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# War and Remembrance

**At the onset of the Civil War's 150th anniversary, events and historical sites commemorate Southern conflict and culture.**

By Suzanne Corbett

"In the South the past is never dead. It's not even in the past. – William Faulkner

Vicksburg, Fayetteville and Shreveport are among those Southern cities whose present and past intertwine. Each city is rich in Civil War heritage and is dedicated to preservation, ensuring the past is not forgotten.



Above: Soldiers prepare for a battle re-enactment at Headquarters House in Fayetteville. Washington County Historical Society photo

Below: With the Illinois Monument in the background, a cannon stands silent vigil at Vicksburg National Military Park, a reminder of the fierce fighting that occurred around the city for 45 days. Vicksburg Convention and Visitors Bureau photo

## Grant's Road to Vicksburg

President Abraham Lincoln wrote, "Vicksburg is the key," knowing whoever held that city controlled the Mississippi River. Vicksburg, Miss., still holds a key that unlocks opportunities to experience Southern culture and history.

Grand Gulf Military Monument (12006 Grand Gulf Road) south of Vicksburg and north of Port Gibson marks the first battle of the Vicksburg Campaign. The monument's 400 acres encompass original buildings, the Old Grand Gulf Cemetery and an impressive collection of armament and artifacts.

From Grand Gulf, travel to Windsor Ruins, located about 12 miles outside Port Gibson along state Highway 552. Twenty-three Corinthian columns are all that remain of the palatial plantation, which burned after the war. Windsor served as an observation station for both Confederate and Union forces.

Up the road is Port Gibson, which escaped destruction after Grant proclaimed it "too beautiful to burn." Explore the town's historical homes and landmarks, such as the First Presbyterian Church of Port Gibson.

Located an hour northeast of Port Gibson, the city of Raymond offers historical homes and sites relating to the Civil War.

"More visitors are discovering our history and how it relates to the Vicksburg Campaign," said Mayor Isla Tullos. "Hundreds come to the Raymond Battlefield during re-enactments and to our historic sites that have fascinating stories to tell, as St. Mark's Episcopal Church, which was used as a hospital and





Episcopal Church, which was used as a hospital and still has blood stains on the floors.”

Confederate Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton officially surrendered the city and its flag on July 4, 1863, at Vicksburg’s Old Court House (1008 Cherry St.). Visitors can see war memorabilia and articles representing military and civilian life, along with unusual items, such as Jefferson Davis’ necktie, at this museum. The Confederate Christmas Ball, a

yearly event that re-enacts the original 1862 ball, takes place here on Dec. 10.

A few blocks from the courthouse is the Southern Cultural Heritage Complex (1302 Adams St.), which sits across the street from Pemberton’s headquarters. The foundation sponsors monthly events from its fall Classics in the Courtyard series to symposiums on Southern culture throughout April during Vicksburg’s Tapestry, its spring pilgrimage and antebellum house tour.

Ten minutes from downtown is Vicksburg National Military Park (3201 Clay St.). The National Park Service maintains the battlefield and monuments while sponsoring various interpretive programs depicting military camp life. The USS Cairo Museum is next to the national cemetery. Remains and artifacts from the ironclad gunboat that sunk in 1862 were reclaimed from the Yazoo River in 1964.

## Shreveport and the Red River Campaign Trail

Shreveport, La., which served as headquarters for the Confederacy’s Trans-Mississippi Army, was the last capital of the Confederacy and the last city to lower the Confederate flag after the war.

The Caddo Parish Courthouse (500 Texas St.) flies the Confederate flag in remembrance of that day. A Confederate monument was constructed on the courthouse lawn in 1905 and can be seen today. Visitors also can see battlefields and other remembrances of war along the Red River.

“Fort Turnbull, also known as Fort Humbug, is still a popular Civil War drive-by site,” said Johnny Wessler, Louisiana North Tourism Coordinator. He said trees were cut and charred to resemble cannons and placed along the river bluffs at Fort Turnbull to trick Union forces into thinking Shreveport was heavily armed. The trick worked; Union troops never attacked. The fort is located at 400 E. Stoner.

Union and Confederate forces did engage in April 1864 at the Battle of Mansfield south of Shreveport. It was the Confederacy’s last major victory. The Mansfield State Historic Site (15149 state Highway 175) preserves the battlefield and offers tours.

Follow the Red River from Shreveport to Alexandria/Pineville and Forts Randolph & Buhlow State Historic Site (135 Riverfront St.). Learn about Bailey’s Dam, a project that saved the Union gunboat fleet from capture. Remains of the dam can be viewed from the park’s elevated boardwalk that overlooks the Red River.

Plantations were the heart of the South and its economy. In Natchitoches, the Cane River Creole National Historic Park preserves the Oakland and Magnolia plantations. Oakland offers guided tours that interpret plantation life from before the Civil War through the sharecropping system.

Frogmore Plantation (11054 Highway 84) near Ferriday survived the Civil War and Reconstruction Era. It continues as a cotton-producing plantation today. Walk the grounds to explore originally furnished buildings from slave quarters to the overseer’s house to the historic gin house, complete with a rare steam-powered cotton gin.

Alexandria’s Kent Plantation (3601 Bayou Rapides Road) is another survivor of Union occupation. Kent includes its main house, a re-created 1840s sugar mill and a collection of reassembled 19th-century buildings. Kent’s popular fall events include October’s Funeral re-enactment, Fall Herb Day and an arts and crafts festival. During Sugar Day (Nov. 12), sugar is made from cane using the plantation’s re-created 1840s mill.

## Fayetteville’s museums, battlefields

“This is a place to ponder,” said John Scott, Pea Ridge Battlefield National Park Superintendent. “This battlefield is the best preserved in the U.S. because it has remained basically unchanged. If you could bring back a veteran of that battle, he would recognize it.”

The Battle of Pea Ridge, March 1862, is credited with saving Missouri for the Union. View a 28-minute video and walk through the museum’s life-sized dioramas of civilian and military life before taking the

battlefield tour. Don't miss the story of the Confederate Cherokee regiments. The park is on the northwest Arkansas/Missouri border in Garfield, Ark.

Travel south to Prairie Grove, Ark., where another battle was fought nine months after Pea Ridge. Prairie Grove's battlefield is now a state park and combines traditional activities with battlefield tours. Its interactive museum provides a multi-sensory experience. Walk the exhibits and you'll smell gunpowder and hear ambient sounds of the Arkansas countryside.

It's about nine miles from the park to Fayetteville where visitors can tour Headquarters House (118 E. Dickson St.), the home of Judge Jonas Tebbetts and his family. The house still holds its scars from the Battle of Fayetteville—a minie ball remains lodged in the doorway as a reminder of the battle that was fought in the home's front yard. The home became the headquarters for Confederate and Union forces.

"It's a little brush with the past," said Dee Dee Lamb, Director of Historic Programs for Headquarters House. "It's how we make history come alive."

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