

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

FORT MORGAN

ENGLISH



1834
Guardian
on the Bay

Fort Morgan is a Third System Coastal Defense Fort. It, like all the forts of the Third System, was built after the War of 1812 when Congress realized the need for stronger fortifications along the eastern and southern coastlines.

Designed to control the main ship channel into Mobile Bay, the star shape of the fort allowed its defenders to bring a heavy concentration of artillery fire on an enemy fleet as it approached the fort and to maintain this volume of fire as the enemy force moved into the bay. Because of its isolated position, the fort was also designed with extensive land defenses to enable it to withstand a siege.

During the Civil War, Fort Morgan and all her sister forts were proven to be out of date. Rifled cannon and steam-powered warships repeatedly defeated the old brick forts. This was dramatically demonstrated at Fort Morgan on August 5, 1864, when Union Admiral D. G. Farragut led his fleet past the guns of the fort and into the bay with the loss of only one ship.

Following the Civil War, the Army moved slowly to improve the nation's coastal defenses. It was not until the 1890s that major improvements were undertaken. This building program, known as the Endicott program, upgraded the nation's defenses. All the concrete gun positions at Fort Morgan are a part of this program.

While the weapons and gun positions changed, the fort's goal remained the same – to prevent any enemy forces from entering Mobile Bay. The concrete batteries were built between 1896 and 1905 and were manned during the Spanish-American War and World War I. Fort Morgan was also occupied during World War II, but by that time the concrete batteries, like the brick fort before them, were no longer the primary defensive positions.

No wooden structures from the Civil War era remain at Fort Morgan. The oldest building on site is the lighthouse keeper's house built in 1872. The five remaining wooden buildings on the site date to the beginning of the 20th century. The military base was greatly expanded between 1898 and 1910. The surviving buildings are all that remain of a large support complex that at its peak numbered almost 100 structures. The buildings still standing were originally designed to house a coast artillery officer's quarters, a staff officer's quarters. A hospital steward's quarters, the post bakery, and the post administration building.

Important Dates in Fort Morgan's History

1819	Construction begun on fort at Mobile Point
1833	Fort named for General Daniel Morgan
1834	Fort completed and garrisoned by Company B, 2nd Artillery
1841 Dec 31	Garrison withdrawn and fort put in caretaker status
1861 Jan 4	Civil War begins Alabama Militia seized fort from caretaker
1863 Apr 30	Fort's commander, Lt. Col. C. Stewart, killed in the explosion of a cannon
1864 Aug 5 Aug 9	Battle of Mobile Bay Union troops landed east of fort siege began
Aug 23	Fort surrendered to Union forces
1865	Civil War ends
1867 Dec 31	Garrison withdrawn, fort placed in caretaker status
1898 March	Spanish-American War Fort reactivated, garrisoned by Battery I, 1st Artillery
1917-1918	Fort used as training base during World War I
1923	Fort deactivated, put in caretaker status
1941	Fort reactivated, manned by Battery F, 50th Coast Artillery Corps, Navy and Coast Guard units
1946	Fort deactivated and turned over to State of Alabama

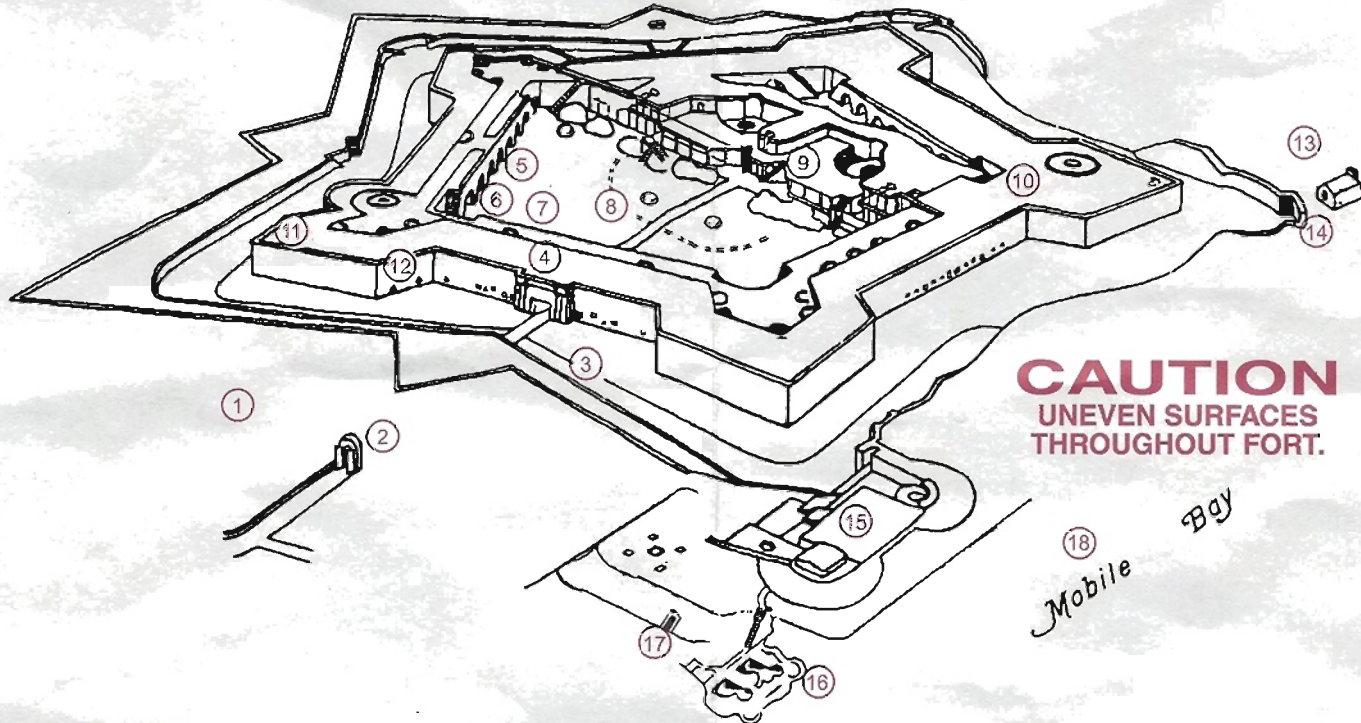
⑮ **TECUMSEH BUOY:** Near this marker buoy lies the wreck of the U.S.S. **Tecumseh**. The **Tecumseh** was sunk by an exploding "torpedo" as it steamed to attack the Confederate ironclad C.S.S. **Tennessee**. The stricken monitor rolled over and sank in less than two minutes drowning over 90 of its crew. Among the dead was the ship's commanding officer, Commander Tunis Craven. Twenty-one sailors escaped including four who were taken prisoner when they swam to Fort Morgan.

THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY

At dawn on August 5, 1864, an 18-ship Union fleet commanded by Admiral D. G. Farragut steamed toward Fort Morgan and the entrance to Mobile Bay. The Confederate defenders of the fort opened fire. At 7:30 AM, as cannon fire reached a crescendo, the leading Union monitor, the **Tecumseh**, struck a mine (known as a torpedo during the Civil War) and sank within a minute taking most of the crew down with her. This sudden disaster threw the Union fleet into confusion causing them to hesitate under the guns of Fort Morgan. At this critical moment, Farragut gave his famous order, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" which led the remaining vessels past the fort, through the minefield, and into Mobile Bay.

Fort Morgan National Historic Landmark is administered by the Alabama Historical Commission.

For more information, call (251) 540-7127 or email at ftmorgan@centurytel.net



CAUTION
UNEVEN SURFACES
THROUGHOUT FORT.

① **GLACIS:** The cleared ground that slopes upward toward the fort. It screened the fort walls from enemy gunfire.

② **POSTERN:** The connecting tunnel through the glacis. The tunnel originally had a sand floor. The concrete was added during the 20th century.

③ **DITCH:** Also known as the dry moat, the ditch surrounds the fort. It was intended to prevent an enemy from easily reaching the walls of the fort. The ditch could be swept with a deadly cross-fire from guns mounted in the fort's bastions. The brick-lined drain in the center of the ditch carries rainwater out of the moat.

④ **SALLYPORT:** The main entrance of the fort. The date "1833" is the year the fort was named, not the year it was completed. Named for General Daniel Morgan, a Revolutionary War hero, the fort was completed in 1834 and first occupied in March of that year.

⑤ **CASEMATES:** These arched rooms were designed as protected gun positions for the fort's cannon, but few cannon were ever mounted in them. The casemates were used for the storage

of food and equipment and were occasionally used as living quarters for troops, providing shelter from enemy bombardment.

⑥ **POWDER MAGAZINE:** Large amounts of black powder were needed to fire the fort's cannons. The powder was stored in small, well-protected, rooms known as magazines. The fort was designed with two magazines, and a third was added in the 1870s. At the time of the siege of the fort in 1864 more than 60,000 pounds of powder was stored in the magazines. The small openings in the walls provided ventilation for the rooms.

⑦ **CISTERN:** There are four in-ground brick cisterns in the fort. They were used to store rainwater for the use of the men in the garrison.

⑧ **CITADEL FOUNDATION:** All that remains of the ten-sided barracks is the remnants of its foundations. The citadel was torn down after being badly damaged during the 1864 siege.

⑨ **BATTERY DUPORTAIL:** This concrete gun emplacement was built across the fort in 1898-99. It mounted two 12-inch, breech-loading can-

⑱ *Mobile Bay*

non known as disappearing rifles. Lead counterweights weighing 30 tons were dropped to raise the gun into firing position above the concrete wall. When the gun was fired, the recoil would return the gun to the loading position. The gun used 268 pounds of explosive to throw a 1046-pound shell up to 8½ miles.

⑩ **PANAMA MOUNT:** The original brick of this bastion was leveled when Battery Duportail was built. The circular concrete gun mount was constructed during World War II to facilitate the turning of a 155-millimeter gun so that a wider area could be fired on by the gun. Five of the 155-millimeter guns were brought to the fort during World War II.

⑪ **BASTION:** The projecting corners of the fort are bastions. Cannons were mounted on top of each bastion to fire over the wall, "en barbette." The barbette guns on these bastions and along the walls were to bring an overwhelming concentration of fire on any enemy ships that attempted to enter Mobile Bay.

⑫ **FLANK CASEMATE:** The two 24-pounder Flank Howitzers mounted in each of the fort's ten Flank Casemates could deliver a deadly cross fire on any attackers in the ditch. The howitzers in this casemate were manufactured in 1847 and were part of the fort's ordnance during the Civil War. In the early 1900's the U.S. Army shipped the guns to Cincinnati, Ohio for use in a Civil War monument. They returned to the fort in November 2001 and remounted in this bastion in June 2004.

⑬ **LIGHTHOUSE BATTERY:** So named because the Mobile Point Lighthouse once stood in the center of the battery, directly in front of the "hotshot" furnace. This artillery position was constructed during 1843. Before the Civil War guns were often mounted in this battery and

covered with small wooden sheds called "pent-houses" to protect them from the weather. During the Battle of Mobile Bay, Confederate artillerymen were forced to abandon this position because of brick fragments flying from the light-house.

⑭ **HOTSHOT FURNACE:** This hotshot furnace was constructed during 1843 & 1844. Solid iron cannon balls would be heated in the furnace until white hot. This "hot shot" would be fired at wooden ships to set them afire. By the Civil War "hotshot" had largely been replaced by exploding shells and it was never used in battle at Fort Morgan.

⑮ **BATTERY THOMAS:** This concrete gun position was built in 1898 over the site of part of the old brick fort. In time of war, electrically detonated mines were laid across the entrance to Mobile Bay. This battery, mounting two 4.7-inch British-made, quick-fire guns, was designed to prevent the removal of the mines by minesweepers or other small ships.

⑯ **BATTERY SCHENCK:** The two matching gun positions were completed in 1900. The third, raised position was begun in 1903 and finished in 1904. The battery mounted 3-inch, rapid-fire guns fired 15-pound projectiles. This battery was intended to prevent hostile ships from removing the defensive mine field at the entrance to the bay.

⑰ **TORPEDO CASEMATE:** This position was built in the 1870s and modernized in the 1890s. During wartime, electrically detonated mines were placed across the entrance to the bay. The firing cables to the mines ran to this position, and the mines were detonated from here.