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Life in Union-Occupied Vicksburg

LSU Press to Publish Bradley Clampitt's New History in October 2016

Baton Rouge—During the Civil War, Vicksburg, Mississippi, assumed almost mythic importance in the minds of Americans: northerners and southerners, soldier and civilian. While many historians have told the story of the fall of Vicksburg, Bradley R. Clampitt's *Occupied Vicksburg*, to be published in October 2016, is the first comprehensive examination of life there after its capture by the United States military. The city occupied a strategic and commanding position atop rocky cliffs above the Mississippi River, from which it controlled the great waterway. As a result, Federal forces expended enormous effort, expense, and troops in many attempts to capture Vicksburg. The immense struggle for this southern bastion ultimately heightened its importance beyond its physical and strategic value. Its psychological significance elevated the town's status to one of the war's most important locations.

Vicksburg's defiance dismayed northerners and delighted Confederates, who saw command of the river as a badge of honor. Finally, after a six-week siege that involved intense military and civilian suffering amid heavy artillery bombardment, Union forces captured the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy," ending the bloody campaign.

In the war-ravaged town, indiscriminate hardships befell soldiers and civilians alike during the last two years of the conflict and immediately after its end. In *Occupied Vicksburg*, Clampitt shows that following the Confederate withdrawal, Federal forces confronted myriad challenges in the city including filth, disease, and a never-ending stream of black and white refugees. Union leaders also responded to the pressures of newly free people and persistent guerrilla violence in the surrounding countryside. Detailing the trials of blacks, whites, northerners, and southerners, *Occupied Vicksburg* stands as a significant contribution to Civil War studies, adding to our understanding of military events and the home front. Clampitt's astute research provides insight into the very nature of the war and enhances existing scholarship on the experiences of common people during America's most cataclysmic event.

Bradley R. Clampitt is associate professor and chair of the Department of History and Native American Studies at East Central University and the author of *The Confederate Heartland: Military and Civilian Morale in the Western Confederacy*.

October 2016
304 pages, 6 x 9
978-0-8071-6338-2
Cloth \$48.00s, ebook available
Civil War

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