LOUISIANA
Commemorates The
CIVIL WAR
CENTENNIAL
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LOUISIANA COMMENORATES THE CIVIL WAR

by

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The Civil War Centennial currently being observed commemorates an important part of American history, and pays sincere tribute to a period of brave, idealistic people who endured untold hardships while seeking that which they believed right.

Louisiana contributed significantly in the War Between the States, and provided many heroic leaders and thousands of enlisted men, equally as heroic.

This booklet offers a brief outline of Louisiana’s role in the Confederacy, and is presented as part of the Centennial for the pleasure and information of all residents of the State and all who visit us.

Governor Jimmie H. Davis
This booklet has been prepared under the supervision of the Louisiana Civil War Centennial Commission. It attempts to relate in summary form the story of Louisiana during the Civil War. It is hoped that it will be used and enjoyed by residents of the State, by teachers and students, and by visitors to our State. The Commission plans to issue additional booklets that will amplify Louisiana’s contribution to the War and its part in the present Centennial.
LOUISIANA AND THE CIVIL WAR

The great American fraternal conflict of the 1860's is known by many names. Some of them are The War of Secession, The War for Southern Independence, The War for the Union, and The Confederate War. For a time after 1865 the United States government officially used a term to which Southerners objected, The War of the Rebellion. Some Southerners today prefer to call it The War Between the States. The most common designation is The Civil War, which, although not completely satisfactory, has the merit of brevity and was employed at times by such Southerners as Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. Some observers, calling attention to the heroic qualities displayed by both sides, have suggested as the most appropriate name, The American Iliad.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY

The Civil War was the first of the modern wars. Although it exhibited some of the characteristics of the older wars—men charging in mass formations, generals leading attacks, soldiers going by rules of chivalry in battle—it was essentially a modern or total conflict. It witnessed the introduction of, or the first extensive use of, such devices and weapons as railroads, ironclad ships, the telegraph, observation balloons, rifled artillery, repeating rifles, a precursor of the machine gun, submarines, land mines, the military telegraph, flame throwers, and trenches. It was a total war in that both sides were fighting for what they considered fundamental objectives that could not be compromised. If it was not total in its impact on the life of the people, it brought to both sides a greater regulation by government than had ever been known before, in such areas as conscription and taxation. The Civil War is the great pivotal event in our history, the event on which so many things before and after turn.

It was the biggest war the country had yet fought and the biggest war of its century. The total number of men serving on both sides can never be accurately known because of incomplete records. The best estimate is that 1,500,000 men served in the Northern armies for three years, and 900,000 men in the Southern Armies for the same period. In addition, many thousands served for shorter periods. The combined size of the opposing armies on some fields rivaled or surpassed anything in other wars of the century. For example, at Fredericksburg the blue and gray armies totaled 200,000. At Waterloo the contending hosts numbered only 170,000.

The Civil War is in terms of human losses our costliest war. The total number of deaths of men in uniform was 618,000—360,000 from the North and 258,000 from the South. This figure contrasts with the 606,000 deaths in all other wars from the Revolution through the Korean War. Although the casualties in some battles were incredibly high, more men died in the Civil War of sickness and disease than from bullets. It is estimated that of the Northern total, 110,000 were killed in battle, and of the Southern total, 94,000. The following table gives an estimated total of the service deaths in all American wars.
LOUISIANA'S PART IN THE CIVIL WAR

Louisiana made a full and fair contribution to the Confederacy. In 1860 the population of the state was 708,000, of which almost half consisted of Negro slaves. From a white population of approximately 350,000, the state furnished to the Confederate service an estimated 56,000 men who served for three years. In addition, probably 9,000 served in home defense units, making a grand total of 65,000. If deaths of Louisiana troops are computed at the same ratio as for the Confederate forces as a whole, at least 15,000 Louisiana men in uniform lost their lives. By contrast, only 6,000 Louisiana service deaths were recorded in World War II.

The number of Louisiana units of all types cannot at present be exactly stated. It is the hope of the Louisiana Civil War Centennial Commission to be able to furnish such a list during the Centennial. The Official Records published by the United States government designates 76 infantry regiments, 12 cavalry regiments, 11 cavalry battalions, and 40 artillery units of all types. But we cannot be sure how many of these were outfits serving actively in the war and how many were home defense organizations. An indication is given in a reliable estimate of the number of military companies raised in Louisiana—there were 982, of which over 400 were militia units.

We do know that Louisiana units served brilliantly in many theaters of the war and won high praise. The famous Washington
Artillery of New Orleans was one of the crack batteries of the Confederacy. Fighting in Virginia under General Dick Taylor were the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Louisiana regiments and the colorful battalion known as the Louisiana Tigers, which could be commanded only by the equally colorful Bob Wheat. These troops were from New Orleans, north Louisiana, and the Attakapas. When Stonewall Jackson first saw the gay Acadian soldiers of Taylor’s division, he said they were “thoughtless fellows,” but he soon learned to know their worth. Louisiana units proved their worth on many fields in Virginia and in Vicksburg as well as in their own state.

Some of the most important battles of the war were fought in Louisiana. The state became the center of one of the biggest military divisions of the Confederacy, the Trans-Mississippi Department. After the Confederates were driven out of south Louisiana in 1862, Shreveport became the headquarters of the military command of the whole theater, and the Confederate state government was located there. The city was called the capital of the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy.
The number of military actions occurring in Louisiana depends on what is included—battles, raids, skirmishes, and scouts. The highest figure is 566, which takes in some pretty minor affairs; other estimates are 294 and 118. There were engagements in all parts of the state, but the most important ones were as follows:

1. The fall of New Orleans: In the spring of 1862, a powerful Federal naval squadron commanded by David Farragut appeared in the Gulf and ran by Forts St. Philip and Jackson defending the entrance to the Mississippi River. Defeating a Confederate naval force in a spirited clash, Farragut ran up the river to New Orleans and forced its surrender on May 1. The city was almost defenseless because the Confederate government had expected the attack to come from up the river instead of from below. Farragut then proceeded to Baton Rouge, which surrendered on May 9. For the rest of the war the Federals held the southern parishes. Baton Rouge marked the practical northern limit of the occupation. An attempt by the Confederates to recover the capital failed (the battle of Baton Rouge, August 5, 1862); the Federals abandoned the town but later returned to it. The fall of New Orleans was a bad blow to the South. The Confederacy lost its biggest city and banking center, and was shut off from using the lower Mississippi as an outlet for commerce. (Forts St. Philip and Jackson still exist, but are difficult to reach. It is possible, however, to see them by some planning. They are well worth a visit by all who are interested in the configuration of early American forts.)

2. The Port Hudson Campaign: By 1863 the Confederacy retained only a middle link on the vital Mississippi River line, a stretch anchored by Vicksburg on the north and Port Hudson on the south. As long as this link was held, communication between the two parts of the Confederacy east and west of the river was possible. But in 1863 powerful Northern armies moved on the two river fortresses, U. S. Grant striking at Vicksburg and N. P. Banks coming up from New Orleans with 30,000 troops to attack Port Hudson. The story of Vicksburg is more properly a part of the war in Mississippi, although Grant's troops were quartered on the Louisiana side of the river. In Port Hudson the Confederate garrison of 20,000 was commanded by General Franklin Gardner, a Yankee who had thrown in his lot with the South and who is buried in Lafayette. As at Vicksburg, the Federals first tried to carry the strong Confederate works and failed. Then Banks, like Grant, settled down to siege warfare. Weeks passed, in which the soldiers and the civilians in Port Hudson underwent much the same trying experience as those in Vicksburg.
Finally Vicksburg surrendered on July 4. Gardner knew that with Vicksburg gone he could not hold out, but he refused to surrender until he was sure that the other fortress had fallen. Northern soldiers threw newspapers over the parapet to convince him. Port Hudson surrendered on July 8. At the ceremony Gardner offered his sword to Banks, who declined it but could not resist saying it should have been drawn in a better cause. Placing the sword in the scabbard, Gardner replied, "This is no time to discuss politics." The fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson is considered one of the turning points of the war. The Confederacy was divided in two parts, and the Trans-Mississippi Department was isolated from the rest of the South. (Privately owned, the Port Hudson battle area offers the rare spectacle of a Civil War field in its original condition. It may be most easily visited under the conduct of a Baton Rouge travel agency.)

3. The Red River Expedition: In 1864 General Banks undertook an offensive up the Red River to Shreveport. At the same time a Federal force was to advance from Arkansas. Between them, the two Federal armies expected to squeeze out the Confederate defenders. The objects of the expedition were to occupy more of Louisiana
territory, seize cotton, and plant the flag in Texas. Banks advanced in the spring with 28,000 troops, and by April 8 was near Mansfield, although one of his divisions was still back at Pleasant Hill. General Dick Taylor attacked the Federals as they marched forward in a loose and faulty formation. The Federals had a numerical superiority on the field, about 18,000 to 11,000, but because they were so strung out could not bring their masses into play. The attack cut through them like a huge knife. Banks then retreated to Pleasant Hill, where Taylor attacked him the next day, April 9. The result of the fight was essentially a draw, but Banks was shaken and decided to retreat. When he reached Alexandria, a crisis developed. The Red River was low, and the gunboats accompanying the expedition could not get through the rapids. Finally, a Colonel Bailey, who had had experience in the lumber business in Wisconsin, proposed a solution—to build wing dams out from the banks to deepen the channel. The idea worked, and the fleet escaped. Remnants of the "Bailey dam" can still be seen today; a historical marker on U. S. Highway 71 indicates the site. Taylor wanted to pursue the retreating Federals all the way to New Orleans, but the Confederate commander at Shreveport, General Edmund Kirby-Smith, called him back to meet the Federal thrust from Arkansas. But this force turned back on hearing news of Banks's defeat. Taylor was always bitterly convinced that Kirby-Smith had thrown away a chance to destroy the Northern army. Still the Confederates had accomplished much. They had turned back the invaders, and they had so severely damaged Banks's army that it could not take part in the great Northern offensives of 1864. Banks was supposed to advance from New Orleans to Mobile and then to Montgomery. But after the Red River fiasco he was unable to move anywhere. Thus, this campaign in Louisiana undoubtedly helped to prolong Confederate resistance and the war. (The field at Mansfield is today a State Park. An excellent museum is on the site.)
LOUISIANA'S CIVIL LEADERS DURING THE WAR

Louisiana boasted some of the leading figures of the Confederacy. The ablest man in the Confederate Cabinet was unquestionably Judah P. Benjamin, of Louisiana, sometimes called the brains of the Confederacy. He held successively the offices of Attorney General, Secretary of War, and Secretary of State. After the war he went into exile in Great Britain and became one of the leading lawyers of the English bar.

John Slidell, before the war a United States Senator, was appointed Confederate diplomatic representative to France. A polished and skilled diplomat, Slidell did a good job in a difficult situation. On their way to Europe in an English ship, the Trent, Slidell and James Mason, the representative to England, were captured by the commander of a Northern vessel and taken to a Northern prison. This was the famous Trent affair. Rather than risk a war with England, the Northern government finally surrendered the prisoners.

Other Louisianians played prominent roles in the Confederacy. Pierre Rost was a member of the first diplomatic commission sent to Europe. A. B. Roman was one of the peace commissioners sent by Jefferson Davis to Washington in 1861 to negotiate a settlement with the United States. Louisiana sent an unusually able delegation to the Confederate Congress. Among the members were C. M. Conrad, who had been Secretary of War under President Fillmore, Thomas J. Semmes, Charles J. Villere, Henry Marshall, John Perkins, Jr., Lucius J. Dupre, Edward Sparrow, and Duncan F. Kenner, who was chairman of the important Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives.
Two very competent men served Louisiana as governor during the war: Thomas O. Moore, who acted until 1864; and Henry W. Allen, who headed the government seated at Shreveport. Both had their hearts in the cause and co-operated zealously with the central government. Another important figure was Alexander Mouton, president of the secession convention.
Louisiana provided the Confederacy with some important generals. Space forbids a listing of all the generals who had a Louisiana background. Twenty Confederate generals are buried in Louisiana, and their names and places of rest are given in an appendix.

Louisiana’s most important military figure was P. G. T. Beauregard, one of the eight full generals of the Confederacy. This colorful Creole opened the war at Fort Sumter, commanded at the battle of First Manassas, and was second and then first in command at Shiloh, the first big battle in the West. Later he served at Charleston and again in Virginia and the West. He was one of the ablest generals in the Confederacy, but his quarrels with President Davis hindered his career. Characteristically French in almost every way, he has been called “Napoleon in Gray.”

Three other four-star generals had a connection with the state. Braxton Bragg, although a native of North Carolina, was living in Louisiana at the outbreak of the war and accepted a commission from the governor. Edmund Kirby-Smith commanded the Trans-Mississippi Department. John B. Hood lived in New Orleans after the war and is buried there.

One of the most attractive figures in the Confederacy was General Dick Taylor, son of the former President. He served in Virginia under Stonewall Jackson and later in his native state. Although not a professional soldier, he was one of the best officers developed during the war. His account of his war experiences, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, is a thoroughly delightful book.

Certainly one of the most unusual figures among the generals was Leonidas Polk, Episcopal Bishop of Louisiana, and sometimes called the “Fighting Bishop.” A graduate of West Point, he had turned to the ministry, but at the outbreak of war exchanged his vestments for a uniform. It was said that he thought because of his position he should not curse in battle. But he recognized that a little profanity might inspire his men. So when riding into battle he would call the attention of his troops to another officer, General Cheatham, who was a noted cuss, and shout, “Give ’em what Cheatham says, boys!” He was killed by a cannon shot near Marietta, Georgia, in June, 1864.
THE MEANING OF THE WAR FOR LOUISIANA AND THE NATION

Because the Civil War was a modern war, it affected civilians as well as those in uniform. Men, women, and children all felt the impact of the conflict. Indeed, people on the home front in some ways suffered more than soldiers at the fighting front. Louisiana experienced the same kind of devastation and destruction of property visited on other states. A Confederate officer thus described south Louisiana in 1863: “This section of country might have been termed the 'Paradise' of Louisiana before the war; but alas, what a change has befallen it now! The houses are all deserted; occasionally you meet with a few old, faithful negroes, left by their owners to take care of their place until their return. Here you can behold mansion after mansion, including costly sugar-houses, now going to decay.”

Louisianians of today may well study the fortitude of their ancestors to take heart for the troubled problems of our own world. Indeed, all Americans of today can find something rewarding by studying the deeds of those Americans, South and North, of a century ago. It is the hope of the Louisiana Civil War Centennial Commission that both residents of the state and visitors will join in commemorating the story of Louisiana in the war.
APPENDIX

Confederate Generals Buried In Louisiana

1. Henry Watkins Allen, Baton Rouge
2. P. G. T. Beauregard, Metairie, New Orleans
3. Albert G. Blanchard, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, New Orleans
4. Franklin Gardner, Lafayette
5. Henry Gray, Springfield Cemetery, Coushatta
6. John B. Grayson, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, New Orleans
7. Harry Hays, Washington Avenue Cemetery, New Orleans
8. Louis Hebert, Breaux Bridge
9. Paul O. Hebert, near Bayou Goula
10. John B. Hood, Metairie, New Orleans
11. St. John R. Liddell, Catahoula Parish
12. James P. Major, Donaldsonville
13. Young A. Moody, New Orleans
14. Alfred Mouton, Lafayette
15. Francis T. Nicholls, Thibodaux
16. Leonidas Polk, Christ Church Cathedral, New Orleans
17. Thomas M. Scott, Greenwood Cemetery, New Orleans
18. Leroy A. Stafford, Greenwood near Cheneyville
19. Richard Taylor, Metairie, New Orleans
20. Allen Thomas, Donaldsonville
Suggestions for Further Reading

The following list of books indicates something of the wealth of material bearing on the war in Louisiana. It is only a sampling, however; later the Civil War Centennial Commission hopes to issue a fuller bibliography of readings that will include Union as well as Confederate accounts.


Basso, Hamilton. *Beauregard, the Great Creole*. Colorful account of Louisiana’s foremost general.

Booth, Andrew B. (editor). *Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands*. Four volumes in three. Attempts to list name and record of every man from Louisiana in the Confederate service. Invaluable source.

Bragg, Jefferson Davis. *Louisiana in the Confederacy*. Good general account but slights the battles.

Butler, Pierce C. *Judah P. Benjamin*. A pioneer biography of the ablest man in the Confederate Cabinet.

Dawson, Sarah Morgan. *A Confederate Girl’s Diary*. One of the best of the war diaries, written by a girl from Baton Rouge.


Dufour, Charles L. *The Night the War Was Lost.* Excellent account of the fall of New Orleans.


Mahan, Alfred T. *The Gulf and Inland Waters.* Good short naval account.

Meade, Robert D. *Judah P. Benjamin.* Later biography of the Confederate leader.


Parks, Joseph H. *Gen. Edmund Kirby-Smith, C. S. A.* Excellent biography of the commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department.

Roland, Charles P. *Louisiana Sugar Plantations During the American Civil War.* Scholarly description of the impact of war on the sugar parishes.


Sears, Louis M. *John Slidell.* Life of the Confederate minister to France.
