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Introduction

Michael B. Ballard

The Civil War in Mississippi produced physical destruction, human suffering, emotional scars, economic ruin, divided loyalties, racial upheaval, and a multitude of gravestones. We remember today battlefields and monuments. The place that gets the most attention is Vicksburg, home of the famous siege. To a lesser degree we memorialize the various battles that culminated with the siege. The names of the conflicts are many: Chickasaw Bayou, Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson, Champion Hill, and Big Black River. Other battles that were significant included Corinth, Iuka, Brice's Crossroads, and Tupelo. Raids by cavalry and infantry left their mark on the state's military experiences.

Beyond the battlefields and the varying skirmishes and raids, Mississippi's war experience was a mosaic of displacement, of women and children left to fend for themselves as best they could. Those who took food away from civilian mouths wore Union and Confederate uniforms. Homes and other structures were often burned. Railroads were destroyed. From central Mississippi to the state's border with Tennessee, havoc, fear, death, wounds, and mental anguish engulfed the land. South Mississippi was relatively out of harm's way, though the overall impact of the war extended in every direction.

More than one hundred and fifty years later, most Mississippians accept the war as a momentous historical event to be studied, to be taught, and to be understood. The impact of the conflict on the state's history cannot be overestimated. Racial turmoil emerged during Reconstruction and for many decades defined the state's image. Even today, well into the twenty-first century, the Confederate battle flag is still seen by some as a kind of holy grail. Many others look to a future beyond the lingering shadows of a time that will never be forgotten, but will be viewed in a different perspective in the future.

The essays contained herein address the complexities of Mississippi's role and experiences in the Civil War. Hopefully they will provide today's Mississippians, especially its younger generations, insight into

what happened, why, and how it matters. We can learn much about the state from its disastrous passage through the Civil War years, we can be fascinated by it, and enjoy the nuances of walking over hallowed ground. Whether we will ever let it rest in peace is up to us.