



Occupied Vicksburg by Bradley R. Clampitt.

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With a few exceptions,¹ historians have not studied extensively the subject of Confederate-held territories falling under Federal control during the Civil War. The best known case is the Port Royal experiment on the South Carolina coast, which combines themes of radical politics, race, retribution, and social experimentation.² Even in the case of New Orleans, available histories are rare and dated.³ Certain episodes that contain a hint of scandal remain notorious: for example, Gen. Benjamin “Beast” Butler’s issuance of his infamous General Order No. 28, a crafty insult to Southern womanhood, stipulating that “when any female shall by word, gesture, or movement insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation.”

As for the key fortress city of Vicksburg, Mississippi, the complicated military aspects of its siege and surrender—but not its occupation—have been well covered.⁴ This discrepancy has now been addressed by historian Bradley Clampitt (East Central Univ. [Okla.]) in *Occupied Vicksburg*.⁵ Clampitt points out that “during the war the Stars and Stripes flew over the town for almost as long as the Confederate banner waived [*sic*] over the iconic courthouse” (1). He argues that “two years of life under enemy occupation proved at least as important as the destruction and anguish of the siege in forging a Confederate identity for Vicksburg that outlived the Confederacy itself” (7). Stressful or traumatic events can profoundly affect the psyches of those who endure them; the survivors of the siege and surrender of Vicksburg fall into this category.

Occupied Vicksburg comprises an introduction (on military operations prior to 4 July 1863) and five chapters on aspects of the occupation. Chapter 1, “Vicksburg Conquered and Liberated,” concerns the negotiations between the commanders and the surrender of the city by Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton. In the first hours after the surrender, soldiers of both armies and the citizens of Vicksburg were starting to take the measure of each other. At the same time, amid the chaos of that first day, the commanders began to appreciate the problems they would have to solve in the coming days and weeks. Meanwhile,

1. E.g. Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861–1865* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 1995).

2. See, e.g., Willie Lee Nichols Rose’s classic *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964); Akiko Ochiai, “The Port Royal Experiment Revisited: Northern Visions of Reconstruction and the Land Question,” *New England Quarterly* 74.1 (2001) 94–117; and Kevin Dougherty, *Port Royal Experiment: A Case Study in Development* (Jackson: U Pr of Mississippi, 2014), which adopts the modern perspective of nation building.

3. E.g., Gerald M. Capers, *Occupied City: New Orleans under the Federals, 1862–1865* (Lexington: U Kentucky Pr, 1965). As yet unpublished is Stephen Jay Edwards’s master’s thesis, “The Thin Blue Line: Law and Order during the Federal Occupation of New Orleans, 1862–1865” (Texas Christian Univ. 2015).

4. WorldCat.org yields six hundred-plus hits for the search term “campaign, Vicksburg,” but only eighteen for “occupation, Vicksburg.”

5. His previous works include *The Confederate Heartland: Military and Civilian Morale in the Western Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: LSU Pr, 2011) and (as editor) *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory* (Lincoln: U Nebraska Pr, 2015).

Vicksburg erupted with celebrations, inter-army fraternization, and in certain areas looting and pillaging by Federals and Confederates alike. On the morning of the surrender [Gen. Ulysses S.] Grant had appointed [Gen. John A.] Logan to temporary command ... to reduce confusion. Guards lined the works to keep out other Federals and to contain Confederate soldiers and civilians. As the day wore on the guards proved generally ineffective, and the human traffic flowed in and out of town. (29)

Chapter 2, “A Week with Billy Yank and Johnny Reb,” follows Grant’s first attempts to dispose of the defeated army, deal with emancipation, and impose Federal control. During this phase, occupiers and occupied reflected more carefully on their emerging circumstances as first impressions faded.

Chapter 3, “The Unionization of Vicksburg,” explores the efforts of several Union commanders, including generals William T. Sherman, James B. McPherson, Henry Slocum, and Napoleon J.T. Dana, to solve the daunting problems of governing a city ravaged by war. An early step for the Union leaders was to formulate rules of occupation, particularly in light of the recently issued Lieber Code, “Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field.” Prepared by German-American scholar Franz Lieber and approved by President Abraham Lincoln, the Code had been issued by general-in-chief Henry Halleck as General Order No. 100 on 24 April 1863. It instructed commanders on topics like martial law, disposition of enemy property, treatment of prisoners and spies, and protection of noncombatants, among other things. In a section that still resonates today, the Code gave guidance on the treatment of “armed enemies not belonging to the hostile army.” Clampitt notes that the Code “was more descriptive than instructive,” and that, while the Union’s philosophy of war had shifted, “the implementation really had only just begun” (79). Grant had to learn on the job at Vicksburg with little assistance from Washington.

Chapter 4, “Federal Power and African Americans in Occupied Vicksburg,” traces the progression of Union policies regarding the freed slaves who flooded into Vicksburg. It describes the interactions of African-American soldiers not only with citizens of Vicksburg, who resented their loss of status with respect to the soldiers, but also with their officers and other Union soldiers. Clampitt concludes that “analysis of black soldiers’ performance, conflicts with locals, and discipline and treatment at the hands of Federal officers paints a portrait of generally admirable if frequently tedious service, strained and often violent interactions with civilians, and stern oversight by military superiors” (156).

The final chapter, “Confederate Resistance to Federal Occupation,” shifts back to the citizens of Vicksburg and the reassertion of their identity as loyal Confederates. We learn that Vicksburg’s women resisted Union troops’ attempts to change their opinions. Moreover, Union forces had only limited control of the surrounding region, which continued to be exposed to raids by southern irregulars.

Bradley Clampitt’s examination of the Union occupation of the “Gibraltar of the Confederacy” is a welcome addition to Civil War scholarship. His careful and extensive research in pertinent primary sources lends interest and force to what could have been a routine account of battles, tactics, and weapons. I highly recommend *Occupied Vicksburg* to all students of the Civil War, especially those with an interest in home-front studies.