



The Hancock Rebel



Winner of the 2016-17 Small Camp Newsletter Award from the Mississippi Division SCV

THE SHIELDSBORO RIFLES CAMP #2263 NEWSLETTER

BAY ST. LOUIS, MS

ISSUE #57

JANUARY 2021

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The Charge

"To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans, we will commit the vindication of the cause for which we fought. To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles which he loved and which you love also, and those ideals which made him glorious and which you also cherish.

Given at New Orleans, LA in a speech on April 25, 1906 to the SCV National Convention by Lt. Gen. Stephen D Lee.

From the Commander's Desk

By: Camp Commander Don Green
Greetings Compatriots,

The new year is upon us and we hope this year will be better than 2020. The Rotten Bayou Cemetery Committee wants to thank all those who helped and attended the event. The challenges of defending the honor of our Confederate Ancestors is greater now more than ever. While the many avenues of media continue to try to paint our ancestors as traitors who only fought to preserve the institution of slavery, we know this is a liberal lie and apparent agenda for our enemies to eradicate our Southern and Confederate History. One way we can combat that atrociousness is to continue to honor those we descend from. The next opportunity to take a step towards this is to attend our annual Lee-Jackson Banquet this coming Saturday January 16th. This will be our 6th annual banquet in honor of Generals Lee and Jackson to be held at the Mercy House located across from Lakeshore Baptist Church. The address to the Mercy House is 6077 Lakeshore Rd., Bay St. Louis, MS. 39520. Mississippi Division Commander Conor Bond will be our presenter on the Life Lessons of Generals Lee and Jackson. You are welcome to practice social distancing and take those precautions you deem necessary for safety. Period dress is highly recommended, but in no way mandatory; just come join us to kick off our first event of the 2021 Campaign. The Camp will provide two meats, we ask everyone bring a dish for our potluck supper which has been very successful at our past banquets. Our first Camp meeting of the year will be the February meeting to be held on Tuesday the 23rd, 2021 at 6:30pm at Adjutant Redmond's House in Long Beach. 3rd Brigade Commander Trent Lewis is slated to show us his artifact collection. We hope to see you this Saturday the 16th for our Lee-Jackson Banquet.

McLeod's Mill Reenactment



The Shieldsboro Rifles formed up at Leakesville for the McLeod's Mill Reenactment.



Co. F of the 3rd Miss. Inf. at the Monument Memorial downtown Leakesville Dec. 12, 2020.



The 3rd Miss. Inf. posed for a photo as the 9th Conn. Inf. before the battle in Leakesville.

December Camp Meeting



3rd Brigade Commander Trent Lewis brought info on his ancestor for show & tell.



The Redmond's had their house all decorated for the Christmas Social Dec. 15, 2020.

Rotten Bayou Wreaths Program



The Shieldsboro Rifles fired a volley at the Rotten Bayou Wreaths Program Dec. 19, 2020.



Camp Members salute the Veterans during the Wreaths Across America Ceremony.



The spectators look on at the Rotten Bayou Cemetery Ceremony in Diamondhead, MS.

Christmas in Camp at Beauvoir



The Beauvoir Mansion was all decorated for Christmas with period music by a harpist.



The participants for Christmas in Camp pose for a photo on December 19, 2020.

6th Annual Lee-Jackson Banquet

Hosted by: The Shieldsboro Rifles Camp 2263, Gainesville Volunteers Camp 373, & Pearl Rivers OCR Chapter 30

Presentation by: Mississippi Division Commander Conor Bond

Location: The Mercy House across from Lakeshore Baptist Church 6077 Lakeshore Rd.

Time: 4:00pm Set Up; 4:30pm Social; 5:00pm Program begins



This will be a potluck supper with the Shieldsboro Rifles providing a delicious meat.

All Camps, SCV Members, and guests are invited.

Contact Camp Commander Don Green for more information- 601-270-5316

Past Lee-Jackson Banquets



5th Annual Lee-Jackson Banquet January 18, 2020



4th Annual Lee-Jackson Banquet January 19, 2019



3rd Annual Lee-Jackson Banquet January 20, 2018



2nd Annual Lee-Jackson Banquet January 21, 2017



1st Inaugural Lee-Jackson Banquet January 16, 2016



3rd Mississippi Infantry Regiment 2021 Spring Schedule

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/270849566691036/>

1. **Winter Quarters:** 15121 Hwy 15 S. Union MS 39365, MS January 15-17 - **Scouting Event**
2. **Work Day:** Beauvoir; Biloxi, MS - January 30 - **Scouting Event**
3. **Battle for the Texas Hospital:** Quitman, MS February 19-21- **MAX EFFORT**
4. **Fort Beauregard Reenactment:** Harrisonburg, LA February 26-28 - **Scouting Event**
5. **Confederate Flag Day:** Beauvoir; Biloxi, MS March 6 - **Scouting Event**
6. **Fort Randolph Reenactment:** Pineville, LA March 12-14 - **Scouting Event**
7. **Siege of Port Hudson:** Jackson, LA March 26-28 – **MAX EFFORT**
8. **Battle of Pleasant Hill Reenactment:** Pleasant Hill, LA April 9-11 - **Scouting Event**
9. **Confederate Memorial Day:** Beauvoir; Biloxi, MS April 24 - **MAX EFFORT**
10. **Destrehan Plantation:** 13034 River Rd, Destrehan, LA 70047 May 1-2 - **MAX EFFORT**
11. **Surrender Oak Festival Reenactment:** Citronelle, AL May 1-2 - **TBA**
12. **Battle of Resaca Reenactment:** Resaca, GA May 14-16 - **Scouting Event**
13. **Trail of Honor:** Jackson, MS May 23-25 **TBA** - **Scouting Event**
14. **Battle for Cuba Station:** Gainesville, AL May 28-30 - **MAX EFFORT**
15. **SCV Convention:** Vicksburg, MS June 12 - **Scouting Event**

Capt. Don P. Green, Jr.
3rd Miss Inf. Co. F



Here is the schedule for the 3rd Mississippi Infantry for the Spring 2021 Season.

Brigade SCV Update



5th Brigade Commander Oran Thomas presides over the Brigade Meeting at Dixie.



The attendees to the Brigade Meeting look on as Commander Thomas presents on his ancestor who was the Color Bearer for the 36th Ala Inf. The meeting was held Dec. 5, 2020.

Division SCV Update

Executive Council Resolution on the State Flag

WHEREAS the 1894 State flag of Mississippi was adopted as a symbol of reconciliation less than thirty years after the conclusion of the War Between the States, during the active lifetime of many of the veterans of that conflict, and

WHEREAS the 1894 flag flew as the official flag of the State of Mississippi for one hundred twenty-six years, during which time it was reaffirmed by a vote of the people with over two-thirds supporting its continued use, and

WHEREAS the Sons of Confederate Veterans was established in 1896, just two years after the adoption of said flag, with the intention of memorializing the vast numbers of Southern dead of the War Between the States, and

WHEREAS the 1894 flag, which displays the battle flag of the Southern soldier in its canton corner, also suitably memorializes those soldiers of Mississippi who fell in that tragic conflict,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Mississippi Division, Sons of Confederate Veterans supports the continued use of the 1894 Mississippi State flag as the official emblem representing the State of Mississippi at all Camp, Division, and Confederation functions. As such, all entities representing or coming under the jurisdiction of the Mississippi Division, Sons of Confederate Veterans are hereby instructed to continue the display of the 1894 banner at camp meetings and other official functions of the Division, including during ceremonies in which the salute to the Mississippi flag is recited, as has been the custom unto the present day.

Acknowledging that the old Magnolia Flag, also known as the Secession Flag, created as the flag of Mississippi in 1861 when she seceded from the Union, was adopted by the 1989 Division Reunion in Oxford as the official Mississippi Division flag, camps may also choose to display this banner as they see fit.

www.letmsvote.info or www.facebook.com/letmsvote



Mississippi: INITIATIVE 74 putting The Flag of 1894 on the next Ballot is active! SIGN THE PETITION TODAY!

Initiative 74 is now available for petitions to be signed. More to Come!

National SCV Update

*[FROM THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF]
SCV'S RESPONSE TO SUVCW'S POLICY
Announcement #3 – December 16, 2020*

Compatriots,

During the late 19th and 20th centuries, Confederate and Union veterans had their separate organizations, but maintained fraternal relations between the two. For many years, their descendant organizations have done the same. In fact, when our beloved battle flag and Confederate monuments came under attack, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) supported us in recent years. This is no longer the case.

At their recent National Encampment, the SUVCW issued their new official position on monument protection. They have removed all references to Confederate memorials and our beloved battle flag. It appears that they have become weak-kneed in the face of the “Cancel Culture” and seem to believe if they disassociate themselves from their fraternal brothers of the South that they and their monuments will be overlooked. We know this is not the case as ALL things that are “Traditionally American” and not just Southern are under attack as “those people” attempt to rewrite history to suit their agenda.

If we are asked about the SUVCW's stance on these matters, just mention the fact that they state that “the SUVCW supports and preserves all memorials to American veterans and since the Federal Government have recognized our brave Confederate ancestors since 1903 as ‘American Veterans’ then they too are American memorials.”

Just as our ancestors fought alone during the War for Southern Independence, we find ourselves once again alone as we face a war of cultural genocide. We knew it would come to this, but we will endure and persevere as we fight this war together as brothers. Please pray for myself and the General Executive Council as we go forward once again into the breach that we make the decisions that are needed to advance the Cause and continue the Charge that was given to us.

*Deo Vindice,
Larry McCluney, Jr.
Commander-in-Chief
Sons of Confederate Veterans*



**Brian C. Pierson
Commander in Chief
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War**



**PO Box 3394
Shawnee, OK 74802
CinC@SUVCW.org**

**General Order #7
Series 2020-2021
9 December 2020**

National Policy on Monument Protection and Preservation

1. Whereas the 2020 National Encampment voted to abolish the existing Battlefield Flag and Monument Policy (August 2017) in order to be able to develop a policy regarding the protection of war memorials and monuments that is appropriate for the current conditions in the United States; and,
2. Whereas the Special Committee for Monument Protection Policy diligently and thoughtfully developed a draft policy and presented it to the Council of Administration for review and approval; and,
3. Whereas the Council of Administration carefully reviewed the draft policy and subsequently voted to approve it;
4. Therefore the National Policy on Monument Protection and Preservation attached to this General Order has been adopted as the official policy of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War regarding war monument protection. It will be published on the SUVCW National Policy web page.
5. This policy builds upon the solid foundation of earlier General Orders, policies and resolutions on this critical topic. It clearly articulates the Order's position, provides a basis for engaging the public with a unified message, and allows the ability for a flexible response for different conditions and situations.
6. The new monument protection policy intentionally does not take a position on the status of the Confederate battle flag; therefore, the SUVCW is officially silent on this issue.
7. All Brothers, Camps and Departments, Camps shall follow and refer to this policy, especially when communicating with members of the public, government, or press.

Ordered this 9th Day of December, 2020

Brian C. Pierson
Commander-in-Chief

SUV Policy to denounce Confederate Heritage

Media Pages Update

We are looking at creating a new website for a minimum fee, possibly free, for the Camp. Our original website was a bit costly and has not been renewed as of yet. Camp Members are looking at this for us and will report to us in the very near future with possible options .

Camp Website: In Progress

Brigade Website: www.dgreen1865.wix.com/5th-brig-ms-div-scv

Division Website: www.mississippiscv.org

Beauvoir Website: www.visitbeauvoir.org

National Website: www.scv.org

Upcoming Speakers List

**All Subject to change.*

Saturday January 16, 2021 – Conor Bond – Life Lessons of Generals Lee and Jackson

Tuesday February 23, 2021 – Trent Lewis – Artifact Collection

Tuesday March 30, 2021 – Tristan Dunn – Period Music by Keyboard

Tuesday April 27, 2021 - Paul Gramling – SCV Today

Tuesday May 25, 2021 – Bruce Roberts – Forrest Rides West (TBD)

Tuesday June 29, 2021 – Don Green – CSS Shenandoah (TBD)

Tuesday July 27, 2021 – TBA

Tuesday August 31, 2021 – TBA

Tuesday September 28, 2021 – TBA (at Beauvoir)

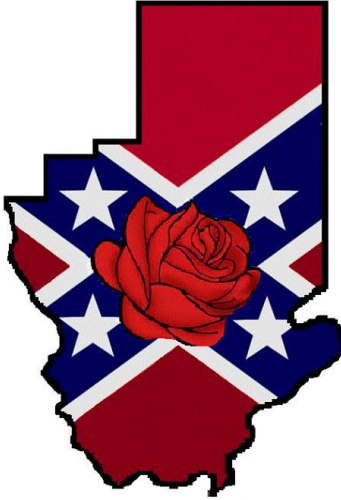
Tuesday October 26, 2021 – Dorthy Necaise – Period Undertakers

Tuesday November 16, 2021 – TBA

Tuesday December 14, 2021 – TBA

Order of the Confederate Rose

ORDER OF THE CONFEDERATE ROSE



*HANCOCK COUNTY CHAPTER,
HANCOCK COUNTY, MS*

The Pearl Rivers Chapter #30 chartered into the Mississippi Society Order of the Confederate Rose during an interesting time in our world. We chartered in January 2020 and were unable to have our first independent meetings due to the COVID pandemic. We are proud to say that we will be hosting our first meeting on September 1st, where our members will discuss activities we hope to accomplish and how we plan on supporting our host Camp.

We hope to invite prospective membership to our future meetings, which will be the first Tuesday of each month. If you have a female family member who would like to join the Pearl Rivers Chapter #30, Mississippi Society Order of the Confederate Rose, please email the Chapter at pearliversocr30@gmail.com.

Yours,

***Callie Bunter
President
Pearl Rivers Chapter #30,
Mississippi Society Order of the Confederate Rose***

What Happened in January throughout the War?

January 1861-

January 2 - South Carolina troops seize Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbor

January 3 - Georgia state troops seize Fort Pulaski

January 4 - Alabama state troops seize the U.S. Arsenal at Mount Vernon, Alabama

January 5 - U.S. Senators from seven Southern states meet in Washington, D.C. to discuss secession

January 6 - The state of Florida seizes the Apalachicola Arsenal

January 7 - Mississippi and Alabama State Conventions meet to discuss secession

January 8 - Jacob Thompson of Mississippi - the Secretary of the Interior and last Southern member of President James Buchanan's Cabinet - resigns

January 9 - Mississippi secedes from the Union

January 9 - The Star of the West fails to relieve Fort Sumter

January 10 - Florida adopts an Ordinance of Secession

January 11 - Alabama adopts an Ordinance of Secession

January 14 - Federal troops occupy Fort Taylor at Key West in order to prevent its seizure by secessionist forces

January 16 - Crittenden Compromise dies in the U.S. Senate

January 19 - Georgia adopts an Ordinance of Secession

January 20 - Mississippi state troops seize Ship Island in the Gulf of Mississippi

January 24 - Georgia state troops seize the U.S. Arsenal at Augusta

January 26 - Louisiana adopts an Ordinance of Secession

January 1862-

January 10 - Engagement at Middle Creek, Kentucky

January 15 - Edwin M. Stanton confirmed as U.S. Secretary of War

January 18 - The Confederate Congress votes to formally organize the Confederate Territory of Arizona

January 19 - Battle of Mill Springs (Logan's Cross Roads), Kentucky

January 22 - Bombardment of Fort Henry, Tennessee by USS Lexington

January 30 - The USS Monitor is launched at Greenpoint, New York

January 1863-

January 1 - Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation goes into effect

January 2 - The Battle of Stones River concludes

January 9 to 11 - The Battle of Arkansas Post (Fort Hindman), Arkansas

January 12 - Skirmish at Lick Creek, Arkansas

January 17 - Lincoln approves Congressional resolution authorizing the Treasury to issue \$100,000,000 in new notes in order to pay Union soldiers and sailors. President Lincoln also calls for regulation of the national currency

January 22 - Union Major General Ambrose Burnside's "mud march" ends in failure

January 25 - Burnside relieved of the command of the Army of the Potomac and replaced with Major General Joseph Hooker

January 31 - Confederate ironclads temporarily break the blockade in Charleston Harbor

January 1864-

January 11 - Rosser's Raid in West Virginia

January 18 - Skirmish at Grand Gulf, Mississippi

January 23 - Skirmish near Newport, Tennessee

January 27 - Engagement at Fair Gardens (Kelly's Ford), Tennessee

January 28 - Operations around New Bern, North Carolina

January 29 - Cavalry skirmish at Medley, West Virginia

January 1865-

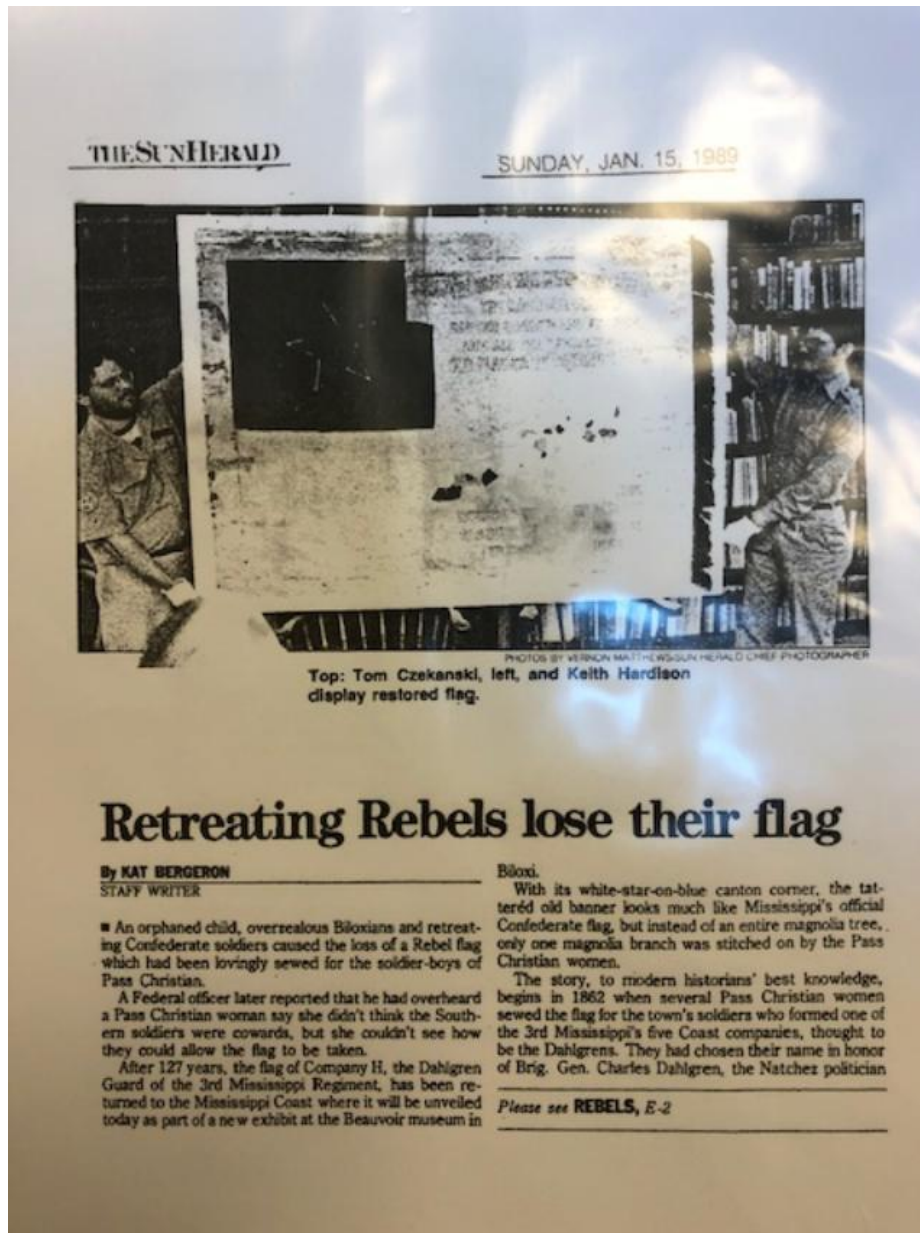
January 12 - Francis Preston Blair Sr. attempts to negotiate peace with Jefferson Davis

January 13 - Second attack on Fort Fisher, North Carolina begins

January 15 - Fort Fisher stormed

January 23 - Joseph E. Johnston opposes Sherman's march through the Carolinas

January 31 - U.S. House passes 13th Amendment abolishing slavery



The Flag of the 3rd Mississippi Infantry was at Beauvoir at one time.

Union Soldiers on Ship Island During the Civil War

By James G. Hollandsworth Jr.

Most Union soldiers fought the American Civil War close to home. Recruits from Pennsylvania in the Army of the Potomac, for example, spent the entire war within one or two hundred miles of home. Farther west, men from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio did not have far to travel to reach the battlefields of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Nevertheless, there were some Union soldiers during the Civil War who served in remote places that were very different from what they were used to at home. These men ended up on Ship Island, a desolate barrier island twelve miles off the coast of Mississippi in the Gulf of Mexico.

Their story began September 10, 1861, just six weeks after the Union lost the battle to the Confederates at Bull Run, the first battle of the American Civil War. Major General Benjamin F. Butler had received authorization to “raise, organize, arm, uniform, and equip a volunteer force for the war in the New England States.”

General Butler

Initially, Butler intended to use these troops to clear Confederate forces from the eastern shore of Virginia but shifted his attention to the Gulf Coast when he learned that the Confederates had already abandoned the eastern shore. Butler’s new plan was either to attack Mobile, Alabama, or to establish a foothold in Texas. Eventually, he hoped to take New Orleans, Louisiana.

Butler selected two infantry regiments, the 9th Connecticut and the 26th Massachusetts, and a battery of light artillery, the 4th Massachusetts, and ordered them to Ship Island.

Butler had a good reason to occupy Ship Island in November 1861. The Confederates had evacuated the place in September, and a detachment of Yankee sailors and Union marines had been holding the island ever since. The strategic importance of Ship Island was obvious. “As the purposes of [Butler’s] expedition were not positively known to either the rebels [Confederates] or the people of the North,” a soldier in the expedition commented after the war, “and as Ship Island was quite as desirable a base for movement against Mobile or the Texas coast as New Orleans, its selection served the double purpose of affording ample accommodations as a Union naval station and of keeping the rebel authorities in a constant state of uneasiness as to the point of attack.”

The SS Constitution steamed out of Boston Harbor on November 21, 1861, with the vanguard of Butler’s expedition on board. The Constitution reached Ship Island on December 2 and anchored off shore. Alfred Parmenter, a musician in the 26th Massachusetts, wrote about his arrival in a letter to his parents back home.

"Well I have just been on deck and taken another look of Ship Island. We have come to anchor within 1/8 of a mile from shore. You may perhaps gather an idea of the place from the remark of the Quartermaster. "What a h--l of a place to send 2000 men 3000 miles."

The 9th Connecticut and the 26th Massachusetts were the first of twenty-seven Union infantry regiments to see service on Ship Island during the Civil War. In addition to these regiments, six batteries of light artillery and a battalion of cavalry spent time on the sandy outpost. Each of these units stayed for varying lengths of time; some for only a few days, others for several weeks, and one, the African-American 2nd Louisiana Native Guards, for almost three years.

General Banks

Union troop strength on Ship Island peaked in April 1862 when more than 15,000 men assembled for the assault on New Orleans. As soon as New Orleans fell, the Union garrison on Ship Island was reduced to one regiment of infantry, the 13th Maine. Three months later, eight companies of this regiment were transferred to the forts below New Orleans, leaving two companies to hold the island by themselves until December, when troops from a new expedition from New England, this one commanded by Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, began to arrive.

Only seven regiments from Banks's expedition disembarked on Ship Island because most of the ships carrying Banks's men continued on to New Orleans. Furthermore, that portion of Banks's expedition that landed on Ship Island stayed for only a few days, leaving the two companies of the 13th Maine on their own. Finally, on January 12, 1863, seven companies from a new regiment of African Americans, the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards, arrived for garrison duty.

The mixture of black and white troops created an explosive atmosphere, and a racial dispute between the men from Maine and the black soldiers from Louisiana broke out within a week. Banks quickly decided to withdraw the two companies of white soldiers, and the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards remained as the primary garrison for Ship Island.

Ship Island had been used as a prison and detention center almost as soon as Union troops landed there. Butler sent the first civilian detainees there from New Orleans in June 1862, a month after he took control of the city. Butler also used Ship Island as a prison for Union soldiers convicted of serious crimes. However, the first Confederate prisoners did not arrive until October 1864, when General E.R.S. Canby ordered more than 1,200 Confederate captives transferred from New Orleans. The number of Confederates on Ship Island peaked in April 1865 when 3,000 prisoners taken with the capture of Mobile arrived. Their stay was short, however, for all of the prisoners of war were sent to Vicksburg, Mississippi, to be exchanged for Union soldiers in late April and early May.

By June 8, 1865, there were no prisoners — Confederate, Union, or civilian — left on the island. On October 11, 1865, the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards, which by then had been re-designated as the 74th Infantry USCT (United States Colored Troops), was mustered out of the

service and replaced by three companies of the 78th USCT, bringing the Civil War on Ship Island to a close.

Soldier life on Ship Island

Many Union soldiers who spent time on Ship Island during the Civil War wrote letters home or kept detailed diaries of their experiences. Captain John William DeForest, for example, described what happened in a letter when the 12th Connecticut arrived on March 8, 1862.

“Here we are, at seven in the morning, dropping anchor within a mile or two of Ship Island. The water is smooth, the sky grey and lowering, the air damp but not cold. Around us are three or four navy steamers and several sailing vessels, which are probably transports. The island is a low stretch of sand, almost as white as snow, with no discernible vegetation except something which looks like pine underwood. A few board shanties are visible, two or three encampments of white tents, and a ghostly lighthouse. Five or six miles away is what seems to be another island [Cat Island], scattered with trees which remind me of palmettos, though they may be tufted pines. Officers and men are joking over our new home. One wants to know where the best hotel is; another says he is going ashore to shake the orange trees; another counsels his friends not to eat too much fruit.”

Private James F. Stoddard described his first night on the island in a letter to his wife after the 7th Vermont disembarked in April.

“We got on the island last night and put up our tents[.] the land is white sand . . . there was 15 of us went up to the upper end of the island after grass to put into our tents to cover up the sand and we saw lots of prickly pears growing on the island and we saw one wild hog that someone had killed and one wild Cow and we killed one snake that was about 3 feet long[.] it is 6 miles up where we went and we did not get back until 10 o Clock at night and I was as tired as any one need to be[.]there is some lemon trees on the island but they [don't] have any lemons on them. . . the Sand drifts like Snow it filled my eyes and ears full[.]it was very warm here yesterday but it is cool this morning[.] it Seems like October[.] I got wet to the skin last night for there was a heavy shower before we got back[.]”

Once they got settled in, these accidental tourists explored their new home. Lieutenant George G. Smith recorded his first tour of Ship Island in his diary.

“We started from the west end of the island, where the troops are quartered, at 9 a.m. On reaching the center of the island we found the water breaching over for about a mile, and this we waded. After this our course lay along the south shore to the further extremity of the island. We found many curious shells, nuts, fruits and branches of trees washed from the surrounding islands. Many pieces of wrecks lay along the beach embedded in the sand, and some almost whole skeletons of vessels lay rotting on the shore. These told sad tales of anguish and death in ages past. From the extremity of the island the southern shore of Mississippi could be seen quite plain. Some porpoises were sporting in the water and many birds were seen. Some of the men caught a few fish. Ripe blackberries were found among the pines. An alligator had been imprudent enough to show himself in a small pond of fresh water, and

several officers and soldiers were watching for him with guns, but he was too cunning for them and they did not get him. After wandering about the island until about 4 p. m. all hands collected as many fan palms as they could carry and bent their steps for camp. The water had receded from the island so that it was dry ground all the way.”

As would be true with many of the men who set foot on this barren shore, Captain DeForest was impressed by how sandy the island was.

“Ship Island is the sandiest region this side of the Great Sahara.. . Here the sand is of a dazzling white which glistens in the moonlight like snow, and by day dazzles and fatigues the eyes unless the weather is cloudy.”

Sand was a nuisance in other ways, as indicated in a letter from Andrew M. Sherman written in July 1863, when he stopped over at Ship Island as a parolee on his way to rejoin his regiment, the 23rd Connecticut.

“When I tell you that this island on which we have been encamped since the first part of the month, consists almost entirely of fine, white sand, with scarcely a tree for shade or ornament, and with only here and there a patch of grass, you cannot doubt the propriety of applying the word ‘barren’ to our present quarters. In this sand our tents are pitched, and on this sand, with a mere blanket for a bed, we lie, and sleep as best we can, with the various insects that minister to our discomfort. Our shoes are never free from the irritating presence of this sand. You may find it difficult to believe me when I say that from 10:30A. M. till about 1:30 P. M. the sand is so hot from the sun’s rays that an attempt on our part to walk in it with bare feet, as some of the acclimated natives do, will prove so painful as to deter one from a second attempt.”

Hot weather was particularly bothersome to the soldiers from the North, who were accustomed to a much cooler climate. Assistant Surgeon Simeon Evans, who remained on Ship Island with the 13th Maine during the summer months after Butler transferred most of his men to New Orleans, wrote to his mother in June to complain about the heat.

“We have terrible weather here now. The sand reflects the heats that we get about as much from below as we do from above. I tell you, we suffer greatly from the heat. No shady trees to intercept it from above, no grass to relieve us from beneath, nothing but scalding, scorching white sand. It is lucky I brought a pair of green glasses with me, or my eyes would have been burnt out of my head before this time.”

In addition to oppressive heat, Union troops on Ship Island had to weather severe thunderstorms in their flimsy tents. In April 1862, James C. Biddle, an aide-de-camp on General Thomas Williams’s staff, wrote home about a big storm the night before.

“I went to bed at about 11 o'clock & was just about going to sleep, when the whole side of our tent blew open & commenced flipping violently. We were obliged to get up, & after a good deal of trouble succeeded in securing it, everything being soaking wet. This is nothing for a soldier. He must soon get used to such things. I found out this morning that the Guard Tent of the

31st Mass. Regt. Had been struck by lightning. It is only about 200 ft from our tent. Three men were killed & some 13 stunned.”

Heat and bad weather were not the only trials, insects were the bane of almost every soldier who spent time on the island. Colonel Henry Rust Jr. recorded in his diary in July 1862 that

“Winged animals of all sizes, shapes and kind are flying in the candle, flying about my head, buzzing in my ears, crawling down my neck and even in my hair — so I must quit writing, close my door. Blowout my candle, get under the [mosquito] bar and try to forget them. Whew! What a plague they are!”

With so many men camped on this sandy station, obtaining a reliable supply of fresh water was crucial. Fortunately, the problem was easily solved. “By digging two feet into the sand and setting down a barrel,” James Schneider, chaplain of the 2nd Infantry USCT, wrote in a letter home, “we have a well of sweet water. This white sand is an excellent filterer.” Lieutenant Smith remarked on the same thing. “Good, cool, fresh water can be had in any part of the island by digging anywhere from eighteen inches to two feet in the sand. I never knew of any scientific reason for it, but I suppose the saltwater of the ocean is made fresh by leaching through the sand.”

Actually, water from these little wells was not salt water made fresh but rain water trapped in the sand. Within a few days, organic matter migrated from the sand and into the barrels, turning the water into putrid soup as it was warmed by the sun. If new wells were not dug every few days, the water became unpalatable. Fortunately, a new source of palatable water could be easily obtained by digging another well close by.

Cooking rations was another priority, and the soldiers busied themselves setting up kitchens as soon as they arrived. In March 1862, Assistant Surgeon Evans wrote home to report on their standard bill of fare.

“For living we have bread[,] hard & soft, beef, hard & salt, bacon, hard, salt & fragrant, beans good when well cooked, rice for low diet, syrup, sugar, sand, sand & sand. You will see that by ingenious combinations of these, especially the last three, we are able to have a great variety. We get plenty of good water by sinking a barrel three feet into the sand. This steeped together with mahogany sawdust makes coffee of excellent quality & with colored raspberry leaves — tea of a most delicate flavor. If we wish for luncheon — there is plenty of sand. When we sweeten our coffee with a tablespoonful of sugar, there remains a sediment of a teaspoonful of sand.”

As would be expected, the Union soldiers on Ship Island attempted to supplement their standard army rations in various ways. During the summer months, blackberries grew in profusion on the island, which were a welcome addition to the spartan army diet.

Enterprising Southerners along the Mississippi Gulf Coast also helped supplement the men’s meager rations when they crossed the sound in small boats to sell fresh vegetables. That lonely cow some of the first soldiers saw on their inspection of the island was killed and cooked, and

hens and turkeys that were brought over by refugees also fell victim to the butcher's knife. Some of the more industrious soldiers even made trips to Cat Island to dig oysters.

As the weeks passed, Ship Island began to take on the appearance of an active military post. Sergeant Charles Freeman Reed of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry Battalion recorded this entry in his diary on May 5, 1862.

“Ship Island looks very different now from what it did when we first came here. Buildings have been erected in quick succession. Some for machine shops with steam power. And other buildings are about every branch of business. Rail roads for little hand cars are running here and there and everything shows the works of industry and power.”

The Union soldiers soon settled into a daily routine. Although Ship Island saw no combat during the Civil War, death was no stranger to the soldiers stationed there. Initially, the island had been “considered the most healthy place on the Coast & would be good place to establish a general hospital.” But the troops who stayed behind after the occupation of New Orleans did not fare well as the hot summer weather set in.

An officer with the Sanitary Commission who sailed with the expedition wrote a scathing report of the health conditions on the island and ended it with a remarkably understated conclusion.

“The wretched condition of Ship Island, a barren, desolate sand-spit, left free for the most part to alligators and such reptiles as abounding the swamps and lagoons of that region; the painful and variable climate; the sufferings of the men from diarrhea, influenza, and rheumatism; the badness of the food, which was of salt meat (no fresh meat being issued); the badness of the water, and the wretched system of cooking, made the presence of the Sanitary Commission not undesirable.”

Given the rough living conditions, unhealthy climate, and boring routine, it is not surprising that most of the Union soldiers stationed on Ship Island counted the days until they would be able to leave. Except for those unfortunate black soldiers in the 74th USCT, most of the Union soldiers who spent time on Ship Island eventually got a chance to get away.

Life on Ship Island for soldiers during the Civil War was a boring, uncomfortable, and often a deadly experience. Plaques mounted at the entrance to Fort Massachusetts bear mute testimony to that fact today. These plaques bear the names of 153 Confederate prisoners of war who died and were buried on Ship Island.

However, there are no plaques with the names of the 232 Union soldiers who died and were buried there as well. They were mainly from New England — Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, with a few boys from New York, Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin mixed in. A dozen or more black men from Louisiana who served for almost three years on that desolate stretch of sand complete the list.

Shortly after the war, Lieutenant George B. Oldham visited the army cemetery and found it in very poor condition “owing principally to the nature of the ground, which is composed entirely of sand.” Burials had been made haphazardly without any particular order or arrangement. Most of the graves no longer had headboards. Initially, it was thought that the bodies should be re-interred on Ship Island and protected. But it was obvious that the physical characteristics of the island made it unsuitable for a national cemetery.

As a result, 228 bodies were exhumed in December 1867 and sent to the mainland to be re-interred in the Chalmette National Cemetery outside of New Orleans. Because of the poor condition of the records and loss of headboards, only 60 of the 228 exhumations could be identified. The remainder were marked “unknown” when they were re-interred at Chalmette.

It might be thought that the occupation of Ship Island by Union soldiers came to an end with the massive re-interment. But that was not so, for twenty years later, in 1885, a correspondent for the New Orleans Times-Democrat visited Ship Island and discovered a number of rough coffins inside the remains of a picket fence about one mile east of the lighthouse. “Why their bodies were not removed to the National Cemetery at New Orleans, when it was established,” he wrote, “I know not.”

The newspaper article resulted in a rash of angry letters, and the quartermaster sergeant in Washington directed the superintendent of the Chalmette National Cemetery to go to Ship Island and make an inspection. The superintendent did as he was told and found the neglected grave site. After receiving the superintendent’s report, the quartermaster general ordered the bones collected, boxed, and removed to Chalmette for reburial. It was only then that it can be said that the Union occupation of Ship Island finally came to an end.

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*This article is condensed from Hollandsworth’s “What a Hell of a Place to Send 2000 Men 3000 Miles: Union Soldiers on Ship Island During the Civil War,” which originally appeared in the Summer 2000 edition of *The Journal of Mississippi History*, Volume LXII, No.2*

Posted January 2006

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Go to NASA Earth Observatory for satellite images of East and West Ship Island before and after Hurricane Katrina.

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