

The American Civil War Museum

Study Guide

THE DEEP SOUTH

Pre-war plantation life in the deep south was a non-mechanized age, in which slaves were vital to an economy based on cotton production. The plantation owners were the south's social aristocrats.

THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH

The North's mills and factories usually were family-operated. Their owners wanted high tariffs as protection against goods from abroad, while the south favored low tariffs to encourage export of its cotton and tobacco.

THE COTTON GIN

Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1793 increased the profit in cotton growing. This in turn increased the demand for slaves to work in expanding cotton fields.

CANING OF SUMNER

Charles Sumner, an anti-slavery Senator from Massachusetts, was assaulted in the Senate Chamber May 22, 1856 by Preston Brooks, a Representative from South Carolina, because of a speech Sumner had made two days before. This incident sharpened sectional antagonisms.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The Underground Railroad was a name given to a system in the Northern states before the Civil War by which escaped slaves were secretly helped to safety in the North. It was called the Underground Railroad because its activities had to be conducted in secrecy and because railroad terms were used. Harriet Beecher Stowe gained first-hand knowledge of fugitive slaves through her contact with the Underground Railroad in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her book, Uncle Tom's Cabin did much to arouse Northern sympathy for the plight of the slaves.

JOHN BROWN

October 16, 1859, John Brown and 21 others attacked the United States arsenal and rifle works at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), with the intention of seizing weapons and arming slaves for an uprising. He was hung for treason December 2, 1859. The nation was divided in their fear and admiration of him.

DRED SCOTT

A United States Supreme Court decision in 1857 written by Chief Justice Roger Taney, refusing the freedom of Dred Scott. This case outraged the abolitionists, and pleased the slaveholders.

LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES

Debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas during the Illinois Senatorial Election of 1858 served to make a national figure of Lincoln. He lost the Senate Election, but two years later defeated Douglas for the Presidency.

ATTACK ON FORT SUMTER

As Commander of Secessionist Forces at Charleston, S.C., General Beauregard ordered the bombardment of Fort Sumter, held by Union Forces. Edmund Ruffin, a fire-breathing proponent of secession, was permitted to fire one of the first shots.

SOUTHERN WAR-TIME LEADERS

Jefferson Davis was President of the Confederate States. Alexander Stephens was Vice President. Joseph E. Johnston was one of the South's first military leader. Judah Benjamin was the Confederate Secretary of State.

NORTHERN WAR-TIME LEADERS

Simon Cameron was a Pennsylvania politician and Lincoln's first Secretary of War. Edwin M. Stanton was Secretary of War during most of the conflict. William H. Seward was Secretary of State, and Gideon Welles was Secretary of the Navy.

JACKSON GETS HIS NICKNAME

This is the scene at Manassas, Virginia, during the first major battle of the war (First Bull Run). To rally his men, Confederate General Benard Bee pointed to General Thomas J. Jackson on the distant hill and cried: "There stands Jackson like a stone wall"!

MONITOR AND MERRIMAC

The first battle in history between ironclad ships occurred on March 9, 1862, at Hampton Roads, Virginia. John Ericson, a Swedish immigrant, completed the Union's Monitor just in time to get it into battle and save a Union fleet from the Confederate Merrimac or Virginia. Here Ericson is shown with Admiral David Dixon Porter who successfully ran the Confederate batteries at Vicksburg in 1863.

THE SLIDELL CASE

An episode which threatened to bring British and French aid to the South occurred on Nov. 8, 1861, when a Union Naval Commander took James M. Mason and John Slidell from a British ship the HMS Trent. They were to be the South's representatives to London and Paris, respectively. Lincoln ordered their release, and apologized to Britain, averting trouble.

MAXIMILIAN IN MEXICO

While the United States was desperately fighting a Civil War, the French took advantage of the situation to violate the Monroe Doctrine by sending French troops to Mexico and establishing a puppet government there. Maximilian and Carlotta, Austrian royalty, were put on the throne of Mexico. When the war ended, the United States forced France to withdraw her troops, and Benito Juarez, a Mexican patriot, caused Maximilian's capture and execution.

JENNIE WADE

The only citizen of Gettysburg killed during the three day-battle was 20-year-old Mary Virginia "Jennie" Wade. She is shown here working dough, preparing to bake, just before the fatal bullet pierced two doors to kill her.

NATIONAL CEMETERY

In 1863 Architect William Saunders, later, the first master of the National Grange, designed the landscaping and layout of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg. At the time he was Superintendent of Propagating Gardens of the Department of Agriculture. He was seated on the platform at the time of President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863.

NORTHERN MILITARY LEADERS

During the American Civil War over 500 men served as Generals in the Union army. Among them were George B. McClellan, the first commander of the Army of the Potomac, which Ambrose Burnside and Joseph Hooker also commanded, none to Lincoln's satisfaction. Winfield Scott, who had captured Mexico City in 1847, was the commander of the United States Army at the outset of the war.

SOUTHERN MILITARY LEADERS

During the American Civil War there were more than 400 men who served as Generals in the Confederate army. Among them were Ambrose Hill and John B. Hood, two of Robert E. Lee's best infantry commanders. Earl Van Dorn fought along the Mississippi. Stand Waite, a Cherokee, fought in the Indian territory.

ROSE GREENHOW

Rose Greenhow was one of the most famous Southern spies. She was a Washington society leader who gathered information at social affairs and, as shown here, passed it on to Southern messengers

BELLE BOYD

Belle Boyd was a Southern spy whose information helped “Stonewall” Jackson outwit the Union several times. Here she is shown shooting a Union soldier in her mother’s home.

CLARA BARTON

Miss Barton was the “Angel of the Battlefields.” She followed the Union troops into battle, ministering to the wounded and the sick. Through her efforts, the American Red Cross was founded.

ADMIRAL DAVID G. FARRAGUT

A great Union naval leader was Admiral Farragut. Here he is shown lashed to the rigging during the Battle of Mobile Bay.

“STONEWALL” JACKSON MORTALLY WOUNDED

General Lee lost one of his most trusted subordinates when “Stonewall” Jackson was fatally wounded in the Battle of Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863. Jackson was mortally wounded by fire from his own men while conducting a reconnaissance after dark.

SOUTHERN MILITARY LEADERS

Here are some more of the South’s most successful commanders. J.E.B. Stuart was Lee’s cavalry leader, Nathan Bedford Forrest was another cavalry chief acting in the west. Jubal Early raided to the outskirts of Washington in 1864 and Col. John S. Mosby was a guerrilla chieftain.

NORTHERN MILITARY LEADERS

Here are some more of the most famous Northern military leaders. George A. Custer was a youthful, daring and successful Cavalry commander. William T. Sherman cut a swath of devastation through the South. Sheridan finally cleared the Confederates out of the Shenandoah Valley. George G. Meade was the Union leader who defeated Lee at Gettysburg.

54TH MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY

Approximately 200,000 black soldiers, designated as the United States Colored Troops, served in the Union Army. By the war’s end, 10% of the Union forces were black. Represented here is the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the first black regiment recruited in the North. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw outlines the plan of attack on Battery Wagner, located outside of Charleston, SC, July 18, 1863.

APPOMATTOX

This is the scene at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, April 9, 1865, when Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant. This in effect ended the war. Lee, dressed in a new uniform shown reading the surrender terms. Looking on is Grant, his uniform muddied by a long ride in the rain that morning.

ASSASSINATION OF LINCOLN

Here is shown the assassination at Ford’s Theater in Washington, DC of Abraham Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth, April 14, 1865, less than a week after Appomattox. The President and Mrs. Lincoln were watching a play, “Our American Cousin” when Booth, a well-known actor, slipped into the box and fired the fatal bullet.

WILL'S HOUSE

Abraham Lincoln stayed at the house of David Wills, a prominent republican lawyer the night before he gave his now famous Gettysburg Address. Lincoln came forward to say a few words to a crowd that had gathered outside the night before the dedication of the National Cemetery

BATTLE ROOM AUDITORIUM

The internationally acclaimed Battleroom depicts the three day Battle of Gettysburg.

Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was driving deeply into Pennsylvania when advance units of both armies met on the outskirts of Gettysburg, as Union forces under George Meade sought to head off the Southerners. The first day July 1, 1863, the advance Union forces were driven back through Gettysburg to Cemetery Hill. The Northerners, totaling about 90,000 occupied a fishhook-shaped line from the Round Tops through Cemetery and Culps Hill.

Attacking on both ends of the Union line on July 2nd in savage fighting, the Union forces held. On July 3rd, Lee assaulted the center, on Cemetery Ridge. After massive but ineffective artillery bombardment, Lee sent his infantry including Pickett's Division against the well protected Union center. Pickett's men temporarily broke Meade's line at the crest of the hill, but were unable to hold their ground in the face of fierce Union resistance.

The next day Lee began a full retreat which saved his army for two more years of futile fighting. His casualties at Gettysburg were some 28,000 out of 70,000; Meade's were 23,000 out of 90,000 men.

LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

Dedicating the Gettysburg National Cemetery on November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln made one of the most eloquent speeches ever given. It was so brief (267 words) that few of the thousands who heard it realized its magnificence until they later had time to read it and reflect upon it.