

The Vicksburg Campaign

- A Field & Walking Tour led by

Terrence J. Winschel

and **Timothy B. Smith**

November 1-4, 2017 - Vicksburg, MS



Shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln assembled his civil and military leaders to discuss strategy for opening the Mississippi River and for ending what he termed a “rebellion” in the Southern states. “See what a lot of land these fellows hold,” he said, “of which **Vicksburg is the key**. Let us get Vicksburg and all that land will be ours.” He stated emphatically, “that the war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket.” A city of unparalleled significance, Vicksburg was nestled on the east bank of the Mississippi on bluffs that towered 200’ above the muddy water. Protected by a line of earthworks that consisted of nine major forts and a continuous line of trenches and rifle pits, Vicksburg’s defenses were manned by 30,000 troops and mounted 172 big guns - a major obstacle to Union dominance of the Mississippi.

Over a period of 18 months, Union land and naval forces operated along the line of the Mississippi River with the objective of capturing Vicksburg. Finally in the spring of 1863, **Ulysses S. Grant** launched his Army of the Tennessee on a bold march down the west side of the river and hurled his army onto Mississippi soil below Vicksburg. Over a 17 day period his army pushed deep into Mississippi, captured the capital of Jackson, defeated Confederate forces in five battles, and drove them back into the Vicksburg defenses. There, following the failure of two assaults, Grant laid siege to the city for 47 days. The combined Army/Navy operations that focused on Vicksburg split the Confederacy in two, severed vital Southern supply and communications routes, achieved a major objective of the **Anaconda Plan**, and effectively sealed the doom of Richmond. The **surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863**, to Grant enabled President Lincoln to pocket the “key” to victory.

We will tour the many battlefields of the Vicksburg campaign and examine the operational art of war as practiced by Grant and **John C. Pemberton** during the struggle for control of the Mississippi. After an overview on Wednesday evening, we will start off on **Thursday** with an examination of the Confederate batteries that were trained on the Mississippi River at Vicksburg. We will then drive north to the **Chickasaw Bayou** battlefield. Here, Southern soldiers thwarted attempts by **William T. Sherman** to capture Vicksburg on December 29, 1862. We will cross the Mississippi River for a stop in **Madison Parish, Louisiana**, where Federal soldiers attempted to cut a canal across the base of **De Soto Point** and render the fortress city useless without firing a shot. At the **Williams-Grant Canal** we will also discuss the opening phase of the final campaign that resulted in the fall of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863.

Then we will travel to the **Grand Gulf State Military Monument**. After lunch we will visit Grant’s desired landing site and see the powerful Confederate fortifications that on April 29, 1863 stood defiant in the face of a bombardment by Admiral **David Dixon Porter**’s gunboats, forcing Grant to search elsewhere for a crossing point. Crossing the river below Grand Gulf on April 30-May 1, Grant’s army pushed inland until it encountered Confederate forces under Brig. Gen. **John S. Bowen** near **Port Gibson**. In a furious struggle that lasted throughout the day, Bowen’s Confederates fought with grim determination to drive the invaders back into the river while Grant’s forces fought with equal determination to secure their beachhead on Mississippi soil. By day’s end the Confederate forces were compelled to retire from the field and abandon their Grand Gulf bastion. We will tour the battlefield at Port Gibson and see the magnificent ruins of **Windsor Plantation** that were immortalized in the movie “Raintree County.”

On Friday, we will spend the morning at **Champion Hill** – scene of the largest, bloodiest, most significant action of the campaign. Here, the leading authority on Champion Hill, **Timothy B. Smith**, will take the lead as we stop at the historic **Coker House** and on the crest of Champion Hill from which we will discuss the bloody action in which Pemberton’s army was routed and driven from the field. We will follow the route of the retreating army back to **Big Black River** where on May 17, 1863, Confederate soldiers attempted to hold the bridges long enough for Pemberton’s army to make good its escape to Vicksburg. After touring the battlefield at Big Black River we will return to Vicksburg for lunch. Then, we will visit **Vicksburg National Military Park** and drive along the Union siege lines around Vicksburg, seeing many of the magnificent monuments that collectively make Vicksburg, in the words of one Civil War veteran, “**the art park of the world.**” We’ll examine the unique terrain that made Vicksburg a natural fortress and detail the assaults launched by Grant on May 19 & 22, 1863 that failed to take the city by storm, resulting in his decision to lay siege to the city. We will follow along in the path of Union sappers who worked their way with pick and shovel toward the Confederate works for the purpose of digging underneath the fortifications to plant mines.

On Saturday, we will continue our explorations of the battlefield park and the siege of Vicksburg and then visit the **U.S.S. Cairo Museum** and walk on the gun deck of the restored ironclad gunboat **Cairo** that was sunk by an electronically detonated torpedo on December 12, 1862. We will view hundreds of artifacts recovered from the gunboat and then drive along the Confederate defense line and see many of the forts that helped make Vicksburg the “**Gibraltar of the Confederacy.**” Lunch will be a buffet at the ever popular **Goldie’s Barbecue**. **Join us** for this in-depth examination and tour of the Vicksburg Campaign, led by **Terry Winschel and Tim Smith**. **Space is limited. Enroll today!**

About Our Tour Leaders

Terrence J. Winschel, retired historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, is regarded, along with Ed Bearss, 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*. **Timothy B. Smith** is the author of a number of books including *Champion Hill: Decisive Battle for Vicksburg* and *Mississippi in the Civil War: the Home Front*.

- **Program Begins on Wed., November 1 at 7:30 PM** - Overview: Hampton Inn, Vicksburg
 - **Concludes on Sat., November 4 at 4:00 PM** upon arrival back at the Hampton Inn

What is Included in Your Registration:

- the services of expert historians chosen for their knowledge and experience * transportation to sites as described Thursday, Friday & Saturday lunches * refreshments and snacks during the tour * map package

Base Location & Lodging: We will be based at the **Hampton Inn & Suites Historic District**, 3330 Clay Street, Vicksburg, MS 39183 where we have reserved a block of rooms at the special nightly rate of \$119 – Single or Double. Hotel guests are entitled to a free deluxe hot breakfast for each morning of their stay and a complimentary reception to include beer, wine, sodas and snacks for each evening of their stay. To reserve a room under our block **Call 601-636-6100** and identify yourself as a registrant for the **CWE (group code) tour**.

Name _____ Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone # (____) _____ E-Mail Address _____

Registration Fee: \$495 - If You Must Cancel, Your registration fee will be 100% refunded.

Enclosed is \$ _____ Check to CWEA Charge my MasterCard, VISA, Discover or AMEX

Card # _____ Ex Date _____

Security# (3 digit # on back of VISA, MC or DISC or 4 digit # on front of AMEX) _____

Signature _____

CWEA, P O Box 78, Winchester, VA 22604 800-298-1861