

A tribute to

Burrel Taylor Fortenberry

on the 150th anniversary of the

Siege of Port Hudson

Burrel Taylor Fortenberry (sometimes spelled Burrell) was the grandfather of Ferman Esco Fortenberry whose Navy career was discussed in the previous post. In the 1860 census shown below, Burrel already has 5 sons. Ferman's father, William Jackson, was his second son. By the time Burrel entered Confederate service in August of 1862, he was leaving a family consisting of a wife and five sons between the ages of 10 and 3 years old. When the 1870 census was taken, Henry was not listed. He probably died some time during the war. Though she was in her early 30's when he died, Burrel's wife, Eliza Jane Ellzey, never remarried. She lived another 36 years without Burrel.

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SCHEDULE 1.—Free Inhabitants in _____ in the County of Pike
of Miss enumerated by me, on the 27 day of July 1860. Wm. Nicholson
Post Office Holmesville.

1	2	3	DESCRIPTION.			7	VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED.		10	11	12	13
			4	5	6		8	9				
Dwelling-houses— numbered in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	Age.	Sex.	White, black, or mulatto.	Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.	Place of Birth, Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year.	Attended School within the year.	Persons over 20 yrs of age who cannot read & write.

33	1092	1192	Burrel T Fortenberry	39	M		Farmer ✓	450	1700			
31			Eliza J "	24	F							
35			John A "	8	M							
36			William J "	7	M							
37			Henry F "	6	"							
38			Benjamin C "	4	"							
39			Linda S "	1	M							

(Confederate.)

F | **2** (Quinn's)
(State Troops.) | **Miss.**

B. J. Fortenbery

Priv., Co. *H*, 2 Reg't Miss. State Troops.

Appears on
Company Muster Roll*
of the organization named above,
for *Aug. 1 to Sept. 1*, 1862.

Enlisted:
When *Aug. 9*, 1862.
Where *Holmesville*
By whom *Lieut. Col. Hoover*

Period _____
Last paid: _____
By whom _____
To what time _____, 1862

Present or absent *Present*

Remarks: _____

* From copy (made in the M. S. Office, War Department, in March, 1905,) of an original record borrowed from the Director of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.—M. S. 438010.

Book mark: _____

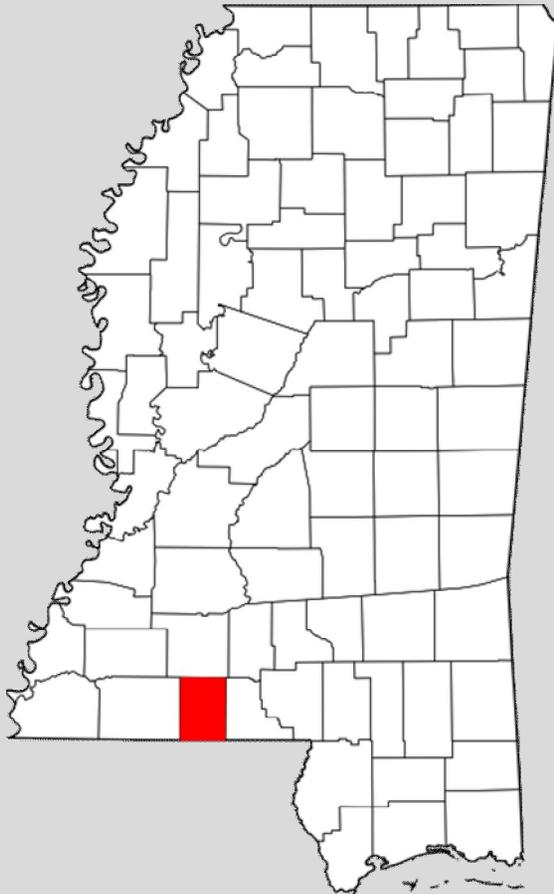
M. Leonard

(642) Copyist.

Burrel joined Quinn's Mississippi State Troops on August 9, 1862 at Holmesville, Mississippi (which was the original county seat of Pike County). He was enrolled in Company H as a private. The men in this company came mostly from Pike County. Notice that his last name is spelled Fortenbery instead of Fortenberry. The state troops were organized similar to the militia during the Revolutionary War and were generally composed of older men with families who consequently did not want to leave the state. Research indicates that he was born in the latter part of 1820 so he probably turned 42 soon after his enlistment.

Why did he feel compelled to enlist?

Though most of the history of the Civil War has concentrated on the "eastern theater" of the war, a great deal was happening along the Mississippi River. As will be shown in the following description of events occurring in the area, Burrel, his relatives, and friends wanted to protect their families and homes.



Pike County, Mississippi is shown here in red.

It is not known what Burrel Fortenberry did during the four months with the Mississippi State Troops. On December 20, 1862, Burrel was transferred from the state militia to Confederate service. Because Mississippi State Troops were not allowed, by law, to fight outside the state, the Confederate government would transfer men from state service to Confederate as needed. The Fortenberrys lived in the area of Pike County just above the state line.

(Confederate.)
F | **2** (Quinn's) | **Miss.**
(State Troops.)

B. J. Fortenberry
Priv., Co. *H*, 2 Reg't Miss. State Troops.

Appears on
Company Muster Roll
of the organization named above,
for *Sept. 23, 1862 to Feb. 25, 1863*, 1863.

Enlisted:
When *Aug. 9*, 186 .
Where *Holmesville*
By whom *Col. Statham*
Period *12 Months*

Last paid:
By whom *Maj. Walton*
To what time *Sept. 4*, 186 .

Present or absent _____
Remarks: *Transferred to Confed-
erate service Dec. 20, 1862.*

Book mark: _____

M. Leonard
(642) Copyist.

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Fortenberry B. F.

Co. K, 3 (Wingfield's)
Louisiana Cavalry.
(Confederate.)

Private Private

CARD NUMBERS.

1	46614213	20
2	711461	21
3		22
4		23
5		24
6		25
7		26
8		27
9		28
10		29
11		30
12		31
13		32
14		33
15		34
16		35
17		36
18		37
19		38

Number of medical cards herein.....

Number of personal papers herein.....

BOOK MARK:

See also

In Confederate service, Burrel was a private in Company K, Wingfield's 3rd Louisiana Cavalry. Notice that he had been moved from a Mississippi unit to a Louisiana unit.

On several of the official documents, Burrel's name appears as B. F. instead of B. T. Fortenberry. Evidently, someone inadvertently crossed their T and never asked the soldier if it was wrong. We do know that he was the only Fortenberry in Company K.

Over time, the unit had several name changes. The same group of soldiers appear in the Confederate records as:

- Wingfield's Regiment
- Wingfield's Cavalry
- 3rd Louisiana Cavalry
- 9th Louisiana Cavalry Battalion
- 9th Louisiana Partisan Rangers

Within this writing, Wingfield's Cavalry will be used unless a quote refers to them differently.

Since the establishment of the internet, I have frequently done random searches for interesting information related to events in the lives of family members. In 2001, I came across a large PDF file called “The Third Louisiana Cavalry of the Confederate States Army.” It was listed as “excerpted and condensed from a book in progress” by Neale S. Brown called Wingfield’s Rangers. It was very, very detailed and included rosters of all the companies. When I began my current research, I expected to be able to find the book that was in progress 12 years ago. Imagine my surprise to discover that there had not been a book published, and the information I had originally copied was no longer online. In fact, no records can be found to equal the detailed work done by Mr. Brown. So a special thanks goes to someone named Neale Brown for giving us a more detailed understanding of Burrell’s movements during his short time fighting to protect his family and home.

The original mission for the establishment of Wingfield’s Partisan Rangers was to scout the Union forces in Louisiana, harass them, and raid their supply lines. This unit was formed by Captain James H. Wingfield of St. Helena Parish, Louisiana. As can be seen from the Louisiana map below, he was from the area just below Pike County, Mississippi. Many of his troops came from the same areas of Mississippi and Louisiana.



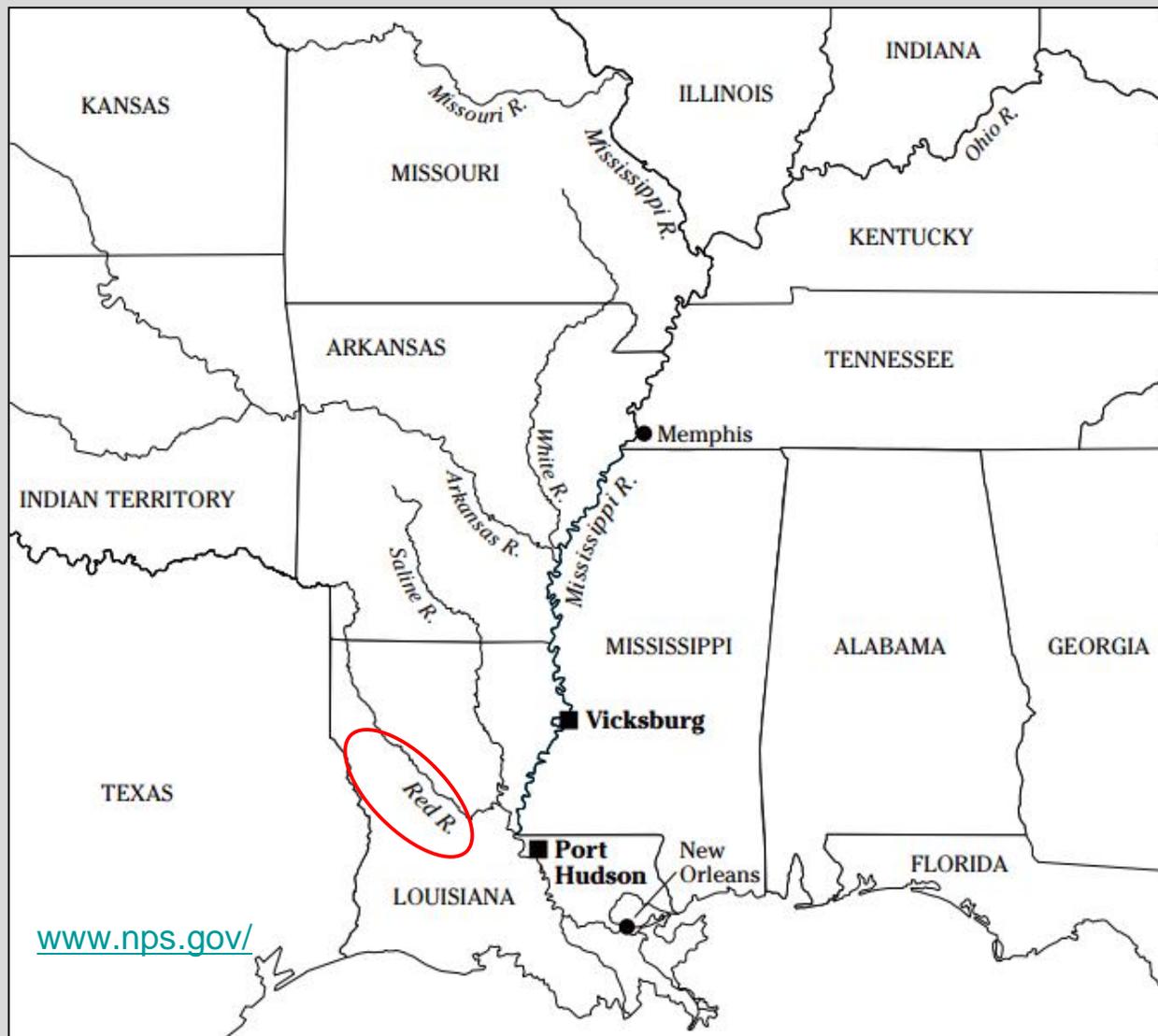
The Regiment was formed in May of 1862 under the authority of the Louisiana governor as a Partisan Ranger unit. They were essentially using guerrilla warfare techniques. Partisan ranger groups were to receive additional pay for supplies and material captured from the Union Army. The outfitting of the unit was also out of the ordinary as the captain was expected to supply weapons, uniforms, and horses. The picture on the right shows the typical uniform of a C.S.A. cavalryman, though it is doubtful Wingfield had the funds to outfit everyone. They most likely wore anything that would provide camouflage for their raids.



Both the Union and Confederate military leaders considered the Mississippi River as a vital possession. The Union leaders felt that by controlling the river, they would end the war sooner by stopping supply lines. And of course, the Confederate forces needed to keep the supply lines open on the Red River since many important military supplies (men, munitions, food, salt) came from Texas and Mexico.

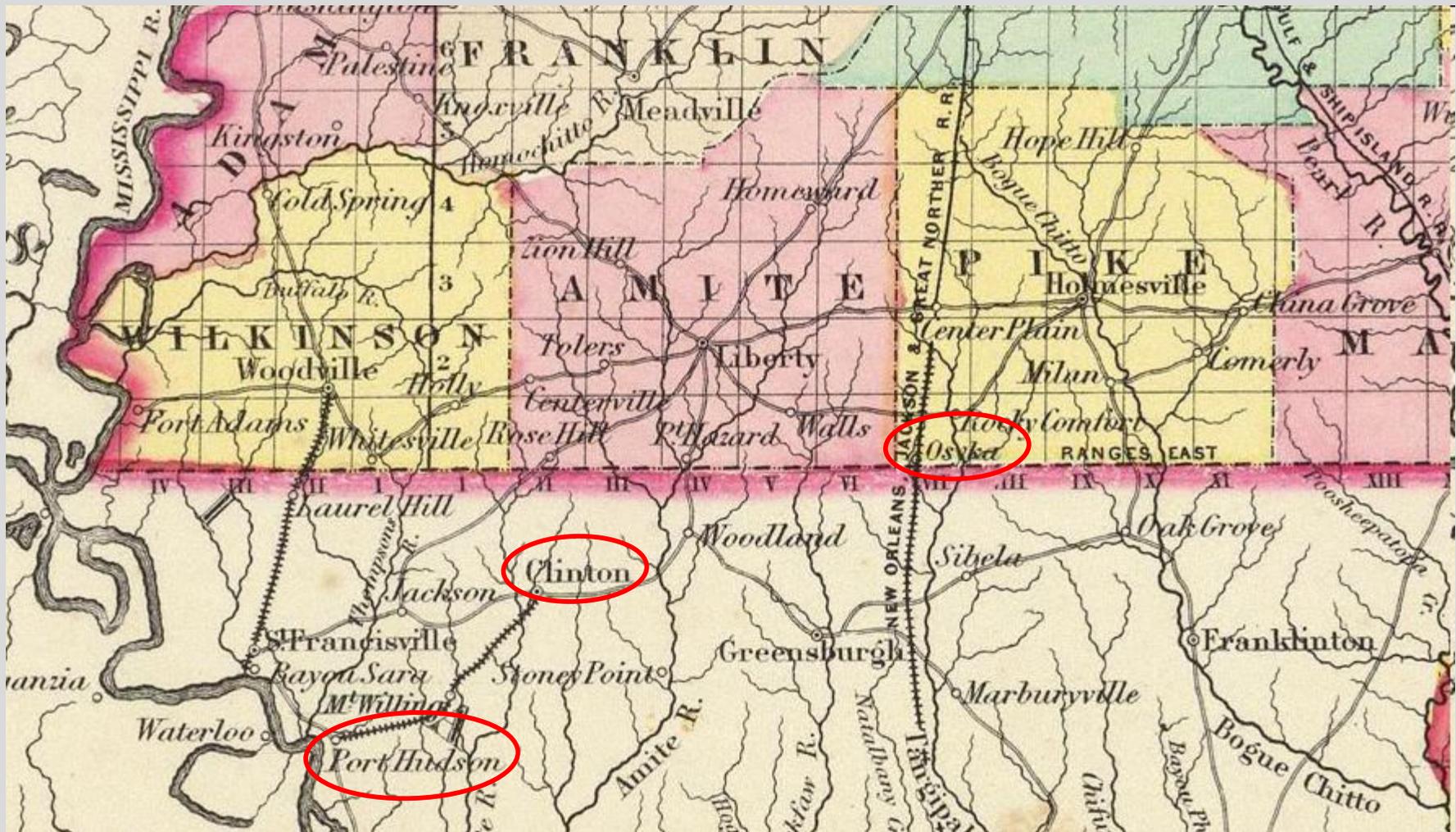
New Orleans had been taken by the Union forces on April 28, 1862 and Baton Rouge on August 5, 1862. Something had to be done by the Confederacy to keep parts of the Mississippi River open for supplies.

The Red River entered the Mississippi between the villages of Vicksburg and Port Hudson. If garrisons were placed in both locations and in Confederate possession, supplies would continue to flow east. In March of 1862, plans to fortify Port Hudson began.



Port Hudson also received supplies from the east. A railroad ran between Port Hudson and Clinton, Louisiana for 21 miles but did not connect to other important railway centers. Consequently, to get goods into Port Hudson they generally traveled by railway to Osyka, Mississippi, then by road 38 miles to Clinton, Louisiana, and finally back on rail to Port Hudson. This made getting supplies to Port Hudson difficult and time consuming. Osyka became a target for Union raids since supplies were stored locally until ready to be sent to Port Hudson. See the section of an old map below.

Osyka, Mississippi is located in southern Pike County on the state line and is where many Fortenberrys lived and where Adrian Fortenberry was born.



Port Hudson was actually a small village sitting on an 80 foot bluff in a sharp curve of the Mississippi River 25 miles upriver from the capital at Baton Rouge. The Confederacy chose this site because of its location relative to Vicksburg and Baton Rouge as well as its defensible position.



The above two pictures of the high banks along the river are taken from two opposite directions. In the image on the left, the tents are visible on the top of the cliff.

Library of Congress images

Neale S. Brown wrote the following that covers the entire time Burrel was with Wingfield's Louisiana Cavalry:

“January 6, 1863 – July 9th, 1863: Detailed to the defense of Port Hudson. By order of the Secretary of War, Companies I and K are recalled to Confederate Service and reassigned to the 9th Battalion. Though retaining the designation of the 9th Louisiana Battalion, Partisan Rangers, the unit had, again, reached full regimental strength with 10 companies and regular field and staff.”

Because Burrel belonged to Company K which is mentioned above, he would have been with the men “reassigned.” Though he was transferred to Confederate Service on December 21, 1862, he appears on the company muster roll beginning on January 9, 1863.

Many of the names in his company are Pike County Mississippi names such as Alford, Brumfield, Magee, Varnado, and Schilling. The hard to read message at the bottom of the document on the right says “Name appears on column as Rec'd Payment of .”

In the same regiment, but in different companies, was his nephew, W.F. Fortenberry, son of Burrel's older brother, Gasua, (Company C) and his brother, William J. Fortenberry (Company A).

(Confederate.)

F | **3 Cav.** | **La.**
(Wingfield's.)

B. F. Fortenberry
Pr, Co. *K*, { 9 Battalion Louisiana
Partisan Rangers.*

Appears on
Company Muster Roll
of the organization named above,
for *not stated*, 186 .

Enlisted:
When *Jan. 9*, 186 *3*.
Where _____
By whom _____
Period _____

Last paid:
By whom _____
To what time _____, 186 .

Pay for horse, 40 cts. per day \$ _____ 100
Present or absent *not stated*

Remarks:

*Name appears in column as
Rec'd Payment of*

* This battalion subsequently became the 3d Regiment
Louisiana Cavalry (Wingfield's).

Book mark: _____

B. J. Burrel
(642) Copyist.

Composition of Wingfield's Cavalry

Interesting composition of Wingfield's Cavalry compiled from the research by Neale S. Brown:

Company A - 18 soldiers with surnames related to the Fortenberrys

Includes: W. J. Fortenberry – Burrel's brother

Company B - No pertinent family names

Company C - 41 soldiers with surnames related to the Fortenberrys

Includes: William F. Fortenberry, son of Gasua Fortenberry

Company D - No pertinent family names

Company E - called the Beaver Creek Rifles and formed from Wingfield's original St. Helena

Parish, Louisiana group. No pertinent family names

Company F - called the East Baton Rouge Louisiana Guard. No pertinent family names

Company G - No pertinent family names

Company H - No pertinent family names

Company I - No pertinent family names

Company K - called the Pumpkin Studs – 21 men with surnames related to the Fortenberrys

Includes: Burrel Fortenberry.

Notes:

- 1. "Pertinent names" would include obvious Pike County names such as Brumfield, Simmons, Fortenberry, Stogner, Alford, Magee, Thigpen, Strickland, Pigott, Schilling, Conerly, and Varnado.**
- 2. No reason can be found as to why Burrel's company was called the Pumpkin Studs!**
- 3. There was not a Company J.**

In January, 1863, the Confederacy appointed Major General Franklin Gardner as commander of the military district that included East Louisiana and Mississippi. Born in New York, Gardner's sister married Alexandre Mouton, a wealthy Louisiana widower. Later, Gardner married Mouton's daughter. His allegiance changed, and thereafter he considered himself a Louisianan. He was charged by the Confederate government with organizing and commanding the defenses at Port Hudson. He immediately ordered Wingfield's Louisiana Cavalry to assist with this task. The troops were assigned to help with construction of the defenses, ride as couriers, serve picket duty, and guard the Confederate signal stations on the west bank of the Mississippi River. (See the official record below from Gardner.)



**Franklin Gardner -
Commanding officer
of Port Hudson**
Library of Congress

**A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and
Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. XV, p. 807:**

**“To: Maj. J. R. Waddy, Assistant Adjutant-General, Jackson, Miss.
From: Frank. Gardner, Major-General,
Headquarters, Port Hudson, La.,
February 6, 1863**

**Major: I have the honor to report that the troops of this command
have been consolidated into the following organizations:**

. . . .

**Lieutenant-Colonel Wingfield, having reorganized his battalion of
Partisan Rangers, is performing all the essential cavalry duty
within the fortifications, and also has two companies upon the
west side of the Mississippi River as a protection to the Signal
Corps. The infantry and artillery garrisons that were at Camp
Moore and Clinton have been withdrawn to this point and cavalry
substituted in their places.**

. . . .

**I inclose herewith a roster of this command, and it will be seen
that I have accounted for all of the troops except the two cavalry
companies at Ponchatoula.**

I am, sir, very respectfully, etc.”

Their physical environment was also pretty bad! Poor housing was the standard. Below is a photo from the Library of Congress showing some of the Confederate garrison housing.

A lieutenant Crockett from Tennessee stationed at Port Hudson during this time said “We are living in a swamp and drinking water out of a mud hole.” Soldiers suffered from typhoid fever, scurvy, malaria, chills, jaundice, smallpox, and constant diarrhea.

The housing shown below probably belonged to the original residents of Port Hudson or the officers since several diaries and memoirs say the soldiers stayed in tents until they were “shot to pieces.”



Some of the better housing within the fort - Library of Congress

Though Wingfield's Cavalry fought in quite a few skirmishes and battles before Burrell joined the group, those will not be covered here. From January until mid March of 1863, the rangers were involved with different tasks around Port Hudson as mentioned before: i.e. courier duty, picket duty, and tracking Union forces.

First Battle of Port Hudson March 14, 1863

Rear Admiral David Farragut, in charge of naval operations along the lower Mississippi, attempted to make a late night run of his fleet past Port Hudson to attack the garrison and break the tie between Port Hudson and Vicksburg. Because the Confederates had sentries posted, they were aware of the ships' movement and were ready for gunners to open fire. Because of the narrow passage, height of the battlements, and sharp turn of the river, they disabled five out of seven Union gunboats and warships. The only problem was that the two ships that made it past were able to block the mouth of the Red River. This effectively closed the western supply line into Port Hudson.



Credit: Artist, J.R. Hamilton. Publisher, Harper's *Weekly*.



Union commander - Nathaniel Banks - 1861
Library of Congress image

A couple of days before the attack by water, Wingfield's Cavalry, along with other groups, was sent to delay the advance of Major General Nathaniel Banks with the 19th US Army Corps. Banks was to support the fleet by engaging the garrison at Port Hudson from the east by land with the intent of dividing the attention of the garrison. Banks left Baton Rouge on March 13 with 12,000 men. The Confederates intercepted his group about a half mile from a place called Plains Store which was only a mile or two from Port Hudson. Though the Federal forces outnumbered the Confederates 30 to 1, Banks retreated. The Confederate forces captured livestock and 15 wagonloads of goods which they took back to Port Hudson. Banks and his troops plundered the homes along the way back to Baton Rouge and were caught in a heavy rainstorm.

A newspaper article from the *Memphis Appeal* was found discussing what Burrell's group was doing on March 14.

THE MEMPHIS DAILY APPEAL.

BY McLANAHAN & DILL.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1863.

VOL. XIV, NO. 59

Movements of the Infantry During the Late Attack on Port Hudson.

[From the Port Hudson Courier.]

The 9th Louisiana battalion of partisan rangers, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Wingfield, were ordered to the front on Saturday evening, the 14th inst., for the purpose of reconnoitering the enemy, and reported at Plain's Store, four miles east of this place. On approaching, they found the advance guard of the enemy about half a mile south of them, on the Baton Rouge and Bayou Sara road, which extended west to what is called the Springfield road on the river.

Here the skirmishing first commenced, and continued until the darkness of the night put a stop to further operations. It was resumed, however at five o'clock, A. M., on Sunday, when the enemy contrived to hold their own for some two hours, when they began to fall back.

Col. Wingfield's men kept rapidly advancing upon them till they had fallen back to the Plains, where the cavalry were drawn up in line of battle, supported by some two thousand infantry. Here severe and rapid firing commenced, but within twenty minutes the Yankees gave way, and our forces continued in pursuit until they were prevented from further advancing by the heavy rains of Sunday night. Our troops held the ground, however, over which they had driven the Yankees.

The stampede of their advance guard, both cavalry and infantry, at the Plains, had such an effect on the enemy, that notwithstanding the severe rain, they continued their march for twelve miles farther, until they were enabled to take refuge behind their breastworks at Baton Rouge.

On Monday, at daylight, our cavalry again advanced, and found the enemy quietly reposing inside their breastworks, having left behind them, in the woods and fields, any quantity of arms and ammunition, fine swords, pistols, guns, blankets, clothing and provisions—all of which were well taken care of by their pursuers.

Private Irwin, of company K, attached to Col. Wingfield's command, was found at the church, his leg having just been amputated by a Federal surgeon. The fact is mentioned as one of the few instances on record where an act of humanity has been practised by the enemy during this war.

Out of Col. Wingfield's command, one man was severely wounded, three were wounded slightly, and six were missing.

The enemy buried one of their lieutenants and six of their men at the church and sent in nine ambulances and two wagons to carry off the wounded from the field.

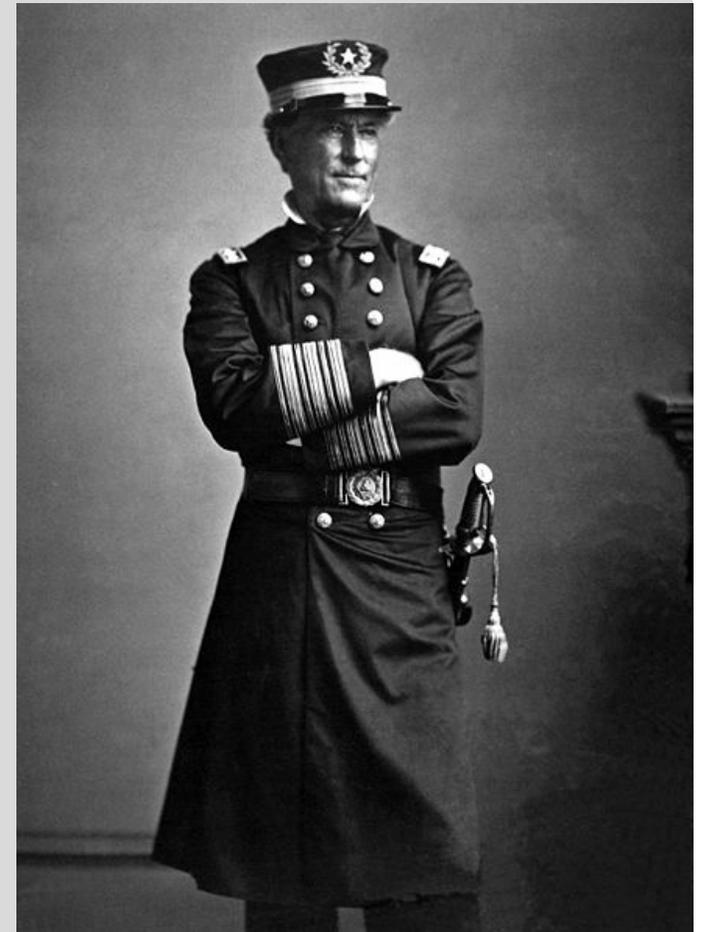
The article title incorrectly names the battalion as infantry. They were cavalry. Private Irwin mentioned above was in the same company as Burrell.



There are some interesting facts about these events. Farragut, the Union commander of the naval forces, was said to have been aggressive and assertive. The predetermined plan was for the attack to commence at 8:00 am on March 15. Farragut would begin to move up the river at the same time as Banks's ground forces would attack. Farragut decided on his own to begin the assault at 9:00 pm on March 14. Of course, Banks would not yet be in place. Had things gone as originally planned, Port Hudson may have been forced to surrender long before the lengthy siege would have occurred.

**Two images of David Farragut
Library of Congress**

It is interesting to note that Farragut was born in Tennessee and even had relatives in Louisiana but fought for the Union.





Because the Federal ships were now blockading the Red River, all supplies would now have to come over rail to Osyka, Mississippi, by road to Clinton, Louisiana and back to rail to Port Hudson. It was the only route left and now of paramount importance to keep open. Imagine the effort involved in constantly taking the same items and transferring them from one form of transportation to another just to get it across the 38 miles to another railroad.

This meant that protecting the supply line would be critical to Port Hudson. Wingfield's Cavalry would be heavily involved in attempting to keep this final route open.

Map: Library of Congress

While Burrel was serving in the cavalry, his 56 year old brother, Calvin Kennington Fortenberry, was also helping Port Hudson. The record to the right was located on a military website (Fold3.com) in a section listed as "Confederate citizen files." From reading the document, it is obvious that Calvin was hauling goods over the road between the railroad terminals at Osyka and Clinton. The original image was blurry.

No. 22.

The Confederate States of America,

To *Calvin Fortenberry* Dr.

		Dollars.	Cts.
<p>1863 April 8</p>	<p>For Service of one wagon & driver hauling stores from Osyka Miss to Clinton La from March 19 to April 8 20 days @ 7⁵⁰ -</p>	150.	

I CERTIFY that the above account is correct and just; that the services were rendered as stated; and that they were necessary for the public service.

A. C. Lanalle Capt. Quartermaster.

RECEIVED at *Osyka Miss* the *27* day of *April* 1863

of *Capt. A. C. Lanalle* Quartermaster, C. States Army,

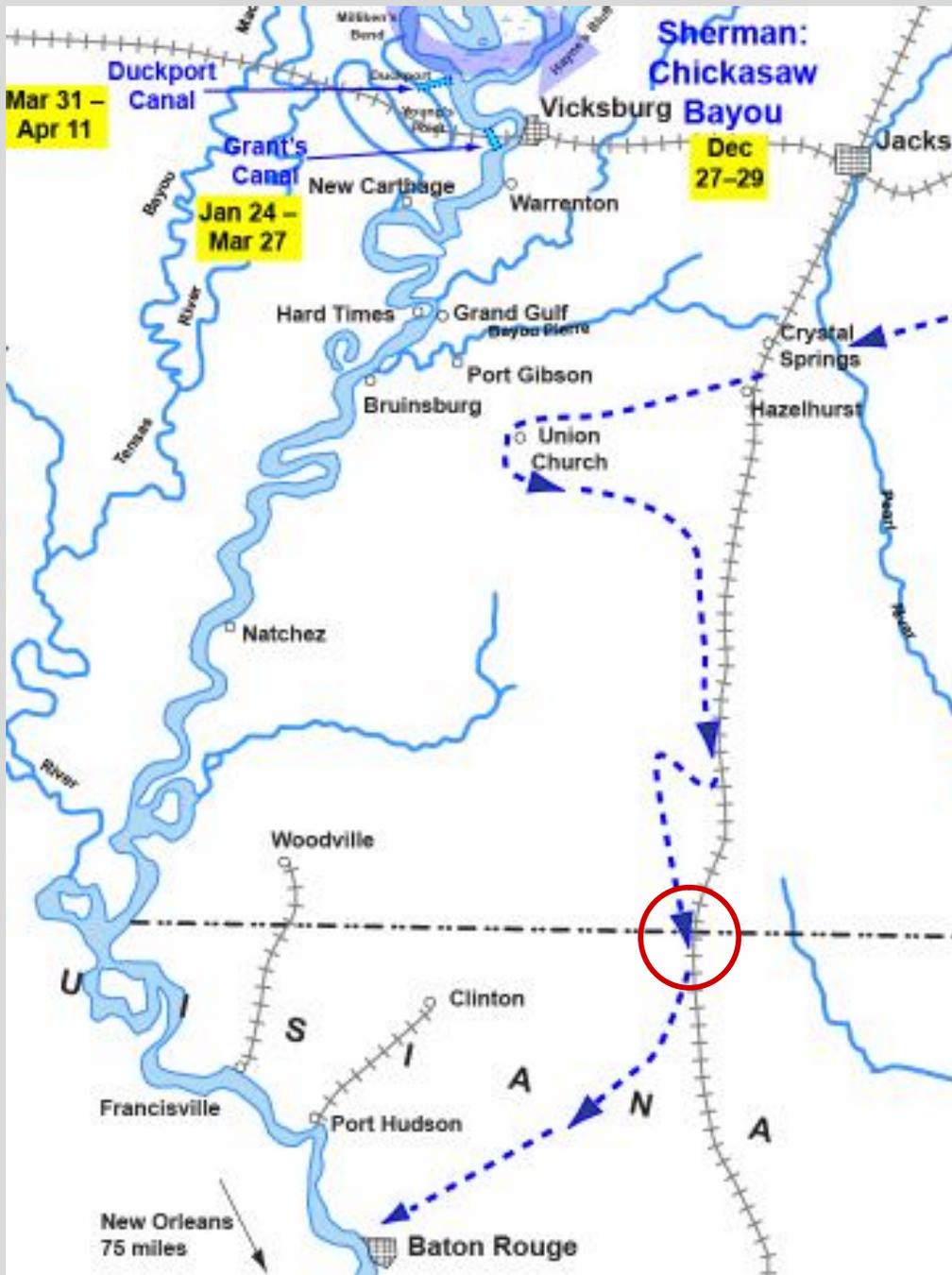
the sum of *one hundred & fifty* Dollars

and _____ Cents, in full of the above account. *C. K. Fortenberry*

[Signed in Duplicate.]

QMD

The first column gives a date of April 8, 1863. For services of one wagon and driver hauling stores from Osyka Miss to Clinton La from March 19 to April 8 20 days @ 7⁵⁰ - He received \$150 (surely Confederate money). He was paid at Osyka, Mississippi the 27th day of April, 1863 and his signature is visible. One wonders if Calvin crossed paths with many of the Union foragers in the area!



On April 28, 1863, 150 men from Wingfield's Cavalry led by James DeBaun, (Wingfield's second in command) were sent to intercept Union troops being moved from Tennessee to Baton Rouge. The Union commander was Benjamin Grierson, a former music teacher. He was sent to Louisiana to draw troops away from Vicksburg and Port Hudson. His route is shown as a blue, dotted line with arrows on the map. The location of Osyka, Mississippi is where the blue arrow is located within the red circle near the state line.



Benjamin Grierson – Library of Congress

Battle of Wall's Bridge



On the morning of May 1, a few of DeBaun's men were fired upon as they reached Wall's Bridge over the Tickfaw River just east of Gillsburg, Mississippi and eight miles west of Osyka. He quickly put his men in position to ambush the Union forces. Meanwhile, some of his men in place as pickets at the bridge began questioning a few men in Confederate uniforms coming across the bridge. It turned out that they were Union scouts dressed in stolen Confederate uniforms.

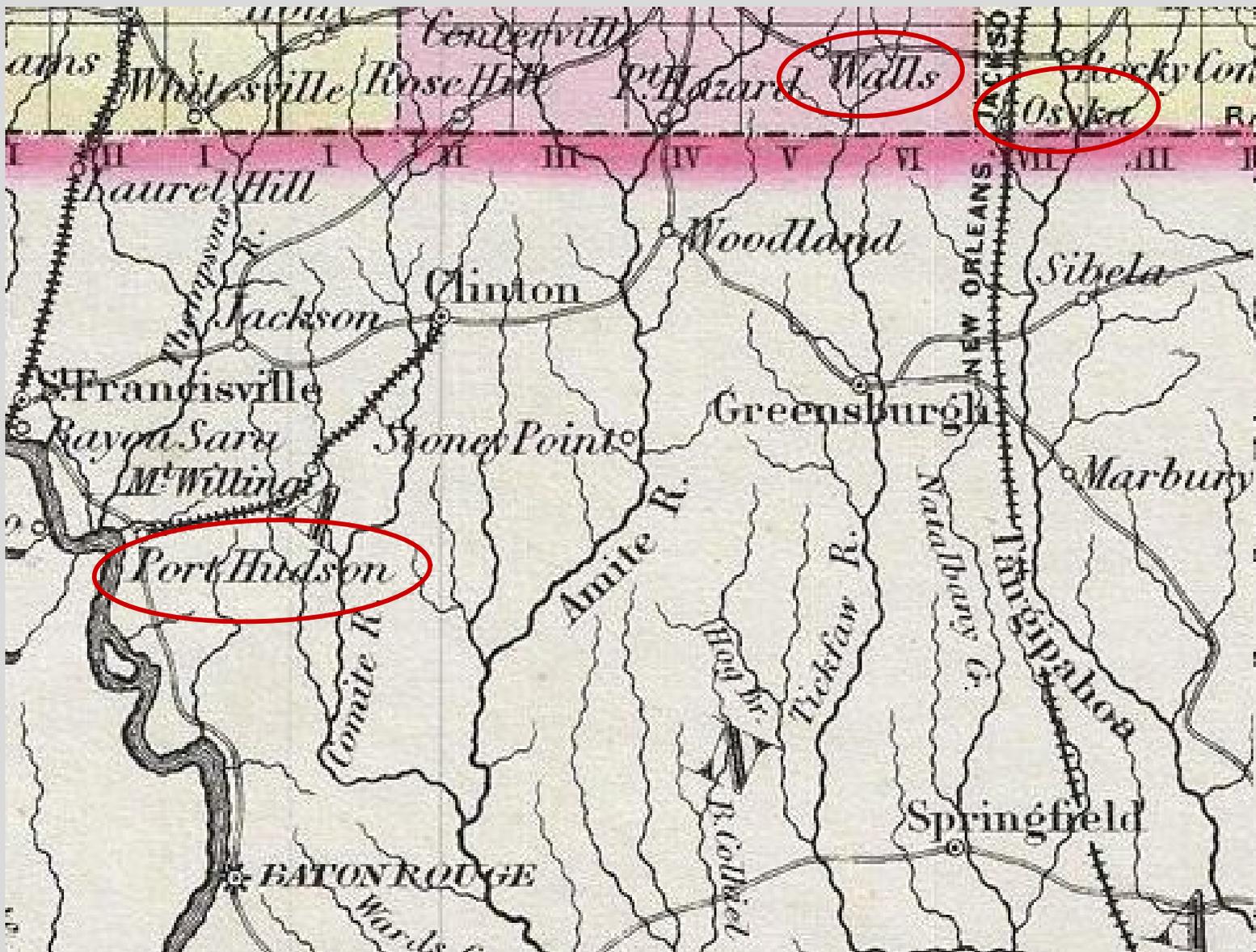
The commander of the Union forces realized upon reaching the bridge that if their forward progress was impeded they might lose the opportunity to get across the river. He therefore chose to charge across the bridge. DeBaun's men fired from their ambush positions. As soon as the Union brought more men and two pieces of artillery forward, the Confederate rangers disengaged and made their way to Osyka.



On May 2 Wingfield's Cavalry engaged the advancing Union 19th Army Corps at the Comite River, Louisiana. No information about this encounter has been found. The Comite River is labeled on this segment of an old map of the area.

On May 7 Wingfield's Cavalry was in the area around Livingston, Louisiana which is due south of Osyka, Mississippi and east of Baton Rouge once again trying to prevent the loss of the supply link to Osyka.

Between May 7 and 21, research does not indicate specific movements for Wingfield's Cavalry. The decision was made by the Union to encircle Port Hudson to force the Confederate troops into a quick surrender. Union troops were being moved into place during that last half of May.



This map shows the general area where Wingfield's Cavalry spent their time. Livingston is the name of a town *and* a Parish in Louisiana located on this map between the Amite River and the Tickfaw River northeast of Baton Rouge. The small town of Walls where the battle of Walls Bridge occurred can be seen west of Osyka.

As of May 15, 1863, Wingfield's Cavalry was temporarily placed under the command of Col. William R. Miles. Reminder: 9th Louisiana Battalion Partisan Rangers was another name for Wingfield's Cavalry.

SPECIAL ORDERS, }
No. 133. }

HEADQUARTERS,
Port Hudson, May 15, 1863.

I. Col. A. R. Witt, with his regiment (the Tenth Arkansas), is assigned to duty with Beall's brigade, and will report to Brig. Gen. W. N. R. Beall with as little delay as practicable.

II. Roberts' battery and the Ninth Louisiana Battalion Partisan Rangers are temporarily assigned to Colonel Miles' lines, on the breastworks, and will report to Col. W. R. Miles for duty with as little delay as practicable.

III. Col. W. R. Miles' lines on the breastworks will commence on the right at the river and extend to the left. He will scatter his troops as far to the left as practicable.

IV. The Watson Battery is hereby assigned to duty with Beall's brigade, and will report to Brig. Gen. W. N. R. Beall with as little delay as possible.

* * * * *

VII. Col. Frank P. Powers, Fourteenth Arkansas Volunteers, will proceed to Olive Branch and report to Col. John L. Logan, who will assign him to duty as commander of the cavalry at that place, under his own command, as commanding the outpost.

By command of Maj. Gen. Frank. Gardner:

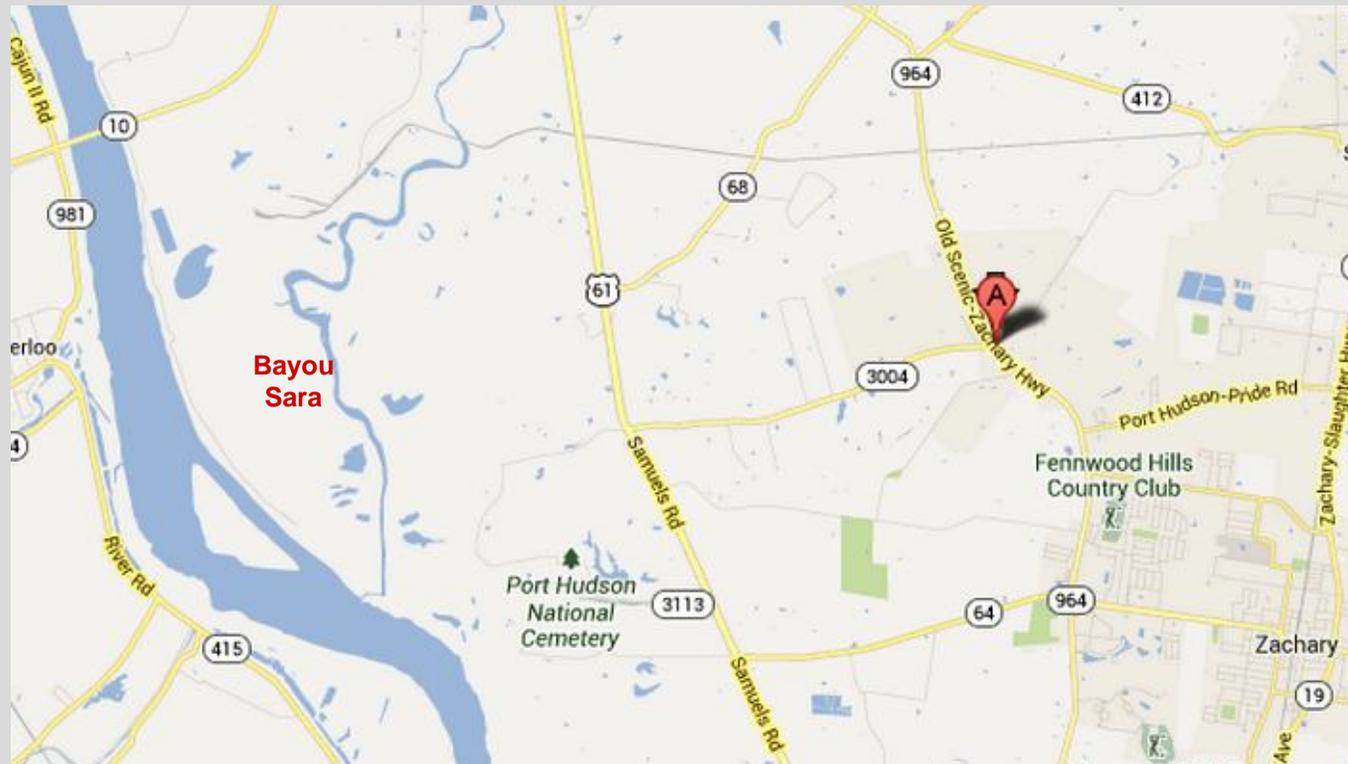
[T. FRIEND WILLSON,]
Assistant Adjutant-General.

The Battle of Plains Store

National Park Service quote:

“Early in the morning of May 21, 1863, Maj. Gen. Christopher C. Augur’s Union division advanced from Baton Rouge toward the intersection of Plains Store and Bayou Sara roads on the way to secure a landing, on the river, for Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks. Col. Benjamin H. Grierson’s cavalry, in the lead, encountered Confederate forces under the command of Col. Frank P. Powers and skirmishing ensued. As the morning progressed the Union infantry approached the crossroads and came under fire, bringing on a general engagement. At noon, Col. W. R. Miles set out for Plains Store with Confederate reinforcements. By the time Miles arrived in the area late in the day, the fighting had ceased, the Rebel forces had retreated, and the Federals were preparing camps for the night. Miles attacked the Union forces and, at first, drove them, but they regrouped and counterattacked. Miles could not stand against the overwhelming Union force and retired into the Port Hudson perimeter. The battle ended, and the last Confederate escape route from Port Hudson was closed.”

Point A is the location of the Battle of Plains Store.



Notes about this battle:

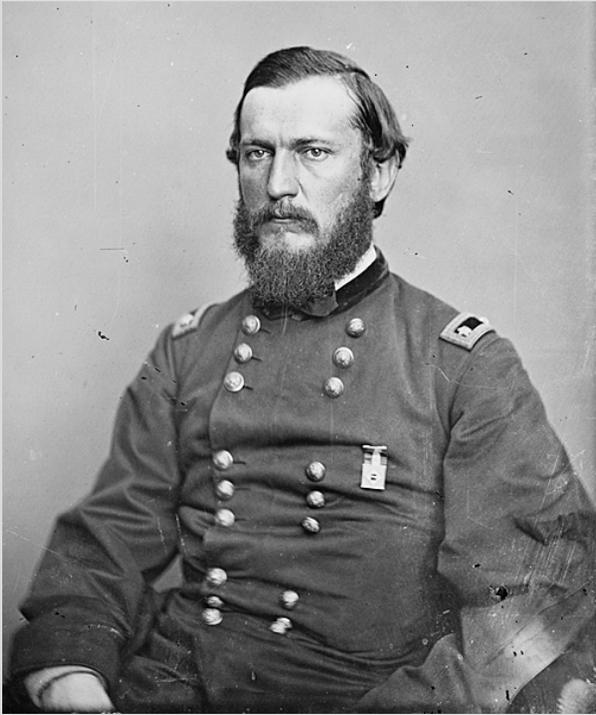
- 1. Wingfield's Cavalry had been assigned to Miles and arrived at the location about noon.**
- 2. This was Wingfield's Cavalry's second encounter with Grierson's troops, the first one being the skirmish at Wall's Bridge the morning of May 1, 1863.**
- 3. Lack of ammunition was given for the withdrawal of Confederate troops.**
- 4. This encounter was so close to Port Hudson, that there was little area left not under the total control of the Union forces. Therefore, once a retreat from this engagement occurred, the Confederates (except for small cavalry groups) were now locked within Port Hudson.**
- 5. This was the last "battle" before the siege began.**
- 6. ALL supply lines were now blocked.**



**Historical Marker for the Battle of the Plains Store
City: Zachary, Louisiana**

Location: SH 964 & Plains-Port Hudson Road

Latitude & Longitude: 30.690693,-91.205766



Godfrey Wietzel

Wingfield's Cavalry continued to be sent out for reconnaissance. On May 22, 1863, Wingfield's scouts reported that the 19th U.S. Corps was moving into position around all sides of Port Hudson not facing the Mississippi River. Two entire divisions under Brigadier Godfrey Wietzel were moving down Telegraph Road, an extremely marshy and heavily wooded area. Because it was the least fortified of the perimeter, Gardner ordered Wingfield's Cavalry to go out and delay the Union forces in the hopes that the defenses on that front could be improved.

Telegraph Road



The above picture of Godfrey Wietzel is from the Library of Congress and was taken by none other than Matthew Brady, the most famous photographer of the Civil War. I hope you have noticed that very few of the photographs have been of Confederate soldiers.



I. G. W. Steedman
Commander of the 1st Alabama Volunteers
Unknown origin of photo

They encountered Wietzel's troops along Telegraph Road at Chamber's Plantation. As the cavalry engaged and slowly fell back, Col. I. G. W. Steedman of the 1st Alabama Volunteers attempted to construct earthworks behind the cavalry. By late afternoon, Wingfield's Cavalry was gradually pushed back but Steedman's troops had been able to establish a defensive line about ½ mile outside Port Hudson.



Chamber's Plantation – Harper's Weekly July 11, 1863

The following commendation for the actions of Wingfield's Cavalry on May 22 was issued by the Major General Franklin Gardner by way of his Assistant Adjutant General.

GENERAL ORDERS, No. 47. HDQRS.,

Port Hudson, La., May 23, 1863.

It is with much pleasure the major-general commanding announces to the troops a successful skirmish of Col. Wingfield's Partisan Rangers with the whole force of the enemy's cavalry, in which the enemy were several time repulsed, and finally driven back with considerable loss. These examples of heroic conduct are cheering to us, and will convince the enemy that we are determined to defend this post to the last.

By command of Maj. Gen. Frank. Gardner:

T. FRIEND WILLSON,

Assistant Adjutant-Gen.

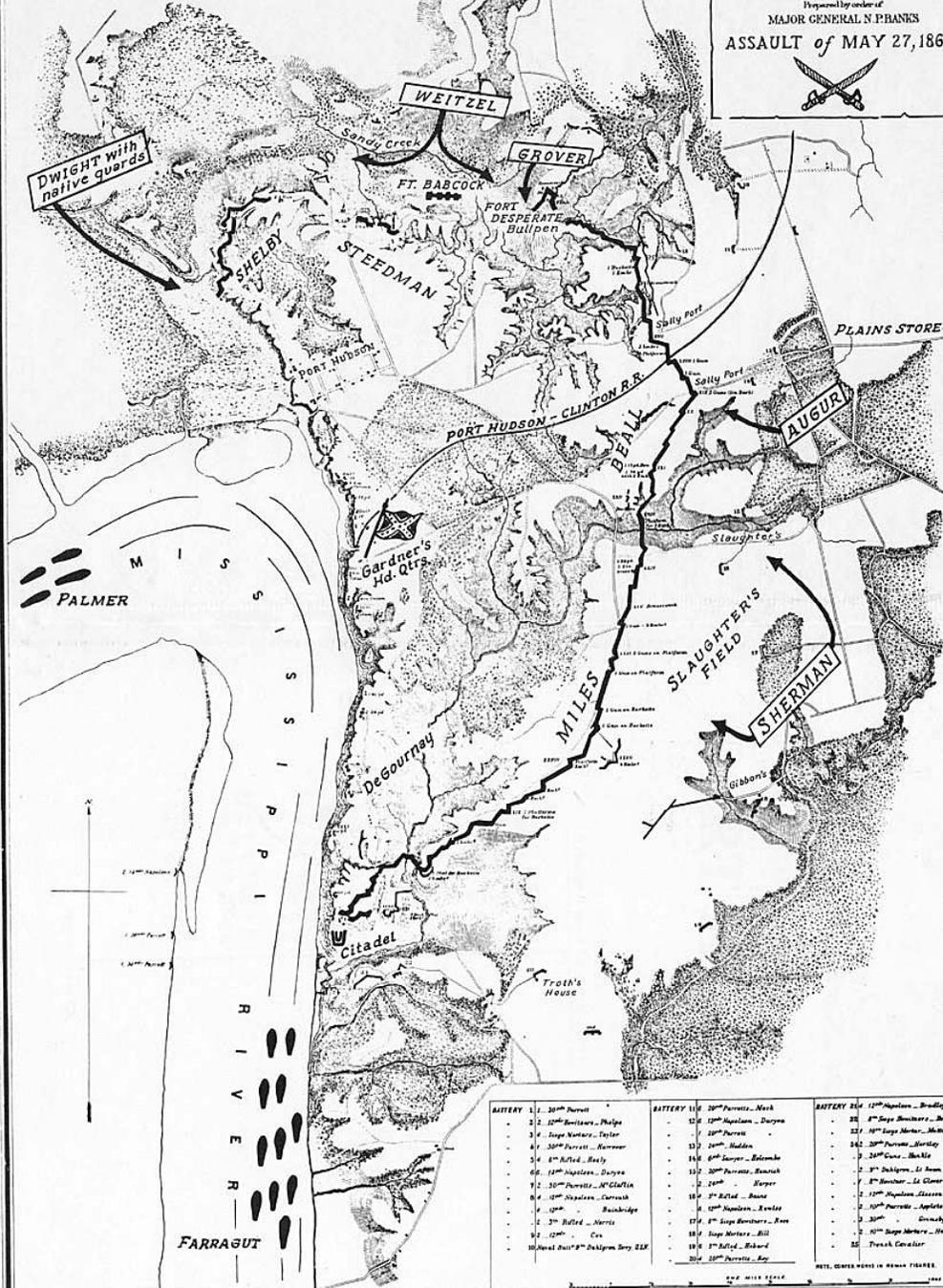
On May 24, Wingfield's Cavalry combined forces with four companies of Steedman's 1st Alabama and once again went out to meet Wiezel's troops. As the Southerners advanced, the Union troops stopped firing and took cover behind trees on the edge of a clearing. When the confederates entered the clearing, the Union troops opened fire from a covered position. The Southerners withdrew but the engagement stalled the Union advance (which was the point of the whole endeavor).

Through the rest of May 24th and into May 25th, skirmishing occurred along a ridge just outside the fortifications in the same area as before. Once again, Wingfield's men would engage the Yankees while Steedman's men were building defensive lines made of trees and branches pushed into ravines, all with the intent of slowing the Union's approach to Port Hudson. Everyone inside Port Hudson knew that these defensive lines were in preparation of the "big event" in the making.

MAP OF
PORT HUDSON AND VICINITY
Prepared by order of
MAJOR GENERAL N. P. BANKS
ASSAULT of MAY 27, 1863



National Archives



BATTERY 1	BATTERY 11	BATTERY 24
1. 20th Parcel	10th Parcel - Mack	11th Regiment - Bradley
2. 10th Battery - Pluge	12th Regiment - Dargun	25. 8th Siege Battery - Dough
3. 4th Siege Battery - Taylor	13th Regiment	26. 10th Siege Battery - Miles
4. 30th Parcel - Hammer	14th Regiment - Hadden	27. 20th Parcel - Murley
5. 4th Artillery - Neely	15th Regiment - Belmont	28. 20th Cavalry - Mackle
6. 11th Regiment - Dargun	16th Regiment - Kautsch	29. 20th Regiment - 2nd Bn. P.E.R.
7. 20th Parcel - 1st Division	17th Regiment - Kover	30. 8th Regiment - La Crosse
8. 4th Regiment - Curran	18th Artillery - Stone	31. 11th Regiment - Eason
9. 12th Regiment - Rankin	19th Regiment - Kover	32. 10th Regiment - Appleton
10. 3rd Battery - Morris	20th Regiment - Kover	33. 30th Regiment - Dinwiddie
11. 12th Regiment - Cox	21st Siege Battery - Hill	34. 10th Siege Battery - Hamilton
12. Naval Dist. 2nd Division Reg. 22	22nd Artillery - Richard	35. French Cavalry
	23rd Regiment - Kay	

Banks really did not want to conduct a siege. His goal was to have a quick win and then join Ulysses Grant with his push at Vicksburg; therefore, on May 27, 1863, he ordered a general advance. The plan was for three different groups to attack at the same time on all land sides while being supported from the river. This would force Gardner to place everyone immediately on the line, become overwhelmed, and be forced to surrender Port Hudson.

Weitzel was to attack on the Union right with 17 regiments. He would face I. G. W. Steedman who was holding the Confederate left. This included Wingfield's Cavalry. To get close to Steedman's position, Weitzel would have to cross through the deep ravines and woods just fortified two days before. At 6:00 am Weitzel's troops began to move and immediately were forced to slow due to the terrain.

National Archives



Part of the Louisiana Native Guard – first Black regiment to fight in the war – Library of Congress

While Weitzel's men were trying to push through the forest, 2 black regiments were sent to assault the extreme left of the Confederate lines between the Mississippi River and Weitzel's men. (See map on previous slide-noted as Dwight with Native Guards.) These black troops of the Louisiana Native Guard were the first used by the Union Army. Once again, due to the terrain, the Confederates' higher position proved in their favor. By midday, both attempts from the north had stalled.

In the meantime, Banks was waiting to hear that his men in the center and left were engaging. As it turned out, Banks had ordered the assault at the earliest possible time, which for the other two groups was 2:00 pm! They decided to have lunch first! By then, Weitzel's men had disengaged and the Rebels had reinforced the center. These two sectors fared no better than Weitzel's troops. By the end of the day, the Union had lost almost 2000 men and the Rebels 225, most of those with Steedman.

At this point, a long siege was evident to both sides. With little chance of rescue by other Confederate forces, their situation was ultimately hopeless.



**THE SIEGE OF PORT HUDSON—BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF THE GREAT RIVER BATTERY, THREE HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE REBEL CITADEL.—SKETCHED BY MR. J. R. HAMILTON.
Publisher, Harper's *Weekly* July 23, 1863.**

Cries from the wounded still on the field could be heard during the night, so the following morning (May 28) Banks raised a flag of truce in order to remove the Union wounded and dead. This was granted and the battle “resumed” at 7:00 pm. During the next two weeks, both sides spent time digging trenches, tightening defenses, and shooting at the enemy every chance they got.



A Union artillery battery at Port Hudson.

The white material in the foreground is from the cotton bales used to protect the cannoneers from Confederate fire.

Library of Congress

On June 13, 1863, still trying to induce a surrender, the Union began a heavy bombardment from land and river.

June 14 opened with a request from Banks for the Confederate garrison to surrender immediately which they promptly refused. Banks ordered another assault. Due to the high position of the Confederate guns, the Union once again had heavy losses.

Two days later, Banks wanted to make another advance. Due to the Union's low morale, he requested volunteers. He was unable to put together a large enough group to try again. No additional frontal assaults would occur.

Much has been written about the events occurring during the siege, especially the two attempts to storm the fort to end the siege. Because there were no direct references to Wingfield's Cavalry other than the fact that they were on the left fighting with Steedman, nothing is known about Burrell's movements. Therefore, a detailed description of these events has not been given. If interested, please read some of the references from the bibliography, especially the Wikipedia article.



**Capt. Edmund C. Bainbridge's Battery A, 1st U.S. Artillery, at the siege of Port Hudson, La., 1863.
Library of Congress**

Food – or at least things to eat

Even in the early months of 1863 before the siege began, food was a major issue for the people at Port Hudson. In addition to a general shortage of food, the handling and storage of food was deplorable. Food stored in the holds of steamships during shipping sometimes arrived close to spoiling. It would be immediately issued to the men, making quite a few sick. The cattle that would arrive to be used for food would be so thin and ill that it was probably a mercy to kill them. The meat would be so bad that the men called it “blue beef” because it was discolored, gummy, and gristly. Corn would be deposited on the landing, sit there for days, and spoil before being given to the men. Before the siege, their main source of edible staples included sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and molasses.

Two letters from a compilation of letters by Jeff Toalson (see full reference in bibliography) that were written during 1863 have been quoted below. The letter on the left sounds like it was most likely written in March while access to Texas beef was still possible. Though the one on the right was written from Vicksburg, the men of Port Hudson were dealing with the same problems with food, especially how to cook rats! I thought it was interesting reading!

*Undated
Port Hudson, LA
Infantry
Private William H. Lucy
Co. G – 3rd Tenn
“While at Port Hudson, La our provisions ran short had a drove of Texas steers and nothing to feed the steers so we laid a fence rail on the ground drove the steers over it and all that were able to step over the rail let them live all that were so weak they feel we killed them for beef. We did this ever day untill the whole drove had been eaten by us.”*

*Late May 1863
Vicksburg, Miss.
Lt. Charles S. O. Rice
Co. M – 7th Tenn. Cavalry
“...rations for man and beast would be scarce...how hungry we became...had bread of meal and peas mixed, when cooked meal was done peas were still undone...meat was almost a thing of the past...some of the boys indulged in the rare dish of rodent, well cooked in a hollow log and that without taking off his epidermis...I did not indulge...in a few days we had better meat...one of our mules [killed]...cut a bucket full of steaks from sd. Dead mule and we all joined in...made jerked meat from what was left over...fed our horses on mulberry leaves and the long moss which hug from the trees.”*

Food during the siege

Joseph M. Bailey of the 16th Regiment Arkansas Infantry had the following to say in his memoirs which included the siege of Port Hudson:

“Our rations at the beginning of the siege were far from being good or plentiful, with the exception of sugar and molasses; of these we had an abundance. We had only a scant supply of bacon, which was soon exhausted. Beef of very poor quality was issued with more or less irregularity for about thirty days. Flour or flour bread we had none. Corn meal made from badly weevil eaten corn was our staple of life. This becoming scarce, cowpeas equally as badly weevil eaten was ground with the corn, equal parts of each. This made a compound offensive alike to taste and smell. But for weeks it was our only bread. ... After our beef was exhausted, horse and mule meat was issued with more or less regularity during the remainder of the siege. The flesh of these animals was fairly good though coarse grained and very poor, as they subsisted upon such vegetation as was to be found inside our breastworks. This meat was usually boiled and put over live coals to barbecue. Wharf rats were plentiful and large, and numbers of the men killed and ate them. I tried one only. Well cooked, they might have done very well. Having no grease of any kind, we could only boil, broil, or barbeque our meat; parched corn, or bits of parched bread was our substitute for coffee. With this diet, and the incessant round of duties and watching, all grew more or less weak. Yet with all of these hardships, there were no words of complaint.”

Baker, T. Lindsay, ed. *Confederate Guerrilla: The Civil War Memoir of Joseph M. Bailey*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2007. Print, pages 28-29.

*We eat all the meat and
bread in the fort...eat all
the beef--all the mules--all
the Dogs--and all the Rats
around us.*



Conditions during the siege

Joseph M. Bailey also commented on the physical conditions during the siege:

“In the early part of the siege, we put up what few tents we possessed for protection against the rain and the hot sun, but these were soon shot to pieces. To add to our discomfort, especially at night, were swarms of mosquitoes that were terribly annoying. Often our faces in the morning looked like a patient just broken out with measles. As a slight protection, the boys would burn cotton or cotton rags when they could get them, near their heads all night.”

Baker, T. Lindsay, ed. *Confederate Guerrilla: The Civil War Memoir of Joseph M. Bailey*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2007. Print, page 25.

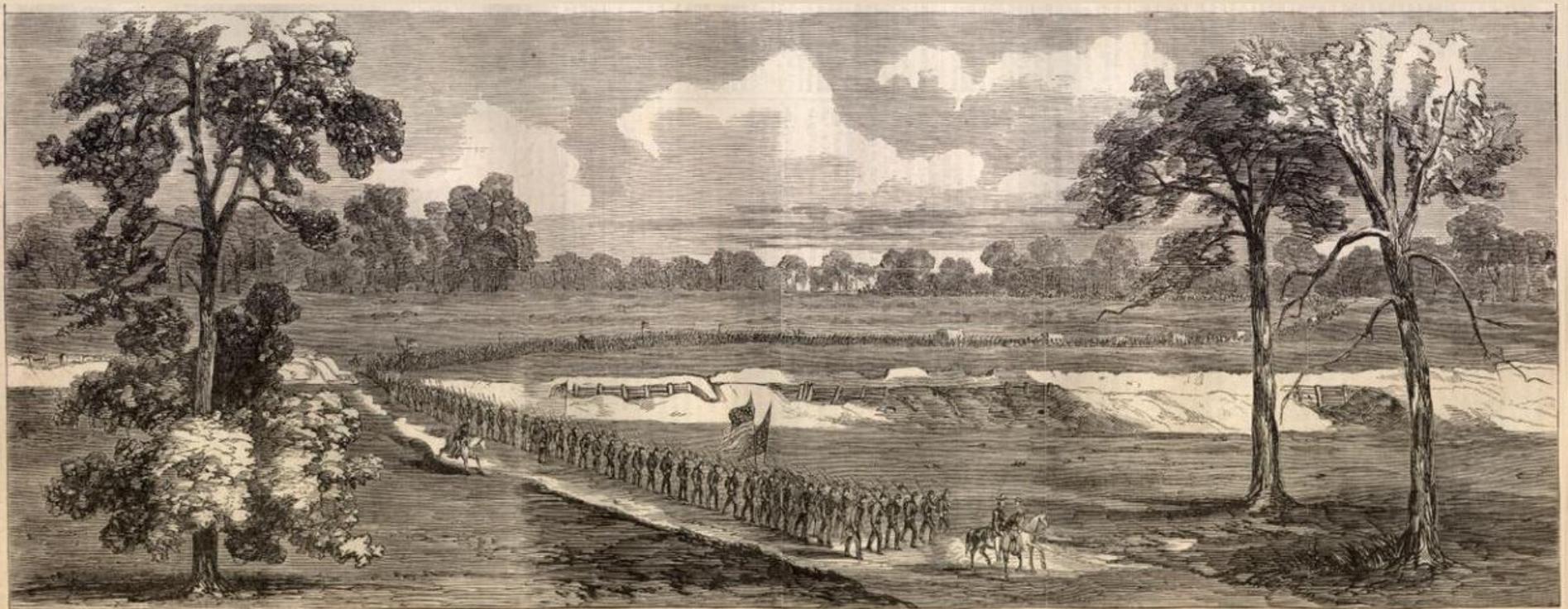
Besides health issues caused by bad or scarce food, the men had to battle malaria carrying mosquitoes hatching out of the swamps and waterways that surrounded them. Notice that Bayou Sara was a huge swamp just to the northwest.

Life became progressively miserable for everyone, both Yankee and Rebel. Though the Union troops had better food, they too had to deal with rain, insects, heat, living outside, and the stress of war. Also, many of the Yankees found the Southern heat and humidity very taxing. It has been estimated that 5,000 Union soldiers died or were wounded and 5,000 Union soldiers died of disease and heat exhaustion. Imagine the agony if the siege had gone on into late July or August!



The Surrender

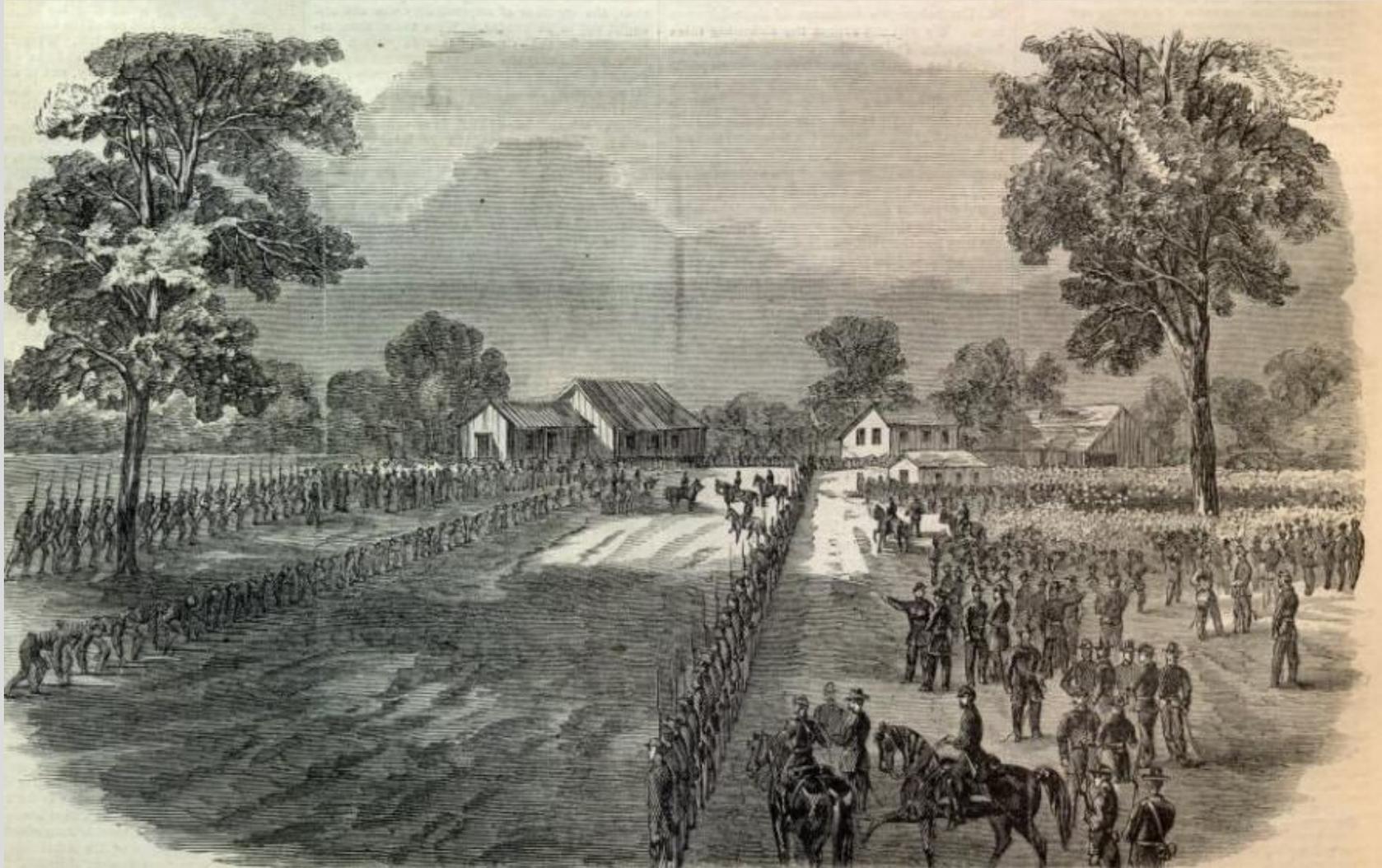
When Major General Gardner learned that Vicksburg had surrendered on July 4, 1863, he knew he was fighting a hopeless battle. It was impossible to continue. Terms of surrender were negotiated and on July 9, 1863, the Confederates turned Port Hudson over to the Union. This gave the Union complete control of the Mississippi River. Banks granted lenient terms to the Rebel garrison, mainly because he had no way to control or guard the large number of prisoners of war (about 7,000). Enlisted men were paroled and told to go home while officers were sent north to prison camps.



THE UNION FORCES ENTERING THE BREAST-WORKS TO TAKE POSSESSION OF PORT HUDSON, JULY 9, 1863.—FROM A SKETCH BY MR. J. R. HAMILTON.—[SEE PAGE 497.]

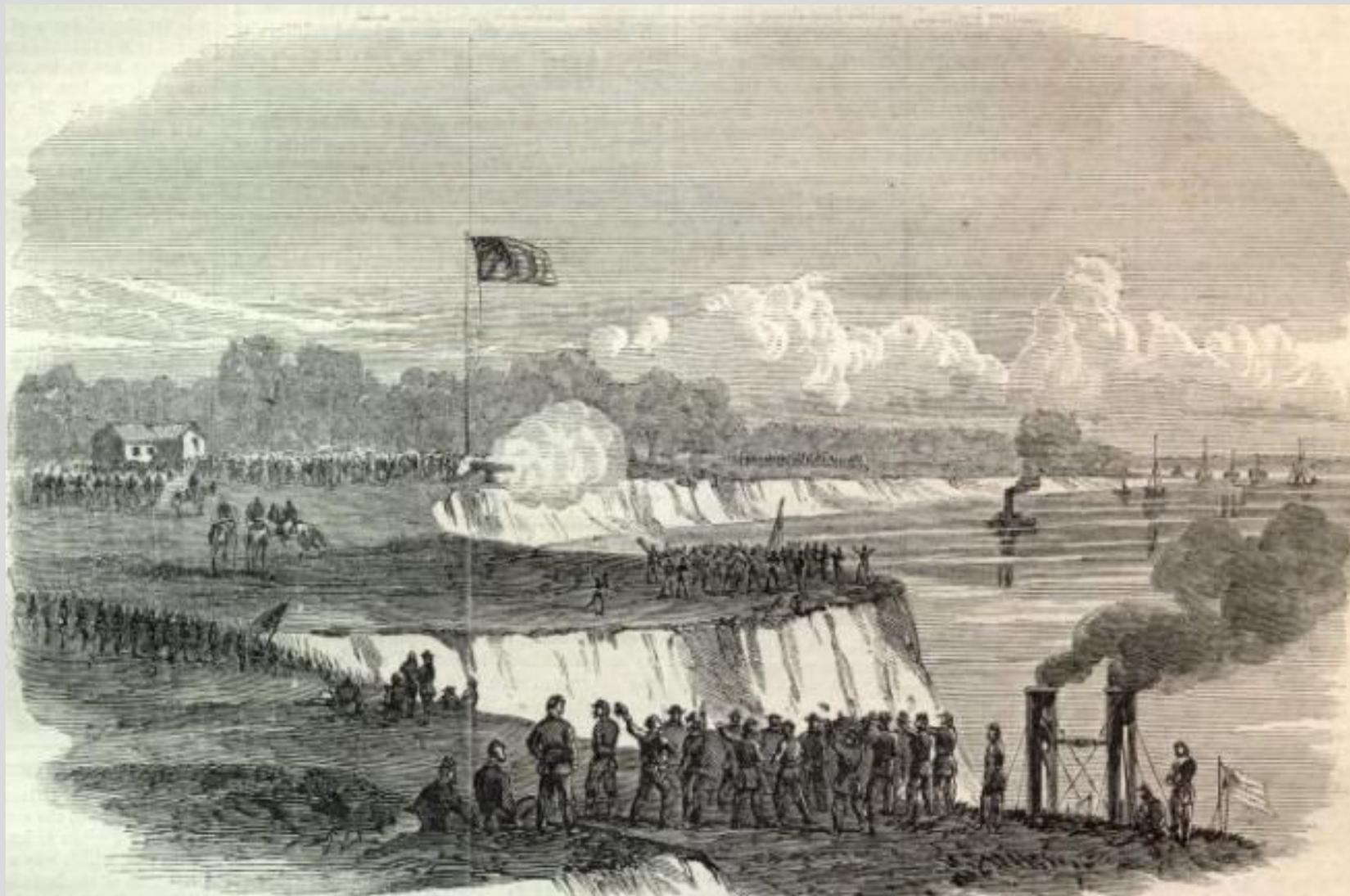
Harper's Weekly August 8, 1863

So many men were incapacitated by the time of the official surrender ceremony on July 9, 1863 that it has been estimated less than 3,000 men were able to stand at attention. Notice the men in the bottom left corner.



THE FORMAL SURRENDER OF PORT HUDSON.---DRAWN BY MR. J. R. HAMILTON
Harper's Weekly August 8, 1863

After the surrender, General Banks had food brought in to feed the Confederate men.



**“SALUTING THE OLD FLAG AT PORT HUDSON, JULY 9, 1863.”--DRAWN BY MR. J. R. HAMILTON.
Harper’s Weekly August 8, 1863**

After the surrender, someone with a camera took quite a few photographs from inside. Some of them follow, in no particular order.



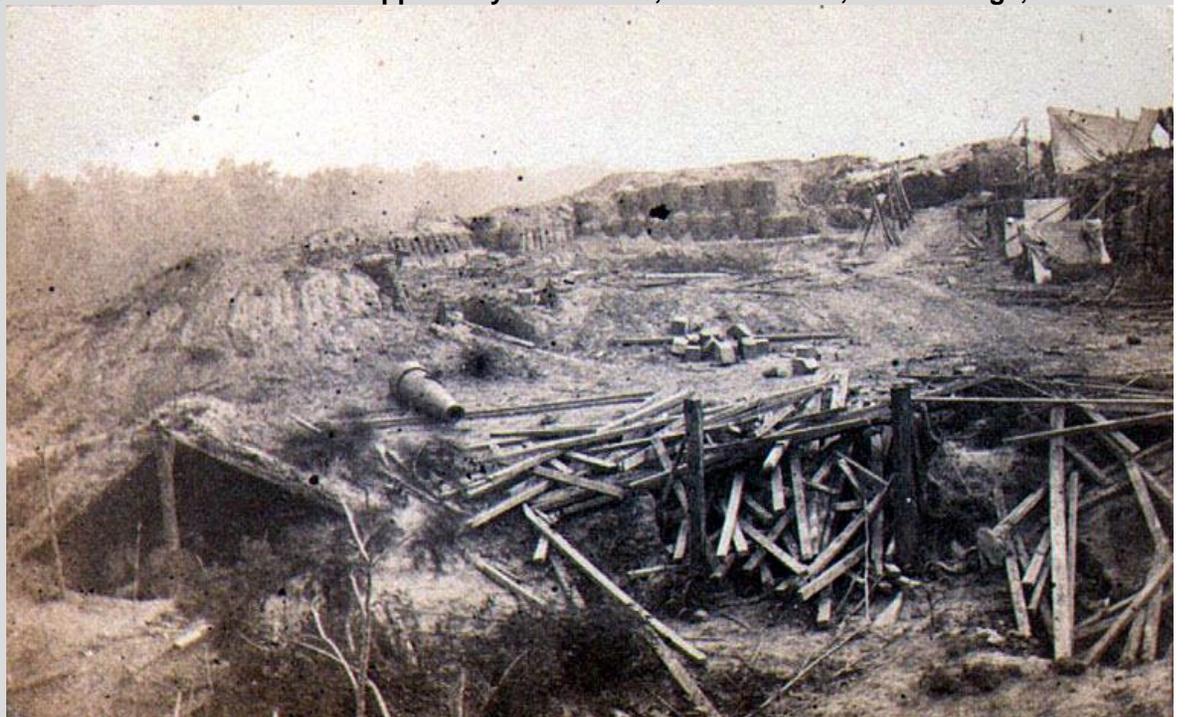
Library of Congress



Confederate defensive area called the “Citadel.” In an attempt to get the siege over with, the Union forces decided to tunnel under the area in order to break the defensive line.

Marshall Dunham Photograph Album (Mss. 3241), Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA.

The above photo is from the outside and the one on the right is from the inside.



This view is taken of the sapping (tunneling) done under the Citadel. It was finished, gunpowder was put in place about July 7, and was intended to be detonated on July 9.

Tunnel entrance



Marshall Dunham Photograph Album (Mss. 3241), Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA.



Library of Congress



Confederate "rat holes" (dug-out caves) within the defensive lines. There was a Federal artillery position along the tree line in the distance.



More “rat holes”

When the Union cannons would begin firing, Rebels would quickly roll into a rat hole to be protected from the shelling.

Marshall Dunham Photograph Album (Mss. 3241), Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA.



Looking toward Federal 17 gun battery from the interior of the Citadel.

Library of Congress

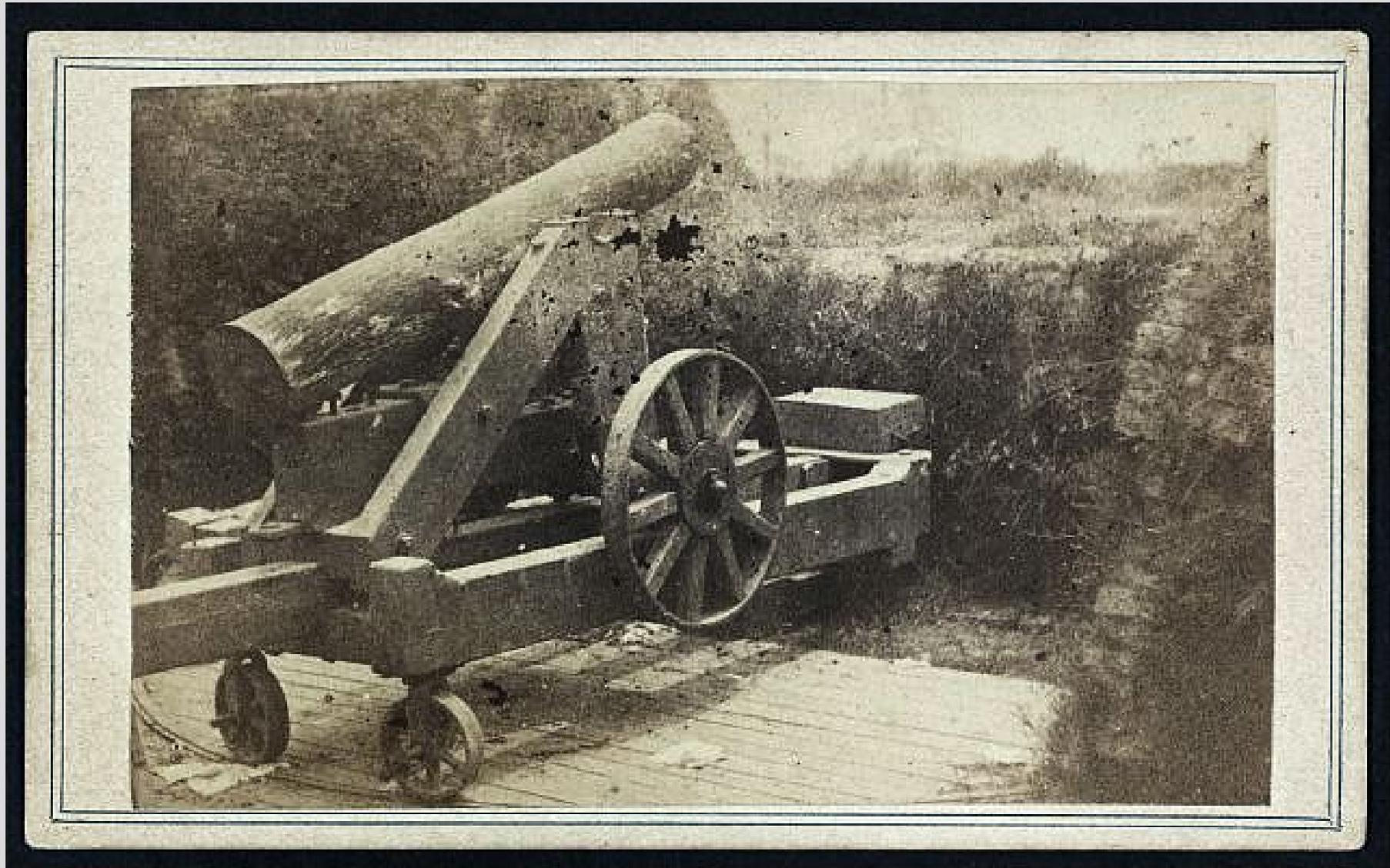




Library of Congress



This is looking north to an area called the Priest Cap.



**Confederate cannon on bluff.
This “cannon” actually is a log to deceive the Yankees!**

Library of Congress



Ruins of a defensive installation
Library of Congress



Confederate siege gun

Library of Congress

A Confederate cannon demolished by Federal artillery fire. The earthworks include a barrel (upper left) with a hole for sharp shooting. This area was nicknamed "Fort Desperate."

In the background can be seen the reinforced parapet wall, and the shallow trench just inside it, used to stand in while looking or shooting over the wall. Also visible is a barrel with a hole cut through it, which was used as a shield by sharpshooters, who shot through the hole at the Union troops digging the sap towards the Fort.



Library of Congress



Library of Congress

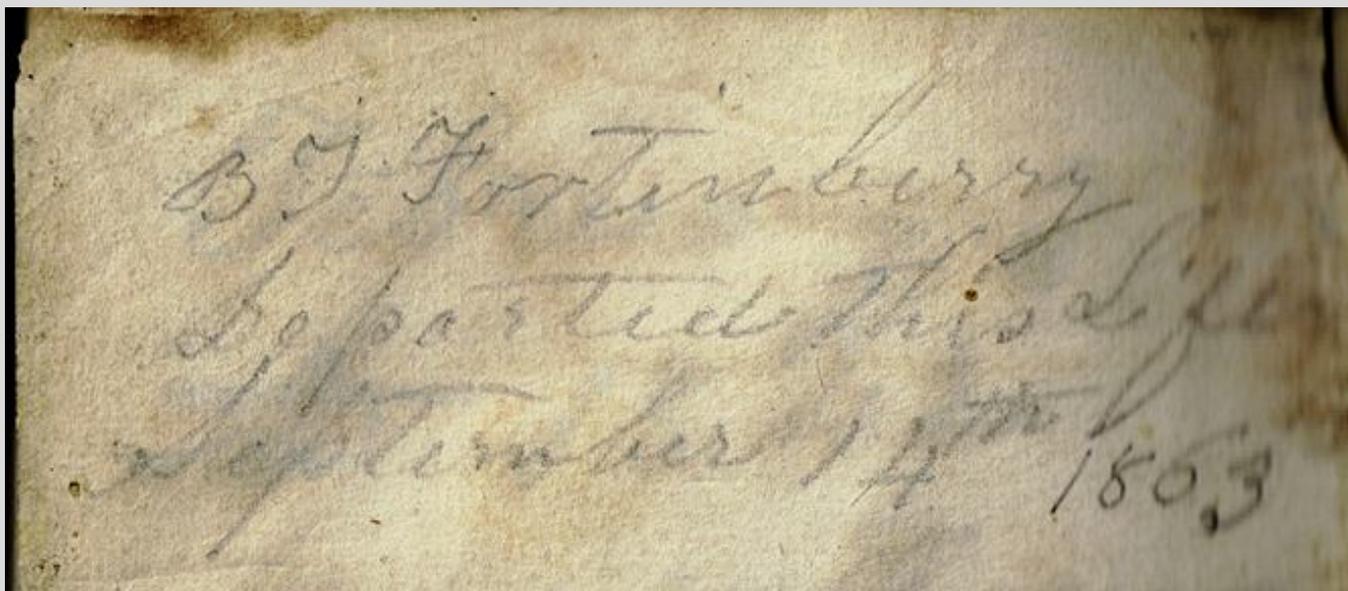
Summary of Port Hudson's place in history

1. Not all historians agree as to when the siege of Port Hudson actually began but many give a date of May 22, 1863. Everyone agrees that it ended on July 9, 1863 with the official surrender.
2. The Union had between 30,000 and 40,000 men fighting against an estimated 6,800 Rebels.
3. It was the longest siege ever conducted on American soil, lasting 48 days of continuous fighting.
4. The siege of Port Hudson was the longest battle of the Civil War. Sadly, it never made National Park status but is a Louisiana State Park.
5. It was the first time African Americans were used as soldiers on the front line.
6. The fact that Ulysses Grant forced Vicksburg to surrender first was a major blow to the political ambitions of Major General Nathaniel Banks. He had planned to get Port Hudson to surrender quickly and then take over for Grant at the siege at Vicksburg. He thought that would give him the publicity he needed to reach his ultimate goal of eventually becoming President of the United States. Instead, it worked out just the opposite.
7. Historians seem to believe that had either of the attacks (May 27 or June 14) been better coordinated by Banks, he would have been successful, ending the battle much sooner.
8. An estimate of 750 Rebels were killed or wounded compared to the Union losses of about 5,000 killed or wounded.
9. The deprivations experienced by the men at Port Hudson are thought to be the worst experienced in the Confederacy.
10. Sickness was as much a problem as guns! The Union had 5,000 men die of disease and heat exhaustion. The estimate of Rebel death by disease and heat is about 250.
11. The events at Port Hudson were overshadowed by those occurring at Gettysburg, Virginia giving the siege of Port Hudson a much smaller place in history than it deserves!
12. The Mississippi River, as is its nature, has changed its course and is no longer visible from the area where the fighting occurred. The northern end of the Confederate line (where Burrell was) has been preserved.

How do we know what happened to Burrel Taylor Fortenberry?

Being a private, Burrel would have been released to return home. He probably had to make his way the 60 to 70 miles to Osyka, Mississippi without a horse. We know he was sick and did make it home.

His oldest brother, Gasua Fortenberry, penciled a note in his small bible that has proven to be our only definitive record of his date of death. After two months of fighting a disease or disability from his time at Port Hudson, he died on September 14, 1863.



Ferman Esco Fortenberry, Burrel's grandson, also left a note in his Navy journal about the deaths of his grandparents. For Burrel, the note translates as "Died 1863. Cause of Death Exposure in War. For his grandmother, Eliza Jane Ellzey Fortenberry, he says "Died 1899 Cause of Death Exposure and age.

A photograph of two lines of handwritten notes in blue ink on lined paper. The first line reads "D. 1863. C. of D. Exposure in War." and the second line reads "D. 1899. C. of D. Exposure and age.".

D. 1863. C. of D. Exposure in War.
D. 1899. C. of D. Exposure and age.



Two tintype photographs of Burrel were found in a trunk belonging to his older brother, Gasua Chapman Fortenberry. When we were doing research in the late 1970s, a descendant of Gasua's (Alton Smith) gave the trunk and its contents to Adrian. Quite a few of the very old pictures used in the Fortenberry book came from this trunk. We recently digitized the image and made it clearer using Photoshop. Notice the rust around the edges of the image. The above is an enlargement of his face.

This image was probably made between 1855 and 1861.



This tintype includes Burrel (seated) and his brother, William J Fortenberry. It was probably taken while on leave between his transfer from Mississippi service on December 20, 1862 to Wingfield's Cavalry on January 9, 1863.





When Burrel died, it was right in the middle of the Civil War with all its inherent problems of Confederate money, subsistence living, and little time for the niceties of life. He was buried on his brother Gasua's property with only a large, deeply imbedded stone as a marker. In 1976, Adrian Fortenberry (Burrel's great grandson) requested a marker from the Veteran's Administration and he had it placed on Burrel's grave in 1977. The picture to the left shows Adrian with the marker; notice his right hand is on the buried stone that marked the grave from 1863 until 1977. The cemetery has a GPS location of Latitude: 31.03860, Longitude: -90.29670 and is called the Fortenberry Cemetery. A descendant of one of Gasua's daughters (Jim Huffman) voluntarily maintains the cemetery.

Burrel

By Teresa Fortenberry



That I could tell you
Face to face
How my heart surrounds your soul
You are always remembered
And never forgotten
Your deeds have blessed us all.

That I could see you
Eye to eye
And see your world through your eyes
How you greet your wife
How you love your children
Yes, I know that's why you fought.

That I could hear you
Call to Jack
And watch you teach him life
He's a man at 10 and you must go
Wingfield's men await at Hudson.

To hear your voice
And see your eyes
To hold your work worn hands
My Southern Warrior
My Southern Hero
Stand down, your job is done.

Dark days are gone
The pain is eased
The records speak loud and clear,
Your father is proud
Your children are strong
Your memories remain forever.

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