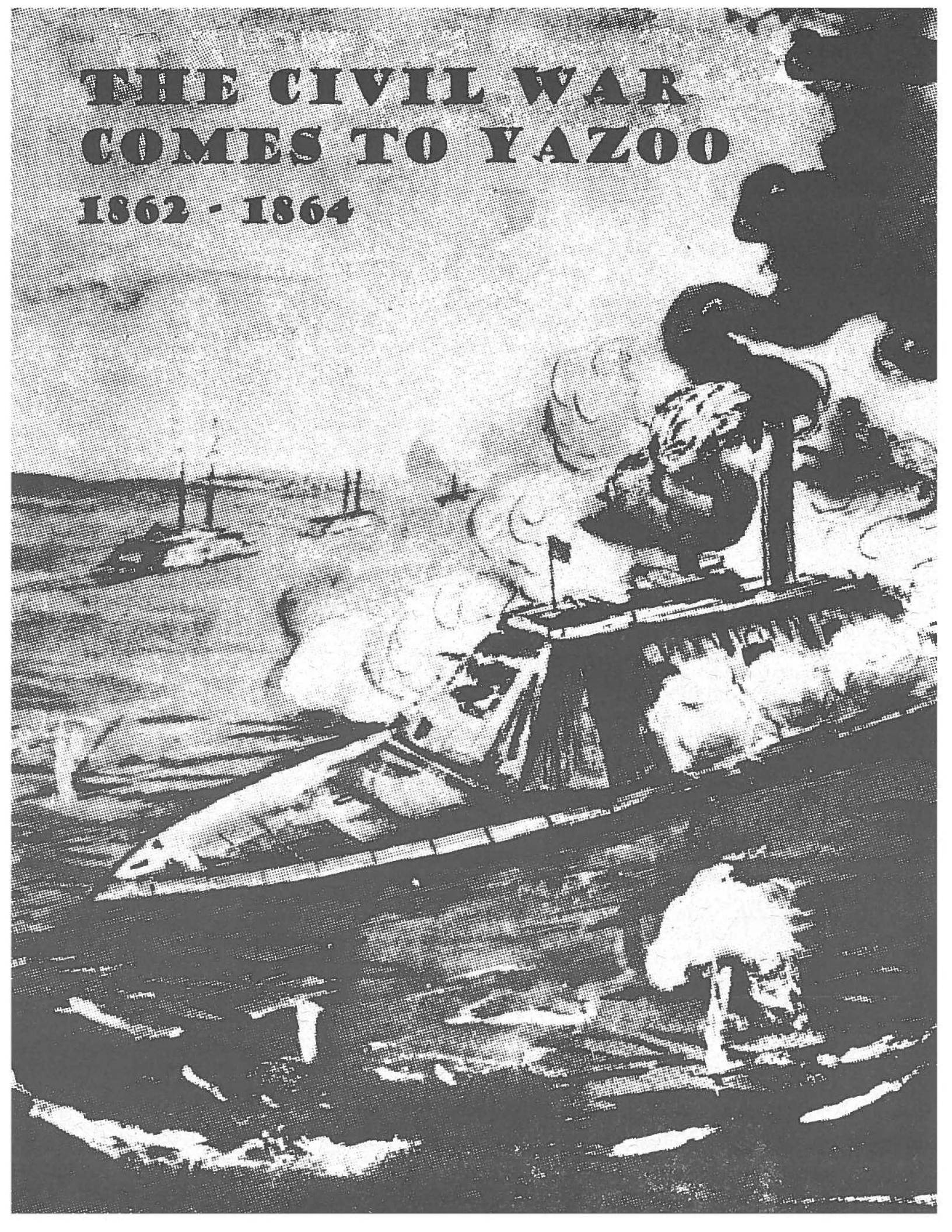


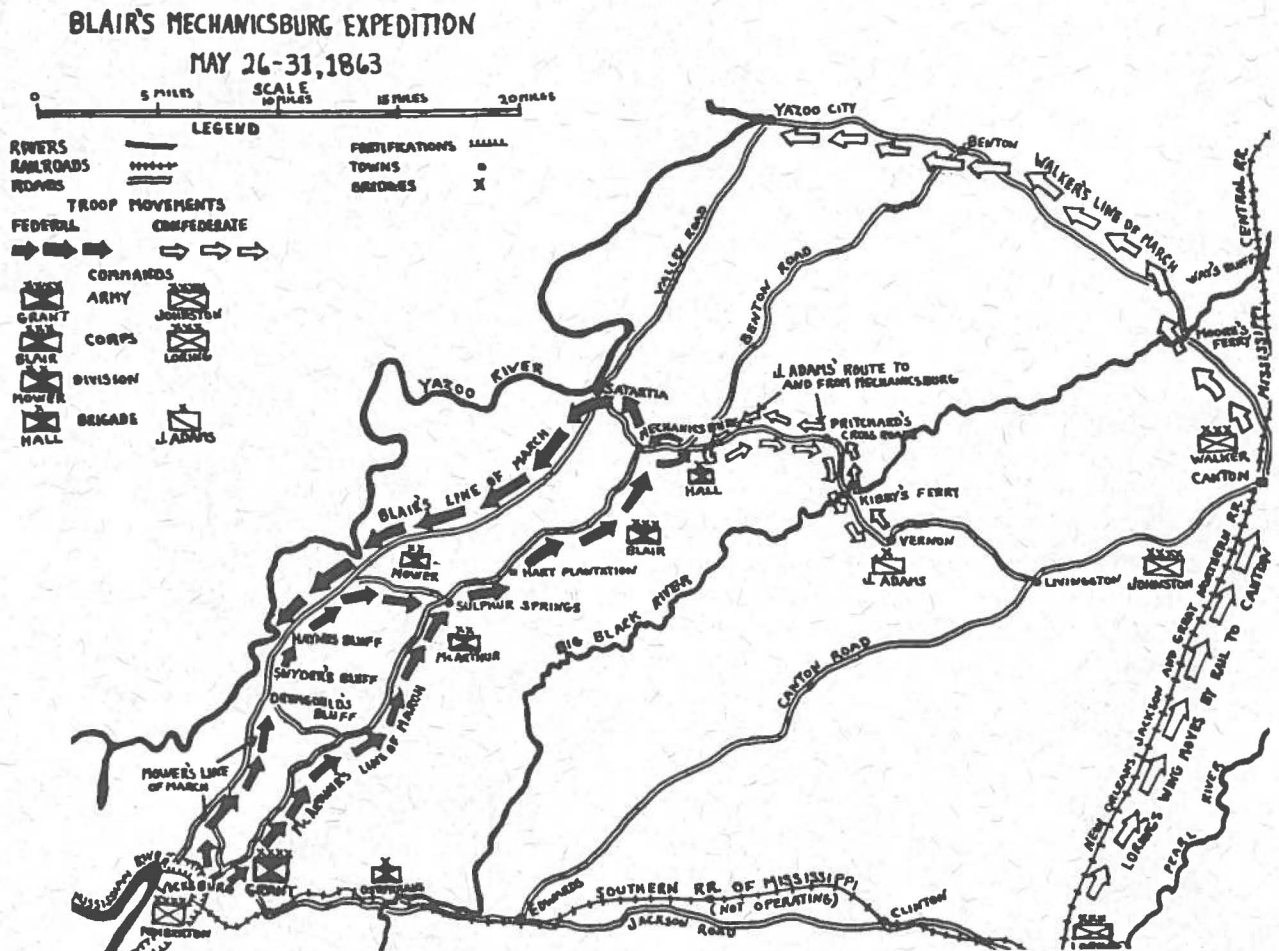
THE CIVIL WAR COMES TO YAZOO

1862 - 1864



THE CIVIL WAR COMES TO YAZOO – 1862 – 1864

(Originally titled “The Battle for Yazoo,” this pamphlet was compiled from information supplied by Glen Jones, Mississippi Chemical Corporation; Edwin C. Bearss, Research Historian, Vicksburg National Park, and Sam Olden, President, Yazoo Historical Society. It was first produced by the Yazoo County Chamber of Commerce.)



“He Saw the Elephant”

by Hewitt Clarke

Confederate Naval Saga

Lt. Charles “Savvy” Read, CSN

A compelling chronicle of Lt. Read (Yazoo County native born in Satartia) and his swashbuckling and heroic career in the navy of the Confederate states.

Researched and written by a former citizen of Meridian, Mississippi.

Yazoo Historical Society — \$26.00

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Preface by Willie Morris

This book covers early settlement, politics, Civil War, Reconstruction, architecture, and many other facets of Southern life from the beginning through 1876. The period from 1876-1976 is covered by articles and photographs.

\$50.00

(Available at Mijo, Essco, Cindi’s, Old Capital Museum)

THE CIVIL WAR COMES TO YAZOO 1862 - 1864

For Yazooans the War Between the States at first seemed far away. For its first full year, though scores of Yazoo boys had already enlisted and many were fighting in distant Virginia, life at home went on quietly. And in those early, heady days of the conflict, most Yazooans expected things to remain that way.

Then in the spring of 1862, in rapid succession, came stunning, sobering Confederate losses nearer home in the Western Theater. Union victories at Pea Ridge in Arkansas and Shiloh in Tennessee brought the war to Mississippi's doorstep. The U. S. Navy entered the Mississippi River in force from both north and south, quickly capturing New Orleans and Baton Rouge, then Memphis. With Vicksburg as President Lincoln's next target, and Admiral Farragut steaming toward it, Yazoo City and Yazoo County, in the space of a few weeks, found themselves almost in the center of the storm.

The Vicksburg campaign was to last for fourteen months, and the initial attempt to take it by a purely naval action was fruitless. But in the months before that first siege was abandoned, Yazoo City was spurred into action. A string of earthwork fortifications manned with cannon were built on the bluffs above the town and the Yazoo River. A barricade of submerged rafts, old boats and chains was placed across the river at Liverpool Landing some 15 miles downstream. Hurriedly the Confederate Navy Department, with the help of local artisans and plantation owners, created a rudimentary navy yard a half-mile south of town on the eastern bank of the Yazoo River.

Yazoo City soon became a key naval bastion almost by accident, and its one great contribution to naval warfare was probably the most incredible vessel ever to engage an enemy fleet.

The ironclad ram *CSS Arkansas* was a child of misfortune from the beginning. She was one of several ships being built at Memphis when Union forces threatened that city. Of all the vessels in the yards, only the *CSS Arkansas* was saved. Her unfinished hull was towed down the Mississippi and up the Yazoo to near Greenwood where work on her stopped.

On the morning of May 28, 1862, Lieutenant Isaac N. Brown, a native of Grenada and a 27-year veteran of the United States Navy, who had commanded the Confederate navy yards at Memphis and Nashville, received a telegram from Stephen Mallory, Secretary of the Confederate Navy, instructing him to "finish and equip that vessel (the *CSS*

Arkansas) without regard to expenditure of men or money."

At Greenwood, where the vessel was supposed to be, Lt. Brown was told the *Arkansas* was up river "nigh to four miles from dry land, but we will try to row you to her." Upon reaching the hulk, Brown found that she had no engines, no armor and no deck house. She was loaded down with ten enormous guns, but there were no carriages on which to mount them. Her armor plate lay on the river bottom in a sunken barge.

With the help of soldiers from a nearby army camp, the barge was raised, the armor retrieved, and two old mismatched engines were salvaged from wrecks.

Greenwood offered comparative safety for completing the vessel, but there was no skilled help and no necessary materials available. In Yazoo City both men and materials were in readiness, but the whole Union fleet was practically on top of Vicksburg—less than 50 miles away. Because of the plight of Vicksburg, Lieutenant Brown had the river steamer *Capitol* tow the hull downstream to the shipyard at Yazoo City.

There was excitement among the workers as the big gray shape was berthed. The *Arkansas*, even at this stage, was an imposing sight. She stretched 110 feet long and at her bow was a massive ramming beak. Her sides, soon to be covered with four inches of iron, sloped inward 45 degrees to help deflect cannon balls and there were gun ports all around. When fully armored, she would draw 14 feet of water. Her pilot house which stuck up 12 inches from the armored gun housing would be only six feet above the water line.

Soon 200 men were working around the clock to get the ship ready. Crews of workmen systematically scavenged the countryside for metal and parts. Any likely item, and some not so likely, wound up in the makeup of the ship that—after her destruction—the enemy dubbed "a floating junkyard."

After five weeks the stern and some portions of the ship were still unprotected by armor, but the Yazoo River was falling. Pilots warned that if the *Arkansas* did not get into the deeper Mississippi River soon, the great ironclad would be landbound for the summer.

So, on July 2, 1862, the *Arkansas* steamed away on her first self-powered voyage. Never a more unlikely vessel headed for combat. Her armor was skimpy in spots and boiler plate had been "tacked" over the unprotected stern to hide its weakness. Her mismatched engines were totally

inadequate for a ship of her size and would push her along at only eight knots—far too slow for any ramming. Her crew of two hundred men was composed principally of landsmen with no experience in either operating or fighting a ship. One notable exception was young Confederate Navy Lieutenant Charles “Savez” Read, a native of Yazoo County born in Satartia. A graduate of the U. S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and a U. S. naval officer up until the war, he manned the stern guns of the *Arkansas*. Serving on the ram as long as she stayed afloat, Read went on later to a swashbuckling and heroic career, first in Confederate raiders on the high seas, then to exploits on the James and Red Rivers.

Lieutenant Brown of the *CSS Arkansas*, recognizing his vessel’s weaknesses, explained to the crew that they would have to meet the enemy head on. Said he, “No ram, no run, just fight.”

And fight they did, but not before one more piece of bad luck plagued the ship. Some 25 miles below Yazoo City a steam pipe broke and soaked all the gunpowder. Luckily it was a hot, dry day and the powder soon dried on tarpaulins spread over warm beds of sawdust at a sawmill where the broken steam pipe was repaired.

On July 13, the *CSS Arkansas* rounded a bend about a mile and a half upstream from the Mississippi River. Ahead were the Union gunboats *O. S. Tyler*, *Carondelet*, and *Queen of the West*. Although this was a formidable fleet, the *Arkansas*—which had already been affectionately named “the ramming bucket of bolts” by its crew—must have looked to the enemy like the world’s best fighting ship in perfect shape. The Union fleet reversed engines and tried to back away into the broader Mississippi.

The Confederate ironclad continued to forge straight for the enemy. There were two reasons for this: (1) because despite her weaknesses she was a first class fighting ship, and (2) because she couldn’t expose her weakly armored stern to Federal fire. Each of the enemy let the *Arkansas* have a broadside, but most of the shot bounced off of the armor like hailstones. In her turn, the *Arkansas* gave the Union ships a severe mauling.

When the battle ended the *Carondelet* was badly damaged and had run ashore, the *Tyler* limped off in bad shape, and the *Queen of the West* decided to retire and fight another day.

The *CSS Arkansas* had taken the fire of all three ships. Lieutenant Brown had been wounded and a part of the wheel had been blown away. The base of the smokestack had been hit and heat and smoke filled the engine room, making frequent changes of the crew necessary. But the pride of Yazoo City had survived her first battle and there was no place to go except straight ahead—or straight down.

Straight ahead could only mean to Vicksburg where the entire Union armada lay in wait. As the *Arkansas* stormed

toward the beleaguered city, there was consternation in the Federal fleet. The guns were manned, but fires had been banked to preserve precious coal. The *Arkansas* drove at the middle of the fleet and took broadsides from the *Hartford* and *Richmond* without serious damage. Anywhere the Confederate ironclad might fire, it was almost certain to hit a Union ship. But the Union fleet did more damage to itself than the *Arkansas* could ever have inflicted. Many of the shots fired at the *Arkansas* passed over her low gun house and landed on a Union target.

The *Arkansas* docked at Vicksburg under protection of the shore batteries. The Union battle ship *Essex* charged in for a ramming attempt and both vessels loosed a short-range broadside. The *Essex* missed the ramming and dug its bow into the river bank where shore batteries gave it a tough time until it could back off and steam away at full speed. Next the *Queen of the West*, which had followed the *Arkansas* down river, tried to ram, but a well-placed broadside from the *Arkansas* disabled her and she was towed away after drifting out of range.

Presence of the *CSS Arkansas* at Vicksburg made the Union position precarious. It was always necessary for the Federal fleet to keep up steam for fear of a surprise attack, and coal was scarce. Commodore Farragut’s deep-water vessels were in danger of being stranded as the low-water season approached, so he ordered his fleet back to New Orleans. The “bucket of bolts” had almost single-handedly lifted the siege of Vicksburg.

The Federals did not know the damage they had inflicted on the brave vessel. One point-blank shell from the *Essex* had penetrated *Arkansas*’ armor, killing eight men. Many of the crew had to be transferred to the hospital, including the able engineer who seemed the only man capable of keeping the ancient engines operating. Lieutenant Brown had been ordered home to Grenada to recuperate from his wounds and Executive Officer Stevens, a fine officer, was in command.

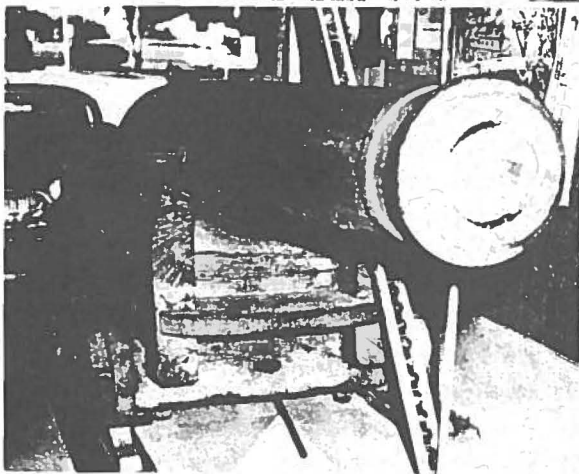
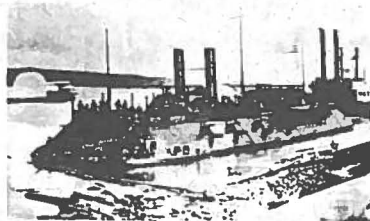
Although the *Arkansas* had been in heavy battle and was not in shape to go without extensive repairs, General Earl Van Dorn ordered her to support him on a drive he planned against Union forces at Baton Rouge. Lieutenant Stevens told Van Dorn that Lieutenant Brown had left orders for the ship to stay at Vicksburg. General Van Dorn appealed all the way to Richmond to have these orders overruled.

CSS Arkansas had steamed only a short distance before her creaking engines played out. After being patched up, she headed for Baton Rouge, but on the way met the *Essex*. Charging full steam ahead and bow guns firing, the *Arkansas* headed straight for her old enemy, but just before the expected collision the *Arkansas*’ port engine quit. With each engine connected separately to a propeller, this pulled the ship square-around into a terrific broadside from the *Essex*.

As the *CSS Arkansas* drifted helplessly toward shore, her weak stern a perfect target for enemy fire, Lieutenant Stevens ordered the crew to destroy the ship and try to reach Confederate lines. Men of the *Arkansas* put powder on deck, set her afire, and scurried for the woods. Then an unpredictable current swung the *Arkansas* into the river where, face to face with the *Essex*, she blew up.

Thus, in just 24 full days, the *CSS Arkansas* dealt the Union severe blows and then died honorably.

The *CSS Arkansas* was not the only surprising weapon unleashed on the harried Union navy on the Yazoo River. The first warship to be sunk by an electrically detonated mine was the *USS Cairo*, sent to the bottom in the autumn of 1862 near the mouth of the Yazoo River.



U.S.S. *Cairo* (top) first ship ever sunk by electrically detonated torpedoes. The cannon, including the carriage, was raised first and the ship completely raised by December 1964.

Eight months after the sinking of the *Cairo*, the *USS Baron DeKalb* was sunk by torpedoes at Yazoo City. But descendants of the men who touched off those torpedoes are still living in Yazoo City, and they say that this ship was sunk by jugs filled with explosives and pulled against the ships by strong cord.

When General U. S. Grant's final great siege of Vicksburg by both the Union Army and Navy began in May 1863, a Confederate fortification at Snyder's Bluff on the Yazoo River blocked passage to Yazoo City where the navy yard was still building ironclad vessels. Union Rear Admiral David D. Porter sent five ironclads to try to bypass the Snyder's Bluff defenses and destroy the yard. And he almost succeeded in becoming one of the first admirals to have

his naval fleet captured by land forces.

The vessels ascended Steele's Bayou, passed through Black Bayou and entered Deer Creek. If the Yankee warships gained Rolling Fork, they would have clear sailing down the Big Sunflower and up to Yazoo City. Confederate Colonel Samuel W. Ferguson moved his combat team to Rolling Fork. While snipers lined the creek banks and peppered the ships with small arms, other soldiers cut trees to fall across the stream ahead of and behind the vessels. With the fleet blocked in by trees, the crews unable to come into the open, and Confederate forces ready to drive in and take the ships, General Grant had to send a land force to rescue Admiral Porter's fleet.

By May 17, the Confederate forces had abandoned Snyder's Bluff and two days later units from the Union army and navy occupied the fortifications without firing a shot. The first frontal attack upon Yazoo City itself came on May 21, 1863, and was a naval thrust. Admiral Porter ordered a task force consisting of the ironclads *Baron DeKalb* and *Choctaw*, supported by the tinclads *Forest Rose*, *Linden* and *Petrel*, to proceed against the Yazoo City Naval Works as soon as demolition teams could destroy the chain placed across the Yazoo River by Confederates.

With Lieutenant Commander John G. Walker in charge, the fleet met only token resistance on the river. But Captain Isaac Brown, recovered from the wounds he had received on the *Arkansas* and in command at Yazoo City, ordered the navy yard burned.

A landing party from the Union ships found that Confederate demolition squads had destroyed everything of military value in the town. Three warships at the naval station were smoldering ruins, nothing more than charred hulks. They were the *Mobile*, the *Republic*, and an unnamed ironclad monster 310 feet long and with a beam of 70 feet. The latter vessel was scheduled to be plated with 1.5 inch iron and was to have had six engines, four side wheels, and two propellers.

All that remained of the navy yard, which had contained five saw and planing mills, extensive machinery, carpenter and blacksmith shops, were fire-blackened ruins. Shore parties reported that except for a large sawmill and lumberyard north of town, Confederate forces had also either removed or burned all the public property in Yazoo City of potential value to the enemy. By the morning of May 23, the sawmill and lumberyard had been put to the torch by the Federals. After paroling the 115 military patients in the city hospital, the Union squadron was ready to return to the fleet anchorage at the mouth of the Yazoo.

After the destruction of the shipbuilding facilities at Yazoo City the river had little naval value to the Confederacy, but Union ships continued to use the waterway.

Immediately after General Grant failed to crack the

Vicksburg defenses by a massive assault on May 22, 1863, he received word of a Confederate build-up at Yazoo City and Commander Walker's squadron again steamed upriver. There was no build-up of Southern forces and the expedition met little resistance. Lieutenant Brown had planted torpedoes in the Yazoo River, but the Federal fleet inadvertently avoided them when the ships cut through Tchula Lake—an old channel of the Yazoo—instead of staying on the main stream.

After passing Yazoo City uneventfully, the Union fleet was stopped below Greenwood by a barrier of vessels which Lieutenant Brown had ordered sunk across the channel. While sailors tried to remove the scuttled steamboats, Confederate Captain John H. Morgan's Arkansas sharpshooters peppered them with rifle fire. The Union fleet sprayed the area in which the sharpshooters were hiding with canister and shell, then cut the cables and withdrew downstream.

The expedition stopped again at Yazoo City where a landing party gathered a number of iron bars missed on the first raid of the navy yard. In the eight-day raid up the Yazoo, the Union fleet destroyed seven Confederate steamboats.

At the time he ordered Commander Walker's fleet up the Yazoo (May 22, 1863), General Grant received word that Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston was massing a large force to move in relief of Vicksburg. He feared that this army would move toward him down the "Mechanicsburg Corridor," the ridge in Yazoo County that separated the watersheds of the Big Black and Yazoo Rivers. Accordingly he detailed Colonel Amory J. Johnson to take 1,000 men and reconnoiter that area. Secondary objectives were destruction of the Mississippi Central Railroad bridge across the Big Black at Way's Bluff, near Vaughan in Yazoo County, and destruction of all forage and corn stored in the region between the Big Black and Yazoo rivers.

On May 24, Colonel Johnson and his blue coats rode out of Snyder's Bluff and the next day they rode right back in again. They had encountered Confederate Colonel W. Wirt Adams' Mississippi Cavalry and after a brief skirmish had withdrawn.

Upon his return to his base, Colonel Johnson made the wildly exaggerated report that General Joe Johnston, with a force of between 6,000 and 10,000 men, was camped near the Yazoo County village of Mechanicsburg. Actually, at this time the only Rebel force operating between the Big Black and Yazoo were scattered units belonging to Brigadier General John Adams' mounted command.

General Grant dispatched 12,000 of the troops which he had assembled at Vicksburg to meet the threat of General Joe Johnston's overestimated forces. General Grant placed these troops under command of aggressive Major General Francis P. Blair, who in turn split them into two divisions under Brigadier Generals Joseph A. Mower and John

Opposing Generals

UNION

CONFEDERATE



Major General
Francis P. Blair



General
Joseph E. Johnston

McArthur.

General Blair planned a two-pronged thrust toward Mechanicsburg with General Mower's division marching up the Ridge Road and General McArthur's division moving up the Benton road to a rendezvous at Sulphur Springs. Colonel Johnson's cavalry was to screen the advance of the "Expeditionary Corps."

The force moved out of Vicksburg on May 27 and even Colonel Johnson's far-ranging cavalry failed to flush any Confederates that day. On May 28 the two forces came together at Sulphur Springs, but Colonel Johnson brought General Blair a disturbing report. The cavalryman had talked to a farmer, Richard A. Barkley, who told him that Lieutenant General Ambrose P. Hill had just reached Jackson with heavy reinforcements from the battle-hardened Army of North Virginia. Between them, General Johnston and General Hill were reported to have 45,000 men in Central Mississippi.

General Blair relayed this information to General Grant with the comment that Colonel Johnson "has no doubt of the entire correctness of the statement, with the exception that he believes the numbers are exaggerated."

General Blair, nevertheless, decided to push on. It was about 1 p.m. when the Federal horsemen rode by the dozen or so houses that constituted Mechanicsburg and they turned into the road leading to Kibbey's Ferry. Two miles beyond the village, an Iowa Regiment sighted a number of greyclads. These were the same hell-for-leather troopers that had turned back Colonel Johnson's blueclad cavalry four days before.

As soon as General John Adams saw the bluecoats he sent his cavalrymen charging at the enemy. The startled Federal troops fell back toward Mechanicsburg, fighting a bitter delaying action. General McArthur sent his advance brigade to the rescue and the thin line of greyclads, vastly outnumbered, fell back toward the Big Black River.

Two miles southeast of Mechanicsburg the Confederates

made one more effort to halt the Federal advance. Guns of the Brookhaven Artillery charged up and started firing on General Blair's men. This threat was quickly met by arrival of additional Union artillery, armed with 12-inch howitzers. After a brief duel, the outgunned Mississippians broke off the engagement.

What Confederate forces had failed to do, General Grant did for them. Troubled by reports of General Joe Johnston's huge army and fearing that General Blair might be moving into a trap, he ordered the northern army back to Snyder's Bluff.

The Union forces made their return trip down the fertile Yazoo Valley. Here General Blair estimated there was sufficient subsistence and forage to supply General Joe Johnston's army for at least a month.

The soldiers destroyed an immense quantity of bacon, approximately 500,000 bushels of corn and seized about 1,000 head of cattle and 200 horses and mules.

Meanwhile, Confederate communications being very slow, General Johnston did not receive word at his Jackson headquarters that a force of Federals was advancing up the "Mechanicsburg Corridor" until May 30, the same day General Blair was evacuating Mechanicsburg to fall back toward Snyder's Bluff.

To effect a concentration against General Blair, General Johnston sent Major General William W. Loring's "Left Wing" and Brigadier General Samuel G. Maxey's brigade to Canton by rail. At the same time he ordered Major General William H. T. Walker's "Right Wing" to march from Canton to Yazoo City. Colonel Samuel W. Ferguson's hard-hitting combat team joined General Walker and by June 1 the "Army of Relief" was in Yazoo City.

Immediately after the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, Admiral Porter prepared to follow up this Confederate disaster with a series of raids into the surrounding countryside.

General Johnston, occupied with defending the capital, Jackson, against Major General William T. Sherman's forces, had called the "Army of Relief" and all the troops he could take from other Central Mississippi locations.

At Yazoo City, Commander Isaac Brown was in charge of a naval unit, while Colonel William B. Creasman commanded the soldiers. They were desperately trying to throw up fortifications against an inevitable Union attack.

On July 12, Admiral Porter sent seven transports carrying Major General Francis J. Herron's division to Yazoo City. The transports were convoyed by the ironclad *Baron DeKalb* and the tinclads *Signal* and *New Republic*. The 5,000 men of General Herron's army disembarked below the city and the ships moved upstream where there was a short duel between Confederate artillery in the bluffs above the town and the vessels on the river. The troops, during the artillery engagement, outflanked the town and made

the Confederate position untenable.

Both Commander Brown and Colonel Creasman withdrew. Commander Brown moved on to the Confederate Arsenal at Selma, Alabama, and his sailors joined ships at Mobile. Colonel Creasman's small force made contact with General Johnston's Rebels at Morton, Mississippi.

The only bright spot in all this from the Southern viewpoint was the sinking of the *DeKalb* by two planters, Mr. J. J. B. White and Dr. Washburn, who had devised the mine-like device described earlier that they could discharge under the vessel.

From September 1863 to December 1864, northern gunboats ranged the Yazoo River at will, and Yazoo City was raided and/or temporarily occupied four more times without significant resistance from the small number of Confederate units operating in the interior of Mississippi. The main objective of these raids was to commandeer cotton and food supplies, livestock, horses and mules for the Yankee stronghold in Vicksburg.

In September 1863 the Federals landed two regiments of troops from river vessels which went on a rampage in the city. In October, another Federal force, this time under General McArthur, occupied the town and were particularly ruthless.

Only once did the Confederates strike back, on March 5, 1864, during the third temporary occupation. And this time bloody fighting in the streets of downtown Yazoo City left 31 northerners dead, 121 wounded, and 31 missing. And brought a hasty return to Vicksburg by the rest. The southerners lost only six dead and 51 wounded.

That Union operation began as a sweeping raid based in Yazoo City to seize cotton, mules and foodstuffs from as far away as Greenwood and Grenada. The considerable booty was being assembled in warehouses on the Yazoo City waterfront for further shipment to Vicksburg. The warehouses were guarded by tinclad gunboats.

To stop the raiding, and to retrieve as much of the loot as possible, a strong contingent of 1,300 Tennessee and Texas cavalry was assembled at Benton, just east of Yazoo City. With some artillery support they were led by Generals R. V. Richardson of Tennessee and Sul Ross of Texas. Early in the day they first surrounded and silenced with cannon-fire the main Union redoubt on the Benton Road protecting the occupying force. Then the southerners swept from the bluffs into the north of town and on down toward the river landing. Fiercely resisting house by house, the Federals were pushed during the day toward the protection of their tinclads which were also lobbing shells into the fray. At one point a howitzer was landed from one of the boats to the foot of Main Street and surrounded by cotton bales to make a small fort. Firing up Main Street, it was soon taken by the southerners, but then was recaptured by the Yankees.

By mid-afternoon the southerners had found and burned

much of the looted cotton and had retaken most of the mules and supplies not inside the warehouses. Considering their objectives largely gained they began an orderly withdrawal. Rushing out of the warehouses to fire at the departing enemy, the Yankees were quick to claim a Southern rout—that is, until their true losses were realized the next day.

The following month, on April 22, 1864, another surprising and most uncommon event occurred on the Yazoo River two miles upstream from Yazoo City. A Federal gunboat, the tinclad *USS Petrel*, tied up to the river bank near the mouth of Tokeba Bayou, was attacked and captured by a combat patrol from the 11th and 17th Arkansas Consolidated Mounted Infantry. Accurate fire from the opposite bank by two 10-pound Parrot rifles partially disabled the vessel, causing part of its crew to flee. Then Arkansas boys swimming across the swift-flowing muddy waters took their prize.

On May 19, 1864, Federal troops for the last time came into Yazoo City and got out of hand. Despite the efforts of the provost guards, they burned the courthouse, the lawyers' offices, and several dwellings.

By the last few months of the war, Yazoo County had been so overrun by the frequent raids of the enemy that there was little of value left and the county had practically no strategic value.

In addition to serving as a battleground, Yazoo City and County contributed mightily of men to the Confederate cause. The Hamer Rifles was the first unit to be organized and mustered into service at Yazoo City on April 8, 1861. This unit was assigned to the Army of Virginia and served there as Company D of the 18th Mississippi Regiment.

By the end of the war all of companies made up from Yazoo County had suffered extreme losses through death, wounds, prison confinement and disease. Only a small remnant of those who enlisted returned.

It was these survivors who, when they returned to their denuded homeland, were faced with the heartbreaking task of rebuilding under the rigors of Reconstruction days. It

was several years before the county began to take on a healthy economic complexion and the battle against great odds was turned in favor of the residents.

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Today, Yazoo County shows none of the scars of a battleground. It has long ago modernized its farming and has become firmly entrenched as an industrial and commercial center. The economy of the county is divided almost equally between agriculture and industry. Cotton, soybeans, rice, small grains and the rapidly growing farm-raised catfish industry give the area an important agricultural base.

Oil was discovered in the southern part of Yazoo County in 1939 and the many producing wells located in Tinsley Oil Field today represent an important segment of the area's economic base.

In 1948, Yazoo City became the headquarters of Mississippi Chemical Corporation, the world's largest producer of nitrate for use in commercial fertilizers.

Hood Packaging Corporation manufactures multiwall paper bags, Amco manufactures farm and construction implements for domestic and foreign markets, Yazoo Industries is a major supplier of electronic wiring accessories for the automobile industry. The industrial base is widely diversified and includes chemical and fertilizer manufacturers, farm implements, lumber mills, grain elevators, and grain storage facilities.

The Yazoo County Port, located on the Yazoo River in the Industrial Park just west of town, contains modern port facilities and is capable of handling full size river barges. The Port has the capability of loading and unloading liquid and dry materials.

Yazoo County is served by the mainline of the Canadian National/Illinois Central Railroad, four-lane access to Interstate 20, state and federal highways to Memphis, Vicksburg and Jackson, the state capital.

A municipal airport can accommodate large private aircraft and corporate jets.



Yazoo County Convention & Visitors Bureau

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