

SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS

Fort Blakeley Camp 1864

MAIL CALL



FORT BLAKELEY
GARRISON FLAG

Baldwin County, Alabama

September 15, 2010

Volume 11 Special Edition 3



Special Edition

Battle of Fort Blakeley April 9, 1865

SCV - REMEMBERING AND HONORING

FORT MORGAN



DAMN THE TORPEDOES

Fort Morgan is a historic fort at the mouth of Mobile Bay, Alabama, United States. Some regard it as "one of the finest examples of military architecture in the New World." The post was named in honor of Revolutionary War hero Daniel Morgan. Construction was completed in 1834 and it received its first garrison in March of the same year.

Fort Morgan is at the tip of Mobile Point at the western terminus of State Route 180 (Alabama). It and Dauphin Island, on which Fort Gaines is situated, enclose Mobile Bay. The Alabama Historical Commission maintains the site.

War of 1812

After the departure of the Spanish from Mobile in April 1813, the Americans built an earth and wood redoubt on Mobile Point, ultimately naming it Fort Bowyer after Col. John Bowyer, who completed the construction before leaving in 1814. In September 1814 the fort withstood a British naval and land attack, known as the First Battle of Fort Bowyer. The British returned in February 1815 after their defeat at the Battle of New Orleans and again launched an attack that became known as the Second Battle of Fort Bowyer. This time they were successful, with its American garrison surrendering the fort. Before the British could continue their attack towards Mobile they received word that the Treaty of Ghent, ending the war, had been signed on Christmas Eve, 1814. When word of the treaty's ratification arrived shortly thereafter, the British withdrew. The site was a logical one for a more substantial fort that could defend itself from landward and protect the entrance to the bay, leading to Fort Morgan replacing Fort Bowyer.

Construction

After the War of 1812, the U.S. embarked on a program to strengthen its seacoast defenses. As part of this program, in 1818 the U.S. contracted with Benjamin Hopkins of Vermont to build a large masonry fort on Mobile Point after a design by Simon Bernard, who had been a military engineer for Napoleon. However, Hopkins died a year later in a yellow fever epidemic, having accomplished little. The next contractor, Samuel Hawkins of New York, died in 1821, before accomplishing anything on the project. The Army turned the task over to the Corps of Engineers under Capt. R.E. DeRussey. Using slave labor, DeRussey was able to make some progress before he took ill in 1825 and turned the work over to

his deputy, Lieut. Cornelius Ogden. Ogden completed the work in March 1834 and turned the fort over to Capt. F.S. Belton, commander of Company B, 2nd US Artillery. This unit remained at the fort for about a year and a half before their transfer to Florida to assist in the Second Seminole Indian War.

Civil War

Eight days before Alabama seceded from the Union, Col. John B. Todd took four companies of Alabama volunteers and captured the fort before dawn on 3 January 1861. The Confederates then proceeded to strengthen the defenses of Mobile Bay. The key point was the Main Ship Channel opposite Fort Morgan as this was the only approach where the water was deep enough to permit major warships to pass. To defend this area, the Confederates placed 18 of the fort's heaviest guns (including two 7" Brooke rifles and two British-made 8" Blakely rifles), so that they could bear on the Channel. They also built redoubts and trenches east of the fort to impede further any attack via land. Lastly, they complemented the land defenses with a small flotilla consisting of the ram Tennessee, and three gunboats, Morgan, Gaines and Selma, all under the command of Admiral Franklin Buchanan.

During the war, Fort Morgan provided protective fire for blockade runners. All 17 vessels that ran out of the Bay eluded capture, as did 19 of the 21 that attempted to enter.

During the Battle of Mobile Bay, Union naval forces under Admiral David G. Farragut were able to get past Fort Morgan and enter the Bay. They captured Tennessee and Selma, sank Gaines, and captured Fort Gaines. This freed the Union land forces to besiege Fort Morgan. During the siege, the wooden roof of the Citadel, a ten-sided barracks located in the center of the fort used to house the enlisted men, caught fire and the structure was badly damaged. (Rather than restore it, post-War crews demolished the building.) After two weeks of bombardment from sea and land, General Richard L. Page, commander of the fort, felt compelled to surrender. He did so on August 23, 1864, after first spiking the fort's guns.

Once the Fort was in Union hands, the Union used it as a base for reconnaissance raids, and then as a staging area for the Battle of Spanish Fort and the Battle of Fort Blakely, which occurred after General Robert E. Lee had surrendered at Appomattox.

Late 19th Century

During a renovation project in the 1870s, the fort received 12 200-pounder Parrott rifled cannon. Eventually, however, the US Government abandoned the fort, letting it fall into disrepair. Then under the presidency of Grover Cleveland, Secretary of War William Endicott chaired the Endicott Board, which led to a program of building new, concrete batteries. Between 1895 and 1900, Fort Morgan received five concrete batteries, supported by the latest in fire control, electricity, and communications.

The first battery, Battery Bowyer, was operational during the Spanish-American War. It had four 8" breech-loading guns on disappearing carriages. The battery was closed in 1917 and the guns removed for conversion to railway guns for service in Europe.

At beginning of the Spanish-American War, Fort Morgan also received eight 10-inch smooth-bore muzzle-loading cannon, converted to 8" rifles with the insertion of a barrel sleeve. This was a make-shift and the Army later gave the guns away to cities for Civil War memorials.

The second battery, completed in 1900, was Battery Dearborn, named for Major General Henry Dearborn. The battery had eight breech-loading 12" mortars in two four-gun pits. The intent was that should enemy vessels approach, the mortars would rain down shells on the vessels' less heavily armored decks.

The third battery, also completed in 1900, was Battery Duportail, named for Major General Louis Duportail. Its armament consisted of two 12" breech-loading rifles on disappearing carriages. The battery was decommissioned in 1923. The Army removed the breechblocks and plugged the breeches before abandoning the guns in place. The Army scrapped the guns in the early 1940s.

The fourth battery was Battery Thomas, named for Captain Evan Thomas, who had been killed in the Battle of Sand Butte in 1873 during the Modoc War. This battery's armament consisted of two British 4.7" rapid-fire Armstrong guns. The battery's role was to prevent smaller enemy vessels from passing through the ship's channel in front of the fort. The battery was deactivated in 1917 and its guns removed.

The fifth battery was Battery Schenk, named for Lieutenant William T. Schenck, who was killed in

action in Luzon in 1900 during the Philippine-American War. The battery initially held two, later increased to three, 3" rapid-fire guns. It too protected the ship channel.

Twentieth century

Hurricanes in 1906 and in July 1916 caused a great deal of damage to the wooden houses at Fort Morgan along Officer's Row. The wide porches that helped cool the buildings in summer proved particularly vulnerable.

In 1915, the Coast Artillery Corps built an experimental battery, called Battery Test, about a mile away from Fort Morgan. The battery held a single 10" gun on a disappearing carriage. Then in 1916, the Navy had two battleships, the USS New York and the USS Arkansas shell the battery for two days to see how well it would survive, which it did with remarkably little damage. The gun was removed shortly after the tests.

After the US declared war on Germany in April 1917, the fort took on the task of training Coast Artillerymen in modern weapons. The fort also trained field anti-aircraft batteries.

In 1920, the Fort received four British 9.2" howitzers. These guns were abandoned and later scrapped in 1942.

The Army abandoned the fort in 1924 and the base deteriorated quickly.

In April 1942, the Army re-occupied the fort and constructed an adjacent airfield. Initially, the Coast Artillery brought five Model 1918 155mm guns to equip the fort. The Army placed two on top of Fort Morgan on mounts that permitted 360 degrees traverse. The remaining three guns stood on the Fort's parade ground.

The Coast Artillery disbanded in 1947, and the Army again abandoned the Fort, turning it over to the State of Alabama in 1946.

Recent developments

Fort Morgan was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960.

In 2007 it was listed as "one of the nation's 10 most endangered battle sites" by the Civil War

Preservation Trust in History Under Siege: A Guide to America's Most Endangered Civil War Battlefields.

In June 2008, a 90-pound live Union naval shell was uncovered at the site. The shell was from a Parrott rifle on a U.S. Navy warship and was fired at the fort in the summer of 1864. The discovery came during excavations as part of a project meant to repair cracks in the walls.

This article is from Wikipedia.org encyclopedia.

Damn the Torpedoes! The Battle of Mobile Bay

From HALLOWED GROUND MAGAZINE, Winter 2008
From Tommy Rhodes



Confederate ironclad CS *Tennessee* engages the USS *Oneida* while under fire from the USS *Chickasaw*. Painting by Tom Freeman.
www.tomfreemanart.com

Along with the clash of ironclads in Hampton Roads and the duel between the Alabama and the Kearsarge off Cherbourg, France, the Battle of Mobile Bay is one of the iconic confrontations of the Civil War at sea. Indeed, Farragut's charge into Mobile Bay in August of 1864 may have been the most dramatic moment of the naval war, comparable to Pickett's

Charge at Gettysburg or the Union assault up Missionary Ridge.

The Battle of Mobile Bay had a dramatic cast of leading characters. Inside Mobile Bay, the Confederacy's only full admiral, Franklin Buchanan, waited with his flagship, CSS Tennessee, the most powerful rebel ironclad since the Virginia. Buchanan was an old sea dog with an illustrious and lengthy career. He had entered the Navy as a teenager — not unusual in those days — during the War of 1812, first serving under the command of Oliver Hazard Perry, fresh from his immortal victory on Lake Erie. Buchanan had subsequently commanded warships against pirates in the Caribbean, and he led a storming party ashore during the Mexican War to capture an enemy fort. He was the founding superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy, where the superintendent's home is named Buchanan House in his honor. Earlier in the Civil War, he had commanded the CSS Virginia during its initial sortie in Hampton Roads when it all but destroyed the Union fleet there on March 8, 1862. Badly wounded in that fight, he missed the Virginia's historic clash with the Monitor the next day. Promoted to full



admiral — the only man ever to bear that rank in the Confederacy — he was sent to Mobile Bay to take command of the naval forces there. By August of 1864, he had been a naval officer for 49 years.

As impressive as that is, David Glasgow Farragut, who commanded the Union squadron outside Mobile, had a 51-year naval career that rivaled it. Born James Glasgow Farragut in Tennessee, the future admiral entered the naval service at the age of eight. Even in

those days, going to sea at such a tender age was unusual. It came about by accident, or, if you believe in such things, by fate. Having moved his family from Tennessee to New Orleans, Farragut's father, Jorge Farragut, was fishing one day when he happened upon an elderly man lying unconscious in a small boat. Jorge Farragut brought the man home and nursed him for weeks until his death. He turned out to be 84-year-old David Porter, whose son and namesake was a captain in the U.S. Navy. Out of gratitude for this solicitude, Captain Porter offered to take Jorge Farragut's son to sea as a midshipman. It was quite a generous offer since such appointments were rare and valued, even more so then than now.



Admiral David Farragut. Commanded the Union naval forces aboard the USS *Hartford*. His actions in the battle made him a national hero. Image Credit: Library of Congress

Consequently, David Porter became a kind of surrogate father for the young Farragut, who changed his first name to David to honor his benefactor. He could not adopt his patron's surname since there was already a David Porter in that generation — the captain's natural son, whom historians call David Dixon Porter to distinguish him from his father. That is how James Farragut became David Farragut and the foster brother of David Dixon Porter, another key player in the Civil War.

Besides their age and their connection to famous figures from the War of 1812, Buchanan and Farragut also shared the rather curious distinction of having switched sides. Buchanan, born in Baltimore and appointed as a midshipman from Pennsylvania, fought for the South; Farragut, born in Tennessee, raised in New Orleans and married to a Virginian, fought for the North. Thus it was that at Mobile Bay the northern-born southerner Franklin Buchanan awaited an attack by the southern-born northerner David Farragut. Between them they had accumulated a total of 100 years of service at sea.

Mobile Bay also involved ironclad warships. Inside the bay, Buchanan commanded the formidable ironclad CSS *Tennessee* in addition to two less-efficient ironclads, the *Baltic* and the *Nashville*, which were badly underpowered and unlikely to be of much value in combat. Farragut was reluctant to fight his way in until he, too, had some ironclads in his command. The first of them arrived in late July 1864, and by the end of the month he had four. On August 1, Farragut ordered the captains of his wooden steamers to send down their upper yards, stripping away nonessential impedimenta for imminent action. Farragut planned his attack carefully, for he had to worry not only about the *Tennessee*, but also about the twin forts guarding the entrance to the bay. The larger of these, Fort Morgan, was a star shaped masonry fortification armed with a score of heavy guns, any one of which was capable of sinking one of his wooden screw steamers. In addition, there were the “torpedoes”— what the Federals called “infernal machines,” and what today would be called mines — that the Confederates had sown in the ship channel. Only a very narrow passage directly under the guns of Fort Morgan had been left unmined for arriving and departing blockade-runners. The smaller Fort Gaines stood on the western side of the bay's mouth, completing the gauntlet.

Farragut planned to advance his ships in two columns. The column on the right, or starboard, was closer to Fort Morgan and consisted of his four monitors, with the *Tecumseh* in the lead. To the left and slightly behind these, Farragut positioned a second column — his wooden warships lashed together so that the more formidable vessels absorbed the bulk of the fort's guns. The idea was that the bigger ships would screen the smaller ones, and, in addition, if one ship became disabled, the other could pull it through the channel to safety. Farragut did not plan to stop and fight it out with the forts. As he had done on the *Mississippi* in 1862, he hoped to run past

the enemy forts into the bay. Only after he made it past the forts and through the minefield would he worry about Buchanan in the Tennessee.

Farragut expected to lead the attack in his flagship, the wooden hulled screw sloop Hartford, but at the last minute his captains prevailed upon him to let the sloop Brooklyn go first instead. If the admiral were hurt early in the fight, they argued, it might throw the whole attack into confusion and lead to disaster. Reluctantly, Farragut agreed that the Hartford could go second in line behind the Brooklyn.

white smoke from their broadsides beginning to obscure their formation.

As the two columns approached the bay's entrance, Capt. Tunis Craven in the Tecumseh spotted Buchanan's Tennessee through the narrow viewing slit on his pilothouse. Since Craven's job was to shield the wooden warships from Buchanan's Tennessee, he began to edge over to port — that is, to the left — to intercept her. But that pushed the wooden ships in the left-hand column to the left as well, dangerously near the line of buoys marking the edge of the mine field. Seeing the buoys ahead of him, Capt. James Alden, in command of the Brooklyn, ordered his ship to stop.

Behind him, Farragut sent him the flag hoist signal number 665: "Go ahead." Alden answered by wig-wag, which he calculated would be faster than flag hoist. Unfortunately, the only officers aboard the Hartford who could read a wig-wag signal were army officers currently below deck. After passing the word for the army signal officer, Farragut climbed part way up the rigging to see over the smoke that was billowing about the deck. Worried that the admiral might fall to the deck if he were hit by a splinter, Farragut's flag captain, Percival Drayton, sent up a signalman with a piece of line to secure the admiral to the rigging. Farragut at first refused, then seeing the wisdom of it, passed the line around his body a few times and gave the loose ends to the signalman, who secured him to the rigging.

Meanwhile, the army signal officer arrived to read Alden's wig-wag message, which was that the monitors were squeezing the Brooklyn toward the mine field. "We cannot go on without passing them," Alden signaled. "What shall we do?" Again, Farragut ordered Alden to go ahead. With both columns under fire from the fort, this was hardly the place to stop and have a conversation.



CWPT Map: The Battle of Mobile Bay. August 5, 1864.

August 5th dawned with a gentle haze that turned the sky a milky white and a sea as smooth as glass. As the Federal warships approached the ship channel, the rebel gunners in Fort Morgan fired slowly and deliberately, the shell splashes erupting around the lead ships, which returned fire as their guns bore, the

Suddenly, off to starboard of both the Brooklyn and the Hartford, the bow of Craven's Tecumseh heaved up out of the water, followed quickly by the muffled thump of an underwater explosion. The Union monitor turned over onto its starboard side; its bow plunged downward, its stern rose up, exposing its still-turning brass propeller; and then it shot downward like an arrow and was gone from sight. The whole incident, from explosion to the moment the Tecumseh disappeared, lasted barely twenty-five seconds. All that was left was a handful of survivors flailing in the roiling water where the Tecumseh had been. At least one of the Confederate torpedoes had proved appallingly successful.



The Tecumseh strikes a torpedo and sinks as the Union fleet passes under Fort Morgan and into Mobile Bay. Painting: Library of Congress

While the Tecumseh went down, the Brooklyn was edging even closer to the minefield on the left. Farragut had ordered Alden to keep to the center of the channel, but that was impossible now. Indeed, Alden could not go forward at all without steaming directly into the mine field. Again he ordered the engines stopped, and then he began to back down. The whole Federal movement was about to collapse into confusion and disorder.

This, of course, is when Farragut took matters in hand. In order to avoid having his entire column of ships collide like a collapsing accordion, he ordered the Hartford to pull out of line and steam past the Brooklyn to port, directly through the mine field. As Farragut passed the Brooklyn, Alden called across to him to point out the torpedoes in the water dead ahead. To which Farragut purportedly replied, "Damn the torpedoes!" The phrase has gained immortality in the 150 years since, but, in fact, Farragut had little choice at this point but to go ahead. He could not stop under the guns of Fort Morgan and he could not back down with a column

of ships behind him, so he went ahead. The rest of the Federal ships followed him, careful to stay in his wake. As they passed through the mine field, some sailors later claimed they had heard the primers snapping on the torpedoes. Luckily, no more of them exploded, very likely because of faulty primers.

Buchanan watched all this from the pilothouse of the Tennessee, and once it was clear that, except for the unlucky Tecumseh, Farragut's vessels had survived the run into the bay, he ordered his ship to steam directly for the Hartford, which was now leading the Federal squadron out of the minefield. Alas, the Tennessee's plodding speed made such an attack an exercise in frustration. Two and a half years earlier, when Buchanan had commanded the Virginia in Hampton Roads, he had been able to ram and sink the Cumberland with relative ease largely because his target had waited passively at anchor to receive the Virginia's charge. The circumstances in Mobile Bay were quite different. A ship underway had little to fear from an iron-clad ram whose top speed was only six knots. Farragut's Hartford easily eluded the Tennessee, while gunners on both ships fired at one another. Buchanan made a run at several more of the Federal ships, but failed to make contact. Buchanan then broke off the action, and ordered the Tennessee back to its anchorage off Fort Morgan.

As his ungainly vessel steamed slowly back to Fort Morgan, Buchanan ordered an inspection of her damage. The news was gratifying. Though the exterior accouterments, such as the smokestack, boat davits and handrails, had all been blasted away by fire from the enemy fleet, the armored casemate was undamaged, the engines were sound and there had been no serious injuries.

Because the Tennessee had gone into battle before the hands could be fed, Buchanan ordered the crew to breakfast. Afterward, he turned to his flag captain and ordered him to get the Tennessee underway again. "Follow them up, Johnston," one officer recalled him saying, "We can't let them off that way." As the Tennessee moved up the bay, his intentions became obvious to every man on board, and a murmur ran along the deck. One crewman muttered: "The old admiral has not had his fight out yet; he is heading for that big fleet; he will get his fill of it up there." Another wrote that, "It looked to me that we were going into the jaws of death." The ship's surgeon could hardly believe it. "Are you going into that fleet, Admiral?" he asked. "I am, sir," Buchanan told him. Turning away, the surgeon incautiously ventured the opinion, "We'll never come

out of there whole.” Overhearing the remark, Buchanan instantly rounded on him, “That’s my lookout, sir!”

On board the Hartford, Farragut was surprised that Buchanan planned to renew the fight so soon, but he did not hesitate to order his own vessels to clear for action. He ordered his flag captain to aim the Hartford directly at the approaching vessel. Buchanan, too, sought out the opposing flagship. Like two jousters in some slow-motion medieval tournament, the Hartford (at 10 knots) and the Tennessee (at four knots) steamed directly at one another. At a combined speed of 14 knots, it took 15 minutes for the two ships to cover the four miles that separated them. Had they collided stem-to-stem, the



collision would almost certainly have sunk both vessels within minutes. As it was, the steersman on the Tennessee turned slightly to starboard at the last second and the two vessels passed each other port-to-port at point-blank range.

The Tennessee slides past the Hartford at point blank range. The ships were close enough for the sailors to hurl objects at each other through the gun ports.

Image: Harper's Weekly

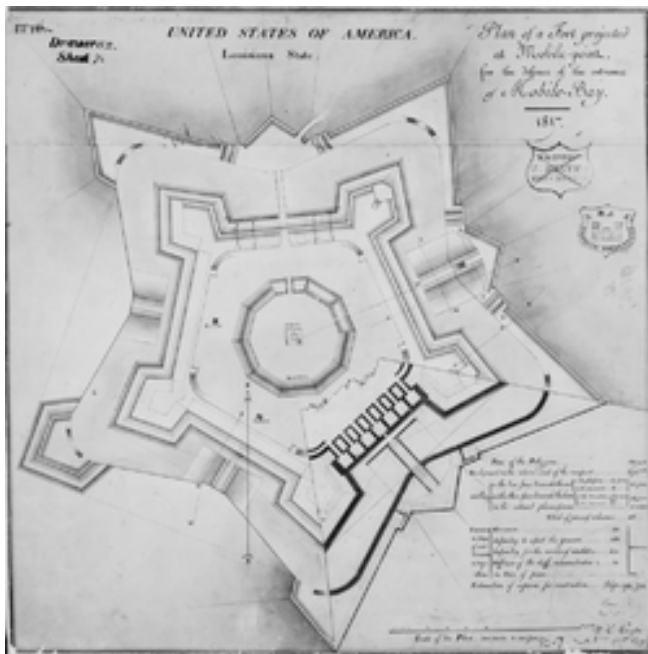
As the two ships scraped past one another, virtually touching, men on both ships screamed insults. Swept up in the fight, they used any weapon at hand: a sailor on the Hartford threw a spittoon and a holystone at the Tennessee; a sailor on the Tennessee leaned out a gunport and stabbed a Federal sailor on the Hartford with his bayonet — the only bayonet wound ever inflicted in a Civil War naval battle. Percival Drayton, Farragut’s flag captain, later claimed that as the two ships slid past one another, he spotted Buchanan through an open gun port and, overcome by fury, threw his binoculars, thundering: “You infernal traitor!”

Once the Tennessee had slipped past the Hartford, it was surrounded by Federal warships all firing as fast as they could load. In less than an hour, the Union double-turreted monitor Chickasaw fired 52 shells into the Tennessee at a distance her commander estimated to be from “50 to 10 yards.” Buchanan could not return fire even though he was literally surrounded by targets for one gunport was jammed shut and the primers regularly misfired on his other five. He called for a party of workmen to try to unjam the stuck gunport. Two men stood with their backs to the casemate holding a metal bolt over the pivot rod, while two more struck it with sledgehammers. Buchanan was personally supervising their labor when a shell smashed into the casemate directly opposite where they were working. The men holding the bolt died instantly. Buchanan was struck by flying debris and fell to the deck. His left leg — his good leg — suffered a compound fracture and bent out at an impossible angle. Immediately the cry went up that the admiral was hit. “Well, Johnston,” Buchanan told his flag captain, “They have got me again. You’ll have to look out for her now; it is your fight.”

But the Tennessee was already doomed. The fusillade of enemy shells had severed the steering chains on the afterdeck, and the Tennessee’s rudder no longer answered the wheel. Without its steering mechanism, the Tennessee was no longer maneuverable. Moreover, with its funnel shot away, the ship could not raise steam in her boilers. The gunport that Buchanan had tried to clear remained jammed, and the primers on the other guns were unreliable. The Tennessee could not steam, could not maneuver, and could not shoot. The situation spoke for itself. “Do the best you can,” Buchanan told his flag captain, James D. Johnston. “And when all is done, surrender.” Johnston wasted little time. Almost at once, he lowered the Confederate flag flying from the pilot house. In the fury of battle, that gesture was ambiguous, and Johnston realized what had to be done. He tied a white handkerchief to a boarding pike and raised it above the ship, and at last the firing stopped.

The wounded Buchanan was taken prisoner and, eventually, sent to New York, where he spent the winter months in Fort Lafayette in New York Harbor. Exchanged in the spring, shortly before Appomattox, he made his way back to Mobile, arriving there just as the war came to an end. As for Farragut, Congress voted him a \$50,000 bonus — serious money in those

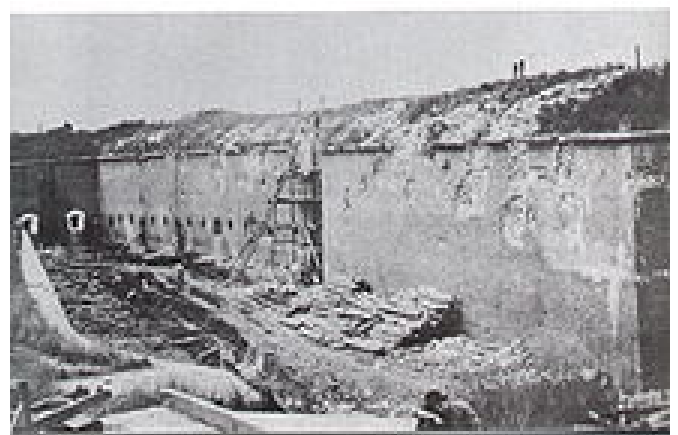
days, equivalent to several million dollars today — and in December, he was promoted to the rank of vice admiral. After the war was over, on July 26, 1866, Congress created the rank of full admiral and named David Glasgow Farragut to fill it. Just as Franklin Buchanan, the northerner who fought for the South, had been the first Confederate admiral, Farragut, the southerner who fought for the North, became the first admiral of the U.S. Navy.



Original plans for FM dated 1817



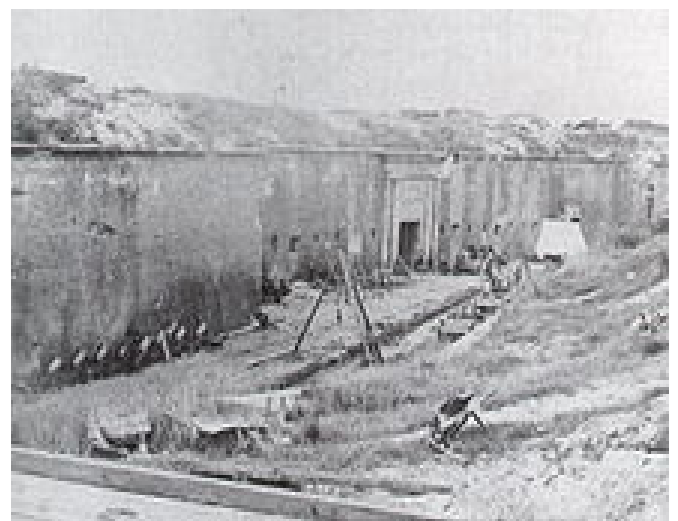
Aug 23, 1864, Damage to the Citadel



View of Fort Morgan - 1864



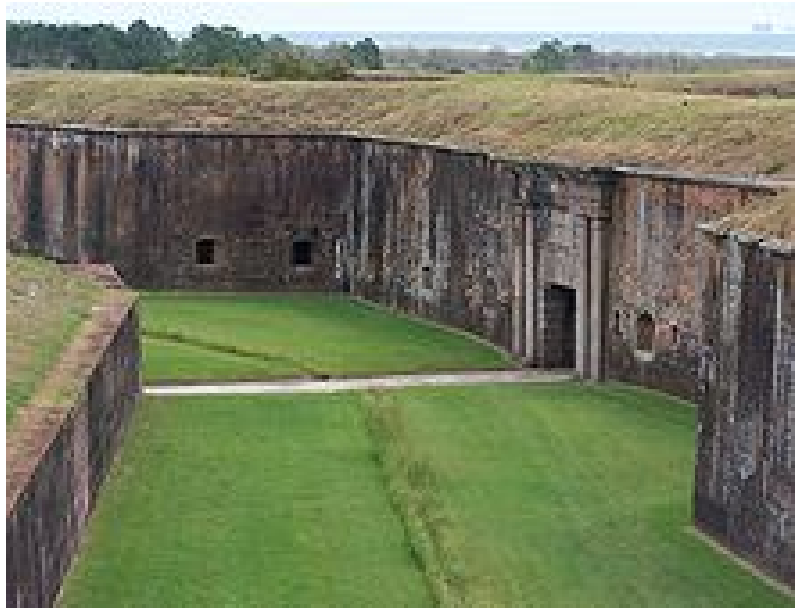
View of Fort Morgan in 1864, after its surrender.



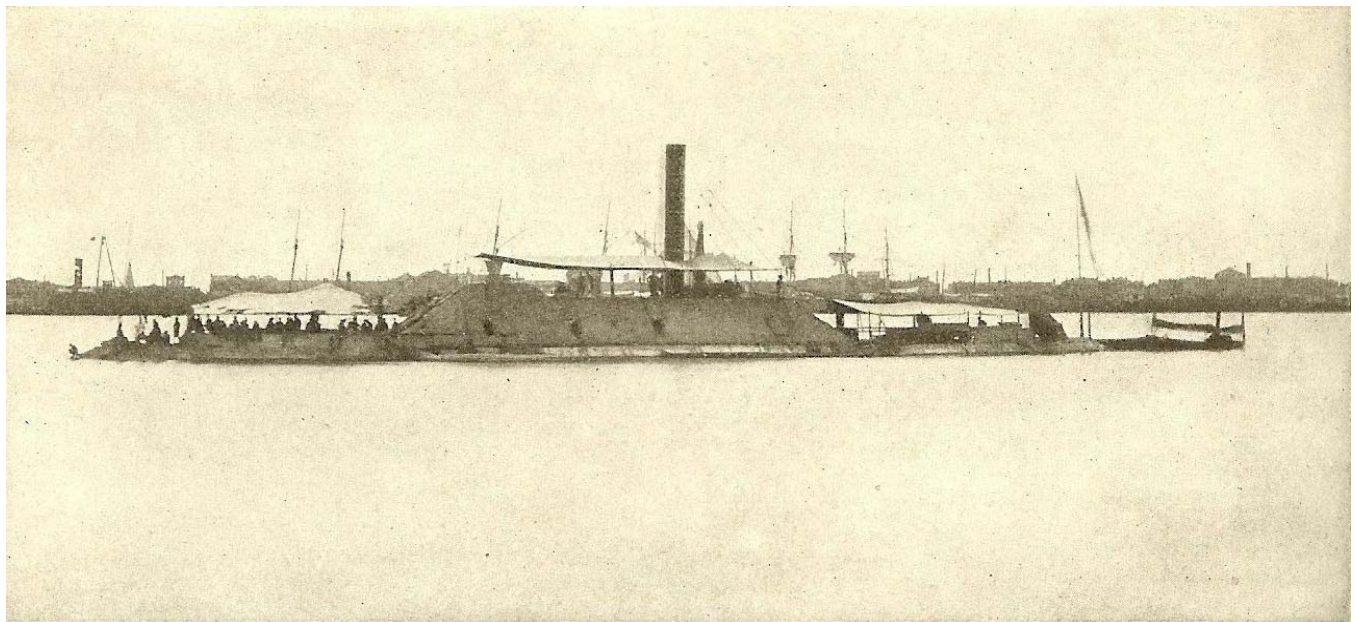
View of Fort Morgan - 1864



Entrance to Fort Morgan in 2008

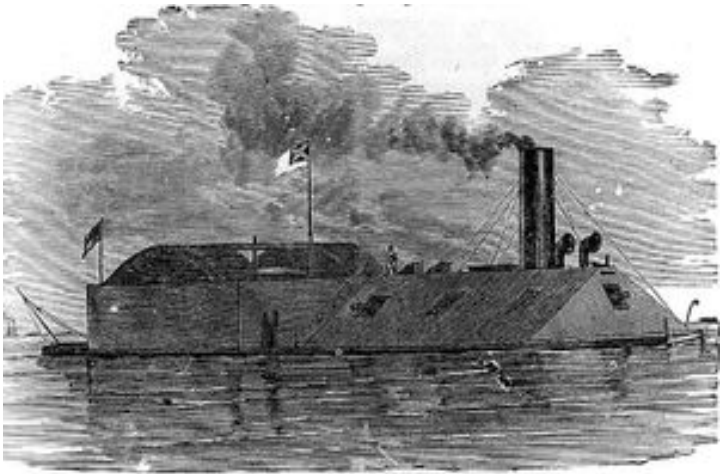


Fort Morgan in 2008



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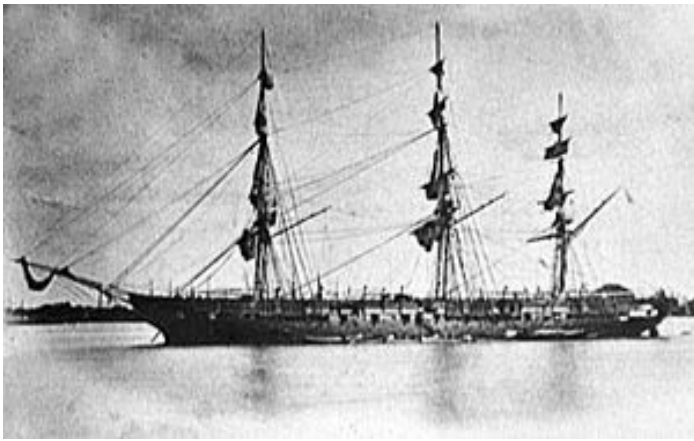
THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE—THE CONFEDERATE IRONCLAD RAM “TENNESSEE”



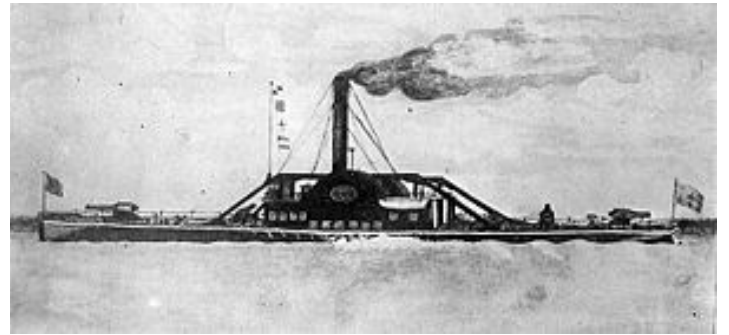
CSS BALTIC



USS RICHMOND



USS BROOKLYN



CSS SELMA



USS HARTFORD

Deo Vindice --- "God will vindicate"



FORT MORGAN (AL)



Ft. Blakeley Camp #1864

Meeting - 2nd Tuesday
Of Each Month at the
Gift Horse Restaurant, Foley, AL
Meal 6 PM – Meeting 6:45 PM



SCV Ft. Blakeley Camp #1864
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