

This Was The Civil War

Grant Takes Mississippi Capital



GRANT IN TROUBLE—Despite his momentous accomplishments in early May, 1863, Gen. U. S. Grant was still in trouble. He had to either storm Vicksburg or besiege it. Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army was gathering strength, so Grant moved out. The overall plan was for Grant to join his forces and strike at Port Hudson, La. But he decided to move for Vicksburg on his own, by way of Jackson, Miss. His move was a success and Jackson fell—Vicksburg was doomed. This drawing from the Library of Congress collection, shows the burning of Rebel property in Jackson. (UPI)

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In 20 days south and east of Vicksburg, Miss., Ulysses S. Grant earned the name of a great captain.

Between April 30 and May 19, 1863, Major General Grant:

1. Ferried an Army of 43,000 across the Mississippi river.
2. Marched it 180 miles in hostile territory, skirmishing continuously.
3. Fought and won five battles.
4. Captured and burned Jackson, Miss., the capital.
5. Substituted his army off the country without a supply base.
6. Killed, wounded and captured about 8,000 Confederates. (His losses were 4,374.)
7. Fended off one Confederate army under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston and penned another under Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton—a total of about 60,000 men—in the defense of Vicksburg.

For speed and quick results the Civil War holds no parallel.

iel campaign. Only Stonewall Jackson approached it in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

In those 20 days the little Illinois leather goods clerk wrote his name in gold among the great captains of the world.

But on May 19 Grant still was in trouble. He must either storm the works of Vicksburg or besiege it. Johnston's army on the east was gathering force. At least half of Grant's army must watch Johnston.

Grant's whirlwind campaign started at Bruinsburg, Miss., a port about 30 airline miles south of Vicksburg, about 60 by river.

Bruinsburg was selected as a landing point on advice of a slave. A squad of Illinois soldiers rowed across the Mississippi from the west bank and kidnapped the Negro from a plantation. He showed Grant on a map how by landing at Bruinsburg his army would be on dry ground, something the Union army had seen little of all winter

on the levees north of Vicksburg. The steamers which had run the Vicksburg batteries a short time before made short work of the crossing.

All day and night of April 30 Grant's troops landed and headed inland in the direction of Port Gibson, Miss., about 10 miles away. They carried five days' rations, all the government food they would get for 20 days.

The Confederates under Maj. Gen. J. C. Bowen around Port Gibson were no match for the Federals. Bowen only had 4,000 to 6,000 men, thanks to feints Grant had made north of Vicksburg and a looping cavalry raid to the east.

Sherman Joins Drive
Bowen abandoned Port Gibson the night of May 1 after a sharp fight and the Federals pushed on to Willow Springs, Miss., five miles farther, re-building bridges the Rebels had burned.

By the time Grand Gulf, Miss., a stronghold on the river which Grant's gunboats had bombarded earlier with-

out any luck, was flanked and abandoned.

The corps commanded by Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, the last of Grant's three-corps army to march down the west bank of the Mississippi from above Vicksburg, landed there and joined the drive.

At this point Federal plans called for Grant to join with the troops of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks on the river below and capture Port Hudson, La., which, with Vicksburg, was the last of the strongholds the Confederates had on the river. Then Banks and Grant could combine against Vicksburg.

But Banks with most of his troops were up the Red River on an expedition and reported he could not join Grant before May 10.

Now Grant made the decision which could make or break him. He decided to go it alone and strike for Vicksburg, via Jackson on the east. To wait for Banks meant that Pemberton and Johnston would have time to join their forces, which were sufficient to drive Grant back into the river.

Grant feinted north toward Vicksburg but kept his main body marching northeastward toward Jackson.

Pemberton was baffled. He had three big problems. One was Grant. Where was he going? Another was President Jefferson Davis of the Confederacy, who ordered Pemberton to hold both Port Hudson and Vicksburg. The third was Johnston, Pemberton's superior, who kept telling Pemberton to forget Vicksburg and Port Hudson, concentrate his forces and fall on Grant from the west. Johnston would strike at the same time from the east. With Grant out of the way, Vicksburg and Port Hudson would take care of themselves.

Pemberton tried to solve a little of all three problems and subsequently achieved

nothing decisive.

Grant's army was picking up speed now. Each regiment had two army wagons and they carried ammunition. Plantation owners along the way reluctantly furnished carriages and farm wagons to carry the provisions the army swept up as it marched—hams, chickens, turkeys, sweet potatoes, eggs, vegetables—dainties to which the army was unaccustomed.

By May 12 Grant had cut his communications with Grand Gulf.

"You may not hear from me again for several days," he informed Army Commander Henry W. Halleck in Washington. The message had to go by land and steamboat to Cairo, Ill., and from there by telegraph to Washington, so Halleck was in no position to veto Grant's plan.

On the same date the advance corps under Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson drove the Confederates from Raymond, Miss., about 10 miles west of Jackson, in a brisk fight.

On May 14 the Federals hit Jackson in the rain. Johnston, weak from an illness, had arrived only the day before. He found only 8,000 defending the capital. He had 15,000 more coming from time. But he was able to hold off the Federals only a part of that day and retreated north.

One of those who proudly entered the Mississippi capital that day was Frederick Dent Grant, the general's oldest son, just 12. He was sporting the sash and sword his father never wore.

Here Grant had a stroke of luck.

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A Union agent who had

been planted as a Confederate courier, delivered to Grant one of Johnston's orders instructing Pemberton to meet him on the railroad which ran east from Vicksburg to Jackson. The railroad now was Pemberton's only connection with the rest of the Confederacy.

Leaving Sherman's corps to destroy military installations in Jackson, Grant swung his army west toward Vicksburg, about 40 miles away.

Pemberton left about 10,000 troops around Vicksburg and advanced with about 23,000 east toward Jackson. He crossed the Big Black River, which ran roughly north and south east of Vicksburg.

The armies clashed on May 18 at Champion's Hill, about halfway between Vicksburg and Jackson. The fighting was fierce.

In mid-afternoon Pemberton's men broke and retreat-

ed. Grant lost 2,400 men.

Pemberton 3,800 and 27 guns. He fell back toward Vicksburg across the Big Black, leaving a rear guard to dispute the Federal crossing.

The next day Grant's men stormed the crossing and defeated the rear guard.

That night the triumphant Yankees improvised bridges from logs and boards and crossed the river.

On the 18th they began to move into position before the fortifications of Vicksburg. By the 19th the investment was complete. Vicksburg was doomed.

VISITS PRESIDENT

Rome—(AP)—Pope John XXIII, looking haggard but in good spirits, left the Vatican Saturday to pay an extraordinary visit to his neighbor, the president of Italy. He called for a peace "based not on fear, on suspicion" but on truth and freedom.

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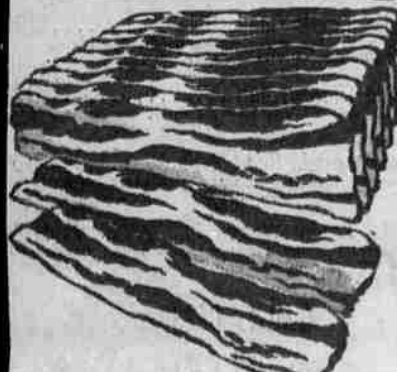
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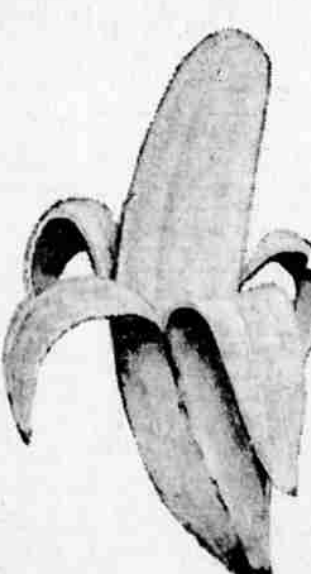
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