

VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES
Vicksburg National Military Park
Vicksburg vicinity
Warren County
Mississippi

HAER No. MS-14

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VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES
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Location: Various locations in Vicksburg National Park, Warren County, Mississippi.

Construction Dates: 1902-1913; significant revisions 1933-1939 and 1956-1980

Structure Type: Scenic park tour system

Fabricator/Builder: Various public and private contractors

Original Owner: U.S. Department of War

Present Owner: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Vicksburg National Military Park

Significance: The Vicksburg National Military Park tour roads provide access to areas of interest in the park, which commemorates and interprets the siege and defense of Vicksburg in 1863 during the Civil War. The tour route through Vicksburg National Military Park was designed primarily for vehicular traffic. The roads and bridges in the park are integral aspects of the commemorative landscape of the battlefield. The road-related structures in this park are significant both for their individual structural designs and their functional unity as part of a tour system. Initial construction of the basic road system took place during the early 1900s and was followed by a period of improvements, additions, and deletions by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. An additional period of improvement work was accomplished in the 1960s as part of Mission 66.

Project Information: The Vicksburg National Park Roads and Bridges Recording Project was conducted in 1997 by the Historic American Engineering Record. The project team consisted of Todd Croteau, project supervisor; Tim Davis, supervisory historian; Pete Brooks, field supervisor and architect; Deborah James, landscape architect; Gregory Seale, architect; and Courtney Jones, historian. This is one in a series of reports prepared for the project. See also HAER Nos. MS-12, MS-14A, MS-14-B and MS-14C.

Introduction

This document presents an overview of the development and evolution of the road system in Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, Mississippi. The roads and bridges in the park are an integral aspect of the commemorative landscape, significant both for their unique individual structural designs and for their functional unity as a tour system. Designed to display important areas of the park complete with monuments, markers, and interpretative tablets, the tour route serves not just as a roadway, but also as a guide and narrator. Beginning with a brief description of park and the layout of the current tour route, this document chronicles the planning, construction, and evolution of roads and bridges within the park. A brief historical overview of the Vicksburg campaign and the establishment of the park is also provided. In addition to this historical report, individual structure reports on several of the park bridges are also available (HAER Nos. MS-12-A, MS-12-B, MS-12-C, and MS-12), providing more detailed information on the history of these structures, including construction and engineering processes.

Vicksburg National Military Park, originally established in 1899 under the auspices of the U.S. War Department and now maintained by the National Park Service (NPS), preserves and commemorates the site of a pivotal Civil War battle. The park roads were created to provide visitors with access to historically significant areas relating to the 1863 siege and defense of Vicksburg. The original layout of the park formed a semi-circle around the city, bordering the old Mississippi River bed, now the Yazoo River Diversion Canal, at points both above and below Vicksburg. This conformation changed in 1963 when the southern portion of this "crescent" was transferred to the city of Vicksburg to facilitate urban development and suburban expansion.

The landscape of the area, consisting primarily of dense woods and farmland, was altered dramatically by military actions during the campaign. The ground was dug out for earthworks, trenches, and rifle pits. Much of the area was stripped of its timber for use in building entrenchments and campfires. Most of the underbrush was burned by exploding ammunition. As these battle scars began to heal in the years following the war, the recovery process transformed the appearance of the area dramatically. Earthworks and entrenchments were worn away by farming operations and natural erosion. By the time of the park's inception, it was necessary to recreate wartime vistas and entrenchments that had been obliterated over time. Fortunately, the natural topography of the land had changed very little since the war, which aided in the restoration of the battleground and made the placement of guns and monuments more accurate.

Once the park was established, it was necessary to develop a road system that would provide quick and easy access to a large area of land with many important features. Park commissioners and engineers involved with the planning of the tour roads wanted to make the park as convenient as possible for its visitors. In their opinion, the park should be geared more toward the average citizen or tourist who would spend a few hours touring the grounds, rather than to the military or historical student who would devote days or weeks to the study of siege operations at Vicksburg.¹ The result was a park tour designed to be experienced from the road, via horse, wagon, or carriage. Ultimately, the tour route, created by the construction of new

¹ William T. Rigby to Secretary of War, 29 July 1901, RG-79, Box 2, Vol. 5, National Archives and Records Administration (noted hereafter as NARA), East Point, Georgia.

roads and the incorporation of existing public roads, was established as a one-way, closed-loop road system.

The road system at Vicksburg currently consists of two primary avenues (Union and Confederate), four secondary avenues (Grant, Pemberton, Connecting, and Graveyard Road), and four circles (Pemberton, Sherman, Grant, and Tennessee). Commemoration of the battlefield was accomplished not only through erecting monuments and reconstructing earthworks, but also through the network of roads that lead visitors to these historic sites and structures. The roads and bridges serve as the storytellers of the Vicksburg saga, using the nearly 1,300 markers, monuments, and memorials as illustrations. The tale told by their interpretive features begins with the portrayal of repeated Union attacks against Confederate fortifications, with tour stops at locations such as Battery DeGolyer, Thayer's Approach, and Battery Selfridge. The story continues with the Confederate defense, depicted by tour stops at Fort Hill, Stockade Redan, Great Redoubt, Railroad Redoubt, and Fort Garrott.

Landscape of Vicksburg National Military Park

Vicksburg National Military Park today consists of approximately 1,800 acres forming a partial crescent around the city of Vicksburg. Beginning at the Yazoo River Diversion Canal (what was once the Mississippi River) at a point above Vicksburg the park land curves around the city to the east and south, encompassing an area of Confederate defenses and Union approaches. The scenery in the park includes a wide array of flora, ranging from the majestic magnolia trees lining the entrance of Vicksburg National Cemetery, to the all-encompassing

kudzu and the noxious, exotic plant, Tansy Raywort, discovered in the region for the first time in 1979. An equally diverse population of wildlife resides within the confines of the park boundaries, ranging from squirrels and deer to snakes and fire ants. Towering hills provide breathtaking views of the river known as the "Mighty Mississippi."²

A vast majority of the park area is shaded by a canopy of lush vegetation. Keeping the fast-growing kudzu under control is a never-ending task for park maintenance workers. The extensive greenery often makes it difficult to imagine what the landscape actually looked like during the battle. Patches of dense woods and neatly cut grass dotted with monuments, markers, and tablets create a perfect park-like setting, but give little hint as to the deforestation that came about during the war due to the need for wood in building earthworks and clearing fields of fire. A more accurate picture of the battlefield would show the area as it stood at the close of the battle, when not a single tree was left standing.³ Some of the clearings and vistas created during the battle are maintained by mowing and prescribed fire. Due to the park's limited funding and labor force, however, it is impossible to maintain the wartime appearance of the park as a whole.

The topography of Vicksburg National Military Park consists of a series of miniature mountains and valleys. Small intermittent streams, such as Glass, Stouts, and Mint Spring bayous, cut deep ravines in the terrain, creating steep slopes. These features were central in the

² Severe flooding in 1876 caused the Mississippi River to change course, bypassing Vicksburg's port. A diversionary canal was constructed from the Yazoo River to the Mississippi by way of Vicksburg to reestablish access to the river.

³ McConaghie, James R., speech to Civitan Club, "Vicksburg National Military Park: Past, Present and Future," 9 October 1957.

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development of the road system, influencing the number and type of bridges as well as the routing and alignment of the roads. Winding among the hills of Vicksburg, the tour roads were designed to follow several switchbacks to aid in navigating the steep grades. This was necessary to facilitate travel for horse and buggy traffic, which was dominant at the time.

The park tour route is a closed loop of about 16 miles, beginning and ending at the Visitor Center, located near the intersection of Clay Street and Interstate 20. The primary park roads, Union Avenue and Confederate Avenue run roughly parallel to each other, connected at three points by secondary roads. Two of these roads, Pemberton Avenue and Graveyard Road, provide access to the area between the two primary park roads, leading to the Surrender Interview Site and Stockade Redan, respectively. The primary avenues were designed to follow the earthworks and entrenchments of the opposing armies as closely as possible, while the secondary roads were for the most part adaptations of existing public roads.

Crossing beneath the stately Memorial Arch, the tour route begins on Union Avenue, following a jagged path to the north. Union Avenue continues northward toward Grant Avenue. This spur road veers off to the east, providing access to the site of General Grant's headquarters, as well as to Sherman Circle, leading to General Sherman's headquarters area. Exiting this circle, Union Avenue turns to the west, heading toward the U.S.S. Cairo Museum and the national cemetery. Union Avenue terminates in a three way intersection with the parking area for the Cairo museum, the entrance to the cemetery, and Connecting Avenue. After a loop through the cemetery, the tour continues with Connecting Avenue leading southward toward Confederate Avenue and Fort Hill, overlooking the Yazoo River Diversion Canal (formerly the Mississippi

River, see footnote #3). Confederate Avenue mirrors Union Avenue, traveling back to the east and south. Nearing the Visitor Center again, the tour road veers off again to the south, passing under Clay Street to what is now known informally as the South Loop. The roads in this area include a portion of both Union and Confederate avenues, providing access to Railroad Redoubt and Fort Garrott (Square Fort).

Although the park tour was designed and routed to be experienced by visitors in vehicles, there are several markers and explanatory tablets that are not visible from the road. All of the interpretive signs in the park were meticulously placed so that visitors are in the approximate location and facing the same direction as the troops and movements they are reading about. Therefore, some of these markers are located at a distance from the road and some are facing the opposite direction. Blue tablets provide information pertaining to Union forces, while red markers denote information concerning Confederate troops. These markers demonstrate the proximity of the opposing armies, especially in areas such as Thayer's Approach on Union Avenue (mile marker 6.4) where Union and Confederate tablets stand back to back within a few feet of one another. This demonstrates how close the advancing Union forces came to the enemy encampment, a remarkable feat considering the steep terrain.

The state monuments seen along the tour route are, for the most part, well-situated along the road. However, they were originally placed to be seen traveling the road in the opposite direction. The direction of the one-way tour route was reversed during 1970-71, with the opening of the new Visitor Center and the relocation of the Memorial Arch from Clay Street to Union Avenue. This resulted in specifications as to what areas the roads would be routed

through and how monuments would be placed and angled to provide the most inspiring view. Some monuments have retained a good position in relation to the road despite the directional change, such as the Michigan memorial, which is located on the curve of a switchback so that visitors can see from all sides the detail of the elaborate carving of the female figure representing the "Spirit of Michigan." Other monuments, like the statue of General Pemberton and the Tennessee memorial, are surrounded by short circles so they may also be seen from all sides, regardless of which direction traffic flows.

Still other monuments, however, have been robbed of their intended views by the reversal of traffic. Many have also had surrounding circles removed due to the expense of upkeep. These changes detract from the full appreciation of the artistic and commemorative value of these grandiose statues and memorials. The Missouri monument was clearly meant to be seen from the opposite direction. As it stands now, visitors must pull to the side of the road and look backward for a good view of the monument. The same is true of the Louisiana memorial. Situated on the highest elevation in the park (397'), this 81' Doric column was intended to be seen from an uphill approach. Now it is viewed from a level position, which robs it of the imposing, grandiose view that was originally intended. The issue of how the perspectives of the monuments would change with the direction of the tour road was unfortunately not considered at the time of the reorganization.

This lapse seems to exemplify the transformation of the park from a traditional commemorative landscape to a more dispassionate, historical site. Originally established as a memorial to the heroism of the soldiers who fought at Vicksburg, the park displayed its historic

sites as shrines, commemorated by elaborate markers and monuments. As the events and people associated with the park gradually became less directly related to its visitors and administrators, the emphasis centered more on describing and interpreting the events of the battle. This gradual shift seems to have come about as memories of the battle began to fade and the number of veterans continued to dwindle.

Background: the Campaign for Vicksburg

The Mississippi River played a vital role in the outcome of operations in the Western Theater of the Civil War. Serving as a major transport route from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, the river was essential for shipping troops and supplies. The Confederacy had a particular interest in protecting this asset, because the Mississippi's connections to the Red, White and Arkansas rivers provided access to interior Confederate holdings. Rebel troops fortified strategic points where the river bordered Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. It quickly became apparent that the most valuable of these ports was at Vicksburg. Its central location and access to the Southern Railroad of Mississippi allowed for easy distribution throughout the Confederacy. Command of the Mississippi was a primary goal for the Union, because it would provide uninterrupted passage for supplies and troops into the heart of the South. Union control of the river would also divide the Confederacy by cutting off Texas, Arkansas, most of Louisiana, and the Indian Territory, which comprised approximately half the land area of the fledgling nation. Vicksburg was the key to controlling the river and thus, the key to victory. Studying a map of Confederate holdings during the war, President

Abraham Lincoln said of Vicksburg that "the war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket."⁴

After several failed attempts to take Vicksburg during the winter of 1862-1863, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant was advised to withdraw to Memphis. Grant, however, maintaining confidence in his victory and fearing that such a move would further demoralize soldiers and civilians alike, decided to take a more daring course of action. The first phase of Grant's plan involved running Union gunboats and transport vessels past the batteries at Vicksburg. These vessels would then ferry troops across the river at a point below the city. Grant then planned diversionary tactics to occupy Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton's attentions while Union troops were marching southward along the Louisiana side of the river. In addition, Col. Benjamin H. Grierson led a Union cavalry raid, which originated in LaGrange, Tennessee, on 17 April 1863, blazed through Mississippi, and ended successfully in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on 2 May.⁵

On 30 April, Union boats began ferrying the 17,000 troops of the XIII Corps across the Mississippi River from Disharoon's plantation in Louisiana to Bruinsburg, Mississippi. At that time, this was the largest amphibious landing in American history. Grant then moved quickly toward Port Gibson to defeat the only Rebel force in the area, comprised of about 8,000 infantrymen, on 1 May. Having gained a foothold, Grant took this opportunity to send for Maj.

⁴ David D. Porter, *Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War*, (New York, 1885), 95-96.

⁵ The following battle summary is drawn from the following sources: Ballard, Michael B., *The Campaign for Vicksburg*, Civil War Series, Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1996. And Korn, Jerry, *War on the Mississippi: Grant's Vicksburg Campaign*, Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia, 1985.

Gen. William T. Sherman and the rest of his army, which would bring Union forces east of the river to over 40,000. By this time, Pemberton was aware that Grant had assembled his army to the south and took steps to further fortify his position at Vicksburg.

Logically, Grant's next move would seem to be a drive directly north for an attack on Vicksburg. However, Grant decided to head northeast with the intention of severing the railroad connection between Vicksburg and Jackson. Grant then headed west, to Vicksburg. This plan resulted in Union victories at Raymond on 12 May, Jackson on 14 May, Champion Hill on 16 May, and Big Black River Bridge on 17 May.

Anxious to finish the job, Grant ordered an ill-prepared assault on the Confederate earthworks at Vicksburg on 19 May. Sherman's corps was repelled at Stockade Redan, while Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson and Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand made only token advances. This effort having failed, Grant attempted another assault on 22 May, ordering a heavy artillery bombardment followed by an all-out attack. Again, Sherman's movements against Stockade Redan were repulsed. Sent to advance on the Jackson road, McPherson's troops were checked by heavy Confederate fire. McClernand's brigades managed to force the evacuation of Railroad Redoubt and threatened Confederate defenses at Second Texas Lunette, but without the backing of additional troops, these advances were also doomed to failure. During these assaults, the topography of the land worked in favor of the Confederate troops, who for the most part held the high ground and had spent many months fortifying their city. Union forces were easily repulsed from an uphill vantage point. New tactics were necessary to defeat the Rebels at Vicksburg.

After two unsuccessful attempts to take Vicksburg by assault, Grant changed his strategy and ordered his army to begin siege operations. The city was pummeled by virtually unending cannon fire from gunboats on the river and land-based batteries, while Federal troops inched their way toward Confederate earthworks through zig-zagging approach trenches. Cut off from supply lines for over six weeks, Pemberton was no longer concerned with the threat of enemy fire, but now faced the greater danger of losing his soldiers to starvation and desertion. The caged Confederate troops were depending on Gen. Joseph E. Johnston for deliverance, waiting expectantly each day for his arrival. Johnston had managed to gather a force of nearly 31,000 troops at Jackson, but hesitated to aid the besieged city, believing it was already a lost cause. Many, including Confederate President Jefferson Davis, blamed Johnston for the fall of Vicksburg, because of his reluctance to send help. Pemberton was finally forced to capitulate after 47 days under siege, surrendering his position at Vicksburg on 4 July 1863.

Origin of the Idea for a Military Park

During the 1880s, a desire for commemoration emerged in the United States as wounds caused by the Civil War began to heal. Interest in Civil War history was on the rise throughout much of the country in the 1890s, which initiated a drive to memorialize and preserve Civil War battlefields. Aging veterans, fearing that their experience would be forgotten, contributed to this rush for commemoration. Several battlefield preserves were established during this time, including Chickamauga/Chattanooga National Military Park in 1890, Antietam National

Battlefield in 1890, Shiloh National Military Park in 1894, Gettysburg National Military Park in 1895, and Vicksburg National Military Park in 1899.⁶

The main problem facing Mississippians in this endeavor to provide a lasting memorial to the Civil War was the legacy of bitterness between North and South. Because the war was fought primarily on Southern soil, much of the South was left devastated and much of the population was destitute. The loss of property, in terms of land, crops, and slaves, resulted in impoverished conditions for the majority of Mississippi's population, regardless of race or loyalty to the Union. By 1875, many residents of Mississippi had lost the title to their land and were forced into sharecropping. The Bourbon Era (1875-1902)⁷ was a time of very little, if any, social progress throughout Mississippi. Most schools did not even approach adequate standards, violence was prevalent, dietary deficiencies resulted in diseases like scurvy and pellagra, and many people sought solace in alcohol and opiate-based drugs.⁸

In addition to these poor social conditions, the citizens of Vicksburg also faced the task of rebuilding their homes and businesses in the years after the war. Preoccupied with these tasks, they took little action toward preservation of the battleground surrounding their city. The people

⁶ Edward T. Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁷ The Bourbon Era in Mississippi was the time during which members of the Democratic Party regained political power, playing on racial and economic issues. They were called "Bourbon Democrats" by their Republican opponents to suggest less-than-ethical conduct.

⁸ Robert J. Baily and Priscilla M. Lowrey, *Historic Preservation in Mississippi: A Comprehensive Plan*, (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1975), 32.

of Vicksburg also had little interest in commemorating and memorializing the site of their greatest defeat. For this reason, the battleground around Vicksburg remained largely under private ownership, unpreserved and unprotected for over three decades. During this time, trees and foliage began to reappear, altering the scenery created by the battle. Artifacts were unearthed by plowing and livestock were allowed to roam freely on the former battleground. These were the conditions found by Union and Confederate veterans when they gathered on the Vicksburg battlefield for a reunion on 18 September 1889. These men were appalled to discover that the ground upon which they had fought and upon which their comrades had given their lives had been all but forgotten. The only marker to speak of was an inscribed cannon commemorating the site of the surrender interview between Grant and Pemberton.

Establishment of the Park

In October 1895 these veterans began a movement to establish a national park at Vicksburg. In late October, John F. Merry, a veteran of the 21st Iowa Infantry, in cooperation with the veterans' group, The Blue and Gray Association, organized the Vicksburg National Military Park Association (VNMPA), which was incorporated on 22 November 1895. This group elected officers and immediately set about accomplishing its primary goal: lobbying Congress to set aside funds for the preservation of the Vicksburg battlefield and its establishment as a national military park.⁹

⁹ According to the Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting, 22 November 1895, officers elected at this meeting were Lt. Gen. Stephen D. Lee, president; Maj. Charles L. Davidson, vice

Merry's brother-in-law and veteran of the Vicksburg campaign, Capt. William T. Rigby, quickly rose from his newly acquired position as secretary of the executive committee to become the preeminent leader of the Vicksburg park movement. Rigby served as resident commissioner for thirty years, from the establishment of the park in 1899 until his death in 1929. By the early twentieth century, Rigby had personally overseen the purchase of all park land, the construction of all roads and bridges, as well as the erection of 95 percent of all monuments in the park.

Plans for a continuous roadway were already in the minds of the newly elected commissioners in 1895 when the Executive Committee of the VNMPA drew up the original proposal for the park to be presented to Congress. It was the commissioners' desire that the park encompass the lines of the earthworks of both armies and the land between these lines, along with a strip of land behind each line for a roadway. They were also interested in including General Grant's and General Pemberton's headquarters and other areas of particular historical interest. The total area was expected to be not more than 4,000 acres.¹⁰

As the time for proposing the park bill in Congress drew nearer, the commissioners were informed by Speaker of the House Thomas Reed that the original outline for the park was too large and that the project would prove too costly for Congress to approve. At the second meeting of the Executive Committee of the VNMPA, Rigby made a motion modifying the proposed size

president; Capt. William T. Rigby, secretary; and Col. Charles C. Flowerree, treasurer. All were veterans of the Vicksburg campaign.

¹⁰ Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 22 November 1895, Official Records, RG-12, file: 1895, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (hereafter noted as MDAH), Jackson, Mississippi .

and location of the park. It was now to be 1,200 acres with two Confederate wings and two Union wings, and was estimated to cost an average of \$35 per acre.¹¹ In response, J.K.P. Thompson, Department Commander of the Iowa chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), suggested that this cost estimate was extremely inflated and accused local landowners of profiteering. In a letter to Rigby dated 14 January 1896 he stated, "I am fearful the average price of land is so high that Congress will not deem it wise at this time to purchase . . . these people would have been very glad to have disposed of the whole of that land a year ago at \$5 to \$15 per acre."¹² Others expressed concern that the condensed part would be too small to achieve its purpose. William D. Hoard, executive committee member of the VNMPA, wrote to Rigby on 21 January inquiring, "is it possible that the whole area... between the lines and including the lines of both armies can be embodied in 1200 acres? I can hardly believe it."¹³

The Vicksburg park bill, proposing expenditures of \$50,000 for land acquisitions and \$25,000 for improvements and restorations, was first introduced in 1896 by Rep. Thomas B. Catchings, a native of Vicksburg. Action on the bill was slow, and in 1897, Stephen D. Lee wrote to Rigby that it would be necessary to reintroduce the bill at the next congressional session. Although this new start resulted in the bill being favorably reported out of committee,

¹¹ Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 10 January 1896, Official Records, RG-12, file: 1895-1896, MDAH, Jackson, Mississippi.

¹² J.K.P. Thompson to William T. Rigby, 14 January 1896, Official Records, RG-12, file: 1896, MDAH, Jackson, Mississippi.

¹³ William D. Hoard to William T. Rigby, 21 January 1896, Official Records, RG-12, file: 1895-1896, MDAH, Jackson, Mississippi.

war with Spain was declared in February 1898 and forestalled action on the park bill. It would be another year before the bill passed through the House and Senate to be signed by President McKinley on 21 February 1899.

The first item on the agenda in physically establishing the Vicksburg park was land acquisition. At the meeting of commissioners on 15 March 1899, Rigby was assigned the position of resident commissioner, to remain in Vicksburg and begin procuring the necessary park lands, with the help of newly-appointed secretary Charles Longley. Acquisitions went smoothly, in spite of earlier concerns about inflated costs and greedy owners. By 30 September 1899 only three tracts of land were missing, comprising approximately 42 acres. In order to secure this land, the commissioners agreed to grant current owners use and possession rights, rent-free for a term of years, after transferring ownership to the United States.¹⁴

Although the area of the park was only about one-third of that originally desired by the VNMPA, the association did manage to include the majority of significant areas occupied by both armies, and the plans for creating a roadway behind each remained unchanged. The Confederate line of defense remained consistent throughout the 47 days of siege, composed of a series of redoubts, redans, and lunettes all connected by a continuous line of trenches and rifle-pits.¹⁵ The definite and continuous nature of this line made it relatively easy to locate the interior

¹⁴ Annual Report of the Vicksburg National Military Park Commission, 30 September 1899, Vicksburg National Military Park Library.

¹⁵ These are types of temporary fortifications. A redoubt is simply a small enclosed defensive work. A lunette is built with two faces forming a salient angle and two flanks.

roadway. In addition, the area along the Confederate line contained several historic sites such as Fort Garrott (also known as Square Fort), Railroad Redoubt, Great Redoubt, and Fort Hill. The fluctuation of the Union line as troops gradually advanced made the location of the exterior roadway much more difficult and time-consuming. For these reasons the commissioners decided that construction of the interior park road, or Confederate Avenue should be the first order of business in the process of creating a road system in the park.

Creating a Memorial Roadway

The commissioners and engineers involved with routing the roads planned to create a continuous park roadway, which would allow visitors to view the historic landscape without leaving their wagons and carriages. In 1900, the commissioners decided that construction of the interior park roadway should be the first project undertaken and should be completed as soon as possible. Describing these plans in a letter to Ohio veteran J.H. Burbaker in 1901, Rigby explained that the proposed roadway would provide access to the most historically interesting areas of the park.¹⁶ In planning the layout of the park roads at Vicksburg, engineers followed the example set at Shiloh. Although the Shiloh park for the most part utilized existing roads, in cases where new roads needed to be constructed, the engineers were careful to route them along the lines that existed during the battle. Following the natural contour of the ground as closely as possible, they were able to avoid the appearance of any shelter or defense for troops behind a

¹⁶ William T. Rigby to J.H. Burbaker, 5 April 1901, RG-79, Box 1, Vol. 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

raised road or in a sunken road.¹⁷ Careful attention to alignment and grading of the roads were important aspects of building the roads at Vicksburg, in order to create smooth transitions and help in drainage. The Vicksburg area often receives heavy amounts of rain and is subject to flash flooding. To help alleviate this potential problem roads were sloped in a way to make the grades less steep and guide large amounts of water to gutters and drainage structures.

Authority for a survey of the park land was approved on 16 October and conducted from 1 November 1900 to 31 May 1901. The results of this survey, compiled by Assistant Park Engineer G.C. Haydon, determined the location and dimensions of the proposed roadway, which was to be 8 miles in length, 28' wide in excavation, and 26' wide on embankments. Four bridges were recommended: a 500' steel cantilever bridge at Glass Bayou, costing \$38,000; an 80' Melan arch bridge spanning the A & V Railroad, costing \$7,000; a steel arch or steel plate girder at Halls Ferry Road, costing \$5,000; and a 450' fixed span steel bridge at Stouts Bayou, costing \$27,000.¹⁸ Work was delayed for some time because the secretary of war was not willing to approve such expensive bridges. Rigby wrote to Stephen D. Lee on 15 July 1901 that "our work in the establishment of the park, is necessarily difficulty and expensive for the same reasons which, in 1863, made Vicksburg a hard nut for General Grant to crack."¹⁹ Rigby was referring to

¹⁷ Cornelius Cadle to Stephen D. Lee, 19 August 1899, "Letters Received," RG-79, Box 1, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

¹⁸ William T. Rigby, "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 19 July 1901, Vicksburg National Military Park Library.

¹⁹ William T. Rigby to General Stephen D. Lee, 15 July 1901, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 1, Vol. 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

the ragged and broken character of the landscape, which made construction more costly due to the need for more and longer bridges as well as more cuts and fills on roadways. At the request of the secretary of war, the acting chairman of the commission conferred with the engineer of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga Military Park Commission, E.E. Betts, on the subject of park roadways. As a result of this conference, Betts made a report to the chairman recommending a resurvey of the inside roadway to reduce its width to 22' in excavation and 20' on embankments, and to reduce the length of the bridges at Glass and Stouts bayous as much as possible. Betts also recommended the use of concrete viaduct bridges in lieu of the more expensive steel designs.²⁰ Melan arch viaducts²¹ were used to construct the shorter spans in the park. Other bridge types were selected to accommodate the wider spans.

Throughout March and April 1901, Rigby corresponded with several contractors and architects about surfacing materials to be used on the roads. On 18 April, Rigby wrote to M.A. Kirby thanking him for his advice and acknowledging his preference for chert over crushed lime stone for the purpose of road making. Rigby added, however, that the commissioners had decided to use all of the available appropriations in the making of a dirt roadway on the lines of Confederate Avenue and in the construction of three bridges on that roadway. In accepting such

²⁰ William T. Rigby, "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 19 July 1901, Vicksburg National Military Park Library.

²¹ For more detailed information on Melan arch bridges, see sheet HAER MS-14-A and accompanying history.

a proposal for the construction of a dirt road only, the commissioners made it clear that they planned to carry out guttering and surfacing at a later date.

Captain Rigby wrote to the secretary of war on 23 April to request appropriations for the coming fiscal year. This request called for \$101,555.68 to begin construction of Confederate Avenue and erect bridges. Rigby suggested that these funds would be used to cover the cost of three bridges and as much grading of the roadway as the appropriation would afford, beginning at the north end near the public road south of Fort Hill. The total length of Confederate Avenue was to be eight miles with a total of four bridge crossings. The fourth bridge, to be placed at Stout's Bayou, was not included in this allotment because it was one of the more costly spans. Combined with Betts' suggestions for lowering costs, this made it possible to grade the entire roadway and construct three bridges within the budget allowed for this work.²²

Eager to obtain information concerning the proposal to build Confederate Avenue, many contractors flooded the commission with inquiries during the early months of 1901. Rigby announced that the avenue would probably be divided into three or four sections, to be contracted separately. Letters inviting bids for the work of grading the first section of the roadway were sent out beginning in early April; the bids were to be opened in the office of the resident commissioner on 1 May. On 30 April, Rigby reported that the tasks of securing the land and making surveys to locate the roadway was nearly completed, and the work of road building

²² William T. Rigby, "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 19 July 1901.

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would commence soon. The following day thirteen bids for the grading of section one on Confederate Avenue were received in the Office of the Commission.

The lowest bid was submitted by Robert Nicholson of Villa Vista, Louisiana. The contract was not awarded right away, however, due to Rigby's concern over the fact that Nicholson employed black foremen. In a memo to Commissioner James Everest, Rigby questioned, "are these foremen competent, experienced, and intelligent men for work such as ours, which is quite different from and perhaps more difficult than levee work?"²³ The situation was remedied only days later when Nicholson gave his word that he would not employ black men under this contract. In reference to this matter, Rigby wrote to Commissioner Stephen D. Lee on 4 May, "as Nicholson's bid is the lowest, I feel compelled, under the circumstances, to give him the work. He called at the office yesterday morning and consented to my statement that he could not begin work before June 1 . . . He also agreed to give continuously his personal attention to the work and to employ only white foremen."²⁴

As the process of road building continued, several of the public roads within the park area were used as access roads for construction equipment. On 28 June 1901 the governor of

²³ William T. Rigby to James Everest, undated memoranda, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 1, Vol. 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

²⁴ William T. Rigby to General Stephen D. Lee, 4 May 1901, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 1, Vol 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia. This concern was not restricted to Vicksburg, however. Members of the Shiloh Battlefield Commission also displayed discriminatory attitudes towards the laborers in their park. On 19 August 1899, Chairman Cornelius Cadle wrote to Stephen D. Lee at Vicksburg that they had no trouble getting workers at Shiloh and that their labor force was "almost all white."

Mississippi ceded jurisdiction to the United States over portions of City Cemetery Road, Jackson Road, Baldwins Ferry Road, and Flower Hill Road, which were necessary for the construction of Confederate Avenue. Jurisdiction over all public roads in the park was not requested at that time, because the commissioners did not yet feel prepared to properly care for them.²⁵ The question of access rights for citizens whose property adjoined these public roads within the park would later become a recurring problem for park officials. Eventually, all public roads in the park were either closed and obliterated or incorporated into the current tour route.

Although the secretary of war approved the work to be done on section one of Confederate Avenue in July 1901, delays were still forthcoming. The commissioners found it difficult to obtain approval for the remaining sections of the road, because the secretary of war remained unconvinced of the need for a continuous roadway through the park. This was most likely due to the great expense of the requested bridges. Rigby explained that a continuous roadway was the best way to provide access to the positions of the different commands. He wrote to John S. Kountz, historian of the commission, in July 1901 that, "we should yield something on the bridges in order to secure this indispensable condition."²⁶ Rigby insisted that it was impossible to dispense with any of the four proposed bridges on Confederate Avenue. He was, however, willing to yield on the length of the two longer bridges, spanning Glass and Stouts bayous. Rigby continued to argue for the creation of a continuous roadway, stating, "the

²⁵ William T. Rigby, "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 19 July 1901.

²⁶ William T. Rigby to John S. Kountz, 17 July 1901, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 1, Vol 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

commissioners are of the opinion that the park is primarily established, not for the historical student, who can give days or weeks to its study, but rather for the busy citizen who can give but one day and whose convenience in studying it should be carefully considered and provided for.²⁷ If the roadway were not continuous, visitors would be forced to waste valuable time traveling to the various points of interest in the park and would face the inconvenience of non-park traffic on non-park roads.

Work on the two-and-one-half mile section of Confederate Avenue finally began in spring 1902. Nicholson was under contract to have the section completed by 1 September 1902. Two proposals for work on the second section of roadway were reviewed on 2 July 1902. Both were considered too high and were subsequently rejected. It was then decided that proposals would be invited for the construction of an earth road for sections two and three combined. Nicholson was again awarded the contract, which required completion of the remaining six miles of roadway by 1 June 1903. This project being completed on time, culvert work, consisting of grading and drainage, and the construction of concrete gutters began on Confederate Avenue by July 1903.²⁸

Three of the four viaduct bridges on Confederate Avenue were scheduled for completion by September 1903. By January, however, Rigby expressed hopes of having the roadway completed by July. In a letter to Lee dated 29 January, Rigby wrote, "it therefore looks as

²⁷ William T. Rigby to Secretary of War, 29 July 1901, RG-79, Box 2, Vol. 5, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

²⁸ William T. Rigby, "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 3 July 1903.

though you and I might celebrate the 'Fourth' by taking a drive over Confederate Avenue completed as an earth road and with all the bridges finished."²⁹ This desire was fueled by the fact that the contract for the bridge at the Alabama and Vicksburg (A&V) Railroad was to be completed by 31 May, as well as the promise by the Penn Bridge Company that their work on the Glass Bayou bridge would be finished before contract time (30 June), if possible. George H. Crafts, contractor for the Stouts Bayou viaduct brought Rigby's dream even closer to fruition by promising to complete his project two full months earlier than his 31 August deadline, providing that he experienced no delay in receiving the necessary steel from the mill.³⁰

On 20 December 1902 the secretary of war approved the survey and location of Union and Grant avenues, and authorized the commission to invite proposals for their construction. Jurisdiction over the portions of public roads necessary for the construction of these roads was ceded by the governor of Mississippi on 8 December 1902. Bids for the work of grading Union and Grant avenues were reviewed on 22 January 1903 and the contract was awarded to J.T. Crass, to be completed by 15 August.³¹

As the work of grading the park roads was carried out, many artifacts were unearthed, including the bodies of two Civil War soldiers. The first body, identified as that of a Texas

²⁹ William T. Rigby to General Lee, 29 January 1903, RG-79, Box 3, Vol. 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia .

³⁰ The fourth bridge spanning Halls Ferry Road was completed as an at-grade crossing, to reduce expenditures.

³¹ Rigby to Reverend N.M. Baker, 20 December 1902, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 3, Vol. 12, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

officer, was discovered in early January 1903 by workmen involved with grading Confederate Avenue. Silk threads, metal buttons, the end of a sword scabbard, and fragments of cloth were also found in the vicinity and turned over to the adjutant of the United Confederate Veterans Camp, No. 32 of Vicksburg.³² On 17 July 1903 the remains of another man in an iron casket were exhumed during work on grading Union Avenue. The body was found to be clothed only in a white shirt, undershirt and cotton-flannel "drawers," with socks on the feet and white cotton gloves on the hands. Although the absence of a uniform prevented a positive identification, Betts believed the remains to be those of a Union soldier and recommended that the body be reinterred in the Vicksburg National Cemetery.³³

Contracting for the bridge work turned out to be a much more time-consuming task than assigning the work of road grading had been. After carefully reviewing the bids for viaducts on 12 February, Betts was convinced that all of the proposals submitted were too high and advised that they be rejected. Rigby wrote the secretary of war, requesting authorization to either invite new bids or contract with the current bidders at a 30 percent reduction. New proposals for the twelve viaducts on Union Avenue were invited. Thirteen bids were reviewed on 16 April 1903, the aggregate of the lowest bids being approximately \$30,000 less than at the first opening. On Betts' recommendation, the commission accepted the proposals of two bidders who were not the

³² William T. Rigby to General Waul, 31 January 1903, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 3, Vol. 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

³³ R.D. Betts to Superintendent of Vicksburg National Cemetery, 18 July 1903, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 4, Vol 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

lowest, due to the superiority of their plans. William T. Young was awarded the contract for construction of nine Melan arch bridges (then designated as Nos. 1,2,3,6,7,9,10,11, and 12) to be completed by 31 December. While the initial cost of these bridges was greater, the cost of future maintenance and upkeep was expected to be much less and the designs fulfilled all the requirements as to strength, adaptability, and beauty.³⁴ The remaining bridges on Union Avenue (then designated as Nos. 4,5 and 8) were constructed of steel with superstructures of masonry. The Virginia Bridge and Iron Company completed these bridges in November 1903.³⁵

The commission received authority for guttering all park roads, where needed, in 1903. By August 1904, 1000 yards of concrete gutters had been constructed on Confederate Avenue. Gravel and sand for this project was obtained through a contract dated 24 July 1904 with W.C. Craig and Co. and Charles H. Fife.³⁶ This was the first step in the establishment of the elaborate drainage system seen in the park today. This drainage system was necessary to help protect the roads, which were at that time made only of dirt and gravel, from heavy rains and flash flooding. Many additions and improvements were made to the drainage system during the 1930s through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In

³⁴ E.E. Betts to William T. Rigby, 16 February 1904, "Letters Received, 12/22/03-3/31/04," RG-79, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

³⁵ E.E. Betts to William T. Rigby, 29 January 1904, "Letters Received, 12/22/03-3/31/04," RG-79, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

³⁶ William T. Rigby to Stephen D. Lee, 23 July 1904, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 6, Vol. 1, NARA, East Point, Georgia

combination with road improvements and paving, the drainage system became a vital asset to the park.

On 31 July 1903, the secretary of war granted the commissioners authority to have the park roads paved or "metaled," providing the cost did not exceed \$2.75 per cubic yard for distribution and rolling of gravel on the roadway. The commissioners determined that all roadways in the park, totaling 26 miles, were in need of metaling. Rigby and Engineer R.D. Betts, brother of E.E. Betts, conducted a great deal of research as to what sort of material should be used for surfacing the park roads. Betts inspected the gravel at Rosetta, Mississippi, and reported to Rigby that it was similar to chert gravel, possessing a "cementing action" after rolling. This was considered a desirable quality in a road metaling material and ultimately, this material was used for the project. Owners and operators of gravel pits were invited to submit samples of crushed stone and gravel to be tested by the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. This testing is indicative of the high quality demanded by both of the Betts brothers in their engineering projects.³⁷

Proposals for the job of metaling the park roadways were reviewed on 24 September 1903. Of the seven bids received, the lowest was submitted by J.T. Crass, for metaling at \$2.50 per cubic yard. Crass' contract was expected to take at least two years to fulfill. Work began on this project during the summer of 1904. The materials provided by Craig & Company and Fife, used in the earlier guttering work, were considered unsuitable for road metaling due to the loose,

³⁷ R. D. Betts to William T. Rigby, 4 July 1903, "Letters Received 4/1/03-9/30/03," RG-79, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

clean nature of the gravel. E.E. Betts gave very detailed specifications for this project. Stone, coarse gravel, and slag were to have a top dressing of chert or Rosetta gravel at least two inches thick, which could be laid in one course and rolled. If any other material was used it was to be laid and rolled in several courses.³⁸

Even before the contract for metaling the park roadways had been awarded, Z.S. Claggett was eagerly preparing to make a bid on supplying the crushed stone. Claggett made several visits to the park to look over the situation in order to make his estimate as to the cost of preparing the road-bed, distributing the metaling material, and rolling it twice, as Betts had deemed necessary. Rigby received a letter from Claggett in September 1903, stating that he was experiencing problems in dealing with the A & V Railroad, concerning the expense of transporting his gravel.³⁹ There is no documented indication as to how these difficulties were resolved. There was no mention of a contract being awarded to another company, however, so it is likely that Claggett was successful in his efforts to supply the park with road metaling materials.

In his annual report for 1904, Rigby stated that grading of nearly six miles of secondary park avenues and approximately three miles of public roads in the park was to be completed by

³⁸ William T. Rigby to Stephen D. Lee, 17 August 1903, "Letters Sent," RG-79, Box 4, Vol. 4, NARA, East Point, Georgia.

³⁹ Z.S. Claggett to William T. Rigby, September 1903, "Letters Received, 1899-1925," RG-79, Box 5, folder "4/1/03-3/31/04, L-Z," NARA, East Point, Georgia.

the commission's force of laborers and teams employed under the direction of Engineer Betts.

This work was carried out for about a year, to the extent permitted by limited funding.

Efforts to create a closed-loop system of park roads continued throughout the development of the road system. Toward this goal, several public roads were incorporated into the park tour. On 29 April 1903 the park commission submitted to the secretary of war a request for authority to name and rename several park roadways that had previously been public thoroughfares. With the approval of this request, North Ridge Road became Sherman Avenue, the road on spur No. 1 of the South Union wing and Flower Hill Road from that spur to its intersection with Confederate Avenue became Indiana Avenue, the road on spur No. 2 became Wisconsin Avenue, and the Halls Ferry road and the road on spur No. 3 became Illinois Avenue. All other pre-existing roads in the park retained their original names. In 1905, the commission approved a recommendation to extend Confederate Avenue by including part of the old Yazoo City Road (Road No. 81) from the origin of the avenue to the north end of the Glass Bayou bridge, increasing the length of Confederate Avenue to 9.19 miles. This recommendation was dependent on the cession of jurisdiction by the governor of Mississippi, which was granted without contest. The transfer was completed in January 1906.

The park road system was further expanded by the approval of many secondary avenues, which provided access to points of historical interest and short circles, which provided panoramic views of their namesake monuments. The addition of Illinois Memorial Circle (900'), Iowa Circle (325'), and Minnesota Circle (390') brought the total length of park roads to approximately

27.25 miles in 1906.⁴⁰ The next year the tour route was lengthened to over 30 miles by the addition of 17 short avenues and circles (Connecting, Navy Memorial, New York, Missouri, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Logan, Pemberton, Louisiana, Mississippi, Indiana, Texas, Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia, Tennessee, and Navy). In 1908, three additional circles (Maryland, Tilghman Memorial, and Virginia) were laid out and constructed as earth roads, bringing the total of park roads to approximately 31 miles.⁴¹ Most of these new circles were actually semi-circles providing access to the back and sides of statues and state monuments. In order to fully appreciate the detail and intricacy in the carving of many of these memorials, it was deemed necessary to see them from more than one perspective.

Most of these small sections of road were obliterated either during the 1930s as part of the WPA projects, or during 1960s as part of Mission 66. Like the directional change in the late 1960s, the elimination of these circles demonstrates changing ideas about the primary purpose of the park. The creation of these circles exemplifies the commemorative nature of the park in the early 1900s. At that time, the monuments were the first priority, because this is what visitors were primarily interested in seeing. Personal memory of the siege of Vicksburg and the war as a whole was still very prevalent during this time. The result was less emphasis on historical interpretation and more attention devoted to memorialization. As personal memories faded, the balance began to shift. The removal of these short circles demonstrates a trend toward viewing

⁴⁰ Rigby, William T., "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 16 July 1906.

⁴¹ Rigby, William T., "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 22 April 1908.

the battlefield in more broad, historical terms, rather than the earlier focus on specific regiments or individuals.

By 1910, the park road system consisted of two primary avenues, 11 secondary avenues, and 30 short circles, in addition to several sections of public road. These roadways consisted of 30 miles of graveled surface and two miles of dirt road. J.T. Crass' metaling work was complete and made way for the construction of twenty-five miles of concrete gutter. Sixteen bridges were complete at a total cost of \$116,449 (ten of reinforced concrete and six of steel; twelve on Union Avenue, three on Confederate Avenue, and one spanning the A&V Railroad at Battery Maloney). Rigby reported on 12 July 1910 that the current road work primarily involved erosion control. This consisted mainly of making and sodding slopes in roadway cuts and at the head and sides of ravines. Over the next three years, road construction involved the completion of approximately two miles of concrete gutter and nearly two miles of roadway. Once basic road construction was completed in 1913, annual budgetary expenditures for roadways were significantly reduced, as only \$6,000-\$8,000 was deemed necessary for care and maintenance. New work on the park roads dropped off even further during and after World War I and through the Great Depression .⁴²

Construction of Roadside Structures

As the roads and bridges were constructed in the early 1900s, providing access to the park area, states began erecting monuments and memorials commemorating the battle and its

⁴² Rigby, William T., "Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner," 8 July 1913 and 10 July 1917.

participants. The first of these monuments was dedicated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on 14 November 1903. Other states followed suit fairly regularly through the early 1920s, and more sporadically through 1962. The most recent addition to date was the Tennessee Monument, dedicated on 29 June 1996. Park officials at Vicksburg have also been talking recently with officials from the commonwealth of Kentucky, concerning the construction of an additional monument. Currently, Kentucky is the only state that was represented by troops in the battle that is not yet represented by a state memorial in the park.

The changing nature of memorials over the years illustrates the evolution of attitudes towards veneration of the battlefield. As those who had first-hand memories of the war became fewer and fewer, the emphasis on commemorating the battle and its participants gave way to an interest in the historical significance of the battle in a larger cultural context. Earlier monuments reflect veterans' efforts to memorialize their own heroism and honor their martyred comrades in the elaborate style and sheer magnitude of the structures. This is evident in the grandiose marble dome dedicated by the state of Illinois in 1906. This monument includes an intricate mosaic of the state seal on the floor and the names of Illinois soldiers who served at Vicksburg carved into the walls. Likewise, the Wisconsin memorial, dedicated in 1911, lists the names of that state's participants.

In comparison, the more recent monuments are less traditional and explicitly didactic. While the cost of producing elaborate memorials played a significant role in later design, continuing changes in artistic and architectural styles have also had an effect on the appearance of the more recent monuments. Kansas, for example, dedicated a very modern-looking

monument in 1960. This memorial is a steel structure, consisting of a disjointed ring bordered on either side by a solid ring stacked vertically. This symbolism represents the period of peace before the war, the disunion during the war, and the time of reunion following the war. Although it is a very innovative design, it does not inspire veneration for the participants of the battle, nor was it intended to. Similarly, the Tennessee Monument, constructed in 1996, does not explicitly evoke the memory of fallen soldiers. It consists of a flat stone tablet cut in the shape of the state of Tennessee. Making no reference to specific men or events, this memorial serves more to mark the area where Tennessee troops fought than to commemorate the achievements of particular individuals.

Observation Towers

As improvements to the roads and grounds were made, the park commission decided that observation towers should be built in the park to provide better views of the battlefield. In July 1907, Rigby reported that work had commenced on an observation tower at Logan Circle, which was expected to be completed by 1 October 1908. Plans for a second tower on Confederate Avenue east of Fort Hill were under way by summer 1908, even before the first tower was completed. The next year, as proposals for the second tower were being received, the commission decided that a third observation tower was needed on Confederate Avenue on the line of Reynold's brigade. These towers were constructed of concrete and consisted of five

“wedding cake” tiers supported by large Corinthian columns. All three structures were completed by the end of 1910.⁴³

With funding cutbacks during the mid 1900s resulting from World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Cold War, many structures in the park fell into a state of disrepair. In 1965, after decades of neglect, Superintendent W.R. “Rusty” Sund deemed it advisable to have the observation towers removed. A contract was made with Southwest Wrecking Inc. of Austin, Texas, for the demolition of tower No. 1. This work commenced on 17 December 1965 and was completed on 3 January 1966 at a cost of approximately \$10,000. The operation consisted of fastening one inch cables to the structure, starting at the top, and pulling by means of two bulldozers. The tower was torn down by sections until around the 50' level. Air hammers were then used to cut the column bases to reduce the pulling force required and bring the remaining structure down. Then, the debris was pushed into a deep hole and buried on land adjacent to park property. The site was then graded, using the excess dirt for fills and erosion control in other areas of the park. This process was repeated for the obliteration of the remaining towers.⁴⁴

According to current park historian, Terrence J. Winschel, there was a good deal of public opposition to the removal of these towers. Park officials responded by declaring the towers unsafe. Officials decided that to demonstrate the perilous and irreparable condition of the

⁴³ Rigby, William T., “Annual Report of the Resident Commissioner,” 15 July 1907, 11 July 1908, 12 July 1910.

⁴⁴ “Superintendent's Annual Reports,” box 2, file: “Observation Tower Obliteration,” Vicksburg National Military Park Library, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

towers, they would employ a single bulldozer to simply pull the structures over. This attempt failed, and they tried again with two bulldozers. Again failing to bring the tower down, dynamite was used to weaken the structures before they were finally torn down.

The official reason for the elimination of the observation towers was cited as highly damaged and dangerous conditions, however, there may have been other factors involved. It is possible that there was simply a lack of funding for ongoing minor repairs and upkeep. Another possible factor could have been that park officials had changing ideas about appropriate park function and landscape. This may have resulted in a move to minimize the number of structures within the park that had no direct connection with the battle.

The construction of these observation towers represented the beginning of a shift in ideas about the way visitors were to view the battlefield. At the park's inception, visitors were primarily concerned with remembering the heroism of a friend or relative. At that time, most people were interested in seeing a certain memorial or statue that had personal meaning. As this first-hand knowledge of the battle receded into the past, visitors became more interested in understanding the history of the battlefield as a whole. The observation towers were constructed for these visitors to provide a sense of unity among the many points of interest. It was thought that an aerial view of the battlefield would make the logistics of the siege and defense of Vicksburg easier for visitors to comprehend. Widespread opposition to the obliteration of these towers suggests that the public considered these towers an important part of the battlefield tour experience. Unfortunately, park authorities were either not willing or not able to preserve the structures.

Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps

Events during the 1930s provided many good opportunities for improving and upgrading the road system at the Vicksburg park. The transfer of the national military parks from the War Department to the National Park Service under the Department of Interior in August 1933 sparked interest in development and improvement. This was coupled with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Depression recovery tactics of sponsoring construction projects through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In the annual report for 1933-1934, Acting Superintendent, Colonel L.G. Heider noted an allotment of \$363,750 for construction, reconstruction, and improvement to roads, walks, and trails. No doubt, the growing popularity of the automobile in the 1920s necessitated many of these improvements, which included widening the roadway and improving drainage.⁴⁵

Surveys for proposed work were conducted by the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) beginning 16 February 1934. During the next fiscal year, work began with the letting of a contract for the installation of drainage structures and widening of shoulders on Jackson Road and the existing concrete section of Confederate Avenue. The Barber Brothers of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, started this project on 8 December 1934 under the direction of the BPR. Considerable work was done and the entire project was complete within approximately seven months. The job included sloping banks, making roadside fills and cuts, and installing brick catch basins with galvanized, corrugated metal pipe. During this construction, it was discovered that improper

⁴⁵ "Superintendent's Annual Report", 1934-1935

drainage had undermined the road slab, causing its thickness to vary from 3" to 8", which eventually would have become a serious safety hazard.

A great deal of progress in drainage development was accomplished during April 1936. With average rainfall around 55" per year in the Vicksburg area combined with the steep hills, drainage had always been a critical issue in regard to the park roads. However, it was not until funding was allotted through the WPA that the drainage system was completed. The system involved curbs and gutters working with the slope of the road to direct large amounts of water away from the road and prevent flash-flooding. As part of this system, field locations were made for a concrete drainage structure at Union Avenue Bridge (No. 4 in the park's old numbering system). In addition, plans were under way to replace temporary wooden flumes with permanent concrete gutters, particularly in erosion-prone areas where the earth had compacted to the extent that conditions warranted their installation.⁴⁶ The drainage system was developed with much attention to preserving the natural surroundings. Acting Superintendent Heider reported in 1936 that "concrete gutters will not be constructed unless we find them absolutely necessary, and will be located in the most inconspicuous sections so as not to be obvious and deface the naturalistic appearance of the landscape."⁴⁷ In September 1950, the superintendent reported that "a good test

⁴⁶ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," April 1936.

⁴⁷ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," October 1936.

of our drainage system was made on the 11th when 1.37 inches of rain fell in 15 minutes, 1.01 of this in 10 minutes, which we consider a very good test of our drainage system or lay-out."⁴⁸

WPA projects also included reconditioning several bridges in the park. Bridge No. 8 on Union Avenue, spanning the Illinois Central Railroad (A&V Railroad), was reconditioned in May 1936.⁴⁹ This process involved the removal of the timbers and the scraping and wire brushing of all the steel in preparation for receiving two coats of red lead and two coats of forest green paint. The dead load was decreased by approximately 4.5 tons by eliminating the 4" by 6" nailing strips and fastening the guard rail through the 4" by 6" decking, using "U" and "L" bolts to the steel. During this process, it was discovered that the structural steel had deteriorated by nearly ten percent. Bridge No. 2 on Confederate Avenue was reconditioned in the same way in June 1936. This structure was found to have deteriorated approximately 15 percent.⁵⁰

New bridges were also under construction during this time. Increasingly heavy traffic on Hall's Ferry Road necessitated an overpass to divert park traffic on Confederate Avenue from the busy intersection, which at that time was an at-grade crossing. This structure was completed in September 1937.⁵¹ The realignment of Confederate Avenue in 1937-1938 led to the reconstruction of the bridge spanning the railroad and Stouts Bayou. Plans for the new bridge

⁴⁸ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," September 1950.

⁴⁹ Bridge No. 8 no longer exists. It was removed in the 1960s.

⁵⁰ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," May 1936 and June 1936.

⁵¹ "Superintendent's Annual Report," 1938.

were submitted to the chief engineer of the Illinois Central Railroad System for clearance in February 1937. Bids were invited and opened on 13 April, with the lowest proposal submitted by Keliher Construction Company of Dallas, Texas. The new bridge was built alongside the old one, reusing some of the construction materials.⁵²

Pemberton Avenue and a section of North Confederate Avenue, from the existing concrete at Graveyard Road to Fort Hill, were paved in April 1936, bringing the total mileage of concrete pavement to 4.6 miles. The next paving project, completed in 1939, was a 2.565 mile section of South Confederate Avenue from the Yazoo and Mississippi Railroad southward to a point near the second observation tower. The next year the paving of several roads was undertaken. U.S. Highway 61 leading into the city from the north was completed during May, Hall's Ferry Road, in August, and the remainder of South Confederate Avenue in September. In spite of these numerous projects, the work of paving the park roads was progressing slowly, with 25 of the park's 32 miles of roadway remaining dirt and gravel in 1940. Work within the park continued to be hindered in the early 1940s as the nation's attention was focused on World War II.⁵³

In 1950, a group of BPR officials arrived in the park to make a preliminary survey of Union Avenue in preparation for paving the roadway. The superintendent reported that the "paving of Union Avenue will facilitate visitor use as quite the large number of visitors seem to

⁵² "Superintendent's Annual Report," 1937.

⁵³ "Superintendent's Annual Report," 1939.

resent having to drive over gravel roads due to the dust and the rough terrain.”⁵⁴ In spite of the need and demand for paving, it was approximately twenty years before the work was completely finished.

Land Transfers

Several land transfers and exchanges took place during the 1950s and 1960s. In February 1956, the Mississippi Highway Department undertook to secure a plot of park land on the east side of U.S. 80 opposite Navy Circle for a truck weighing station. The state would acquire lands considered essential for protection of the park, which would then be offered in exchange for the isolated tract of park property desired by the Highway Department. By June 1958, enabling legislation was pending that would permit the exchange of park lands occupied by the new Vicksburg High School and the Mississippi State Highway Commission’s truck scale for lands needed by the park for protection.

Another, more controversial transfer, was also underway during this time. In December 1951 the superintendent reported that a number of verbal requests for entrances from private property onto avenues in the southern section of the park were being received. Park officials at Vicksburg, still aiming to establish a continuous, uninterrupted one-way road system through the park, opposed these requests. Continued development of the city adjacent to and east of South Confederate Avenue assured park officials that the problem would continue to escalate with time.

⁵⁴ “Superintendent’s Monthly Report,” April 1950.

By November 1953, nine housing developments were under construction along the park boundary. Public relations deteriorated as the issue of access to park roadways for these subdivisions came to the fore. One major point of contention was the fact that two of the new developments had been granted access rights according to their deeds whereby the government had secured the land bounding the subdivision.⁵⁵

As the city of Vicksburg continued to expand in the area immediately south of the park, city officials opposed having a strip of federal land divide the city into sections. This resulted in a request for a land transfer, so that the city might have control over portions of the park roads providing access to new city developments to the south. In return, the park would be authorized to accept title to several tracts of city-owned land. In early August 1951, park officials devoted the majority of their time to conducting and reviewing studies concerning the proposed land transfer. The results of these studies were sent to the regional office along with maps and other related materials. Final plans were drawn up and recommendations were forwarded to the Washington office by the end of the month, where the proposal was approved and signed. Appraisal of the lands proposed for transfer to the city was completed by the U.S. Engineers' Appraisal Board and submitted to the regional office in November 1951.⁵⁶

In June 1952, many citizens of Vicksburg were outraged by an Associated Press article, which appeared in a local newspaper. The article reported the approval of a bill proposing the

⁵⁵ "Superintendent's Monthly Report", December 1951, and November 1953.

⁵⁶ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," August 1951 and November 1951.

transfer of park lands to the city of Vicksburg. Public agitation increased when a subsequent article reported that the House had passed the bill. Superintendent James R. McConaghie reported in June that a major reason for this opposition was that the public had not been previously advised of the pending legislation. In his monthly report, Superintendent McConaghie described this sentiment as "the feeling being that it was a secret deal."⁵⁷ Strong opposition to the proposal on the grounds that it would destroy a portion of the historic park was another element of the argument put forth by the Vicksburg Historical Society. Another prevalent fear was that the city would be unable to carry out its agreement, to maintain and protect Confederate Avenue and its spur roads. This anxiety was expressed by many concerned citizens, who felt that the city would be preoccupied with its own growth and development.

In July 1952, a meeting was held, "engineered by a group of what can only be termed radicals of the Historical Association" as McConaghie put it, to discuss the reasoning behind the proposal. By September, those who still had concerns about the potential transfer formed a Citizen's Committee to study the details of the proposal. In February 1953, this committee issued a report recommending that the area proposed for transfer be divided. Under this plan, the park would retain the main avenue and its monuments, and the spur roads would be transferred to the city, along with the waterfront lands near the cemetery.

This public opposition had a dramatic effect and slowed the transfer significantly. The bill proposing the transfer of lands failed to be considered before Congress adjourned in 1952. In

⁵⁷ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," June 1952.

September of 1953, Superintendent McConaghie held a conference with U.S. Rep. John Bell Williams and Mayor Pat Kelly to discuss ways to promote the legislation. By December, the opposition had gained a little ground and it was beginning to look as though a compromise might be reached. McConaghie's report for that month stated that city and local park officials agreed with the Citizen's Committee that the spur roads and bordering small tracts of land should be transferred, but were hesitant to agree to the transfer of Confederate Avenue at that time. This was the result of earlier stated fears that recent expansion in the city was already causing a strain and that the city administration was not currently in a position to take on the task of maintaining a park avenue. McConaghie went on to state, however, that, unlike some preservationist groups, park officials were of the opinion that Confederate Avenue should eventually be transferred to the city.

In a speech to the Civitan Club⁵⁸ on 9 October 1957, Superintendent McConaghie addressed these concerns, asserting "this transfer is highly desirable and has been approved by all technical branches of the National Park Service whose job it is to protect historical values. You can be assured that if the historical values, such as they are, were to be endangered such a proposal would never have been approved."⁵⁹ In actuality, the historic integrity of the landscape was compromised by this transfer, as the subsequent construction of shopping centers and housing developments demonstrated. The park gave up significant Confederate trench line areas,

⁵⁸ Civitan is a military-based service organization.

⁵⁹ James R. McConaghie, "Vicksburg National Military Park: Past, Present, and Future," 9 October 1957.

and there are now five state monuments located outside of the park boundary and beyond park authority as a result of this land transfer.

In June 1963 Public Law 88-37 passed the eighty-eighth Congress and was signed by the president. This legislation allowed for the acquisition of up to 544 acres by the park and the transfer of approximately 125 acres to the city of Vicksburg. The area acquired by the city included a section of Confederate Avenue as well as the spur roads, Indiana Avenue, Iowa Avenue, Illinois Avenue, Wisconsin Avenue, and the cemetery access road, Fort Hill Drive. Most of these roads were resurfaced with gravel prior to the transfer, so that all were in excellent condition when turned over to the city for further maintenance on 25 June 1964.⁶⁰

Following close on the heels of this land exchange came a Memorandum of Agreement between the Warren County Board of Supervisors and the NPS recorded on 13 January 1964, which included a quitclaim deed covering the transfer of certain roads. The final agreement, signed by all of the county supervisors on 29 October, involved the acceptance by Warren County of Sherman Avenue and McHan Circle Road for all future use and maintenance. This allowed the closure of city access roads within the park and eliminated egress by some thirty-one families. In return, the NPS received rights to Graveyard Road, one of the most important historic roads in the park. This transfer allowed the park to complete the planned development and restoration of this road to a historic trace.⁶¹ The county still owns the right of way for

⁶⁰ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," June 1963.

⁶¹ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," November 1964.

Jackson Road, another extremely important road in the park. Only a portion of this road has been restored to a historic trace.

Mission 66

Mission 66 was a ten year development program for all national parks, which was proposed to alleviate deteriorating conditions after years of neglect during and after World War II. All park superintendents were called upon to submit estimates outlining the work needed to improve and maintain the each park. These plans provided the impetus needed to obtain Congressional funding for the project. The scheduled completion date was set for 1966 because of its significance as the fiftieth anniversary of the National Park Service. Officials at Vicksburg went a step further in establishing their own completion date for 3 July 1963, the 100th anniversary of the surrender interview between Generals Pemberton and Grant. The continuing goals turned out to be too ambitious for this deadline, however. The project was extended to include areas surrounding the park and was not completed until 1980.⁶²

In early 1956, the Vicksburg Chamber of Commerce elected to take on the task of obtaining hard surfacing for Union Avenue as one of its primary goals for the coming year. To accomplish this, members planned to publish an illustrated leaflet, showing the road conditions on Union Avenue, which would be sent to the governors of various Northern states that had troops at Vicksburg. The park superintendent met with the Chamber of Commerce in February

⁶² "Superintendent's Annual Report," 1980.

to inform them of the Mission 66 aims, which coincided with their own. The superintendent persuaded the group that their efforts would be better directed in supporting Mission 66, rather than working separately for similar results.⁶³

By April 1958, however, the superintendent was again meeting with the Warren County Board of Supervisors, the Mayor of Vicksburg, and committees of the Chamber of Commerce about Mission 66. These groups were concerned about the program because of the possible curtailment in access to and from Vicksburg from the outlying areas to the east and north.⁶⁴ These complaints, in addition to private access requests, increased pressure on city officials to push for the heavily debated land transfer of 1963.

Plans for improvements in Vicksburg National Military Park covered several areas. Paving of all gravel roads and construction of short sections of new road were planned to eliminate dangerous conditions. With the road improvements providing better access to park areas, it was also deemed necessary to conduct vista clearings and roadside cuttings to improve the park area itself. The objective was to restore the area as much as possible to that of the war period. Erosion control was proposed to help accomplish this aim. The restoration of historic structures and appropriate landscaping throughout the park was also planned as part of Mission 66.

⁶³ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," February 1956.

⁶⁴ "Superintendent's Monthly Report," April 1958.

The improvements accomplished through Mission 66 were numerous. By 1967 the program had resulted in the rebuilding of U.S. Highway 80 from the city of Vicksburg to the eastern boundary of the park, construction of an overpass allowing the park tour road to run beneath the highway, creation of a new park entrance, relocation of Memorial Arch from U.S. 80 to Union Avenue, and paving of nearly all sections of gravel road in the park. The superintendent stated proudly that "the completion of the above items and projects slated for future completion will enable this Park to have a one-way closed loop tour system which will not interfere with or be interfered by local commuter traffic."⁶⁵

This long-time goal was brought one step closer to fruition by the Mission 66 road project, which was the result of an additional agreement between the city of Vicksburg and the National Park Service, wherein funding was provided by the government and construction was completed by the city. A segment of the proposed road, running parallel to Confederate Avenue was completed during 1967, thereby absorbing local traffic that once used the park road. This project, started in 1964, was completed in May 1980. The ultimate result was the closing of Confederate Avenue to through traffic, and its establishment as a one-way tour road. This completed the original plan for a closed-loop tour route in Vicksburg National Military Park.

Recent construction in the park has primarily consisted of occasional fills on rough patches of the aging roadways. One bridge has also required recent replacement, which took place during the summer of 1997. This Melan Arch bridge, located on Union Avenue, was

⁶⁵ W.R. Sund, "Highlight Briefing Statement, 1967 Calendar Year."

replaced with a reinforced concrete box culvert structure. For more information on this structure, see HAER No. MS-14-A. At the time this document was being written, park officials were considering removal of the steel arch bridge on Confederate Avenue and were working to design replacement bridges for all remaining Melan arch bridges as they approach 100 years of age.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Terrence J. Winschel, letter to HAER NPS Roads and Bridges Project Manager Todd Croteau, 7 April 2000.

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