Unconditional Surrender

Ulysses S. Grant in the Civil War

by Curt Fields
and Chris Mackowski

Unedited Excerpt

SB
Savas Beatie
California

First edition, first printing

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Fields, Curt, 1948- author
Title: Unconditional surrender : Ulysses S. Grant in the Civil War / Curt Fields.
Description: El Dorado Hills, CA : Savas Beatie LLC, 2025. | Series: Emerging civil war series | Summary: "Ulysses S. Grant didn't think he'd even have an opportunity to get into the war, yet, by the time it ended, he commanded every soldier serving in the United States Army. This book allows readers to walk in Grant's footsteps with Dr. Curt Fields, the nation's foremost Ulysses S. Grant living historian. Distilled within these pages are years of extensive study that offer an ideal introduction to the "dust-covered man" from the West who won the Civil War and saved the United States"-- Provided by publisher.
Identifiers: LCCN 2025020731 | ISBN 9781611217445 paperback | ISBN 9781611217452 ebook
Subjects: LCSH: Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885--Military leadership | United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns | Generals--United States--Biography | LCGFT: Biographies
Classification: LCC E672 .F54 2025 | DDC 973.8/2092 $a B--dc23/eng/20250618
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2025020731

Savas Beatie LLC
989 Governor Drive, Suite 101
El Dorado Hills, California 95762
916-941-6896 / sales@savasbeatie.com / www.savasbeatie.com

All Savas Beatie titles are available for bulk purchase discounts. Contact us for details.
Proudly published, printed, and warehoused in the United States of America.

Introduction

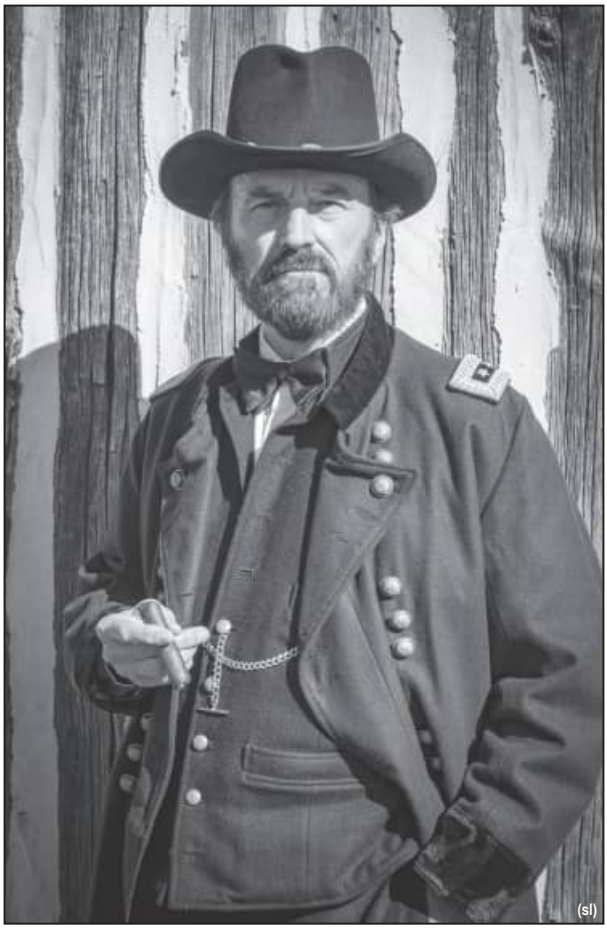
By Curt Fields

My friend (and co-author/editor) Chris Mackowski shocked me with his exclamation, "Hey, Pal! You should write a book!" I was taken aback and more than a bit overwhelmed. I could only think to say, "Me?"

Chris laughed and asked, "Who better than you?"

With that encouragement, I was off on an odyssey that put to paper the studies that have prepared me for portraying Grant—and, in a measure, my experiences *as* Grant to write this narrative *about* Grant in the Civil War. It is a look, from the inside out, at what he did and why.

I have studied Grant closely for more than a decade, reading primary and secondary sources—many of them multiple times. I have walked most of the places and battlefields where Grant walked. By doing so, have felt a deep closeness with him. I wasn't walking the ground with an intent to write a book but rather to get a sense of what he saw that might then help me add greater breadth to my presentations. My feelings on those walks have always been strong. Trying to match his descriptions and "see" battlefields or places as he did is akin to focusing a stereoscope card, bringing two images together to see one image with depth and detail.



Writing a sweeping narrative about Grant and his battles in the war was tempting. However, "sweeping" and "dynamic" were not in his vocabulary. I wanted a more personal perspective.

Grant was a mystery to people who knew him, and he has been a mystery to the subsequent generations that have read about him. Sherman said he thought Grant was a mystery even to himself and predicted 10,000 years or so would pass before Grant would be understood and maybe not even then.

As I learned about him, for instance, it was a surprise to discover that Grant had a great sense of humor and that he was a devoted and indulgent father. I was equally surprised to learn that he would much rather capture a man than wound or kill him. His determination to win in battle was steely, yet his humanity to the killed, wounded, and captured was profound.

Grant was reluctant to write about himself and, for years, resisted suggestions to write his memoirs. Circumstances eventually forced his hand, but for the longest time, he was leery of the idea. It brings to mind a quote I like from President Lincoln, which is a sentiment I think Grant shared: "Biographies, as generally written, are not only misleading but false. The author makes a wonderful hero of his subject. He magnifies his perfections, if he has any, and suppresses his imperfections. History is not history unless it is the truth."

Curt speaks to thousands of people across the country each year. Here, he addresses an audience in southern Ohio's "Land of Grant," the area where a young Hiram Ulysses Grant grew up. (ac/cf)

I am certainly a Grant enthusiast, but I am not a Grant apologist. He had his flaws and foibles, of which I am painfully aware. But it's because he was wonderfully human and complex.

What I have written here about what Grant will, I hope, give the reader some insight into what he did and why.

Grant told his brother Orvil as they were walking home from an evening recruiting rally in Galena, Illinois, days after the war started, "I am in to do all I can."

I have been as well.

* * *

What follows are the most-frequently asked questions Curt gets during his presentations about Grant.

How would you address questions about Grant's drinking?

Grant was a man who had a problem *with* alcohol, not *for* alcohol, and the Grand Canyon lies between those two prepositions. A problem with alcohol describes Grant's condition. He said himself that more than one drink will make his speech slurred—so we're talking two drinks—and more than two drinks will make him unsteady on his feet.

And it hit him like a locomotive, really hard and really fast. Physiologically, he could not process alcohol.

FROM CHRIS: Let me put my editorial hat on for a moment rather than my authorial hat. "Being" Grant has given Curt an insightful way of knowing and understanding a man who has a historical reputation as a sphinx. I wanted to capture Curt's unique position, at least in part, by using photos of Curt as Grant throughout the book as illustrations. I also thought this would be a way to help put Curt's personal stamp on this biography. I make this point because less charitable critics might think it presumptuous of Curt to use his own photos in the book; the idea—and any such blame that might be attached to it—is my own. If there is credit to be had from the idea, I direct it all to Curt and the many talented photographers who have worked with him over the years to help channel and capture Grant's essence.

Dialogue in the text that appears in quotation marks has been quoted directly from a source. On occasion, where a source indirectly quotes a person's speech, we have put that dialogue in *italics* rather than in quotation marks. That has allowed us to convey the sense of what a person said without misrepresenting their words as exact quotations.

Did he drink occasionally? He did. But he did not have a problem *for* alcohol. That would indicate addiction: "I've got to have it." Grant was never like that. But of course, that reputation that haunts him.

Why do you think Grant was successful?

He was self driven. He was self confident. He never gave up hope. He always felt there would be another day. But you couldn't just wait around for it, wait for something to happen. That was not Grant. He always felt you had to be busy. He always was driven to work and be productive

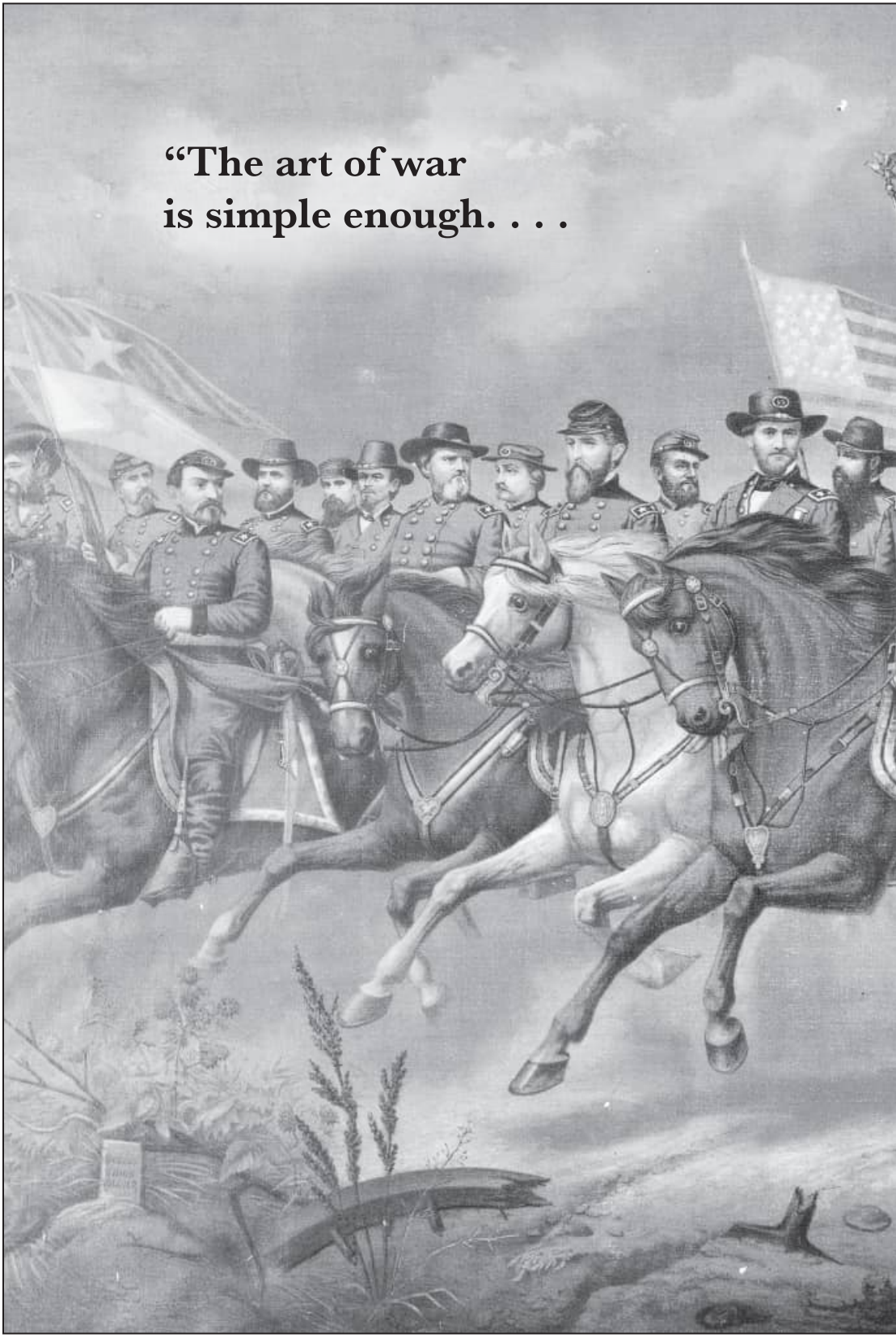
Hidden under his self-effacing, quiet demeanor, he was a brilliant military strategist and tactician—and it's hard to be both, but he was both. Once he got the opportunity to show what he could do, there was no stopping him.

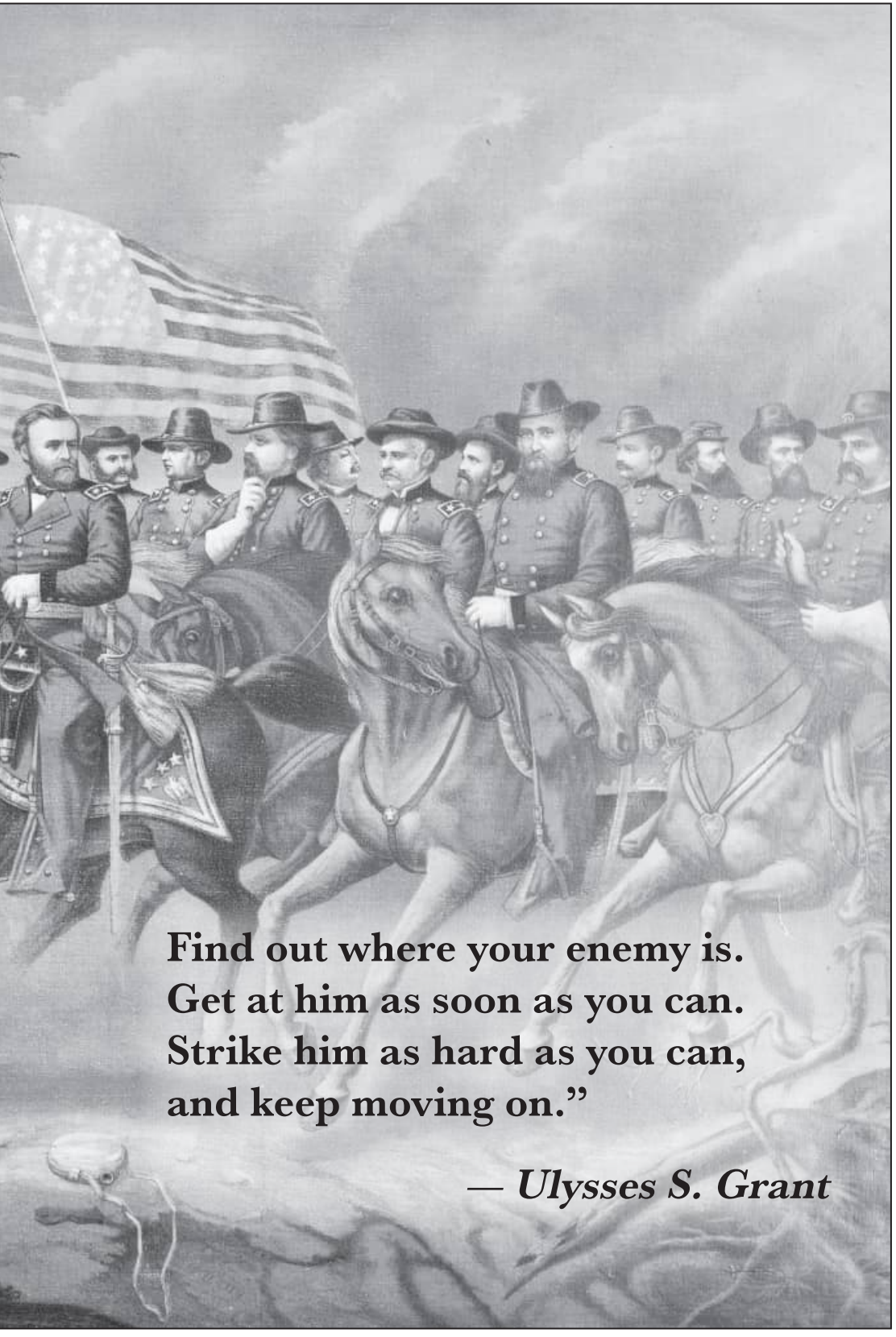
What did Grant want to do that he couldn't?

Take Mobile. He advocated three different times—after Donelson, after Shiloh and the taking of Corinth, and after Vicksburg—to go to Mobile, Alabama. And he was never allowed to. And so Mobile never fell until the final weeks of the war, in mid-April 1865 after Appomattox. But the way Grant saw it, if Mobile had fallen sooner, it quite possibly could have shortened the war.

What did Grant like to eat?

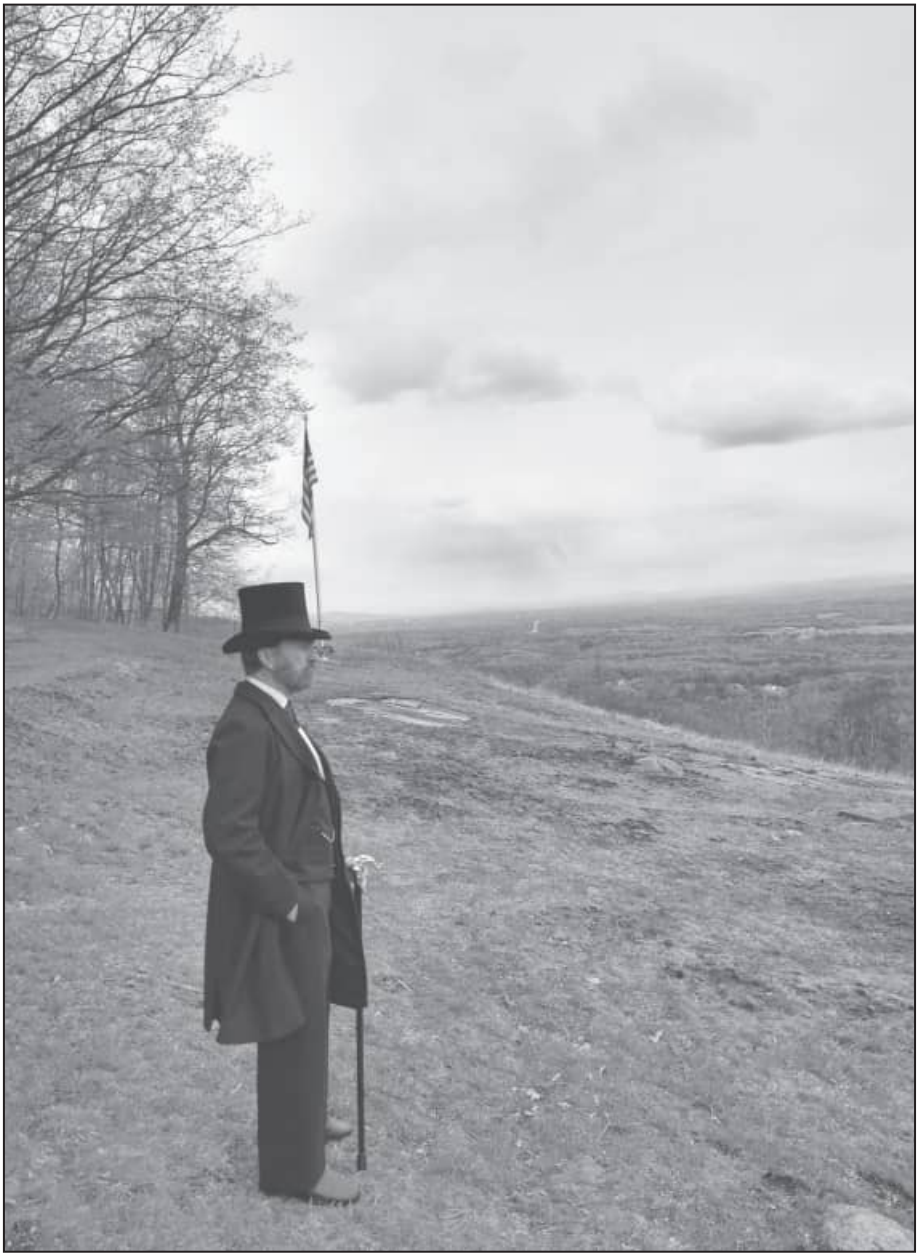
His favorite breakfast was sliced cucumber dipped in cold pickle brine. I think that's because his tongue and mouth were so coated with nicotine that it took something that pungent and that sharp to cut through the coated taste buds so that he could taste anything!


“The art of war
is simple enough. . . .



**Find out where your enemy is.
Get at him as soon as you can.
Strike him as hard as you can,
and keep moving on."**

— Ulysses S. Grant



Grant Takes Command

CHAPTER ONE
April–July 1861

Ulysses S. Grant was afraid he would miss the war.

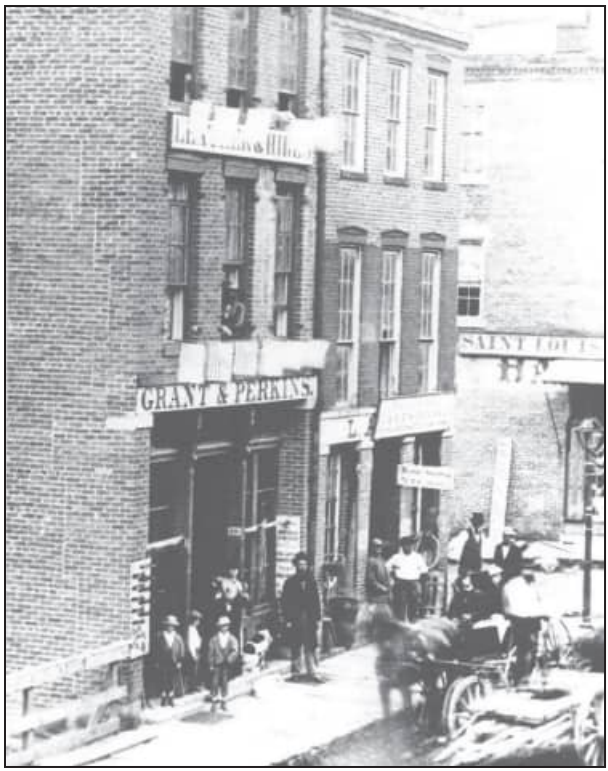
He was days away from his thirty-ninth birthday when the war broke out, toiling unhappily in his father's leather-goods shop in Galena, Illinois. It was the latest in a line of unspectacular careers Grant had undertaken during his seven years as a civilian.

Prior to that, though, he had served as an officer in the United States Army—and had been a war hero at that. He had graduated 21st out of 39 cadets in the West Point Class of 1843 and, like so many of his classmates, served in the war against Mexico. During the final assault on Mexico City, Grant manhandled an artillery piece to the top of a church steeple and blasted one of the gates to the city. The act of valor earned him a brevet promotion to captain.

Postwar assignments along the Great Lakes, in Panama, and on the West Coast took him far from home and his young wife, Julia, whom he had married in August 1848 when he returned to St. Louis from the Mexican War. In 1852, when he transferred with the U.S. 4th Infantry to the Pacific Northwest, he couldn't afford to bring his wife and two children on the pay of a lieutenant. He went without them, but troubles with loneliness then led to troubles with

Grant's time at White Haven in St. Louis were his "lean years," yet they did much to forge his character. (ac/cf)

ILLINOIS, 1861— Grant had lived in Illinois less than a year before civil war broke out, but he had spent considerable time in St. Louis during his early service in the U.S. Army. By the end of 1861, he had traversed much of the state as he settled into his wartime responsibilities.



Jesse Grant worked in the leather industry for most of his life. When his young family lived in Georgetown, Ohio, he owned a tannery. In Galena, Illinois, he owned a leathergoods store, Grant & Perkins (left), although Jesse mostly left daily operations to his sons. **(ac/cm)**

alcohol. Under a cloud, Grant resigned from the army on April 11, 1854, after he had been promoted to full captain.

Back in St. Louis, Grant tried farming. To make ends meet while clearing the trees from his farm, he sold the timber, peddling it as firewood for $4 per cord. After five unproductive years, he gave up on farming and joined a partnership to sell real estate and collect rents. That, too, was unsuccessful.

During the grim winter of 1859, Captain Grant (as he was generally known) gave up on that partnership and asked his father, Jesse, for help. Jesse offered him a job working for his two younger brothers in Galena, Illinois. In April of 1860, he, Julia, and their (now) four young children boarded a steamboat at the St. Louis wharf and headed upriver. At age 38, Grant was starting over, working in the family leather business he hated, but he had a job and poverty had been averted.

A historic plaque marks the former location of Grant & Perkins in downtown Galena. **(mbp)**

The Grants rented a two-story brick house for $100 a year. It sat high atop a bluff north of Main Street; to reach it required a climb up several

On their arrival in Illinois, Ulysses and Julia Grant rented a bluff-top house north of Main Street. Julia described Galena as "a charming, bustling town settled in the rich ore-laden hills of northern Illinois. The atmosphere was so cool and dry, the sun shone so brightly, that it gave us the impression of a smiling welcome. . . . She has greeted us with open arms. I have only pleasant, kindly memories of this home." (loc)

hundred wooden steps. The family "lived so quietly, so inconspicuously," settling into a "quiet routine," according to an early biographer. Grant was thankful to have a way to support his wife and kids, but he loathed the work.

Attorney John Rawlins would play a pivotal role in Grant's professional life. In the wake of Fort Sumter, Grant and Rawlins raised troops together. "This is no longer a question of politics," Rawlins said at one event. "It is simply country or no country." Following Grant's elevation to brigadier general, he appointed Rawlins his chief of staff—a position he would hold for the war's duration. (loc)

Just a year later, civil war erupted. On April 12, South Carolinians fired on Fort Sumter, a Federal installation at the mouth of Charleston Harbor. On April 15, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion. On April 16, following a public meeting in Galena, Grant resolved to join the war effort. "I thought I was done with soldiering," he admitted to his youngest brother, Orvil, as they walked home from the meeting. "I never expected to be in the military again. But I was educated by the Government; and if my knowledge and experience can be of service, I think I ought to offer them." Orvil agreed.

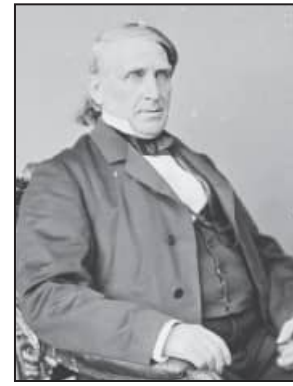
One of the speakers that night had been a local attorney, John Rawlins. "I have been a Democrat all my life; but this is no longer a question of politics. It is simply Union or disunion, country or no country . . ." Rawlins thundered. "We will stand by the flag of our country and appeal to the God of Battles!" This closely reflected Grant's view. For him, the Union cause transcended politics. "There are but two parties now," he privately told his father, "Traitors and Patriots." He would go to war to save the country—although he did admit in a letter to his pro-slavery father-in-law, Col. Frederick Dent, "In all this I can see but the doom of slavery." The colonel's views

had impacted Grant deeply during their time living together at the Dent home of White Haven in St. Louis, but Galena was quite different: "a hotbed of Republican discussion and agitation," according to Grant biographer Ronald C. White.

Congressman Elihu Washburne, a Republican who represented the area around Galena, was a close ally of Lincoln's. He knew of Grant's distinguished Mexican War experience. He also suspected Grant's Democratic leanings, although Grant had been unable to actually vote in the previous year's election because he hadn't yet met the state's residency requirement. In Washburne's eyes, this gave Grant what biographer Ron Chernow described as a "bipartisan veneer." Washburne believed having someone from a different part of the political spectrum would lend credibility to the recruitment effort.

On April 18, men from around Galena gathered for another rally where Washburne gave a rousing, patriotic oration. Then—in a surprise move—he nominated Grant to serve as the chair of the recruiting meeting. Grant, sitting in the back of the room "in grave silence," was shocked to hear his name called. He rose with much embarrassment and made his way to the front of the room. He had the look of "a serious, capable, sympathetic country doctor" with "a certain impressiveness," recounted one writer. "[H]is face thoughtful and resolute. He wore a full beard, light brown in color, trimmed rather close, and the firm line of his lips could be seen."

Rather than giving the crowd a rousing stemwinder of a speech as Washburne had done, Grant spoke calmly, level-headedly, honestly. "The army is not a picnicking party. Nor is it an excursion," he warned the crowd. "You will have hard fare." His sober assessment deflated the meeting's "bombast," replacing it with "genuine, resolute patriotism." Twenty-two men enlisted on the spot. Another eighteen joined the following day. Grant, John Rawlins, and several friends barnstormed the county to raise more recruits, and within a week, he had a full company, the Jo Daviess Guards, named after the county. Grant issued the men pine sticks to use as guns, and he drilled the Guard in Washburne's wide front yard.



"Mr. [Elihu] Washburne, allow me to thank you for the part you have taken in giving me my present position," Grant wrote to the Congressman who became his invaluable political patron. "I think I see your hand in it and admit that I had no personal claims for your kind office in the matter. I can assure you however my whole heart is in the cause which we are fighting for and I pledge myself that if equal to the task before me you shall never have cause to regret the part you have taken." (loc)

The March 27, 1869, issue of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* conjured the scene of Grant's 1861 departure for war. "It was his first step to fame and to the Presidential chair," the paper proclaimed. "As, clad in well-worn citizen's dress, with carpet-bag in hand, he was leaving his residence on the hill, with no higher hope, perhaps, than the command of a company, a woman residing in the neighborhood passed that way and asked him where he was going. 'I am going to Springfield to offer my services to President Lincoln,' was the answer. He never returned to Galena until after his appointment as Lieutenant-General." (fi)

When the company tried to elect Grant their captain, he declined. "I have been graduated at West Point," he told them, "I have been a Captain in the regular army and I should have a Colonelcy or a proper staff appointment—nothing else would be proper." It wasn't a boast; Grant understood his worth in a time of military emergency. He hoped the governor would furnish something appropriate. In the meantime, he made himself as useful as possible, teaching the recruits the basics of military discipline and teaching the officers how to be officers.

On April 25, the Galena recruits—sporting fresh new uniforms made from cloth Grant had picked out himself—prepared to ship out to the state capital in Springfield to muster into Federal service as an eventual part of the 11th Illinois. Citizens flocked to the streetside to watch the march toward the train station, escorted by the local fire company, the Masonic society, the order of Odd Fellows, and a gaggle of local officials. Grant, "with a lean carpet-bag in his hand, stood modestly in the crowd on the sidewalk" and watched them pass, falling in at the end.

Springfield "seethed like a pot with orators and soldiers and place-seekers and glory-hunters," said one writer. Grant hoped for an appointment to some command or other by the governor, yet he did not look at all the part of a military man. One witness described Grant as "seedy": "he had only one suit and that he had worn all winter—his short pipe,

his grizzled beard and old slouch hat did not make him look like a promising candidate for a colonel." Governor Yates's secretery rebuffed him. "Call again," he said.

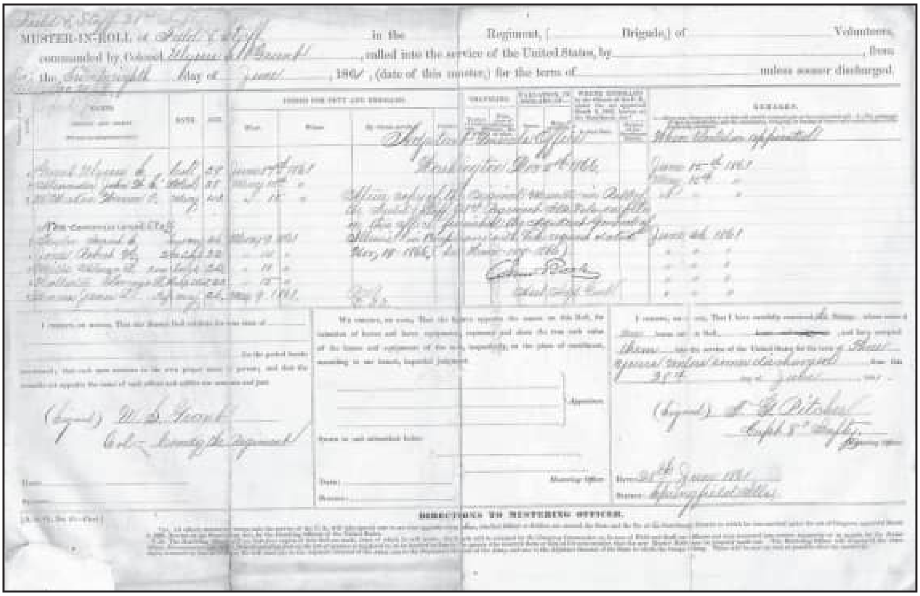
Lacking connections beyond Washburne—who was not on especially friendly terms with Yates—and unwilling to shamelessly promote himself, Grant found his new-found military career over almost as soon as it had started. "I was perfectly sickened at the political wire-pulling for all these commissions and would not engage in it," he wrote his father. As he prepared to return to Galena, though, a last-minute call from the governor led to a staff appointment that took good advantage of Grant's military experience.

There were few such military men around, and Grant's former service as a quartermaster and commissary officer made him instantly invaluable because no one in the adjutant general's office even knew how to requisition supplies. Grant taught procedures and protocols from the ground up. He hated the busy work, but everyone recognized his competence and insight, which almost doomed him as too valuable to promote. "[A]nyone could ask any military question whatsoever of him and receive a clear, concise, and unforgettable answer," claimed one writer.

But a fluke incident a few weeks later opened another door: a fellow officer, discontented about an expected promotion that didn't come through, resigned in a huff, and Grant found himself in temporary command of one of the military encampments around the capital. That, in turn, led to a renewed look from Yates, who soon put Grant in command of the state's mustering-in efforts: as new recruits assembled, Grant oversaw their onboarding and initial training. He was so successful at the work that the regiment in Mattoon renamed its camp "Camp Grant" in his honor.

Yet no coveted colonelcy came. Too antsy to get involved, too worried that he'd miss out, Grant then broke his own rule: He began to seek out advancement. He tried another direct appeal to Yates. No luck. He made an appeal in Missouri. No luck. He appealed to up-and-coming Union general George B. McClellan,

John Pope, a former friend of Grant's in Mexico, had commanded Camp Yates but quit in disgust after being denied a promotion to brigadier general. Grant filled Pope's slot, which opened the door to additional opportunities. (loc)


MUSTER-IN-ROLL of Field & Staff in the Regiment, (Brigade,) of Volunteers,
commanded by Colonel Ulysses S. Grant, called into the service of the United States, by , from
the day of June, 1861, (date of this muster,) for the term of unless sooner discharged.

DIRECTIONS TO MUSTERING OFFICER.

Note Grant's name first on the muster roll of the 21st Illinois Infantry. (isa)

then serving Ohio. Still no luck. He tried the governor of Ohio, who had been a childhood friend. Nothing.

The *Galena Daily Gazette* rallied to his cause:

> *We are now in want of just such soldiers as he is, and we hope the government will invite him to higher command. He is the very soul of honor, and no man breathes who has a more patriotic heart. We want among our young soldiers the influence of the rare leadership of men like Captain Grant.*

Grant even sent a letter directly to the office of the adjutant general of the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C. "I have the honor, very respectfully, to render my services, until the close of the War, in such capacity as may be offered," he wrote. "[I]n view of my present age, and length of service, I feel myself competent to command a regiment," he wrote, "if the president, in his judgement, should see fit to entrust one to me."

The War Department never answered. Biographer Ronald White speculated that, "The harried [adjutant general, Lorenzo Thomas] must have put the request in a drawer, because fifteen years passed before it was discovered—in 1876—by a subsequent adjutant general."

During this period, Grant happened to be in St. Louis on the day newly raised Federal soldiers

prevented a Confederate militia from taking control of the United States arsenal in the city. Grant called it "splendid work" that saved not just the arsenal but the city itself. "If St. Louis had been captured by the rebels it would have made a vast difference in our war," he later mused. "It would have been a terrible task to have recaptured St. Louis—one of the most difficult that could be given to any military man. Instead of a campaign before Vicksburg, it would have been a campaign before St. Louis."

Grant didn't realize it, but during this period of limbo, his own good work was actually catching up to him. One of the last regiments he'd mustered in, the 21st Illinois in Mattoon, was undergoing convulsions. Its colonel, a bombastic, hard-drinking rowdy named Simon S. Goode, had allowed discipline to slip so badly that men in the regiment raided local farms, caroused drunkenly, set fires, and rioted for bread. The junior officers petitioned Yates to replace Goode with Grant, who had made a deep impression on them during his brief time drilling them when they had mustered in. Yates followed their wishes and, on June 15, he telegraphed Grant to offer him the job.

* * *

When Grant showed up to take command of the regiment—a return to Camp Grant, as it happened—he arrived in "a plain blue blouse coat and an ordinary black felt hat, and never had about him a single mark to distinguish his rank." Two Illinois Congressmen who would go on to play major roles in Grant's military life greeted him. One was John McClernand, the other John Logan, who introduced Grant to the men with a two-hour speech. Concluding, he said, "Allow me to present you your new colonel, U. S. Grant."

Grant's first comments to the regiment, in a voice not loud but clear: "Men, go to your quarters."

And thus began Grant's effort to tame the untamed 21st. The regiment consisted of "lusty young men from the farms, shops, and offices of the district," said one writer. James L. Crane, who served as chaplain, described the regiment as "a sort of disorderly mass, a hodge-podge of entanglements, an unsystematic, unarranged hurly-burly of officers and privates."

"[John] Logan's popularity in this district was unbounded," Grant wrote of first meeting the man who would later become a trusted subordinate. Logan gave "a speech which he has hardly equaled since for force and eloquence. It breathed loyalty and devotion to the Union which inspired my men to such a point that they would have volunteered to remain in the army as long as an enemy of the country continued to bear arms against it." (loc)

"[Grant] is no dissembler, no assumer of snob dignity; he has more than ordinary freedom from selfishness, and appears to no one as an ambitious man. He is a sincere, thinking, real man; by real we mean that he does not take to shows, shams, or 'flourishes,' but to realities. . . .

"[H]e is magnanimous, having a special regard for the feelings and interests of others. He has no desire to rise by the fall of others; no glorying over another's abasement; no exulting over another's tears. . . ."

– Chaplain James L. Crane, 21st Illinois

Grant knew them from his days mustering them in and considered them good men overall, although as he later said, "There were men in it who could be led astray. . . ." He admitted, "I found it very hard work for a few days to bring all them into anything like subordination; but the good majority favored discipline, and by the application of a little regular army punishment all were reduced to as good discipline as one could ask."

Chaplain Crane spent considerable time with his new commander. "Grant would correct, and, if necessary, punish any want of conformity to rule, or neglect of orders, or infraction of regulation, in as cool and unruffled a manner as you would give directions to your gardener before breakfast," Crane observed. In less than ten days, Grant tamed the regiment. "All this complicated confusion was brought to order and subordination by his quiet, unostentatious vigor and vigilance," the chaplain added. The men began to call their commander "the quiet man."

Crane had heard the rumors from the prewar army that Grant was "a lover of ardent spirits" who "indulged too freely in their use," but he saw nothing of the sort. "I was with him for the most part of three months, in all sorts of weather, marches, and exposure," Crane wrote; "we ate at the same table, often slept in the same tent, and sat around the same camp-fire; and I never knew him to allow ardent spirits in the regiment, not did I ever know him to taste them in any form."

The men responded positively to Grant's firm but fair expectations, and Grant took notice. "I don't believe there is a more orderly set of troops in the

volunteer service," he finally proclaimed. "I have been very strict with them and they seem to like it." And indeed, they did. "We knew we had a real soldier over us," one junior officer said approvingly. Chaplain Crane observed "a strong mutual attachment between Grant and the men of his regiment. . . ."

On July 3, orders came for the regiment to relocate to Quincy, Illinois, along the Mississippi River. Seeing an opportunity to continue their training on the march, Grant refused the opportunity to entrain them for a quicker ride. "I prefer to do my first marching in a friendly, and not in an enemy's, country," he told a superior. But en route, word arrived of a Federal regiment harried by Confederate troops on the Missouri side of the river, in Palmyra, so Grant rushed the 21st to the scene.

Erected on July 11, 2008, at a cost of $2,950, a monument in Quincy, Illinois, marks the location where Grant's 21st Illinois crossed the Mississippi River to Palmyra, Missouri, on their first mission. (js)

While that emergency quickly vanished, Grant's men kept busy with various duties but finally received orders to march toward the town of Florida. There, Confederate Col. Thomas Harris and a band of partisan rangers were harrying locals. The episode led to one of Grant's most important lessons of the war.

"[W]hen we got on the road and found every house deserted I was anything but easy," Grant later admitted. He maintained discipline, refusing any of his men to enter the abandoned homes. Eventually, the column neared a hill where Grant expected to find Harris's men waiting for them. "Harris had been encamped in a creek bottom for the sake of being near water," Grant explained. "The hills on either side of the creek extended to a considerable height, possibly more than a hundred feet." The position looked formidable.

"[M]y heart kept getting higher and higher until it felt to me as though it was in my throat," Grant said. "I would have given anything then to have been back in Illinois, but I did not have the moral courage to halt and consider what to do; I kept right on."

Thomas Alexander Harris, sketched here for his April 1895 obituary in the Louisville, Kentucky, *Courier-Journal,* taught Grant one of Grant's most important lessons of the war—without even realizing it. (cj)

In 1881, members of the 21st Illinois dedicated a monument in Ironton, Missouri's Emerson Park, commemorating the occasion of Grant's promotion to brigadier general. (isa)

The column crested the hill only to discover Harris's men had abandoned their camp.

"It occurred to me at once that Harris had been as much afraid of me as I had been of him," Grant realized. "This was a view of the question I had never taken before; but it was one I never forgot afterwards."

* * *

Upon the regiment's return from its illuminating mission, the men received several other assignments, most of which involved going from place to place in whack-a-mole fashion. But on August 5, Grant received the assignment that would finally propel him inexorably down the Mississippi River.

It was Chaplain Crane, newspaper in hand, who flagged him down. "Colonel, I have some news here that will interest you," he said.

"What have you, Chaplain?"

Crane passed him a copy of the *Missouri Daily Democrat*. "I see that you are made brigadier-general."

"Well, sir, I had no suspicion of it," Grant replied, taking a seat. "It never came from any request of mine. That's some of Washburne's work." President Lincoln had asked to the Congressional delegation for some recommendations for promotion, and Grant had unanimously been chosen as the first on a list of seven.

Grant's promotion came at a time of high tension for the Union. On July 21, just outside Manassas, Virginia, Confederate forces routed Federal forces in what became known as the battle of Bull Run. Then, on August 10, days after Grant's elevation, Federal forces lost a battle at Wilson's Creek near Springfield in southwest Missouri. The Federal commander, Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon, fell as a casualty—the first general officer killed in the war. "I have a task before me of no trifling moment and want all the encouragement possible," he told Julia.

Later in life, Grant saw something of himself in the early war troubles of Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell, the Union general defeated at First Manassas. "You will remember people called him a drunkard and a traitor," Grant told a reporter. "Well, he never drank a drop of liquor in his life, and a more loyal man never lived." (loc)

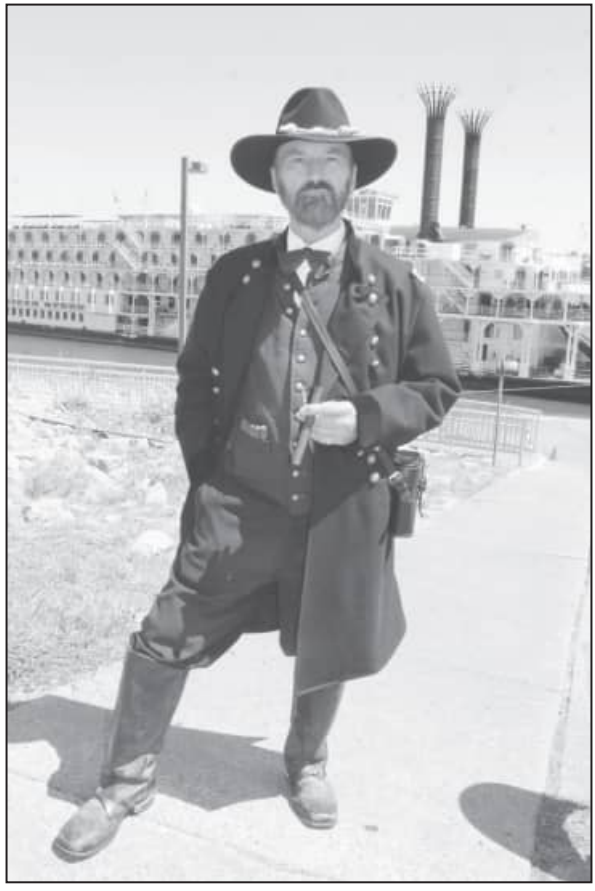
This image from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* shows the Union defeat at Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861, which accentuated the state's already-tense situation. (loc)

Over the course of a few weeks, department commander Maj. Gen. John "The Pathfinder" Fremont shifted Grant from one posting to another across southern Missouri: Ironton, Jefferson City, Cape Girardeau. "My duties are active but I enjoy most excellent health," Grant wrote Julia.

Ultimately, Grant found himself in command of an area that encompassed southeast Missouri and southern Illinois: the river gateway of the Mississippi River to the Deep South. Grant's competence had impressed Fremont, who decided to place Grant at the tip of a spear Fremont was aiming down the Mississippi. "I believed him to be a man of great activity and promptness in obeying orders without question or hesitation," Fremont later explained. "I selected him for qualities I could not find combined in any other officer, for General Grant was a man of unassuming character, not given to self-elation, or dogged persistence, and of iron will." Coming from a man who personified self-elation and assuming character, this was high praise, indeed.

Grant's unflappable nature would prove vital for navigating a controversy that erupted soon after he arrived at his new posting.

John Fremont, the Republican Party's first presidential candidate, earned his nickname as "The Pathfinder" from his successful explorations of the American West. While press portrayals seemed romanticized, Fremont actually thought of himself in such inflated terms. (loc)



End of Unedited Excerpt