

LIVING THROUGH THE SIEGE OF VICKSBURG

<https://www.apps.mdah.ms.gov/Public/prop.aspx?id=29426&view=facts&y=1040>

The Vicksburg Campaign was not a singular event, but a multi-season deluge of fighting over what President Abraham Lincoln called “the key” to the Mississippi River. Union and Confederate leaders believed Vicksburg to be the most important location for control of the Mississippi River and ultimately the South. The Confederates dug into Vicksburg’s bluffs, ravines, and hills so thoroughly, that it took Union troops eighteen months to gain control of the city.

Union troops, led by General Ulysses S. Grant went through four stages to take Vicksburg. First Grant tried to gain access with gunboats. They proved ineffective because of the extensive defenses the Confederates had built into the bluffs. The second stage was a two-pronged attempt to flank the Confederates and push them into the central part of Mississippi away from the river. Thirdly, Grant used other groups of soldiers throughout the area to create diversions that kept the Confederate leader, General John C. Pemberton guessing as to what would be their next move. The last stage of the Vicksburg Campaign was an overland march to take the Confederacy by surprise. This march from Jackson led to Grant’s troops laying siege to the town for forty-seven days, until the Confederates surrendered on July 4, 1863.

The people of Vicksburg began enduring military activity as early as the spring of 1862. There was only need for protection against gunboats at that time, but as the war progressed, there was a need for more fortified protection. In the spring of 1863, the Union army brought out much larger and more destructive firepower. To shelter themselves, the citizens resorted to going beneath the earth, and cave construction and living became a way of life.

Subjects that can be addressed within this digital archive:

- The Siege of Vicksburg
- The Civil War
- Leaders of the battle over Vicksburg
- Mississippi in the Civil War
- Cave life in Vicksburg

Directions:

Have students read the introduction provided in this lagniappe, then use the following link to access the information on the Vicksburg Siege Cave. <https://www.apps.mdah.ms.gov/Public/prop.aspx?id=29426&view=facts&y=1040>, and click on **View National Register Nomination Form** (use this form to answer all questions) Type your response in the space provided.

Questions:

1. What is the location described in this form?
2. What was the size and shape of this cave?
3. Who is listed as the cave's owner in this document?
4. Describe what the first caves were like.
5. Why did digging out these caves become a necessity?
6. Why do you think building caves became a lucrative business?
7. Who do historians believe lived in this cave mentioned in the article?