

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LIII, Battlefield Tour Edition

Chicago, Illinois

May 6-9, 1993

43rd Annual Tour: Vicksburg

by Barbara Hughett and Marvin Sanderman

"See what a lot of land those fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key ... Let us get Vicksburg and all this country is ours. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket." These words of President Abraham Lincoln vividly illustrate the strategic importance during the American Civil War of the city that became known as "the Gibraltar of the Confederacy."

The Civil War Round Table has chosen for the site of its Forty-third Annual Battlefield Tour that "key" of the Confederacy—Vicksburg, Mississippi. This will be The Round Table's fifth trip to Vicksburg: previous tours were made in 1954, 1961, 1972, and 1981.

Our bivouac during the tour will be the Park Inn International, located across the road from Vicksburg National Military Park. The itinerary is noted on page three of this newsletter. Ground transportation will be by air-conditioned motor coaches, provided by Brantley Charter, Inc., of Lexington, Tennessee.

Our tour guides will be three eminently-qualified Civil War historians. Once again, our main guide will be Edwin C. Bearss, chief historian of the National Park Service. Ed Bearss has been leading our annual battlefield tours since 1961. He began his Park Service career at Vicksburg, where he did the research that led to the lost resting place of the Union gunboat *Cairo*. Bearss is the author of numerous books and articles and is the recipient of many honors, including the 1980 Nevins-Freeman Award of The Civil War Round Table. He also received the Distinguished Service Award of the United States Department of the Interior, which designated Bearss as "unquestionably the most productive historian in the history of the National Park Service."

Terrence J. Winschel, historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, is a fifteen-year veteran of the National Park Service. He served at Gettysburg and Fredericksburg National Military Parks and Valley Forge National Historic Park before coming to Vicksburg. He is the author of two books, dozens of articles, and several pamphlets, and is a popular speaker on the Civil War circuit. Terry Winschel last addressed The Round Table in February 1991.

Al Scheller, a retired marine pilot with the New York City Fire Department, served for a number of years as a seasonal historian at Vicksburg National Military Park. He is recognized as one of the foremost authorities on the Vicksburg campaign. Scheller was one of our guides during



Cost of Tour

\$305 per person, double occupancy; \$355, single occupancy. Please note that non-members must add \$25 to prices listed. Please indicate the person with whom you wish to share a room. Transportation from the Jackson airport to Vicksburg on Wednesday, May 5, and to the Jackson airport on Sunday, May 9, will be available and is included in the tour cost.

Includes: Accommodations at the Park Inn International (601-638-5811) in Vicksburg—Wednesday night-Sunday afternoon; breakfast, lunch, and dinner Thursday-Saturday; breakfast and lunch on Sunday; two complimentary cocktails or soft drinks served poolside on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday; group admission fees; group service tips; tour kits; literature; badges; daily bus transportation; refreshments on buses; experienced guides; evening programs.

For variations: Portions of tour, joining enroute, individual meetings, call Barbara Hughett (312-973-5822) or Don Anderson (708-296-2780), co-chairs of the 1993 tour.

Local CWRT groups and others attending lunches or dinners, please make reservations through our registrar so that caterers can be notified of how many meals will be needed.



The Round Table's 1981 tour, and has given many addresses on various aspects of the Civil War to groups throughout the country.

THE BATTLES

Port Gibson—May 1, 1863

On April 30, McClernand's Corps was ferried over the Mississippi River and immediately began to move inland towards Port Gibson. About three miles west of Port Gibson the country roads split into a northern road and a southern road. McClernand sent the divisions of Carr and Hovey along the southern road while Osterhaus's men took the northern road. To block this thrust, Confederate General Bowen deployed Tracy's brigade across the northern road, and Green's across the southern. At 8:15 a.m., the battle began with Union assaults on both Confederate flanks. Tracy was killed early in the fighting and Colonel Garratt assumed command.

Osterhaus's division pushed Garratt's men back four

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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Very special thanks go to several people. For help in acquiring and assembling the tour kits and badges: Mary Munsell Abroe, Marvin Sanderman, Carole Cerniak, and Carole Le Claire.

For an extraordinary amount of help with details and planning: Jim Woodrick, editor of *The Rebel Yell*, the newsletter of the Jackson Civil War Round Table.



hundred yards, but was stopped and made no further advance until late afternoon. Reinforcements under McPherson arrived and broke the Confederate right flank. On the southern road, Carr's and Hovey's divisions worked forward slowly until 10:00 a.m. when they assaulted Green, forcing him to fall back northward. At 11:00 a.m., Baldwin's brigade took over the defense of the southern road while Green reorganized his brigade in the rear and re-

turned to the north flank to assist Garratt. Also assisting Garratt was Cockrell's half-brigade, which had just marched up from Grand Gulf.

Meanwhile, Union reinforcements reached the field in division strength. In a daring gamble, Bowen sent Cockrell with two of his regiments far to the left. Taking advantage of the thick terrain, Cockrell was able to assail McClernand's right and roll up Slack's brigade. To counter, McClernand rushed artillery and Burbridge's brigade, and the Confederate success was soon nullified.

At 5:00 p.m., the Union began attacks on both Confederate flanks. The right gave way, and the rest of Bowen's line collapsed just as dusk was setting over the fields.

Raymond—May 12, 1863

On May 11, Pemberton concluded that Grant was merely feinting toward Jackson—where Confederate General Joseph Johnston was gathering his forces—and that the Union's main drive would head for Vicksburg, via the Big Black River Bridge. He wired General John Gregg at Raymond to strike the Yankees in flank and rear as soon as they turned north.

On the morning of the 12th, Gregg's scouts notified him that a small enemy force was marching up the Utica road toward Raymond. Believing this was the "feint," Gregg moved his 3000-man brigade to attack the advancing Union troops. These "blue clads" were, in fact, McPherson's entire corps, some 10,000 strong. Gregg deployed his troops across the Utica and Gallatin roads. At 10:00 a.m., Gregg's troops opened fire on Dennis's brigade as it advanced down the road toward the creek. The Union troops began to deploy, but they soon became disconnected in the thick forest.

Gregg, still thinking he was attacking a small force, decided to pin it in front with a secondary attack, while moving his main force to strike the Federals with a "left hook." He started his movement about noon, and at first seemed to be gaining ground. The Federals, still confused, gave way in some instances, but Logan dashed up and steadied his line.

McPherson continued to feed brigade after brigade into the fight. The Confederates gradually realized what they were up against. The Union counterattack around 1:30 p.m. drove the Southerners back across the creek. Heavy Union pressure caused the 50th Tennessee on the Confederate extreme left to give way. On the Confederate right, a strong Union attack forced this wing to collapse and sent Gregg's forces into a general withdrawal.

Jackson—May 14, 1863

Grant ordered two corps towards Jackson in the early morning. Sherman's men advanced from the southwest along the Raymond road while McPherson's troops, slightly to the north, marched along the Clinton road. Johnston had but 6000 troops with which to defend Jackson. At 3:00 a.m., he evacuated the city, turning command over to Gregg, with instructions to cover the army's withdrawal.

Near daybreak, Gregg led Colquitt's 900-man brigade and a battery three miles out on the Clinton road. When advised that a Union column (Sherman's Corps) was advancing via the Raymond road, Gregg positioned a reinforced regiment under Colonel Thompson to guard this approach, and alerted his own brigade, under Colonel Farguharson, to stand by in Jackson as a ready reserve.

Initial fighting occurred at 9:00 a.m. on the Clinton

road when the vanguards of McPherson's men came under artillery fire. It was raining hard and McPherson had to delay action until 11:00 a.m. When the rain ceased, he ordered Crocker to attack. Colquitt's Confederates resisted but were forced back. Gregg had Farguharson make a feint far out to the north flank, but this didn't deceive McPherson. Soon all Confederate forces on the northern flank fell back within the main trenches ringing Jackson.

Meanwhile, on the southern flank, Sherman's troops were held up temporarily by Thompson's regiment and a battery firing down the Raymond road and blocking a bridge crossing a deep creek. The Federals brought up twelve guns, which soon decided the contest. At 2:00 p.m., Gregg was informed that the Confederate supply train was safely clear of the city. His mission accomplished, he ordered his troops to retreat to the north.

Champion Hill—May 16, 1863

Late on May 14, Grant received a message from a Union spy that Johnston had ordered Pemberton to Clinton where the two Confederate armies would unite and strike Grant's rear. Grant immediately ordered McPherson and McClermand "to turn all your forces toward Bolton Station ..." Pemberton deployed his three divisions, some 23,000 men, along the ridge commanding Jackson Creek; Champion Hill was the highest prominence. He posted Stevenson's division to the left, Bowen's in the center, and Loring's to the right. Opposing him, Grant had a force of 32,000.

At 10:00 a.m., Union Generals Hovey and Logan deployed their divisions for an attack on Champion Hill; a savage contest ensued. The Union forces captured the crest, driving the Confederate left back to the Jackson road. By 1:00 p.m., Pemberton's left had been mauled and Logan's division was in a position to cut the Confederate line of retreat.

Pemberton slowly came to the conclusion that the Union troops approaching along the Middle and Raymond roads were not as great a threat to his right as the fierce Union attack that was crushing his left. Bowen and Loring were ordered to rush their divisions to support Stevenson. Both commanders at first refused, but at Pemberton's second request, Bowen moved towards Champion Hill. In the attack that ensued, the Confederates recaptured the crest of Champion Hill. For a short time it looked as if Bowen's men might rout the Union right and capture Grant's trains parked near the Champion house.

But a fresh Union division, Crocker's, reached the field and rushed to the assistance of Hovey and Logan. Once again, the tide of battle turned and Bowen was forced back. Grant now ordered McClermand's divisions to press their attacks up the Middle and Raymond roads. Loring, commanding the Confederate right, finally moved two brigades to aid Bowen. He gave Reynold's brigade the critical task of holding the Raymond road. At 5:00 p.m., Pemberton concluded the battle was lost and ordered a retreat.

The Big Black River Bridge—May 17, 1863

In order to block the hot pursuit of Grant's army, Pemberton set up a defense line across a two-mile-wide bend in the Big Black River. The Southern Railroad Bridge, which was the only avenue of retreat, was to their backs. McClermand's forces came up first and made contact near the center of the Confederate line. Carr's division, deployed to the right, Osterhaus's in the middle and Smith's to the left.

TOUR SCHEDULE

Variations will be announced on the tour.

All times are approximate.

Breakfast is provided, free of charge, each morning in the Park Inn's dining room. Each evening before dinner, two complimentary cocktails or soft drinks will be provided. Following that, a cash bar will be in operation.

Thursday, May 6, 1993

- 8:00 a.m. Board buses. Tour west bank of Mississippi—Milliken's Bend, Grant's Canal, Duckport Canal. Cross river and tour Grand Gulf, Bruinsburg.
- 12:00 p.m. Picnic lunch, Grand Gulf State Park.
- 1:00 p.m. Port Gibson battlefield.
- 5:00 p.m. Return to Park Inn.
- 6:30 p.m. Command post.
- 7:30 p.m. Dinner. Speaker: Terrence J. Winschel on "The Inland Campaign: Grant's March through Mississippi."

Friday, May 7, 1993

- 8:00 a.m. Board buses. Grant's line of march. Battles of Raymond and Jackson.
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch, Denney's Restaurant in downtown Jackson.
- 1:00 p.m. Battles of Champion Hill and The Big Black River Bridge.
- 5:00 p.m. Return to Park Inn.
- 6:30 p.m. Command post.
- 7:30 p.m. Dinner. Speaker: Edwin C. Bearss on "The Search for, Raising, and Restoration of the USS Cairo."

Saturday, May 8, 1993

- 8:00 a.m. Board buses. All-day tour of Vicksburg battlefield.
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch, Tavern in the Park.
- 1:00 p.m. USS Cairo Museum and the Old Court House Museum.
- 5:00 p.m. Return to Park Inn.
- 6:30 p.m. Command Post.
- 7:30 p.m. Dinner and Fun Night program.

Sunday, May 9, 1993

- 8:30 a.m. Board buses. Tour of Chickasaw Bayou battlefield, Snyder's and Haynes Bluffs.
- 12:30 p.m. Buffet lunch, Park Inn.
- 2:00 p.m. Tour ends.

But this day belonged to General Michael Lawler's brigade. A few moments before 11:00 a.m., Lawler led his men forward into a concealed ravine near the Confederate works. He then massed his four regiments on a two-regiment front so that his attack would be a narrow battering ram. He instructed the men to fix bayonets and hold fire until they were charging over the Confederate works.

The rebels were startled and could hardly get off a volley before Lawler's men were upon them. The charge, which lasted only about three minutes, broke the Confederate line. Other units of the Federal army advanced and the rebels broke for the bridge. Before all the fleeing troops could get across, the Confederates set fire to the turpentine-soaked bridge and Grant captured 1752 prisoners.

Orders and Ammunition

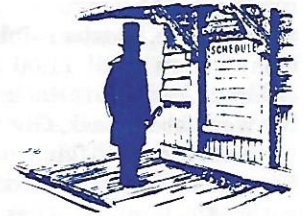
by Marshall D. Krolick



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BULLETIN BOARD



ON THE TOUR: Please be prompt in boarding the buses at the appropriate time each morning to allow maximum time for touring. A bus marshal will be on each bus to help you. If you plan a side excursion, or for any other reason will not be on the bus, you must notify your bus marshal so that buses are not detained waiting for you.



Vicksburg—May 19-July 4, 1863

The morning of May 19 found Grant's army surrounding Vicksburg on three sides, with Porter's fleet blockading the Mississippi River on the fourth side. Pemberton's four divisions manned the formidable Vicksburg defenses. At 2:00 p.m., the Union forces assaulted; the burden of this massive attack was on Blair's division of Sherman's Corps. Blair charged the northern side of the Confederate works and came within a few yards of Stockade Redan and the 27th Louisiana Lunette before his men were pinned down.

McPherson and McClernand also attacked, but without success. At dark, all Union troops retired to the ridges on which they had earlier formed. Three days later, Grant tried again. After a four-hour bombardment, Grant launched an all-out attack at 10:00 a.m.

Sherman's Corps advanced down the Graveyard road, four abreast, but the Confederates posted in Stockade Redan quickly halted this thrust. McPherson attacked along the Jackson road, but he was stopped by Confederates holding the 3rd Louisiana Redan. McClernand met with some initial success when he attacked and drove the 30th Alabama from the Railroad Redoubt. However, the Confederates counterattacked and the men of Waul's Texas Legion recovered the redoubt. Grant's second assault on Vicksburg had failed and he settled down to siege tactics, which would prove successful. Vicksburg surrendered on July 4.

Chickasaw Bayou—December 9, 1862

Grant's strategy in the early winter of 1862 was to capture Vicksburg using a two-pronged land and water attack. The left prong, under Grant's command and consisting of 30,000 men, was to march overland against the Confederate army below Oxford, Mississippi, and attack Vicksburg from the east. Sherman, commanding the right prong with an equal number of troops was to transport them down the Mississippi River, land above Vicksburg and attack from the north. Unknown to Sherman, Grant's column was stopped and forced back by Confederate cavalry.

On the evening of December 28, Sherman decided to attack even though "not one word could I hear from General Grant who was supposed to be pushing south." The main assault was shouldered by Blair's and DeCourcy's brigades, while A.J. and M.L. Smith led diversionary attacks. Blair's and DeCourcy's men struggled across the bayou, climbed an embankment covered with a strong abatis, and charged the Confederate's main line. They were mowed down by a storm of shells, grape, canister, and minie balls.