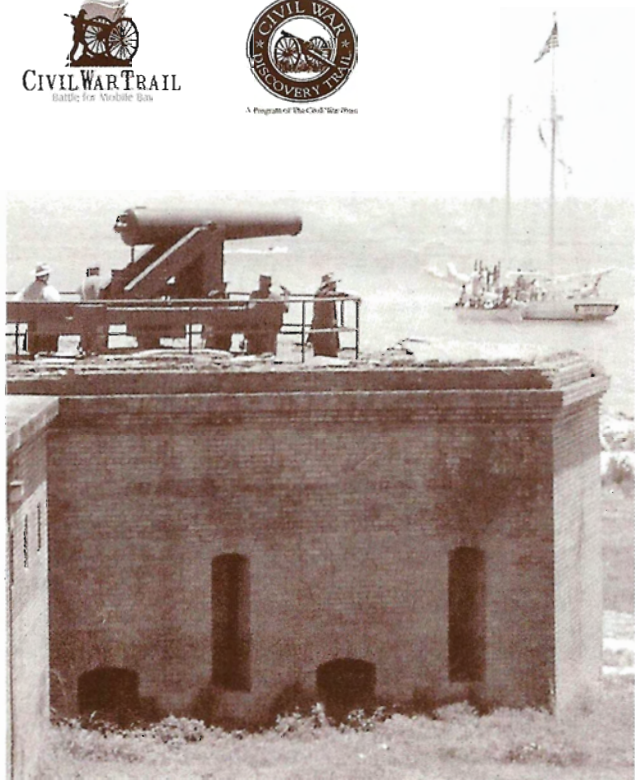


Fort Gaines

Dauphin Island, Alabama

**“Damn the torpedoes.
Full speed ahead!”**

FOR YOUR SAFETY DONOT WALK ON TOP OF WALLS
OR GET CLOSE TO DROP-OFFS (EXCEPT WHERE
GUARD RAILS ARE IN PLACE).



A Walking Tour Through History . . .

Follow the marked route and be careful. The Dauphin Island Park and Beach hereby states that upon agreement to tour the fort visitors remove the Board and Fort from any liability of personal injury or property damage. Children must be accompanied by adults.

1. **South Gun Ramp.** Built of brick it provides access to the terreplein, or gun platform for both soldiers and ammunition carts. To the left the kitchen courtyard can be seen.
2. **Gun Mounts.** This terreplein has a well preserved array of granite track supports upon which the guns were removed on their barbette carriages to change their field of fire. The breast high serpentine wall was built for protection of both guns and gun crews.
3. **The south flank firing stations** are well preserved showing where 32 pounder cannons were positioned behind the brick parapet. North of this station rises the chimney from the kitchen, and its patio lies below.
4. **View of Pelican Harbor.** Sand Island, site of the present day lighthouse, lies in the gulf to the southeast. Directly to the south formerly lay Pelican Island, a thin split of sand like Sand Island was before hurricanes removed or altered the offshore barriers.



A pre-Civil War illustration of the fort, from Harper's Weekly.
(University of South Alabama Photographic Archive)

In 1864 these two islands defined what was earlier known as Pelican Harbor, the principle site for anchorage that dates back to the early 18th century, when Dauphin Island was capital of all French Louisiana. Farragut's fleet anchored just beyond Sand Island prior to its invasion of the bay. To the right can be seen an observation post built atop the southwest bastion in 1901.

5. **Southeast Bastion.** Pointing toward Sand Island lighthouse, the visitor can view where the powerful Union fleet assembled for its run past the Forts into Mobile Bay. A lighthouse has been there since 1838. Two miles from this point (along bearing of arrow A on map) the Union supply ship "Phillippi" was bombarded, burned, abandoned and sunk during the first engagement of the Battle of Mobile Bay.

This section of the fort was altered during installation of the disappearing guns at the turn of the century. The tunnel was closed for the construction of an ammunition magazine and the breast high wall running around the roof surface removed to provide a broad field of fire for the disappearing coastal guns. Evidence of rain traps can be seen on the floor.

6. **Ammunition Magazine.** This raised earthen section covers part of the extensive network of ammunition magazines built for the coastal batteries. Three air circulation vents were visible to the left.

7. **Range Finder.** This was a central station for a range finding operation.

8. **East Bastion.** Facing east across the three mile mouth of Mobile Bay, Fort Morgan is visible. Directly north of Fort Morgan the Union monitor *Tecumseh* struck a torpedo (mines fashioned from beer kegs and detonated on impact or from shore by electricity), which exploded and sank her with 93 officers and crew. Along the bearing of arrow B on the map, the confederate ironclad *Tennessee* surrendered, ending the naval fighting of the famous battle. This bastion was leveled and filled, with sand at the construction of the later concrete coastal batteries.

9. **"Disappearing" Gun Mount.** Housed here was a 6 inch Disappearing Cannon. These were installed around 1898 - 1903. They were called "disappearing" because for loading purposes the cannon's were lowered to the level of the concrete platform and to fire were raised above the wall.

10. **Northeast Bastion.** Four miles north of this point along the bearing of Arrow C on the map, Fort Powell stood. A smaller fortification, it fought six Union ships until its guns were disabled, then withstood a severe bombardment. It was destroyed by the Confederates in a spectacular night explosion when further defense was impossible.

11. **North Flank.** Visible from this point is the location of a 3 inch rapid fire battery atop a small hill. The 928 foot pier originally ran out from this point into the water.

12. **Tunnel Course.** Visitors may choose here to descend the north ramp to the courtyard. Those descending the ramp may enter the bastion through the tunnel described below.

13. **Northwest Bastion.** This bastion is preserved in its original condition. Note the

tures within the Fort were built between 1898-1903.

21. **Officer's Quarters.** This building was originally three stories tall but the upper floors were destroyed during the Battle of Mobile Bay. The standard garrison for this Fort was around 400 men. The enlisted men's barracks outside the walls were burned down during the battle as well.

22. **Kitchen Courtyard.** Note the large cisterns dominant here. These fireplaces and ovens were used daily in the preparation of food for the Fort garrison.

23. **Southwest Bastion.** Similar to the Northwest Bastion. The steps lead up to the concrete observation post built at the time of the coastal gun battery installation.

24. **Rest Rooms.** Formerly this building was the orderly room and Commandant's office.

25. **Guardhouse.** The Fort Gaines Gift Shop is located on the ground floor of this building.

26. **Sally Port.** The entrance tunnel architecture is interesting for its intricate brickwork. Original plans for the fort included a drawbridge.

By 1864 Mobile was one of the last Ports open to Blockade Runners bringing in supplies to the beleaguered Confederacy. In August 1864 Admiral David Farragut had assembled a large strike force of soldiers and ships to capture the Forts that guarded the entrances to Mobile Bay.

On August 3 over 1,500 troops were landed on the Western End of Dauphin Island. These troops under the command of General Gordon Granger drove the Confederate garrison on the Island back towards Fort Gaines. Skirmishing with the advancing Fed-



Admiral David Farragut (left) and General Gordon Granger meeting at Fort Gaines to discuss strategy for the Mobile Campaign on August 22, 1864.

erals went on all day in a desperate attempt to buy time to reinforce the Fort with volunteers from Mobile. Meanwhile throughout the day the sailors aboard the fourteen wooden hulled frigates of Admiral Farragut's fleet prepared to run the gauntlet. The maneuver would be daring. Four ironclad monitors would lead the assault on Mobile Bay as a screen beside the frigates sailing past, lashed together in pairs.

But to run between the guns of the two Forts, Gaines and Morgan, guarding the mouth of the bay would demand a heavy price. The Confederate cannoneers were busy with their own preparations for battles.

At Fort Gaines, Colonel Charles Anderson and his garrison, now inflated to over 800 men, were ordered to hold at any cost and continued to battle the Union Army.

Dawn of August 5th saw the fleet drawn up in battle line and a line of besieging Federals entrenched to the West of Fort Gaines. Anderson watched as Farragut's fleet closed in at 6:30 a.m. Suddenly, in hellish sheets of flame, the smooth bore howitzer and columbiads lashed out from Morgan's walls. Stiff geysers of water shot up around the advancing fleet. the battle of Mobile Bay was on.

As his frigates ran the passage, Farragut's boats released volleys into the Fort defenders. But the Confederate fire was more gruesome. Cannonballs heated to red hot temperatures in Fort furnaces tore into the ships hulls. "Shot after shot crushed into the Hartford" said one witness later, "mowing down men, deluging the decks with blood and scattering mangled fragments of humanity so thickly that it was difficult to stand on the deck".

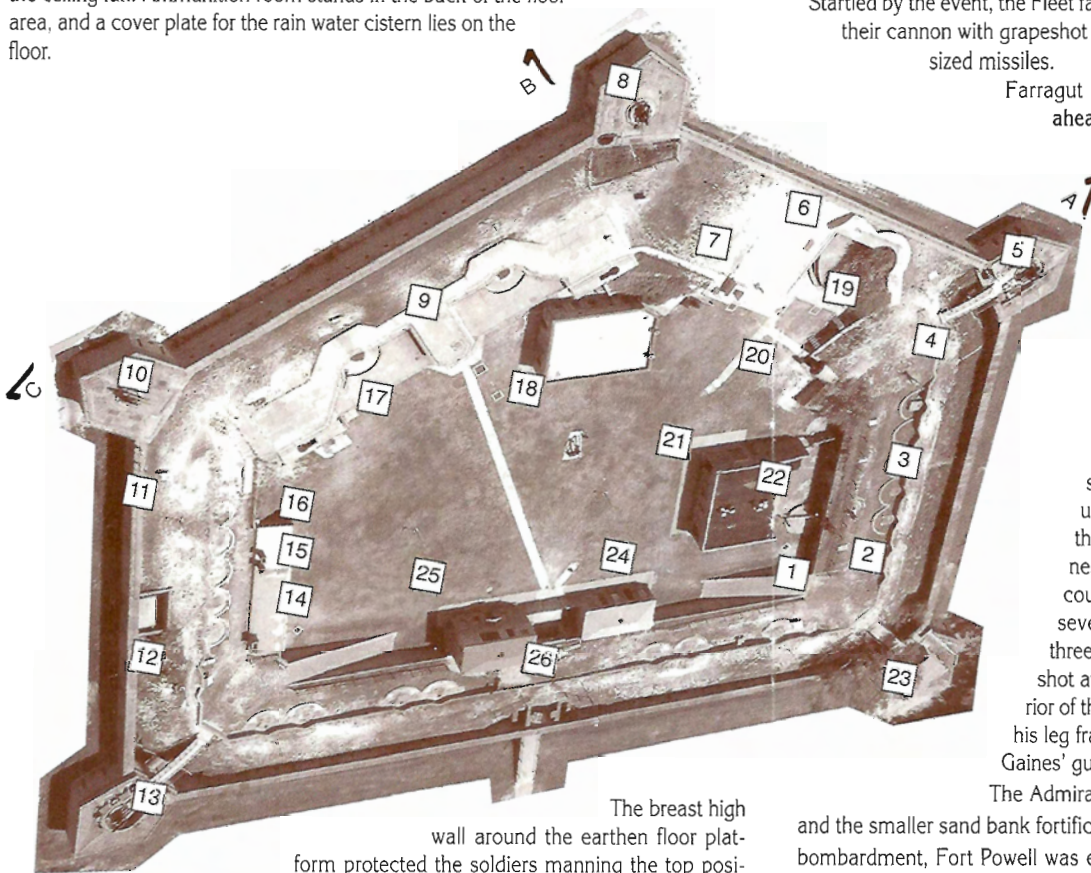
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13. Northwest Bastion. This bastion is preserved in its original condition. Note the craftsmanship and engineering expertise which went into the brick work of the tunnel. On each side, facing the moat are embrasures for firing small arms. Three 24 pounder howitzers were mounted here in 1861. Ventilation ports can be seen in the ceiling fan. Ammunition room stands in the back of the floor area, and a cover plate for the rain water cistern lies on the floor.



The breast high wall around the earthen floor platform protected the soldiers manning the top positions. Rain catchers can be seen outside as well as filter arrangements. Prominent on the floor are circular granite mounts for the barbette gun carriages traversing their field of fire.

14. Bakery. This section housed a 12 foot oven, a smaller oven, and store rooms.

15. Latrine. Beneath the gun platform and earth works the latrine is accessible by tunnel.

Anderson's attention turned immediately upon Fort Gaines and the smaller sand bank fortification, Fort Powell, at Grant's Pass. After an intense bombardment, Fort Powell was evacuated and blown up at night by its defenders. Anderson now knew it would be his fight alone.

From August 6-8, the fight for Fort Gaines raged on. The garrison was under siege from both land and sea, day and night. Nearly 3,000 Federal infantry now lay in the entrenchments to the west of the Fort and shelled the fort with their cannon. The

As his frigates ran the passage, Farragut's boats released volleys into the Fort defenders. But the Confederate fire was more gruesome. Cannonballs heated to red hot temperatures in Fort furnaces tore into the ships hulls. "Shot after shot crushed into the Hartford" said one witness later, "mowing down men, deluging the decks with blood and scattering mangled fragments of humanity so thickly that it was difficult to stand on the deck".

Amid the carnage, a muffled roar near Morgan caught the Admirals ear. Turning with the hope of seeing a magazine within the Fort going up, he observed instead the lead bottom and screw propeller of the U.S.S. Tecumseh turning in the air. It sank immediately. The torpedo (known today as mines) field had claimed a victim.

Startled by the event, the Fleet faltered. Sensing confusion, Morgan's gunners loaded their cannon with grapeshot to rake the decks with rapid blasts of clustered fist-sized missiles.

Farragut reacted boldly. "Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead", he thundered down to the pilot. The Hartford

lashed to the Metacomet churned into the Bay.

The pairs of Union ships steamed through the heat of Morgan's withering fire to a safe harbor out of range. The Confederate Ironclad Tennessee, commanded by Admiral Franklin Buchanan, the pre-war superintendent of Annapolis, lumbered out from Morgan's lee to engage the fleet. Three smaller defending gunboats, Selma, Gaines and Morgan, followed with a brief bombardment, but were soon disabled by the frigate's superior fire of rifled cannon.

The Tennessee was left to fight one of the most lopsided contests of naval history. Buchanan steered his unweildy vessel with its 2" thick iron hide directly into the fleet. At once the ships converged upon the Tennessee with point blank fusillades and ramping. The courageous Confederate sailors engaged as many as seven ships at once, firing into them from as close as three feet away. Soon the Tennessee steering chains were shot away and her stack so riddled with shot that the interior of the vessel filled with smoke. Buchanan, wounded and his leg fractured, cruised his vessel to a point a mile north of Gaines' guns, where at 10:00 a.m. he surrendered.

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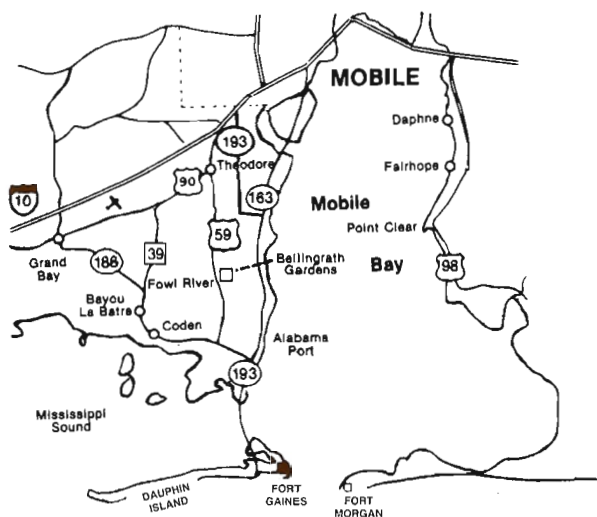
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hopelessness of any victory, visited Farragut on board his ship at the Admiral's Invitation, where the Admiral served them wine. After discussion of the placement of forces against them, Anderson decided not to risk what would surely be a suicidal defense. The next day the Fort surrendered.

Thus the Fort that took 40 years to construct and was provisioned to withstand any attack from land or sea, at great strategic advantage, became an overnight victim of obsolescence. The technology of armament and the facile display of opposing forces doomed the Renaissance Fort Design.

Spend the Night at Dauphin Island Campground.

- * 150 Campsites
- * Washer/Dryers, Clean Restrooms
- * Childrens' playground-volleyball & horseshoe sites
- * Wooden path from rear of campground to private beach on Gulf of Mexico
- * Campground bordered by 160-acres Audubon bird sanctuary with nature walks and scenic lake
- * Fishing pier with easy walking distance
- * Public boat launch next to campground.



GULF OF MEXICO

To get to Fort Gaines from I-10, exit 17-A at 193 South to