

Fort Powell: Mobile Bay's Forgotten Defender

(John Mason)

At approximately 5:30 a.m., August 5, 1864, Union Rear Admiral David Glasgow Farragut began the Battle of Mobile Bay with the somewhat inauspicious words, "Well, Drayton, we might as well get underway."¹ By 10:30 A.M., he had successfully run his gunboat fleet past the guns of Fort Morgan and defeated the Confederate fleet. Since New Orleans had fallen in 1862, it now appeared that the Union navy had finally closed the South's last major Gulf Coast port. But at this point, Admiral Farragut's victory was incomplete; he actually had more problems than he did solutions.

His fleet may have had possession of the bay, but it was cut off and surrounded without any promise of resupply. All of the passes and channels into the bay lay under the protective guns of one of three forts: Fort Morgan on Mobile Point guarding the Main Shipping Channel, Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island, and Fort Powell on Tower Island protecting Grant's Pass. It would be suicide to ask small, unarmed supply vessels to run those guns, but without supplies, the fleet could not remain in place indefinitely. Farragut's options were limited.

As he considered his plight, the Confederacy gave him a gift.

One of the things that made Mobile Bay such a haven for blockade running was its geography. A natural harbor, the bay stretches some thirty miles from the Port of Mobile to its mouth at the Gulf of Mexico narrowing in width from fifteen miles there to about six at the city itself. The mouth of the bay is protected by Dauphin Island, the easternmost of the channel-islands protecting the Mississippi Gulf Coast, on the west, and Edith's Hammock, a long finger of sand projecting into the waters from the eastern shore.

The Main Shipping Channel skirts the tip of Edith's Hammock, commonly known as Mobile Point, as it leads in a northeasterly direction from the Gulf into the estuary. This was the common means of egress for the deep-water vessels commuting back and forth from Mobile. ²

The shallow draft coastal vessels used a different route. The body of water between Dauphin Island and the mainland is known as the Mississippi Sound. The common access into the sound from the bay is through Grant's Pass, a small channel between Dauphin Island and Cedar Point. For years, shallow draft, intercoastal commerce traders had traversed the pass, plying their trade between Mobile, the Mississippi coast, and New Orleans. ³

The state of Alabama also recognized the importance of guarding Mobile Bay, and on January 4, 1861, under orders from Governor Andrew B. Moore, members of the Alabama militia seized both Forts Morgan and Gaines, turning them over to Confederate control when the state seceded on the 11th. Deeming that maintaining the waterways between their states was crucial to them and the Confederate war effort, the governors of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana then got together to insure that Grant's Pass and the Mississippi Sound were defended and kept open for the duration. As a result, the State of Alabama would spend some \$1,200,000 for the protection of Mobile and the Alabama River. ⁴

Named after Revolutionary War Hero Daniel Morgan, Fort Morgan was built on a site initially employed by the French in 1699. Completed in 1834, it was a pentagonal-bastioned work built of brick and designed to mount guns both in casemate and in barbette. In addition to the fort itself, a water battery capable of mounting 7 guns was

added on the northwest face to further guard the shipping channel. By the summer of 1864, Fort Morgan mounted 7 10-inch, 3 8-inch, 22 32-pound smoothbores and 2 6.5-inch and 4 5.8-inch rifles for its defense. In August of that year, its commander, Brigadier General Richard L. Page would add another 29 guns in its exterior batteries. The water battery would additionally mount 10-inch Columbiads, 1 8-inch rifle, and 2 rifled 32-pounders. Fort Morgan was garrisoned by 640 officers and men. ⁵

About three miles to the west-northwest, Fort Gaines was deemed to be too distant from the main shipping channel to assist in its defense, and therefore assumed a secondary role in that regard. Its main function would be protecting the Mississippi Sound. Garrisoned by some 864 men of the 21st Alabama Infantry Volunteers, a regiment raised primarily in the Mobile area and commanded by Colonel Charles D. Anderson, it mounted 4 rifled 32-pounders, 3 10-inch Columbiads, and 20 32-, 24-, and 18-pound smoothbores. ⁶

While these two forts assumed the major roles in defending the bay, perhaps the most important position was constructed as something of an afterthought. In the same correspondence that authorized the expenditure of funds for defense of the bay, Governor Moore mentioned detailing one battery of guns and a company of infantry to protect Grant's Pass. Based on that authority, Major Danville Leadbetter directed the formation of a defense in depth in Grant's Pass in August 1861. This was the beginning of Fort Powell. ⁷

Tower Island may have been nothing more than a small sand covered shell bank lying about fifty yards from the mouth of Grant's Pass between Cedar Point and Little Dauphin Island, but it's strategic importance was tremendous. As a result, the original

plans for a battery position soon grew in scope. The first priorities had been hauling in enough sand to expand the island. When this was complete, construction on bombproofs began. By the end of 1861, this small island was covered with earthen works and named Fort Powell in honor of the former commander of the 21st Alabama Volunteer Infantry, Colonel William L. Powell. One of the local engineers, Thomas Milligan, said, “It will be a very comfortable little battery, and as strong as the armaments can make it.” Those armaments would eventually include 2 8-inch Columbiads, 1 6.4-inch rifle, 2 24-pound howitzers, 3 12-pound mountain howitzers, and 2 6-pound smoothbores for the perimeter batteries. The magazine was centrally located in a twelve-foot thick bombproof, connected to every mounted gun position by a series of passages framed with boards of twenty-four inch pine and covered with twelve feet of sand. When in contact with the enemy, the soldiers slept inside the bombproof. Otherwise, they were quartered in a barracks building on an adjacent wharf. The entire island was then surrounded with a four-foot tall breakwater to resist erosion. ⁸

Problems with the bay fortifications first arose in the spring of 1862, when Confederate Chief Engineer, Colonel Jeremy F. Gilmer, placed himself in charge of all of the river defenses in Alabama. Naturally prioritizing his river defenses, Gilmer subordinated all work on the bay fortifications to those up the Alabama River. As a result, workmen and supplies dearly needed at Fort Powell were assigned elsewhere, causing severe labor shortages. ⁹

While construction continued, the men of the 21st Alabama were beginning the saga that led them to become Powell’s eventual garrison. Mustered into Confederate service on October 11, 1861, the unit was initially ordered to report to Fort Gaines on

November 16, 1861, to prevent Federal landings on the western portions of Dauphin Island. In the spring of 1862, they found themselves in receipt of orders to move to northern Mississippi as reinforcements for Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston's spring offensive. They participated in both the Shiloh and First Corinth campaigns before returning to Mobile in July. They would remain there for the remainder of the war. ¹⁰

Part of that unit was a young Captain James M. Williams, born on October 5, 1837 in St. Clairsville, Ohio. Williams had moved to Mobile in November 1860 after accepting a job as a bookkeeper for James Conning, a nationally known manufacturer of jewelry, silver, and swords. In August 1861, he joined a local militia company, the Washington Light Infantry, number two. He rose to the rank of sergeant. ¹¹

On October 4, 1861, Williams enlisted for one year in the 21st Alabama. He began his military career as the First Sergeant of Company A (Washington Light Infantry). In December of that year, after the unit had been assigned to Fort Gaines, Williams resigned his post in protest of the quality of the unit's officers and reenlisted in the unit as a private. He was extremely popular with the troops, no doubt enhanced by the establishment of an unofficial Post Exchange in his tent. This is where Williams developed the easy-going style of camaraderie he would later display as a unit commander. ¹²

On the way to Corinth in March 1862, Williams was elected as second lieutenant of Company A. He commanded the company during the battle of Shiloh and was commended for gallantry there. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed regimental Adjutant. In May, Williams was elected as Captain of Company A, but his initial

command was short lived. He almost immediately fell ill and was granted a leave to return to Mobile to recuperate. Like his unit, he too would remain there for the rest of the war.¹³

Returning to Mobile in the summer of 1862, the Twenty-first was again assigned garrison duty at Forts Gaines and Morgan. On August 25, Confederate Captain James M. Williams was assigned to command a battery of 4 24-pound smoothbores and 1 42-pound rifle at Fort Morgan. He would soon write to his wife that,

If the enemy come and make the attack, they will come prepared to succeed without doubt . . . at any rate, we can suffer some in order to punish them for their temerity.¹⁴

Quick promotions to major (October 1862) and lieutenant colonel (November 1863) followed. After serving a brief stint as the commander of the second battalion of the Twenty-first, Williams was reassigned as detachment commander of the small garrison at Fort Powell in January 1864.

The Union Navy had maintained a presence in the Gulf outside the entrance to the Bay since proclaiming the blockade to be in effect there in May 1861. In letters home, men of the regiment often reported the presence of enemy ships but noted that they always withdrew prior to contact. In January 1862, they noted the first Union vessels inside the sound itself.¹⁵

While Williams and the men of the 21st traveled back and forth between their assignments, construction on Powell's works continued. This labor did not pass unnoticed, as on June 20, 1862, R.B. Hitchcock, Commander of the *U.S.S. Susquehanna*, reported that, "From the movements of troops, etc., I infer that they are getting up a battery at Cedar Point, and have again obstructed Grant's Pass." While Commander

Hitchcock's information was not entirely correct, it was obvious the Union navy was, and would be, well aware of any Confederate action in planning their defenses. It was, after all, no secret. Besides, the Union vessels stationed in the Sound and at the entrance to the Bay were in perfect positions to monitor the Confederate construction activities. ¹⁶

By January 1863, Confederate engineer reports noted that two 8-inch guns and one 32-pounder rifle had been mounted, that the bombproof had been completed, and that repairs were continuing on the magazine. In May, the wharf had been completed, and the first torpedoes employed. ¹⁷

On August 27, the Union Navy tested the Powell defenses by firing “69 shells of which some 6 or 8 only took effect on the island”. While returning fire, one of the Confederate guns at Fort Powell burst, wounding one soldier. No effect was noted on the enemy ships. About this same time, Williams wrote his wife that:

I have just been ordered to send a company to Grant’s Island. Robinson is constructing a fine battery now at Grant’s Pass which will not be completed for some time.

Preparations apparently took longer than first assumed, as on November 27, Williams noted that he still had not moved to Camp Powell but expected to go soon. He finally made his move sometime between January 7 and January 24, 1864 and began to prepare the battery for a siege. Accompanying him were about 140 officers and men of Companies D (the Mobile Battle Guards) and K (the Mobile Cadets), 21st Alabama Infantry, and part of Culpepper’s South Carolina Battery of artillery ¹⁸

The timing of this move could not have been better for the Confederates. In Vicksburg, Union Major General William Tecumseh Sherman was preparing to make a raid through Mississippi towards Meridian. Union Major General Ulysses Grant, fresh

off a victory at Lookout Mountain, was anticipating a move against Mobile and the Confederate heartland. One potential problem was that Confederate forces in and around Meridian were threatening Federal supply stations along the Mississippi River. Sherman's job was to clear these forces out of the area. Fearing that Confederate forces at Mobile could be hurried along interior lines to Jackson, Mississippi to thwart his raid, Sherman asked that Farragut to make a feint against Mobile. In mid-February, Farragut gathered several mortar boats and shallow-draft gunboats from the Mississippi Squadron and proceeded into the Sound. He would remain there, bombing Fort Powell until the 28th. Major General Henry W. Halleck would report to Grant that Farragut's mission was to "draw the enemy from Sherman." ¹⁹

It was during this bombardment that one of the interesting little anecdotes of the battle occurred. In order to check on his mortar fleet, as well as to gauge the effect of the bombardment, Admiral Farragut made daily excursions from the Gulf to the Sound to watch the proceedings. He would land on Dauphin Island about two miles west of Fort Gaines, cross the isthmus, then board a small boat and ride out to the mortar fleet which was positioned about 4000 yards off of Fort Powell. After several hours, he would return to his flagship. The Confederates occupying Fort Gaines soon recognized this pattern.

A small party from E Company, 1st Confederate (Georgia) Infantry (Sergeant Wiley Wagner, Corporal William Foster, and Private Harry Savage) decided to do something about it. One night, they slipped out of Fort Gaines and took up a position in the woods adjacent to the admiral's usual path and waited. For some reason, Farragut chose this particular time to abandon his usual pattern. For three days and two nights, the men waited, with their only foe being the hordes of mosquitoes that attacked them at

dawn and dusk each day. Finally, so sick they could barely return to the fort (they would remain on the post sick list for a week as a result), the men gave up on their ambush. As only fate would have it, the day they departed was the very day Farragut chose to resume his routine.²⁰

The Federal fleet bombed Fort Powell daily for the remainder of February, sometimes firing as many as 304 shells a day at it. Their fire was extremely inaccurate, with the result being merely the rearrangement of several tons of sand and the wounding of one rebel soldier. Aboard the U.S.S. *Calhoun*, Captain Percival Drayton characterized the whole encounter by saying, “We are hammering away at the fort here, which minds us about as much as if we did not fire.” The most serious attack was made on the 25th, when a Union gunboat sailed around to provide enfilade fire against the fort. There was a furious exchange of gunfire for about a half-hour, but again, no serious damage occurred. Williams wrote of these encounters:

If they will come in just a little closer, I think I can administer a quietus to some of their gunboats or those confounded little mortar boats. The enemy won't take Fort Powell very soon that way.

Fortunately for the Union fleet, the Confederate fire from Fort Powell was equally inaccurate, sometimes missing the targets by as much as three-quarters of a mile. Even worse, when they did hit the target, the shells often failed to explode due to faulty fuses and wet powder.²¹

Thereafter, Farragut would periodically send boats into the Sound for short bombardments and to look for torpedo placements. He had no fear of return fire, and as a result of his observations, was generally unimpressed with the gunnery skills of Fort Powell's defenders. The other lesson he learned from the February attacks was that he

could damage but could not destroy the bay fortifications. He was going to have to have infantry support to assault and garrison the positions. It was also at this point that he recognized that Grant's Pass would be his supply line when he made his assault on Mobile.²²

In spite of these now frequent Union intrusions, construction on Fort Powell continued unabated. Southern engineer reports for July stress that work be concentrated on immediately mounting the guns on the eastern parapets, on finishing construction of these parapets and their gun traverses, and on completing the overall work on the proposed plan. Still, the major problem lay in a dearth of mechanics and laborers. Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Von Sheliha, Chief Engineer, District of the Gulf, continually asked for support in this quarter, and at one point, actually tendered his resignation because of the lack of it.²³

It is interesting to note that at the same time Von Sheliha was fighting to get enough men to finish construction on Powell's fortifications, Williams noted that on Tower Island, the soldiers were having a fine time. He talks of building model boats and racing them in tidal pools, of crabbing and oystering, and of taking pleasant sailboat rides around the island. Never does he mention actually working on fortifications. He must not have felt that construction was his responsibility, but regardless of the reason, his inactivity would have disastrous results.²⁴

Throughout July, Von Sheliha pleaded with the local authorities to complete the work at Fort Powell. He noted that the guns had yet to be mounted and the parapets and traverses completed. By the end of the month, the guns, a 7-inch Brooke rifle on the southeast salient, a 10-inch Columbiad in the center, and a 32-pounder on the northeast

salient, had been mounted, but the parapets and traverses were still incomplete. Again, Von Sheliha noted that progress was slow due to lack of hands. ²⁵

On the first of August, in a letter to his wife, Williams noted that a formidable Federal fleet had gathered in the Gulf, but he was ready. In spite of the 26 vessels present, including 3 ironclads, Williams wrote:

I am delighted that I have command of my pet fort for another fight and am fixed up to make it a good one this time.

Von Sheliha was not so sure. In an August 2d telegram to Captain G.W. Maden, the engineer responsible for completing the defenses of Fort Powell, he wanted to know if the eastern face was ready for a fight. He must have been satisfied with the response, for on the 4th, he telegraphed Colonel Gilmer that in spite of not having an adequate work force, Fort Powell was in a defensible position. In fact, the guns were mounted and operational. The parapets, however, were still incomplete, and it was further noted that “the eastern face of the fort was apparently encumbered with large quantities of lumber” being used in the construction of galleries, magazines, etc. ²⁶

Farragut had initially intended to run the forts on the morning of August 3d, acting in concert with the landing of Major General Gordon Granger’s 2000 troops on Dauphin Island, but postponed his plans because the ironclad *Tecumseh* had not arrived. He did not postpone the landing though. Granger’s men, comprised of detachments from the Seventy-seventh Illinois, Thirty-fourth Iowa, Ninety-sixth Ohio, Third Maryland Dismounted Cavalry, and Cobb’s Colored Regiment of Engineers, landed unopposed on the western tip of the island and began moving inexorably eastward. Time had run out. The Battle for Mobile Bay had begun. ²⁷

On the 5th, the final assault on Mobile Bay began, and on Tower Island, Williams tried to prepare his men for action. Farragut had ordered Lieutenant Commander James C.P. de Krafft to take his gunboats *Conemaugh*, *J.P. Jackson*, *Estrella*, *Narcissus*, and *Stockdale*, into the Sound on the 3d to support Granger. Now, they were directed to assume a crescent-shaped position off the western face of Fort Powell and initiate an attack. Somewhere around 8:00 a.m., de Krafft's gunboats opened fire on the fort with 2 100-pound and 4 30-pound Parrot guns. Powell returned fire with four of their guns, and there continued a brisk artillery duel until about 10:00. As with the previous bombardments, neither side's fire had much effect. ²⁸

At about 2:20 p.m., Farragut sent the ironclad *Chickasaw* into Grant's Pass to assist de Krafft. With its six-foot draft, *Chickasaw* was able to close to within 350 yards of the eastern face of the fort, where she commenced firing her 11-inch guns. During the ensuing duel, she fired some twenty-five shots, dismounting one of Powell's guns, while Powell answered with three shots from their Brooke rifle. At this point, one of the Union shells passed through a sally port, into the magazine and embedded in the wall without exploding. This seemed to unnerve Williams, who noted,

the shells exploding in the face of the work displaced the sand so rapidly that I was convinced that unless the ironclad was driven off it would explode my magazine and make the bombproof chambers untenable.

In spite of his concerns, he reports that as a result, he soon withdrew his men into the bombproofs. ²⁹

The question here is why? If the ironclad gunfire was going to make the bombproofs untenable, why move into them? Instead, it would appear that Williams' best move would have been to keep his men at their guns, returning fire in an attempt to drive

the gunboat away. The problem may have been that there were no men available to man the guns.

Then, Williams telegraphed Colonel Anderson at Fort Gaines “that unless I could evacuate I would be compelled to surrender within 48 hours”. Anderson quickly replied, “Save your garrison when your fort is no longer tenable”. In reality, Williams had already made his decision. In his official report to General Garner dated August 7, 1864, he wrote:

At the time his [Col. Anderson’s] dispatch was received it was becoming dark. The fleet had not moved up to intercept my communication with Cedar Point. I could not expect to have another opportunity for escape, and I decided promptly that it would be better to save my command and destroy the fort than to allow both to fall into the hands of the enemy, as they certainly would have done in two days. The tide being low, I marched my command to Cedar Point without interruption or discovery. Lieutenant Savage was left in the fort, with orders to prepare a train and match to explode the magazine as soon as he discovered that I had gained the mainland. Lieutenant Jeffers, acting ordnance officer, was directed to spike the guns at the same time. The fort was blown up at 10:30 p.m. Every man was brought off safely to Cedar Point, thence to the city.³⁰

Williams’ report on the timing of these activities is interesting. He reports that he did not abandon the fort until nightfall. Union acting Master Gaius P. Pomeroy, commanding the *Estrella*, saw things a little differently. In his report of August 6, Pomeroy said he opened fire approximately 3500 yards from the fort with his 30-pound Parrott gun at about 8:40 a.m., gradually decreasing the range to 2000-2500 yards. Then, at 9:45, he reported:

We perceived the troops evacuating the fort by the way of the reef leading from the fort to the mainland. As near as I could judge, I think there were from 100 to 150. They seemed to be in great haste as they took nothing with them.

Had the Confederates run? If so, it would mean that rather than retire to the bombproof as Williams had stated, the fort had been evacuated prior to his message traffic with

Anderson. This might also offer an explanation as to why only three shots were fired at the *Chickasaw* - no one remained in the fort to man the batteries! In fact, by the time Williams sent his first message to Anderson, it is highly likely that he and Lieutenants Savage and Jeffers were among the few remaining occupants of Fort Powell. The defenders inside the fort had taken matters into their own hands. Whether Williams had much to say about their decision is unknown.³¹

Major General Dabney H. Maury, commanding all the forces in and around Mobile, was furious at Williams' actions. In his report, he frankly stated that:

Lieutenant-Colonel Williams, of Fort Powell, abandoned and blew up his works without having a man injured, nor had any injury been inflicted on any part of his fort. He reports one of his gun carriages disabled, and one gun temporarily out of use by careless loading. He had under his bombproof fully thirty days water and two months provisions. He had hand grenades, revolvers, muskets and howitzers to defend his fort against launches, and eight heavy guns to use against the ships. The fort had just been connected by telegraph with Fort Gaines and with Mobile.

On the morning of the 5th there were 70 Negroes with trenching tools in the fort. The guns on the east face of the work were mounted and in fighting order, but were not yet covered by the parapet, and the men serving them would have been exposed as are sailors on an ordinary man-of-war. It is altogether probable that a faithful service of their battery for half an hour would have driven off or sunk the only boat attacking its eastern face, and *that it might have been held long enough to compel the fleet to put to sea*, or at least enable Mobile to prepare fully for land attack.

Mary was firmly convinced that "Williams should have fought his guns" and "Fort Powell should not have been surrendered." It is also obvious that he believed Powell to be the linchpin that could have forced Farragut out of the Bay. As a result, he promptly relieved Williams from command on the 8th.³²

In spite of this timing of the fort's evacuation, everyone in both armies saw and/or heard the explosion that rocked Tower Island around 10:30 that night. Lieutenants Savage and Jeffers had done their job, at least. At around 7:00 a.m. the next morning, de

Kraft sent Pomeroy to take possession of Fort Powell. After raising the national colors, Pomeroy surveyed the island. Fort Powell was now, “a heap of rubbish and ruins, with a deep, funnel-shaped hole in the center”, though it was noted that most of the armament and ammunition was in good condition. With Powell now under Union control, Farragut turned his eyes towards Fort Gaines.³³

Gaines had now been completely enveloped. Granger was constructing regular siege approaches on the western face, and the Union navy had access to all the others. On August 6, against direct orders, Anderson surrendered. The Battle of Mobile Bay, and the Battle for Mobile, was over.

Was Fort Powell adequately defended? No. What affect did its evacuation and destruction have on the overall strategic and tactical situations? Pervasive.

In his article on the defense of Mobile Bay, Art Bergeron stated that the surrender of Fort Gaines would have negated any advantage gained by Fort Powell holding out. Unfortunately, Mr. Bergeron got it backwards. In fact, it was the premature fall of Fort Powell that allowed Gaines to be subjected to the enfilade fire of the Union fleet. Coupled with the demoralizing effects of seeing their comrades fleeing and then destroying their fortifications and the Federal siege lines drawing ever closer, Colonel Anderson simply lost his nerve. Had Powell held out, it is probable that Anderson would not have been forced to surrender on August 6th. In that case, his only opposition would have been Granger’s infantry, and with nearly a thousand men and twenty-seven pieces of artillery, he had ample defenses to counter that.

What might have caused Powell’s defenders to give up so quickly? The most likely explanation is simply a lack of discipline. Williams continually makes mention of

the fun he and his men were having on Tower Island. In a letter to his wife, Lizzie, on September 6, 1862, he describes the events of a fishing expedition, ending with the observation that:

. . . the soldier has been ordering some Captain or other superior officer around like a deck hand - Then follows a laugh at the expense of the two . . . ³⁴

Fraternization is dangerous in any military organization. Powell's defenders simply were not adequately trained and disciplined, and as a result, at the first sign of a true attack, they had nothing to fall back on. Their only choice was to run. While this reflects poorly on Williams, it also reflects poorly on Colonel Anderson and General Page. They were as responsible as Williams for failing to point out any shortcomings on Tower Island. That no one lived up to their command responsibility resulted in a calamity for the South.

The responsible commanders on both sides recognized the importance of Grant's Pass to the Mobile Bay operations. Farragut knew that the pass and the Mississippi Sound were the only logical routes his resupply vessels could use. Maury knew this too; his comments indicate that he firmly believed Fort Powell was the main installation that could force the Union fleet to retreat. Von Sheliha knew it as well and fought for two years for men and material to finish the fort's construction, finally losing out to time and lack of support.

Fort Powell was well planned and well situated for its potential role in the defense on Mobile. Had it been adequately commanded, there is no reason to believe it could not have held out for another two to three days at a minimum. Had that occurred, Fort Gaines would not have fallen, and Farragut and the Union fleet may well have been compelled to give up their hard-earned victory in the Bay and return to their blockading

duties in the Gulf. Like many of the defeats in the Confederacy's Western Theater, Fort Powell and Mobile were lost as a result of inferior commanders and command decisions.

NOTES

1. Chester G. Hearn, *Mobile Bay and the Mobile Campaign: The Last Great Battles of the Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1993), p. 82, hereafter referred to as Hearn, *Mobile Bay*. This statement was made over morning coffee. In spite of its simplicity, the plans were quite detailed and the fleet ready.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
3. John K. Folmar, "Lieutenant Colonel James M. Williams and the Fort Powell Incident.", *Alabama Review*, 12 (April 1964): p. 124, hereafter referred to as Folmar, "Fort Powell Incident". J. Thomas Sharf. *History of the Confederate States Navy* (New York: Rogers and Sherwood, 1887), p. 535, hereafter referred to as Scharf, *History*.
4. United States War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 70 Volumes in 128. Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1880-1901, Governor A.B. Moore to Alabama State Congress, October 28, 1861, Vol. 1, Series 4, pp. 697-707, hereafter referred to as ORA with volume, series, and page shown as I, 4:697-707. James P. Duffy, *Lincoln's Admiral: The Civil War Campaigns of David Farragut*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997), p. 223, hereafter referred to as Duffy, *Lincoln's Admiral*. James F. Epperson, *Causes of the Civil War*. Internet: members.aol.com/jfepperson/causes.html, hereafter referred to as Epperson, *Causes*.
5. Hearn, *Mobile Bay*, p. 41. Scharf, *History*, p. 552. Art Bergeron, *A Parcel of Poor Devils Cooped up in a Pile of Bricks: The Other Battle of Mobile Bay*, (Internet: The American Civil War Home Page), hereafter referred to a Bergeron, *Poor Devils*.
6. *Ibid.* Of the ten companies in the regiment, eight were from Mobile County. The original companies were: A (Washington Light Infantry #2), B (Montgomery Guards), C (Witherspoon or Marengo Rifles from Marengo County just north of Mobile), D (Battle Guards), E (Chamberlain or Woodruff Rifles), F (Baldwin Rifles #2, from Baldwin County just east across Mobile Bay), G (Spanish Guards), H (French Guards), I (United Rangers), and K (Mobile Cadets #2).
7. ORA I, 4:697-707, Report of Governor A.B. Moore; ORA I, 6:726-7, Leadbetter to Lockett, September 2, 1861.
8. Caldwell Delaney, *The Story of Mobile* (Mobile, AL: Gulf Printing Company, 1953), p. 96, hereafter referred to as Delaney, *Mobile*. ORA II, 32:547, Statement of the number, caliber, and position of the guns in the Department of the Gulf, January 11, 1864.
9. James L Nichols, "Confederate Engineers and the Defense of Mobile", *Alabama Review* 12 (July 1959): p. 183.

10. John K. Folmar, *From That Terrible Field: Civil War Letters of James M. Williams, Twenty-First Alabama Infantry Volunteers*, (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1981), p. xiii, hereafter referred to as Folmar, *Terrible Field*.

11. Folmar, *Terrible Field*, p. xi.

12. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

13. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 30. Bern Anderson, *By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1962), p. 37.

16. United States War Department. Office of Naval War Records. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*. 30 Volumes and index. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922, Hitchcock to Welles, June 20, 1862, Vol. I, Series 18, pp. 568-9, hereafter referred to as ORN with volume, series, and page shown as I, 18:568-9. ORN, *Ibid.*, p. 841, Randolph to McRae, April 6, 1862.

17. ORA II, 26:26-7, Reports of the Confederate Engineer Department, January, 1863. In this report, Leadbetter notes that, "by order of the commanding general, 150 torpedoes have been procured. A few have been placed at Grant's Pass . . . the remainder will be held in readiness to be placed when necessary."

18. *Ibid.*, p. 120-127. The final move was probably closed to the latter date.

19. B.H. Liddell Hart, *Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), pp. 223-5. ORN, I, 34:340, Halleck to Grant, February 16, 1864. In a corresponding letter to the Adjutant General on May 9th, General Sherman would write: "The possession of Mobile Bay will not only stop all blockade running there, but will relieve a large blockading squadron for other important duties. The possession of the city of Mobile will be unimportant."

20. R.A. Brock, ed., *Southern Historical Society Papers*, 51 vols., (Richmond, VA: Published by the Society, 1907), vol. 35, New Orleans *Times-Dispatch*, December 23, 1907, pp. 174-5.

21. Hearn, *Mobile Bay*, p. 49. Folmar, *Terrible Field*, pp. 127-9. Duffy, *Lincoln's Admiral*, p. 225. Not only was the Confederate aim bad, the ordnance employed left a lot to be desired. Both Union and Confederate reports indicate that at one point, four shells in succession struck the mortarboat *John Griffiths* and not one exploded.

22. Hearn, *Mobile Bay*, p. 49. *Ibid.*, p. 125. ORN I, 21:96-7, Farragut to Welles, February 28, 1864. In another letter to Welles on September 30, 1862, Farragut had written that, “Fort Gaines . . . must be taken to secure an entrance for our supplies, as we have no vessels to get up Grant’s Pass and get our supplies in that way.” (ORN I, 19:242-3). From this, it is obvious that using the Mississippi Sound and Grant’s Pass was Farragut’s only real choice as a supply route. This makes Powell’s existence even more deadly for a Federal occupation of Mobile Bay.

23. ORA I, 39:739, Monthly Report of Operations, July, 1864. *Ibid.*, p. 707-8, Von Sheliha to Gallimard, July 10, 1864.

24. Folmar, *Terrible Field*, pp. 131-5.

25. ORA I, 39:704-5, Von Sheliha to Rives, July 11, 1864.

26. Folmar, *Terrible Field*, p. 135. “Letters and Telegrams Sent by Engineer Department, C.S. War Dept. Department of the Gulf”, Fort Morgan Historical Society, p. 129, Von Sheliha to Maden, August 2, 1864. *Ibid.*, p. 136, Von Sheliha to Gilmer, August 4, 1864. Foxhall A. Parker, *The Battle of Mobile Bay and the Capture of Forts Powell, Gaines, and Morgan* (Boston: A. Williams and Company, 1878), p. 10, hereafter referred to as Parker, *Capture*.

27. Parker, *Capture*, p. 18-19. Folmar, *Terrible Field*, p. 136.

28. Folmar, “Fort Powell Incident”, p. 125. Parker, *Capture*, p. 19. Hearn, *Mobile Bay*, p. 120.

29. Hearn, *Mobile Bay*, p. 121. Folmar, “Fort Powell Incident”, p. 129. ORN I, 21:560, Williams to Garner, August 7, 1864. *Ibid.*, pp. 786-7, Abstract Log of the U.S. Ironclad *Chickasaw*, August 5, 1864.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 560, Williams to Garner.

31. ORN I, 21:504, Pomeroy to de Krafft, August 6, 1864.

32. ORN I, 21:565-6, Maury to Seddon, August 12, 1864; Folmar, *Terrible Field*, p. 136. Italics inserted by the author. Williams would later be convicted by court-martial, but would be reinstated to command over Maury’s and Garner’s protests in September due to manpower shortages.

33. Hearn, *Mobile Bay*, p. 125. ORN I, 21:504-5, Pomeroy to de Krafft, August 6, 1864.

34. Folmar, *Terrible Field*, p. 106.

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