

Civil War Battles

Bull Run and
Peninsular Campaigns, (1)
Union's Anaconda Plan (2)
Vicksburg (3) on the Mississippi River
South hurt economically (4)
Gettysburg Attack (5)
Sherman's March to the Sea (6), and
War ends at last (7).

Notes

1) Bull Run and Peninsular Campaign: The Battle of Bull Run (July 1861) was the first major battle of the Civil War. A confident Union army of 35,000 soldiers attacked a Confederate force of 22,000 in Virginia, and was turned back in a disorganized retreat. Later in the War there were large force concentrations in the peninsular region between Richmond, Virginia and Washington, D.C., the Confederate and Union capitals, and several indecisive battles.

2) Union's Anaconda Plan: A key part of the Union's military strategy, the Anaconda Plan imposed a naval blockade on the South to cut off cotton exports, prevent the importation of war supplies, and generally strangle the Confederate economy.

3) Vicksburg on the Mississippi River: Both the Confederate and Union armies tried to control the Mississippi River, which was an important trade and military artery. Vicksburg, Mississippi was the site of a well defended Confederate fortress, located high above the river. It gave the South control of the river early in the war. The Union Army of Tennessee under General Grant captured Vicksburg after an attack and siege of the fortress in the summer of 1863.

4) South hurt Economically: Most pre-War manufacturing was located in the North and as the Union naval blockade tightened, the South faced serious shortages of consumer and military goods. Cotton exports declined by 95%, almost erasing the Confederacy's main source of income. Due to food shortages, periodic bread riots broke out in Richmond, Virginia, the Southern capital. "Goober Peas" became a popular song of the Confederate soldiers, who tried to make the best of the fact that at times, all they had to eat was peanuts. Economic distress was a major factor leading to the defeat of the Confederacy.

5) Gettysburg Attack: The Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, was the most significant Southern attack into Union territory during the Civil War. If successful, it might have changed the outcome of the War. The small town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania was not a strategic objective, but it was the place where Union scouts encountered Confederate advance parties, which led to a rapid build-up of forces from both sides. Almost 92,000 Union soldiers, led by General George Meade faced 72,000 Confederates under the command of Robert E. Lee. The North won decisively and the South retreated. General Mead's unwillingness to pursue and decisively defeat the retreating Confederates was a tactical blunder, allowing the War to drag on for another two years.

6) Sherman's March to the Sea: In 1864 Union General William Tecumseh Sherman was determined to force the South to surrender by inflicting extreme suffering during a march from Atlanta, Georgia to the port city of Savannah. His army punished civilians by destroying farms, stealing cattle, ripping up rail lines and generally terrorizing the civilian population. Facing a hopeless military situation, a shattered economy and Sherman's scorched earth tactics, the Southern will to resist was broken.

7) War Ends at Last: General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army to General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865 in the village of Appomattox Court House, Virginia. Lincoln wanted relatively favorable peace terms for the South offered in a spirit of healing and national reconciliation. However, Lincoln was assassinated only five days after the formal surrender and his successor, Andrew Johnson, implemented a Reconstruction policy that was more lenient toward the South than Lincoln had envisioned.

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