

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

A major portion of the Moss Plantation on which the Battle of Mansfield was fought is now the Mansfield Battle State Park and as such is kept in a park like condition. A centrally located building houses a museum which contains relics of the battle of Mansfield, displays of confederate and federal equipment and dioramas of the battle on the field.

With the exception of commemorative monuments marking the location of various forces, the area is still much the same as it was at the time of the battle. The surrounding area is rural and sparsely settled. The battlefield is still surrounded by woods and the original fence rows still stand. The road mentioned by General Taylor in his description of the area is now State Highway 175.

The appearance of the area at the time of the Red River Campaign was described by General Richard Taylor in his account of the battle. He wrote, the road from Natchitoches to Shreveport through Pleasant Hill and Mansfield passed through a hilly country and for the most part followed a divide, crossing very few streams that furnished enough water to supply a large army. Most of the area was heavily wooded and scattered farms along the way were incapable of furnishing any considerable amount of forage for either army.

General Taylor helped to explain his choice of a place to make a stand with these words: three roads lead from this place (Mansfield) to Shreveport, the Kingston, the middle and the Ketachi. The distance by the first, "the one nearest the valley of the Red River, is thirty eight miles; by the second, forty; and by the third, forty five. If the federal forces could get past Mansfield, then, the enemy would have three roads, one of which would be near his fleet on the Red River. Only one direct passable road connected Mansfield and Pleasant Hill".

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is believed to be the most important battle of the Civil War, West of the Mississippi, was fought on and near the Moss Plantation, part of which is now the Mansfield Battle Park, near Mansfield, Louisiana.

It was at this point on April 18, 1864, confederate forces under the command of General Richard Taylor, stopped the federal advance on east Texas and the upper Red River. This defeat under the Red River campaign which was a massive military operation under the command of Major General Nathaniel Banks. General Banks employed 36,000 federal soldiers and had under the direct command of Admiral David D. Porter a naval force of fourteen ironclads, six tinclads and numerous transport and supply vessels, believed to number sixty in all. This huge military array was tied up for three months at a time when the United States Army was attempting to defeat Lee at Richmond.

Although the Red River campaign was a costly military endeavor, the main purpose of the campaign was to satisfy economic and political commitments. President Lincoln was under great pressure by prominent New England industrialists and politicians who demanded that an expedition be sent to Texas to secure the cotton lands and free labor to supply the idle cotton mills of the north. A second group consisting of the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Iowa were experiencing a pinch on their economy. They demanded, under threats of secession, that the Mississippi River be immediately opened to their trade. In October 1862, President Lincoln conceded to these demands and commissioned General Banks to establish headquarters in New York and raise an army for this purpose. After many delays the expedition departed from New York on December 4, 1862, to begin a campaign which many months later would end in defeat and the

loss of 762 Union troops killed or wounded and 1551 missing. One thousand confederate soldiers were killed or wounded and both sides lost untold amounts of materials and supplies.

So crushing was the defeat, no further major federal effort was made west of the Mississippi.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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