called back to his position or to a high command, especially with Halleck as his superior and about to become general-in-chief. It was completely possible that if Grant went home, he would wind up chairing court martial trials and recruiting rather than leading in the field. Moreover, there was no guarantee that he would be allowed to remain in the army. Historian Bruce Catton, in fact, later surmised that such a furlough “under the circumstances, would practically amount to taking himself out of the army for good.”<sup>26</sup>

Yet just as Grant was ready to depart, the next morning in fact, several factors intervened to stop him. One was William T. Sherman, who heard while at Halleck’s headquarters that Grant was leaving. He rushed over to see Grant. “Of course we all knew that he was chafing under the slights of his anomalous position, and I determined to see him on my way back,” Sherman later noted. He found Grant dejected and shuffling papers, tying them with red tape; everything was packed ready for the trip. Sherman asked Grant if it was true that he was leaving. Grant blurted out, “Sherman, you know. You know that I am in the way here. I have stood it as long as I can, and can endure it no longer.”<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately for Grant and for the United States as a whole, Sherman got Grant to promise he would rethink the decision and not leave until he talked with Sherman again. It certainly helped Grant’s feelings knowing there was someone who still desired his presence with the army. In fact, he wrote Julia on June 9, evidently of Sherman’s council, but perhaps others as well: “privately I say to you that when I talked of going home and leaving my command here there was quite a

---

<sup>26</sup> Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 1:255; Simon, *PUSG*, 5:141; Bruce Catton, *U. S. Grant and the American Military Tradition* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1954), 91; Catton, *Grant Moves South*, 274.

<sup>27</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 262; Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 1:255.

feeling among the troops, at least so expressed by Gen. Officers below me, against my going.”<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, it seemed that even Halleck realized the situation and that Grant was useful. In fact, Grant later wrote Congressman Washburne to disregard his earlier letter of June 1: “at the time . . . I had leave to go home . . . , but Gen. Halleck requested me to remain for a few days. Afterwards when I spoke of going he asked that I should remain a little longer if my business was not of pressing importance. As I really had no business, and had not asked leave on such grounds, I told him so and that if my services were required I would not go atal [sic].” Soon, Halleck had so many second thoughts about letting Grant go that he revamped his command structure once more, certainly in part to alleviate Grant’s concern and perhaps to get him to stay. “Necessity however changes my plans,” Grant wrote Julia that day, “or the public service does, and I must yeald [sic].” Grant also added significantly, “this settled my leave for the present, and for the war, so long as my services are required I do not wish to leave.”<sup>29</sup>

Grant’s patience was officially rewarded on June 10, when Halleck revoked his earlier orders splitting the army into wings and making Grant second in command. Grant resumed command of the Army of the Tennessee and, better yet, was allowed to make his headquarters in Memphis, where he arrived on June 23, away from Halleck and in actual command of the area. Halleck had called off his ordered pursuit of the Confederates and begun to disperse his army left and right to garrison what Union forces had conquered. While Grant did not agree with the decision, it was fortunate for him because he regained his independent command. No longer was he under the thumb of a tyrannical commander who did not like him.<sup>30</sup>

\* \* \*

An appreciative Grant had a new lease on life, and he was grateful to those who had supported him, especially Sherman. He wrote a quick note informing his friend that he was indeed staying, to which Sherman joyously responded, “I have just received your note, and am rejoiced at your conclusion to remain. For yourself, you could not be quiet at

---

<sup>28</sup> Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 1:255; Simon, *PUSG*, 5:140-141.

<sup>29</sup> Simon, *PUSG*, 5:137, 145.

<sup>30</sup> *OR*, 10, 2:288; Simon, *PUSG*, 5:147.

home for a week, when armies were moving, and rest could not relieve your mind of the gnawing sensation that injustice has been done you.” That said, there was one awkward moment when Grant learned that Sherman had requested Grant’s escort for his own use once Grant had departed; Sherman assured Grant that “of course I only asked for your escort, when I believed you had resolved to leave us, and assure you that I rejoice to learn of your change of purpose.”<sup>31</sup>

The nation should have rejoiced as well. Grant’s talk of leaving in early June could have proven disastrous. There was no guarantee that Grant would have been brought back in the same position or even in a field command after just a thirty-day’s leave, and certainly outright resignation would have ended his military career. Accordingly, the decision to remain in and with the army in June 1862 became a watershed event in Grant’s life, even if he did not realize its full consequences at the time.

Grant obviously made many decisions during the war and during his life, but few had the altering level of significance as this one. If Grant had left the army or had even been shunted out of field command, there likely would have been no Vicksburg, Chattanooga, or Virginia Overland Campaign, at least not under Grant’s leadership. Certainly life would have been drastically altered for Grant himself, but it was also a watershed moment for the nation. While others could have stepped up and become Lincoln’s go-to guy for success, that person most certainly would not have been Grant. And it almost goes without saying that Grant’s post-war career would have been less as well. His political career was firmly based on his military exploits, and without them in the Civil War, had he gone home in June 1862, he most assuredly would not have been twice elected president of the United States.

It is unnerving to think how seemingly small decisions at the time, made sometimes in the heat of the moment or out of frustration, can actually turn into major life-changing events. So it was for Ulysses S. Grant when in perhaps the lowest point of his war career he seriously contemplated leaving the army. But he stayed. How ironic, however, that the Ohio-born Illinoisan who became president of the United States for two terms actually made the major decision of his life, to stay in the Federal army and continue fighting for the Union, while in the state of Mississippi.

---

<sup>31</sup> Simon, *PUSG*, 5:140-141.

## **Applicability in the Modern Age: Ulysses S. Grant's Vicksburg Campaign**

*By Terrence J. Winschel*

“. . . the second in splendor if not first in real consequences.”<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, these words written in reference to the Vicksburg campaign were penned by Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade who commanded the victorious Union army in the battle of Gettysburg. Time has validated his assessment, and so too does the modern Army of the United States.

On July 3, 1863, as the legions clad in butternut and gray commanded by Gen. Robert E. Lee advanced against the center of the Union line along Cemetery Ridge in the climactic action at Gettysburg (known to history as “Pickett’s Charge”), Meade’s fellow Pennsylvanian and boyhood friend, Confederate Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, was requesting terms for the surrender of Vicksburg, the southern fortress on the Mississippi River. At the very moment Lee’s men battled their way over the stone wall at “The Angle,” Pemberton was face-to-face with Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant whose troops in Union blue held Vicksburg in a death grip. The following day, as the Army of Northern Virginia prepared to withdraw from Pennsylvania, Grant’s army marched in and took possession of the “Gibraltar of the Confederacy.” A joyful President Abraham Lincoln was able to declare, “The Father of Waters again flows unvexed to the sea.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition to securing unfettered navigation of the Mississippi River, Grant’s victory at Vicksburg cut the Confederacy in two, dividing it along the great river that separated the Cis-Mississippi (the heartland of the Confederacy east of the Mississippi River) from the Trans-Mississippi (that portion of the Confederacy west of the river).

---

<sup>1</sup> George G. Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg* (Philadelphia: J. C. Winston, 1930), 262.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Steele Commager, ed., *The Blue and Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1950), II, 677.

---

*TERRENCE J. WINSCHER is the retired chief historian of Vicksburg National Military Park. He is the author of several full-length works, including Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar, and Triumph & Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign as well as almost fifty articles about the Civil War.*

From the vast Trans-Mississippi region, which comprised fully one-half the landmass of the Confederacy, came tremendous quantities of Texas beef, lamb, pork, and horses, sugar and salt from Louisiana, lead from Missouri, and molasses and mules from Arkansas. These supplies were funneled through Vicksburg and sent by rail to the armies of Lee and Gen. Braxton Bragg operating farther to the east. Not only were these supplies essential to maintain Confederate armies in the field, but they were also necessary to sustain the southern people who suffered an ever-increasing need of sustenance. Thus, vital Confederate supply and communication lines were severed with the fall of Vicksburg and a major objective of the Anaconda Plan — control of the Mississippi River — ultimately sealed the fate of Richmond, the capital of the Southern republic.

Ever since the twin Union victories in July of 1863, Meade's triumph at Gettysburg has overshadowed the Vicksburg campaign in terms of "splendor" in the vast and ever-growing historiography of the Civil War. Yet Gettysburg pales in comparison to the "real consequences" of Vicksburg. Although Meade's army, in saving the commercial, industrial, and political centers of the North, had inflicted crippling casualties on the Army of Northern Virginia and destroyed its offensive capabilities, it would still have to face this same force again and again in The Wilderness, at Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor, and throughout the long siege of Richmond and Petersburg. Meade's success at Gettysburg was hailed throughout the North, but in the nation's capital, President Lincoln was frustrated that greater results had not been secured. He took pains to express his disappointment in a letter he wrote to Meade. (After venting his frustration, however, the president promptly discarded the letter.). To Grant, on the other hand, he sent a note of heartfelt words in "grateful acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you have done the country." Lincoln saw that Vicksburg was indeed more important than Gettysburg.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas two armies, badly bruised and bleeding, marched away from Gettysburg to fight another day, the Union victory at Vicksburg was complete. In addition to taking the city and capturing a garrison of 29,500 officers and men, Grant's Army of the Tennessee seized a huge amount of military stores. Among the public property captured were

---

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), VI, 326.

172 pieces of artillery, 38,000 artillery projectiles (mostly fixed), 58,000 pounds of black powder, 50,000 shoulder weapons (mostly British Enfield rifle muskets, arguably the finest infantry weapons of the time period), 600,000 rounds of ammunition, and 350,000 percussion caps — resources in men and material the South could ill afford to lose. In addition to this tally were the 7,000 casualties inflicted on Southern forces during the operational phase of the campaign leading up to the Vicksburg siege and 82 cannon captured as Grant's army pushed deep into the interior of Mississippi. In the process, Grant compelled the evacuation of Confederate strongholds at Snyder's Bluff, north of Vicksburg, as well as Warrenton and Grand Gulf, south of the city.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of artillery alone, Federal forces captured 254 cannon during the Vicksburg campaign. (For the sake of comparison not a single Confederate cannon was captured at Gettysburg.) This figure represented more than 11 percent of the total number of cannon cast by the Confederacy from 1861-1865. Even more significant, of this figure 85 were heavy siege guns. In their work on Confederate cannon foundries, Larry Daniel and Riley Gunter state "Even under the best of circumstances it took some 400-500 hours of labor to complete a 10-inch columbiad weighing 19,000 pounds. It took the Tredegar Iron Works [which produced one-half of all cannon cast by the Confederacy] a minimum of one month to cast, finish, and mount such a weapon. For the larger Brooke guns it took the Selma Naval Ordnance Works in the neighborhood of 1,000 hours for completion." At such a rate it would take four years for Southern foundries to replace just the heavy ordnance alone that was lost at Vicksburg. Although Confederate foundries produced field guns at a more rapid rate, it would still take one full year for iron workers at Tredegar, Bellona, and a score of smaller foundries across the South to replace the 169 field guns captured by the Federals during the campaign for Vicksburg. (This does not include the corresponding number of limbers, caissons, forge wagons, implements, harnesses, saddles, bridles, and the myriad of other accouterments associated with artillery that were also lost during the campaign.) Thus, rather than producing weapons to strengthen the armies in the field, Southern foundries were working to replenish

---

<sup>4</sup> *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 73 vols., 128 parts. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889-1901), vol. 24, pt. 2, p. 178, (hereinafter cited as *OR*); *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 62; Alexander S. Abrams, *A Full and Detailed History of the Siege of Vicksburg* (Atlanta: Intelligencer Steam Power Presses, 1863), 67.



diminished supply. As events proved in the wake of the disasters of 1863 at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga, the Confederacy did not have the luxury of time to replenish this tremendous loss.<sup>5</sup>

“We must go back to the campaigns of Napoleon to find equally brilliant results accomplished in the same space of time with such a small loss,” wrote Francis V. Greene. The Union effort to take Vicksburg, cost Grant’s army only 10,000 casualties. The results of the campaign identified Grant in the mind of Abraham Lincoln as the general who could lead the Union armies to victory. “Grant is my man and I am his the rest of the war,” stated the president emphatically. His victory at Vicksburg also established Grant as one of the great captains in history and led to his promotion to lieutenant general and general-in-chief of all Union armies.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Grant, far more so than Meade or any of their contemporaries (Lee being the possible exception), rightly merits study by students of the Civil War and academic scholars. But none stand to benefit more by a study of Grant than do professional soldiers. For the remainder of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, soldiers the world over studied Grant and then applied what they had learned to battlefields in two world wars and scores of smaller conflicts. Among the more famous students of Grant were the “Desert Fox,” Erwin Rommel, and “Stormin’ Norman” Schwarzkopf. Even now, soldiers around the globe, as they prepare for conflicts on modern multi-domain battlefields of the twenty-first century, study Grant with emphasis on the Vicksburg campaign. The questions must be asked, however, what makes Grant relevant to the modern Army? What lessons from Grant’s time at Vicksburg can be applied to the present-day multi-domain battlefield?

Perhaps the most persuasive answer to these questions are found in *FM 100-5*, the Army’s “keystone warfighting manual.” In its May 1986 edition, the Army highlights the Vicksburg campaign in its treatment of offensive operations. In Chapter 6, titled “Fundamentals of the Offense,” the Army recognizes that “The offensive is the decisive form of war.” In specific reference to Grant, the manual maintains that he “understood the essence of offensive operations.” His actions

---

<sup>5</sup> Larry J. Daniel and Riley W. Gunter, *Confederate Cannon Foundries* (Union City: Pioneer Press, 1977), vii.

<sup>6</sup> Francis V. Greene, *The Mississippi (Campaigns of the Civil War)*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1882), 170-171.

south of Vicksburg in the spring of 1863 were “the most brilliant campaign ever fought on American soil.” Then the Army goes on to affirm that “it exemplifies the qualities of a well-conceived, violently executed offensive plan.” Through its critical analysis of the struggle for Vicksburg, the Army considers Grant “a master of maneuver, speed, and the indirect approach” and asserts that “The same speed, surprise, maneuver, and decisive action will be required in the campaigns of the future”<sup>7</sup>

These tenets are indeed at the very core of Army doctrine and basic components of the Nine Principles of War that were codified in 1921: Objective, Offensive, Mass, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Unity of Command, Security, Surprise, and Simplicity. These principles, which are the bedrock of U.S. Army offensive operations, have “withstood the tests of analysis, experimentation, and practice,” attests the Army in *FM 100-5*. Although much broader and more comprehensive than the static and simplistic Jominian theory taught by Dennis Hart Mahan at West Point and drilled into the minds of cadets throughout the antebellum period, Union and Confederate generals understood and applied these same principles during the Civil War. But few combined as many of these principles in a single campaign as did Grant in his operations against Vicksburg. Nor did anyone apply these principles as consistently as did Grant throughout the war.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly no one, including that plebe who entered the academy on May 29, 1839, could have expected--or even imagined that in time he, Grant, would become the military icon we know today. By his own admission, “I did not take hold of my studies with avidity,” wrote Grant in his *Memoirs* of his days at West Point, “in fact I rarely ever read over a lesson the second time during my entire cadetship.” Instead, the young cadet filled his time reading novels, of which he was proud to boast that they were “not those of a trashy sort.” (How ironic that the mediocre student of one generation has become the teacher of subsequent generations of soldiers!)<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> *FM 100-5 Operations* (Washington: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986), i, 91, 94.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 173. Antoine-Henri Jomini, later Baron de Jomini, was a French-speaking Swiss national (1779-1869), whose most famous work is *Summary of the Art of War*. Jomini advised Czar Nicholas during the Crimean War and Napoleon III during his Italian campaigns.

<sup>9</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant The Complete Annotated Edition*, eds. John F. Marszalek, David S. Nolen, and Louie P. Gallo (Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2017), 21.

Perhaps, not being as rooted in or wedded to Jominian theory explains in part how Grant was able to rise above other generals of his time and evolve faster and to a higher level than any of his contemporaries on both sides of the battle lines. In fact, Grant proved himself to be an independent strategist and his operations at Vicksburg reveal more of a Clausewitzian approach to war — even though at that time few in America (and clearly not Grant) were familiar with the Prussian military theorist. Brig. Gen (ret.) Parker Hills, the founder of Battle Focus, which educates and develops effective and ethical leaders, both military and corporate, through battle studies, staff rides, and training seminars, compares the Union general to Clausewitz. Both men, he points out, understood that “Destruction of the enemy forces is the overriding principle of war.” General-in-chief Grant emphasized this point to his subordinates, such as when he told Meade in 1864, “Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also.” Destruction of Lee’s army and not the capture of Richmond was the objective.<sup>10</sup>

A military axiom is that the primary goal of offensive operations is to defeat enemy forces, and in *FM 100-5* the Army stresses that “defeat of an enemy force at any level will sooner or later require shifting to the offensive.” Most generals during the Civil War—even the poor ones, launched an offensive during their tenure in command. But even those who were successful often seemed hesitant to assume risk, or they spent an inordinate amount of time planning for possible contingencies, to include their own avenues of retreat.<sup>11</sup>

Grant, on the other hand, came to embrace fully the offense, which set him apart from other Civil War commanders. He was willing to accept risk — great risk at times, and excelled in offensive operations. Col. (ret.) Doug Douds, an instructor in the Advanced Strategic Art Program at the U. S. Army War College credits this characteristic in part to Grant’s experience early in the war during his first offensive at Belmont, Missouri, where he realized that the “enemy was as afraid of me as I was of him.” Indeed, Grant’s experience at Belmont enabled him to grasp the psychological impact of offensive operations on the enemy. As stated succinctly in *FM 100-5*, the offensive is “the commander’s ultimate means of imposing his will upon the enemy.” This realization emboldened Grant who conducted offensive operations the frequency

---

<sup>10</sup> Parker Hills, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2017, Grant, *Memoirs*, 483.

<sup>11</sup> *FM 100-5*, p. 91.

of which was matched by no other general during the war. He proved to be a bold, energetic, and aggressive warrior, and his embrace of the offense led to victories at Fort Donelson, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga. Ultimately this strategy led to Appomattox.<sup>12</sup>

The present-day Army of the United States promotes this same spirit of the offense and the central aspect of its Multi-Domain Battle doctrine is “its focus on the seizure and retention of the initiative . . . to create temporary windows of superiority across multiple domains and throughout the depth of the battlefield in order to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative; defeat enemies; and achieve military objectives.” The Army articulates the doctrine that, by seizing and maintaining the initiative, offensive operations can result in defeat of enemy forces, the command of key or decisive terrain, destruction of enemy resources, confusion to the enemy, holding him in position, and even disrupting an enemy attack. “Whatever their purpose,” underscores the manual, “all successful offensive operations are characterized by surprise, concentration, speed, flexibility, and audacity.” This is the very manner in which Grant conducted his operations against Vicksburg, the relevance of which was clearly demonstrated by Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, whose offensive in Iraq was based largely on Grant’s thinking. Thus, Grant’s proven relevance in the modern age and the potential for the decisive application of his strategy on the multi-domain battlefields of the twenty-first century is undeniable.<sup>13</sup>

Grant’s campaign for Vicksburg was composed of several attempts to seize the Confederate fortress beginning in November 1862, when he launched what is known as the Central Mississippi campaign. This campaign extended through the various Bayou Expeditions conducted during the winter of 1862-1863, to his final and successful effort that culminated in a forty-seven-day siege resulting in surrender of the city on July 4, 1863. Throughout the campaign, Grant demonstrated a firmness of purpose, perseverance, and dogged determination that was later best expressed at Spotsylvania in his famous statement, “I intend to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer.” As Dr. William Pierce, director, Advanced Strategic Art Program, U.S. Army War College, writes, “he never took his eye off the prize – Vicksburg.” His

---

<sup>12</sup> Doug Douds, email message to author, November 8, 2017; *FM 100-5*, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Multi-Domain White Paper: [http://www.tradoc.army.mil/multidomainbattle/docs/MDB\\_White-Paper.pdf](http://www.tradoc.army.mil/multidomainbattle/docs/MDB_White-Paper.pdf); *FM 100-5*, pp. ii; 94-95.

“persistence” was a key factor in his success, states Pierce, and no one respected and appreciated his persistence more than did President Lincoln. In the aftermath of the failed Bayou Expeditions, when even members of his own Cabinet demanded that the general be removed from command, Lincoln responded to those critical of Grant by saying, “I can’t spare this man, he fights.”<sup>14</sup>

And fight Grant did, combining surprise, concentration, speed, flexibility, and audacity to claim victory. Following months of frustration and failure in his efforts to capture Vicksburg, Grant boldly launched his army on a march south through Louisiana from its base camps at Milliken’s Bend and Young’s Point, Louisiana (opposite and upstream from Vicksburg), to search for a favorable crossing point of the great river somewhere below Vicksburg. The audacity of this move is highlighted by the fact that his two most trusted subordinates, Maj. Gens. William T. Sherman and James B. McPherson, voiced their opposition to the move. In fact, both men put their objections in writing and requested that their letters be forwarded to the secretary of war. Despite such misgivings, Grant knew he could rely on these men to do their duty and reciprocated his trust in them.

Thus, Grant was able to maintain unity of command unlike his opponent Pemberton, whose subordinates openly feuded with him. Most notable of the intransigent officers in gray was the irascible division commander, Maj. Gen. William W. Loring, whose feud with Pemberton came to a head on May 16, 1863, at the battle of Champion Hill — much to the detriment of Confederate forces. In this action, which proved to be the largest, bloodiest, and most decisive action of the campaign, Pemberton and his subordinates had no cohesive plan and the Southern army was routed and driven from the field. In the panic and confusion that followed, Loring’s division was cut off from the main force and barely managed to escape. His division eventually reached Jackson, but it was effectively out of the campaign.

Consistently Grant used deception to distract Pemberton by launching a series of cavalry raids aimed at Confederate supply and communication lines. The most famous of these raids was led by Col. Benjamin Grierson, whose horse-soldiers rode from La Grange, Tennessee, the length of Mississippi, and reached safety behind Union

---

<sup>14</sup> Grant, *Memoirs*, 544; E-mail, William Pierce to author, November 3, 2017; John Fiske, *The Mississippi Valley in the Civil War* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1900), 225.

lines in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, (April 17-May 2, 1863). Along the way they severed the Southern Railroad of Mississippi, Pemberton's main supply line, and tore up the tracks of the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad knocking that line out of commission for the duration of the war. In response to the raids, Pemberton stripped his river defenses and scattered his infantry in a futile effort to capture the raiders. Thus, in the opening and crucial phase of the campaign when he should have been concentrating his forces, Pemberton was dispersing his available manpower, thus enabling Grant to achieve numerical superiority in each of the battles during the operational phase of the campaign on Mississippi soil.

Grant used further deception as his forces pushing south through Louisiana neared their desired crossing point. The Union commander sent a portion of Sherman's corps up the Yazoo River, north of Vicksburg, to launch a demonstration at Snyder's Bluff. The objective was to divert Pemberton's attention away from the main Union effort and hold Confederate forces in position north of the city, while his own army crossed the Mississippi River below Vicksburg.

Combined with these highly successful deceptions, Grant integrated and synchronized the capabilities of the Army-Navy team that enabled his troops to storm ashore unopposed at Bruinsburg on April 30, 1863. Pemberton was caught by surprise and became unhinged when news of the Federal landing reached his headquarters. Reeling in shock, the commander of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana embraced a defensive posture and relinquished the offensive to a dangerous adversary. Michael B. Ballard, biographer of the general in gray, asserts that "when Grant crossed the Mississippi, he pushed Pemberton across his personal Rubicon." Confused, uncertain, and with his confidence shattered, Pemberton stumbled through the unfolding crisis with predictable indecision.<sup>15</sup>

Having secured his beachhead on Mississippi soil and thereby compelling the Confederate evacuation of Grand Gulf through his victory in the battle of Port Gibson on May 1, Grant sought to concentrate his command and ordered Sherman to make haste and join him below Vicksburg. While awaiting Sherman's corps, Grant prepared his men for the hard fighting that surely lay ahead in which he would

---

<sup>15</sup> Multi-Domain Battle White Paper; Michael Ballard, *Pemberton: A Biography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 140.

drive his army as a stake into the heart of his enemy.

Rather than drive directly north on Vicksburg, which Pemberton moved to counter, Grant launched his army in a northeasterly direction in order to sever Pemberton's supply line when Sherman's forces arrived on May 7. Although the Southern Railroad of Mississippi had been cut by Grierson's Federal cavalry, repairs had been quickly made and the road placed back in operation. Grant's objective was to sever Pemberton's line of supply and isolate his opponent in Vicksburg, where Confederate forces could be destroyed. (Almost 150 years later, in virtually identical fashion and with equally decisive results, Gen. Colin Powell hurled coalition forces against Saddam Hussein's line of supply — and possible route of retreat in order to, as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff put it, "cut him off and kill him.")

Grant's move inland is often referred to as the "blitzkrieg" of the Vicksburg campaign. Over a seventeen-day period, his army marched 200 miles during which it met and defeated Confederate forces in five separate actions: Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson, Champion Hill, and Big Black River Bridge. Throughout this period, Grant maintained the initiative "imposing his will" on the enemy. The speed of his movements kept Pemberton off balance and in a reactionary mode. Union victories shattered Southern morale and the soldiers' confidence in John Pemberton. As one Confederate wrote in the aftermath of Champion Hill, "Pemberton is either a traitor or the most incompetent general in the Confederacy. Indecision. Indecision. Indecision."<sup>16</sup>

During the operational phase of the campaign, Grant also demonstrated what was perhaps his greatest strength as a battle captain — flexibility. The Union commander was ever-adaptive to the fluid nature of war and kept his options open. This is best illustrated in the aftermath of the battle of Raymond that was fought on May 12. Based on an exaggerated report by James McPherson, Grant was led to believe that there were more Confederate soldiers in Jackson than he initially thought there were. This report, coupled with the intelligence that Gen. Joseph E. Johnston was en route to Jackson to assume command of Confederate forces in Mississippi's capital city, led Grant to change the operational direction of his army. He turned it ninety degrees east. In doing so, he turned his back on Pemberton's forces at Edwards Station and left a numerically smaller force to protect

---

<sup>16</sup> Diary of John A. Leavy, Letters and Diaries Files, Vicksburg National Military Park.

the rear of his army. This move resulted in the capture of Jackson and the scattering of Johnston's forces. In the process, Grant achieved force security. Thus, when The Army of the Tennessee wheeled west, toward its objective — Vicksburg, Johnston's forces posed no threat. And, throughout the remainder of the campaign, Grant's army was firmly established as a wedge between Pemberton in Vicksburg and Johnston in Jackson. This situation prevented the two Confederates from cooperating with one another and coordinating their movements to destroy the Union army. To further enhance the security of his force, Grant requested reinforcements that arrived by the tens of thousands. These troops established what became known as the Exterior Line that was located north and east of Vicksburg to prevent Johnston from lifting the siege. That line was never tested.

Truly then, Grant was a master of the offense, and this fact by itself justifies a modern study of him. But there is more to Grant that can benefit those in the modern Army. *FM 100-5* asserts that "Wars are fought and won by men [and now too, women], not by machines. The human dimension of war will be decisive in the campaigns and battles of the future just as it has been in the past." The manual further states that superior performance in combat depends: "First and foremost . . . on superb soldiers and leaders with character and determination who will win because they simply will not accept losing." This is a perfect description of Grant, who refused to accept defeat or even take a backward step. He instilled confidence in his subordinates and soldiers, and they gave him superior combat performance in reply. More than just the manner in which he conducted the Vicksburg campaign, it is the character of the man himself that draws soldiers to study Grant. Colonel Douds of the Army War College avows that "It is the sum of the man that merits our study and perhaps gives us insights of our own strengths and weaknesses in the end." Grant was a man who, through the hard lessons of failure and poverty in his personal life prior to the war, came to know his strengths and weaknesses and became the commander who never took counsel with his fears. Rather, he always acted from his strengths. This is a valuable lesson for all soldiers throughout the ages to learn.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *FM 100-5*, p. 5; Doug Douds, e-mail message to author, November 8, 2017.



After years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army has revised the capstone manual on operations to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and has replaced *FM 100-5* with *FM 3-0* that focuses on the principle of Mission Command. Simply stated, Mission Command is the “exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.” Mission command calls for the **empowerment** (author’s emphasis) of subordinates and the individual soldier—those whose boots are on the ground, rather than micromanagement by commanders. The intent is to provide those in the field with the flexibility they need based on the exigencies of the situation to determine how best to achieve the objective.<sup>18</sup>

Mission Command requires building cohesive teams through mutual trust, creating a shared understanding, providing a clear commander’s intent, and exercising disciplined initiative-- precisely the hallmarks of Grant’s Vicksburg campaign. To achieve these principles, mission orders must be clear and concise, and simplicity is key. “[Grant] could write,” notes Colonel Douds. “While not a notable verbal communicator, his orders were masters of simplicity, succinctness, and understanding.” Dr. Pierce, who for the past two decades, has conducted staff rides for officers and civilian officials selected to participate in the Advanced Strategic Art Program at the Army War College, agrees, writing, “Grant appeared to give mission type orders and let his subordinates (and Porter) determine how to accomplish the mission without micromanaging their efforts.” Pierce’s colleagues at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Ft. Leavenworth concur. Lt. Col. (ret.) Edwin Kennedy, assistant professor in the Department of Command and Leadership, cites Grant’s 1864 Overland campaign as an “example of current ‘mission command’ doctrine,” and claims that it was “not replicated again for decades in the US Army.” In a recent staff ride focusing on the Vicksburg campaign, Lt. Col. (ret.) Michael “Tom” Chychota, assistant professor in the Department of Tactics at the CGSC, repeatedly discussed this point and stressed “even before the concept of Mission Command was codified, Grant and Porter used the philosophy of mission command and unified operations

---

<sup>18</sup> Michael Chychota, e-mail message to author, December 6, 2017.

to defeat Pemberton's Army and capture Vicksburg."<sup>19</sup>

The Civil War has often been referred to as the "last of the old wars and the first of the modern wars." As such, the case can convincingly be made that Grant was the first modern American warrior. During the conflict that tore the nation asunder from 1861-1865, Grant demonstrated an uncommon grasp of offensive operation and, through his application of principles that are now codified as part of Army doctrine, remains a subject of study by professional soldiers the world over. The lessons he offers remain relevant in the present age and can readily be applied on the multi-domain battlefields of the twenty-first century and beyond.

---

<sup>19</sup> Doug Douds, e-mail message to author, November 8, 2017; William Pierce, e-mail message to author, November 3, 2017; Edwin Kennedy e-mail message to author, October 14, 2017; Michael Chychota, e-mail message to author, December 6, 2017. Reference is made to Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter, who commanded the Mississippi Squadron that cooperated with Grant's army throughout the Vicksburg campaign.



# Hiram R. Revels, Ulysses S. Grant, Party Politics, and the Annexation of Santo Domingo

*by Ryan P. Semmes*

In late 1869, less than a year into his first term as president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant sat down at his desk in the Executive Mansion and wrote a memorandum that he titled “Reasons why San Domingo should be annexed to the United States.” This memorandum, whether or not Grant sent it to anyone, encapsulated Grant’s vision of Reconstruction, his ideas about the American economy, and his strategy for United States foreign policy. Grant’s memorandum stated that “San Domingo is the gate to the Caribbean Sea . . . destined at no distant day to be the line of transit of half the commerce of the world.” Important to Grant, too was the economic consequence of the acquisition of the island, with its thousands of acres of fertile land and its location at the nexus of world trade in the western hemisphere.

Grant also noted that the social tensions between African Americans and whites made annexation all the more relevant. “The present difficulty in bringing all parts of the United States to a happy unity and love of country grows out of a prejudice to color,” Grant wrote. “The prejudice is a senseless one, but it exists. The colored man cannot be spared until his place is supplied, but with a refuge like San Domingo his worth here would soon be discovered, and he would soon receive such recognition as to induce him to stay.” For Grant, the annexation of Santo Domingo meant a safe haven for African Americans free from the prejudices of whites, a place where they could prosper and enjoy the rights of American citizenship and prove to unenlightened whites that they had every right to be considered Americans.

Grant understood the importance of supporting African Americans in their quest for equal rights, much as he understood the need to eradicate slavery not only in the United States, but throughout the hemisphere. In his memorandum, Grant specifically argued that the

---

*RYAN P. SEMMES is an associate professor and coordinator for Mississippi State University’s Congressional and Political Research Center, which includes the John C. Stennis papers. He is also the archivist for the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library.*

importation of tropical goods into the United States supported slave labor. "San Domingo in the hands of the United States," Grant argued, "would make slave labor unprofitable and would soon extinguish that hated system of enforced labor." In 1869, he noted that the United States continued to receive the vast majority of its imports from Brazil and Cuba, two slave holding societies supported by European powers. "Get San Domingo and this will all be changed," he wrote.<sup>1</sup> The annexation of Santo Domingo would mean cheaper acquisition of tropical products, such as sugar and coffee, for the American public, thus saving millions of dollars.

Grant next discussed the influence of the British in the Caribbean. "The coasting trade of the United States," Grant wrote, "has now to pass through foreign [sic] waters. In case of war between England and the United States, New York and New Orleans would be as much severed as would be New York and Calais, France." Without an American presence in the Caribbean, he said, the United States would lose the region and its southern and eastern coastlines to British naval power. He also used the memorandum to stress the importance of the Monroe Doctrine, noting that Santo Domingo was a weak nation in need of protection, and Santo Domingo was also free of tropical diseases. Annexation was "a step towards claring [sic] all European flags from this Continent." He finally asked a question of the members of Congress, "Can any one [sic] favor rejecting so valuable a gift who voted \$7,200,000 for the icebergs of Alasca [sic]?"<sup>2</sup>

The Santo Domingo memorandum, which was crafted by Grant with small edits by either his personal secretary or his Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, encapsulated Ulysses S. Grant's entire Reconstruction agenda in one short document. The president intended to continue the lesson of the Civil War and eradicate the institution of slavery from the Western Hemisphere. In order to do so, the United States had to enforce the Monroe Doctrine even if that meant the threat of war. The annexation of Caribbean territory would enable the United States to prosecute a naval war against European foes while, at the same time, establishing economic connections that would sever American commerce from the slave economies of Brazil and Cuba. An allied interest to all of these was the inclusion of the Dominican people into

---

<sup>1</sup> John Y. Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 20: November 1, 1869-October 31, 1870* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 74-76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the American republican experiment and the development of Santo Domingo as a safe haven for African Americans who confronted the racial prejudices of American whites in both the South and the North. Annexing Santo Domingo was the key to the success of the Grant Administration and the key to the success of Reconstruction. Grant looked to members of Congress to support such an effort, including a new member of the United States Senate who understood fully the effects of Reconstruction on African Americans across the South.

Around the time Grant was crafting his memorandum, the Mississippi legislature was attempting to rejoin the Union. An election was held within the legislature to fill the two seats in the United States Senate, left vacant when Mississippians Jefferson Davis and Albert Gallatin Brown had resigned their posts as a result of the state's secession. Now controlled by Republicans and under the administration of the United States government, the Mississippi legislature selected a newcomer to take one of its seats in the upper chamber of Congress. This man was Hiram R. Revels, the first African American to hold a seat in the United States Congress. Revels was seated on February 23, 1870, and quickly began work to help President Grant and the Republican party put forth an agenda to establish economic stability, civil rights for African Americans, and the concept of free labor for free men. As Grant's foreign policy agenda made its way to Congress, particularly his proposed annexation of Santo Domingo, Revels found himself at odds with some of his most ardent supporters in the Senate. Grant and Revels were thwarted in their desire for Santo Domingo annexation, but not before they were able to articulate its importance to the Senate and to sway some of the most important leaders in both the Congress and the African American community.<sup>3</sup> The two men came from entirely different backgrounds and experiences, yet in important ways they were shaped by their experiences in and with the state of Mississippi.

Ulysses S. Grant was born in Point Pleasant, Ohio, on April 27, 1822, to parents Jesse Root and Hannah Simpson Grant. The oldest of six children, Ulysses was officially christened Hiram Ulysses Grant, and thereby saddled with the unfortunate initials H.U.G. Grant attended the United States Military Academy at West Point where

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Jenkins, "Black Voices in Reconstruction: The Senate Careers of Hiram R. Revels and Blanche K. Bruce" (Master's Thesis, Mississippi State University, 1975), 44-66.

a clerical error listed him as Ulysses S. Grant, a name the young man fully adopted soon into his tenure as a cadet. Ulysses shed the name Hiram from then on, leading to a number of nicknames such as Uncle Sam Grant, United States Grant, and most famously, Unconditional Surrender Grant. Ulysses would go on to serve admirably in the Mexican-American War before his resignation from the Army following problems with depression and alcohol. He spent the late 1850s attempting to work as a farmer and salesman before he settled for a job in his father's leather goods store working for his younger brother. Secession and war brought new opportunities for Ulysses as he was given a commission as a colonel in the Twenty-first Illinois Regiment. Soon after, he rose through the ranks, capturing three Confederate armies at Fort Donelson, Vicksburg, and finally, at Appomattox Courthouse. This swift change of fortune sent Grant's fame into the stratosphere, and he soon became the most famous man in the United States. Following the murder of President Lincoln and the disastrous tenure of President Andrew Johnson, Republican Party leaders talked Grant into running for president. A political novice, Grant accepted the Republican nomination to the presidency in 1868 and won election handily.<sup>4</sup>

As an African American, Hiram Revels had a somewhat different beginning. He was born free in September 1827 in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he received a formal education. Revels later entered a Quaker seminary in Indiana before being ordained as a minister of the AME church. He pastored African American congregations in Maryland prior to the Civil War and then served as a chaplain in the United States Army, particularly with African American regiments under Ulysses S. Grant during the siege of Vicksburg. Revels moved to Natchez, Mississippi, where he began a career as the pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in that community. He parlayed his pastoral activities in Natchez into a position on the city's board of aldermen before finally being elected to the state senate. In the Mississippi legislature, his fellow Republicans, black and white, overwhelmingly elected him to the United States Senate. Revels's

---

<sup>4</sup> Two recent studies provide excellent insight into the early life of Ulysses S. Grant. Ronald C. White's *American Ulysses: A Life of Ulysses S. Grant* (New York: Random House, 2016) and Ron Chernow's *Grant* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017).

entrance into the United States Senate was hotly contested, but not overtly based on his race, rather on whether or not the Mississippi legislature's vote was legitimate since it had occurred prior to Mississippi's re-admittance to the Union. In the end, the United States Senate supported him, and by late February 1870 he was a sitting member of that body.<sup>5</sup>

In March 1869 when Ulysses S. Grant had entered the White House, Hiram Revels, with his short terms in city and state politics, had a much more impressive political resume than did the commanding general of the Union Army. Yet Grant began governing with the same energy that he had demonstrated in pursuing Confederates in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Virginia. One of the most important decisions he made was to select as his secretary of state, his political patron, Elihu B. Washburne, as a reward for his support of Grant during the Civil War. Washburne served as secretary of state for only eleven days before becoming Minister to France, a post he would hold for the remainder of Grant's presidency. This appointment allowed Grant ultimately to choose Hamilton Fish, the former governor of New York and United States senator as secretary of state. He did so even though Fish implored Grant to choose someone else for the position. Grant refused, having already sent the nomination to the Senate. Fish reluctantly accepted the position. This nomination would prove to be the best decision Grant made, as Fish ably served the entirety of Grant's presidency in the senior cabinet post.<sup>6</sup>

With Hamilton Fish's support, Grant crafted a foreign policy that solidified the United States as the primary force in the western hemisphere. They settled Great Britain's *CSS Alabama* claims against the United States and agreed on calling for the eradication of slavery in both Cuba and Brazil. But, the two were not in agreement on the proposed annexation of Santo Domingo. Yet, once Grant decided upon annexation, Fish pushed the matter forward on behalf of his president.<sup>7</sup>

Abraham Lincoln's secretary of state, William Henry Seward, had believed that the nation had the potential to grow larger, so he pushed for the annexation of Alaska and tried to acquire territory in the Caribbean. However, no attempts, prior to Grant's, had been

---

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Jenkins, "Black Voices in Reconstruction," 44-66.

<sup>6</sup> Allan Nevins, *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration* (New York: F. Ungar publishing Co., 1938): 112-115.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-278



made to include the non-white populations of proposed territories in the grand experiment of democracy. Annexing Santo Domingo, then, represented an anomaly in the narrative of American imperialism. From his earliest considerations of the scheme, Grant intended to allow citizenship for the people of Santo Domingo, with all the rights and privileges accorded by the United States Constitution. To not do so, he thought, would defy one of the most important lessons of the Civil War, the opportunity to provide equal protection to all men regardless of race.

In order to fulfill his hemispheric mission, Grant wanted to know more about the Dominicans' willingness to join the Union and whether they could then sustain themselves economically and politically. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, though not a supporter of annexation, consented to sending a member of the State Department to speak to the Dominican government. Unfortunately, the man selected, Benjamin Hunt, became suddenly ill and, so, Grant sent Orville E. Babcock, his trusted assistant and former Civil War aide-de-camp. Though unhappy with Babcock's selection, Fish provided the young officer with a passport and instructions.<sup>8</sup> President Grant and Secretary Fish instructed Babcock, in mid-July 1869, to travel to the island to ascertain a range of basic information about the country, including the economic viability of the nation, the size of its military, and a copy of its constitution.

Fish also inquired about the "number of whites, pure Africans, of mulattoes, and of other mixtures of the African and Caucasian races; of Indians, and of the crosses between them and whites, and Africans, respectively," that is, any racial mixing between the groups. These instructions demonstrated Grant's and Fish's desire to fully understand both the racial makeup and the Dominican's viability to be included as a citizen of the United States of America.<sup>9</sup>

Babcock did not question the appropriateness of his selection to visit Santo Domingo. The State Department briefed him, and he understood that his was a fact-finding mission. He was also fully

---

<sup>8</sup> John Y. Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 21: November 1, 1870-May 31, 1871* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 53.

<sup>9</sup> Orville E. Babcock Collection, Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, Mississippi State University. *Report of the Select Committee Appointed to Investigate the Memorial of Davis Hatch*, SR 234, June 1870, 189; Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1868* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 36-37.

aware that he had no authority and possessed no treaty making powers. When he returned, Babcock believed that he had fulfilled his superiors' wishes: he provided the President and the Secretary of State with samples of natural resources and economic data. He also provided Grant and Fish with a memorandum from the Dominican government that spelled out its desire for annexation and statehood, its economic and military needs, and its interest in relations with the United States. A language barrier between Babcock and Dominican President Buenaventura Baez resulted in an embarrassing claim in the document, however that Babcock was "Aide-de-camp" to President Grant. This error, coupled with Grant's mistakenly reporting the memorandum to his cabinet as a "treaty," began a long process of political and diplomatic wrangling that resulted in a second visit by Babcock to Santo Domingo where an official treaty was finalized and presented to the United States Congress.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, Hiram Revels joined Congress on February 23, 1870, after three days of Senate debate over the legitimacy of his claim to a Senate seat. Revels had arrived in Washington in late January, attending numerous dinners in his honor, including a reception hosted by President Grant at the Executive Mansion. He became the toast of the town for a short period of time but soon settled in to the drudgery of life in the Senate. Revels understood his position as a freshman senator meant, historically, a position of silence and inactivity, in deference to his more senior colleagues. However, he also understood the historic nature of his position as the first African American member of Congress and the responsibility he held in this position. He introduced a number of petitions on behalf of citizens, significantly, many of which were sent to him not just from Mississippi but from African Americans across the United States.<sup>11</sup>

In his first speech before the Senate, a luxury not afforded to other less experienced legislators, Revels spoke out against legislation that

---

<sup>10</sup> For the best analysis of Babcock's mission to Santo Domingo see: Charles W. Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 205-228; Most accounts tend to reflect the version of the mission as seen in Nevins's *Hamilton Fish*. Like Nevins, Ron Chernow places significant emphasis on the recollections of former Cabinet member Jacob Cox in his book, *Grant*. Calhoun, however, rightly shows that Cox's recollections were inaccurate and based on his personal animosity toward Grant. Cox's recollection that Grant sent Babcock to Santo Domingo without the knowledge of Hamilton Fish is not born out by the evidence, which shows handwritten instructions given to Babcock by Fish. Chernow's relying on Cox and Nevins is unfortunate.

<sup>11</sup> Robert L. Jenkins, "Black Voices in Reconstruction," 61-67.

would have allowed Georgia to rejoin the Union but would have meant the dissolution of an African American majority state legislature. Revels also used the speech to lay out his vision for a post-Civil War America. African Americans, he wrote, “appeal to you and to me, to see that they receive that protection which alone will enable them to pursue their daily avocations with success, and enjoy the liberties of citizenship on the same footing with their white neighbors and friends.” The senator from Mississippi lamented the fact that whites were unwilling to accept the rights of African Americans, noting, “if a certain class of the South had accepted in good faith the benevolent overtures which were offered to them . . . today would not find our land still harassed with feuds and contentions.”<sup>12</sup>

It was during the same time of Revels’s first weeks in the Senate that the Grant administration had submitted the official treaty for the proposed annexation of Santo Domingo. Grant’s plan for annexation was doomed as soon as he sent the treaty to Congress because he failed to consult with Charles Sumner, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and former leader of the abolitionist movement. In a meeting that defied presidential protocol, Grant had walked from the Executive Mansion to the home of Senator Sumner, where he discussed the annexation treaty with the senator and a few reporters. Grant left this meeting with the understanding that Sumner, as a loyal Republican, would support the treaty. Yet Sumner believed that he had made no such promise. When the president entered into negotiations without consulting the powerful chairman, he unknowingly made an enemy out of the senator. The annexation treaty was the beginning of a long, drawn-out feud between Sumner and Grant that resulted in the removal of the senator from his committee chairmanship and the defeat of the president’s treaty.<sup>13</sup>

Sumner especially objected to Babcock’s memorandum from September, as well as Babcock portraying himself as Grant’s “Aide-de-Camp” and the provision indicating that Grant would use his influence to achieve annexation. According to a Sumner acquaintance, the senator “became the enemy of the whole scheme,” because he “did not believe that the President of the United States should be made a

---

<sup>12</sup> *New York Times*, March 17, 1870.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Callan Tansill, *The United States and Santo Domingo, 1798-1873* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), 383-389; See also, David Donald, *Charles Sumner* (New York: De Capo Press, 1996), Part II, 435.

lobbyist to bring about annexation.” These objections were supposedly made directly to Babcock who had brought the memorandum and treaties to the senator on behalf of the president. Soon after Sumner, and his ally Carl Schurz, began a systematic attack on the treaty, its negotiation, and the character of the men involved in the scheme, particularly Orville Babcock.<sup>14</sup>

Though he was a strong proponent of the integration of the United States Senate, Sumner had very little to offer in the debate over Revels’s gaining his seat. When his fellow Senator, George Vickers of Maryland, cited the Dred Scott decision as a reason to question Revels’s qualifications as a citizen, Sumner argued that the Supreme Court decision was “to be remembered only as a warning and a shame.”<sup>15</sup> Revels sought advice and input from Sumner throughout the first months of his term, especially prior to his initial speech on the Georgia Bill. “I think that I will deliver my speech on tomorrow,” he wrote, “unless you advise me not to do so . . . I will be pleased to have you fix the hour when tonight, I shall at your house, put my manuscript in your hand for criticism.”<sup>16</sup> Revels’s speech was widely covered in the press, and many dignitaries were in the gallery to witness it, yet it was not enough to thwart the readmission of Georgia to the Union. Revels’s speech had, though, articulated his philosophy as a Republican and as a representative of African Americans across the United States. Clearly, Revels and Sumner generally supported the same causes, whether Civil Rights legislation or interstate commerce. Yet, the subject of the annexation of Santo Domingo was one in which they took diverging positions.

At this same time, Ulysses S. Grant attempted to gain support from a constituency of like-minded Republicans who would support the annexation. It is unclear whether or not he showed his memorandum to these senators, yet it is clear that Grant expected Republicans to support his plan. Sumner’s committee rejected the treaty by a vote of 5 to 2, however, prompting the president to go to the Capitol to stump for his treaty. Grant’s presence in the Capitol caused a stir

---

<sup>14</sup> Tansill, 389.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Sumner, *The Works of Charles Sumner: Volume XIII* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard, 1880), 337; See also: David Donald, *Charles Sumner*, 427; and Philip Dray, *Capitol Men: The Epic Story of Reconstruction Through the Lives of the First Black Congressmen* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008), 71.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Allan Nevins, *Hamilton Fish*, 294.

among members of Congress, most notably Sumner himself, who complained bitterly to Secretary Fish about the President's "invasion of turf he considered his own."<sup>17</sup> During the debates over the treaty, annexation proponent and Grant ally Senator Oliver P. Morton of Indiana presented goods and materials which Babcock had brought back from the island nation including hemp products and large blocks of salt. Curious senators proceeded to lick a salt block causing quite a stir when Revels joined racist Democrat Garrett Davis of Kentucky to simultaneously taste the block.<sup>18</sup>

Sumner's growing distrust of the annexation proposition seemed incongruous to his lifelong support of African Americans and his support of the Republican Party. Yet his personal dislike of Grant and Grant's personal dislike of Sumner led to a showdown on the Senate floor in which the old Bay Stater unleashed his greatest weapon, his oratory skills, against his president. In a series of speeches, Sumner railed against Grant and the treaty, questioned Grant's motives in annexing Santo Domingo, charged Grant with attempting to steal the entire island, including Haiti, mocked Grant's grammar, and uncharacteristically disparaged the intelligence of African Americans. About a month after the swearing in of Senator Revels, Sumner delivered a speech arguing that Grant was acting like a despotic monarch, "all this has been done by kingly prerogative alone, without the authority of an act of Congress." Sumner accused Grant of acts of terrorism against the sovereign people of Santo Domingo, arguing that the president had spent little time worrying about African Americans in the southern states, while he allowed the rise of the Ku Klux Klan focusing instead on annexation. "I insist that the Presidential scheme, which installs the Ku-Klux on the coasts of St. Domingo," Sumner charged, "and which at the same time insults the African race in the Black Republic, shall be represented. I speak now of that Ku-Klux of which the President is the declared head, and I speak for the African race, whom the President has trampled down."<sup>19</sup> This leader of the Senate and a member of the Republican party was charging the President of the United States with attempting to establish a Ku Klux Klan in the Caribbean with himself at the head! This charge was a stinging rebuke of the president's policy, one that brought derision

---

<sup>17</sup> Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant*, 236.

<sup>18</sup> David Donald, *Charles Sumner*, 443.

<sup>19</sup> Knoxville *Daily Chronicle*, March 28, 1870.

from Sumner's Republican colleagues.

Revels was particularly disturbed by Sumner's speech. In a letter he sent to the Massachusetts Senator two days after this fiery speech, the former pastor argued that the annexation of Santo Domingo was one of Christian magnanimity, viewing:

the question from a Christian standpoint, that is, whether it is not the duty of our powerful, wealthy, and Christian nation, regardless of the trouble and expense which may attend it, to extend the institutions or various means of enlightenment and intellectual, moral and religious elevation with which God has blessed us, to the inhabitants of that Republic, and whether this cannot be done more effectively by annexation than in any other way.<sup>20</sup>

For Revels, the blessing of American liberty, republican ideals, and Christian civilization were best exported to the Caribbean by the United States through the annexation of Santo Domingo to the United States. Revels saw the moral and social reasons for annexation along with the strategic and economic reasons and, as such, he defied his friendship with Sumner and voted for the treaty.

Meanwhile, Sumner argued against a commission that Grant proposed sending to ascertain the annexation desires of the Dominican people. The speech, which became known as Sumner's Naboth's Vineyard speech as the senator likened Grant's annexation attempt to the biblical tale of King Ahab's coveting of the vineyard of the farmer Naboth, focused most of the Senator's derision on Grant's secretary Orville Babcock. He challenged Babcock's qualifications and argued that the young officer had been duped by supporters of the Dominican president. He also complained loudly about Grant's decision to lobby publicly on behalf of the treaty. Sumner parsed Grant's words in his annual message, focusing on the fact that Grant referred to the "island of San Domingo," arguing that the president was thus clearly signaling his desire to annex Haiti as well! "Nine times in this message," Sumner claimed, "the President has menaced the independence of the Haytien [sic] republic." He concluded his initial remarks with: "I protest against this legislation as another stage in a drama of

---

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Charles W. Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant*, 238.

blood.”<sup>21</sup> Despite Sumner’s best efforts, the commission won approval and Sumner ally Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist orator, was named its secretary. Upon their return the commission reported to Grant in favor of annexation. Douglass, like Revels, split with his former abolitionist ally and offered his support to the president. “If Mr. Sumner after [reading the commission’s findings] shall persevere in his present policy,” Douglass stated, “I shall consider his opposition fractious, and regard him as the worst foe the colored race has on this continent.”<sup>22</sup>

The Santo Domingo treaty dominated most of the first two years of Grant’s presidency, because the former general believed that the future of Reconstruction was at stake. The treaty was put to a vote in the Senate chamber after contentious floor debates, investigations into Babcock’s mission to Santo Domingo, and the open feud between the president and Senator Sumner. Hiram Revels joined twenty-seven other senators who voted in favor of the treaty, while twenty-eight Senators voted against it. A tie vote of 28 to 28 fell well short of the required two-thirds majority for ratification of the treaty, thus the president’s plan was dead.<sup>23</sup> Grant attempted to maintain good relations with Santo Domingo, and he authorized Fish to lease a port in that country, and he continued to seek support from allies to lobby for the idea of annexation. In a speech in St. Louis, Missouri, in January 1873, Frederick Douglass also continued to push for the annexation of the island nation. “What do we want with Santo Domingo?” Douglass asked his crowd, “we want them for men — for human beings to live in and be happy . . . it is not a nation . . . it is a small country with 150,000 people who are being degraded. Let us lift them up to our high standard of nationality.”<sup>24</sup>

After serving his one-year term in the United States Senate, Hiram Revels returned to Mississippi to become the first president of Alcorn University of Mississippi (changed to Alcorn Agricultural

---

<sup>21</sup> Charles Sumner, “Naboth’s Vineyard: Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, on the Proposed Annexation of ‘The Island of San Domingo,’ December 21, 1870,” (Washington: F. and J. Rives and George A. Bailey, 1870).

<sup>22</sup> *New York Times*, March 30, 1871, quoted in H. W. Brands, *The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses Grant in War and Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 2012.), 462.

<sup>23</sup> Charles W. Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant*, 257.

<sup>24</sup> John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan, eds. *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volume 4: 1864-80* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 354-355.

and Mechanical College in 1878), a land-grant institution founded for African Americans. Unfortunately for Revels, his experience as an educator was on par with his experience in politics. His tenure at Alcorn was riddled with problems and accusations of corruption. Consequently, Revels left the position at the college in 1873 and returned to the Mississippi legislature to serve out the term of the now deceased Secretary of State James Lynch. Having fulfilled Lynch's term, Revels returned to Alcorn later that year where he was dismissed from his position by his former United States Senate colleague and new Mississippi governor Adelbert Ames. Ames had opposed James L. Alcorn, namesake for the land grant college and a friend of Revels, in the election. Many saw Revels's firing as retribution for the former senator's support of Ames's opponent. The animosity between Ames and Revels boiled over the next year when, in 1875, the white Democrats attempted to wrest control of the state from the African American and Republican majority.<sup>25</sup>

Reconstruction in the South continued on, and violence toward African Americans began to rise as white former Confederates attempted to wrest control from Republican-dominated legislatures throughout the old Confederacy. Senator Sumner had charged that Grant had precipitated the rise of the Ku Klux Klan by focusing his attentions on Santo Domingo instead of the lives of African Americans across the South. In Mississippi, tensions came to a boil in the summer and autumn of 1875 when whites utilized intimidation and violence to keep African Americans from voting for Republicans. This Mississippi Plan, as it came to be known, led Grant to lament to the Mississippi Governor Ames, through his Attorney General Edwards Pierrepont, "I suggest that you take all lawful means, and all needed measures to preserve the peace by the force in your own State, and let the country see that the citizens of Miss[issippi] who are largely favorable to good order, and who are largely Republican, have the courage and manhood to fight for their rights and to destroy the bloody ruffians who murder the innocent and unoffending freedmen."<sup>26</sup> Grant's administration had interceded in a number of armed conflicts between whites and African Americans in Mississippi, and he felt that it was time for the governor

---

<sup>25</sup> Robert L. Jenkins, "Black Voices in Reconstruction," 88-90.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards Pierrepont to Adelbert Ames, September 14, 1875, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 60; see also John Y. Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 26: 1875* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 314.



and the people of the state to take control of the situation and protect the rights of the freedmen at the local level. Unfortunately, Ames was unable to prevent the violence, and the Democrats succeeded in winning a majority of the political offices in the state. Congressional investigations of Mississippi proved fruitless as one former member of the Senate provided evidence on behalf of the white Democrats. That former member was Hiram Revels.

The Grant administration's admonitions to Ames and the Mississippi government underscored the president's desire for the people of Mississippi to control their own political situation, but he must have been shocked when he received a letter from Hiram Revels in early November 1875 that seemed to advocate for the Democrats. In this letter which was widely published throughout the nation, Revels explained the situation in Mississippi to Grant and why he had chosen to not support Ames and his Republican colleagues in the election. Written from his home in Holly Springs, Mississippi, where he moved after losing his job at Alcorn, Revels began: "I will premise by saying that I am no politician . . . I never have sought political preferment, nor do I ask it now, but am engaged in my calling — the ministry — and feeling an earnest desire for the welfare of all the people, irrespective of race or color, I have deemed it advisable to submit to you . . . a few thoughts in regard to the political situation in this State." Revels charged that the Republicans in the state had misled African Americans who were "enslaved in mind by unprincipled adventurers, who," he argued, "caring nothing for country, were willing to stoop to anything, no matter how infamous, to secure power to themselves and perpetuate it." Revels charged that African Americans in Mississippi had realized that they were "being used as mere tools and . . . they determined, by casting their ballots against these unprincipled adventurers, to overthrow them" and in doing so were seeking to coalesce again as Republicans for the national election in 1876. Revels charged the Republican administration in the state, ostensibly Adelbert Ames, with being "notoriously corrupt and dishonest" and that "to defeat [them], at the late election men irrespective of race, color, or party affiliation, united and voted together against men known to be incompetent and dishonest." Revels claimed that "the great masses of the white people have abandoned their hostility toward the General Government and republican principles, and to-day accept as a fact that all men are born free and equal." Any animosity was not the fault of the people

of Mississippi, Revels argued. "The bitterness and hate created by the late civil strife has . . . been obliterated in this State, except in some localities, and would have long since been entirely obliterated were it not for some unprincipled men who would keep alive the bitterness of the past." According to Revels, the Republican administration, and not the racial animosity of white Democrats, was responsible for any bitterness in the state. Revels concluded his letter to the president by restating his love for the Republican Party but identifying that the party in Mississippi was being represented by "demagogues."<sup>27</sup>

Revels's assessment of the political situation in Mississippi was wholly inaccurate. If anything, white Mississippians' bitterness toward the Republican Party and the federal government was increasing exponentially. Historian Robert Jenkins has argued that "Revels's support of the Democrats was simply revenge against Ames and the rest of the Republican Party for having ousted him from his presidency at Alcorn."<sup>28</sup> Historian Julius E. Thompson argued that Revels sided with the Democrats in order to secure his old position at Alcorn from a friendly administration.<sup>29</sup> While both of these conclusions are certainly possible, since Revels was offered the presidency of Alcorn yet again by Democratic governor John Marshall Stone, Revels's letter was neither out of character nor out of line with his political ideology.

As a member of the United States Senate, Revels had introduced numerous petitions on behalf of white southerners and even supported legislation that would allow for the reinstatement of political rights to former Confederates. His Christian faith led him to support Grant's annexation scheme and certainly could have guided him in dealings with white Mississippians. When Revels put forth legislation asking for magnanimity toward southern whites, Frederick Douglass surmised that Revels's having been born free colored his dealings with former Confederates. "He [Revels] is an amiable man, has always been free," Douglass wrote, "and has, perhaps, not a 'stripe' on his back to forget. Such men are apt to find it easy to forget stripes laid upon other men's backs and can as easily exhort them to forget them."<sup>30</sup>

A picture of consistency, thus appears when Revels's record

---

<sup>27</sup> John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 26*, 320-321.

<sup>28</sup> Robert L. Jenkins, "Black Voices in Reconstruction," 93.

<sup>29</sup> Julius E. Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1973), 155.

<sup>30</sup> *New National Era*, December 22, 1870.

in Congress is compared to his decision in 1875 to join Democrats against the Republicans in Mississippi. He supported Grant and his annexation in order to bring Christianity and civilization to the people of Santo Domingo and to further the Republican Party's agenda in the Caribbean. He supported the plight of African Americans across the country when they were being denied their liberty and he did the same for former Confederates who were being cut out of the political process. If he truly felt that the Ames administration was corrupt and needlessly engendering bitterness among the white population of Mississippi, why would Revels not have supported peaceful coexistence among the races and the ouster of men whom he described as demagogues? In the end, though, Mississippi whites began to curtail the rights of African Americans, and incidents of violence and intimidation against blacks continued to rise across the south.

Revels's support of the Democrats against the Republican government was a blow to Grant's efforts across the South in the final days of his presidency. Rampant violence and intimidation occurred so frequently that Grant grew impatient with the Republican administrations that failed at curtailing the violence. As Grant noted to his Attorney General Edwards Pierrepont, "the whole public are tired out with these annual, autumnal outbreaks in the South."<sup>31</sup> In the final year of his presidency, Grant was unable to convince his cabinet that the lives of the freedmen mattered. As historian William McFeely put it: "by the summer of 1876 there was no one around the White House who gave a damn about black people."<sup>32</sup>

Grant worried about the plight of African Americans, having lost the chance at annexing Santo Domingo and seemingly lost Revels to the influence of Democrats in Mississippi. In his final annual message to Congress Grant lamented the lost opportunity in Santo Domingo. Echoing his memorandum written in his first year, Grant noted the economic and strategic benefits of the "island nation," but he also reiterated the social benefits of annexation. The violence which he envisioned in 1869 against African Americans had come true. "In cases of great oppression and cruelty, such as has been practiced upon them in many places within the last eleven years" he argued, "whole communities would have sought refuge in Santo Domingo. I

---

<sup>31</sup> John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 26*, 312.

<sup>32</sup> William McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1982), 439.

do not suppose the whole race would have gone . . . but the possession of the territory would have left the negro 'Master of the Situation, by enabling him to demand his rights at home on pain of finding them elsewhere [sic]."<sup>33</sup>

The end of Grant's presidency meant the end of Reconstruction, and with that, the end of the promise of civil rights for African Americans. Grant left office and set out upon a three-year tour of the world, returning in 1880 with the hopes of being nominated for a third term as the Republican nominee, only to lose the nomination to James A. Garfield of Ohio. Grant would go on to lose his entire fortune, begin working on his masterful memoir, and battle with mouth cancer until he finally died in the summer of 1885. Hiram Revels returned to his position as president of Alcorn A & M College, where he remained until 1882. He then returned to Holly Springs, Mississippi, where he continued as a minister until his death in 1901.

These two men, the two Hiram, were pushed into the political sphere soon after the end of the Civil War. Though both were political novices, both shared a vision of a reconstructed America that sought to put the rights of African Americans in the forefront. For Hiram Revels, this meant that the promise of liberty was to be protected for all freedmen, but not at the expense of former white Confederates. For Hiram Ulysses Grant, the annexation of Santo Domingo was the epitome of his Reconstruction policy. It would provide the United States with a much needed economic and military foothold in the Caribbean while, at the same time, providing a place for African Americans to escape the violence and prejudices that would inevitably occur in the years following the Civil War. Both men enjoyed national prominence at the same moment, and both sought to achieve results on behalf of African Americans. Unfortunately, neither of these two Hiram saw their dreams of true equality come to fruition, not in Mississippi nor in the entire nation.

---

<sup>33</sup> John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, Volume 28: November 1, 1876-September 30, 1878* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 69.



# Mississippi's Most Unlikely Hero: Press Coverage of Ulysses S. Grant, 1863-1885

*By Susannah J. Ural*

In the fall of 1990, Ken Burns's now-famous documentary, *The Civil War*, captivated nearly forty million viewers for five consecutive nights. Historians still debate the benefits and detractions of this famous work of cinematography, which inspired its viewers to study America's defining conflict while reinforcing a host of stereotypes. One of the most stubborn of these myths is modern Americans' understanding of the Union siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and its surrender to the Federal forces led by Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant on July 4, 1863. After mesmerizing television audiences with Grant's dramatic invasion of the state, destruction of the capital at Jackson, and desperate battles on the way to Vicksburg, the documentary explained that exhausted and starving Confederates finally surrendered the city on Independence Day. "The Fourth of July," viewers were told as the screen faded to black, "would not be celebrated in Vicksburg for another 81 years."<sup>1</sup>

Numerous Civil War scholars have worked to correct this erroneous claim, but the symbolic parallels of freedom and surrender have held firm. Part of this thinking may be influenced by the fact that the fall of Vicksburg proved devastating for white Mississippians and the Confederacy as a whole. Historian Timothy B. Smith rightly argued that the city's surrender, preceded by the destruction of Jackson, convinced Southerners that "the enemy was there to stay" and signaled a sharp erosion in Mississippians' will to fight. Historians Terry Winschel and William L. Shea agreed. In their analysis of the military significance of the campaign, they insisted that the "capture of Vicksburg and its

---

<sup>1</sup> This erroneous claim is still listed under "Civil War Facts" at the PBS website for the documentary: <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/civil-war/war/civil-war-facts/>. Burns's analysis of the Vicksburg Campaign is found in Burns, Ken, et al., Episode Five: "The Universe of Battle," *The Civil War* (Burbank, CA: PBS Home Video, 2004).

---

SUSANNAH J. URAL is a professor and co-director of the Dale Center for the Study of War and Society at the University of Southern Mississippi. She is a past president of the Mississippi Historical Society.

garrison was a strategic victory of almost incalculable proportions” and “the single greatest feat of arms achieved by either side during the entire Civil War.” Contemporary Confederates agreed. Reflecting on the South’s defeat at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 3 and the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, Colonel Josiah Gorgas, chief of the Confederate Ordnance Department observed, “Yesterday we rode on the pinnacle of success—today absolute ruin seems to be our portion. The Confederacy totters to its destruction.”<sup>2</sup>

Considering the fatal significance of Vicksburg to the larger war effort, one might assume that Mississippians would feel a strong animosity toward Ulysses S. Grant, the man who orchestrated the port city’s surrender. His victory at Vicksburg launched Grant on a trajectory that led to command of all Union forces and two terms as president of the United States. If one believes the myth that Vicksburg refused to commemorate any aspect of July 4, the date of their surrender, it would be easy to conclude that the town’s citizens, and the state as a whole, would harbor significant animosity toward the man who orchestrated their most infamous moment. An examination of contemporary newspaper accounts during and after the Vicksburg Campaign through the anniversary of General Grant’s death, however, reveals a very different story.

When the Vicksburg Campaign began at the end of March 1863, Mississippi newspapers reminded us that Grant was not yet the man he would become. Newspapers called for his removal from command, as did members of President Abraham Lincoln’s cabinet. First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln openly referred to Grant as “the Butcher,” a popular reference to the high human price that the press insisted was required for the general’s victories. Until that spring, Mississippians could point to their own success in thwarting the efforts of both Grant and Union Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman. He may have become famous afterwards, but Grant was not yet a star in the spring of 1863,

---

<sup>2</sup> Timothy B. Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 3; William L. Shea and Terrence Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 178; Gorgas quoted by Winschel in D. Scott Hartwig and Terrence J. Winschel, “Two National Park Service Historians Contemplate the Significance of Gettysburg and Vicksburg — Hallowed Ground They Walk on Every Day,” *America’s Civil War* (July 2003), 17; see also the argument by historian Michael Ballard, who insisted that “it is one of the unfortunate paradoxes of the Civil War that Vicksburg mattered more and is remembered less than many campaigns and battles of distinctly smaller consequence” in *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 430.

and Mississippians were confident that Confederate forces would successfully defend Vicksburg. Indeed, Grant's name was mentioned infrequently in papers, and it was often simply listed along with other Federal commanders in the area.

After the Civil War and even after the end of Reconstruction and Union occupation — a time when newspaper editors would have felt safe to publish their outrage against federal policies and when Confederate veteran groups began to organize — there was a brief spike in anti-Grant statements, but this faded quickly into positive and even glowing references to their onetime foe. Finally, on the anniversary of Grant's death, Mississippi newspaper editors seemed to enter a formal period of mourning. It is rare to find anyone who will speak ill of the dead publicly, but the level of praise that Mississippians showered on Grant is noteworthy. They recognized that it was Grant who conquered Vicksburg and, along with Sherman, fractured Mississippi's ability to contribute substantially to the Confederate war effort after 1863. But by the time of his death in 1885, he had become a respected adversary among white Mississippians. Indeed, Ulysses S. Grant had become the unlikely hero of the Magnolia state.

This article analyzes Mississippians' public opinions of Grant through the pages of Magnolia state newspapers. Other scholars have examined citizens' private thoughts on the war through diaries and correspondence, and still others have studied the history and memory of the Vicksburg campaign. But historians lack a sense of Mississippians' evolving opinion of the man who sealed their fate that summer, and the findings of this article contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate over postwar reconciliation. In the last several decades, historians have observed that Civil War veterans reconciled their differences in the late-nineteenth century through a shared view of the war as a fight over states' rights and the preservation of the Union that largely ignored the centrality of slavery and emancipation in the conflict. Recently, however, scholars have clarified that while Union and Confederate veterans could set aside their differences after the war, each side was willing to sacrifice reconciliation to emphasize the righteousness of their own cause. This article concurs with this latter argument, revealing strong wartime animosity toward Grant that slowly evolved into a reconciliationist opinion of their one-time foe by the 1880s. But citizens were also quick to remind each other that such sentiments had their limits. That was certainly the position of the editors of the



*Biloxi Herald* in July 1890. As Southerners considered contributing to a Grant-Lee monument symbolizing reconciliation around Independence Day that year, the editors explained their opposition. "We are glad to see our northern friends building monuments to those who served them well. Let them build one to Grant that will pierce the skies and let it go higher and higher, marking in the fullest manner the appreciation and admiration of those he served so well. But for us and ours," they insisted, "let us mourn alone over our dead."<sup>3</sup>

### **"Let Our People Take Courage": Mississippians and Grant During the Vicksburg Campaign**

On March 29, 1863, Grant ordered the Union Army of the Tennessee to march south, down through Arkansas and Louisiana on the west side of the Mississippi River. They were joined by Union Admiral David Dixon Porter, who led his Union fleet on a daring and swift run past the Confederate defenses at Vicksburg in mid-April and reconnected with Grant opposite Bruinsburg, Mississippi. With the help of Porter's ships, Grant's army crossed the Mississippi River and launched an astonishingly rapid invasion of the state on April 30 and May 1, 1863. Over the next ten weeks, Mississippians clambered for news about Grant's movements and their own army's ability to defend their homes and families and drive Union forces out of the state. Mississippians watched with horror as Union soldiers clashed with Confederates at Port Gibson and Raymond in the first half of May and then captured the state capital at Jackson on May 14. Grant's men destroyed everything of military value and significantly avoided the need to secure their supply lines by feeding off the land. It seemed that Mississippians could only watch with horror as Grant turned his army west, pushing on to the bloody battle of Champion Hill on May 16, followed by the Battle of the Big Black River the following day. But when they reached the outskirts of Vicksburg, Grant discovered that he was wrong in assuming that Confederates were so thoroughly demoralized and exhausted that they would barely resist him. After several attempts to break through Confederate defenses, Grant ordered his army to surround and lay siege to the river town. For forty-seven days, Union soldiers attacked and dug their way into Vicksburg, while

---

<sup>3</sup> *Biloxi Herald*, July 5, 1890.

Confederates inside the city and throughout the state remained equally determined to turn the Federals back.

That resolve was one of the strongest themes to surface in Mississippi newspapers throughout the Vicksburg Campaign. The citizens of Natchez, for example, watched closely from the south. Natchez was a fellow port city along the Mississippi River, and one of the oldest and wealthiest communities in the state. It had fallen to Union control a year earlier in May 1862, shortly after Federal forces captured New Orleans the previous month. As Grant's men marched south through Louisiana, the Natchez *Daily Courier* and Jackson *Mississippian* promised the state that the Federals would be defeated. "Let our forces be concentrated, if necessary, and the enemy can never successfully penetrate the interior far from his river communications." Recalling the logistical challenges that Sherman faced in late 1862 in north Mississippi, the editors promised that if Grant "depend[s] on railroads, these, we know, can be tapped and destroyed. . . . The impossible condition of subsisting a large army in any enemy's country, hundreds of miles from any adequate depot of supplies, without sure and speedy transportation, with a powerful and determined army in front, or flank to contend with must be complied with before such a scheme could be made effective." Readers in Natchez and Jackson were assured that "We are not, to-day, in a bad situation. . . . Let our people take courage."<sup>4</sup>

Four days later, the Natchez *Daily Courier* shared an account from the New York *Tribune* that insisted that "one or two more staggering Union victories would ward off" possible British assistance for the Confederacy and help ensure victory for the North. The Natchez editors laughed, rightly reminding their readers that "So far this Spring, the Federals have had 'staggering Union victories,' but somehow or other the results have all been overwhelmingly in favor of the Confederates! A few more such 'staggering victories' would make the whole Federal army 'stagger' home where they belong." It was true, the paper admitted, that Federals had "struck hard" at Port Hudson, Vicksburg, and at Charleston in recent months. But on each occasion, the editors boasted, they had "been splendidly whipped."<sup>5</sup>

By April 22, however, word had spread about Porter's ships slipping

---

<sup>4</sup> Natchez *Daily Courier*, April 11, 1863. The *Daily Courier* reprinted this article from the Jackson *Mississippian*.

<sup>5</sup> Natchez *Daily Courier*, April 15, 1863.

past Vicksburg. Editors in Natchez reported that citizens across the river in St. Joseph and Waterproof, Louisiana, were evacuating, and the *Daily Courier* continued to offer advice on how to best defend Vicksburg.<sup>6</sup> Others in the state, though, were less concerned. The editor of the *Canton American Citizen*, located about forty miles north of Jackson, stated on April 17 that Union gunboats remained near Vicksburg, and reported rumors that Federal forces were preparing to launch a campaign in the northern part of state. General Grant, they told their readers, had moved his Army of the Tennessee north to join Union General William S. Rosecrans, who was then operating in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. But a week later, the *American Citizen* confirmed in a small notice that Porter's ships had raced past Vicksburg on April 23, and that the discussed invasion from the north were likely "only raids to divert attention, with a hope to draw troops from our seriously threatened defenses at Vicksburg and elsewhere."<sup>7</sup>

Rumors like this continued throughout April 1863 as editors in the larger communities around Vicksburg struggled to keep their readers informed. Despite the confusion, confidence remained high, even in Vicksburg. On April 24, the *Vicksburg Daily Citizen* reported that Grant's "side expeditions" would result in nothing, just as his planned canal had. "As to a direct assault upon Vicksburg, we presume no sane man believes it could be successful even with a force two or three times greater than that now held by Gen. Grant." Editor J. M. Swords clarified the accuracy of this information to his readers, promising that his correspondents and their reports ensured that his paper "exceed[ed] . . . any other public journal" in accuracy. He argued that, "We have good reason to believe that Gen. Grant has not at any time since he was ordered to Vicksburg felt any considerable confidence in the success of the undertaking. Grant, Swords insisted, was directed by "wretched charlatans in Washington." He was one of the few editors open to the idea of Grant as a talented military commander. If left to his own devices, Swords admitted, Grant might have caused "some substantial results." But this would not happen, the *Daily Citizen* promised. "The Mississippi will not be opened this year. Less than two months remain in which our Northern soldiers can operate in the climate of Vicksburg, and this brief space of time will not suffice for

---

<sup>6</sup> Natchez *Daily Courier*, April 22, 1863.

<sup>7</sup> *Canton American Citizen*, April 17, 1863 and April 24, 1863.

a change of base by General Grant's army and the prosecution of any effective campaign."<sup>8</sup>

By early May, Mississippians learned that Grant's army had crossed the river at either Grand Gulf or Port Gibson, but they had little idea where he was going or if Confederate defenders had stopped him along the Mississippi River.<sup>9</sup> The Jackson *Mississippian* shared their readers' frustrations on May 3 and admitted in a column titled "No Reliable News" that rumors were swirling, but they could confirm nothing. Still, they reminded Jacksonians that all essential military information would go to Confederate Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, in overall command in Vicksburg, and though he "has no time to telegraph, save to Richmond ... if anything serious had occurred he would have warned the citizens of Jackson, of course."<sup>10</sup> Few Mississippians understood at this point how swiftly Grant was driving his army and how much destruction, including of telegraph lines, the Federal forces left in their wake.

By May 15, the Natchez *Daily Courier* could report little else beyond the Federal capture of Port Gibson, not yet having learned of Raymond's fall or that Grant had already seized control of Jackson.<sup>11</sup> Still, editors in Jackson managed to report some news. On May 23, the Jackson *Mississippian* published "Cheering New[s] from Vicksburg" that Confederates there had repulsed six separate attacks in which Union forces suffered terrible losses. Confederate Major General Carter L. Stevenson (who commanded a division in Pemberton's Army of Tennessee) promised that he could "hold Vicksburg indefinitely." While the editors also shared reports that Vicksburg's defenders had "abundant provisions," the Jackson *Mississippian* likely worried readers by adding the clarification that orders had been given that any man feeding corn to stock "will be shot."<sup>12</sup>

By the end of May, it was clear to readers that Grant's army had pushed on to Vicksburg, and his name was appearing with more frequency in news reports. Still, the mood in Mississippi papers was confident. Reporting Federal boasts along the river that "Grant will

---

<sup>8</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Citizen*, April 24, 1863.

<sup>9</sup> Natchez *Daily Courier*, May 2, 1863.

<sup>10</sup> Jackson *Mississippian*, May 3, 1863.

<sup>11</sup> Natchez *Daily Courier*, May 15, 1863.

<sup>12</sup> Jackson *Mississippian* report from May 23, 1863, published in Natchez *Daily Courier*, May 28, 1863.

Take Vicksburg in Three Hours,” the *Natchez Daily Courier* retorted on May 30 that Grant had tried but, after seven failed assaults on the Vicksburg defenders, had lost 30,000 men killed, wounded, or captured. “It is a very long ‘three hour’ job Gen. Grant has taken, and one that he is evidently prosecuting under difficulties!”<sup>13</sup> Similar reports of failed Federal assaults and high casualties appeared in the Jackson *Mississippian* and were reprinted in the Canton *American Citizen*. “Our boys [are] literally piling up their dead in heaps,” the *Mississippian* promised on May 26.<sup>14</sup>

Part of the confidence seen in Mississippi papers published in the cities surrounding Vicksburg might have been to inspire similar hope in their readers. But it is also true that the citizens of Natchez had little to worry about — they were already under Federal control — and readers in Canton were comforted by the arrival of forces under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, who established his headquarters there at the end of May. “Gen. Johnston is decidedly the right man in the right place,” editors promised their Canton readers, not knowing just how badly Johnston would fail the defenders at Vicksburg.<sup>15</sup>

Mississippians’ confidence that summer also appeared in communities far from the besieged defenders along the river. This may have been influenced by the Southern victories that spring at battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville in Virginia, and by their own ability to repulse Grant and Sherman’s attempts to conquer Mississippi in 1862. It is also quite possible that the Federal destruction of telegraph and rail lines caused significant confusion about their operations. In Macon, Mississippi, located in the eastern portion of the state north of Meridian, editors at the *Beacon* reported on June 10 that Gen. Johnston was in Jackson, and that Pemberton was devastating Grant at Vicksburg. The paper had to resort to publishing rumors and reported that Grant was likely “retreating toward Grand Gulf. If true we have gained a great victory.” Still, editors warned, nothing was certain. As if to underscore that fact for modern readers, they added that “Gen. Sherman had his leg amputated and since died.”<sup>16</sup> Mississippi newspapers continued to exude hope by the early summer

---

<sup>13</sup> *Natchez Daily Courier*, May 30, 1863.

<sup>14</sup> Jackson *Mississippian* report of May 26, 1863, published in the Canton *American Citizen*, May 29, 1863.

<sup>15</sup> Canton *American Citizen*, May 29, 1863.

<sup>16</sup> Macon *Beacon*, June 10, 1863.

of 1863. The only newspaper in the state that seemed to have any confidence in Grant was the Corinth *Chanticleer*. Its editors reported great Union victories around Vicksburg, but they were also Union soldiers of the Second Iowa Infantry occupying Corinth and, in their spare time, publishing the *Chanticleer*.<sup>17</sup>

By mid-June, Mississippi editors in and around Jackson and Vicksburg were referencing Grant more by name, but he still seemed to be just another Federal commander who, if their confidence was well placed, would soon be forgotten. This confidence even appeared in Vicksburg as late as July 2 when editors of the *Daily Citizen* reported that “The Yanks outside our city are considerably on the sick list. Fever, dysentery and disgust are their companions, and Grant is their master. The boys are deserting daily and . . . cussing Grant and abolitionists generally.” The editor added a report that “The great Ulysses — the Yankee Generalissimo, surnamed Grant — has expressed his intention of dining in Vicksburg on Saturday next, and celebrating the 4th of July by a grand dinner and so forth. . . . Ulysses must get into the city before he dines in it. The way to cook a rabbit is ‘first catch the rabbit.’” While Vicksburg’s civilians dodged Federal artillery and suffered from dwindling food sources, the editor helped their community laugh at their increasingly desperate situation. The *Daily Citizen* thanked an officer for sharing a “steak of Confederate beef *alias* meat” with his office. “We have tried it,” editor J. M. Swords reported, “and can assure our friends that if it is rendered necessary, they need have no scruples at eating the meat. It is sweet, savory, and tender, and so long as we have a mule left we are satisfied our soldiers will be content to subsist on it.”<sup>18</sup>

Two days later, editor Swords fled Vicksburg as Confederate forces surrendered the city to Grant. Union occupiers published his last issue on July 4, 1863. They added a note to remind readers that “Two days bring about great changes. The banner of the Union floats over Vicksburg. Gen. Grant has ‘caught the rabbit;’ he has dined in Vicksburg, and he did bring his dinner with him.”<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Corinth *Chanticleer*, June 12, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Citizen*, July 2, 1863.

<sup>19</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Citizen*, July 4, 1863.

### **“The Great and Magnanimous Soldier”: Mississippians Reflect on Grant as Veteran and President**

When the Civil War ended, black Mississippians were some of the few openly praising Gen. Grant, along with the U.S. Army forces occupying the state. The headquarters of the Freedmen’s Bureau for the Vicksburg district was also housed in the city, making it a symbol of one of Grant’s great victories and of one of the war’s most powerful results. An African-American newspaper in New Orleans, the *Tribune*, reminded its readers in the summer of 1865 that the veteran officers of the Army of the Tennessee were hosting an anniversary ceremony to celebrate Independence Day and their capture of the city. They expected Grant to attend.<sup>20</sup> Such celebrations continued throughout Reconstruction and even after Union forces left the state. In July 1877, for example, the Vicksburg *Daily Commercial* reported that the city had enjoyed an unusually festive Fourth of July. “Several hundred people attended the Hibernian picnic at Newman’s Grove,” the editors noted, and “the colored population turned out in large force, fully one thousand men of them going down the river on excursion boats to picnic-grounds, yet there were enough of them left in the city to form a very respectable procession of colored Masons, and a very large audience to listen to the oration of Judge J. S. Morris.” While there were no official fireworks and businesses were not closed, there was, the *Daily Commercial* reported, “the prevalence of a broader National sentiment and a determination to at least partially forget the past which renders the Fourth of July especially distasteful to Vicksburgers, and make it in the future ‘The Day We Celebrate’ as much as any other National holiday.”<sup>21</sup>

Similar festivities had become a tradition on the Gulf Coast. As one Pass Christian resident explained in July 1876, “We are to have a grand picnic, music, dancing, orations, &c., together with a centennial hymn of thanks that, in spite of Grant, the country has not gone to the devil. . . . Apropos of the 4th we of the South have a great deal to be thankful for, and it is very appropriate in us, after four years’ desperate effort, to get out of the Union, to be spasmodically returning thanks because we couldn’t do it.” Still, the man who signed his letter to the editor “Quid Nung,” believed some reticence on the part of Southerners

---

<sup>20</sup> New Orleans *Tribune*, June 7, 1865.

<sup>21</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, July 5, 1877.

was understandable. “We didn’t get out, and we are satisfied to except [sic] things as they are — like erring children who have been severely punished by a stern father. We are told that we are ‘still a part of the country and should rejoice in its progress,’” Quid Nung explained. But they had been “punished for thirteen consecutive years for one offense, it is natural . . . to feel that it would be better” to belong “to some other family.” Still, he looked forward to Independence Day celebrations on the coast.<sup>22</sup>

It was in that same year of 1876, while the nation celebrated its centennial, that Ulysses S. Grant ended his second term in the White House. It is noteworthy that it was also at this time that a flurry of complaints surfaced in Mississippi papers about his presidency. In Starkville, the *Livestock and Farm Journal* declared that it was time to return to Democratic rule after two disastrous terms under Grant. The editors argued that “not a single Republican was found who did not condemn the course of Grant in most unqualified terms. ‘He is drunk half the time, and no decent man can have any influence over him,’” one man complained. The *Journal* reported another who argued that “There is more ground for the impeachment of Grant than there ever was for the impeachment of Andy Johnson.”<sup>23</sup>

The Corinth editors of the *Sub-Soiler and Democrat* agreed. They accepted that “there can be no allowance of ‘southern war claims,’ no ‘pensioning of the confederate soldiers,’ no ‘danger that the claims for the value of slaves would be considered and paid,’” but the editors wished similar high standards would rid the nation of “the wholesale corruption and debauchery now manifest in every department of the government. . . .”<sup>24</sup> Editors at the Vicksburg *Daily Commercial* agreed, and mocked the local black population to whom the paper claimed Grant and Republicans had made great promises that they failed to keep. In a small section on local issues, the *Daily Commercial* shared a fictional conversation between two Freedmen. “Tambo — ‘What’s Geni’l Grant a doin’ now?’ Sambo — ‘He’s done retired to make a crap on dat forty acres of land wid dat mule you niggers spected you was gwine get.’”<sup>25</sup> The Democratic editors argued that even Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes would be better than Grant. He would bring

---

<sup>22</sup> Handsboro *Democrat*, July 1, 1876.

<sup>23</sup> Starkville *Livestock and Farm Journal*, August 3, 1876.

<sup>24</sup> Corinth *Sub-Soiler and Democrat*, September 29, 1876.

<sup>25</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, March 23, 1877.



Reconstruction and occupation to an end and fulfill Grant's "empty" promise to "let us have peace."<sup>26</sup>

Grant was barely out of office when Mississippians started to miss the devil they knew and showed early signs of reconciliation. In 1878, the *Daily Commercial* refuted rumors that Gen. Grant had publicly criticized Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson while Grant was on his European tour. Responding to these charges, the *Daily Commercial* reported that Grant refuted such claims. "I knew Jackson when he was a cadet, served with him in the Mexican war, and know that he enjoyed the confidence and respect of all who knew him," Grant explained. Jackson "was regarded as a man of great ability, great perseverance, and great piety." The retired General insisted that whatever Jackson did in the war, "he did conscientiously [sic], no matter whether it was right or wrong. I have compared him . . . with Cromwell."<sup>27</sup>

It was statements like this one that led to a noticeable shift in the tone with which white Mississippians spoke about Grant after Reconstruction. The corruption scandals of his presidency and his support for the Fifteenth Amendment, which enfranchised hundreds of thousands of African-American adult male citizens, faded from memory. These comments were replaced with a view quite similar to the one Grant used to describe Stonewall Jackson. White Mississippians did not agree with Grant's Unionist loyalties, but they respected him as a worthy foe. In the summer of 1878, the Vicksburg *Daily Herald* published a piece titled "Grant Again," signifying the frequency with which they returned to this issue. They reported that Grant had expressed admiration for both Jackson and Lee, as well as Joseph E. Johnston and Albert Sidney Johnston. It seemed, the *Daily Herald* reported "that there is more in the man [Grant] than his enemies have been in the habit of admitting," though there were limits to their admiration. The editors clarified quickly that they would not support Grant if he sought a third term in office.<sup>28</sup>

The white citizens of Columbus, Mississippi, however, were not convinced. Grant remained a Republican, the Columbus *Index* reminded their readers, insisting that the sole purpose of that party "is now, and has been ever since it was organized, to destroy the government and

---

<sup>26</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, September 20, 1877.

<sup>27</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, June 24, 1878.

<sup>28</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, July 29, 1878.

build upon its ruins a despotism.” The good news, the editors explained, was that “States rights and local self-government will survive” even if Grant or even Sherman were elected to a third term. “The time has passed when the Federal government could over-ride successfully and with impunity the power-rights and authority of States. . . . The war . . . was not waged against States rights, but against secession.” The South was sufficiently independent, the *Index* promised, to survive another Republican president so long as they remained in the Union.<sup>29</sup>

By the late 1870s and early 1880s, white Mississippians heavily involved in business and trade joined others praising Grant. As one Mississippi Democrat in Vicksburg claimed when he pledged to support Grant for president in 1880, his vote was earned not by “U.S. Grant as the former president, but as the great and magnanimous soldier; as the commander-in-chief of all the nation’s armies; as the man who proclaimed that the terms of the immortal Lee’s capitulation must forever remain inviolate.” Grant had, the author argued, “spoken not in suppliant but in manly tones of ex-rebels; as the man who says there must be peace between the sections; and lastly, as the chiefest [sic] citizen and savior of the nation; and who utters to the world that war, if it made the United States anything, made it a nation for all time to come.” This citizen of Vicksburg believed that “the South is not disloyal; she is simply an enemy to herself. Just now she is beginning to open her eyes to the fact. . . . Like the Hebrew children of old, she is in a wilderness and she is beginning to see that the path of salvation must be blazed by the Republican party, with U.S. Grant at the head of it.”<sup>30</sup>

While this was just a letter to the editor in the *Daily Commercial* and cannot speak for the entire community, additional signs surfaced by 1880 that showed that Vicksburg’s opinion of Grant was changing. In 1865, it was the general officers of the Army of the Tennessee that organized Independence Day celebrations and invited Grant to join them. Fifteen years later, however, the “City Fathers” of Vicksburg, knowing that Grant was touring the country and stopping in nearby New Orleans that spring, formed a bi-racial board to extend a formal invitation to Grant to visit Vicksburg.<sup>31</sup> Additional invitations came from African American leaders in Jackson and Greenville, Mississippi, and New Orleans, Louisiana, where representatives from the two states

---

<sup>29</sup> Columbus *Index* published in the Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, August 6, 1879.

<sup>30</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, December 30, 1879.

<sup>31</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, March 30, 1880.

offered a joint invitation to Grant to return to Vicksburg. A letter to the editor of the African American newspaper the *Weekly Louisianian*, reported that “Every man you talk with says he is for Grant first and last. . . . While there are many other worthy men, there are none whose names can awake such enthusiasm as that of Grant, or would cause the colored men of this parish to awake to a sense of their duty—to vote and have that vote counted.”<sup>32</sup> Ten days later, reporting on Grant’s visit to New Orleans, the editors of the *Weekly Louisianian* reported that “General Grant is the lion of the town. Southern hospitality is maintaining its reputation.” They referenced the economic growth credited to Grant’s presidency, arguing that “The Grant boom still booms.”<sup>33</sup>

Not everyone agreed on this public praise for Grant. In January 1885, the *Brandon Republican* complained that the *Vicksburg Post* wanted to return Grant to his title as General of the U.S. Army. The *Republican* suggested that the next request from the *Post* would be for Adelbert Ames, the unpopular Reconstruction Governor of the state, to return to his former office as well. “Thank God there are but few Southern men who want to lick the foot of the man who kicked them after they were down,” the *Brandon Republican* claimed. The *Vicksburg Post* quickly defended their praise of Grant, but clarified that they had no desire for Ames’s return.<sup>34</sup> The *Brandon* editor’s fury is noteworthy, but it is important to recognize that by the early 1880s, white Mississippians’ opinion of Grant had radically improved, and black Mississippians’ continued to view him as one of the key architects of emancipation.

### “The Nation’s Hero”: Mississippians Mourn General Grant

Mississippians’ public opinions of Grant fluctuated in the postwar period, with praise sometimes followed by critical reminders of his presidency, Republican rule, or wartime defeats. But if there is one powerful indicator of just how much Mississippians had come to respect their former foe, it came with his death on July 23, 1885. A flood of reflection and mourning swept the state. The *Natchez Weekly Democrat* insisted that “when the news came that death had claimed his mortal

---

<sup>32</sup> *Weekly Louisianian*, April 3, 1880.

<sup>33</sup> *Weekly Louisianian*, April 10, 1880.

<sup>34</sup> *Brandon Republican* quoted in the *Vicksburg Evening Post*, January 16, 1885.

part” the South was gripped in “sorrow for the loss of one who as an American won so much of renown in a contest in which they were the unsuccessful parties.” The editors clarified that “of the character of Gen. Grant as a soldier or as a statesmen the time has not yet arrived for it to be correctly appreciated,” but they sought to “assure our Northern friends that we in the South . . . sympathized with the afflictions and sorrow for the death of this distinguished American soldier.”<sup>35</sup> The Greenville *Times* marked the occasion by publishing an account about the empathy Grant had shown a Confederate widow during the war, advocating for her despite challenges from other commanders and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.<sup>36</sup> The Magnolia *Times* reported Grant’s death under the headline “The Nation Mourns the Loss of Its Great Military and Civic Chieftain.” The Yazoo *Herald* described Grant as showing chivalry to a Confederate general’s wife during the Vicksburg Campaign.<sup>37</sup> The *Carrollton Conservative*, published a full-page review of Grant’s life from childhood through his meeting “Miss Dent” and onto his military career and later presidency, and the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* offered its readers similar reports that spanned multiple pages of print.<sup>38</sup>

The Mississippi press that covered Grant’s death in greatest detail, however, was in Vicksburg. On July 31, 1885, half of the *Weekly Commercial Herald*, an eight-page paper, was dedicated to accounts of Grant’s life and death. This was a press known in the 1870s for its highly partisan critiques of President Ulysses S. Grant and Federal Reconstruction policies, as well as Mississippi leaders like James Lusk Alcorn. But in the summer of 1885, at least on the topic of Grant, these Vicksburg editors had changed their position. They presented readers with “Sketches of His Life in Pen and Pencil” reminding the city of Vicksburg that Grant was “The Nation’s Hero.” Coverage of Grant’s death continued into October that year, and included the publication of the eulogy that famed abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher delivered in Boston. At least three Mississippi papers — the Panola *Weekly*, the Magnolia *Gazette*, and the Grenada *Sentinel* — carried detailed coverage of Beecher’s speech, which included his reminder that the South’s devotion to slavery had caused the war, but fell under the

---

<sup>35</sup> Natchez *Weekly Democrat*, July 29, 1885.

<sup>36</sup> Greenville *Times*, August 8, 1885.

<sup>37</sup> Yazoo *Herald*, August 7, 1885.

<sup>38</sup> *The Carrollton Conservative*, August 1, 1885; Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, July 29, 1885.

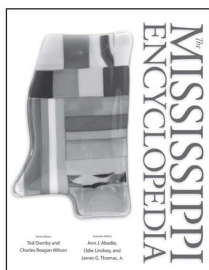
headline “The Plymouth Pastor Delivers a Warm Eulogium on the Life, Virtues, and Heroic Deeds of the Departed Warrior Statesman.”<sup>39</sup>

The Ulysses S. Grant of 1885 was a very different man in the eyes of white Mississippians than the Grant of 1863. Their opinion of him improved sharply after Reconstruction ended, and his comments about Confederate commanders earned Mississippians’ respect. The state continued to show signs of hesitation in its praise, but as this review of Mississippi’s evolving news coverage of Grant demonstrates, the state genuinely mourned him at his death, because they had warmed to the man years earlier. The Magnolia state remained decidedly Democratic until the end of the twentieth century, but one Republican, Ulysses S. Grant, proved to be Mississippi’s most unlikely hero.

---

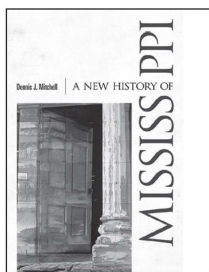
<sup>39</sup> Panola *Weekly*, October 31, 1865; Magnolia *Gazette*, October 30, 1885; Grenada *Sentinel*, October 31, 1885.





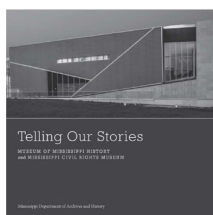
**The Mississippi Encyclopedia**

Senior editors Ted Ownby and Charles Reagan Wilson  
Associate editors Ann J. Abadie, Odie Lindsey, and James G. Thomas, Jr.  
An A-to-Z compendium of people, places, and events in Mississippi from prehistoric times to today  
**\$70**



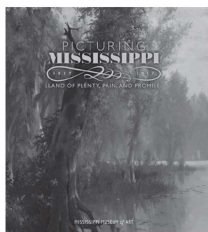
**A New History of Mississippi**

Dennis J. Mitchell  
The first comprehensive history of the state in nearly four decades  
**\$40**



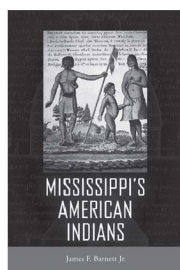
**Telling Our Stories**  
*Museum of Mississippi History and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum*

Mississippi Department of Archives and History  
The definitive guide to two state-of-the-art museums—the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, which both opened in December 2017, in celebration of the state's bicentennial  
**\$25**



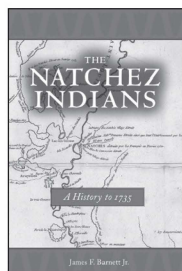
**Picturing Mississippi, 1817-2017**

*Land of Plenty, Pain, and Promise*  
Mississippi Museum of Art  
A collection of essays that explore the current state of the history of art in Mississippi  
**\$39.95**



**Mississippi's American Indians**

James F. Barnett Jr.  
The full story of the state's once thriving and diverse American Indian population  
**\$40**



**The Natchez Indians**  
*A History to 1735*

James F. Barnett Jr.  
The most complete and detailed examination of a vanished tribe  
**\$28**

ALSO AVAILABLE AS EBOOKS



www.upress.state.ms.us • 800-737-7788



# The Southern Quarterly

Published by The University of Southern Mississippi since 1962, *The Southern Quarterly: A Journal of Arts & Letters in the South* is a scholarly journal devoted to the interdisciplinary study of Southern arts and culture, including literature, history, anthropology, and the traditional arts.

TO SUBSCRIBE:

Individuals \$40/year

Institutions \$70/year

Send article, poem, photo essay,  
or interview submissions through  
[aquila.usm.edu/soq](http://aquila.usm.edu/soq).



CONTACT:

The Editor, SoQ

118 College Drive #5078

Hattiesburg, MS 39406

[SouthernQuarterly@gmail.com](mailto:SouthernQuarterly@gmail.com)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN  
MISSISSIPPI



JOIN THE MISSISSIPPI HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
and receive the  
**Journal of Mississippi History**  
plus the  
**Mississippi History Newsletter**

Join or renew dues online at [www.mississippihistory.org](http://www.mississippihistory.org)  
or complete the form below.

First name	Middle initial	Last name
Mailing Address		Apt/Suite #
City	State	Zip code
email address		

**Annual Dues** (Add \$10 for all foreign subscriptions.)

\$5 High school student	\$75 Supporting (single/joint)
\$15 College student	\$100 Corporate
\$25 Single	\$200 Patron (single/joint)
\$35 Family	\$400 Lifetime (single)
\$50 Contributing (single/joint)	\$500 Lifetime (family)

Mail completed form and check (made payable to Mississippi Historical Society) to Mississippi Historical Society, P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205-0571.

## NOTE TO PROSPECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

Initial submissions should be made to editor Dennis J. Mitchell, [dmitchell@meridian.msstate.edu](mailto:dmitchell@meridian.msstate.edu) or P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205-0571. Preferred manuscript length is 25–30 pages (double-spaced), exclusive of footnotes.

The *Journal* encourages the inclusion of illustrations—photographs, drawings, maps, tables—that enhance the essay.

*The Chicago Manual of Style* (latest edition) should be followed, with some exceptions (primarily dates: the *Journal* prefers “December 1, 1866,” to Chicago’s “1 December 1866”).

For more information contact *Journal of Mississippi History* editor Dennis J. Mitchell at [dmitchell@meridian.msstate.edu](mailto:dmitchell@meridian.msstate.edu) or 601-479-6293.