

The battle of vicksburg



History of the United States of America is filled with many pivotal battles and each of these past battles have had a key role in determining the state of the country. When one thinks of any kind of historical battle, siege, or war in the United States, the Civil War is the first to come to mind for many. Since The Civil War was a series of events that heavily divided the country, it's evident that battles fought during this war were very compelling. Specifically, the Battle of Vicksburg. The Battle of Vicksburg was a one that had an immense effect not only on the Union and the Confederate armies, but also the Civil War and the United States altogether.

The Battle of Vicksburg, which is also known as the Siege of Vicksburg, was a significant battle that was considered the "key" to the Civil War. As reported by HistoryNet. com, President Abraham Lincoln once said, "Vicksburg is the key, the war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket." Confederate President Jefferson Davis viewed Vicksburg as "the nail" that held the Confederate South together. If the Union was to siege Vicksburg, then that would ultimately lead to the South's demise and "be a major tactical blow to the Confederates" (grantandvicksburg. weebly. com).

One reason as to why Vicksburg was so important to and strongly sought after by both the Union and the Confederate armies is because of the advantages Vicksburg had to offer. Vicksburg's location provided access to the Mississippi River. Vicksburg is located right on the Mississippi River and was considered the transportation hub of the South. Whether the Union or the Confederate Army had control of this port determined who had major access to shipping supplies. Not only was access to the river an advantage, but also the access to all the railroads. Along with being a transportation

hub, Vicksburg's relevant location provided a link to Trans Mississippi. So, it's very clear as to why both sides wanted control of Vicksburg. Whoever won this battle gained access to Trans Mississippi, the port on the river, and the railroads. The winner ultimately moved a step closer to winning the war.

The American Civil War began on April 12, 1861. The war essentially consisted of the North, also known as the Union, and the South, which was the Confederacy. Both sides fought each other for almost four years and over 600, 000 soldiers died. From the beginning, the Union had a competitive advantage. The North was more industrialized than the South which provided more resources, supplies, weaponry, and soldiers. Union Major General Ulysses S. Grant became a key military leader for the Union. General Grant's past military experience before the Civil War consisted of him being an officer in the army during the Mexican-American War. His experience from the Mexican-American War lead to his success and prestigious titles earned in the Civil War.

During the Civil War, General Grant continued time and time again to win on the battlefield for the Union. According to an online article posted by grantandvicksburg.weebly.com, some of his victories were listed as "major Union victories against the Confederate Army, including the Battle of Shiloh, the Battle of Vicksburg." His many victories and successes lead him to be promoted as Commander of the Entire Union Army; General Grant even went on to become the 18th President. Some historians called General Grant a military genius for his strategic planning and attacks.

Even though General Grant had numerous victories under his belt, conquering Vicksburg, Mississippi proved to be a challenge for him and his army. General Grant was over the Army of Tennessee. Because Confederates were deeply rooted in and around Vicksburg, General Grant and his army had a hard time gaining control. However, this didn't stop them from pursuing Vicksburg given the immense pressure on General Grant and his army to control Vicksburg and the Mississippi River. After all, Vicksburg was “the key” to winning the war for the Union.

Just like Grant, Lieutenant General John Clifford Pemberton of the Confederate Army served as an officer and gained military experience and success by fighting in the Mexican-American War. At the very beginning stages of the Civil War, Lt. Gen. Pemberton decided to resign his commission in the Union Army and join the Confederate Army. Pemberton's decision to fight for the South instead of the North came as a shock to many. He had long time associations and ties with the North and even had a history of supporting the North and what it stood for. Pemberton was born in the North and even had brothers that fought for the Union Army. This scandalous decision of Pemberton came about due to his wife's strong influence.

At the time of Gen. Grant and his army's attempted capture of Vicksburg, John C. Pemberton and his army occupied the city and were in charge of defending it and the Mississippi River. Pemberton was the Commander of the Army of Vicksburg and his army consisted of roughly 30, 000 soldiers along with the 24, 000 citizens that resided in Vicksburg. While pursuing to keep command of Vicksburg, Pemberton attempted to grow his army's numbers by traveling away and meeting up with another Confederate Army. While

doing so, Pemberton and his army ran into Grant and his army as they were on the way to attack. Pemberton's army suffered heavy loss. This was only the beginning of the long campaign in attempt to control Vicksburg.

The Union's drive for conquering Vicksburg was apart of the Union Army's overall strategy called the Anaconda Plan. This strategy was proposed by General-in-Chief Winfield Scott of the Union. He suggested using military action to cut the South in two. To accomplish this, the Union armies were ordered to form a blockade of all Southern ports, including Vicksburg, and then to progress down south by using the Mississippi River. This strategy essentially cut off the South from the rest of the country and its source of supplies. The Anaconda Plan got its name from that of a real anaconda. Anacondas isolate and suffocate its victims and that was the overall goal of the Union Army: to isolate the Confederate Army.

In preparation of the Battle of Vicksburg, both opposing forces geared up and attempted to grow their numbers. At the start of the Vicksburg campaign, General Grant's Union Army of Tennessee consisted of five different corps: IX Corps under Major General John Parke, XIII Corps under Major General John McClelland, XV Corps under Major General William Sherman, XVI Corps under Major General Cadwallader Washburn, and XVII Corps under Major General James McPherson. Outnumbered by almost two to one, Lt. Gen. Pemberton commanded the Confederate Army of Mississippi which consisted of four divisions: Stevenson's Division, Forney's Division, Smith's Division, and Bowen's Division. The total number of soldiers that fought in the Vicksburg Campaign included 75, 000 Union soldiers and 34, 000 of the Confederate.

Before the actual Battle of Vicksburg, there was a whole Vicksburg Campaign. The campaign was broken into two explicit phases: Operations Against Vicksburg and Grant's Operations Vicksburg. The first phase occurred from December 1862 to January 1863, while the second phase was from March to July 1863. Apart of the Anaconda Plan in the campaign, the North pushed the South and challenged the Confederates in a series of battles including Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans in Louisiana all of which the Confederates lost making Vicksburg “the key remaining point of their dense of the Mississippi River” (Britannica.com).

With pressure of President Lincoln becoming heavier, Grant finally began pushing his armies in a series of failed attacks. In early summer of 1862, Grant ordered half of his army to the Yazoo River and hoped to win the city this way; this approach did not work. Additionally, Union naval operations attempted to take the city; this too failed. These naval attempts were considered the First Battle of Vicksburg. After several failed attempts, Grant changed strategies and lead his armies' south to Louisiana where he gathered with other Union soldiers that sailed down south. It was here that Grant decided to trick the Confederates by crossing the river in Bruinsburg, MS late April 1863. Grant then marched his men inland and fought in a series of small battles. During this time, the Confederates had control of the state capital Jackson, Mississippi, and about 5, 000 soldiers were settled here. Grant succeeded in capturing Jackson. As the Union went on this wining spree, momentum and hope of winning the war grew.

After taking control of the state capital, Grant finally engaged in the Battle of Vicksburg. In bid of defending Vicksburg, General Pemberton build several defense mechanisms around the city. As a result of this, Grant's army lost about 1, 000 men. Days later, there was another attempted attack by the Union that only resulted in failure and an additional loss of 3, 000 more men. These heavy losses affected the confidence of Union soldiers. With low morale, Grant decided to change is tactics and to siege Vicksburg.

With Pemberton and his army still stationed in Vicksburg, Grant ordered his soldiers to march around the city to surround it. The soldiers began to dig trenches that measured fifteen miles around the city and were prepared to wait for the long siege to end. As time progressed, the soldiers moved closer and closer to the city. With the city completely surrounded by more than 70, 000 Union soldiers, there was no way for Pemberton and his armies to receive much needed supplies, so the city was officially cut off from the rest of the country. While the siege took place, there were rescue attempts by other Confederate armies, but none were successful. During this time, citizens of Vicksburg tried to seek shelter from the constant firing of cannons by digging and hiding in caves. After almost a month and a half of dwindling supplies and near starvation, Pemberton discussed terms of surrender. Finally, on July 4, 1863, Pemberton surrendered Vicksburg, Mississippi to General Grant.

The aftermath of this long and rigorous battle proved to change the pace of the war. The battle and siege of Vicksburg, marked the turning point of the war giving the Union the edge it needed it go on and become victorious. The Union's Anaconda Plan proved to be successful with the Confederacy being

split in half with the Union controlling the Mississippi River. Casualties for Pemberton's army totaled 2, 872 while Grant's army lost 4, 910 men.

To justify the fact that battles in the United States have impacted the country is evident by noting the aftermath. Not only did the Battle of Vicksburg effect the Civil War and the United States as a whole, but also the city's people were impacted. Their overall lifestyle changed. For example, the people of Vicksburg would not celebrate the Fourth of July for 81 years as a result of losing the battle. To this day, the aftermath of the battle is still noticed. The Vicksburg National Military Park exists along with the Vicksburg National Cemetery. It is clear that wars and battles do play a significant part in determining the standing of the country. The Battle of Vicksburg is no different considering it forever changed the fate of not only the Civil War itself, but also the country.

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