

Part of the Series - Frequently overlooked sites in and around Corinth, Mississippi.

Corinth's Civil War Battery F.

No, it's not that kind of a battery. You can't put it in a flashlight or a digital camera, but you can visit it on Davis Street to the northeast of the Magnolia Regional Hospital. Back in the Civil War days the word battery had two definitions: a grouping of artillery pieces for tactical purposes; or, any place where cannon or mortars are mounted. In this case, we use the second meaning. Thank you Mr. Webster.

Some folks like to claim the Civil War saw the first use of earthworks for military defense, at least on a large scale. These claims are wrong on both counts as any Roman legionnaire would be glad to tell you. But there is no denying the widespread use of earthworks during the American conflict. Most of the great trenches and forts were torn down or plowed under after the war but there are numerous surviving examples, many right here in Corinth.

In the spring of 1862 Confederates built a defensive line of earthworks roughly seven miles long. The line began northwest of town and in a great semi circle stretched around to the southeast. It was built to protect the soldiers during a battle that never happened. At the end of May '62 the Southern army left Corinth and the Federal armies moved in. The Union commander, Henry Halleck, or "Old Brains" as he was called behind his back, thought it a good idea to continue work on the entrenchments. His plan would completely encircle the town of Corinth.

Halleck had his West Point trained engineers select sites for six forts, each in a position to defend Corinth from an attack along one of the important roads leading into town. Each fort, or Battery, would be large enough to hold several cannon. Once completed the Battery's would be connected by rifle pits. Work began and as the forts took shape they were given names; Battery A through Battery F.

In July of '62 Halleck was promoted and given a new job desk in Washington, D.C. He was replaced by General Grant who was not too keen on Halleck's fortification plans, claiming "They were laid out on a scale that would have required 100,000 men to fully man them." He was right, and Grant didn't have nearly that many men in Corinth. As a consequence, the forts were finished but they were never connected by the smaller rifle pits.

Only one of the six forts was ever put to the military test; Battery F. It was located on a ridge a mile and a half northwest of the railroad junction, in an excellent position to guard against an enemy approaching along the Memphis & Charleston tracks. On October 3, 1862, the first day of the Battle of Corinth, a Confederate brigade under

Brigadier General John C. Moore approached the position from the north. He had nearly 2,000 men from Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri and Texas. They were intent on reaching Corinth and Battery F was in their way.

Inside the fort were two cannon from an Ohio unit with four more just outside manned by men from Minnesota and Illinois. There was some artillery action but the real fight was between Moore's troops and an all Iowa brigade led by Colonel Marcellus Crocker. The Hawkeyes, slightly outnumbered by the Confederates, made good use of the high ground and fought the Southerners to a standstill in a 45 minute stand up fight. Eventually Southern gains on other parts of the battlefield forced the Union troops to retire to fortifications near the Corona Female College. The fighting at Battery F was over.

Directions to Battery F, as well as detailed accounts of the fighting, can be picked up at the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center, a unit of Shiloh National Military Park. The visitor center is located at 501 West Linden Street and open daily from 8:30 to 4:30. Park staff can be reached at 662-287-9273.