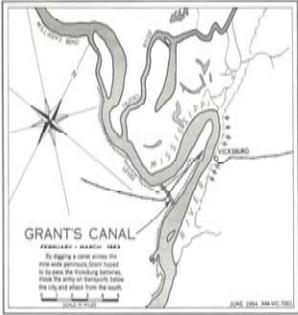




Grant's Canal



Believing it could leave Vicksburg high and dry by building a man-made channel to change the course of the Mississippi River, the Union army commenced work on a canal on June 27, 1862. Intending to catch

enough of the current's force to divert the river, the Federals hoped to make Vicksburg militarily worthless without firing a shot.

Under command of Brigadier General Thomas Williams, a 3,000-man infantry brigade composed of soldiers from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Michigan began felling trees and turning dirt.



General Thomas Williams

Disease, however, soon began spreading like wildfire through the ranks. Dysentery, diarrhea, malaria, and various fevers took a heavy toll in addition to men falling victim to heat exhaustion and sun stroke. *"The labor of making this cut is far greater than estimated by anybody,"* confessed Williams.

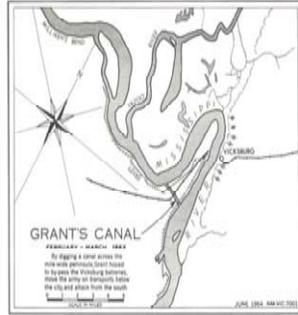


To augment his fast-dwindling workforce, Williams reported that *"Between 1,100 and 1,200 blacks, gathered from neighboring plantations by armed parties, are now engaged in the work of excavating, cutting down trees, and grubbing up roots."*

But, by July 24, 1862, work on the canal stopped and Williams's weary soldiers withdrew with Admiral David Glasgow Farragut's West Gulf Blockading Squadron to safer waters.



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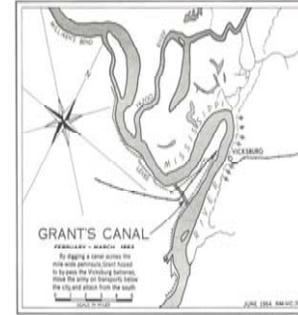


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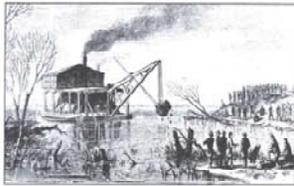
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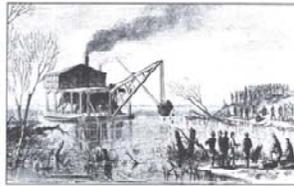
When a sudden rise in the river during construction broke through the dam built at the head of the canal, flooding the area, and filling it with back water and sediment, a desperate effort was made to rescue the effort. Two huge steam-driven dipper



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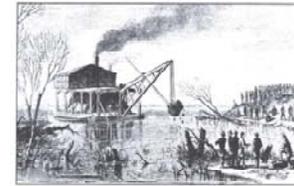
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For additional information contact:
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