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The Journal of Mississippi History

Special Civil War Edition

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COVER IMAGE—Mississippi Monument, Vicksburg National Military Park. Courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

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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.

Wrong Job, Wrong Place: John C. Pemberton's Civil War

Michael B. Ballard

John Pemberton had a seemingly never ending list of factors that affected his Civil War career. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, August 10, 1814, he married a Virginia girl, which was not enough to cancel out his Yankee-birth handicap. He graduated from West Point in 1837 (27th out of a class of 50) and went on to serve in the Mexican War, the Second Seminole War, and in a variety of outposts. Except for brief combat experience early in the Mexican War, Pemberton's army duties consisted mostly of staff work in war and peace. His persona changed from his rather carefree days at West Point, and he became an officer hardened by a soldier's life. From a likeable person, he gradually turned into somewhat of a martinet. When the Civil War began, he joined the Confederacy because of his wife Pattie's influence. Had Pemberton married a woman from the north, he would have fought for the Union. But he did not. He was very close to his wife and was an adoring father. After resigning from the U.S. Army, Pemberton went to Virginia. The new Confederate officer had never had the opportunity to lead men in battle, and witnessing war in Mexico had confirmed his preference for staff duties.¹

Pemberton began his Confederate military career as an artillery instructor in the Norfolk, Virginia, area. He was then sent to command a district in South Carolina, ultimately taking command of the District of South Carolina and Georgia when the previous commander, Robert E. Lee, returned to Richmond.

Right away problems and characteristics emerged to cause Pemberton grief. His birthplace did not sit well with South Carolinians. He had trouble communicating effectively with political leaders there (as did most normal people). Predictably, he backed off serving in the field, preferring office paperwork. His preference not only prevented

¹ Michael B. Ballard, *Pemberton: A Biography* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 24, 27–35, 40–41, 43–63, 85–86.

his gaining leadership in the field, but also deprived his personal staff of that same experience. His long absences from the field kept him from bonding with the men in his army. He never developed a solid interaction with the officers and men who served under him. Doubtless many of them never saw him.

Pemberton created a political storm when he made clear that he would surrender Charleston before risking the destruction of his army. South Carolina politicians considered that a treasonous position. The resulting uproar stuck in his mind when he was sent to his next assignment. Confederate president Jefferson Davis responded to criticism of Pemberton by South Carolinians by sending the general to Mississippi to take command of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana, which included Vicksburg.²

Pemberton, with his organizational skills, soon had his department in the best administrative shape it had ever been in, and he settled into his headquarters at Jackson, Mississippi, to make sure the department details remained on track. He and his staff did a remarkable job attending to issues ignored by the previous commander, Earl Van Dorn.

Ulysses S. Grant's invasion of North Mississippi confronted Pemberton with his first great military challenge. Following his established pattern of leadership, he left management of his field army to Earl Van Dorn. He did consult with Van Dorn, and their army conducted an admirable campaign, retreating before Grant's advance, while at the same time slowing the Federals and fighting off Grant's flank attack from Arkansas. Again Pemberton proved to be just a name to his soldiers; he made no effort to establish rapport with his army, and none of the soldiers talked of seeing the general riding by with his staff to check the battle lines. There were no cheers of support when he was sighted or when his name was mentioned.³

Pemberton endorsed the idea of sending Van Dorn with cavalry on a successful raid to destroy Grant's supply base at Holly Springs. After the raid forced Grant to retreat, Pemberton went to Vicksburg

² Ibid., 86, 90–91, 103–5, 114–15.

³ Ephraim McD. Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal, Including The Campaigns of the First Missouri Brigade* (1868), ed. Edwin C. Bearss (Dayton, OH: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1972), 245; Bell Irvin Wiley and Lucy E. Fay, eds., *"This Infernal War": The Confederate Letters of Sgt. Edwin H. Fay* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1958), 179.

to orchestrate the defeat of William T. Sherman at Chickasaw Bayou near the Yazoo River north of Vicksburg. He used the railroads well to get reinforcements from the North Mississippi front to Vicksburg. It was a staff officer's job, and he embraced it. Pemberton did not go to the battlefield, but confined himself to directing men who arrived in Vicksburg. He funneled reinforcements to Stephen D. Lee, commanding the Confederate Army in the field, and eventually Sherman gave up and retreated back to the Mississippi River.⁴

During all these events, Pemberton continued to neglect building a close relationship with his officers and men. He had a devoted staff, but he had no close friendships with his officers. His soldiers thought him aloof and considered him to be much the martinet. Later, after Grant crossed the Mississippi and began marching inland, Pemberton delivered a rah-rah patriotic sort of message to his men, but there is no evidence that his appeal to their patriotism had a great effect. They responded positively to their commanders and ignored the commanding general. Most of his officers considered him abrasive and had little confidence in his leadership. While many citizens, including political leaders in Mississippi, preferred Pemberton to Van Dorn, they never warmed up to the "Yankee" general.

In early 1863, Grant tried many approaches to take Vicksburg, but they all failed because of a variety of circumstances. Yet each move Grant made, from attempts to follow streams on the Louisiana side of the river south in order to bypass Vicksburg, to the Yazoo Pass operation, to the Steele Bayou/Deer Creek expedition fiasco (where the Union almost lost several ironclads), kept Pemberton guessing about what Grant was up to.

A diversion that did work involved the cavalry raid led by Benjamin Grierson. Grierson's column of seventeen hundred men slashed from northeast Mississippi on a southwesterly course through the center of Mississippi before arriving safely in Baton Rouge. Grierson's men destroyed supplies along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad and the Southern Railroad of Mississippi, the latter connecting Vicksburg to potential reinforcements, ammunition, and arms from the east. Grierson's campaign proved to be one of the most successful of the war;

⁴ Ballard, *Pemberton*, 127–29. On the North Mississippi and Chickasaw Bayou campaigns, see Ballard, *The Civil War in Mississippi: Major Campaigns and Battles* (Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 105–29.

his men destroyed fifty-six miles of railroad track and telegraph lines, captured and destroyed some three thousand stands of rifles, and took many horses and mules much needed by Pemberton's forces.

Meanwhile, Grant, frustrated for weeks by unworkable plans and failed expeditions, decided to take his army south through Louisiana and cross into Mississippi near Port Gibson. Pemberton's poor communications and interactions with his commanders cost him an opportunity to capture Union ironclads and led to a bitter feud with one of his subordinates, William Loring. During the Fort Pemberton campaign, he had also failed to listen to warnings from General John Bowen about Grant's march south on the Louisiana side of the river. Grierson had Pemberton's eyes looking east when he should have been looking west. Pemberton could not seem to focus on more than one problem at a time and obviously made a bad choice when he refused to take Bowen's warnings seriously.⁵

Meanwhile, Grant crossed the Mississippi at Bruinsburg below Grand Gulf, won battles at Port Gibson (where, despite Bowen's warnings, Pemberton had sent no reinforcements), Raymond, and Jackson. Meanwhile Pemberton wrestled with his own plans and orders from General Joseph E. Johnston, who arrived in Jackson in time to give up hope right away without resisting Grant.⁶

As Pemberton gathered his army minus two divisions at the Big Black River to protect Vicksburg, he received an order from Johnston to march to Clinton, where they could join forces. Johnston was nowhere near Clinton at the time and was, in fact, marching his army to Canton after abandoning Jackson. Pemberton initially intended to obey, but he realized that if he moved toward Clinton, he would leave Vicksburg vulnerable to Grant. Pemberton conferred with his generals, some saying Johnston should be obeyed, and some saying, as Pemberton preferred, that he should march toward Raymond and Grant's supply line. The voting particulars are not certain since different versions were later reported. But Pemberton decided on Raymond.

⁵ Ballard, *Pemberton*, 133–40; Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 187–88, 207–8; *Daily Delta*, November 12, 1862. The text of Pemberton's patriotic speech is quoted in Ballard, *Pemberton*, 130–31.

⁶ Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations, Directed, During the Late War Between the States* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), 175–76. Johnston, after arriving at Jackson, sent a terse message to Richmond: "I am too late."

Johnston did not think Vicksburg worth fighting for; Jefferson Davis insisted it was, so Pemberton exercised caution in favor of Davis's directives. Ultimately, as he moved his army toward Raymond, he received another order from Johnston to join forces. This time, perhaps because he considered it dangerous to disobey two orders, or because he felt that if something went wrong he could blame Johnston, Pemberton tried to reverse his course, but he was unable to do so before Grant attacked. Johnston, still at Canton, wanted to join Pemberton at Clinton. Grant, who was aware of Johnston's second message because it had been intercepted by a Union spy, ordered two corps west to block Pemberton from getting to Clinton. To obey Johnston's second message, Pemberton had to throw his army into reverse, for it was strung out from the northwest near the Southern Railroad of Mississippi that connected Jackson and Vicksburg to the southeast at the Raymond road. As he tried to reverse his course, a cumbersome task at best, Grant's lead elements attacked at Champion Hill.⁷

The fight at Champion Hill was the first and only time Pemberton led an army in battle, and his lack of experience and poor relationships with his division commanders was evident. Some officers openly laughed at his orders. Pemberton's deployment of troops, a result of his army's position when Grant attacked, was north to south ranging from the railroad to the Raymond-Edwards road, consisting of the divisions of Carter Stevenson, John Bowen, and William Loring. Stevenson's division was wrecked during the early fighting. Bowen, who had Federals in his front, hesitated to reinforce Stevenson. Yet Bowen decided he must obey Pemberton's call for saving Stevenson, so he led a magnificent charge that almost broke Grant's line. However, a lack of reinforcements ultimately forced Bowen to retreat. Loring made no move to help until it was too late. Pemberton had to order a retreat. During the process, Loring's division was cut off and circled around to join Johnston. Is it possible Loring deliberately separated his division from Pemberton's army? Given his attitude toward the commanding general, he could not have been displeased at the way things worked out. There is no way to know Loring's intent, but since he was threatened by Federals pursuing Stevenson and Bowen, he must be given the benefit of the doubt.

⁷ Ballard, *Pemberton*, 153–60.

Pemberton waited for Loring on the west side of the Big Black, but after his forces were defeated there, he pulled his army back into Vicksburg where two fresh divisions awaited. He could have left Vicksburg to Grant and moved to the northeast, but he never considered it. Given the deployment of Grant's army, whether Pemberton could have escaped is problematical. If he had made the effort, William T. Sherman was in a position to attack Pemberton's right flank, and Sherman's corps was fresh, having so far participated only in the Battle of Jackson, which had not been much of a battle at all. Pemberton's only thought was that President Davis had said Vicksburg must be held and that was that. Never mind that Johnston had warned Pemberton about getting trapped in Vicksburg. The Union Navy blocked supplies and reinforcements from Louisiana, so Pemberton's only hope would be reinforcements, which unfortunately for his besieged army never came. Pemberton's men repelled two Grant attacks on May 19 and 22; at that point, the Federals began regular siege operations.

Having only limited contact with Johnston and unable to receive supplies, Pemberton reduced rations until it became obvious that Johnston had no intention of offering any help. Pemberton had much food stored away when he decided to surrender on July 4, so he obviously hoped to hold out longer.⁸

Despite the loss of Vicksburg, Pemberton did the best he could within the context of his background, especially his lack of battlefield experience and his personal isolation from his officers and men. He did well what his preferences, ability, and personality allowed him to do. He was outgeneraled by the best general the Union had, as many others would be.

After the surrender, Pemberton received no further assignment at his rank of Lt. General, for he had become a pariah to other southern troops who unfairly thought he had intentionally surrendered Vicksburg. Pemberton proved his loyalty by accepting a reduction in rank and spent the rest of the war in the Eastern Theater as an artillery officer. He survived the war, tried and failed at farming in Virginia, and eventually returned to Pennsylvania where his family welcomed him back into their foreign export business. His work brought him to Jackson, Mississippi, and one of his former aides invited him to visit

⁸ Ibid., 167–200.

Vicksburg. Pemberton could not bring himself to do so. He lived with his wife and family for the rest of his life and died July 13, 1881.⁹

Looking back at Pemberton's defining moment, which was the Vicksburg campaign, it is worth considering the "what ifs" of his performance. Suppose Pemberton had been more experienced, more adept at building teamwork, more able to read the enemy's activities, popular with his soldiers, or had a navy to battle David Porter's Union fleet. The navy question is easy; the Confederacy had no navy on the Mississippi able to take on the Federal fleet, so that is a moot point. But otherwise, would he have done better? That question must be considered in light of the flawed Confederate command system. Pemberton's commanding general ordered him to do one thing, the president of the Confederacy another. Davis had encouraged Pemberton to communicate directly with him, bypassing Johnston. Johnston and Davis detested each other, and it showed. Pemberton's best was not good enough for a number of reasons, but had his best been much better, the result would very likely have been the same. Why? He still would have had no navy. More importantly and more to the point, he would have had to deal with Joseph Johnston and Jefferson Davis, who together ensured the loss of Vicksburg at Pemberton's expense.

⁹ For more on Pemberton's post-war years, *ibid.*, 188–202.

The Naval War in Mississippi

Gary D. Joiner

The Union campaigns and battles to wrest control of the Mississippi Valley were, by necessity, combined operations. The U.S. Navy played a greater role in this arena than in any other throughout the war, and the state of Mississippi saw more naval action within its borders and along its western boundary than any other state during the course of the war. Prior to 1861, the U.S. Navy possessed no armed vessels to use in guarding or patrolling the inland waters of the nation. After secession, the Union Navy was not interested in these internal rivers and instead contended that the fresh water streams were the purview of the U.S. Army. In assuming this role, army commanders in the West recognized that the rivers provided a convenient method by which military units that were yet to be formed could be transported into places that were exceedingly remote.

The Confederate government, which possessed no semblance of a navy at the beginning of the war, was handicapped in building a matching naval force by a severe shortage of the necessary manufacturing infrastructure. Its plan instead was centered on point defense. Simply put, Confederate military leaders identified the most important points along the coast and on the inland rivers to protect them by creating massive fortifications and building local naval units to thwart any Union incursions. As a result of this strategy, primary Confederate bastions on the inland waterways of the Mississippi River Valley were located at Columbus, Kentucky; Island No. 10 on the Missouri-Tennessee state line on the Missouri side of the river; Fort Pillow north of Memphis, Tennessee; Forts Henry and Donelson guarding the lower stretches of the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers; Fort Hindman, guarding the lower portion of the Arkansas River; Forts Jackson and St. Philip below New Orleans; and the primary fortifications at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Port Hudson, Louisiana. The Vicksburg and Port Hudson positions were by far the most formidable on the Mississippi River.

Both sides relied on new, often untested, methods of creating new war craft on the inland rivers. The preferred form of defensive armament involved iron-cladding boats and then arming them with siege guns. Northern efforts to build and arm an inland fleet were based in St. Louis, Missouri, and Cairo, Illinois. The latter shipyard was located on a small but strategically important position at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The mastermind behind the Union efforts was James Buchanan Eads, arguably the best nautical engineer of the nineteenth century, who promised to build seven gunboats and deliver them in sixty-five days. Eads personally financed the entire operation.¹ At the same time, Union Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles dispatched Commander John Rodgers to Cincinnati, Ohio, to assist the commander of the Western Department, Major General George B. McClellan.² Soon after his arrival, Rodgers began converting fast steamboats into wood-augmented vessels, called “timberclads,” which were named the *Conestoga*, *Lexington*, and *Tyler*.³

In contrast to Rodgers’s work, Eads specialized in totally new boats that became the most fearsome vessels on the rivers. His gunboats constituted a separate class of boats, known variously as the “Cairo Class” or “City Class” vessels. Captain Andrew Foote, the commander of the new flotilla, built by Eads, named the gunboats to recognize the towns and cities that were located nearby or associated with the boats’ construction. The vessels would be named *Cairo*, *Carondelet*, *Cincinnati*, *Louisville*, *Mound City* *Pittsburg*,⁴ and *St. Louis*. Eads, who delivered the city-class boats that were delivered to the Navy between the end of September 1861 and the last days of January 1862,⁵ also built other ironclads, including the *Essex* and the massive *Benton*. Before 1862 ended, he had constructed the *Neosho*, *Osage*, and *Ozark*.

¹ John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 22–31.

² U.S. War Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, DC, 1895–1929), 22: 277–280. Hereafter cited as *ORN*.

³ *Ibid.*, 284, 285.

⁴ William M. Fowler, Jr., *Under Two Flags: The American Navy in the Civil War* (Annapolis, MD: Avon Books, 2001), 134–35, 139. The vessel’s name was spelled “*Pittsburg*.” Although the spelling of the city name was, and is, “*Pittsburgh*,” the federal government and other entities periodically dropped the “h” that was not officially added until 1911.

⁵ Paul H. Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies: 1855–1883* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 151–155.

As the need for action in smaller streams became evident, smaller light draft gunboats came into service; these were dubbed “tinclads” because of their thinner, lighter armor. These vessels carried large ordinance for their size and proved decisive in later campaigns. Although the Confederate strategy of relying upon point defense seemed reasonable considering the huge distances between major population centers and the Confederacy’s limited military force concentrations, Union countermeasures wreaked havoc on the southern plans. Using combined arms operations, with the Navy taking the lead and units of the Army of the Tennessee and other forces finishing the work, Union forces bypassed the Confederate defenses at Columbus, Kentucky, and moved instead against Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, which quickly fell in February 1862. Before surrendering, the Confederate defenders had managed to deploy a new weapon, the “torpedo” or mine.⁶ Weeks later, Union forces captured Fort Henry’s companion defense point to the east, Fort Donelson. Following an attack by the Navy,⁷ the ironclads were not prepared for plunging cannon fire on their unarmored decks.⁸ In addition, Foote, who had been elevated to Flag Officer, was wounded during the battle. He would not command his flotilla again and was succeeded by Captain Charles H. Davis.⁹

With the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers now vulnerable, Union forces moved to take Corinth, Mississippi. In March, units under the command of Major General Ulysses S. Grant encamped at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, were attacked by General Albert Sidney Johnston’s Confederate forces on April 6–7. The two-day Battle of Shiloh, in which the Union Navy participated by firing rounds from the *Lexington* and *Tyler* timberclads into the southern positions was the bloodiest fight in the war to that date.¹⁰

Although both sides considered Island No. 10 to be all but impregnable, a daring night run past the gauntlet of guns by Captain Henry

⁶Naval Historical Division, *Civil War Naval Chronology 1861–1865* (Washington, 1971), part 2, 15–17.

⁷Henry Walke, “The Gunboats at Belmont & Fort Henry,” *Battles and Leaders* (Secaucus, NJ: Castle, n.d.), I: 362.

⁸B. F. Thomas, “Soldier Life: A Narrative of the Civil War.” Privately printed, unpaginated. Archives and Collections of Shiloh National Military Park library.

⁹ORN, 22: 316.

¹⁰O. Edward Cunningham, *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2007), 312–13; Gary D. Joiner, “Soul-Stirring Music To Our Ears,” in Steven E. Woodworth, ed., *The Shiloh Campaign* (Carbondale, IL: Combined Books, 2009), 96–109.

Walke in the *Carondelet*, which occurred simultaneously with the Battle of Shiloh, placed forces above and below the island.¹¹ With Island No. 10 eliminated, Memphis, which was guarded on the north by Fort Pillow, became the next target for the Union Navy. Using rams and gunboats to defend the river at Fort Pillow and Memphis, the Confederates¹² attacked the *Cincinnati* near Fort Pillow on the morning of May 10. The engagement grew until most of the Union ironclads were involved. The *Mound City* and *Cincinnati* sank in shallow water, and the Confederates lost several vessels before withdrawing to the protection of Fort Pillow. When Union ironclads were quickly repaired,¹³ the Confederate vessels retreated to Memphis and abandoned Fort Pillow where their position had become untenable.

Before the push on Memphis could be launched, the Union flotilla was augmented by the Mississippi Ram Fleet, a hybrid command not under Davis's control and therefore not welcomed.¹⁴ The rams, however, proved to be very effective in the destruction of the remaining Confederate vessels at Memphis on June 6, 1862.¹⁵

While this lightning campaign unfurled, the blue water warships under Flag Officer David Glasgow Farragut moved up the Mississippi River against New Orleans. After a major ship-to-shore naval battle against Forts Jackson and St. Philip, Farragut anchored the Union fleet near the levees of New Orleans at the end of April.¹⁶ He quickly moved upstream and took Baton Rouge and Natchez, Mississippi. Soon thereafter Farragut's advance vessels reached Vicksburg, but

¹¹ ORN 22: 730, 734–35; Larry J. Daniel and Lynn N. Bock, *Island No. 10: Struggle for the Mississippi Valley* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 142; Spencer Tucker, *Andrew Foote: Civil War Admiral on Western Waters* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 188.

¹² ORN 23: 3–4.

¹³ ORN 23: 13–17; Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies*, 170; Jack D. Coombe, *Thunder Along the Mississippi: The River Battles That Split the Confederacy* (New York: Bantam, 1996), 125.

¹⁴ William D. Crandall, and Isaac D. Newell, *History of the Ram Fleet and the Mississippi Marine Brigade in the War for the Union on the Mississippi and Its Tributaries, The Story of the Ellets and their Men* (St. Louis, MO: Press of Buschart Brothers, 1907), 9–13.

¹⁵ Walke, *Battles and Leaders* 1: 452–62; Bern Anderson, *By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1962), 113–14; H. Allen Gosnell, *Guns on the Western Waters: The Story of the River Gunboats in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), 94–99; U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: 1890–1901), vol. 10, 906–910.

¹⁶ John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 85–102.

the Confederate leaders in the heavily fortified bluff town refused to surrender. Farragut, who could not connect with the Western Gunboat Flotilla, moving down the river from Memphis, withdrew to Baton Rouge. Farragut's decision prompted the Confederates to immediately begin strengthening the fortifications at Port Hudson, approximately twenty miles northwest of the Louisiana capitol.

The brown water flotilla massed north of Vicksburg, was challenged on July 15, 1862, by the surprise attack of the ironclad CSS *Arkansas*. The hastily constructed vessel steamed out of the Yazoo River, created panic within the Union fleet and then sought safety under the guns at the bluffs at Vicksburg. The Union ironclad *Essex* and another vessel had engaged the intruder and, after vicious attacks by both sides, had become separated from the fleet below the Confederate guns.¹⁷ The *Arkansas* was damaged, but not seriously. The *Essex* steamed south to join Farragut at Baton Rouge. Confederate leaders unwisely opted to have the *Arkansas* to participate in an attack to retake Baton Rouge. The attack on August 5 almost worked but the *Essex* and other vessels pounded the southerners. The *Arkansas*, with very poor engines, approached Baton Rouge to assist, but engine failure forced its officers and crew to set the ironclad afire before it could be captured.¹⁸

The Confederates still held the Mississippi River between Vicksburg and Port Hudson, and the Union fleets were unable to unite. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles decided that the Western Gunboat Flotilla should become a major command with squadron status. He transferred the capable Flag Officer Charles Davis to Washington and promoted him to Acting Rear Admiral.¹⁹ His replacement, David Dixon Porter, was elevated to Acting Rear Admiral with an appointment date that preceded that of Davis.²⁰

After sorting out his command responsibilities, Porter planned an attack up the Yazoo River to approach Vicksburg from what he hoped was an undefended front. Porter's plan called for his acting in concert

¹⁷ Anderson, *By Sea and By River*, 133.

¹⁸ Coombe, *Thunder Along the Mississippi*, 162.

¹⁹ Effective to full rank February 7, 1863. William B. Cogar, *Dictionary of Admirals of the U.S. Navy: Volume I 1862–1900* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 41–42, 1331–33. The timing of Davis's promotion was important for his rank of rear admiral technically made him the third man to hold that rank, following his successor, David Dixon Porter, who was made acting rear admiral on October 15, 1862, with effective full rank on July 4, 1863.

²⁰ Ibid.

with an advance by General Grant striking down the interior of Mississippi. Grant created a large supply base at Holly Springs, Mississippi, and then moved south. Confederate forces under General Earl Van Dorn raided the base on December 20. Grant's supply depot in Memphis was destroyed almost simultaneously, and although Grant was forced to retreat, he issued no recall orders for General William T. Sherman, who had been dispatched to join Porter's naval operation.²¹ Grant's decision left Porter and Sherman and his men in the dark without knowledge of the setback occasioned by Van Dorn's surprise attack.

One month after Porter assumed command of the squadron, he and Sherman began operations. Porter sent two gunboats up the Yazoo from its mouth to investigate water depth and to search for the presence of torpedoes. They found them. The second attempt up the Yazoo, which began on December 12, 1862, was made by two ironclads, the *Cairo* and *Pittsburg*, two tinclads, the *Signal* and *Marmora*, and one of the Mississippi Marine Brigade rams, the *Queen of the West*.²² Slowly picking their way to gain access to dry land below Chickasaw and Haynes' bluffs in order to counter the Confederate defenses, the flotilla encountered obstructed stream channels and minefields. The lighter vessels made sweeps, and ironclads sometimes assisted.²³ During this operation, the *Cairo* struck a torpedo and sank immediately. It could not be raised and remained in the river for almost exactly one hundred years.²⁴

Yet another attempt to move up the Yazoo was made in the fourth week of December. The flotilla continued to near Haynes' Bluff, where Sherman, supported by the ironclads and tinclads led by the *Benton*, suffered a crushing defeat at Chickasaw Bayou.²⁵ The *Benton*, which received considerable attention from the Confederate gunners, lost her captain, and nine crewmen including the executive officer were killed or wounded.²⁶ Following the Confederate repulse of Sherman,

²¹ Terrence J. Winschel, *Chickasaw Bayou: A Battlefield Guide* (National Park Service, n.d.), 1.

²² ORN 23: 546–47.

²³ David D. Porter, *Naval History of the Civil War* (Secaucus, NJ: Castle, 1886), 284–85.

²⁴ ORN 23, 550; John C. Wideman, *The Sinking of the USS Cairo* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 26–31. For the recovery efforts, see Edwin C. Bearss, *Hardluck Ironclad: The Sinking and Salvage of the "Cairo"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

²⁵ ORN 23: 571–72, 574, 576; William L. Shea and Terrence J. Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 45, 51–52.

²⁶ ORN 23: 574, 576.

the Union gunboats and transports carrying the troops retreated. To continue attacking the Confederate river defense points and to boost flagging morale, Porter and Sherman then made a successful attack on Fort Hindman on the Arkansas River.²⁷

Following the capture of Fort Hindman, Porter and Sherman returned to the main task, Vicksburg, where the defenses had grown stronger with each passing day, and the prospects of a frontal assault, at least from the river, appeared nonexistent. At the same time, the Confederates were fortifying two strong positions downstream at Grand Gulf and Port Hudson. On February 2, 1863, Porter sent Colonel Charles Rivers Ellet, aboard the ram *Queen of the West*, past the Vicksburg batteries. The ram carried cotton bales over its wooden sheathing to absorb or deflect the solid rounds from the Rebel artillery. The *Queen* made it past the batteries and then proceeded to wreak havoc below Vicksburg before steaming up the Red River on February 13 to reconnoiter.²⁸ It was disabled and captured at Fort DeRussy, the southernmost static Confederate defensive position on the Red River.²⁹ The ram was then used by the Confederate forces to disable the USS *Indianola*, which had run the batteries at Vicksburg to assist the *Queen of the West*.

The loss of the *Queen of the West* and the *Indianola* forced Porter to test how the Vicksburg batteries would react to a brazen daylight run past them. He concocted a dummy ironclad made of wood and fabric, which sailed past the gauntlet and forced the Confederates to destroy the *Indianola* in order to prevent its being recaptured.³⁰ At roughly the same time, Admiral Farragut tried to compromise the Port Hudson batteries but only succeeded in stranding his own flagship *Hartford* and an escort upstream of the fortifications and in losing the USS *Mississippi*.³¹

²⁷ Charles Edmund Vetter, *Sherman: Merchant of Terror, Advocate of Peace* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1992), 150; David D. Porter, *Incidents and Anecdotes* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1885), 129.

²⁸ ORN: 24: 320, 217–20.

²⁹ For a thorough history of Fort DeRussy, see Steven Mayeux, *Earthen Walls, Iron Men: Fort DeRussy, Louisiana, and the Defense of Red River* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007).

³⁰ *Vicksburg Whig*, March 5, 1863; ORN 24: 397.

³¹ The best accounts of Port Hudson siege operations and the naval operations against the Confederate fortifications are found in Lawrence Lee Hewitt, *Port Hudson: Confederate Bastion On the Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986) and O. Edward Cunningham, *Port Hudson Campaign 1862–1863* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991).

Porter's projected contorted path would, if successful, put his flotilla in the Yazoo between Yazoo City and the Confederate defenses at Haynes' Bluff and Fort Snyder to the south. Porter could turn north, if he chose, and go past Yazoo City and attack the Confederate Fort Pemberton near Greenwood. The Fort Pemberton defenses had earlier stalled Grant's ill-fated Yazoo Pass campaign. Porter, however, never reached Yazoo. Thwarted by the narrow Deer Creek and Confederate resistance, Porter had to back his ironclads out of Deer Creek into Black Bayou, Steele's Bayou, and finally back into the Yazoo where he had started his adventure. His men had to remove trees cut by Confederates to trap his boats, and Porter even made preparations to scuttle the boats if necessary. But the Confederate troops in the area failed to act aggressively, and Porter received infantry support at the Rolling Fork from William T. Sherman. The Confederates lost a great opportunity to capture the ironclads.

Porter's campaign, along with the failures of the Grant-Williams Canal, the Lake Providence operation, the ultimate abandonment of the Yazoo Pass expedition, and the unsuccessful Duckport Canal strategy spelled the end of Grant's efforts to reach Vicksburg from the north.

General Grant determined that a march down the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River to a suitable point to cross was the only way to take Vicksburg by a landward attack. Admiral Porter and his squadron were instrumental in this effort. The only way the Navy could support Grant was to run the gauntlet of the Vicksburg defenses.

Porter divided the squadron into two flotillas. One was to run the batteries, while the other was to remain above Vicksburg and support a deception operation to draw off some of the Vicksburg defenders from Grant's amphibious assault. The first group would reduce the Grand Gulf fortifications before Grant's infantry could cross the Mississippi. That task alone was monumental and could not be adequately planned before the fate of the flotilla was known. Grant asked his agents to collect yawls and barges in St. Louis and Chicago to transport men across the great river.³²

The passage began at 9:15 p.m. on the night of April 16 with little moonlight and the vessels making just enough steam to keep the

³² *ORN* 24: 241.

paddle wheels turning, thereby allowing the river current to move them along. Porter hoped that the batteries would not notice them until the flotilla was well underway, but Confederate scouts spotted the massive dark shapes moving in the night. They lighted dry wood and several abandoned houses on the Louisiana side to backlight the gunboats. The pitch wood fires from the west bank cast a thick pall of smoke, which only the bright yellow and orange flashes punctuated as the guns fired. As the slow, majestic procession moved south, it was perfectly silhouetted for the Confederate gunners. The batteries began firing on the gunboats with great accuracy from seemingly every gun on the bluffs, from the waterline batteries up to the heights of Fort Hill, and down to Warrenton on the southern end of the defense line. Porter's ironclads returned fire, and soon the sky around Vicksburg glowed yellow and orange. Amazingly, Porter only lost one vessel, the transport *Henry Clay*, to the batteries.³³

As the Mississippi Squadron's mortar craft pounded the Vicksburg defenses, the last great effort was to get Grant's Army across into Mississippi. Porter fought a major ship versus shore engagement at Grand Gulf, which forced Grant to reconsider his launch and landing points. The ironclads and tinclads suffered greatly from the Confederate fire, but the landings from Hard Times Plantation rendered the Grand Gulf forts irrelevant.³⁴

As the noose tightened around Fortress Vicksburg, the Mississippi Squadron would lose two ironclads, the *Cincinnati*, which was raised to fight again and the *Baron DeKalb*, which still rests below the Yazoo waters. Vicksburg surrendered to General Grant on July 4, 1863. Port Hudson surrendered five days later. The Mississippi River was open to the Union at last.

³³ Ibid., 553, 556–58, 682.

³⁴ Ibid., 607–8, 610–11, 613, 615–23, 625–26; Edwin Cole Bearss, *The Campaign for Vicksburg* (Dayton, OH: Morningside House, 1986), II, 311; U.S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 317.

Ulysses S. Grant and the Strategy of Camaraderie

John F. Marszalek

When historians study the military history of the Civil War, they quickly learn that relationships are an important factor in the war's direction. At Vicksburg, for example, John McClernand's interaction with Ulysses S. Grant played a negative role in the campaign. Braxton Bragg's personality and his animosity toward a variety of Confederate officers, and their dislike in return, exacerbated Confederate problems in the West. Conversely, the camaraderie that developed between Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman positively aided the Union war effort.

Grant and Sherman hardly knew each other when the Civil War began, and they did not see all that much of each other throughout the conflict. Yet they developed a close bond that helped shape the direction of the war. That bond was one of complete trust: "I know wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come if alive," Sherman said in March 1864. Grant felt the same way.¹

These two men were an odd couple: Sherman tall, thin, and red headed; Grant, stumpy and dark. Grant was quiet and shy, able to write succinctly and clearly, but he found public speaking and most relationships with strangers painful. Conversely, Sherman was outgoing and exuberant, his correspondence a string of excited run-on sentences. He was very much at home behind the podium and pleased to have conversations with strangers. Should Grant walk into a modern room today, he would immediately, and as unobtrusively as possible, head for a corner. Sherman, on the other hand, would talk to everyone, shake hands, slap backs, tell stories, and revel in meeting so many new friends.

¹ William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, March 10, 1864, *War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, vol. 32, part 3, 49.

Despite their differences, however, they had similarities. Both generals were born in Ohio, although we usually associate Grant with Galena, Illinois. They both found their years at West Point tedious and tiresome, Sherman graduating in 1840 and Grant in 1843. They considered their service in the antebellum frontier U.S. Army boring. Each resigned his commission in 1854 to go into business, and both suffered one failure after another. They bumped into each other, by accident, in St. Louis one day in 1857. Sherman had just experienced his New York bank failure, while Grant had failed as a farmer. They spoke only briefly. Grant never mentioned the encounter, but Sherman later wrote that at the time he had surmised that "West Point and the regular army were not good schools for farmers [and] bankers."²

In the early years of the war, both men served under Henry W. Halleck, and both thought he was the smartest military man they knew. Halleck saw potential in Sherman, though Sherman had difficulties with anxiety and depression in Kentucky and Missouri from late 1861 to early 1862. Conversely, although Grant had won victories at Forts Henry and Donelson and at Shiloh, Halleck thought little of Grant, considering him a sloppy officer who did not know how to prepare reports properly, a talent Halleck saw as the essence of a good officer. He also believed the unproven rumor that Grant was a drunkard and even passed the gossip along to the Federal Commanding General George B. McClellan.³

During the early campaigns, Sherman deferred to Grant despite the fact that he outranked him. He followed Grant's lead and sent forward supplies and encouragement during the Forts Henry and Donelson campaigns in February 1862. Grant was impressed with Sherman's bravery and leadership skills at Shiloh in April 1862, and repeatedly credited him with turning the tide of the battle there. Sherman had three horses shot from under him, suffered a painful shoulder wound from a minie ball that bounced off him after cutting through his hat and shoulder strap, and had buckshot bloody his hand. Despite these injuries, Sherman kept fighting and leading, and Grant saw that he did not have to tell him what to do in the battle; Sherman was already doing it.⁴

² John F. Marszalek, *Sherman, A Soldier's Passion for Order* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 114. The paperback edition: (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007).

³ John F. Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln's Army; A Life of Henry W. Halleck* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 118–119.

⁴ Marszalek, *Sherman*, 178.

Sherman was similarly impressed with Grant for not quitting. After the slaughter of Shiloh's first day, Sherman found Grant standing in the pouring rain under a tree that evening. Sherman considered suggesting a retreat, but something told him not to do it. Instead, he tentatively said, "Well, Grant, we've had the devil's own day, haven't we?" "Yes," Grant responded matter-of-factly, "Lick 'em tomorrow, though."⁵ The following morning, Grant drove the Federals forward. He was not defeated, even though it had looked like the Confederates were going to push the Federals into the Tennessee River that first day.

During the May 1862 Corinth campaign, Halleck took Grant's Army of the Tennessee from him, made him second in command to himself, and then completely ignored him during the campaign. Grant became so depressed that he began planning his exit from the army. It was Sherman who talked him out of leaving and, in the process, strengthened the bond between the two men.⁶ From this point on, their mutual affection and trust remained rock hard. No matter what happened, the two men knew that they had each other's support. Each believed in the other's trustworthiness. This was a situation that was extremely rare among Civil War generals on both sides. Most of the time, generals were jealous of each other rather than working in concert for the good of the war effort.

It was in Mississippi at Vicksburg that this Grant-Sherman closeness was tested. Grant tried a variety of ways to take the Gibraltar of the West, and each attempt failed. Then he came up with another plan. He decided to run David D. Porter's navy ships past the Vicksburg guns, march his army along the western side of the Mississippi River, meet up with the fleet, have Porter's naval vessels ferry his troops to the east bank below Grand Gulf, and conduct his campaign against Vicksburg from there.

It was far too risky, Sherman worriedly told Grant. He believed Grant should take the Union Army back to Memphis and re-start the Vicksburg campaign from there. Grant understood that Sherman made military sense, but politically any movement back to Memphis would look like a retreat, a failure. The northern populace would become discouraged, and this was dangerous, he believed. Grant said no to

⁵ Ibid, 180.

⁶ William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 2 vols. (New York: New American Library, 1990), 1:275-76.

Sherman. Unconvinced, Sherman put his arguments on paper, in a letter to Grant. At the same time he promised his full support, no matter what Grant decided to do. Grant read Sherman's letter, put it into his pocket, and never mentioned it again.

Grant then completed one of the most daring campaigns in all of military history. Sherman's critique was proven wrong. Since Grant never brought up Sherman's letter, Sherman could simply have kept quiet, and no one would have known the better of his opposition. Instead Sherman told anyone who would listen, including a delegation consisting of the Illinois governor and other state politicians, that Grant had been right and he had been wrong about how to capture Vicksburg. "Grant is entitled to every bit of the credit for the campaign; I opposed it. I wrote him a letter about it," Sherman said.⁷

Grant marveled that despite his opposition, Sherman "could not have done more if the plan had been his own." He also recalled that Sherman had been willing to make an elaborate feint in the same area where Confederates had driven him off in his failed attempt at Chickasaw Bayou late December 1862. Grant knew that in the event of failure of the feint movement, Sherman's archenemies, the reporters, would make it look as though Sherman had been beaten and had to retreat again. Sherman had recently court martialed a reporter for sneaking on board one of his troop ships despite Sherman's exclusion orders to the contrary. Sherman clearly knew that he was setting himself up for more such press attacks, but he conducted the feint anyway and made no complaint because he wanted to help Grant in any way he could.⁸

The experience the two men had at Vicksburg was indeed a demonstration of their greatest contribution to the war: it was their belief in one another, their camaraderie. They provided each other with what they both needed: a person the other could trust implicitly. Their mutual respect allowed them to work out differences that might otherwise have split them apart and thus handicapped the Union war effort. Their camaraderie allowed them to focus on the enemy, knowing full well that they did not have to be concerned about treachery to their rear. As the war progressed, their implicit trust helped secure victories

⁷ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles L. Webster, 1885), 1:542n, 542–43n.

⁸ Ibid.

at Meridian, Chattanooga, the march to the sea, through the Carolinas, and in Virginia.

At Chattanooga, for example, Grant built his battle plan around Sherman, and despite the fact that George H. Thomas deserved credit for the victory, Grant continued to praise Sherman. Their friendship was clearly the reason for Grant's attitude demonstrated by their reaction to one another when the Union generals met before the battle. Demonstrating their normally quiet personalities, Grant and Thomas said little to one another when Grant first arrived in Chattanooga. When Sherman arrived, however, the usually subdued Grant broke out into a wide grin. He pointed to a rocker and handed Sherman a cigar. "Take the seat of honor, Sherman," he said. Sherman wanted Grant to have that seat and said so. Grant answered with a smile, "I don't forget, Sherman, to give proper respect to age." "Well then," Sherman said with equal good humor, "If you put it on that ground, I *must* accept."⁹

The Grant-Sherman friendship was clearly the most important such tie of the war and one of the most important in all military history. It is hard to imagine Federal victory in the Civil War without Grant and Sherman. In truth, it could not have happened had this "odd couple" not developed such a strong respect and affection for one another in Tennessee and Mississippi. It was their camaraderie that ensured cooperation throughout the war and helped ensure the Union victory.

⁹ Oliver O. Howard, "Chattanooga," *Atlanta Monthly* 38 (August 1876), 210–11.

Newt Knight and the Free State of Jones: Myth, Memory, and Imagination

Victoria E. Bynum

On October 5, 1863, as the Civil War raged, Confederate Major Amos McLemore was shot to death in Jones County, Mississippi, while visiting with Confederate Representative Amos Deason in Deason's Ellisville home. At the time of his death, Maj. McLemore and his soldiers were on assignment to arrest deserters in McLemore's home county. His murder has long been attributed to Jones County's most notorious deserter and guerrilla leader, Newt Knight.¹

Newt Knight and Amos McLemore are likely the most famous figures in one of many inner civil wars that occurred throughout the South. As recent studies of Civil War guerrilla warfare demonstrate, politically-divided home fronts sometimes became unofficial battlefields. Disaffection in the ranks and incipient Unionism plagued the Confederacy, bringing the brutality of war to the very doorsteps of civilians and slaves.²

A small farmer who owned no slaves, Newt Knight typified white southerners whose view of the Civil War as a "rich man's war and poor man's fight" led them to desert the Confederacy. Just eight days after

¹ For discussions of Amos McLemore's murder, see Thomas J. Knight, *Life and Activities of Captain Newton Knight and His Company and the "Free State of Jones"* (n.p. 1935), 74–75; Ethel Knight, *Echo of the Black Horn* (n. p., 1951), 165–66; Rudy Leverett, *Legend of the Free State of Jones* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 62–67; and Victoria Bynum, *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 105–6.

² The burgeoning historiography on southern Unionism and guerrilla warfare is too voluminous to cite here. Recent overviews include Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: the Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), and Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Harvard University Press, 2010). A promising new work on dissent in Civil War Mississippi is Jarret Ruminski's *Southern Pride and Yankee Presence: The Limits of Confederate Loyalty in Civil War Mississippi, 1860–1865* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Calgary, 2012). For a contemporary account of Piney Woods, Mississippi, Unionists, see R. W. Surby, *Grierson's Raids, and Hatch's Sixty-Four Days' March, with Biographical Sketches and the Life and Adventures of Chickasaw, the Scout* (Chicago: Rounds and James, 1865).

the murder of Major McLemore, Newt and about fifty-five men gathered together, vowing to fight against the Confederacy and, as they later claimed in depositions, to support the United States Government. They elected Newt captain and named the ad hoc military unit the “Knight Company.” The Free State of Jones, as it is known today, thus was born.³

Although the story of Jones County is steeped in myth and clouded by conjecture, there is no doubt that its citizens fought an internal civil war, one in which the Knight Company played a central role. Organized, armed, and deadly, the band was composed of men descended from the region’s oldest white settlers. Of the approximately 95 to 125 who eventually joined, the majority owned land but no slaves.⁴

A common factor in such uprisings was kinship. Among the Knight band’s fifty-five core members, twenty-six shared the same six surnames. These families had intermarried for several generations—in some cases, long before entering Mississippi Territory. Most were related either to Captain Newt Knight, or to his first and second lieutenants, James Morgan Valentine and Simeon Collins. In fact, the band might more accurately be termed the Knight-Valentine-Collins Company.⁵

Social divisions, as well as kinship, shaped pro- and anti-Confederate neighborhoods. Branches of the same families were often divided according to whether or not they owned slaves. Pre-war feuds, marital alliances, and economic relations all shaped one’s loyalties, and the band relied heavily on support from family members. One family, the Collinses, was so consistently pro-Union that one could pretty well predict the Unionism of any family branch that intermarried with them.

³ The date and details of formation of the Knight Company are detailed in depositions contained in Records of the U.S. Court of Claims, 1835–1966, RG 123, Committee on War Claims, Claims of Newt Knight and Others, #8013 and 8464, Claims of Newton Knight, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as Claims of Newton Knight). My thanks to Kenneth Welch for providing me with copies of these files.

⁴ Federal Manuscript Population and Agricultural Censuses, 1850–1880, Jones, Covington, and Jasper Counties, Mississippi. Mississippi’s Piney Woods region was not a land of cotton plantations. Only 12.2 percent of Jones County households held slaves, compared to a state average of over 55 percent. Leading supporters of the Confederacy belonged to its small slaveholding and commercial elite (Amos McLemore, however, was a non-slaveholder who had initially opposed secession).

⁵ Kinships were compiled from various genealogical records, esp. the Federal Manuscript Population Census Reports, and through correspondence with descendants. For the importance of kinship in three different settings, see Victoria Bynum, *Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

Newt Knight himself credited Jasper Collins with having convinced him to desert the Confederacy.⁶

The course of the war accelerated desertion among men from Jones County. In October 1862, the Battle of Corinth, combined with passage of the Twenty-Negro Law, caused increasing numbers of soldiers to flee their units. The 1863 siege of Vicksburg was the last straw for many of the 7th battalion Mississippi Infantry, which included Newt Knight among its ranks. Assigned to Hebert's Brigade, the 7th proceeded toward Vicksburg on May 17, 1863. According to Private O. C. Martin, however, Newt avoided Vicksburg by deserting at Snyder's Bluff. Although Martin remained loyal to the Confederate Army even after being pinned down in Vicksburg, many other soldiers from the 7th never returned after signing loyalty oaths in exchange for parole by General Ulysses S. Grant.⁷

Within five months of Maj. McLemore's murder and formation of the Knight Company, deserters had reportedly taken over Jones County. On March 3, 1864, Gen. Dabney Maury informed Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon that Jones's deserters, whose numbers extended well beyond Knight's band of men, were well-armed and 500 strong. "They have been seizing Government stores," he wrote, "... killing our people, and have actually made prisoners of and paroled officers of the Confederate army."⁸

On the same day, Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk reported to Confederate headquarters that Jones County deserters had murdered a conscript officer, pillaged loyal citizens' houses, and launched a successful

⁶ For extensive treatment of the Unionism of the Collins family in both Mississippi and Texas, see Bynum, *Long Shadow of the Civil War*, and Ed Payne, "Kinship, Slavery, and Gender in the Free State of Jones: The Life of Sarah Collins," *Journal of Mississippi History* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 55–84. Newt Knight's statement that Jasper Collins convinced him the Civil War was a "rich man's war and poor man's fight, is from his interview with Meigs Frost, *New Orleans Item*, March 20, 1921.

⁷ Brig. Gen. Louis Hebert, Hdqrs, Hebert's Brigade, Vicksburg, report to Maj. S. Croom, Asst. Adj. Gen., Forney's Division, July 9, 1863, <http://www.civilwarhome.com/siegeofvicksburg.htm>; Deposition of O.C. Martin, March 6, 1895, Claims of Newton Knight. On the battle of Corinth, see Peter Cozzens, *The Darkest Days of the War: The Battles of Iuka and Corinth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); on Vicksburg, see especially Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁸ Maj. Gen. Dabney H. Maury to Secretary of War James A. Seddon, March 3, 1864, U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1 (hereafter referred to as *Official Records*), 32 (2): 688–89.

raid (which Newt Knight later took credit for) on government stores at Paulding in neighboring Jasper County. Alarmed by such reports, the Confederacy sent two major expeditions into Jones County during the months of March and April 1864, the most important of which was headed by Col. Robert Lowry, who later served as governor of the state.⁹

The infamous “Lowry raids” severely crippled the Knight Company, resulting in the deaths of ten band members.¹⁰ At least sixteen additional men were captured and forced back into the Confederate army on threat of execution. Soon, these men found themselves fighting the battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, where they were captured in July 1864 and sent to Yankee prison camps for the remainder of the war. In the immediate aftermath of Lowry’s raid, a general fleeing of men from the Piney Woods region of Mississippi produced over 200 enlistees for the Union Army’s 1st and 2nd Regiments of the New Orleans Infantry.¹¹

About twenty members of the Knight band, including Capt. Newt Knight and First Sgt. Jasper Collins, remained in the swamps throughout the war. A Knight family slave, Rachel, helped obtain food, supplies, and vital information for the men. After the war, Newt and Rachel’s lives remained intertwined as their families lived and worked together on his Jasper County farm. Rachel’s children, all of whom apparently had white fathers, grew up with the nine children of Newt and his wife, Serena.¹²

⁹ Lt. Gen. L. Polk to Gen. S. Cooper, March 3, 1864, *Official Records*, 32 (3): 580. The initial recommendation that troops be sent to Jones County came a month before Polk’s letter to Cooper, but did not occur until March 2, when Col. Henry Maury entered the county. Lowry’s raid followed in mid-April, 1864. Lt. Gen. L. Polk to Gen. Dabney H. Maury, February 7, 1864, *Official Records* 32 (2): 688–89. Newt Knight discussed the Knight Company’s raid on Paulding in 1921 with journalist Meigs Frost, *New Orleans Item*, March 20, 1921.

¹⁰ On May 5, 1864, Col. William N. Brown described the Knight Company deaths in his report on Lowry’s raid to Governor Charles Clark (Governors’ Papers, RG 123, Mississippi Department of Archives and History). See also *New Orleans Item*, March 20, 1921; Leverett, *Legend of the Free State of Jones*, 90; and Bynum, *Free State of Jones*, 115–29.

¹¹ Bynum, *Free State of Jones*, 124–25. On men from this region who fled to New Orleans and joined Union forces, see Ed Payne, “Crossing the Rubicon of Loyalty: Piney Woods Enlistees in the Union, 1st and 2nd New Orleans Infantry,” May 26, June 7, and July 1, 2011, <http://renegadesouth.wordpress.com/2011/05/26/crossing-the-rubicon-of-loyalties-piney-woods-enlistees-in-the-union-1st-and-2nd-north-orleans-infantry/>.

¹² Rachel was the slave of Newt’s grandfather, John “Jackie” Knight, and later Newt’s uncle, Jesse Davis Knight.

This was no simple story of a white man crossing the color line with a woman of color. Not only did Newt and Rachel have children together, two of Newt and Serena's children—Molly and Mat—also married two of Rachel's children—Jeffrey and Fannie. Newt presided openly over this mixed-race community, eventually distributing land among his mistresses as well as his children and grandchildren.¹³

Newt Knight's important role in defying Confederate authority during the war was rewarded during Reconstruction, during which time he received appointments under the administrations of two Republican governors: William L. Sharkey and Adelbert Ames. Under provisional governor Sharkey in 1865, Newt was designated "commissioner to procure relief for the destitute in a part of Jones County," a position that empowered him at one point to return two formerly enslaved children to their parents, and in another to seize dry goods from former Confederate representative Amos Deason. Under Governor Ames, Newt was appointed deputy U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Mississippi on July 6, 1872. Though ultimately unsuccessful in his petitions for federal compensation for himself and fifty-four members of the Knight Company between 1870 until 1895, several state leaders supported those petitions.¹⁴

Over the course of 150 years, the facts of the Jones County rebellion have been both denied and embellished to support contradictory versions of the story. Just as politicians, historians, and novelists regularly interpret and reinterpret the meaning of the Civil War, so are the motives and character of Newt Knight regularly reinterpreted.

In 1886, for example, as northern industry increasingly penetrated the South, Union veteran G. Norton Galloway of Pennsylvania looked back on the uprising as emblematic of the restless and violent southern

¹³ After Rachel's death in 1889, Newt also fathered two children with Georgeanne Knight, Rachel's oldest daughter by another man. On the history of mixed-race Knights, see Bynum, *Free State of Jones*, 149–190, and *Long Shadow of the Civil War*, 97–135.

¹⁴ Documents on Newt Knight's role as "commissioner of relief" are from his first federal claim, filed in 1870 (Newton Knight Folder, HR 1814, RG 233, House of Representatives, Accompanying Papers Files, 42nd Congress, box 15, NARA). Newt was appointed deputy U.S. Marshal for Mississippi's southern district by U.S. Marshal Shaughnessy. Various politicians who sponsored Newt's petitions to Congress included Republican representatives LeGrand W. Perce, George C. McKee, George Whitmore (of Texas), and Albert R. Howe. Other sponsors included Republican senator Blanche K. Bruce and Democratic representative Thomas R. Stockdale. For a detailed analysis of Newt Knight's thirty-year quest for compensation, see Bynum, *Long Shadow of the Civil War*, 77–96.

society that lay beneath a thin veneer of white upper class gentility. Galloway argued that during the war poor whites of Jones County formally seceded from the Confederacy and declared their county a “free state.” He estimated that the band of deserters known as the Knight Company included approximately 10,000 men! He portrayed them not as patriots to the Union cause, but as “miscreants” who took feuding to “bloodcurdling” heights during the Civil War. Plain white southern men were a savage, backward bunch, thanks to the degrading effects of slavery, he made clear. But northern industrialists, he thanked God, were poised to civilize them.¹⁵

Galloway’s wildly inaccurate version of the Jones County uprising was given intellectual legitimacy by Harvard professor Albert Bushnell Hart, who repeated many of Galloway’s errors—including the myth of secession-within-secession—in the December 1891 issue of *The Nation* magazine. Under Hart, Newt Knight was transformed from a brutal savage into a noble savage patriot.¹⁶

Characterizations of Newt would soon change again. By 1900, builders and believers of the “Lost Cause” had subverted northern images of a glorious war of liberation. The publications of the newly-founded Mississippi Historical Society touted Confederate leaders as the soul of republican virtue in their fight to maintain constitutional principles against an increasingly oppressive federal government. Southern Unionists were generally dismissed as misguided poor whites—ignorant and thankfully few in number.¹⁷

But despite this political atmosphere, Laurel lawyer Goode Montgomery published the first balanced and well-researched account of the Free State of Jones in the Society’s journal. In thoroughly refuting Galloway’s “warped” claims, Montgomery drew a picture of an uprising made up of respectable farmers who had either opposed secession before the war or become dissatisfied with the Confederacy during the war.¹⁸

¹⁵ G. Norton Galloway, “A Confederacy within a Confederacy,” *Magazine of American History* (Oct. 1886), 387–90.

¹⁶ Albert Bushnell Hart, “Why the South Was Defeated in the Civil War,” *New England Magazine* (Nov. 1891), 363–76.

¹⁷ See, for example, J. S. McNeilly, “The Enforcement Act of 1871 and the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, 9 (1906): 171.

¹⁸ Goode Montgomery, “Alleged Secession of Jones County,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* 8 (1904): 13–22. See also Alexander L. Bondurant, “Did Jones County Secede?,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* 1 (1898): 103–6.

In the aftermath of the Great Depression, as historians rediscovered the virtuous plain white southern farmer and explored connections between southern white Unionism and pre-Civil War class divisions, Newt Knight's brand of southern rebellion came back in style. In 1943, James Street published *Tap Roots*, his pro-Union novel inspired by Newt. Then, in 1946, Newt's son, Thomas Jefferson Knight, published a worshipful biography of his father. In 1948, Universal Studios made a movie, *Tap Roots*, based on Street's novel.¹⁹

Lost Cause devotees struck back against the portrayal of Newt Knight as a heroic David who took on the Goliath of white slaveholders by refusing to fight their war. In 1951, Ethel Knight, Newt's pro-Confederate grand-niece, went after him with a vengeance in *The Echo of the Black Horn*. She condemned him as a man who had committed treason against his government—and against his race.²⁰

Capitalizing on southern white opposition to the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, Ethel made public an open secret—that Newt had crossed the color line during and after the Civil War. Her book revealed that Newt had fathered numerous children by Rachel, the former slave of his grandfather. Furthermore, Ethel claimed, he forced two of his white children to marry across the color line. Newt and Rachel's own great-grandson, Davis Knight, she pointed out, had been convicted of miscegenation in 1948 for daring to marry a white woman.²¹

In the 1950s segregated South, Newt Knight was finished as a hero except for those few who looked beyond Ethel's saga of forbidden lust and banditry to the story of insurrection in which it was wrapped. While the legend of the Free State of Jones largely disappeared from academic works, locally, it became the tale of a demented white man, a manipulative, seductive, green-eyed mulatto, and one hundred or more men who were persuaded to join a misbegotten plot to overthrow the noblest government on earth—the Confederacy.²²

Two subsequent historical works pitted tall tales against documentable facts in separate efforts to puzzle out the true story of Civil

¹⁹ James Street, *Tap Roots* (Garden City, NY: The Sun Dial Press, 1943); Thomas J. Knight, *Life and Activities of Capt. Newt Knight*; the movie, *Tap Roots*, was produced by Universal Studios in 1948.

²⁰ Knight, *Echo of the Black Horn*, 70–95, 279–300.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7–10, 300.

²² *Ibid.*, 82, 99.

War Jones County. Drawing primarily from military records and the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Rudy Leverett's *Legend of the Free State of Jones* (1984) effectively proved that no "secession within secession" ever took place in Jones County. Leverett stopped short, however, of researching the backgrounds of the Knight Company members, dismissing them as outlaws. He chose not to discuss Newt's interracial family at all.²³

Building on Leverett's work, my own study, *The Free State of Jones* (2001) drew on state, county, and territorial records, federal censuses, and memories to recreate a community war deeply rooted in kinship ties and neighborhood divisions. Interracial alliances, as well as alliances between families opposed to secession before the war and those no longer willing to fight the war, were forged. Parents, wives, children, and slaves thus became embroiled in home front schisms, both among themselves and with Confederate troops sent to the region.²⁴

Despite these works, many readers remain polarized in their opinions of the Free State of Jones. Just as pro-Confederate enthusiasts have long dismissed the Jones County uprising as the work of a treasonous murderer—Newt Knight—so also do pro-Union enthusiasts continue to elevate him to hero status. In 2009, for example, sports journalist Sally Jenkins and Harvard professor John Stauffer co-authored *State of Jones: the Small Southern County that Seceded from the Confederacy*, whose very title revived the myth of secession-within-secession. Jenkins and Stauffer recast Newt Knight as a devoutly-religious abolitionist much in the model of John Brown who "envisioned" and "fought" for a world of racial equality before and after the war.²⁵

Although evidence suggests that Newt's parents chose not to own slaves and that Newt himself disliked slavery, his wartime stance was more consistent with those of disaffected non-slaveholders, not

²³ Leverett, *Legend of the Free State of Jones*, 37, 75, 79.

²⁴ Bynum, *Free State of Jones*, 71–113.

²⁵ Sally Jenkins and John Stauffer, *The State of Jones: The Small Southern County that Seceded from the Confederacy* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 3–4, 45, 141. Further suggesting that Newt's life paralleled that of John Brown, the authors included an 1859 excerpt from John Brown's "Last Address to the Virginia Court" just before their table of contents. A 2009 online article by James Kelly, "Newton Knight and the Legend of the Free State of Jones," makes a similarly inflated claim that Newt Knight "married" his mixed-race mistress, Rachel. See <http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/309/newton-knight-and-the-legend-of-the-free-state-of-jones>.

abolitionists. Likewise, his political actions during Reconstruction identify him as a Republican who advocated rights of citizenship for former slaves, but tell us nothing about his views on racial equality. Certainly Newt's acceptance of his mixed-race descendants, which included their financial support and education, is remarkable. But again, there is no evidence, contrary to the inflated claims by Jenkins and Stauffer, that he ever opposed legal segregation of the races, although there *is* evidence that he objected to his light-skinned descendants being defined and treated as "Negroes."²⁶

Newt Knight continues to fascinate historians and journalists. James Street's comment that he was a "rather splendid nonconformist," juxtaposed against Rudy Leverett's opinion that he revealed a "penchant for shooting his victims in the back," indicates, however, that we will likely never agree on who Newt really was.²⁷ A mercurial and charismatic man of bold actions, his private thoughts, inner feelings, and motives remain mostly hidden from view. His convictions appear strong, but subject to change—not surprising given the times in which he lived, for the Civil War was clearly transformative for many of his generation. Newt first entered military service voluntarily, later deserted, was captured and sent back to camp, then deserted again. By May 1863, he was living in the woods, and by October of that year, he was captain of the Knight band.²⁸

²⁶ Although Newt's grandfather, John "Jackie" Knight owned at least twenty-two slaves, Newt's father, Albert Knight, apparently avoided slave ownership most of his adult life. In 1952, Rachel Knight's granddaughter, Anna Knight, referred to Newt (without naming him) as "one of the younger Knights who did not believe in slavery," Anna Knight, *Mississippi Girl: An Autobiography* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 11–12. Thomas Knight and Ethel Knight both claimed that Rachel Knight attempted around 1870 to send her mixed-race children to a white public school. According to former slave Martha Wheeler, when the children were denied entrance, someone (rumored to be Newt) burned the school down (Thomas J. Knight, *Life and Activities of Captain Newton Knight* 96–97; Ethel Knight, *Echo of the Black Horn*, 266–67; George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, Supplement, series 1, vol. 10, *Mississippi Narratives*, pt. 5 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), 2269. According to Knight family historian Sondra Yvonne Bivins, Newt's mixed-race contemporaries and kinfolk contended that he counseled his mixed-race descendants to identify and marry as white. See "Yvonne Bivins on the History of Rachel Knight," <http://renegadesouth.wordpress.com/2009/09/11/part-2-yvonne-bivins-on-the-history-of-rachel-knight/>.

²⁷ Street, *Tap Roots*, foreword; Leverett, *Legend of the Free State of Jones*, 45. Most recently, Associated Press reporter Laura Tillman tackled the story with her July 4, 2013, AP wire account: "Jones County's Rebel's Descendants Seek New Facts."

²⁸ On August 17, 1861, Newt was enrolled by Capt. Sansom in Co. K, 8th regiment, Mississippi Volunteers in Jasper County. After the company's muster into the Confederacy, it became Co. E, 8th

As further evidence of his strong convictions, after the war, Newt lived among his rapidly-expanding mixed-race family, served two state Republican administrations and for thirty years tenaciously though unsuccessfully petitioned the federal government for compensation as a Unionist. Then, late in the century, his convictions changed again. Around 1892, Newt declared that non-slaveholders should have risen up and killed the slaveholders rather than be “tricked” into fighting their war for them. In hindsight, he now favored a class revolution rather than cooperation with Union forces as the most effective means by which the slaveholding class might have been defeated once and for all.²⁹

Studies of nineteenth century dissent and insurrection remind us that both the Old and the New South were infinitely more interesting and complex than many imagine. Whether we revere or revile Newt Knight, his personal journey is important for the light it sheds on southern Unionism and guerrilla warfare during the Civil War. His life is also worth studying—but on its own terms, not ours—for the insights it offers into questions about southern class and race relations and the ways in which the Civil War impacted both.

Mississippi Infantry Regiment. After receiving an early discharge, Newt was conscripted on May 12, 1862, into Co. F, 7th Battalion, Mississippi Infantry.

²⁹ J. M. Kennedy, “History of Jasper County,” *Jasper County News*, May 16, 1957, June 13, 1957.

“How Does It All Sum Up?”: The Significance of the Iuka-Corinth Campaign

Timothy B. Smith

A perplexed Ulysses S. Grant no doubt cringed when he read the latest telegraph from his departmental commander Henry W. Halleck. “You will immediately repair to this place and report to these head-quarters,” the July 11, 1862, note stated in its entirety. Many things no doubt went through Grant’s mind, including that he was possibly in trouble yet again. Halleck had shelved Grant twice, once after Fort Donelson and then again after Shiloh. Although Grant had been reinstated after each episode, their relationship simmered with the warming weather that summer. Grant could only guess what he had done now.¹

To Grant’s great surprise, his arrival at Corinth and Halleck’s headquarters did not portend another demotion, but rather a promotion of sorts. President Abraham Lincoln himself had called Halleck to Washington, and Grant, as the department’s second in command, would take over in the Mississippi Valley. Yet even in that ostensible promotion, Halleck sought to undermine Grant, first asking Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton if Grant should take command or if an outside general would be brought in, perhaps planting the idea in Washington minds in case they had not thought of it before. Then, when it became clear Grant would succeed him, Halleck did not elevate Grant to his old command in charge of the Department of the Mississippi; he merely expanded Grant’s original District of West Tennessee to include a slightly larger geographical region.²

Still, Grant’s elevation to command in the Mississippi Valley in mid-July 1862 symbolically ushered in major changes on many levels. For Grant personally, he entered a period in which he would grow

¹ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, vol. 10, part 2: 90–91, 98, 101–2. Hereafter cited as *OR*.

² John F. Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln’s Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 130; *OR*, 1, 10, 2: 90–91, 101–2.

the most as a military commander; he would move from the static army commander role he had performed at such battles as Fort Donelson and Shiloh to a true regional commander, coordinating multiple armies and fronts and performing numerous larger administrative and public relations duties. Also, heavy action soon developed as Confederate forces in Mississippi began to advance trying to retake their lost territory; Confederate generals would certainly test Grant's ability as a larger strategic commander. In addition, the softer side of war also became more of an issue as changing federal policies regarding civilians, slaves, and morale also shifted during this time. Grant, it seems, was growing as a commander, and with him the Union war effort was maturing as well. All these changes were evident in Grant's district in north Mississippi as action picked up in the fall of 1862 around the critical crossroads of Corinth, Mississippi.³



The fall 1862 campaign around Corinth had its antecedents months earlier, when the small northeast Mississippi town served as one of the main Confederate troop induction centers in the state. Sitting as it did at the crossing of two of the western Confederacy's most important rail lines, the Mobile and Ohio and Memphis and Charleston, Corinth quickly became a haven of concentration, supply, and transportation. It just as quickly became a target for the ever-advancing Federals. After breaking Albert Sidney Johnston's defensive line in the west at Forts Henry and Donelson, the Federals continued up the Tennessee River, intending to break the rail lines on either side of Corinth while ultimately taking the crossing itself. The plan was delayed in April by a massive Confederate counter-offensive that resulted in the cataclysmic battle at Shiloh and then by what one Confederate general termed as "those tedious days of Halleck's approach to Corinth." Halleck was ultimately successful in late May, and during the following summer portions of Grant's Army of the Tennessee and William S. Rosecrans's Army of the Mississippi at Corinth endured heat, Confederate raids, lack of water, and major command change such as the

³ For an excellent biography of Grant, see Brooks D. Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph over Adversity, 1822–1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000).

one that sent Halleck to Washington and made Grant commander of the entire area.⁴

As expected, the Confederate high command in the west did not give up despite being pushed back into the lower-slave states. Braxton Bragg gambled on a roundabout turning maneuver that saw most of his army move to Chattanooga via Mobile and thence into Kentucky. When Bragg left the Mississippi Valley, he posted a small portion of his original army, mostly those troops brought over from the trans-Mississippi by Earl Van Dorn and Sterling Price, in Mississippi to block the Union advance down the valley, especially toward Vicksburg. The small body of troops in Mississippi, further divided under Van Dorn and Price, were to defend the lower valley but also to support and partake in Bragg's advance to the east. The Missourian Price was to move from his north-Mississippi position across the Tennessee River and join with Bragg "on the Ohio and there open the way to Missouri." Price set off in September, but made it only to Iuka in the extreme northeastern corner of the state. There, the Tennessee River blocked his advance long enough for the Federals to react.⁵

William S. Rosecrans formulated a plan by which one wing of the Federal army would hold Price in place while the other, led by Rosecrans himself, would march around Iuka and cut off the Confederate retreat from the south. Unfortunately for the Federals, Rosecrans ran late and only attacked near dark on September 19. Grant and his commanders to the north were supposed to advance and aid Rosecrans when he attacked, but they never did. Grant later claimed the wind was blowing in "the wrong direction to transmit sound," but more probably, Grant and his officers came to the conclusion that Rosecrans could not attack that late in the day. Either way, Price held on during a couple of hours of bitter fighting south of Iuka, long enough to allow night to fall and his army to escape by one single unguarded road. Price retreated to the Tupelo area while the Federal commanders cast blame on each other. The ever-learning Grant was realizing just how difficult multiple army maneuvers were on a large strategic canvas.⁶

⁴ A. P. Stewart to William H. McCardle, April 30, 1878, William H. McCardle Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

⁵ *OR*, series 1, volume 17, part 2. For Bragg's campaign, see Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

⁶ U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles L. Webster and Co.,

The dust settled for two weeks as Price caught his breath after the near-disaster, and Grant commanded his broad district from Corinth to Memphis. He moved his headquarters to centrally-located Jackson, Tennessee, some say to get away from Rosecrans, whom he was growing to dislike. In Jackson Grant oversaw major parts of his armies at Memphis under William T. Sherman, at Corinth under Rosecrans, and in the center at Bolivar under Edward O. C. Ord.⁷

The Confederates were not about to let Grant get comfortable, especially when Price and Van Dorn united at Ripley in north Mississippi. Van Dorn was adamant about advancing into west Tennessee and Kentucky, paralleling Bragg's advance and winning glory on his own. But he first had to neutralize Corinth's major garrison; he realized "the taking of Corinth was a condition precedent to the accomplishment of anything of importance in West Tennessee." Van Dorn planned to feint toward Bolivar and then turn quickly and sweep down on Corinth from the northwest. He intended to overpower the town's defenses with speed and surprise, but neither worked for him as his army trudged slowly toward Corinth in the first days of October. Federal patrols and pickets located the Confederate Army miles out from Corinth, allowing Rosecrans to concentrate his divisions inside the town's defenses. The Union's discovery of Van Dorn allowed Grant to send reinforcements from both Bolivar and his own location at Jackson.⁸

In the fighting on October 3–4 that was amazingly similar to Shiloh six months earlier, Van Dorn attacked on the first day and drove Rosecrans's troops through their camps and into a final line around the town. Van Dorn, much like Beauregard at Shiloh, called off the last advance, thinking he could finish the next day. Van Dorn attacked on the second day, but found Rosecrans's Federals well protected behind major earthworks north and east of town. Confederates under Price

1886), 1: 244; Peter Cozzens, *The Darkest Days of the War: The Battles of Iuka & Corinth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 74–126; Lesley J. Gordon, "I Could Not Make Him Do As I Wished": The Failed Relationship of William S. Rosecrans and Grant," in *Grant's Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg*, Steven E. Woodworth, ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 109–27.

⁷ For a revisionist view of the Grant/Rosecrans relationship, see Frank P. Varney, *General Grant and the Rewriting of History: How the Destruction of General William S. Rosecrans Influenced Our Understanding of the Civil War* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2013).

⁸ *OR*, series 1, vol. 17, part 1, 377; Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle, Occupation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 137.

drove through the Union line on the eastern flank, taking the small fort named Battery Powell and surging into town. Others in the center managed to temporarily break the Union line at Battery Robinett and to skirt eastward through a relatively undefended creek valley and into the heart of Corinth. Fighting raged as far south as the Tishomingo Hotel at the railroads' crossing, but Federal counterattacks drove the southerners out and stabilized the line at all points. The heavily bloodied Confederates retreated, having failed in their attempt to take Corinth. The defeat doomed the larger advance into Kentucky.⁹

Even worse for Van Dorn, he now had to get his army to safety, which required that he escape the same way that he came in. His route brought the reinforcements Grant had sent to Corinth into play, and while the small contingent under James B. McPherson from Jackson barely caught up with the retreating Confederates, the other force from Bolivar was much better positioned to make a difference. Van Dorn's army had crossed both the Hatchie and Tuscumbia rivers on their way to attack Corinth, and now the Confederates had to re-cross both to get the army and the massive wagon train to safety. While the Confederate rear guard held off McPherson at the Tuscumbia River crossing, Ord's brigades from Bolivar arrived at the Hatchie crossing and blocked the escape route. Van Dorn barely held Ord's troops off at the Hatchie on October 5 while the rest of the army and the wagons made their escape across the river to the south at Crum's Mill. Van Dorn's bone-weary and bloodied army then marched to safety while Rosecrans and Grant argued over pursuit. It was the second near disaster for many of the Confederates, but escape they did, to become the core of the army that would again defend the Mississippi Valley and Vicksburg.¹⁰



A grateful Abraham Lincoln wrote Grant soon after the fighting ended, asking, "How does it all sum up?" Though it was comparatively small, the campaign in Mississippi nevertheless produced large results. On the strategic level, the failed invasion of west Tennessee in support of

⁹ Smith, *Corinth 1862*, 152–275.

¹⁰ Thomas E. Parson, "Hell on the Hatchie: The Fight at Davis Bridge, Tennessee," *Blue and Gray Magazine* 24, no. 4 (Holiday 2007): 6–24, 43–51.

Bragg's Kentucky push and the unsuccessful invasion of Maryland left the Confederacy on the defensive on all fronts, especially in the critical Mississippi Valley. The net result was worse for the Confederacy along the Mississippi than anywhere else. In Virginia, Lee was able to ensconce his army behind the Rappahannock River line while he received the re-infusion of thousands of troops that had refused to march into Maryland. While the political results of the Antietam campaign, including emancipation and the blow to Confederate foreign recognition, are unmistakable, the strategic outlook was not altogether changed in the East by Lee's invasion. The middle Tennessee strategic situation was not changed that much and slightly favored the Confederacy. While Bragg's invasion of Kentucky had certainly been turned back, the net result of the campaign was a unification of Confederate forces in middle and east Tennessee and the retaking of large swaths of the state.¹¹

In contrast, the Union strategic situation in the Mississippi Valley was altogether enhanced by the fall campaign. Despite close calls at times, the Federals managed to hold every piece of territory they started with while delivering a significant military blow against the enemy. While the fall campaign was admittedly a defensive Union victory that netted little gain, it nevertheless held the line, and that line became extremely important just months later and into 1863 when the Federals continued their advance toward Vicksburg. In that sense, the seemingly moribund defense of the status quo in Mississippi was in fact a huge boon for the Union because the status quo was maintained on the Confederacy's weakest front.

In addition, the strategic situation on the Union side rested in the hands of a much wiser commander, Ulysses S. Grant. Although he had stumbled in the pincer attempt at Iuka and had been awkward in attempting to catch the Confederate Army retreating from Corinth, Grant nevertheless came out of the fall Mississippi campaign with a strategic victory in which he lost little. Grant managed to hold all his territory, to stop a combination with Bragg's forces, to prevent the Confederate invasion of west Tennessee and western Kentucky, and to defeat decisively the enemy in pitched battle although a subordinate was in tactical command for the battle. In the midst of it all, Grant was learning to juggle a larger command of multiple armies and posts.

¹¹ *OR*, series 1, vol. 17, part 1, 160.

These skills, first learned in west Tennessee and north Mississippi in the fall of 1862, served him well later in central Mississippi and Virginia.¹²

The social changes wrought by the fall Mississippi Valley campaign were also enormous. As the Federal line from Memphis to Corinth became more stabilized, Union officers, namely Grant, began to incorporate into their districts the major changes occurring in Federal policy toward slaves and civilians. As the war zones became increasingly enlarged, the Lincoln administration saw it had to take the fight to the people and developed policy that would eventually lead to the famed “total war” activities of 1864 and 1865. The gloves slowly came off in north Mississippi during the fall of 1862. The continually shifting administration slave policy provided major change for the north Mississippi area. As Lincoln declared the freedom of slaves in areas still in rebellion, Grant concentrated them into contraband camps and began their enlistment in the United States military.¹³

Often overlooked as the backwater of the war in 1862 and certainly overshadowed by Lee’s and Bragg’s invasions, the fall 1862 campaign in the Mississippi Valley nevertheless provided major victories in the Union war effort. Of all three major fighting areas, the net result, certainly militarily, was the starkest in Mississippi, which was the weakest area of the Confederate defense. Moreover, the Union’s most successful general was on this front gaining valuable experience in a larger theater of command. His success spelled difficult times for the Confederacy’s future.

¹² For Grant’s development, see Michael B. Ballard, *U.S. Grant: The Making of a General* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

¹³ Smith, *Corinth 1862*, 276–302.

From Brice's Crossroads to Grierson's Raid: The Struggle for North Mississippi

Stewart Bennett

The year 1864 proved pivotal in the development of the American Civil War. Decisions made determined the destinies of commanders, the men who fought under them, and the civilians caught in the crossfire of war. This was especially true in North Mississippi. This also was the year Lincoln put the military fortunes of the Union and its armies under the authority of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant.

While Grant led the war effort from the eastern theater, he put his trust in his close friend Major General William T. Sherman to command and oversee the work of the Union armies in the Western Theater. According to Grant, Sherman's ultimate goals included the destruction of the Army of Tennessee, and if possible, the capture of Atlanta.¹ Atlanta was a major railroad hub for the South and specifically the Western Theater. By taking Atlanta, Sherman would sever Confederate rail lines between the two theaters of war thus continuing to divide the Confederacy. In order to make these goals obtainable, Sherman needed a strong army and a protected supply line so he focused on how to supply his armies throughout the campaign toward Atlanta. Damage to Sherman's supply line would have caused lengthy delays in the Union Army's movements and ultimately would have meant disaster for Sherman. One of Sherman's problems, and quite possibly his most vexing, was the fear of an attack upon his long vulnerable supply line by Confederate Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest and his cavalry forces.

Sherman had good reason to worry about Forrest. Although Forrest had no military training, it became obvious early in the struggle that he was a natural at making war and a force to be reckoned with. By leading a successful escape of his troops from Fort Donelson, his hard fighting at Shiloh and Chickamauga, his raids through Tennessee, his successful pursuits of Union forces in Alabama, and then his

¹ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1886), vol. 2:120.

controversial taking of Fort Pillow, Forrest and his cavalry had made themselves seem larger than life to many in the South and to Union armies who crossed their path.² Although Georgia was on Sherman's mind, the specter of Forrest haunted Sherman's thoughts. Sherman later admitted, "There was great danger, always in my mind, that Forrest would collect a heavy cavalry command in Mississippi, cross the Tennessee River, and break up our railroad below Nashville."³ Therefore, Sherman developed a plan for dealing with Forrest.

In May 1864, Confederate Major General Stephen Dill Lee assumed command of the department that comprised all of Mississippi, Alabama, East Louisiana, and Western Tennessee, encompassing all Confederate forces operating within this large domain, including Forrest and his cavalry.⁴ Although others clamored for Forrest's cavalry to strike Sherman's supply line in Tennessee, Lee had his own problems. If Forrest and his men rode into central Tennessee, it would leave North Mississippi's cornfields and important rail lines vulnerable to Union raids. Furthermore, this would have hampered the delivery of supplies to Johnston's Confederate Army of Tennessee, which depended on North Mississippi for much of its provisions. Lee's fears of Mississippi's vulnerability grew when he realized Alabama's susceptibility to Union raids.

Sherman reasoned that until Forrest had been captured or killed, the southern cavalryman would be a constant worry. Therefore, Sherman decided to take the fight to Forrest by sending a small Union Army from Memphis under the command of Brigadier General Samuel D. Sturgis in search of the illusive cavalryman. In doing so, Sherman hoped to keep Forrest busy in Mississippi and away from Union operations in Georgia. Sturgis's first attempt in late April ended in failure, due mainly to rainy weather and low supplies, but on May 31, Sherman ordered Sturgis, once again, to move forward. This time,

² Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 92–93; Brian Steel Wills, *A Battle from the Start* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 113–16.

³ William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman* (New York: D. Appleton, 1904), vol. 2: 31, 52.

⁴ Lee, Stephen D, "Battle of Brice's Crossroads, or Tishomingo Creek, June 2nd to 12th, 1864," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Franklin L. Riley, ed. (Oxford, MS, 1902), vol. 6, 27–28. It should be noted that an official report has never been found. Lee's article for the Mississippi Historical Society appears to be his report, but it was written in 1902, years after the war and death of General Forrest.

Sturgis had Brigadier General Benjamin Grierson commanding Waring's Cavalry of 1,500 with Winslow's 1,800 cavalymen and six pieces of artillery. Infantry were also part of Sturgis's forces and included Colonel William L. McMillen's brigade of 2,000 along with Company E, First Illinois Artillery, four guns; a section of two guns from the Fourteenth Indiana Battery and part of Colonel George B. Hoge's brigade of A. J. Smith's division, some 1,600 troops. Finally, Captain F. H. Chapman's four-gun battery was added along with Colonel Edward Bouton's brigade of colored troops at 1,200 strong. Sturgis intended to march on Corinth. From there, they would continue to Tupelo, then on to Okolona, Columbus, and finally Grenada. The combined forces planned to return to Memphis from Grenada. Sturgis hoped, during his movements, to provoke an engagement with Forrest.⁵

While Sturgis's men marched through north Mississippi on June 1, Forrest and his men were busy moving toward the Tennessee River to break Sherman's supply line. However, with Sturgis on the move, Lee decided to call Forrest back to Mississippi in order to halt the Union advance. Lee's decision worked wonderfully into Sherman's overall plan. Heavy rains and lack of supplies once again hindered Sturgis's movements through North Mississippi, except this time Sturgis resolved to keep moving toward Tupelo.⁶

On the morning of June 10, Grierson's cavalry reached Brice's Crossroads ahead of Forrest's troopers. Forrest, hoping to catch Sturgis's cavalry separated from the infantry, sent forward what troops he had at the time, roughly 2,000. These men did their best to form a strong skirmish line until Colonel Tyree H. Bell with almost 2,800 men, more than half of Forrest's available troops, could arrive and enter the fight. Cavalry on both sides fought dismounted. Forrest later reported that his available force during the fighting at Brice's Crossroads stood at only 3,500.⁷

Regardless of the numbers, Forrest's men were able to conceal their troop strength by using the area's topography to their advantage

⁵ *OR*, vol. 39, 1: 217–18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 221–22.

⁷ John Morton, *The Artillery of Nathan Bedford Forrest's Cavalry* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2012), 174; James Harvey Mathes, *General Forrest* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902), 238–239, 241; Thomas Jordan and J. P. Pryor, *The Campaigns of Lieut. Gen. N. B. Forrest* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996 reprint), 467–69; *OR*, vol. 39, 1: 222–23, 225.

while keeping up a heavy skirmish fire. This caused considerable angst for Grierson who believed that Forrest had more men than the wily southern general actually commanded. Sturgis and his infantry were at least two miles from the conflict at Brice's Crossroads when the general received notification of the fight. Sturgis committed himself and two of the brigades to the action by moving troops on the double quick under a stifling Mississippi sun. In doing so, Sturgis lost many of his troops to heat exhaustion before they could reach the crossroads. By 1:00 p.m. the remnants of his brigades reached the Union line at Brice's Crossroads. Bell's Confederates had also arrived and entered the fight. Forrest moved his men forward and pushed the Union forces back upon the crossroads finally breaking the federal line and forcing the Union troops back across Tishomingo Creek. Sturgis's final brigade, made up of Bouton's black soldiers, arrived in time to hold the Union line near the Tishomingo Creek bridge, allowing Union forces to cross the creek. The black troops then retreated to a final stand on Whitehouse Ridge. This last stand was short-lived because Sturgis's line could not withstand Forrest's onslaught. The Confederate charge caused the Union men to flee toward Ripley and beyond to Memphis. Sturgis lost about two hundred wagons and all of his artillery. Union troops trickled into Memphis over the next two weeks, yet Confederate forces captured many before they could reach the city. Sturgis recorded Union losses, including the missing, as 1,623.⁸

Forrest's win at Brice's Crossroads came with a price. Confederate casualties lost during his victory were hard to replace. S.D. Lee wrote authorities in Richmond of Forrest's exploits announcing that Forrest had "gained a complete victory, capturing many prisoners and wagon train." Yet in the end, Lee wrote, "our loss quite severe." The Union Army suffered 617 casualties, while the Confederate Army lost 492 killed and wounded. Given that Forrest had a smaller command, his loss was, as Lee mentioned, "quite severe." The greatest difference in assessing this battle could be in the number of Union soldiers taken prisoner.⁹

The battle of Brice's Crossroads became a celebrated Confederate victory and cemented Forrest's reputation as a great leader and fighter, while also helping to secure north Mississippi under southern control,

⁸ Stewart Bennett, *The Battle of Brice's Crossroads* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 41, 66–69, 72, 99–104, 106–7, 109–15, 117–22; *OR*, vol. 39, 1: 92–95.

⁹ *OR*, vol. 39, 1: 95, 220, 230–31.

at least for the moment. Sherman received word of Sturgis's debacle soon after the fight. Although disappointed in the outcome, Sherman had in effect won at Brice's Crossroads, for the fight kept Forrest away from Sherman's supply line. Sherman continued to take the fight to Forrest in north Mississippi and demonstrated his commitment to defeating Forrest by sending an even larger army into Mississippi, stating that Forrest's cavalry "should be met and defeated at any and all cost."¹⁰

By the middle of June, Sherman's forces in Georgia found themselves near Kennesaw Mountain about twenty-five miles north of Atlanta. Sherman could not afford a serious disruption in his supply line, especially at this point. Therefore, it became imperative that Forrest be held in and around North Mississippi because Sherman's supply line continued to be vulnerable as his army maneuvered deeper into Confederate territory.

By early July, General A. J. Smith left Memphis in another attempt to defeat Forrest. Smith had an aggregate of 14,000 troops, which included infantry, cavalry, and four artillery batteries. By July 12, Smith and his Union forces had reached Pontotoc and encountered Confederate skirmishers. Forrest readied his men for a fight south of Pontotoc on the road toward Okolona. However, through reconnaissance, Smith found the Okolona road to be secured about nine miles south of Pontotoc by Confederate forces. This area included swampy lowlands, felled trees, and a strong enemy position upon a hill just beyond the swamp. While Forrest and Lee waited for the Union general to march into their trap at Okolona, Smith instead moved his men west toward Tupelo. Smith, in doing so, looked to secure Tupelo, possess the railroad there, and most of all, to choose the ground upon which he wished to fight.¹¹

As Union forces moved toward Tupelo, Lee ordered Forrest and his men to attack and press the rear of the Union forces. In doing so, both sides suffered casualties, and Smith lost a number of wagons. Smith's army, including his rear guard of colored troops, fought off attacks by Lee and Forrest during the march to Tupelo. When Smith arrived two miles west of Harrisburg, a tiny community west of Tupelo, he developed a battle line, which Forrest found to be, "a strong position on a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 115.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 250–51, 321.

ridge fronting an open field, gradually sloping toward our approach.” The Union line also included fortifications causing Forrest to see the position as, “almost impregnable.”¹² Regardless, Lee decided to attack the next day, July 14. Forrest led the Confederate right in assaulting the Union left roughly a mile distant. Once Forrest had explained the plan to his subordinates and had moved out to select a position for an attack, he found the Kentucky Brigade already in motion toward the front and “retiring under the murderous fire concentrated upon them.” Forrest managed to move the brigade to a more secure area but the well-entrenched enemy position and Union firepower only strengthened Forrest’s resolve not to commit his troops to such slaughter. Instead, Forrest called forward his artillery and developed a new line.¹³

Meanwhile, the Confederate left made its way toward the main Union line and pushed the enemy skirmishers back as they went. These Confederates were within sixty yards of the main Union line when Smith unleashed artillery and small arms fire upon the hapless southerners. The Union gunfire, lack of ammunition, and the heat of the day became too much for the Confederate soldiers. The gray line found itself compelled to fall back after two hours of fighting. Lee, resigned to the fact that the Union line would hold, ordered his men to fall back and create strong works. During the night, Confederates led by Forrest attempted to turn Smith’s left flank but were beaten back, largely by Bouton’s colored troops. Forrest had ridden with one of his aides through the Union lines that evening, getting a good view of enemy positions before he was spotted. He and his aide managed to escape unharmed. The experience left Forrest with an even greater appreciation of Smith’s strong position. What he had seen no doubt accounted for some of his reluctance during the fighting on July 14.¹⁴

Smith and his Union forces had won a victory, but other problems quickly surfaced. Just as Sherman needed to keep his supply line sufficient and unmolested, Smith found on the morning of July 15 that his own supplies were seriously deficient. Much of the Union Army’s bread had spoiled. Now the army had to rely on one day’s rations. Furthermore, the army’s artillery ammunition supply allowed for only 100

¹² Ibid., 1: 251, 321–22.

¹³ Ibid., 1: 322.

¹⁴ Ibid., 1: 322–23; Michael B. Ballard, *The Civil War in Mississippi: Major Campaigns and Battles* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 230–31, 238–39.

rounds per gun. Smith had finally found Forrest and had beaten the Confederate Army, yet with these supply problems he found it necessary to return to Memphis. Perhaps, too, he did not wish to press his luck. Therefore, on July 15, Smith and his victorious army moved out, camping that night at Old Town Creek, but not before one last encounter. Lee called upon Forrest to pursue the Union troops as they made their way along the Ellistown Road. The fighting at Old Town Creek became heavy as Confederate troops drove Union forces from a hill and down into the creek area. Although both sides held their positions, Forrest arrived in the thick of the fighting only to receive a painful wound. That caused the general to be removed from further service for the day. Soon after, the Confederate troops were withdrawn from the fight.¹⁵

Smith and his men made their way back toward Memphis and into camp at La Grange, Tennessee, by July 21. Losses for Smith's command during the Battle of Tupelo (Harrisburg) were around 700 men. While Smith had kept Forrest busy in Mississippi, Sherman expected more. On July 20, Sherman wrote Washburn in Memphis, "Order Smith to pursue and keep after Forrest all the time."¹⁶ Sherman found himself at the gates of Atlanta fighting the Battle of Peachtree Creek on July 20, then the Battle of Atlanta and eventually Ezra Church on the 28th. General John Bell Hood had taken command of Confederate forces around Atlanta, and it became even more imperative that Forrest be kept from the federal supply line if Sherman expected to keep his campaign alive. With this in mind, Smith and an army of at least 20,000 men made their way back into Mississippi in search of Forrest.¹⁷

Not long after the fight near Tupelo, Stephen D. Lee was assigned to Hood's army in Georgia. Forrest continued to do his part serving within the North Mississippi region but at a greater disadvantage than before. The battle of Brice's Crossroads had taken its toll in casualties and additional losses during the fighting around Tupelo cost Forrest and the South 1,326 men.¹⁸ Forrest found that his manpower had been reduced to only 5,000 troops.¹⁹ In explaining his plight to the new

¹⁵ *OR*, vol. 39, 1: 323–24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 256, 2:184.

¹⁷ Jack Hurst, *Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 210.

¹⁸ *OR*, vol. 39, 1: 324.

¹⁹ Hurst, *Forrest: A Biography*, 210.

department commander, Major General Dabney H. Maury, Forrest admitted, "I have not the force to risk a general engagement, and will resort to all other means in my reach to harass, annoy, and force the enemy back."²⁰ While Sherman tried to keep Forrest off his coveted supply lines, Forrest worked to keep Smith from moving into the Confederate general's homeland. What came next surprised Washburn, Smith, and the people of Memphis.

General Benjamin Grierson and his cavalry were, again, part of Smith's movement into Mississippi, this time down the north-south Mississippi Central Railroad. Grierson explained his frustration admitting, "We are moving south again without an objective point, merely striking out in a haphazard sort of fashion, and as likely to hit the air as the enemy. We can do but little good by such movements beyond occupying the attention of the rebels and keeping Forrest's troops from interfering with Sherman's movements further east."²¹ While Smith's troops continued their march toward Oxford, Forrest began his own expedition toward Memphis. Forrest worked to create a diversion that would cause the retreat of Smith's forces while also wrecking havoc among the Union generals, troops, and the civilians residing in Memphis. His possible objectives included capturing Union officers, especially Cadwallader Washburn (commanding in Memphis), creating confusion among the Union troops in the town, freeing captives in Irving Prison, and threatening if not capturing the city itself.²²

On Sunday, August 21, around 5:00 a.m., Forrest's command drove in the Union pickets and entered Memphis. Squads of Confederate cavalrymen surrounded the Gayoso House and Union Street where Washburn made his headquarters and residence. Fortunately for Washburn, he had been alerted and whisked away to nearby Fort Pickering minutes before the Confederates could capture him. The raid ended soon after it started. No Union generals were captured, no inmates were freed from Irving Prison, nor was the city of Memphis captured. However, confusion reigned in the early hours of that foggy Sunday morning. Forrest did procure Washburn's uniform, and the dash through Memphis frightened Smith, who burned many buildings in the vicinity

²⁰ *OR*, vol. 39, 2: 756.

²¹ Bruce J. Dinges and Shirley A. Leckie, eds. *A Just and Righteous Cause: Benjamin H. Grierson's Civil War Memoir* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 275.

²² Hurst, *Forrest: A Biography*, 212.

of Oxford and retreated back toward Tennessee. In doing so, Smith left Forrest and North Mississippi behind in what would be Smith's final expedition in that department. Forrest's raid reverberated throughout Memphis for days. Lieutenant Colonel William H. Thurston recalled on the twenty-third of August that "the whole town was stampeded at about 10 a.m. by a report being circulated that Forrest had returned in force and was again in town. It was the most disgraceful affair I have ever seen, and proves that there is demoralization and want of confidence by the people in our army, and our army in some of its officers."²³

The Union forces at Memphis soon began to dwindle as many were sent into Arkansas and Missouri for other military duties. Sherman's forces had been victorious in Atlanta and on September 2 entered the city. Forrest was finally free to strike Sherman's supply lines but at a time when Sherman no longer depended on them. Forrest then took his command and joined Hood and his army in Tennessee leaving Mississippi with fewer troops for protection. After Hood's disastrous campaign in Tennessee, Union forces, once again, made their way back into the region. In late December, General Grierson with about 3,500 men set out into north Mississippi, revealing just how desperate and unprotected the Confederacy and the region had become. The area of Booneville and Guntown, where Brice's Crossroads had been a major regional victory for Forrest and his men, became easy prey as Union patrols destroyed railroad bridges, culverts, miles of track and telegraph lines, and store houses with clothing and military goods. Grierson's men then attacked Confederate supplies at and near Verona. Here, Union troops destroyed supplies on board two trains of thirty-two cars along with eight warehouses containing what Grierson found to be, "ordnance, quartermaster, and commissary stores, besides 300 army wagons, most of which were marked 'U.S.A.' having been captured from General Sturgis at the time of his defeat by General Forrest near Brice's Crossroads."²⁴

From Verona, Grierson continued toward Tupelo destroying the 1,000-foot railroad bridge over Old Town Creek and the track toward Tupelo. This destruction was accomplished without serious delays from southern forces. The lack of strong Confederate resistance revealed a stark difference when compared with Confederate resistance during

²³ *OR*, vol. 39, 1: 468–72.

²⁴ Dinges and Leckie, *Just and Righteous Cause*, 302–3.

the summer of 1864. From this point, Grierson's forces moved along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad destroying Confederate supplies from Okolona to Egypt Station where Confederate forces made their bitterest stand. This three-hour fight ended in Union victory and Confederate supplies destroyed. Union forces continued moving west to Houston. Detachments of Union cavalry from Grierson's command then moved out across Mississippi to areas including Pontotoc, West Point, Bellefontaine, Greensborough, Bankston, Winona Station, and the area near Grenada. Track, bridges, and equipment were destroyed as well along the Mississippi Central Railroad. Although Union forces met with some Confederate resistance, more often than not, Union troops were able to move easily and accomplish their objectives without serious resistance.²⁵

Grierson's entire command moved southwest from the Winona area, arriving in Vicksburg on January 5, 1865. Success rode with Grierson while he and his troopers completed their 450-mile mission. Grierson's forces managed to destroy twenty thousand feet of bridges, ten miles of track, twenty miles of telegraph, sixteen locomotives, over three hundred wagons with supplies, two caissons, thirty warehouses of supplies, cloth and shoe factories along with a number of tanneries and machine shops, captured five thousand new muskets and a volume of foodstuffs. While Confederate troops were killed and wounded, more than a hundred of those captured at Egypt Station were found to have actually been Union prisoners who were recruited from southern prisons for Confederate service.²⁶ War had taken its toll on the region. Union and Confederate manpower proved to have a significant role in the part North Mississippi played in the war during 1864. Both sides had been able to muster the forces needed to fight battles such as the Confederate victory at Brice's Crossroads and the Union victory near Tupelo. Yet, as the summer waned, so did Confederate reinforcements. By the fall of 1864, Forrest found himself using diversionary tactics such as the raid on Memphis to draw back larger Union forces, but by the winter of that same year, Union cavalry under Grierson could raid at will. Although Union forces found themselves stretched

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 303–8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

across Mississippi and Tennessee, they never wanted in material and manpower quite like Confederate forces in the same areas. When the remnant of Hood's army reached Corinth, they found few supplies, for Grierson's second raid had left the cupboard bare. With Union victories in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Sherman's successes in Georgia, the end of the war and the Confederacy became inevitable.

Unionism in Civil War North Mississippi

Thomas D. Cockrell

One would think the voluminous literature on the American Civil War would have long exhausted every conceivable area of study, but very little has been written on the role southern Unionists played in the nation's greatest tragedy. In recent years, a small group of historians has given more attention to the subject and the activities of Unionists in the southern states thereby compensating for the dearth of published information region-wide by previous generations of scholars. For decades Georgia Lee Tatum's *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (1934) provided one of the best guides for a general account of the topic. Recent studies have given more insight into Unionist activities in individual states. Without attempting to exhaust every aspect of Unionism in Mississippi, this study only tries to cover the northern part of the state where loyalty to the Union or resistance to the Confederacy was more prevalent. Defining Unionist is difficult since those who opposed secession, or came to support the Union during the war, may not be classified with those who were "disloyal" Confederates, although both resisted Confederate control. In Mississippi, as in other southern states, Unionism's greatest challenge came with the secessionist movement after the Compromise of 1850. When John A. Quitman, the leading "fire-eater" in the state, dropped out of the gubernatorial race in 1851, Jefferson Davis replaced him on the States' Rights ticket. However, Davis lost the election to Unionist Henry S. Foote. While Unionists' seats in the state senate outnumbered States' Rights Democrats 21 to 11 and in the house of representatives by an impressive 63 to 35, these victories proved to be short-lived.¹

¹ James L. Hutson, *Southerners Against Secession: The Arguments of the Constitutional Unionists in 1850-51* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2000), 285; James W. Garner, "The First Struggle over Secession in Mississippi," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* [hereafter cited as *PMHS*], IV (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Harrisburg Publishing Company, 1901), 102; Victoria E. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 5.

As the decade moved forward, the average citizen in Mississippi believed unrestricted expansion of slavery to be the only means to preserve southern interests since one newspaper columnist wrote, it was “so often sounded in their ears that they had become somewhat accustomed to it.” As a result, a “fire-eater,” John J. Pettus of Kemper County, won the governor’s seat in 1859 because most Mississippians accepted the belief that if slavery were threatened, they along with all other southerners would suffer from impending economic and social consequences. When Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election of 1860, they were convinced to leave the Union.²

The delegates from the northeastern hill counties joined those from the old Whig areas along the Mississippi River mounting the strongest opposition to disunion in 1860 and 1861. This strange coalition of poor upcountry non-slaveholding farmers and large slaveholding planters in the Natchez district indicated that Mississippians viewed Unionism differently. Many poor subsistence farmers saw secession as unnecessary since their plight would be the same in or out of the Union. The large planter saw his slaves protected by the Constitution and feared losing everything if the South left the Union. On January 7, 1861, delegates to the state-wide convention that would decide Mississippi’s fate met in Jackson. Of the one hundred delegates, fifty-six were middle class professional men, small slaveholders, or non-slaveholders. Forty-four were of the planter class, but only ten owned over one hundred slaves. The vote of eighty-four to fifteen to secede on January 9 suggests that instead of the large planters leading the state out of the Union, it was the middle class. Believing in the “righteousness of slavery,” they mistakenly thought it could be done peacefully. Events throughout the state led to this decision.³

The anti-Unionist middle-class also inflamed the secession fervor. A typical delegate was a young man whose “real hopes lay in the future.” In other words, he aspired to be a wealthy slave owner, the standard by which the white South measured success. The Vicksburg

² Ben Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War: A Narrative History* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2006), 17–18; (Jackson, Mississippi) *Mississippian*, March 7, 1851; Percy Lee Rainwater, *Mississippi: Storm Center of Secession, 1856–1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1938), 177–96.

³ Richard A. McLemore, ed., *A History of Mississippi*, 2 vols. (Hattiesburg, Mississippi: 1973), 1: 442; Ralph A. Wooster, “The Membership of the Mississippi Secession Convention of 1861,” *Journal of Mississippi History* [hereafter cited as *JMH*], XVI (1954): 248, 257.

Sun said in 1860, "A large plantation and [slaves] are the [ultimate goal] of every Southern gentleman's ambitions."⁴

The population in the northeastern counties of Tishomingo, Tippah, and Itawamba was made up of 66 percent non-slaveholders, but the delegate vote on secession lacked cohesion. Tishomingo was divided, Tippah voted for secession, and Itawamba voted against it. As one observer wrote, "Unionism in northeast Mississippi in 1860 was not prepared to oppose the secessionists with force." Nevertheless, their delegates "believed that secession would be but another grievance and no remedy."⁵

While the debate raged, threats and intimidation by the secessionists against citizens in most areas of the state were commonplace, and north Mississippi was no exception. For example, Matthew J. Babb of Tishomingo County while "talking against secession" feared arrest if he failed to stop. Both sides had the opportunity to be heard when Mississippi's secession convention met in Jackson. Unionists or cooperationists (those who wanted to secede only in cooperation with other southern states) offered three propositions that would have delayed action, but none were approved. A request that the ordinance be delayed until it was ratified by the voters failed to pass by a vote of seventy to twenty-nine. Unionists in the state were outvoted and their pleas for loyalty ignored.⁶

When cooperationists finally acquiesced and signed the document, a pro-Unionist newspaper prophetically warned, "It may prove a fatal, an [ir]retrievably fatal error" to interpret such as submission to blindly following the secessionists into the pending catastrophe. Loyalists chose to either remain silent or reluctantly gave in. Dr. J. J. Thornton of Rankin County, who refused to sign the secession ordinance, accused fire-eaters of "buying votes, trickery, and false promises."⁷

When Mississippi, the second state to secede, joined the Confederate States of America on March 29, 1861, Unionists faced the dilemma of how to react and what course to take. Many Unionists linked their

⁴ Vicksburg *Sun*, April 9, 1860.

⁵ Mary Floyd Summers, "Politics in Tishomingo County, 1836–1860," *JMH*, XXVII (1966): 151.

⁶ M. Shannon Mallard, "I Had No Comfort to Give Thee," *North and South*, 6 (May 2003): 79, 83; McLemore, *History of Mississippi*, 1: 443; Thomas H. Wood, "A Sketch of the Mississippi Secession Convention of 1861-Its Membership and Work," *PMHS*, VI (1902): 100.

⁷ William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 323; *Mississippi Journal of the State Convention* (1861), 86–88; Vicksburg *Daily Whig*, December 25, 1860; Natchez *Weekly Courier*, December 27, 1860.

fate with that of the South, as the editor of the Vicksburg *Daily Whig* predicted in January 1861, saying he would “abide its fate, be it for weal or be it for woe.” Others accepted the inevitability saying, “It was manifest to the most superficial observer that the die had been cast already, and that civil war was upon us.”⁸

Some Unionists vocally expressed their sentiments whereas members of the clergy used the pulpit as a forum often paying a high price for their loyalty. Reverend James A. Lyon, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Mississippi, rebuked what he called the “wicked unprincipled demagogues, who have brought the country to its present ruin.” His public prayers for the success of the armies without specifying for which side he was praying, created a problem for critics. Local Confederate extremists dubbed him an “abolitionist,” “Black Republican,” and “traitor” and in February 1862, they moved against the minister’s family and the church leadership. Theodoric Lyon, an officer in the Confederate Army, suffered the humiliation of a court-martial in the fall of 1863 as part of the campaign against his father.⁹

Likewise another minister, James Phelan of the Presbyterian Church in Macon received threats of lynching if he continued his anti-Confederate tendencies. Failing to heed the warnings, would-be assassins shot him near his home. Phelan recovered, only to have the assailants burst into his residence where they shot and killed the minister in the presence of his wife. Drawing their weapons, they shouted, “we want . . . to kill you, you infernal Unionist and abolitionist.”¹⁰

Greenwood LeFlore, the Choctaw chief who earlier saw his people removed by the Federal government, had remained in the state and lived in Carroll County. Although the United States rarely held

⁸ Vicksburg *Daily Whig*, January 23, 1861; Wood, “Sketch of the Mississippi Secession Convention,” 93.

⁹ McLemore, *History of Mississippi*, 1: 516–17; Z/0176: Lyon (James A.) Journal 1861–1870, type-script copy, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 30–31; David B. Chesebrough, “Dissenting Clergy in Confederate Mississippi,” *JMH*, LV (1993): 125; John K. Bettersworth, ed., “Mississippi Unionism: The Case of the Reverend James A. Lyon,” *JMH*, I (1939): 45–47; James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), 20.

¹⁰ Chesebrough, “Dissenting Clergy,” 119; Mallard, “I Had No Comfort to Give Thee,” 80–83; Timothy B. Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 182–84.

to agreements with Native Americans, LeFlore remained loyal. When Federal troops approached his property, he offered them all the assistance they required and said he was happy to see the “old flag again carried by United States soldiers.”¹¹

A few Mississippi Unionists joined Federal military units and fought for the preservation of the Union. Records indicate that over a hundred thousand white southerners fought in Union military units. Mississippi provided a regiment of white Unionists called the First Regiment Mounted Rifles, organized in Memphis, which served from March 1864 to June 1865 in northern Mississippi, western Tennessee, and northwestern Alabama. William Franks and several of his neighbors enlisted in another regiment at Glendale, Mississippi, on December 15, 1862. At some time during the war, more than two thousand southern hill country men joined the First Alabama Cavalry Volunteers under the command of Union General Grenville M. Dodge. They participated in scouting expeditions in northern Mississippi and later fought against the Confederates at Bear Creek in Alabama. They also accompanied General William T. Sherman to Atlanta in 1864. Franks left the service in 1863 to take his family to Cairo, Illinois, for their protection since several Unionists had been shot or hanged in northeast Mississippi. During Reconstruction, the Franks family returned to their home state.¹²

Other Unionists chose a more discreet role. Throughout the military campaign in northern Mississippi, Union generals relied heavily on information provided by Unionists in the area. Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck wrote Brig. Gen. W. S. Rosecrans from Corinth on June 23, 1862, saying, “a citizen from Columbus reports a rebel force is moving north toward Rienzi or Kossuth with the intention of surprising and capturing your outposts.” Records show white Unionists, free blacks, and slaves regularly aided in military intelligence around Corinth.¹³

¹¹ Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, 130.

¹² “Unionists,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, June 18, 2010, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-3753>; Terry Thornton, “Hill Country Unionism: Civil War Revisited,” *Itawamba History Review*, January 20, 2008; Frank Moore, *The Rebellion Record* (New York: Putnam, 1863), 400; Smith, *The Home Front*, 62; Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, three volumes (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1908), 3: 1343–44.

¹³ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* [hereafter cited as *OR*], 130 vols. (Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, vol. 17 (2): 2, 26.

On June 29, 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant informed Halleck that he had forwarded to him a statement of "a man from Okolona, who has fled from there with no intention of returning until he can go under the Federal flag." Grant saw pro-Union sentiment in north Mississippi as something worth cultivating and attempted to rectify the "poor job of reaping sympathy for the Union" that his troops had demonstrated among potential Unionists. Likewise, President Lincoln desired a united and coordinated resistance against the Confederacy by southern Unionists. However, widespread support never came to fruition because loyalists often kept quiet or even changed sides for fear of reprisals by Confederates as one Unionist said of his friends, "I am sorry to state that many professed Union men changed their politics and became sadly adulterated with the fire of secession." Organizing uniform resistance was never easy for the Unionists of Mississippi.¹⁴

Confederate vigilance committees operated in virtually every county during the war adding even more threats to Unionists. These vigilantes often performed extralegal interrogations of anyone suspected of pro-Unionist or anti-Confederate sympathies. The leadership at the secession convention encouraged them to "use a stiff limb and a strong rope." Reverend John H. Aughey of French Camp appeared before a committee and became a target for more aggressive behavior having failed to satisfy them. Aughey wrote, "self-constituted vigilante committees sprang up all over the country, and a reign of terror began." After two attempts on his life, he decided to flee to the north Mississippi county of Tishomingo where he expressed his belief "that the great heart of the county still beat true to the music of the Union" when one hundred Unionists flocked to the banks of the Tennessee in February 1862 to welcome Union gunboats cruising down the river. Five months later, while in the Central Military Prison at Tupelo after Confederates arrested him,

¹⁴ Ibid., 47; U. S. Grant to Colonel J. C. Kelton, July 6, 1863, Grant Papers, 8: 485 in William B. Feis, *Grant's Secret Service: The Intelligence War from Belmont to Appomattox* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 145; Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *Chickasaw, A Mississippi Scout for the Union: The Civil War Memoir of Levi H. Naron* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 10; Mark Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142–43; John K. Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi: The People and Politics of a Cotton State in Wartime* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1934), 223.

he wrote a petition to United States Secretary of State, William H. Seward, dated July 11, 1862, complaining of bad treatment. Since there was obviously nothing Seward could do, escape was Aughey's only hope, which he accomplished. After making his way to Federal lines, he provided intelligence to General Rosecrans about Confederate strength and activities at Tupelo.¹⁵

Levi H. Naron of Chickasaw County also faced encounters with a vigilance committee because of his Unionist views. Upon stabling his horse one night, Naron said, "I found myself surrounded by a body of men, who ordered me to accompany them . . . stating that I should appear before the vigilance committee." Naron was released after a heated and terrifying exchange of words and later made his way to Corinth where he continued on to Pittsburg Landing across the Tennessee border. Federal troops were gathering prior to the Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, 1862, and there he met General William Tecumseh Sherman. "It was he who gave me the name of Chickasaw, by which I am so well known in his army," Naron recalled after the war.¹⁶

A significant number of southerners assumed a more covert role in the war. By day they appeared to be loyal Confederates, but at night they changed allegiance and supported the efforts of people like Naron who had joined the Union Army as a spy. Naron said there were "good Union men residing in the South, without whose assistance many of my plans would have proved failures." He added "while laying in the woods, waiting for my scouts to report, my meals were brought to me by a young lady, and I promised that . . . her services would be greatly rewarded." He fulfilled his promise later at Corinth saying he "knew of no better way to remunerate her than to offer her my heart and my hand, which she at once accepted." This was Naron's second wife, Mary Hannah Lee, a native of Alabama. His first wife, Sarah Kellum, had died in 1863 in Girard, Illinois, shortly after Naron took his family there for safety.¹⁷

During Reconstruction, Naron remained in Mississippi, but when Federal troops left, he and his family moved to Pratt County, Kansas, in 1878. There he purchased land and became a politician, but by his own acknowledgement, his most prized accomplishment was indicated

¹⁵ McLemore, *History of Mississippi*, 1: 519; John H. Aughey, *Tupelo* (Lincoln, NE: Rhodes and McClure Publishing Co., 1888), 47, 280–81; Chesebrough, "Dissenting Clergy," 121–22.

¹⁶ Cockrell and Ballard, *Chickasaw*, 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

by the inscription on his tombstone: "Served 3 years and 8 mos. as Chief of Scouts."¹⁸

Learning of his death, Union generals were quick to comment on Naron's service to his country. General Benjamin H. Grierson proclaimed Naron had "proven his loyalty and devotion to the cause of our country by his acts, and the sacrifices of property which he has made." General William S. Rosecrans recalled Naron's service as that which "became an honest, brave, loyal and reliable citizen of the United States," and General Grenville M. Dodge described Naron as "daring, bold and shrewd, he rendered me most valuable services." Naron sacrificed greatly for his service. He was ostracized by his neighbors, lost his first wife, suffered from several wounds, lost his home and property, and suffered alienation from his brother George, a captain in the Confederate Army.¹⁹

General Grenville M. Dodge employed large numbers of operatives, mostly southern Unionists, to gather intelligence, granting some spies the discretion to "go right in and get to General Grant at Vicksburg instead of coming to me." Loyal women like Mississippians Jane Featherstone and Mary Malone supplied valuable information. Dodge often referred to his spies as "his boys" and "felt a fatherly duty to protect [females] in this dangerous line of work." In order to secure the release of one of his captive female operatives, the general entertained the idea of "abducting a Confederate officer's wife and holding her hostage until the enemy released his spy." Scouts made an average of \$50 for their services, but because of the hazardous nature of their service, spies made from \$250 to \$500, depending on the value of the information obtained.²⁰

Union generals also took advantage of Unionist sentiment when possible. In the summer of 1862, General U. S. Grant enlisted the aid of several known Union men such as J. W. Causey, owner of a saw mill on the Old Tuscumbia Road, east of Corinth. Since Causey was a Republican and Unionist, Grant offered to either take possession of

¹⁸ Wesley M. Naron, *The Narons: A 202 Year History, 1779–1981* (Houston, MS: M.W. Naron, 1981), 76–79, 199.

¹⁹ Cockrell and Ballard, *Chickasaw*, 171–72; Mallard, "I Had No Comfort to Give Thee," 84; James R. Atkinson, "Levi H. Naron: An Uncompromising Unionist from Mississippi," unpublished essay, Atkinson Papers, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi.

²⁰ Feis, *Grant's Secret Service*, 166–68.

the property for which Causey would be compensated at the end of the war or Causey could operate the mill and Grant would receive the entire production of lumber for which Causey would be paid a sum of \$10,000 cash. Grant needed the lumber to build barracks, hospitals, and other buildings, and Causey was eager to continue to run the mill. Federal troops guarded the mill for some time but eventually withdrew to Causey's dismay. In their absence, Confederate Major I. N. George confiscated ten Federal wagons at the mill. In March 1865, Causey was rewarded by Reconstruction officials in Corinth when he was commissioned to oversee the rebuilding of the railroad lines coming into the city. Another Tishomingo resident, Judge R. A. Hill, was a strong advocate of cooperation with the Federals and by early 1865, the locals were rewarded with permission to conduct regular government business and operate the railroads in the county.²¹

Throughout the war and even during Federal occupation in northeastern Mississippi, Confederate sympathizers persistently intimidated Unionists. E. J. Sorrell of Tishomingo County stated that "all Union men were threatened in a general way." Terry Dalton claimed Unionists in the county suffered personal or property damage as a result of their loyalty. M. A. Higginbottom, a resident of Corinth, said "it was a common expression that every man who would not side with the Confederacy 'ought to be hung.'" Higginbottom volunteered for service and later joined the Federal Secret Service as a spy in 1864. A Tip-pah County farmer, Samuel Beaty, complained of losing his property and his right to vote because of his pro-Union beliefs.²²

Faithful allegiance to the Union persevered even amidst threats and intimidation evidenced when locals warned who they assumed were Union soldiers of Confederate cavalry operating in and around Holly Springs in December of 1862. They had mistaken Earl Van Dorn's Confederates for Union troops.²³

Southern women often played direct roles in the Union effort, as experienced by Union sergeant Richard W. Surby, who participated

²¹ "Source Material for Mississippi History," Alcorn County, vol. 2, part 1, compiled by WPA State-wide Historical Research Project (Susie V. Powell, Supervisor, 1936-1939), Corinth Public Library, Corinth, Mississippi, 194; Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle, Occupation* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 301.

²² Mallard, "I Had No Comfort to Give Thee," 79, 83.

²³ Ballard, *Vicksburg*, 123.

in Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson's raid through Mississippi in 1863. After learning they were Yankee soldiers, the women fed them while proudly displaying a U. S. flag and berating Confederate conscription laws. Women often found themselves leading social unrest, protesting inflation, and encouraging their men to return home. Judge Robert S. Hudson wrote to both President Jefferson Davis and Mississippi Governor Charles Clark in 1864 about female disloyalty. He urged the use of the "most radical and severe treatment" for "women and noncombatants." He believed these women to be "rotten hearted" and "far worse than the men."²⁴

Female disloyalty often resulted from hunger and abuse caused by Confederate soldiers. Albeit from a more personal than political motivation, these women often encouraged their husbands and sons who needed little encouragement to desert. During the war, as many as fifty-six officers and over 11,600 enlisted men deserted from the Confederate Army.²⁵

Another group of Unionists often overlooked is African Americans. Numerous accounts of slaves or former slaves (contraband) informing Union officers of Confederate movements reveal significant contributions to the war effort. Generals Rosecrans, Halleck, Hurlbut, and Sherman all benefitted from intelligence reports from blacks reporting troop movements toward Rienzi, Coldwater, and other places in the summer of 1862 prior to the Battle of Corinth. General Dodge frequently used slaves in a widespread intelligence operation in north Mississippi and western Tennessee. Dodge's interest in the welfare of the contrabands led to the organization of the contraband camp at Corinth in December of 1862. After emancipation changed the status of former slaves from "contraband" to "freedmen," President Lincoln wished to establish the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas accepted the challenge to enlist these new recruits reducing the inordinate numbers of freedmen who followed and burdened Union armies. His task was not an easy venture. General Andrew Jackson Smith said he would hang Thomas if he

²⁴ Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, 3–4; R. S. Hudson to Jefferson Davis, March 14, 1864, *OR*, series 1, vol. 32: 626; R. S. Hudson to Governor Charles Clark, June 25, 1864, *Governors' Papers*, MDAH, Jackson, Mississippi, 94–95.

²⁵ Ella Lonn, *Desertion during the Civil War* (Gloucester, MA: American Historical Association, 1928), 231.

mentioned such an idea in his camp. He also revealed his opposition to abolition, saying, "If Jesus Christ was to come down and ask [me . . . to] be an abolitionist. . . . I would say no! Mr. Christ, I beg to be excused . . . I would rather go to hell." Thomas found a warmer reception in other quarters in Corinth. In May of 1863, he delivered an eloquent speech, after which one soldier commented, "He came here to organize Negro Regiments. We shall have at least one and I think two . . . in a very short time."²⁶

General Dodge was eager to oblige Thomas and recruited blacks in the Corinth contraband camp quickly forming the First Alabama Infantry Regiment (African Descent) that was organized in Corinth on May 21, 1863. The unit served in various capacities in north Mississippi, drilling and standing guard on the eastern approach to Corinth. Companies of the regiment went into Tennessee as guards of bridges and railroads.²⁷

In January 1864, the First Alabama transferred to Memphis and was designated the Fifty-Fifth Regiment Infantry (USCT) in March. Serving guard duty finally changed to a combat role in June as part of the Third Brigade of General Samuel Sturgis's Mississippi expedition at the Battle of Brice's Crossroads on June 10, 1864. The Fifty-Fifth helped provide cover for the escape of retreating Union troops from Ripley back to Memphis.²⁸

With a tint of irony, the Fifty-Fifth later joined in General Andrew Jackson Smith's raid on Oxford in August 1864 as part of the First Colored Brigade, District of Memphis. This action ended combat for the Fifty-Fifth, which transferred to Louisiana in April 1865. Its members were mustered out of service on December 31.²⁹

²⁶ OR, series 1, vol. 17 (2): 26; David Slay, "Abraham Lincoln and the United States Colored Troops of Mississippi," *JMH*, LXX (2008): 68–72; OR, series 1, vol. 4: 734; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964, 1992), 502–3.

²⁷ Joseph E. Brent and W. Stephen McBride, "Conflict, Occupation, and Contraband: Corinth, Mississippi in the Civil War," Corinth Public Library, Special Collections, Corinth, Mississippi, 9; Company A Muster Rolls, July–August, 1863, Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Volunteer Union Organizations, M594 Roll 211, Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780–1917, National Archives, Washington, D. C.; Dyer, *Compendium of the War*, 3: 1213–14; Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, 154; Cam Walker, "Corinth: The Story of a Contraband Camp," *Civil War History*, 20 (March 1974), 14.

²⁸ Joseph E. Brent, *Occupied Corinth: The Contraband Camp and the First Alabama Regiment of African Descent, 1862–1864* (Corinth, Mississippi: February 1995), 20–22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

The First Alabama Regiment Siege Artillery (African Descent) was another unit formed from residents of the contraband camp in Corinth. Formed in June 1863, the unit saw activity in the Memphis area. According to some sources, possibly another black regiment, the Second Alabama (African Descent) officially organized in Pulaski, Tennessee, in the autumn of 1863 actually had its beginning in Corinth as early as July. Of the 180,000 black troops serving the Union, 1,800 of them were Corinth recruits.³⁰

An estimated 25,000 African Americans from Mississippi including at least nine regiments and two artillery companies served in northern military units including at least nine regiments and two artillery companies. Happily surprised, Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, wrote Thomas of his "great pleasure" with his success. These black troops fought out of pride and for the release of those still in bondage.³¹

Unionist activity in Mississippi varied in both scope and scale exhibiting more activism in northeastern Mississippi than in other areas of the state. Unionists never united because of the differences in their motivations and agendas. Nevertheless, these patriots diligently worked for the Union cause. Among these were the poor, male and female, who gave aid and comfort to federal agents and spies often at great personal sacrifice. Many were subsistence farmers who realized they would probably fare no better under either of the belligerent powers. Middle class professionals and yeomen class farmers were torn between loyalty to the Union and loyalty to their secessionist friends, but many aided the Union. Large planters were not very prevalent in north Mississippi, but their loyalty was often contingent upon securing their property. African Americans who served in the military did so without promise of equality as reward for their efforts. A general consensus regarding Unionist motivation is difficult to summarize. Their efforts will probably always remain under-estimated, but a significant number of people from all classes in Mississippi aided the Union cause.

³⁰ Ibid., 24; Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, 154; Dudley T. Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (Pittsburg, Kansas: 1956, reprint Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 114.

³¹ John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 258; Edwin Stanton to General Lorenzo Thomas, May 15, 1863; *OR*, series 2, 3: 214.

They had a significant impact on raising the morale of the Federals while diminishing that of the Confederates. In addition, their efforts gave immeasurable support to the Union. Their sacrifices empowered and strengthened Union military campaigns indicating that Mississippi Unionists were patriotic to the United States. What they did should be remembered.

“Successful in an eminent degree”: Sherman’s 1864 Meridian Expedition

Jim Woodrick

On March 7, 1864, Union Major General William Tecumseh Sherman reported on a recently conducted expedition into east Mississippi. Essentially a raid, the campaign’s objective was the Confederate rail center at Meridian. While Meridian itself had few permanent inhabitants, it was located at the junction of the Southern Railroad and the Mobile and Ohio Railroad and was thus of strategic value to both the Union and the Confederate armies. Arriving in Vicksburg the day before, Sherman bragged about the campaign’s success. “For five days,” he wrote, “10,000 men worked hard and with a will in that work of destruction, with axes, crowbars, sledges, clawbars, and with fire, and I have no hesitation in pronouncing the work as well done. Meridian,” he concluded, “with its depots, store-houses, arsenal, hospitals, offices, hotels, and cantonments, no longer exists.”¹ Though not all components of the expedition were as successful as he might have hoped, Sherman had fulfilled a goal that had been in the works since the previous summer.

Following the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston and his “Army of Relief” fell back to Jackson from the Big Black River. Within days, Sherman pursued Johnston’s army and quickly established siege lines around Jackson. Johnston held on for one week before abandoning Jackson for the second time on July 17. Although a portion of Sherman’s force followed as far as Brandon, the excessive heat and hardship of the campaign prevented him from moving any farther, and he returned to Vicksburg. Sherman’s corps was subsequently moved to Chattanooga to assist Grant in defeating Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee.²

¹ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 1861–1865*, series 1, vol. 32, 176. Hereafter cited as *OR*.

² Michael B. Ballard, *The Civil War in Mississippi: Major Campaigns and Battles* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 171–72.

Anxious to return to Mississippi, Sherman convinced Grant to allow him to complete the task of smashing the railroad network at Meridian. Arriving in Memphis on January 10, 1864, Sherman ordered Major General Stephen Hurlbut to bring two divisions to Vicksburg. At the same time, Brigadier General William Sooy Smith was ordered to take his cavalry, totaling approximately 7,000 men, on a raid down the Mobile and Ohio to join Sherman's main force at Meridian. In Vicksburg, Major General James B. McPherson's XVII Corps added the other half of the main column. In all, Sherman would have more than 23,000 men available for the march to Meridian.³ In addition, a smaller force would move up the Yazoo River with orders to confiscate cotton and occupy the attention of Confederate cavalry in the region. As a final piece of the wide-ranging plan, Nathaniel Banks, the Union commander of the Department of the Gulf, was asked to give the appearance that Union forces were planning an attack on Mobile. In doing so, Sherman hoped to divert Confederate resources to the defense of that city.

Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk, who had recently been appointed commander of the Department of Alabama, Mississippi and East Louisiana, opposed Sherman's advance in Mississippi. Polk was responsible for the defense of a huge geographic region, and although he had approximately 22,000 men under his command, they were widely scattered.⁴ As a result, he had relatively few resources to counter the various Federal threats, especially the main force in central Mississippi. To counter Sherman, Polk had two small infantry divisions under William W. Loring and Samuel French, plus several brigades of cavalry.⁵ Although these troops were hardened veterans, there were simply too few men available to do anything other than slow Sherman's progress. To make matters worse, Polk, who was convinced that Mobile was the target, just as Sherman had intended, diverted the bulk of reinforcements sent to the region to protect Mobile.⁶

The expedition departed Vicksburg on February 3, moving toward Jackson in two columns. Hurlbut's XVI Corps crossed the Big Black at Messenger's Ferry and advanced on a road north of the railroad, while

³OR, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 179–82; Margie Riddle Bearss, *Sherman's Forgotten Expedition* (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, Inc., 1987), 35.

⁴Ballard, *The Civil War in Mississippi*, 176.

⁵Buck T. Foster, *Sherman's Mississippi Campaign* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 35.

⁶Herman Hattaway, *General Stephen D. Lee* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 109.

McPherson's wing crossed at Big Black River Bridge. Although they met only token resistance from Confederate cavalry, the fighting at times was fierce, with skirmishing near the old battlefield at Champion Hill and the plantation of Joseph Davis, the oldest brother of the Confederate president. The heavily outnumbered Confederates continued to harass Sherman's column through Clinton and into the outskirts of Jackson. Although unable to do much damage, the action provided enough time for Loring's division at Canton and French's division at Jackson to withdraw safely across the Pearl River. Thus abandoned by Confederate forces, Jackson was occupied on February 5. After just three days, the Federals had moved half way across Mississippi with only minor losses and had captured the capital city for a third time, a feat Sherman described as "successful in an eminent degree."⁷ As with previous occupations of Jackson, several businesses went up in flames and some residences were ransacked and burned, leading one Union soldier to describe Jackson as "a heap of ruins."⁸

While Sherman marched swiftly to Jackson, William Sooy Smith's cavalry made no progress whatsoever. In light of Smith's orders to move from Collierville, Tennessee, to Okolona and then down the Mobile & Ohio to "consume or destroy the resources of the enemy along that road," Sherman anticipated that Smith would reach Meridian at about the same time as the main force. Once the Union forces combined, Sherman would have the ability to move farther east, possibly as far as Selma, Alabama. Although Sherman wrote Smith on January 27 that the movement "will call for great energy of action on your part," Smith had in fact not yet departed by the time Jackson was reoccupied.⁹ Meanwhile, the force ascending the Yazoo River departed on schedule. On February 1, the naval task force under Lieutenant Commander Elias K. Owen moved upriver, loaded with infantry and cavalry. Owen had been ordered to "Impress on the people along the Yazoo and Sunflower that we intend to hold them responsible for all acts of hostility to the river commerce . . . ," and to take anything of value, including cotton, corn, and horses.¹⁰

⁷ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 175.

⁸ H. Grady Howell, Jr., *Chimneyville: "Likenesses" Of Early Days in Jackson, Mississippi* (Madison, MS: Chickasaw Bayou Press, 2007), 65.

⁹ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 181.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

The expedition's infantry component, which included several regiments of United States Colored Troops, was commanded by Colonel James H. Coates, a native of Pennsylvania. After landing at Liverpool, Coates's infantry was repulsed by elements of Lawrence "Sul" Ross's Texas brigade, which had ridden north to protect the Yazoo River area. Confident the crisis had passed, Ross moved back east to help fight Sherman. While the Texans were gone, the expedition went back upriver and occupied Yazoo City on February 9. From there, the boats continued as far as Greenwood, where they found few inhabitants. Before heading back downriver, Coates sent an all-black cavalry unit, later designated the 3rd United States Colored Cavalry, on a foray toward Grenada. Though unsuccessful in reaching the railroad, the threat of an all-black cavalry regiment roaming through the countryside alarmed the Confederates, and as a result, Robert V. Richardson's brigade of Tennesseans rode hard in pursuit. By February 28, the black cavalymen rejoined Coates's force at Yazoo City, where the Federals prepared defenses east of town.¹¹

By the time Coates's troops first took possession of Yazoo City, Sherman had crossed the Pearl River at Jackson and moved to Brandon, a town still largely in ruins from the previous summer, when troops under Union Major General Frederick Steele had burned most of the business district. Sherman's men finished the job, setting fire to several buildings and ransacking others, including the office of the Brandon *Republican* newspaper. They also tore up sections of the railroad and burned a bridge, turntable, and trestle works, a routine that would be repeated often in the coming days.¹² Meanwhile, Leonidas Polk finally began concentrating what troops he had at Morton. In addition to Loring's and French's divisions, Polk hurriedly shuttled reinforcements by rail. Arriving in the early hours of February 8 were Francis M. Cockrell's hard-fighting Missourians and William A. Quarles's mostly Tennessee brigade. According to one of the Missourians, the train trip to Morton was miserable. "The men on the flat-cars suffered considerably from cold," he wrote, "the night air when the train was in motion cutting like a knife."¹³ Upon arrival, the reinforcements took

¹¹ Bearss, *Sherman's Forgotten Expedition*, 247–71.

¹² *Ibid.*, 90–92.

¹³ Robert S. Bevier, *History of the First and Second Missouri Brigades, 1861–1865* (St. Louis, MO: Bryan, Brand & Co., 1879), 229.

position in earthworks west of town overlooking Line Creek. There, the Confederates hoped to delay or defeat Sherman's thus far unbloodied column. By that evening, however, Loring, who commanded the troops at Morton, decided that the enemy was simply too powerful. Writing Polk, who was at Lake Station, Loring recommended that Polk return to Newton, as Sherman's force was "so much larger than ours."¹⁴

Many Confederate soldiers, including William Pitt Chambers of the 46th Mississippi, were disheartened that no stand was made at Morton. "We knew that our forces in his front were steadily falling back," he wrote, "but now the whole state was to be abandoned without a single blow. No wonder the hearts of her sons burned within them; and no wonder if they learned to distrust the policy that gave their homes to the torch and their families to the tender mercies of the foe." Later that evening, Union scouts discovered that the Confederates had pulled out, and Morton was occupied the next morning. After capturing the post and telegraph offices, details from the infantry and pioneer corps tore up the railroads on either side of town.¹⁵

Since the beginning of the campaign, McPherson's and Hurlbut's two corps had advanced on parallel roads. At Morton, however, both columns would march together, with Hurlbut's taking the lead. To protect his flanks from Confederate cavalry attacks, Sherman kept his force bunched up, making it difficult to isolate any portion of his column. From Morton, the Federals left the line of the railroad and moved to Hillsborough, where several shots were fired from homes in the village. In retribution, Sherman's forces set the town ablaze.¹⁶

As the Union forces continued marching east across a morass of swamps and swollen streams, they encountered little resistance from the Confederates, although Sherman himself narrowly avoided capture at Decatur. On February 12, Sherman decided to spend the night in a "double log-house." After lying down to sleep, Sherman awoke to the sounds of "shouts and hallooing, and then heard pistol-shots close to the house." By some mix-up, an infantry regiment detailed to guard the house had moved down the road a bit, and Sherman was alarmed to find the house almost surrounded by Confederate cavalry. Quickly

¹⁴ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 2, 693.

¹⁵ Richard A. Baumgartner, ed., *Blood & Sacrifice: The Civil War Journal of a Confederate Soldier* (Huntington, WV: Blue Acorn Press, 1994), 116.

¹⁶ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 175.

gathering a few orderlies, Sherman made preparations to take refuge in a corn-crib when the infantry returned and drove off the southern horsemen. Unbeknownst to the Confederates, an opportunity to kill or capture William T. Sherman had just slipped away. What effect his death or capture might have had on the outcome of the Civil War is, of course, a matter of conjecture.¹⁷

The next day, as the column moved toward Meridian from Decatur, more houses and buildings went up in flames. Lake Station and Chunky Station, both located on the Southern Railroad, were also torched. Both were targets of raiding parties dispatched by Sherman. At Lake, Signal Officer Lucius M. Rose wryly reported that "the Signal Corps went through the town like a dose of salts, and just as we were leaving I noticed a man hunting around to get someone to make an affidavit that there had been a town there." At Chunky, a combined force of infantry and cavalry under the command of General Manning Force scattered several Confederate horsemen and then destroyed a railroad bridge and tracks and burned several wagons and a warehouse.¹⁸

The next day, February 14, Sherman's expedition finally entered Meridian. Ahead of him, Loring's and French's men frantically loaded supplies destined for Demopolis and Selma, where Polk hoped to gather enough men to finally halt Sherman if he advanced into Alabama. Polk had stripped Meridian as much as possible of anything of military value, including much of the rolling stock. In a dispatch to General Dabney Maury in Mobile on February 13, Polk reported that he had removed "all my hospitals, commissary, and quartermaster's stores from all my depots," including 100,000 pounds of bacon, flour and wheat.¹⁹ Thus, when Sherman's men entered Meridian, they found most of the supplies gone. The city, however, was still a rich target. After resting on February 15, the army began a "systematic and thorough destruction of the railroads centering at Meridian." According to Sherman, "The immense depots, warehouses, and length of sidetrack demonstrated the importance to the enemy of that place." For the next five days, the Federals not only wrecked the rail facilities but torched most of the town's businesses and dwellings as well. In

¹⁷ William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman* (New York: Library of America, 1990), 419–20.

¹⁸ OR, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 222; Bearss, *Sherman's Forgotten Expedition*, 171–73.

¹⁹ OR, series 1, vol. 32, part 2, 733–34.

addition, tracks, culverts, and trestles were destroyed as far north as Lauderdale Springs and as far south as Enterprise. In effect, Meridian, as Sherman reported at the end of the campaign, no longer existed.²⁰

Sherman waited for five days in hopes that William Sooy Smith's cavalry would arrive. Without the benefit of communication, he had no clue where Smith might be, and Smith's failure to appear hampered plans for possible movement into Alabama. In fact, Smith had not departed Collierville until three days before Sherman entered Meridian.²¹ On February 20 and 21, Smith's troops skirmished with Confederate cavalry under Nathan Bedford Forrest near West Point. Although he had an overwhelming numerical advantage, Sooy Smith did not wish to fight Forrest in what Smith was convinced was a trap and immediately began a withdrawal. Forrest, now in pursuit, savagely attacked the Federal rear guard at every opportunity. On February 22, an emboldened Forrest charged a portion of the Union column at Okolona, and the withdrawal turned into a rout. What ensued was a six-hour running battle that ended in a final engagement at Ivey's Hill several miles north of Prairie Mount. With just 2,500 men, Forrest had wrecked Smith's cavalry. By February 26, the raiders limped back into Collierville. None of these events, of course, were known to Sherman, who was left wondering what had happened to William Sooy Smith.²²

On February 20, Sherman finally gave up hope that Smith would arrive and began his march back to Vicksburg. Taking a different route in hopes of establishing some sort of communication with Smith and to find ample forage, the two corps moved to the northwest on separate roads. Moving rapidly, the main column again marched through what was left of Hillsborough and then headed toward Canton. Sherman also sent his cavalry chief, Brigadier General Edward F. Winslow, swinging north as far as Louisville and Kosciusko in search of Smith. On February 25, the main column crossed the Pearl River into Madison County and occupied Canton, which had thus far escaped serious damage. Despite the destruction that occurred elsewhere during the campaign, Canton escaped similar treatment, mainly because it served no real military purpose to burn the town. The only fighting

²⁰ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 176.

²¹ Brandon H. Beck, *The Battle of Okolona: Defending the Mississippi Prairie* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2009), 46.

²² Ballard, *The Civil War in Mississippi*, 189–92.

near Canton was at Sharon, where William H. "Red" Jackson's cavalry clashed with some of Winslow's men, who had returned from their unsuccessful excursion north to find Sooy Smith.²³

For his part, Sherman spent only a few hours in Canton, choosing to ride on to Vicksburg to begin planning his next campaign and enjoy a rest. The remainder of the column followed in a few days. In Yazoo City, James H. Coates's troops were attacked by Confederate cavalry under "Sul" Ross and Robert V. Richardson on March 5. Overrunning the Union outposts, the Confederates would have annihilated Coates if not for a lack of ammunition. The Federals barely managed to hold Yazoo City and soon withdrew to the safety of Vicksburg. In hindsight, the raid accomplished little and was mainly a feint. The grim and determined fighting between black and white soldiers, however, was a harbinger of the type of warfare seen in the final months of the Civil War in Mississippi.²⁴

The overall effectiveness of Sherman's march is still a matter of debate. With some justification, both sides claimed victory. From Polk's perspective, his cavalry in north Mississippi had completely routed Sooy Smith, and Polk had saved most of the supplies in Meridian. In addition, although there was significant damage to railroads and military installations, much of it was repaired within a matter of weeks. However, the repairs required the use of valuable resources that were in short supply and that would be needed elsewhere in the Confederacy in the coming year. Perhaps most important was the psychological damage of the expedition on the citizens of Mississippi, who bore the brunt of Sherman's policy of engaging in "total war" by destroying not just military targets, but also the will of the people to continue supporting the Confederate war effort.

Although this type of warfare was certainly not invented by Sherman, the scale of destruction had not been seen prior to the Meridian campaign. When combined with the large number of slaves who followed the Federals to safety in Vicksburg, the psychological effect of the raid cannot be overestimated. Today, the Meridian expedition is remembered primarily as a precursor for the scorched earth policy employed by Sherman during his "March to the Sea." It should also be remembered, however, as a complicated movement with multiple

²³ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 370.

²⁴ Bearss, *Sherman's Forgotten Expedition*, 270–80.

components over a truly vast military landscape. While all of their various adventures did not end successfully, the scope of Union operations in the region, compared with the mostly ineffective Confederate response, served as yet another indicator that the Confederate government was no longer able to protect its territory. In that sense, Sherman's Meridian expedition can be considered "successful in an eminent degree."²⁵

²⁵ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 1, 175.

“The Colored Troops Fought Like Tigers”: Black Mississippians in the Union Army, 1863–1866

Jeff T. Giambrone

In 1860, African Americans made up the majority of the population of Mississippi, but not as citizens; they were property that could be bought and sold. They had no rights to speak of, the toil of their labors went to make wealth for others, and they could be separated from loved ones for life at the whim of their owner. Thus it is not surprising that when the United States army entered Mississippi in 1863 and began recruiting black soldiers, they enlisted by the thousands.¹

The active recruitment of African Americans into the United States army began when President Abraham Lincoln announced his Emancipation Proclamation following the Union victory at the battle of Antietam, Maryland, on September 17, 1862. In Mississippi, news of the measure invoked howls of protest among the pro-Confederate population. In an article entitled “Arming Negroes,” the editor of a Canton newspaper blasted the idea of allowing African Americans to serve in the Union Army, saying;

And to cap the climax of cowardice and barbarity—which always go hand in hand—they are willing to employ the slaves of the South to effect her subjugation, thus acknowledging their inability to conquer us without resort to the basest and *blackest* means, and at the same time, practically, as well as theoretically, place themselves on an equality with the negro. Our antagonism with such a people should be, and will be, eternal.²

¹ In the 1860 United States Census for Mississippi, the state had an African American population of 437,406; of that number 436,631 were slaves. The white population was 353,899. *Mississippi Statistical Summary of Population 1800–1980* (Economic Research Department, Mississippi Power & Light Company, 1983).

² “Arming Negroes,” *The American Citizen*, May 30, 1862.

On March 26, 1863, Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas was ordered by the Secretary of War to organize African American regiments in the Mississippi Valley. Shortly thereafter, on May 22, the United States War Department established a Bureau of Colored Troops to take charge of recruiting and organizing black regiments.³ The first Mississippi regiments to be raised were the 1st Mississippi Infantry, African Descent, organized on May 16, 1863, and the 3rd Mississippi Infantry, African Descent, which mustered into service three days later.⁴

The majority of African American regiments raised from Mississippi were organized after the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863. The capture of the city gave United States authorities a base from which to recruit former slaves into the army. On July 11, 1863, Major General Henry W. Halleck, General-in-Chief of all the Union armies, wrote to Major General Ulysses S. Grant at Vicksburg, offering his advice on how best to defend the Mississippi River. He advised:

The Mississippi should be the base of future operations east and west. When Port Hudson falls, the fortifications of that place, as well as Vicksburg, should be so arranged as to be held by the smallest possible garrisons, thus leaving the mass of troops for operations in the field. I suggest that colored troops be used as far as possible in the garrisons.⁵

In addition to the prodding from Halleck to employ black soldiers, Grant also received the following incentive from Abraham Lincoln on August 9, 1863:

General [Lorenzo] Thomas has gone again to the Mississippi Valley, with the view of raising colored troops. I have no reason to doubt that you are doing what you reasonably can upon the same subject. I believe it is a resource which, if vigorously applied now,

³Dudley T. Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966), 114, 130.

⁴Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, vol. 3 (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), 1344.

⁵U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901) [hereafter cited as *OR*], series 1, 24 (III): 497.

will soon close this contest. It works doubly—weakening the enemy and strengthening us. We were not fully ripe for it until the river was opened. Now I think at least 100,000 can and ought to be organized along its shores, relieving all the white troops to serve elsewhere.⁶

African Americans, almost all former slaves, responded to Union recruiting efforts in Mississippi by enlisting in the thousands. All told Mississippi was credited with having 17,869 black men serve in uniform during the Civil War.⁷ This number is almost certainly low, however, as a number of regiments credited to other states were recruited in Mississippi, and two regiments, the 70th United States Colored Infantry and the 71st United States Colored Infantry, were organized in the state and mustered directly into Federal service.⁸ The African American troops serving from Mississippi included one regiment of cavalry, two regiments of heavy artillery, and five regiments of infantry.⁹

The men who served in the Mississippi colored regiments had to overcome numerous obstacles, not the least of which was the prejudice of the white soldiers in their own army. Many whites were upset at the thought of having to serve side by side with black soldiers. Some were very vocal in their opposition; a good example was Lieutenant Colonel Henry Rust of the 13th Maine Infantry, which was serving on Ship Island off the Mississippi Gulf Coast. When Rust learned that the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards, a black regiment, was being sent to serve alongside his unit, he wrote in his diary:

Nigger on the brain. No, I have not got that. It has stuck to my stomach and gone all over me. The feeling of certainty that I have

⁶OR, series 1, 24 (III): 584.

⁷OR, series 3, 5: 662.

⁸Dyer, *A Compendium*, vol. 3, 1734.

⁹The Colored Infantry regiments serving from Mississippi were the 1st Mississippi Cavalry, 1st Mississippi Heavy Artillery, 2nd Mississippi Heavy Artillery, 1st Mississippi Infantry, 2nd Mississippi Infantry, 3rd Mississippi Infantry, 4th Mississippi Infantry, and 6th Mississippi Infantry. In March 1864 these regiments had their designations changed, and in order they became the 3rd United States Colored Cavalry, 5th United States Colored Heavy Artillery, 6th United States Colored Heavy Artillery, 51st United States Colored Infantry, 52nd United States Colored Infantry, 53rd United States Colored Infantry, 66th United States Colored Infantry, and the 58th United States Colored Infantry. OR, series 1, vol. 32 (III): 147–48.

got to leave my two good companies here to come into collision with these niggers has made me feel homesick, and I have serious thoughts of resigning.¹⁰

There were many other injustices that black soldiers had to learn to adjust to in the army. African American soldiers typically served in regiments under white officers; only the non-commissioned officers were black. They were also shorted in their pay; black privates received \$10.00 per month, while their white counterparts got \$13.00 per month. This slight was not corrected until June 1864.¹¹

In addition to the prejudice they faced from their own army, black soldiers and their officers faced the very real threat of harsh punishment if captured by the Confederates. On May 1, 1863, the Confederate Congress authorized President Jefferson Davis to have captured officers of Negro regiments “put to death or be otherwise punished” by a military tribunal. Black enlisted men were to “be delivered to the authorities of the state or states in which they shall be captured to be dealt with,” which could mean death or sale into slavery.¹² This was not just an idle threat, as there were numerous instances of Confederates killing captured African American soldiers.

The African American soldiers from Mississippi who joined the Union army had a very strong motivation for doing so—the freedom of their race. When the 1st Alabama Infantry, African Descent, mustered into service at Corinth, Mississippi, in 1863, the regimental color bearer, Rufus Campbell, gave a speech in which he explained why he joined the army; a newspaper reporter recorded it thus:

The burden of his speech was thankfulness for the privilege of becoming free, through the agency of their strong right arms; exhortation to his fellows to show themselves worthy to be free; and expression of determination to die by the flag they had received rather than disgrace it. Having felt through a long life, the evils of slavery, he rejoiced at the opportunity of rescuing his children from

¹⁰ C.P. Weaver, ed., *Thank God My Regiment an African One: The Civil War Diary of Colonel Nathan W. Daniels* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 27.

¹¹ Dudley T. Cornish, *The Sable Arm*, 184–85.

¹² *OR*, series 2, vol. 5: 940–41.

such a fate. ‘Why,’ said he, ‘there’s not much blood in a man any how, and if he is not willing to give it for the freedom of his children and friends, he does not deserve to be called a man.’¹³

Despite the many obstacles placed in their path, black Mississippians fought very well when given the chance. The first Mississippi regiment to see combat was the 1st Mississippi Infantry, African Descent, at the battle of Milliken’s Bend, Louisiana, June 7, 1863. In that battle a combat-hardened brigade of about 1,500 Texans led by Brigadier General Henry McCulloch attacked the Federal garrison at Milliken’s Bend, which consisted of the 8th, 9th, 11th, and 13th Louisiana Infantry Regiments, African Descent, the 1st Mississippi Infantry, African Descent, and the 23rd Iowa Infantry; all told the defenders had about 1,061 men.¹⁴

The Colored infantry regiments at Milliken’s Bend were all new to the army, had very little training and many of them were indifferently armed with old and obsolete muskets. The only advantage the Federal troops had was a fairly strong defensive position based around the levees near the Mississippi River, and they had the support of the ironclad USS *Choctaw* just offshore.¹⁵

The Confederates charged the Federal position at Milliken’s Bend, and the fighting quickly devolved into a savage hand-to-hand contest. One Confederate soldier in the 17th Texas Infantry wrote of the fight:

Just at daylight we reached the camp of the enemy, and our regiment opened the battle by a furious charge upon the entrenchments. Then ensued a scene of carnage I shall never forget as long as I live. For Forty minutes we fought the enemy on top of the breastworks which we had scaled, in a hand to hand fight. So close were we that we could catch the bayonets of each other, and did use our muskets as clubs to fight with.¹⁶

¹³ “Letter from Corinth,” *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 29, 1863.

¹⁴ Terrence J. Winschel, *Triumph and Defeat* (Mason City, IA: Savas Publishing Company, 1999), 169–70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁶ “Editor Telegraph,” *Semi-Weekly News*, July 23, 1863. A transcript of this article can be found online at: <http://www.uttyler.edu/vbetts/SA%20Semi-Weekly%20News.htm>.

Eventually the weight of the Confederate attack forced the Federal troops to retreat toward the Mississippi River. The Texans pursued, but were forced back by the hail of iron thrown at them by the USS *Choctaw*. The battle ended with heavy casualties on both sides; the Federals had 101 killed, 285 wounded, and 266 captured or missing. The Confederates had 44 killed, 131 wounded, and 10 missing.¹⁷

The importance of Milliken's Bend was that it proved to many white skeptics that African Americans did have the courage and determination to fight very effectively against the Confederates. Captain M. M. Miller of the 9th Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, proudly wrote of his troops after the battle, "I never more wish to hear the expression 'The niggers won't fight.' Come with me 100 yards from where I sit and I can show you the wounds that cover the bodies of 16 as brave, loyal, and patriotic soldiers as ever drew bead on a rebel."¹⁸

The regiment that probably saw the most combat from the state was the 1st Mississippi Cavalry, African Descent, later designated the 3rd United States Colored Cavalry. While the black infantry and artillery units were relegated to garrison duty along the Mississippi River, the 1st, the only cavalry unit raised in Mississippi, was constantly on the move. The regiment participated in raids that took them across the length and breadth of Mississippi and into Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee as well.¹⁹ During the course of the war, the 1st Mississippi participated in over a dozen major raids into Confederate territory and fought in numerous skirmishes. The regiment had 37 men killed in action and 367 who died from disease and other causes during the war.²⁰ In October 1864, the 1st Mississippi took part in a successful raid, in which they captured three cannon from the enemy. A Vicksburg newspaper wrote of the regiment:

We learn the black horse cavalry (U.S. 3d Colored) under gallant leader Maj. [Jeremiah B.] Cook, captured the three pieces of

¹⁷ Terrence J. Winschel, *Triumph and Defeat*, 171.

¹⁸ *OR*, series 3, vol. 3, 454.

¹⁹ Dyer, *A Compendium*, vol. 3, 1343–44, 1720–21.

²⁰ Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served With The United States Colored Troops: 1st Through 5th United States Cavalry. Microfilm Publication M1817, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

artillery which were brought here as the trophies of the late fight near Woodville, Miss. It has been the custom of some white folks to underrate the courage of the negro soldiers, but we have heard officers and men of white commands who have been in action with the 3d Colored Cavalry say that they are as good fighters as there are in the U.S. army, and under the lead of the chivalrous Cook, they will charge to the cannon's mouth.²¹

One of the most interesting battles involving black soldiers in Mississippi was the fight at Coleman's Plantation in Jefferson County on July 4, 1864. This engagement was probably the first time that white Mississippians fought black Mississippians in a Civil War battle. A Union raiding force that included the 48th and 52nd United States Colored Infantry regiments traveled down the Mississippi River by boat and landed at Rodney, Mississippi, reaching the town on July 3, 1864.²²

Moving inland, the Federal column was attacked the next day at Coleman's Plantation, about twelve miles from Rodney, by a Confederate force led by Colonel Robert C. Wood, Jr. After a fierce battle that lasted most of the day, the Yankees were forced to stage a fighting withdrawal back to their boats to avoid being flanked and cut off from their transport home. This movement was successfully completed, and the men boarded their boats on the night of July 4. The raid had been intended to occupy Colonel Wood's troops and prevent them from moving against another Federal column that was raiding Jackson, Mississippi, and in this aim the operation was considered a complete success.²³

The fighting done by the black regiments at Coleman's Plantation did draw some attention. In an article about the battle published in a Vicksburg newspaper, the writer stated that "The Colored troops fought like tigers often clubbing the enemy down with the butts [sic] of their muskets. No cowardice was shown by any of the command, and all acted with the most determined bravery and coolness."²⁴ Even one

²¹ "The Black Horse Cavalry," *Vicksburg Daily Herald*, October 13, 1864.

²² Edwin C. Bearss, *The Tupelo Campaign June 22–July 23, 1864, A Documented Narrative & Troop Movement Maps* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1969), 177.

²³ *Ibid.*, 178–91.

²⁴ "Fighting at Coleman's Plantation Near Rodney," *Vicksburg Daily Herald*, July 7, 1864.

of the Confederate officers involved in the fight admitted that the colored regiments he faced at Coleman's had fought very well. In a letter dated July 9, 1864, Major Elijah Peyton, who commanded a battalion of cavalry in the battle, wrote: "After dark we pursued the enemy to within two miles of Rodney, driving him to his gun boats. The negro troops contested obstinately every inch of ground."²⁵

As the war continued, African American soldiers played an increasingly important role in defending the Union garrisons in Mississippi. A good example is Vicksburg, where by the spring of 1864, there were 320 officers and 5,854 men from colored regiments stationed in the city. This total was about one-half of the entire city garrison.²⁶

Like their white counterparts, the black regiments from Mississippi had their share of malcontents, troublemakers, and ne'er-dowells. Most infractions were minor, but some serious offenses were committed by African American soldiers. One of their most notorious crimes involved the murder of Vicksburg citizen John H. Bobb on May 18, 1864. Bobb had chased off a group of African American soldiers he found picking flowers from his garden. The men later came back and shot him to death.²⁷ The murder of John Bobb brought a swift response from Major General Henry W. Slocum, commander of the District of Vicksburg. He had published in the Vicksburg newspaper General Orders No. 7, in which he spelled out why such behavior would not be tolerated:

The recent murder of a citizen, by colored soldiers, in open day, in the streets of this city, should arouse the attention of every officer serving with these troops to the absolute necessity of preventing their soldiers from attempting a redress of their own grievances. If the spirit which led to this act of violence is not at once repressed, consequences of the most terrible nature must follow. The responsibility resting upon officers in immediate command of colored troops cannot be over-estimated. The policy of arming colored men, although at first strongly opposed, has finally been very generally approved by loyal men throughout the country. If this experiment

²⁵ E.A. Peyton to William McCardle, July 9, 1864. Record Group 9, R151/B16/S3, Box 315, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

²⁶ *OR*, series 1, vol. 32 (III), 561.

²⁷ "Horrible Murder by Colored Soldiers," *Vicksburg Daily Herald*, June 14, 1864.

is successful—if these troops prove powerful and efficient in enforcing obedience to law, all good officers connected with the organization will receive the credit which will be due them as pioneers in the great work. But if in teaching the colored man that he is free, and that in becoming a soldier he has become the equal of his former master, we forget to teach him the first duty of the soldier, that of obedience to law and to the orders of those appointed over him—if we encourage him in rushing for his arms, and coolly murdering citizens for every fancied insult, nothing but disgrace and dishonor can befall all connected with the organization.²⁸

Despite a few problems, the Mississippi African American regiments continued to make a positive contribution to the war effort, serving as garrison troops in outposts and taking the fight to the enemy in raids throughout the state. The 3rd United States Colored Cavalry saw particularly active service, taking part in several important raids to the interior of Mississippi. From July 2–10, 1864, the regiment was part of an expedition to Jackson, the state capitol, and when the Union soldiers marched into the city, the Vicksburg paper noted,

The citizens of Jackson seemed very fearful lest they should somewhere upon their premises encounter the terrible Negro in blue—Yet that personage darkened no forbidden doors, and was everywhere as unthreatening and peaceful as a cloudless sky.²⁹

On the retreat from Jackson back to Vicksburg, the 3rd United States Colored Cavalry was heavily engaged in a rear-guard action as Confederate troopers sought to overtake and destroy the Federal column. The Federal troops, however, were able to beat off determined attacks by the Rebel cavalry and make a safe return to their base at Vicksburg. Once again the conduct of the 3rd Cavalry was praised by the Vicksburg newspaper, which noted:

The gallantry of the veteran troops, infantry and cavalry, was such as it has always been; the conduct of the squadron of colored cavalry, under Major Cook, was not only unexceptional, but worthy of

²⁸ "General Orders No. 7," *Vicksburg Daily Herald*, June 28, 1864.

²⁹ "The Late Expedition to Jackson, Miss.," *Vicksburg Daily Citizen*, July 12, 1864.

all praise. The enemy would have needed to have invoked to their aid a whole forest of Forrest's to have been able to add this encounter to the list of Confederate successes.³⁰

Although the war ended in the spring of 1865, the Mississippi black regiments remained on duty for another year, serving as garrison troops in various posts both inside and outside the state.³¹ When the 52nd United States mustered out at Vicksburg on May 5, 1866, the local paper noted that the regiment "Donated about seven hundred dollars to the 'Lincoln Monument Fund,' and the following day presented to their late Colonel Geo. M. Zeigler, a fine heavy gold watch."³²

When the Mississippi colored regiments mustered out of service, they did so knowing they had earned the right to citizenship in the United States and the state of Mississippi through their faithful service. In a speech given at Baltimore, Maryland, African American orator Frederick Douglass talked of the contributions made by black soldiers to the war effort:

He has illustrated the highest qualities of a patriot and a soldier. He has ranged himself on the side of Government and country, and maintained both against rebels and traitors on the perilous edge of battle. They are now, many of them, sleeping side by side in bloody graves with the bravest and best of all our loyal white soldiers, and many of those who remain alive are scarred and battered veterans.³³

The scarred and battered veterans of the Mississippi black regiments carried with them a pride in their service that carried over into civilian life. After the war many black Mississippians showed that pride by joining the Grand Army of the Republic, the largest Union veteran's organization in the United States.³⁴ They had served their country well

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Dyer, *A Compendium*, vol. 3, 1720–21, 1732–34.

³² *Vicksburg Daily Citizen*, May 10, 1866.

³³ "Inauguration of Douglass Institute," *The Liberator*, October 13, 1865.

³⁴ Dr. Barbara A. Gannon of the University of Central Florida has identified sixteen African American Grand Army of the Republic camps in Mississippi. A list of these camps can be found online at: http://www.woncause.com/appendices.php#appendix_1.

in time of war, and earned the respect of both friend and foe alike. These men had been good soldiers in the fight for freedom, and they continued fighting as civilians for the rights they had earned on many a Civil War battlefield.

A Soldier's Legacy: William T. Rigby and the Establishment of Vicksburg National Military Park

Terrence J. Winschel

"Vicksburg National Military Park Bill Passed the Senate Today," blazed the headlines of the *Vicksburg Evening Post* on February 10, 1899, which confidently asserted it would "Now be Signed by the President." Although temperatures in the city plummeted below zero that day, the citizens of Vicksburg hailed passage of the bill. "The Park will be a great thing for Vicksburg," editorialized the paper, "it will be a source of pleasure to our own people, and will annually attract thousands of visitors from various parts of the Nation." Eleven days later President William McKinley affixed his signature to the bill, by which the Vicksburg battlefield became a national military park. There was cause for celebration and pride in the city and across the nation, especially among those whose service and sacrifice would now be memorialized. Yet, no one associated with the effort was more pleased than former Union captain William T. Rigby, who had labored for almost four years in behalf of the park, and was destined to serve on the park commission for the next thirty years until his death in 1929.¹



William Titus Rigby, born on November 3, 1840, in Red Oak Grove, Iowa, was the first of four children of Washington Augustus Rigby and his wife, the former Lydia Barr. Rigby's father was a devout Methodist and a pacifist farmer who watched with mounting anxiety throughout the decade of the 1850s as the debate over slavery threatened to tear the nation asunder. With the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861, civil war became a reality. Although anxious to enlist, Rigby would not do so without the consent of his father, who was steadfast in his opposition.

¹*Vicksburg Evening Post*, February 10, 1899.

Union reverses marked the first year of conflict, and the war continued longer than most people had anticipated. In the summer of 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 additional men to fill vacant ranks. It was a call that William Rigby had to answer, and in July the young man finally gained his father's permission to enlist. He assisted in enrolling the 102 volunteers who made up Company B, 24th Iowa Infantry and was elected second lieutenant. The Red Oak Boys, as the company was called, experienced their first combat during the Vicksburg campaign, in which they fought at Port Gibson, Champion Hill, and throughout the siege of the fortress city. Little could Rigby have known at the time that his association with Vicksburg would come to dominate the final third of his life.

At war's end Rigby was mustered out of service on July 17, 1865, and returned home to Iowa. Rather than content himself with work on the family farm, he enrolled at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, by which he was awarded an A.B. degree in 1869. While at Cornell he met and fell in love with Sarah Evaline Cattron, whom he married on June 18, 1870. Will and Eva were devoted to one another, and their union was one of bliss, producing three children. Rigby pursued a career in banking and, upon his father's death in 1881, also ran the family farm that encompassed 640 acres. Like most Union veterans, he was an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic, belonging to Post 109 in Stanwood. In 1891, however, he moved to Mount Vernon to provide a better educational setting for his and Eva's daughter Grace. But as they settled in, their lives were soon transformed by the spirit of nationalism that swept across America like a whirlwind and led to their destiny in Mississippi.²



In the closing years of the nineteenth century, as the generation that fought the great war died, veterans of the blue and gray banded together and moved to preserve the fields of battle on which they had fought. Governors' mansions and statehouses across the nation were still dominated

² Alice Rigby, *The Rigby Family* (published privately for family consumption, 1990), 5–6. Rigby's marriage established a family relationship to John F. Merry, who had married Eva's sister, Emma, on November 26, 1866, in Manchester, Iowa. The two men formed a close personal bond, and Merry's influence had a profound impact on Rigby that practically directed his life for more than thirty years.

by Civil War veterans, as were Congress and the White House, so that such sentiment was quickly acted upon. In 1890 Congress set aside the battlefields around Chattanooga, Tennessee, as the nation's first national military park. The establishment of Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland, site of the single bloodiest day of combat in American military history, quickly followed. In 1894 the battlefield at Shiloh was also set aside by Congress, and in 1895, Gettysburg was declared a national military park.

The same spirit of nationalism that led to the establishment of these parks inspired thousands of Union and Confederate veterans to gather in Vicksburg in May 1890 for the Blue & Gray Reunion. Jointly sponsored by Camp 32 of the United Confederate Veterans and Grand Army of the Republic Post 7, both of Vicksburg, the week-long event drew veterans and politicians from across the country. It is unlikely that Rigby attended the reunion, but among those present was former Confederate lieutenant general Stephen D. Lee of Mississippi, who along with Rigby was destined to be indelibly linked with Vicksburg. Those in attendance were saddened to see the battlefield at Vicksburg all but forgotten. Although many of the forts and long lines of trenches that played such a significant role in the forty-seven-day siege of the city were still visible, no effort to preserve them was evident. The former soldiers left Vicksburg convinced that the fields on which they had fought and the thousands of their comrades who had died "deserved more and must be properly marked and preserved by our government." It was an idea that strongly appealed to Lee.³

³"Administrative History Vicksburg National Military Park." Draft manuscript by Edwin C. Bearss. Edwin C. Bearss Series, Box 2, Vicksburg National Military Park (VNMP), Vicksburg, Mississippi; Letter, Stephen D. Lee to S. A. Cunningham, January 16, 1908, quoted in Herman Hattaway, *General Stephen D. Lee* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 224.

Lee commanded a brigade in the defense of Vicksburg. During the war he rose to the rank of lieutenant general and led a corps in the Army of Tennessee. In the aftermath of conflict, he lived in Mississippi and was a farmer, state senator, and the first president of what is today Mississippi State University. Lee was active in veterans' affairs and went on to become commander-in-chief of the United Confederate Veterans. More than many of his contemporaries, Lee supported these preservation efforts, which illustrates his embrace of the New South philosophy and willingness to work with former enemies for the interests of a unified nation. He wrote to a friend, "While I will remain forever loyal to the tender memories of the past, I will continue to be loyal also to our great country." This sentiment made him immensely popular throughout the South and established him as the spokesman for Confederate veterans.

The following year, the Governor's Greys from Iowa led by Captain John F. Merry visited Vicksburg. Although a goodwill visit, Merry's principal objective was to sound out southern veterans and the people of the Hill City as to their views on the establishment of a national military park at Vicksburg. Locally, a man named Tom Lewis was urging city officials to appropriate funds for the purchase and preservation of the forts that ringed the town. His efforts, however, failed to stir elected officials into action. It was obvious to Merry that congressional action was necessary and that only the veterans themselves could succeed in this effort. To do so would require the support of former Confederate soldiers, not just those in Mississippi, but from across the South. To Captain Merry, Lee's participation was deemed vital to gain southern support for the park idea. Because of his service in the Vicksburg campaign, Merry also coaxed his brother-in-law, Will Rigby, to get involved in the project.⁴

John F. Merry was born in Peninsula, Summit County, Ohio, on March 24, 1844. His family migrated to Iowa in 1856 and settled in Delhi, Delaware County. On August 22, 1862, he enlisted in Company K, 21st Iowa Infantry, but was discharged for disability on May 23, 1863. He re-entered service on May 18, 1864, as a second lieutenant in Company F, 46th Iowa Infantry, a 100-day regiment, but saw no action during his time of service. (David B. Henderson was colonel of the 46th Iowa and the association Merry formed with Henderson during their brief service together would later bear fruit in the establishment of Vicksburg National Military Park.) Following the war, Merry taught school then, in 1880, went to work for the Illinois Central Railroad as an excursion agent. He rose to become assistant general passenger agent and later to general immigration agent. As such he became one of the most powerful and influential men in the mid-West. Ever active in veterans' affairs, he served as departmental commander of the Department of Iowa, G.A.R.

The Governor's Greys from Dubuque, Iowa, arrived in Vicksburg on Thursday, February 8, 1894, after having participated in the Mardi Gras festivities in New Orleans. The group stayed at the New Pacific House Hotel on Washington Street.

Lee was enthusiastic about the idea. Although defeat at Vicksburg had sealed the doom of the Confederacy, the general believed that the southern soldiers who had fought so valiantly at Vicksburg deserved to

⁴*Vicksburg Evening Post*, February 9, 1894.

be honored rather than shadowed by shame. He promised both his support and energies on behalf of the enterprise and agreed to the formation of the Vicksburg National Military Park Association. On October 22, 1895, a preliminary meeting of the Association, called by Captain Merry, was held in the Club Room of the New Pacific House (commonly called the Piazza Hotel). Lee was elected chairman and addresses were made by Lee, Merry, and others, and plans were outlined for a permanent organization. The purpose of the Association was to petition Congress to establish a national military park at Vicksburg. Lee was elected president of the new organization. The other officers were Charles Davidson, formerly of the 25th Iowa Infantry, vice-president, and Charles C. Flowerree, of Mississippi (former colonel of the 7th Virginia Infantry), treasurer. Rigby was elected secretary, and from the moment of its inception, proved the most dedicated, energetic, and committed member of the Association. Fifty shares of capital stock were sold for \$5.00 per share, the proceeds of which would cover the expenses of the Association, and the veterans moved quickly to initiate their work.⁵

On November 18, 1895, the charter of incorporation was signed by Governor John M. Stone and issued the following day by Mississippi Secretary of State George M. Govan. Anticipating that the charter would be approved, on November 20, a train carrying 100 directors and members of the Association representing the Northwest left Chicago bound for Vicksburg. The *Vicksburg Evening Post* recorded their arrival:

Capt. Merry's party reached the city at 7:30 o'clock, at which hour a vast throng assembled at the depot to greet its arrival. A detachment of the Warren Light Artillery was already on the ground for the purpose of firing the salute, but the Volunteer Southrons and band, and the resident veterans of both armies, acting as a guard of honor, escorted Gov. Stone, Gen. S. D. Lee and other distinguished gentlemen to the platform where they awaited the coming of the

⁵ *Vicksburg Evening Post*, October 22, 1895; Minutes, Vicksburg National Military Park Association, Administrative Series, Box 7, Folder 158, VNMP.

This meeting was held in conjunction with the Western Waterways Convention, as many of the most powerful and influential politicians and business leaders in the Mississippi River Valley, mostly veterans North and South, would be in attendance.

Because of Captain Merry's pressing duties with the railroad, he knew that he would be unable to devote the time necessary for success of the association. Thus, he convinced his brother-in-law, William T. Rigby, to get involved.

visitors. As the train came in the guns of the Warren Light Artillery signaled its approach and seventeen rounds were fired—the Governor’s salute.

Following a series of welcoming remarks, the visitors were escorted to the Carroll Hotel “by a procession which would have done honor to a President or Emperor.”⁶

The following morning, November 22, a meeting of the incorporators was held in the parlors of the Hotel Carroll at 10 o’clock and the articles of incorporation were read and adopted. The first meeting of the board was then called to order by Lee. Former Union general Lucius Fairchild of Wisconsin rose and recommended “that the proposed Park should include the lines of the earthworks of the opposing armies and the land included within these lines, with such additions as are necessary to include the Headquarters of Generals Grant and Pemberton. Such of the water batteries as it may be desirable to designate, and other historical spots, the whole not to exceed four thousand acres.” The recommendation met with universal approbation and the Association’s Executive Committee was instructed to urge Congress to establish a park along the lines proposed by Fairchild.⁷

That afternoon, Lee called into session the first meeting of the executive committee of the board of directors. A committee consisting of Lee, Davidson, Rigby, Flowerree, and Edward Scott Butts of Mississippi was constituted and charged with: preparing a bill for the establishment of a park at Vicksburg, presenting the bill to Congress, and providing information as to the cost of land. The committee, which was to have full power on behalf of the Association, immediately arranged for a survey of desired land to be made and for a map to be produced of the proposed park. Options on the land were secured over the next few weeks illustrating the sentiment throughout Vicksburg and Warren County genuinely favoring the establishment of a park.⁸

Members of the executive committee spoke at length with Thomas C. Catchings, U. S. representative from Mississippi’s third congressional

⁶ Minutes, Vicksburg National Military Park Association, Administrative Series, Box 7, Folder 158, VNMP; *Vicksburg Evening Post*, November 22, 1895.

⁷ Minutes, Vicksburg National Military Park Association, Administrative Series, Box 7, Folder 158, VNMP.

⁸ Ibid. Edward Scott Butts was former captain of Company H, 21st Mississippi Infantry.

district, which encompassed Vicksburg. A former Confederate soldier who had served in Congress since 1885, Catchings cautioned that the plan was too ambitious, and that because of the desired size of the park, it would meet with opposition in Congress, especially from the tight-fisted speaker Thomas B. Reed of Maine. Catchings recommended that the proposed size of the park be reduced to the bare minimum needed to protect the key features of the battlefield.⁹

On January 10, 1896, a second meeting of the executive committee was called to order by General Lee in the parlors of the Hotel Carroll. Rigby made a motion outlining the size and location of the proposed park. The proposed park would encompass only 1,200 acres, and the average cost per acre would be \$35. Members of the Association were startled at the proposal limiting the size of the park as well as the asking price for land. Despite disappointments and concerns on the part of the committee members, the recommendation was freely discussed and passed. Lee, Davidson, Rigby, and Flowerree were instructed to go to Washington and have Representative Catchings introduce the bill.¹⁰

Lee, however, did not travel to Washington because of an outbreak of smallpox at the Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College in Starkville, where he served as president. But the others went to the nation's capital, where they met John Merry, James G. Everest (a member of the Association and commander of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee), and Representative Catchings. They remained in Washington for two weeks, during which Catchings's bill (H.R. 4339) was referred

⁹ Thomas Clendinen Catchings was born on January 11, 1847, near Brownsville, in Hinds County, Mississippi. Following the war, he was admitted to the bar and practiced law in Vicksburg. He also served as a state senator and was attorney general of Mississippi from 1877–1885. Elected to Congress in 1885, Catchings served eight terms in Washington, after which he returned to Vicksburg and resumed his law practice. He died on December 24, 1927, and is interred in Vicksburg's Cedar Hill Cemetery.

Thomas B. Reed was born on October 18, 1839, in Portland, Maine. Following graduation from Bowdoin College, he pursued a career in law. He served briefly during the Civil War as an acting assistant paymaster with the Navy from April 1864–November 1865. He spent the remainder of his life either practicing law or holding elected office. Reed served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1877–1899, twice as Speaker, 1889–1891 and 1895–1899, when he resigned his seat. He died on December 7, 1902, and is interred in Evergreen Cemetery in Portland.

¹⁰ Minutes, Vicksburg National Military Park Association, Administrative Series, Box 7, Folder 158, VNMP. The main body encompassed the area where Grant's assaults of May 19 and 22, 1863, took place. From the main body of the park, wings radiated to the Mississippi River above and below Vicksburg.

to the Committee on Military Affairs, chaired by Congressman John A. T. Hull from Iowa.¹¹

From Washington, Rigby wrote to Lee and provided him with a detailed account of their work. Greatly pleased by what he read, the general replied to his colleague, "As you present it, it is most encouraging in every way. I feel that if the bill becomes a law, we will be indebted to Captain Merry more than any one else, and to yourself next for your painstaking, efficient, and complete work in the premises." Confident that the bill would pass, Lee conveyed appreciation for all that Rigby had done, and in expressing his admiration for the Iowan, penned, "I need not tell you that your appointment as one of the commission, or in any other place you desire, in my judgement, is due you, and would be most agreeable to the others who may be so fortunate as to be on the commission. I feel that no one could do more efficient, more loyal work, or more intelligent work."¹²

Eleven days later the bill was released from committee and referred to the Committee on the Whole House on the State of the Union. No action, however, was taken as Speaker Reed, referred to by members of the House of Representatives as "The Czar," refused to allow the bill to reach the floor. The members of the Association returned home sorely disappointed.

Upon his return home to Mt. Vernon, Rigby wrote again to Lee giving him a full account of the trip to Washington and provided an assessment

¹¹ Catchings introduced the bill on January 20, 1896. The bill called for the establishment of a three-man commission to manage the park. All three had to be veterans of the siege and defense of Vicksburg, one Confederate representative and two Union representatives.

James G. Everest was a New York native who was born on February 9, 1834. By the outbreak of war he had moved to Illinois where he enlisted as a private in Co. I, 13th Illinois Infantry. Promoted through the ranks to captain of the company he served in that capacity until mustered out on June 23, 1864. He spent his life after the war working with various railroads in the Midwest and was active with veterans' organizations. On March 1, 1899, James Everest was appointed one of the three original commissioners of Vicksburg National Military Park and served on the commission until his death in Chicago on April 17, 1924.

John A. T. Hull was a native of Ohio and resident of Des Moines, Iowa, when the Civil War began. He was appointed a first lieutenant in Company C, 23rd Iowa Infantry and later became captain of the company. Because he had been severely wounded during the Vicksburg campaign at the Big Black River Bridge on May 17, 1863, Hull was discharged from the service by year's end. From 1872–1890 he served successively as secretary of the Iowa Senate, secretary of state, and lieutenant governor of Iowa. In 1890 he was elected to his first of ten terms in the United States House of Representatives. Hull died on September 26, 1928, and is interred in Arlington National Cemetery.

¹² Letter, Stephen D. Lee to William T. Rigby, January 25, 1896, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-28, VNMP.

of the situation. Lee replied on February 19 and again commended the Association's secretary for his diligence and energy writing, "You have certainly won your spurs by your work in the interest of the Park, and I hope you, at least, will be rewarded for it, if no one else is." Having served in the Mississippi Senate, Lee had a more intimate and pragmatic grasp on politics and sought to assuage Rigby's disappointment. "There is some times a great delay in the passage of a bill in congress, even when unanimously recommended as our bill is," he observed, and cautioned "we may not be able to get it enacted as law this session."¹³

No action was taken on the park measure as winter turned to spring. To gain more wide-spread support for the bill and exert pressure on Congress, Rigby traveled throughout New England where he met with state legislators and spoke at G.A.R. camps. His travels ended abruptly in May when his mother became ill and died. He had made it home in time to be with her in her final days and remained in Iowa much of the summer to settle her affairs. On May 8, 1896, Representative Robert G. Cousins of Iowa wrote to express his condolences. In the same letter he gave Rigby a candid view of matters in Washington: "In regard to the prospects for passage of the Park bill, all I can tell you is that I talked with Mr. Reed about it, and recommended as strongly as I could its recognition . . . He named over about 15 propositions for which he said it was claimed that there were special reasons for passing, and that he could not see how they were to be recognized with an empty treasury."¹⁴

During the congressional recess, joint resolutions were passed by the legislatures in Mississippi, Iowa, New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island endorsing the park bill. Yet, despite such encouraging actions, it was a winter of frustration for Rigby, Lee, and those connected with the Association. Over the winter, Merry, Rigby, and others planned their strategy for the next session of Congress. Representative David Henderson of Iowa advised, "We have got to take [Speaker] Reed by the throat at this session." Fred Grant (son of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant), then police

¹³ Letter, Stephen D. Lee to William T. Rigby, February 19, 1896, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-28, VNMP.

¹⁴ Letter, Robert G. Cousins to William T. Rigby, May 8, 1896, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-28, VNMP.

Robert Gordon Cousins, whose father had served with Rigby in the 24th Iowa Infantry, was born on January 31, 1859. Following graduation from Cornell College (Rigby's alma mater), he studied law, which he practiced in Tipton, the seat of government for Cedar County. In 1893 he was elected to Congress and served eight terms in the U.S. House of Representatives.

commissioner for New York City, wrote to Rigby on November 9, 1896, offering words of solace and encouragement:

What you say with reference to getting the appropriation for the Park at Vicksburg, is the usual experience, and I am not at all surprised at Speaker Reed not desiring the matter to come up in the last session of congress, owing to the financial condition of the country. However, the outlook for the coming year is much better, and I presume his objections will be less serious.

Supporters of the bill on Capitol Hill were persistent in their entreaty to "Czar" Reed, but to no avail. On December 14, Congressman Henderson assured his friend Rigby: "I have been pushing the Speaker," but stressed, "much work is needed in that quarter."¹⁵

On December 16, a meeting of the board of directors of the Association was called by Lee in the parlors of the Carroll Hotel in Vicksburg. Lee, Rigby, and others were instructed to travel to Washington in January to push the park bill. Accompanied by Fred Grant, James Everest, and members of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Lee and Rigby visited with Speaker Reed and urged his support of the park bill. The speaker, although not opposed to the park idea, was not sympathetic to the appropriation necessary for its establishment.¹⁶

Reflecting on the meeting weeks later, Lee lamented, "I feel all has been done that could be done for the Park Bill. The trouble is, the empty treasury—and Mr. Reed has 8000 arguments on his side." Knowing that his frustration was shared by Rigby, Lee attempted to buoy the spirit of his new friend and ally, writing, "You have certainly done your duty in

¹⁵ Letter David Henderson to John F. Merry, November 6, 1896; Letter, Frederick D. Grant to William T. Rigby, November 9, 1896; Letter, Henderson to Rigby, December 14, 1896, Rigby Series, Box 1, Folder 28, VNMP.

David Henderson, a native of Scotland, was born on March 14, 1840. When he was only six years of age his parents immigrated to America and settled in Fayette County, Iowa. At the outbreak of the war, Henderson enlisted in Company C, 12th Iowa Infantry and was elected first lieutenant. He was wounded at Fort Donelson and again at Corinth on October 4, 1862, which resulted in the amputation of his foot. Although he resigned on February 16, 1863, he was later appointed colonel of the 46th Iowa Infantry, a one hundred-day regiment, in which he served with John F. Merry. After the war he studied law and entered politics. Henderson was elected to Congress in 1869 and served ten terms in the U.S. House of Representatives where he served as speaker in the 56th and 57th Congress.

¹⁶ Minutes, Vicksburg National Military Park Association, Administrative Series, Box 7, Folder 158, VNMP.

the premises, and covered every chance. Mr. Reed is a man after his own mould, and I don't believe anyone can influence him against his decision when he has deliberately made up his mind." But Lee too despaired. "Although I think the bill may pass in the next Congress, yet the options will all have expired & we can never renew them as favorably again," he wrote. With deep emotion he expressed a fear shared by Rigby and those in the Association: "In the mean time many an old veteran in both armies will have 'crossed over the river.'"¹⁷

When Congress reconvened, memorials "praying" for establishment of the park that had been passed by the legislatures of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin were introduced on the floor of the House of Representatives by members from those states. The speaker ignored the pressure and H.R. 4339 died when the 54th Congress adjourned in March 1897. Representative Cousins again wrote to Rigby, "I regret exceedingly that the measure could not have consideration at the present session." "I hope the options at Vicksburg may be extended without loss or serious embarrassment to those interested in the project," the Iowa congressman continued, and pledged, "I shall be ever interested in the matter until that success comes which your efforts so much deserve."¹⁸

"The failure of Congress to act on the Vicksburg Park Bill, makes it necessary to make a new start with the next Congress," wrote Lee to Rigby on October 29, 1897. "All preliminary work has already been done of course, but I want to consult with you as to what is now necessary for us to do." In a vein of desperation he implored, "What can we do? When can we do it? Where will we get the funds to further prosecute our efforts?" As Rigby sought answers to such pressing questions, the ever-active secretary continued his travels on behalf of the Association and strategized with those promoting the park measure. Among those he conferred with was fellow Iowan James K. P. Thompson, who suggested, "It appears to me that points to emphasise [sic] are the facts that if there is a battlefield of the late war worthy of recognition by the government, Vicksburg is that one. It was big with results. Gettysburg was simply a display of remarkable courage on both sides—no great results followed."¹⁹

¹⁷ Letter, Lee to Rigby, February 7, 1897, Rigby Series, Box 1, Folder 29, VNMP.

¹⁸ Letter, Robert G. Cousins to William T. Rigby, February 25, 1897, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-29, VNMP.

¹⁹ Letter, Lee to Rigby, October 29, 1897; Letter James K. P. Thompson to Rigby, November 26, 1897, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-29, VNMP.

As members of the House assembled in Washington for the start of the 55th Congress, Representative Cousins warned Rigby that “the session promises to be somewhat stormy.” The nation’s financial situation was the major focus of debate on the floor as the session began and grew more heated as the temperature rose in Washington that summer. Despite the pall of gloom, members of the Association persevered and Representative Catchings bided his time. It was the second session of the 55th Congress before he again determined to act. On December 9, 1897, he introduced H.R. 4382 “to establish a national military park to commemorate the campaign, siege, and defense of Vicksburg.” As before, the proposed legislation was referred by Speaker Reed to the House Committee on Military Affairs.²⁰

Rigby urged Lee to accompany him to Washington in January to push for support of the park measure. Frustration with events, however, influenced Lee to write:

Ex-Gov. Hull & Genl. Catchings both were of opinion that neither Col. Flowerree nor myself would avail anything by again appearing before Speaker Reed. I have already addressed him on the Park Bill in his private office. The members of the Mil’ty Comtee have seen the park ground & have all information possible. The speaker is the only obstacle & if his comrades in the G.A.R. and other organizations cannot reach him, certainly I cannot . . . I hope the Speaker will yield this time, but I must confess I do not imagine that he will.

The general went on to suggest that they attempt to get the bill passed in the senate then go to the House.²¹

Despite the odds, Rigby traveled to Washington in late January 1898, and spent two days in the capital talking with members of both houses of Congress. “I am assured, however, that the House Military Committee will to day vote to report the bill favorably,” he wrote Eva from Indianapolis while on the next leg of his journey. To his wife he expressed the stark reality of affairs in Washington relative to the park measure: “It

James K. P. Thompson had served in Company D, 21st Iowa Infantry during the Vicksburg campaign and was wounded in the May 22, 1863, assault against the city’s defenses. He later served as chairman of the Iowa Commission to locate the positions of Iowa troops during the siege of Vicksburg.

²⁰ Letter, Robert Gordon Cousins to Rigby, December 7, 1897, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-29, VNMP.

²¹ Letter, Lee to Rigby, January 5, 1898, Rigby Series, Box 1, Folder 30, VNMP.

simply brings us fairly in front of the Speaker. As to whether he will let it be called up during the session, I am not sanguine." Rigby, however, had influential friends in Congress who were also strong supporters of the bill. He confided to Eva, "[Representatives] Allison and Cousins think he will, but have no definite information. My opinion is it depends on two things, first + chiefly on the amount of influence Henderson can bring to bear. He has the ear of Reed more than any other man in the House [and] will do everything for us he can: and second on the amount of outside pressure from the G.A.R. that I can bring to reinforce Henderson's influence." In support of his efforts he was pleased to inform her that Stuyvesant Fish, president of the Illinois Central Railroad, had provided him \$200 "to enable me to visit substantially all the Depts. G.A.R."²²

From Indianapolis, where he met with the commander of the Department of Indiana, G.A.R., the energetic Rigby traveled south across the Ohio River to Kentucky. On January 29 he wrote his wife from Nicholasville, "I have succeeded with the Dept. of Ky and am going on to Chattanooga to get the Dept. of Tennessee in line." Success also quickly crowned his efforts in the Volunteer State from where he headed north to Chicago. From the "Windy City" he traveled east to New York, making several stops along the way to speak at local camps of the G.A.R. Although the winter landscape was in all its beauty, the iron rails he traveled seemed to stretch forever as they carried him from state to state. Despite frequent line changes, passes awaited him at most stations through the workings of President Fish of the Illinois Central Railroad and Rigby's brother-in-law, John Merry. Arriving in Albany on February 14, Rigby again wrote his wife and shared with her the continued success he experienced on the journey, "My friends in Mass., Conn. [and] R.I. [Rhode Island] do not disappoint me. I found letters from them awaiting me here saying it is all right." He also informed her, "I see the Dept. C[ommander] at Hd.Qrts. here tomorrow."²³

Returning to Washington, Rigby met with Representatives Henderson and Cousins of Iowa. He attempted to see John A. T. Hull as well, but the congressman was out of town. His many weeks of travel wore heavily on the fifty-seven-year-old veteran for his work on behalf of the Association compelled the longest separation from his wife throughout their

²² William T. Rigby to Sarah Evaline Rigby, January 25, 1898, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-30, VNMP.

²³ William T. Rigby to Sarah Evaline Rigby January 29, 1898, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-30; William T. Rigby to Sarah Evaline Rigby, February 14, 1898, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-20.

marriage. "I have been away from you too long," he wrote to Eva in Mt. Vernon. "The memory of our last embrace is very sweet, but I long for a renewal of those remembered delights." Many more weeks were destined to pass before he enjoyed such delights for the balance of February Rigby traveled throughout the Midwest seeking support for the park measure from the G.A.R. commandries in Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin. He then raced back to the nation's capital where the park measure was expected to be reported favorably out of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.²⁴

Rigby was joined in Washington by several members of the Association. Although the measure was reported out of committee on March 1, 1898, before the proposal could be voted on the nation found itself at war with Spain. (The battleship *Maine* had been blown up in La Habana Harbor on February 15, and war was declared on April 25.) War measures engrossed the legislators' attention for the next six months. For Rigby, Lee, and others who had labored so long and hard on behalf of the park measure, frustration reached new depths. With no action on the park bill, Rigby returned to Iowa where he spent the rest of the year devoting what time he could to the park effort. In May, for example, Rigby drafted resolutions on behalf of the park measure and sent them to all the G.A.R. departments that were scheduled to meet that month.

The war with Spain had consumed the headlines throughout the summer. In both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of operations, U.S. land and naval forces proved triumphant and by late July Spain made overtures for peace. A protocol was signed on August 12 which brought an end to hostilities though several months would pass before a peace treaty was signed. The success of the war guaranteed Republican success in the mid-term elections in November, and the most-staunch supporters of the park measure were re-elected.

At year's end, Lee called to order a meeting of the Association in Vicksburg, during which he reviewed the efforts thus far made on behalf of the park bill. Again he, Rigby, and others were appointed to a committee to go to Washington and push for passage of the measure. Lee was unable to go, so Rigby traveled to the capital where he arrived on February 4 and remained in Washington until the 11th. (The week would prove to be one of the most memorable of his life.) He again met with

²⁴ William T. Rigby to Sarah Evaline Rigby, February 19, 1898, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-30, VNMP.

James Everest and Major N. M. Hubbard of the Department of Iowa G.A.R., and they spoke at length to dozens of congressmen, including the chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, Representative Hull of Iowa. They even secured a private meeting with Speaker Reed, whose reluctance to call up the bill for a vote appeared to waiver.²⁵

The Treaty of Paris had been signed on December 11, 1898. With the war over, veterans' issues were again of interest to Congress. Even the tight-fisted Reed seemed anxious to fund projects and programs of interests to veterans and dropped his opposition to the park measure. The opportune moment had finally arrived, and as the measure had been reported favorably out of committee in March 1898, Representative Hull asked on February 6, 1899, that Speaker Reed suspend the rules and pass the Vicksburg Park Bill. As soon as H.R. 4382 was read by the clerk, it was voted on and passed unanimously. The *Vicksburg Evening Post* announced passage of the bill on February 7, stating that "no matter ever brought before the Congress has been more faithfully presented and worked for in the past three years, than the bill which passed the House yesterday under a suspensions of the rules for the establishment of a National Military Park at Vicksburg."²⁶

Two days later, Senator Edmund Pettus of Alabama, a member of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs who had served under Lee's command at Vicksburg, sent to the floor a companion bill, S. 4382. On February 10, Mississippi senator Hernando De Soto Money asked for "unanimous consent" to call up the measure. After a reading, the measure was passed. For Captain Rigby, who watched from the gallery as the park measure passed both houses of Congress, it must have been a moment of supreme relief and personal satisfaction that his efforts had finally achieved the long-sought triumph. On February 21, 1899, ten days after Rigby left for Iowa and a much-deserved period of rest, President William McKinley affixed his signature to the bill making Vicksburg the fifth battlefield from the Civil War to be set aside in perpetuity as a national military park or national battlefield site.

²⁵ Minutes, Vicksburg National Military Park Association, Administrative Series, Box 7, Folder 128; Receipt from Hotel Normandie, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-31, VNMP.

The Association met in Vicksburg on December 28, 1898. Rigby, accompanied by W. O. Mitchell, who had recently been elected to fill the vacant vice-president position on the Board of Directors of the VNMPA caused by the death of Edward Scott Butts, arrived in Washington on February 4, 1899, and checked into the Hotel Normandie on McPherson Square.

²⁶ *Vicksburg Evening Post*, February 7, 1898.

The legislation by which the park was established called for the appointment of three commissioners to oversee the park. All three had to be veterans of the Vicksburg campaign, one Confederate representative, and two Union representatives. Lee was clearly the logical choice for the Confederate representative, and his appointment was quickly made by the secretary of war. As more than 36,000 Illinois soldiers had served in the Vicksburg campaign, comprising fully one-half of Grant's army that captured the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy," it was readily accepted that someone from Illinois must serve on the commission. Thus, James Everest was appointed as one of the Union representatives. Political considerations, however, muddled the selection of the final representative and congressmen from numerous states advanced their own candidates for consideration.

Rigby's son, William C. Rigby, who practiced law in Chicago, recognized the danger and wrote his father in February, "All of your friends seem to think . . . that Ohio and Michigan may unite to beat you." He implored his father to use the influence he had established with members of Congress to gain the appointment. "I want you to use me as your headquarters clerk in this campaign," urged Will, "and want you to organize it as effectively as you did the one to secure the passage of the bill."²⁷

Others also rallied in support of Rigby. State senator William O. Mitchell of Iowa wrote to William B. Allison, who represented the state in the U. S. Senate, "It is conceded by everyone that Captain W. T. Rigby is entitled to practically all the credit for originating and carrying forward the enterprise." Mitchell also wrote Representative Robert Cousins in Washington about Rigby, "He has worked for it for nearly four years, and it would be an out-rage if some one else were appointed commissioner in his place." Fred Grant, Stephen D. Lee, and a host of others interceded on Rigby's behalf. Even Lt. Col. John P. Nicholson, powerful chairman of the park commission at Gettysburg, was pleased to draft a letter of support, writing, "I do not see why there should be a moment's hesitation as it is almost entirely due to your efforts."²⁸

These efforts proved successful. On February 24, 1899, a Western Union telegram from V. L. Mason, private secretary to Secretary of War Russell Alger, arrived at the Rigby home in Mt. Vernon. "The Secretary

²⁷ Letter, William C. Rigby to William T. Rigby, February 8, 1899, Rigby Series, Box 1, F-31, VNMP.

²⁸ Letter, William O. Mitchell to William B. Allison, February 7, 1899; John P. Nicholson to William T. Rigby, February 11, 1899, Rigby Series, Box 1, Folder 31, VNMP.

of War directs me to request that you report at the War Department March first at ten A.M. in connection with the Vicksburg National Park Commission." Rigby was not home at the time, and the news was relayed to him in Grinnell, Iowa, by John Merry. "I suppose it means my appointment," he immediately wrote his wife. "Need I say or try to say how pleased I am. More on account of what it means for you and the children than for myself." He instructed his wife to write him at the Hotel Normandie in Washington and promised her, "When I come home with my commission, we will celebrate." The much deserved celebration had been a long time in coming.²⁹

After receiving their commissions the three men met next in Vicksburg where they arrived on March 14 to establish the park office and start their new duties. A topographical survey of the lands to be acquired was ordered, tracts were purchased, and exhaustive correspondence was entered into with veterans of the siege to amass information necessary to accurately mark the battlefield with historical tablets for the benefit of visitors. The commissioners worked to construct roads and bridges and secure the placement of monuments by the various states represented by troops during the siege and defense of Vicksburg.³⁰

The furious pace required of the commissioners, and of Lee and Rigby in particular, soon exhausted the general. On December 20, he wrote to Secretary of War Elihu Root asking to be temporarily relieved from his duties as chairman of the park commission and recommended that Captain Rigby be named acting chairman. The secretary of war approved both the request and recommendation. Lee never resumed his duties as chairman. On November 20, 1901, Lee reluctantly accepted the limitations that age and health were forcing upon him and tendered his resignation as chairman of the Commission to Captain Rigby, who was appointed to fill the post.³¹

²⁹ Telegram, V. L. Mason to William T. Rigby, February 24, 1899; Letter, William T. Rigby to Sarah Evaline Rigby, February 24, 1899, Rigby Series, Box 1, Folder 31, VNMP.

³⁰ Of the three men, only Rigby moved to Vicksburg where he managed the park office and the day-to-day business of the commission. Thus, on all correspondence, he signed himself "Resident Commissioner."

³¹ In a touching letter written from the heart, Lee expressed his admiration for his fellow commissioner:

I felt at the time when Colonel Everest and yourself by your votes made me your Chairman that it was an act of delicate courtesy extended to me by former antagonists,

Hence Rigby, who had gone from resident commissioner to acting chairman, now subscribed himself chairman of the park commission and would serve in that capacity until his death on May 10, 1929, a few months shy of his 89th birthday. During his tenure at the park he labored tirelessly to make Vicksburg the finest of our nation's military parks. In honoring the men in blue and gray who struggled at Vicksburg in the spring and summer of 1863, he worked with state commissions, veterans' organizations, and a host of individuals to secure placement of state memorials, regimental monuments and markers, and bronze and stone statuary that range from equestrian statues and standing figures to busts and relief portraits that were executed by the foremost American and European sculptors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Collectively they have made Vicksburg, in the words of one Civil War veteran, "the art park of the world." In tribute to the man whose efforts have made Vicksburg an American shrine, a bronze bust of William Rigby was placed on the field in his lifetime and serves to remind current and future stewards of his selfless devotion to duty and of their charge to preserve the rich history that is ours as a people. Laid to rest alongside his wife, Eva (who died in 1928), Rigby is fittingly interred in Vicksburg National Cemetery along with his comrades in arms, whose sacrifice helped to shape the nation that he had so faithfully served as citizen and soldier.

but now ever dear friends. From the very inception of the park movement, you have been the most active and industrious person connected with the enterprise. You have done more work and put more thought on the great enterprise than any member or person connected with the park. From this fact I have never failed to agree with you in almost every suggestion or act connected with your management, and I really feel from association and work you are now the most competent member to be the permanent Chairman of the Commission. I, therefore, tender to you my resignation as Chairman of the Commission and request that you assume all the duties of the office as permanent Chairman. (Letter, Lee to Rigby, November 20, 1901, Rigby Series, Box 2, F-52, VNMP.)

Lee, however, remained on the Commission as the Confederate representative and continued to work on behalf of the park until his death on May 28, 1908.

Contributors

Michael B. Ballard was an archivist and historian at Mississippi State University, his alma mater. He authored eleven books, twenty-five articles and over seventy-five book reviews. Mike Ballard died as this special edition that he edited was being assembled. He died in his library doing what he loved.

Stewart Bennett is the chair of the Social and Behavior Sciences department and professor of history at Blue Mountain College. He is the author of several works on the Civil War.

Victoria E. Bynum is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Texas State University, San Marcos. An award-winning author and NEH Fellow, her scholarship analyzes class, race, and gender relations in the Civil War Era South.

Thomas D. Cockrell is an instructor of history at Northeast Mississippi Community College. He has written and edited many works on the Civil War several with Michael Ballard.

Jeff T. Giambrone is a reference historian for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. He is the author of *Beneath Torn and Tattered Flags: A Regimental History of the 38th Mississippi Infantry, C.S.A.*, and *An Illustrated Guide to the Vicksburg Campaign and National Military Park*.

Gary D. Joiner is a cartographer and associate professor of history at Louisiana State University in Shreveport. He is the author or editor of twelve books including *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862*, *One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign in 1864*, *Through the Howling Wilderness: The Red River Campaign and Union Failure in 1864*, *Red River Steamboats*, and *Mr. Lincoln's Brown Water Navy: Mississippi Squadron*.

John F. Marszalek retired in 2002 as a Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus after teaching at Mississippi State University and publishing

many books. He is currently executive director and managing editor of the Ulysses S. Grant Association and the Grant Presidential Library.

Timothy B. Smith teaches history at the University of Tennessee at Martin. He is the author or editor of nineteen books, including *Shiloh: Conquer or Perish* and most recently *Grant Invades Tennessee: The 1862 Battles for Forts Henry and Donelson*.

Terrence J. Winschel, retired historian Vicksburg National Military Park, is regarded as the leading authority on the Vicksburg Campaign. His books include: *Triumph & Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign*; *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*; and *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River*.

Jim Woodrick serves as director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History Historic Preservation Division. He is the author of *The Civil War Siege of Jackson, Mississippi*, published by The History Press.

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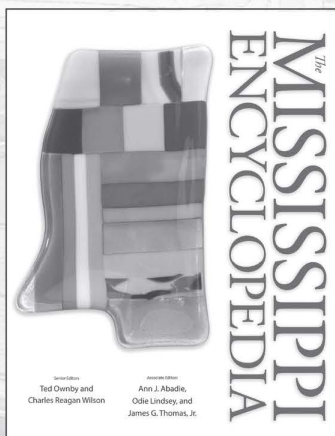
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The Chicago Manual of Style (latest edition) should be followed, with some exceptions (primarily dates: the *Journal* prefers “December 1, 1866,” to Chicago’s “1 December 1866”).

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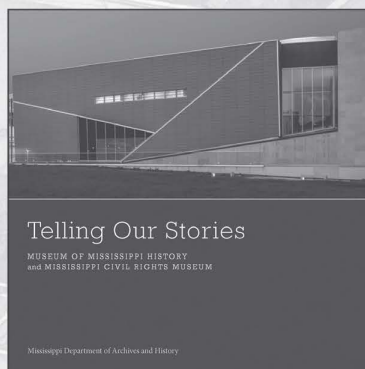


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