

**HERB GLASS, BULLVILLE, N. Y.**

*Antique Firearms for Museums and Collectors*

**CONSULTANT AND APPRAISER**

HONORARY CURATOR  
WEST POINT MUSEUM

MIDDLETOWN 96-3021  
IF NO ANSWER 96-2017

January 2, 1956

Mr. Wm. Florence  
43 Berkeley St.  
Reading, Mass.

Dear Bill:

Am enclosing a copy of the letter I wrote Cliff Young regarding the Leech & Rigdon. I hope you have some fun with this deal - but sure as hell would hate to see this letter ever become public record! That Leech & Rigdon #605 is in my opinion, the finest Confederate pistol in existence. It came to me directly from the person who bought it from the Harrington family and that family is still in existence in Yonkers, New York. The gun is 100% original - as a matter of fact, it had almost all of the blue on it until the old fool I got it from sandpapered it off just before selling it to me. Ensign Harrington wound up an Admiral in the Union Navy and is a nationally known Naval hero. The gun of course, is right and original in every respect and the engraved plate was put on at the time Ensign Harrington captured the gun in the battle of Mobile Bay.

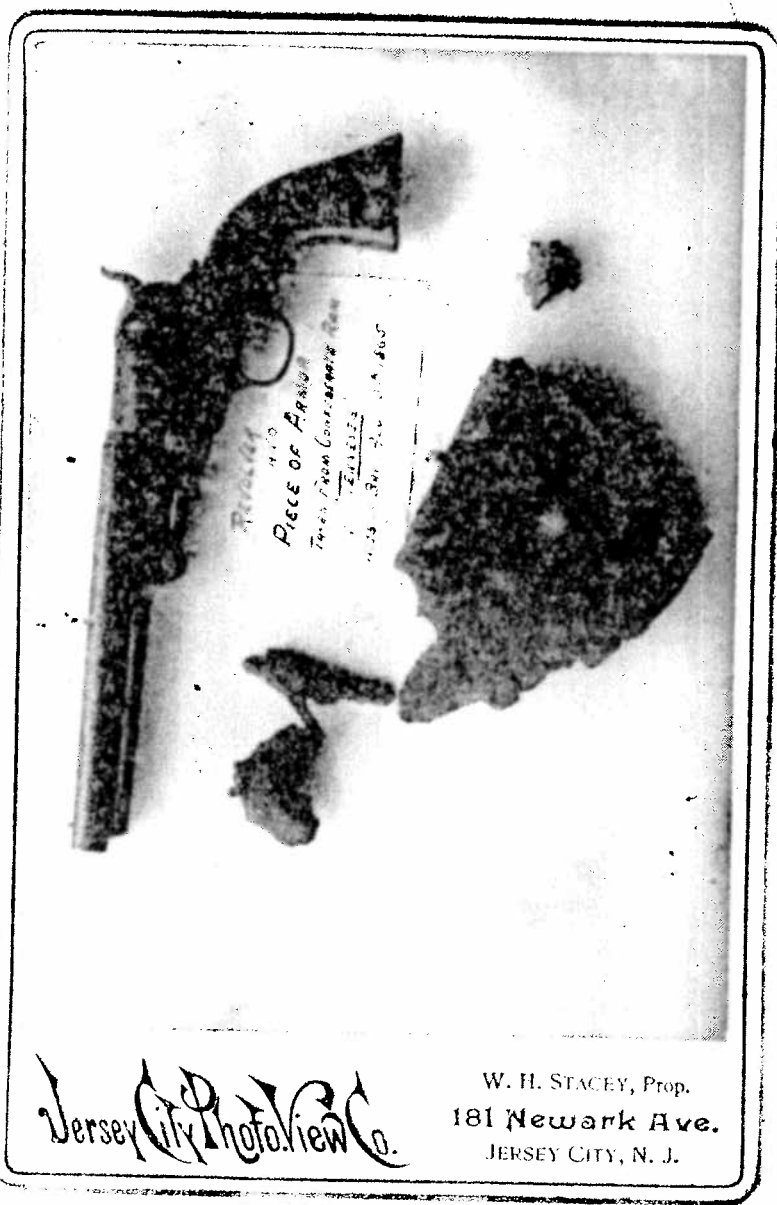
Best regards,

  
Herb Glass

HG/v  
Enc/ copy

Life Member: National Rifle Association.

Member of: National Minute Loading Rifle Association : Ohio Gun Collectors Association : Massachusetts Arms Collectors : Pennsylvania Gun Collectors Association : Texas Gun Collectors Association : Wisconsin Gun Collectors : New Jersey Arms Collectors Club : Connecticut Gun Guild, Inc. : Charter Member Company of Military Collectors and Historians : Illinois Gun Collectors Association : Florida Gun Collectors Association : Carolina Gun Collectors Association.



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W. H. STACEY, Prop.  
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JERSEY CITY, N. J.



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Department of History

August 7, 1996

7

Dear Mr. Young:

I again must apologize for the delay in responding to your letter. I do suffer from procrastination, but in this case a death in the family intervened. Unfortunately I am not going to be a great deal of help to you. The letters are in the possession of the great grandson of Harrington. He is somewhat of a recluse and I have not been in contact with him for several years now. Therefore I am reluctant to give out his full name and address without his permission. When I undertook to edit the letters, he helped in the transcription but refused to receive any acknowledgement for his part in preparing the article. He strongly preferred to remain anonymous and frustratingly have the credit read: held in private hands. Hopefully he will deposit them in the Delaware Historical Society along with a number of other interesting letters. Let me keep your letter and if and when I see him I will mention it and let him, hopefully, respond. Give me some time and I will see what I can do for you. However, in this case, no promises.

As to the photograph, I do not remember the origin of that. If I come across it I will send it. Unfortunately I do not possess any copies of the article, except one for myself, or I would send one to you. The journal was not that generous, if I remember correctly.

Again I appreciate your comments on the article, and I am sorry that at this stage I can be of more help.

Sincerely Yours,

Richard R. Duncan  
Associate Professor, History

16 July, '96

Prof. Richard R. Duncan  
6101 Edsall Road - Apt. 1802  
Alexandria, Virginia 22304

Dear Professor Duncan:

Thank you for your response to my letter of inquiry.

Several months ago Mr. John H. Friend, Jr. of Mobile, who is writing a book on "The Battle of Mobile Bay," sent me a copy of the article you edited for the Spring and Summer, 1978 issue of The Alabama Historical Quarterly titled "The Storming of Mobile Bay."

I thought it was excellent and asked Mr. Friend where I could obtain an original issue for my library. He suggested that I write to the publisher - the Department of Archives and History in Montgomery. I did contact them but, unfortunately, they did not have any copies available.

Purnell Frederick Harrington and "The Battle of Mobile Bay" have long held a special fascination for me since I have in my Civil War collection the Confederate "Colt" revolver that Ensign Harrington pocketed from the Tennessee directly after the engagement. He later had the facts inscribed on a small silver disk and inletted into the grip.

I am very curious as to how you came across these letters and photograph since, over a period of many years, I have made a concerted effort to acquire as much information as I could on Harrington and was not even aware that these letters and picture existed.

Would I be too presumptuous to ask for the name and address of the owner of this correspondence and photograph? I have items and information on Harrington, including copies of other images, that I would be glad to share with you and with this other party.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

M. Clifford Young

Beacon Hill Mailboxes  
66 Charles St., Box 447  
Boston, MA 02114-4626

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

Annapolis, Maryland

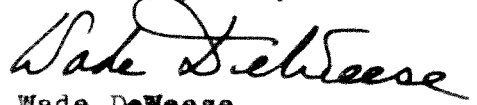
THE MUSEUM

25 June 1953

Dear Mr. Glass:

In reply to your letter of 18 June 1953, you will find a very complete sketch of Purnell Fred Harrington in the "National Encyclopedia of American Biography", Volume 27 - pages 482-483, available at your nearest large Library. You will also find accounts of him in "Notable Americans", Volume 5, and in Lewis R. Hamersly's "Records of Living Officers of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps", published in New York 1902, pages 89-90.

Very truly yours,



Wade DeWeese  
Captain, U. S. Navy (Ret.)  
Director

Mr. Herb Glass  
Consultant & Appraiser  
Bullville, New York

**JOHN H. FRIEND, JR.**

FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING  
107 SAINT FRANCIS STREET - SUITE 2200  
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36602-3322  
(334) 432-3158

March 17, 1996

Dear Cliff:

Many thanks for Milliken's August 5th diary. This is the only diary entry I have for the Seminole, so I am most grateful.

The picture of Harrington's Colt revolver is also most interesting and much appreciated. I have found where Harrington went aboard the Tennessee immediately after her surrender, which certainly helps authenticate the weapon as having come from that vessel. Momentos of revolver size or smaller were probably abundant and free for the taking. Not so during the Korean War, where I was forbidden to bring home a fine Chinese burp gun. I will continue to pursue Caldwell Delaney's belief that Admiral Buchanan might be the revolver's owner, but so far no luck.

I noticed that the Milliken diary has two dates on the cover page: Texas, February 12, 1864 and Off Mobile, April 7. Could I impose on you to send me the other entries made off Mobile. My book begins in the Spring of 1864 and if any of Millikens entries should be used, I would give you full credit for the quotes.

Again, thanks for the information. I look forward to meeting you and discussing the Battle of Mobile Bay, also my favorite subject.

Sincerely,

  
John H. Friend, Jr.

it and shall always be proud that I had command of sixty of the bravest hearts in the world. I had made up my mind to do my duty. I ascribe my self possession to the resolution. I had not an extra heart-throb, except when success dawned and then I felt such pride and such a good-all-over-feeling-that I wonder I did not go up in the smoke. I'll go through a dozen battles to feel that way again. You will read the paper accounts and with this letter get an *idea* of the fight. No one who did not see it will ever fully appreciate it. During the battle, the wildest yet controlled enthusiasm prevailed. Officers and men were alike roused to glory. Prentiss remarked as he was carried forward, "It is only both legs, Back", and a smile lit up his countenance at his sorry joke. Hearing cheering on deck, he cheered the flag, *while the knife was cutting him*. He was married four months ago. I could, but cannot for want of time, write you incidents without number of heroism, coolness, & noble courage. Our captain has made no distinction but recommends every officer and man in the highest terms.

Love to Mother and all the family. Send me *stamps* and also a *good lot of note paper* & envelopes to match. I am *entirely out*. Send price & I will refund.

Your loving Son,

P. F. Harrington

## VI

U.S.S. Monongahela  
Mobile Bay, La. [sic]  
Agu. 18th, 1864

Dear Sam,

I was refreshed to-day with your letter and papers and letters from Father, Dick,<sup>13</sup> and an old classmate, Chadwick of the 1st Class at the Academy. I have rec'd but one letter

<sup>13</sup>Richard Harrington (1847-1884), brother of Purnell Frederick, was a graduate of Georgetown College and studied law under Nathaniel B. Smithers. He was admitted to the bar, and in the early 1870's he was a prominent lawyer in Washington.

before since I came down and was anxious to hear from you. I hasten to write again to you. You have read before this the newspaper accounts of our great fight, the most glorious but terrible of the war. This vessel was a *star* performer, second to no one. On Friday, Aug. 5th at 4 A. M. I took the deck of this vessel and prepared to steam in. At 5:30, we were underway and Capt. Strong took the deck. I then went to my Division. We steamed in in three lines, thus:—

Octorara	Brooklyn	Tecumseh	Rebel Ram
Metacomet	Hartford	Manhattan	Fort Morgan
Port Royal	Richmond		
Seminole	Lackawanna		
Kennebeck	Monongahela	Winnebago	
Itasca	Ossipee		
Galena	Oncida	Chickasaw	

The four iron-clads stood in under the fort till within 200 yards. The second line passed the fort at a distance of 400 or 500 yards. The outer line, the *Octorara* and vessels under, were lashed on the port-side of the centre line, as I have arranged them on the preceding page. At 6:25 the *Chickasaw* fired a gun at the fort. As 7, the battle opened with a gun from the fort answered at once by the Brooklyn. In a few minutes over 100 guns on each side were at work. Shot, shell, and grape flew as thick as apples fall from a tree in a hurricane. I had command of one XI inch gun, from which I fired shells weighing 135 pounds and solid shot of 187 pounds, also two 32 pounders and two 24 pound howitzers. One of my 32's was worked by Acting Ensign and gun's crew from the *Kennebeck* under my direction. At 8, a solid shot struck our Ex. Officer, Lieut. Roderick Prentiss. He died soon after. At 8:10, the *Tecumseh* was blown up by a torpedo and sunk with all on board except one Acting Master, one Acting Ensign and twelve or fourteen men. At 8:15, the Rebel Ram *Tennessee* was seen to steam for the *Lackawanna*, the vessel ahead of us, to run her down. We put on *all* steam and ran into her. We saved the *Lackawanna*. As we approached her she *snapped* two heavy guns at us twice. Had they gone off our slaughter would have been fearful. Encumbered with a heavy gunboat, we were not able to get much way on her. We struck her a light blow and as she swept down by our port side, one of the guns which had refused to go off into us was fired into the *Kennebeck* and after killing

several men set her on fire. We then cast off from the *Kennebec* and left her. As the ram passed our quarter, her flag, already shot to pieces, was shot away. We thought she had surrendered and we yelled. Several vessels refrained from firing into her. We passed on through shot and shell, our gunboats pursuing the rebel gunboats which were now steaming up the Bay. At a little after 9, we had passed Fort Gaines on the left and were preparing to anchor, when the ram which had dropped under the guns of Fort Morgan was seen coming up the bay. She fired a challenge shot at the *Hartford* and the gage was received and returned. Before she fired this ship *was going* and had the honor of leading the way into her. We struck her a terrible blow while going at the rate of 12 knots. The shock was very great. I thought we should lose all our masts. She fired two heavy shells into us just before we struck her. Fortunately they burst forward and wounded only three men. Had they come further aft, we should have lost fearfully. Our heavy stern is all torn away and we leak very much. The *Lackawanna* rammed her next. Then our glorious *Hartford* poured into a broadside while her guns almost touched the ram. This vessel & the *Hartford* had their sides burned by powder from the ram's guns. After the *Hartford*, the *Brooklyn*, *Ossipee*, and ironclads made for her. No vessel except this one & the *Lackawanna* rammed her. The *Ossipee* started for her but stopped on seeing the white flag. She surrendered at 10.15 A. M. three hours and fifteen minutes after the battle commenced. When she surrendered we were steaming for her at 13 knots speed. Had we struck her we would have sunk at once as we were already leaking. Altogether it was a desperate and plucky fight on both sides. The report shows that she was struck *only by one* 15 inch shot. So the honor of capturing the finest ram ever built and the finest ironclad ever built belongs *almost* exclusively to wooden ships. The presence of ironclads did some good I suppose. Immediately after the fight, I went on board the ram. She is like the *Atlanta* but twice as powerful. Her gun deck was flesh and gore. She threw some of her dead overboard in order to make it appear that she had few hurt. All her steering gear & smoke pipe was shot away. Adm'l Buchanan, *Merrimack* man, had his leg broken and was captured. Our loss is severe, it will reach 300 killed & wounded. On the night of August 5th, Fort Powell was evacuated and

occupied next morn. by our men. On the 8th Fort Gaines surrendered to the *Navy*. They refused to surrender to the Army & Navy but sent 26 swords to the Flagship. Next day we landed 2000 troops in rear of Fort Morgan. I went in command of three boats. We have invested it completely. On Monday over a hundred guns will open on the fort & fire till it surrenders. We have free communication with the outside but cannot go out as we draw too much water. The large vessels must go under Fort Morgan to go out. Our small vessels go out through Grants Pass. My paper is all gone. I have written to Father to send me some. If you see him tell him not to forget. Please send this to Dick as I have not paper to spare in writing to him. I rec'd a letter from him today. I will examine the muster roll of this vessel & inform you if I find any Delaware men. I suppose Dick & Arthur are home again. Remember me to all. Tell Arthur I want to hear from him.

I remain,

Your affte, Brother,

P. F. Harrington



May 20, '96

200

Dear Jack:

Thank you very much for sending a copy of the complete article titled "The Storming of Mobile Bay" which included a picture of Harrington (a friend of mine has a later photo of him - a CDV). I was particularly pleased to see this issue which enabled me to read his post-battle letters to members of his family and to view a likeness of Harrington when he was an ensign and only about twenty years of age and which I had not seen previously. Thank you also for supplying me with the name and address of Dr. Edwin Bridges, the Director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History. I would love to be able to track down the present owner of these letters with a view to acquiring them.

I have enclosed copies of pages from Milliken's diary from April 7th (when the Seminole was off Mobile) to the day before his untimely death while he was engaged in clearing mines in Mobile Bay. I trust you will find its contents most interesting.

Enclosed, too, is a photocopy of a U.C.V reunion badge stamped "C.S.S. Tennessee The Giant of Mobile Bay." Keep on the lookout for me as I have been trying to locate one of these for years.

Cordially,



M. Clifford Young

Services  
447  
26

**JOHN H. FRIEND, JR.**

FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING  
107 SAINT FRANCIS STREET - SUITE 2200  
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36602-3322  
(334) 432-3158

g  
s  
o. 447

April 24, 1996

Dear Cliff:

Attached is the complete article, titled "The Storming of Mobile Bay." It also includes a picture of Harrington. I fear, however, the publication has been discontinued, since the latest copy in the Mobile Public Library is for 1982.

The Alabama Department of Archives and History was the publisher and may still have some copies on hand, or know where you can get one. Let me suggest that you write:

Dr. Edwin Bridges, Director  
Department of Archives and History  
624 Washington Avenue  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0100

When I sent the previous information, I failed to notice that the article included a picture of Harrington, which you may or may not have.

I look forward with great interest to Milliken's other diary entries. The Seminole is one of the few vessels for which I have no personal documents.

In the meantime I will keep my eyes open for a copy here in Mobile.

Sincerely,

  
John H. Friend, Jr.

March 28, '96

Building  
et, Suite 2200

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your response and for enclosing photocopies of some of P.F. Harrington's letters from the Spring and Summer, 1978 issue of Alabama Historical Quarterly. I was quite gratified to read these as I was not aware that they existed. I was particularly pleased to see mentioned that he had boarded the Tennessee immediately after the battle.

Could I prevail upon you to have this entire article, where these letters appear, copied for me? Also, would you kindly send the address of the Alabama Historical Quarterly as I would like to purchase an original copy of this issue.

As soon as I get through a very busy period for me, I will send you copies of Milliken's diary from April 7th (when the Seminole was off Mobile) to the day before his untimely death while he was engaged in clearing mines in Mobile Bay (he is buried in a National Cemetery in Mobile.) Since he wrote in ink and in pencil many of the latter pages are very difficult to decipher. However, I am sure that you will find some of the readable contents most interesting.

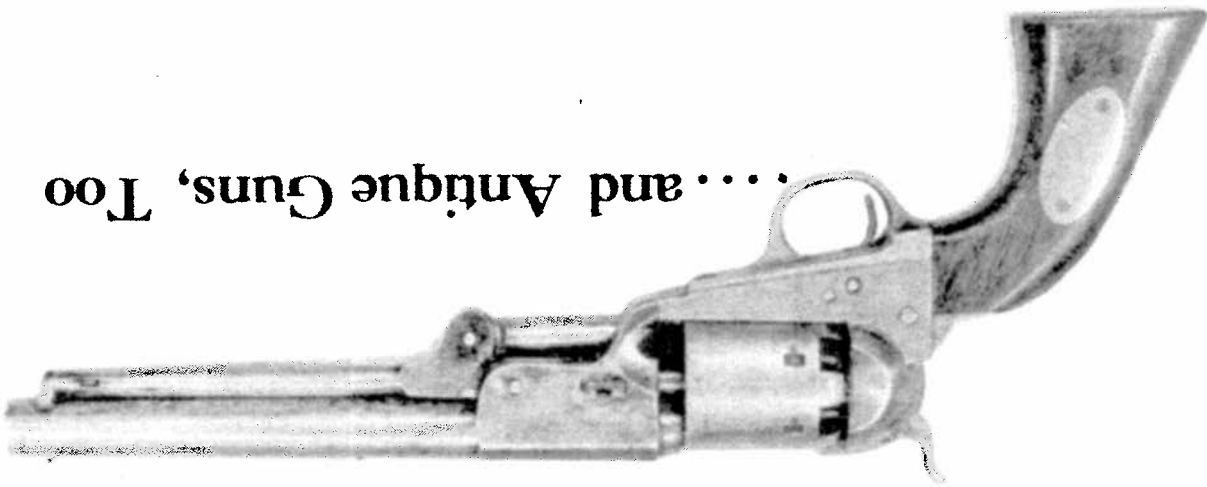
Thanks.

Cordially,

M. Clifford Young

Beacon Hill Mailboxes  
66 Charles St., Box 447  
Boston, MA 02114

## ...and Antique Guns, Too



By Mike Beatrice

Other antiques will consist of more than a dozen Confederate pieces—in four instances believed to be the only known ones in existence—early American flintlocks and Civil War carbines. Contemporary models by Colt, Smith & Wesson, Weatherly and Browning that will be featured in an adjoining Ivanhoe display will sharply contrast with the antiques.

And the gun exhibit is but one of the attractions the annual show holds for New England sportsmen, who themselves actively participate in booths and displays.

Among the sportsmen's organizations scheduled to take part in this show is the new Massachusetts Wildlife Federation, the Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen's Clubs, Middlesex County League of Sportsmen's Clubs, Massachusetts Striped Bass Assn, United Fly Tyers, Isaac Walton League, Maiden Anglers Assn, Mayflower Anglers and Inter-City Rod and Gun Club.

The sportsmen will be there to swap information and yarns that have erupted during the past year of life outdoors. Then they'll turn to inspecting, evaluating, and critiquing the new equipment and devices that will be unveiled by manufacturers and retailers for use afield during the coming 12 months.

Fishing tackle, guns and ammo, sportswear, tents and travel trailers, boats, diving gear, vacation sites and the usual center stage show that thrills both adults and youngsters—it'll all be there.

The Sportsmen's Show also serves as the annual meeting place for the New England Out-door Writers Assn, with rod and gun writers from throughout the

collectors who relate the fire-arms to famed individuals and events. Typical is an early model Confederate Le Mat revolver. Made in France, such guns were smuggled through the Union blockade in the Civil War by runners from Nassau and Bermuda. "This model was carried by such notables as Jeb Stuart, Gen Buaregard and Cmdr Wirtz of the infamous Andersonville Prison Camp," says Saul Arnshtein.

A highlight of the display will be what's generally referred to as "Colt's traveling exhibit," dominated by the 125th anniversary model of the Colt single-action Army .45, valued at \$12,500. Engraved in 24-carat embossed gold are seven historical scenes, including the charge of the Rough Riders on San Juan Hill—Colt revolvers smoking in their hands.

From Young's collection will come a Cofey revolver—one of the most valuable Confederate guns in existence, valued at \$10,000.

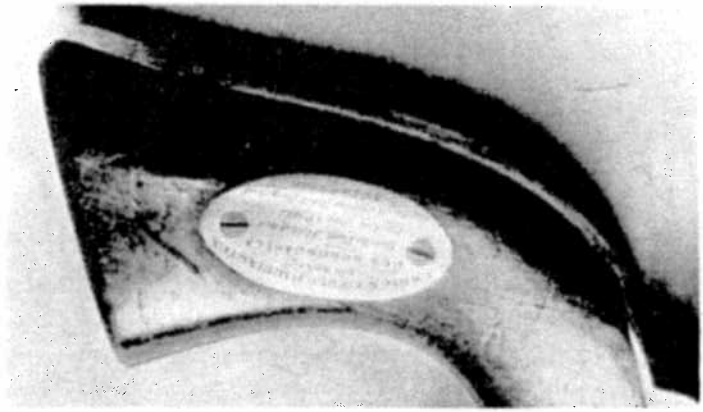
On Aug. 5, 1864, U.S. Navy Ensign P. Fred Harrington pocketed a Leech & Rigdon revolver during the capture of the Confederate ironclad Tennessee.

Harrington's trophy, which now bears an identification plate, will be just one of a special exhibit of rare and antique firearms that will be an unusual addition to exhibits at the upcoming New England Sportsmen's Show at the Hub's War Memorial Auditorium, Jan. 29-Feb. 6.

The display, valued in excess of \$60,000, will be the first of its kind shown in Boston in many years.

The guns will be exhibited at the show by Martin and Saul Arnshtein of Ivanhoe Sports Center, Watertown, through the cooperation of M. Clifford Young, noted collector of Confederate weapons, Colt firearms, and several private collectors in New England.

The association of guns and history has always fascinated

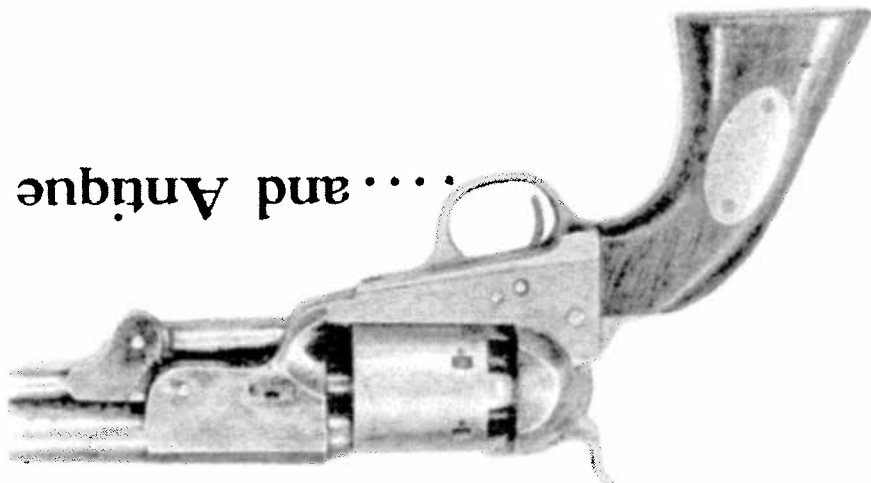


men written from throughout the

## Guns, Too



## ...and Antique



By Mike Beatrice

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The association of guns and history has always fascinated

NH 72733

PURNELL F. HARRINGTON

CAPTAIN, USN, OF USS PURITAN DURING  
SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR, 1898.

COPIED FROM HARPER'S WEEKLY VOL. 42

Jan.-June, page 369 (1898)

"Prominent American Naval  
Commanders"

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PHOTOGRAPHER

REC'D

TAKEN

DESCRIPTION

OFFICERS OF U.S.S. PENSACOLA,  
PANAMA, May 23, 1873.  
Seated left to right  
Fleet Surgeon E. R. DENBY, Rear  
Admiral Charles STEEDMAN, Fleet  
Paymaster Thomas T. CASWELL,  
Assistant Surgeon Paul FITZSIMMONS,  
LCDR. Farnell F. HARRINGTON

STANDING:

- 1 Captain John Henry R. UPSHUR
- 2 Secretary F. H. DEE
- 3 LCDR. C. H. PENDLETON
- 4 Admiral's Clerk Richard R.  
STEEDMAN
- 5 Assistant Engineer George R. BURD
- 6 First Assistant Engineer Charles  
J. McCONNELL
- 7 Pay Clerk John G. SANKEY
- 8 Midshipman Henry McCREA
- 1 Captain's Clerk John W. BREED
- 2 Midshipman Henry R. PENNINGTON
- 3 Lt. William C. GIBSON
- 6 Fleet Engineer George R. JOHNSON

copied from book 'CHARLES  
STEEDMAN Rear Admiral United States

Order this photo-  
graph from NAVAL  
IMAGING COMMAND

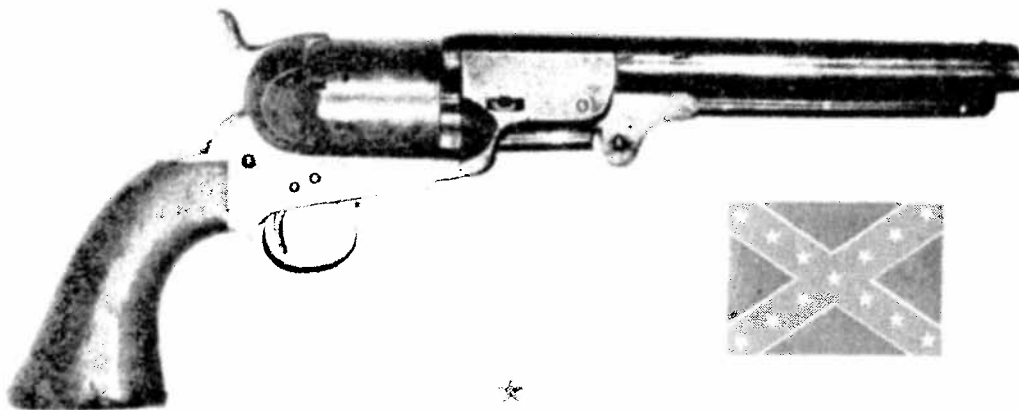


# The Original **CONFEDERATE** **COLT**

THE STORY OF THE LEECH & RIGDON AND  
RIGDON-ANSLEY REVOLVERS



*by William A. Albaugh III and  
Richard D. Steuart*



Greenberg : Publisher  
NEW YORK





### DESCRIPTION OF THE LEECH & RIGDON REVOLVERS

All Leech and Rigdon revolvers examined by the author are in .36 caliber, 6 shot, round dragoon type barrel, iron framed with brass backstrap and trigger guard. Grips are of well seasoned walnut. Stamped on the flat of the barrel top is "Leech & Rigdon C.S.A." Early models had a pin-and-ball type rammer catch, but later the conventional Colt latch was used. Guns are replete with serial numbers which are found on all major parts. In addition to the serial, a small cryptic mark has been observed on each gun examined. This mark is most frequently in the form of a letter

such as "N," but is sometimes in the form of four small square dots stamped to form a cross. This cryptic mark is usually found somewhere on the trigger guard.

As no one has ever suggested the meaning of these marks, I suggest that it is possible the workmen were divided into various teams of men which worked independently of the other. Each foreman was completely responsible for his "team." The completed gun bore the stamp of the foreman in order to properly place the blame in the event the piece was found to be faulty.

### LIST OF SERIALS ON LEECH & RIGDONS KNOWN TO THE AUTHOR

8-not definitely identified as a Leech & Rigdon  
41-same as above  
95-stamped "Leech & Rigdon"  
70-markings, if any, not obtained  
107-stamped "Leech & Rigdon C.S.A."  
109-same as above  
143-same as above  
439-same as above  
450-stamped "Leech & Rigdon," also serial 5. (See text)  
497-barrel not original  
511-markings not known  
515-barrel stamped "Leech & Rigdon C.S.A." This piece is fitted with Rig-

don, Ansley cylinder No. 2344, all other parts serial 515.  
602-markings not known, but assumed to be standard (Leech & Rigdon C.S.A.)  
605-stamped "Leech & Rigdon, C.S.A." On the right grip is a small oval disk of silver which is inscribed "Ensign P. Fred Harrington, U.S. Navy, U.S.S. Monongahela, Mobile Bay, Alabama, Friday, August 5, 1864. Captured with the Rebel Ironclad Tennessee."  
610-same as above  
635-same as above  
691-same as above

(1)

Trophies From The Bay Fight

The most sanguinary, important and one of the most brilliant naval battles of the Civil War was the famous engagement in Mobile Bay, Alabama on the morning of August 5th, 1864. There, Rear Admiral David Farragut took his Union squadron of 18 ships, including four monitors, against the heavy Confederate land defenses of Mobile Bay which consisted of three forts - Morgan, Gaines and Powell. Farragut was determined to force the entrance to the Bay, capture the forts and close Mobile to the outside world. But inside these defenses lay the ironclad ram Tennessee, on which more reliance was placed by the Confederates than on all other defenses combined. Believed at the time to be the strongest vessel afloat, it, along with three other small gunboats challenged the entire Federal flotilla head on.

Most Americans associate the battle with an incident - when Admiral Farragut, aboard his flagship, Hartford, lashed to the rigging to observe the action over the smoke billowing from the guns, promptly and resolutely boomed his famous command, "Damn the Torpedoes, Full Speed Ahead!" But Farragut's most feared enemy was not the mines - called "torpedoes" - but the dreaded Rebel ironclad Tennessee, commanded by Admiral Franklin Buchanan of Merrimac fame who very much wanted to ram the Hartford. Although considered the most powerful of all Confederate ironclads, she had the strengths and weaknesses

of her type. Her four 6.4-inch and two 7-inch Brooke rifles were no match for some of Farragut's heavy cannon. After a very fierce engagement lasting three hours, her smokestack was shot away and her steering gear was cut by the rain of shells. Unable to maneuver and taking on water, the Tennessee, although completely disabled, still struggled on against her overwhelming superior foes despite the terrible cannonade that pounded her mercilessly. She now had become the target for the whole fleet. All of the vessels were making toward her, shelling her with shot and trying to run her down. Ultimately, she was forced to surrender to prevent further loss of life to no fruitful purpose. At the end, she fell victim to a fateful design blunder in her construction - the failure to adequately protect her exposed rudder chains. But even before this catastrophe, she was sorely handicapped by being woefully under-powered. The marine engines and boilers built within the Confederacy were notoriously inferior and constantly in need of repair. The absence of qualified machinists and insufficient tools and materials were the principal reasons. During her construction, as a last resort, engines were used that had been taken from a stranded Mississippi riverboat on the Yazoo river. They were incapable of moving such a great weight of wood and iron at an effective speed. Formidable as the Tennessee appeared, her weak engines prevented her from ramming and sinking the wooden Union vessels who were able to out-maneuver her. The result of the struggle was a great Union victory - the closing of the last major Gulf port in the South thus effectively cutting off

vitally needed supplies from being brought in by blockade-runners.

Shortly after the battle, a 20 year old acting-Ensign, Purnell Frederick Harrington of the U.S.S. Monongahela - a steam-sloop from the West Gulf Blockading Squadron and the first ship to strike the Tennessee during the engagement - pocketed from the ram a Confederate-made, .36 caliber copy of a "Colt" navy revolver. Stamped on the top of the barrel flat was the name of the maker, "Leech & Rigdon" and "C.S.A." Its serial number was 605. The young officer, later had pridefully inset into the right grip a small oval disk of silver inscribed: "Ensign P. Fred. Harrington, U.S. Navy, U.S.S. Monongahela, Mobile Bay, Alabama, Friday, August 5, 1864. Captured with the Rebel Ironclad, Tennessee."

Ensign Harrington was a descendent of a prominent family who could trace their ancestry back to Richard Harrington of England who settled in Kent County, Maryland between 1650 and 1670. When the war ended, he returned to and graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at Annapolis. Remaining in the Navy, he had a very long and distinguished career. During the Spanish-American War, he served as commanding officer of the double-turreted monitor Puritan. He retired a Rear Admiral in June, 1906. When the United States became involved in World

War I, despite his seventy-three years of age, he offered to actively serve again. He died at home on October 20th, 1937 in Yonkers, N.Y. at the age of 93. He was eulogized as a national naval hero and as a community civic leader and but especially as a participant in the "Battle of Mobile Bay."

The title of my talk today is "A Trophy from the Bay Fight" and my display is centered around a captured Confederate-made revolver. I never anticipated that lightening would strike again but, unbelievably, it did. Within the past several months, another trophy from the Tennessee at the Bay Fight appeared at a Massachusetts auction sale. It was the very rare Confederate "Cook & Brother" marked naval cutlass and its distinctive scabbard. The cutlass is stamped on the top of its brass guard with the same die as used on "Cook & Brother" made rifles and carbines. A contemporary label affixed to the scabbard in magenta ink reads: "Cutlass taken from the Rebel Ram Tennessee. Captured by the U.S. fleet under Rear Admiral D.G. Farragut, 5th August 1864."

So determined was I to have the two ship-mates reunited after being separated for 130 years, that I acquired the lot despite stiff bidding competition and very painful cost. The two trophies of war, on display, now lie together once again and are vivid reminders of that August morning in 1864 when Union and Confederate warships under Admirals David Farragut and Franklin Buchanan clashed in the fiercest and most decisive naval battle of the war.

Thank You.

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## THE STORMING OF MOBILE BAY

Edited by

Richard R. Duncan

For a war weary Union the summer of 1864 offered little cause for rejoicing. Both the armies of Grant and Sherman seemed to be hopelessly stalemated before Petersburg and Atlanta, while General Jubal Early swept down the Shenandoah Valley to threaten the very security of Washington itself. Only the navy had offered Unionists much encouraging hope. The destruction of the *Shenandoah*, the Confederacy's fame raider, and finally the stunning victory at Mobile Bay by Admiral David G. Farragut gave at least some solace in the military and political gloom of August of that year.

For two years following the fall of New Orleans Farragut had hoped to direct an expedition against the troublesome port of Mobile.<sup>1</sup> However, frustrating postponements and diversions had prevented any such move until the summer of 1864. Unfortunately, delay had also allowed the Confederacy to strengthen Mobile's defenses and to complete the construction of the formidable ironclad, the C.S.S. *Tennessee*, to aid in the defense of the harbor. Yet, despite an elaborate Confederate defense system consisting of obstructions, a mine field, forts, and the *Tennessee*, a determined Farragut struck at Mobile on August 5th.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mobile, a city with a population of 29,258 on the eve of the Civil War, was the last major Gulf coast port remaining in Southern hands. During the war Mobile became one of the South's principal blockade-running harbors. Three forts—Fort Morgan on Mobile Point, Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island, and Fort Powell in Grant's Pass—protected the lower bay. Fort Morgan, the most important and structurally the most elaborate, commanded the main channel. A mine or "torpedo" field on the eastern side of Dauphin Island narrowed the use of the main channel and made Fort Morgan's command over the bay's entrance a formidable one. In addition three small paddlewheel gunboats, the *Morgan*, *Gaines*, and *Selma*—unarmored except for iron strips around their boilers—and the ironclad, the *Tennessee*, provided naval protection for the harbor. The *Tennessee* was more than 200 feet in length and had six-inch armor. She suffered, however, from two marked liabilities: her top speed was only six knots, and her steering gear was vulnerable to attack. For an account of the entire operations against Mobile Bay see Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* (New York, 1974), III, pp. 492-508.

Witnessing the assault and fury of the ensuing battle was a young twenty-year old ensign, Purnell Frederick Harrington,<sup>3</sup> Son of Delaware's Chancellor, Samuel Maxwell Harrington,<sup>4</sup> he had attended the Naval Academy for two years when in October, 1863, he received his appointment as an ensign. By the following July he had become a member of Farragut's Gulf squadron. Fortunately, Harrington also recorded his experiences and observations of the attack in a series of letters<sup>5</sup> to his father and brother, Samuel.<sup>6</sup> Not only was Harrington a keen observer and recorder of events, but in them he vividly captured the excitement and emotional catharsis of battle.

I

U.S.S. Monongahela

Off Mobile, July 6th, 1864

Dear Sam—

I have time to write you a note. I presume you will read

<sup>3</sup>Purnell Frederick Harrington (1844-1917), born in Dover, Delaware, was the son of Samuel Maxwell Harrington, Chancellor of Delaware. He attended the Naval Academy from September, 1861, until October, 1863, when he was appointed as an ensign. During the Civil War he served on the *Ticonderoga*, *Niagara*, and *Monongahela*. In the summer of 1864 he joined the blockading fleet in the Gulf of Mexico and participated in the attack on Mobile Bay. Following the war he quickly rose in the ranks of the navy and distinguished himself in various positions. In 1903 he was promoted to the rank of rear admiral. *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1939), XXVII, 482-483.

<sup>4</sup>Samuel Maxwell Harrington (1803-1865), born in Dover, Delaware, was a graduate of Washington College in Maryland and studied law in the offices of Henry M. Ridgely and Martin W. Bates. He was admitted to the bar in 1826 and two years later he was appointed to the position of secretary of state. In 1830 he became chief justice of Delaware's supreme court. With the reorganization of that court he was appointed as an associate justice on the new superior court and served in this capacity until 1855 when he was made chief justice. Two years later he became chancellor. He was also a principal figure in the development of the Delaware Railroad and became its president on its organization in 1832. *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1932), VIII, 302-303. Privately owned.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel Milby Harrington (1840-1878), born in Dover, Delaware, was the eldest son of Samuel Maxwell Harrington and brother of Purnell Frederick. He was a graduate of Delaware College and studied law under his father and Chancellor Bates. He was admitted to the bar in 1861 and in the following year he was appointed adjutant-general by the governor of Delaware. In 1863 he was made secretary of state. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware* (Philadelphia, 1888), I, 595-596.



my letters to Father since I arrived here. The passage down was not very pleasant. The transom on which we were to sleep was filled with bedbugs and I refused to sleep there. Several of us made our bed together on the deck of the ward-room. We passed the New *Ironsides* on her way home. On the second day out we spoke the *Tioga* bound north from Key West with yellow fever. Six of her men and three officers had died in three days. We sent her first officer on board and gave her some ice. On Sunday week we chased a steamer laden with cotton. She escaped. On the Tuesday following we arrived at Key West where we left Gillett, Hoff and Irvin. Found fever there but not very fierce. Left Key West and after three very hot and uncomfortable days arrived here at sunset on Thursday last. Several of my classmates came on board at once and we had quite a jubilee. On Friday, July 1st, at 9 A. M. we went on board the *Hartford*<sup>1</sup> and reported to Farragut. I had a very fine letter to Captain Drayton, the Fleet Captain, from my friend Capt. C. R. P. Rodgers. It secured me consideration at once and I was ordered to this vessel. I came right on board and found her underway to shell a rebel steamer under Fort Morgan. I was given a Division at once and in a few minutes from the time I joined her I was under fire. These shells make a horrible noise when they come at ye. I think "he is not brave who feels no fear, but he who nobly dares what nature shrinks from." I certainly did not feel frightened only a little nervous when I saw a shell burst right over my head. I stood still because of a con[s]ciousness that in that I [*sic*] way it was my duty to give my men courage. I soon became tolerably accustomed to it. I have been under fire three times since. On the Fourth, we had the customary salutes at noon. At 1 P.M. on that day, the Adm'l signalled us to engage the fort, two other vessels to fight two shore batteries near Fort Morgan, and two more to fire on the steamer. We fired thirty four shells at the fort, eleven dropping near the flagstaff and the remainder striking the fort outside. This is the last fight I have been in. We were not hurt.

I like the ship very much. I will write you more about the ship, blockade, etc. Our Capt. is Commander Jas. H. Strong —

<sup>1</sup>U.S.S. *Hartford* was Farragut's flagship.

a very good old fellow. We have a very pleasant time in the wardroom. Four of us give a concert for the benefit of the other officers nearly every evening. The Adm'l considers this his fighting ship. We have the post of honor nearest the harbor and right in the channel and must be the first vessel to meet the ironclads when they come out. We have an iron bow and can steam fourteen knots. We have written orders to run down the rebs when they appear. I dined with the Captain yesterday when he told me this last item. I will write to you soon again. Read my letter to Father.

S.M.H. Jr.

I remain, Your Aff'le brother  
P. F. Harrington  
Ensign

P. S. Remember me to Arthur<sup>2</sup> and friends.  
It is *very warm here*

## II

[First portion of the letter is missing.]

[To his Father]

At 2 P. M. we stood in and renewed the engagement. At 3, we steamed away and anchored near the admiral. We were struck but once during the fight and had no one hurt. The *Metacomet* had one man killed and one wounded. So ended my first fight. We are now anchored off our night station to the southward of Fort Morgan. We have all our guns trained to fire on the rebel ironclads in case they should come out, and we are ready to throw up rockets, etc., to bring the whole fleet into action at once.

The *Monongahela* is considered the finest ship here. She is precisely like the *Ticonderoga* in appearance but is finer and faster. We are the fastest ship of the fleet, steaming *fifteen* (15) knots at full speed. The motion is easy and pleasant. When I received my orders this morning, all the officers of the *Hartford* congratulated me on joining the finest ship in

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Milby, a cousin.

the squadron. Rathbone and Dana seemed to envy me very much. They remained on board the Flagship till this afternoon when they were to receive their orders. I have not heard where they go, but suppose they have ships by this time. The squadron is full of fine vessels. The *Lackawanna*, *Seminole*, *Hartford*, *Brooklyn*, *Richmond*, *Galena*, and the *Metacomb* are a few of them. Everyone seems to think, though, that *this* is the desirable vessel. The accommodations are fine and her officers nice fellows. I give you her officers — Commanding Officer, Commander James H. Strong; Executive Officer, Lieut. Roderick Prentiss; Lieutenant, O. A. Batcheller; Ensign Mullan of my class with myself and two Acting Ensigns — very nice fellows. We have also Assistant Paymaster Forbes Parker, Surgeon Kinleburger, Assistant Surgeon Lewis, and a fine Chief Engineer whose name I do not know. The subordinate officers are fine men. We have a very heavy battery and can fight a rebel ironclad. We have a massive stern of iron, and as we are so fast it is understood that we are to run down the rebel ironclads when they appear. Two or three of our ironclads are expected here in a few days from the north.

It is said here that my class will be examined for Lieutenants in October and November next. It is not unlikely. The *Monongahela* has been here 19 months and has received over 200 shots. She was through the New Orleans & Port Hudson fights. She will go north for repairs next spring. Think I may come home then if I don't get transferred to another ship, even if I do not come north for examination in the winter. Write at once.

Hon. S. M. Harrington

I remain, your loving son,  
P. F. Harrington

P.S. It is hot down here. Very truly yours, P. F. H.

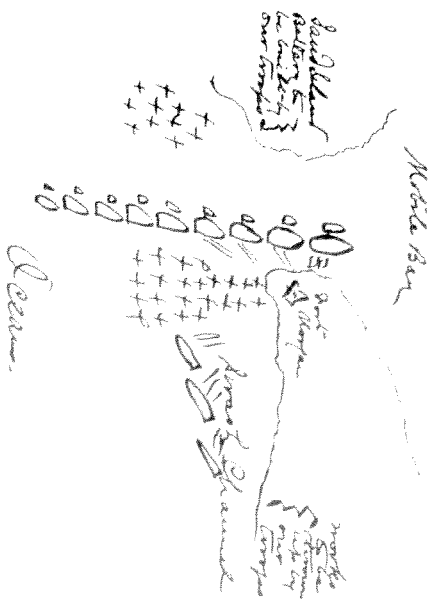
III

P. S. Being in a hurry for the mail, I scribbled off a hurried note of the news to Father. Show him this and he will understand me better. P. F. H.

U.S.S. *Monongahela*  
Off Mobile, July 17, 1864

Dear Sam,

I write to inform you that the long-expected attack on Mobile is about to take place. Farragut issued a general order yesterday directing the preparations and giving the general plan for attack. Each regular man-of-war will have lashed to her on the off side a small gunboat. We go in with the flood tide and open with shot & shell. When within 300 or 400 yards we are to use grape and canister. Each vessel will be protected by chain slung outside and by sand bags inside. Howitzers will be mounted in the tops to drive the enemy from their guns. We shall use a S. W. wind which will blow our smoke right on the fort. The order of Farragut is well written. He commences with the command "Strip your vessels and prepare for the conflict." In one of his sentences you can see the grandeur of his bravery—"I shall go in with the flood tide." It says that there is no defeat. It is "Victory or death." The fleet wonders at such courage. Troops from New Orleans will throw up works on Mobile Pt. in rear of Fort Morgan and on Sand Island opposite to the fort. They will land and work under the protection of our fleet. Several of our vessels will take position outside at right angles to the line of battle and thus give a flanking fire. I will try to give you a rough sketch of the plan.



Now you see the fleet going up the channel [...] a small gunboat being on the port side to take the man-of-war through in case of disability. Several vessels in the Swash Channel [sic] give a flank fire. + represents shoal water. The order of battle is as follows: *Brooklyn*, *Hartford* (Flagship), *Richmond*, *Lachawanna*, *Monongahela*, *Ossipee*, *Seminole*, *Oneida*, and *Galea*. Besides these we shall have the *San Jacinto* and five ironclads, two double turreted, and any number of smaller ships, many of which will be left outside. The fight ought to last about three hours [...] each vessel being one hour under fire. My vessel comes no. 5 in the line, as good a place as one could wish. It was announced that the Adm'l would lead but the Captains of the fleet persuaded him to let the *Brooklyn*, Capt. Alden, lead, reasoning that the first ship might be blown up by torpedoes and that the Flag ought not to risk that chance. We shall go to Pensacola some time this week to prepare for the fight. It is understood that the attack will be made about the 30th inst. or as soon as we can get ready. No one doubts our success. It will certainly be one of the grandest scenes [The remainder of the letter is missing.]

## IV

U.S.S. Monongahela  
Mobile Bay, Aug. 5th, 1864

Dear Father,

We have fought this day one of the most terrific and terrible but one of the most glorious of the war. We got underway at 4 o'clock this morning and steamed in. We had a horrible fight with the fort. After coming in and beating off the rebel

<sup>1</sup>The *Brooklyn* was also equipped with a "cowcatcher or torpedo catcher." As planned, it took the lead in the line of wooden ships, but as it was beginning to overtake the monitor *Chickasaw*, the *Brooklyn* slowed. Captain James Alden signalled the *Hartford* for instructions, but meanwhile an explosion resulting in the sinking of the monitor *Tecumseh* by a mine added to the confusion. When the smoke cleared, a row of suspicious buoys were seen ahead of the *Brooklyn*. To avoid potential disaster the ship stopped and attempted to back away in order to clear them. Impatient, Farragut, assuming the risk, passed the *Brooklyn*, took the lead, and uttered his famous charge. *Official Records of Union and Confederate Navies in the War of Rebellion* (Washington, 1906), Ser. 1, Vol. 21, 403 and 445-447, and Foote, *Civil War*, 500-501.

gunboats, the rebel ram *Tennessee* attacked us. *This ship* led the way into her, ramming her twice. The whole fleet walked into her and she finally surrendered. She is just like the *Atlanta*<sup>2</sup> but twice as powerful. She is the greatest capture of the war. Our loss is severe. This vessel is the glory of the fleet. I never saw such glorious bravery in my life. I am proud of this day. We have lost our Ex. Off. Lieut. Roderrick Prentiss. He has had one leg amputated and will probably die. We had only four or five others hurt. The *Hartford* has 12 killed, 20 wounded, *Brooklyn* 14 K, 20 W., *Oneida* 30 K. & W. The monitor *Tecumseh* is blown up and nearly all lost. This goes by flag of truce to Pensacola at once. I am unhurt.

Your loving Son,

P. F. Harrington

Will write at length soon. P. F. H.

## V

U.S.S. Monongahela  
Mobile Bay, August 7th, 1864

Dear Father,

P. S. Excuse haste in which I have written. I have not had time to say what I wish and of course have hurried. P. F. H.

I write to-day to give you an account of our great battle of Friday. We were underway at 5.30, and steamed into line.

<sup>2</sup>The *Atlanta* was a converted British steamship, the *Fingal*, which had been used in blockade-running. But with the effective closing up of the Savannah harbor and the bottling up of the *Fingal*, she was now rebuilt into the ironclad, *Atlanta*. In June, 1863, Lieutenant William A. Webb, now in command of the ironclad, attempted to do battle with the Union monitors, *Verbancken* and *Nahant*, but unfortunately the *Atlanta* ran aground and was forced to surrender. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy* (Repr.: New York, 1977), 638-644.

<sup>3</sup>Farragut in a report on August 8, 1864 reported losses, excluding those of the *Tecumseh*, of 52 killed and 170 wounded. *Official Records*, 406-413.

J. Thomas Scharf cites Union losses, including those of the *Tecumseh* at 172 killed and 170 wounded. Later estimates placed the loss of the *Tecumseh* at 120 alone. Scharf places Confederate losses at 12 killed and 19 wounded. Scharf, *Confederate States Navy*, 573 and 573n.

A few minutes later we bent to quarters and hoisted the American ensign at Fore, Main, Mizzen, and Peak. At 7.7, the first gun was fired from Fort Morgan and was answered immediately from the *Brooklyn*. The shot & shell fell from over a hundred guns on each side were soon flying in the air. The first shot that struck this ship wounded our 1st Lieut. & Ex. Officer, Lieut. Roderick Prentiss, in both legs. The left one was amputated but he died in eighteen hours. A few minutes after that shot, the rebel ram *Tennessee* made for the *Hartford*. Seeing this we put our helm hard down and ran into him at full speed; but being encumbered with a gunboat alongside we did not hurt her. As she swept by us, her flag, already shot to pieces, was shot away. We thought she had surrendered and *we yelled*. We steamed by the Bay engaging Fort Gaines on our way. The rebel gunboats had taken refuge behind the fort (Morgan) except the *Selma*. She was followed by two of our vessels and captured. At 9.40 the fight was over and we were preparing to anchor when we saw the Rebel ram *Tennessee* hoist her battle flag and steam towards us. She made for this vessel. We steamed ahead at full speed to run her down. She fired a shotted gun at the *Hartford* in defiance. The Adm'l then signalled us to run her down. We ran into her at full speed but could not sink her while our steam is badly broken. We poured a broadside into her and then prepared to ram again. The "Lackawanna" then ran into her and afterwards gave her a broadside. Then the *Hartford*, glorious ship, ran alongside of her and fired her broadside while her guns almost touched the ram. The *Brooklyn* and two ironclads then followed. We shot away her smoke stack, all steerage, & everything we could get at. As we ran her down the second time, she fired two rifled shells into us, laying waste our berth deck and wounding several men. She finally surrendered to the fleet. This fight lasted an hour and was glorious. I went on board immediately after the fight to receive our share of prisoners. She was just as good as ever, but her steering gear being gone and chimney shot away so that steam was going down and her men being suffocated, she surrendered. The 15 in. guns of the ironclads crushed in her sides in one place. One man was blown to pieces by a shot striking him through the port. She is the best ram ever taken. Our loss is severe. This vessel had Lieut. Prentiss killed and

about ten wounded, three badly. The *Hartford* had 18 men killed and about 20 wounded, the Adm'l's Secretary, Higginbottom, being killed. The *Brooklyn* had 11 killed and 20 wounded. The *Richmond* had 5 or 6 killed and about 6 wounded. The *Oneida* had about 15 killed and 1515 [sic] wounded. Her boilers were shot through and scalded nearly all her engineers. The remaining vessels averaged about 8 or 10 each in killed & wounded. The *Tecumseh* was blown up by a torpedo and sank in two minutes with all on board except one Ensign and about 12 men.

Yesterday morning Fort Powell surrendered to us. This gives us free communication with the outside through Grant's Pass. Fort Gaines offered to surrender on terms today. The Adm'l said "unconditional" and they refused. We will have it in a week. The *Metacombet* took our wounded to Pensacola yesterday. She came in to-day. She went out by Fort Morgan under a flag of truce. The Admiral has thanked the officers and men of the fleet. By Genl. Order we performed Divine Service to-day in thanksgiving for so glorious a victory. We are in fine spirits, but mourn our loss greatly. Our loss will be nearly two hundred in killed & wounded. Besides these we lost Capt. T. A. M. Graven and about 90 officers and men in the *Tecumseh*. Admiral Buchanan,<sup>12</sup> the "Merrimack" man, was captured with the "Tennessee." His leg was broken and will probably be amputated. We have three officers and seventeen men prisoners aboard here. We shall glory in this battle to our dying hour. I am proud of the humble share I had in

<sup>12</sup>Franklin Buchanan (1800-1874), born in Baltimore, entered the U. S. Navy in 1815. In 1845 he was chosen by the Secretary of Navy to organize the Naval Academy, and he served as its first superintendent until 1847. He participated in the Mexican war and commanded Commodore Perry's flagship on his expedition to Japan. On the eve of the Civil War he was commandant of the Washington navy yard. With the attack on Massachusetts troops in Baltimore on April 19, 1861 Buchanan, believing that Maryland would secede, resigned his commission. But when Maryland made no such move, he asked to be reinstated in the navy, only to be refused. In the following September he entered the Confederate Navy, and superintended the outfitting of the *Merrimack* in Hampton Roads and commanded it on its first day's attack on the federal fleet. He was promoted to admiral in the Confederate Navy and was put in charge of the naval defense of Mobile. James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Abilities' Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1891), I, 428, and Jon L. Wakeyn, *Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy* (Westport, Conn., 1977), 116.

it and shall always be proud that I had command of sixty of the bravest hearts in the world. I had made up my mind to do my duty. I ascribe my self possession to the resolution. I had not an extra heart-throb, except when success dawned and then I felt such pride and such a good-all-over-feeling that I wonder I did not go up in the smoke. I'll go through a dozen battles to feel that way again. You will read the paper accounts and with this letter get an *idea* of the fight. No one who did not see it will ever fully appreciate it. During the battle, the wildest yet controlled enthusiasm prevailed. Officers and men were alike roused to glory. Prentiss remarked as he was carried forward, "It is only both legs, Back", and a smile lit up his countenance at his sorry joke. Hearing cheering on deck, he cheered the flag, *while the knife was cutting him*. He was married four months ago. I could, but cannot for want of time, write you incidents without number of heroism, coolness, & noble courage. Our captain has made no distinction but recommends every officer and man in the highest terms.

Love to Mother and all the family. Send me *stamps* and also a *good lot* of *note paper* & envelopes to match. I am *entirely* out. Send price & I will refund.

Your loving Son,  
P. F. Harrington

## VI

U.S.S. Monongahela  
Mobile Bay, La. [*sic*]  
Agu. 18th, 1864

Dear Sam,

I was refreshed to-day with your letter and papers and letters from Father, Dick,<sup>13</sup> and an old classmate, Chadwick of the 1st Class at the Academy. I have rec'd but one letter

<sup>13</sup>Richard Harrington (1847-1884), brother of Purnell Frederick, was a graduate of Georgetown College and studied law under Nathaniel B. Smithers. He was admitted to the bar, and in the early 1870's he was a prominent lawyer in Washington.

before since I came down and was anxious to hear from you. I hasten to write again to you. You have read before this the newspaper accounts of our great fight, the most glorious but terrible of the war. This vessel was a *star* performer, second to no one. On Friday, Aug. 5th at 4 A. M. I took the deck of this vessel and prepared to steam in. At 5:30, we were underway and Capt. Strong took the deck. I then went to my Division. We steamed in in three lines, thus:—

Octorara	Brooklyn	Tecumseh	Rebel Ram
Metacombet	Hartford	Manhattan	Fort Morgan
Port Royal	Richmond		
Seminole	Lackawanna		
Kennebeck	Monongahela	Winnebago	
Itasca	Ossipee		
Galena	Oneida	Chickasaw	

The four iron-clads stood in under the fort till within 200 yards. The second line passed the fort at a distance of 400 or 500 yards. The outer line, the *Octorara* and vessels under, were lashed on the port-side of the centre line, as I have arranged them on the preceding page. At 6.25 the *Chickasaw* fired a gun at the fort. As 7, the battle opened with a gun from the fort answered at once by the Brooklyn. In a few minutes over 100 guns on each side were at work. Shot, shell, and grape flew as thick as apples fall from a tree in a hurricane. I had command of one XI inch gun, from which I fired shells weighing 135 pounds and solid shot of 187 pounds, also two 32 pounders and two 24 pound howitzers. One of my 32's was worked by Acting Ensign and gun's crew from the *Kennebeck* under my direction. At 8, a solid shot struck our Ex. Officer, Lieut. Roderick Prentiss. He died soon after. At 8.10, the *Tecumseh* was blown up by a torpedo and sunk with all on board except one Acting Master, one Acting Ensign and twelve or fourteen men. At 8.15, the Rebel Ram *Tennessee* was seen to steam for the *Lackawanna*, the vessel ahead of us, to run her down. We put on *all* steam and ran into her. We saved the *Lackawanna*. As we approached her she *snapped* two heavy guns at us twice. Had they gone off our slaughter would have been fearful. Encumbered with a heavy gunboat, we were not able to get much way on her. We struck her a light blow and as she swept down by our port side, one of the guns which had refused to go off into us was fired into the *Kennebeck* and after killing

several men set her on fire. We then cast off from the *Kennebeck* and left her. As the ram passed our quarter, her flag, already shot to pieces, was shot away. We thought she had surrendered and we yelled. Several vessels refrained from firing into her. We passed on through shot and shell, our gunboats pursuing the rebel gunboats which were now steaming up the Bay. At a little after 9, we had passed Fort Gaines on the left and were preparing to anchor, when the ram which had dropped under the guns of Fort Morgan was seen coming up the bay. She fired a challenge shot at the *Hartford* and the gage was received and returned. Before she fired this ship *was going* and had the honor of leading the way into her. We struck her a terrible blow while going at the rate of 12 knots. The shock was very great. I thought we should lose all our masts. She fired two heavy shells into us just before we struck her. Fortunately they burst forward and wounded only three men. Had they come further aft, we should have lost fearfully. Our heavy stern is all torn away and we leak very much. The *Lackawanna* rammed her next. Then our glorious *Hartford* poured into a broadside while her guns almost touched the ram. This vessel & the *Hartford* had their sides burned by powder from the ram's guns. After the *Hartford*, the *Krooklin*, *Ossipee*, and ironclads made for her. No vessel except this one & the *Lackawanna* rammed her. The *Ossipee* started for her but stopped on seeing the white flag. She surrendered at 10.15 A. M. three hours and fifteen minutes after the battle commenced. When she surrendered we were steaming for her at 13 knots speed. Had we struck her we would have sunk at once as we were already leaking. Altogether it was a desperate and plucky fight on both sides. The report shows that she was struck *only by one 15 inch shot*. So the honor of capturing the finest ram ever built and the finest ironclad ever built belongs *almost exclusively* to wooden ships. The presence of ironclads did some good I suppose. Immediately after the fight, I went on board the ram. She is like the *Atlanta* but twice as powerful. Her gun deck was flesh and gore. She threw some of her dead overboard in order to make it appear that she had few hurt. All her steering gear & smoke pipe was shot away. Adm'l Buchanan, *Merrimack* man, had his leg broken and was captured. Our loss is severe, it will reach 300 killed & wounded. On the night of August 5th, Fort Powell was evacuated and

occupied next morn. by our men. On the 8th Fort Gaines surrendered to the *Navy*. They refused to surrender to the Army & Navy but sent 26 swords to the Flagship. Next day we landed 2000 troops in rear of Fort Morgan. I went in command of three boats. We have invested it completely. On Monday over a hundred guns will open on the fort & fire till it surrenders. We have free communication with the outside but cannot go out as we draw too much water. The large vessels must go under Fort Morgan to go out. Our small vessels go out through Grants Pass. My paper is all gone. I have written to Father to send me some. If you see him tell him not to forget. Please send this to Dick as I have not paper to spare in writing to him. I rec'd a letter from him today. I will examine the muster roll of this vessel & inform you if I find any Delaware men. I suppose Dick & Arthur are home again. Remember me to all. Tell Arthur I want to hear from him.

I remain,

Your affte, Brother,

P. F. Harrington



## Actions with the Forts ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

Government, and a number of well-armed wooden vessels. They added immensely to the defensive strength of the city.

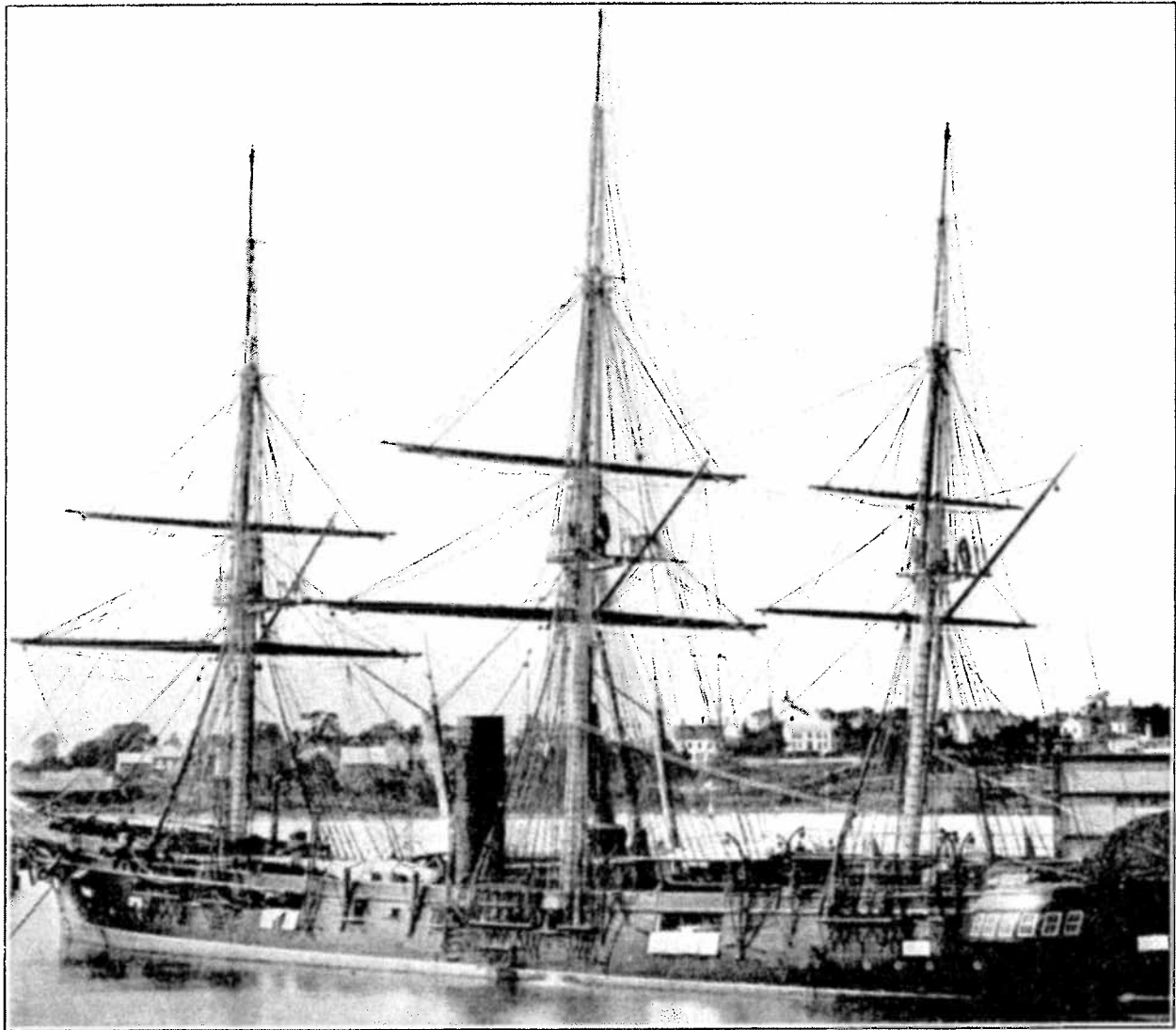
General Gordon Granger landed on Dauphine Island, on the 3d of August, 1864, with fifteen hundred men and moved up to Fort Gaines. Entrenchments were thrown up before the works on the 4th, and arrangements made to cooperate with Farragut's fleet, which was to enter the harbor the next morning, in order to close the port of Mobile and destroy the great ram *Tennessee*. At six o'clock in the morning, Farragut's powerful fleet of eighteen vessels entered the main channel.

The Federal ships were all thoroughbred war vessels; not a single one but what was built for the service. They swept on to the attack with four monitors in the starboard column, close inshore. As they passed the fort and water batteries, where the *Brooklyn* and *Richmond* came very nearly going aground, they completely smothered the Confederate fire.

The *Tecumseh*, under the command of Captain T. A. M. Craven, was sunk by a torpedo as the fleet advanced. Admiral Farragut, unable to see through the smoke, went up the mainmast almost as high as the maintop. While here, a quartermaster fastened a rope around him to keep him from falling.

But if deeds of bravery are to be mentioned in telling of Mobile Bay, much credit must be given to the small Confederate gunboats, *Morgan*, *Gaines*, and *Selma*, that kept up a raking fire which caused great havoc among the advancing vessels. To the great ram *Tennessee* and the magnificent fight that she fought, honor is due also. Her engines were hastily constructed, and of insufficient strength. She charged through the whole line; the *Hartford* dodged her, although it had been the desire of brave old Admiral Buchanan's heart to sink the flagship. The *Brooklyn* had a narrow escape, and the *Monongahela*, under Commander James H. Strong, attempted to ram the *Tennessee*, and drove, bows on, against her side; the blow hardly changed the great ram's direction. The *Ossipee* attempted to follow the *Monongahela's* lead, but the *Tennessee*





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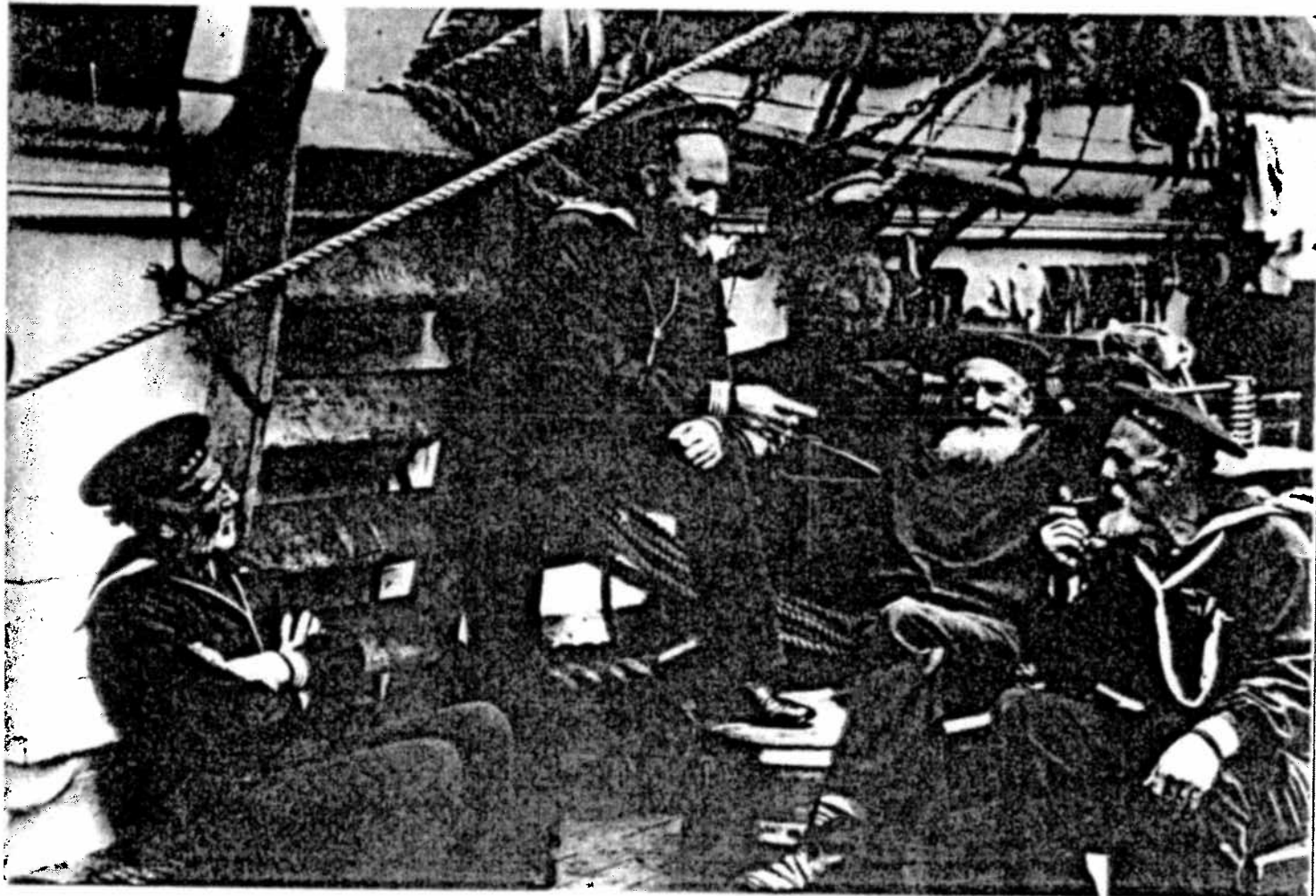
### THE "MONONGAHELA"—A FEARLESS WOODEN SHIP

To this "heart of oak" belongs the distinction of being the first vessel to ram the huge Confederate ironclad "Tennessee." After Farragut, crying, "Damn the torpedoes!" had astounded both the Confederates and his own fleet by running the "Hartford" right through the line of submarine volcanoes, the "Tennessee" moved down with the intention of ramming the wooden ships in turn. She missed the "Hartford" and then the "Richmond," which escaped across the line of torpedoes like the flagship. In attempting to ram the "Lackawanna," the Confederate ironclad swung abeam of the channel, exposing her side full and fair to the "Monongahela," which had been fitted with an artificial iron prow. Commander Strong endeavored to seize the opportunity to ram; but, owing to the fact that the "Kennebec" was lashed to her side, the "Monongahela" could not attain full speed, and only a glancing blow was struck. Later, when the "Tennessee" came up single-handed to attack the fleet above the forts, Farragut ordered the wooden vessels to try the effect of ramming the ironclad. Again the "Monongahela" was the first to advance to the attack and succeeded in striking the "Tennessee" fair amidships. So violent was the shock that many of the men on both vessels were knocked down. The blow, which would have sunk any vessel in the Federal fleet, did no more harm to the "Tennessee" than it did to the "Monongahela." Her iron prow was wrenched off and the butt-ends of her bow planks were shattered, while only a small leak was started in the "Tennessee."



# CIVIL WAR NAVAL CHRONOLOGY

1861-1865



*After the War*

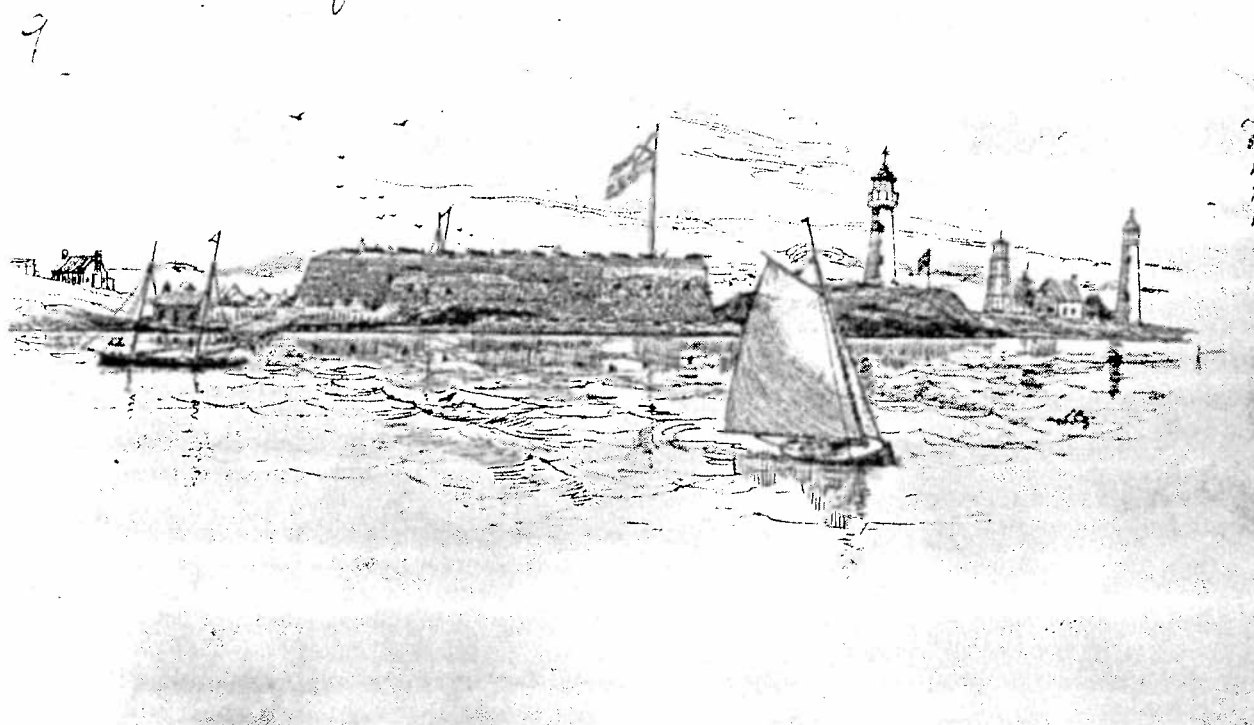
(PART VI—SPECIAL STUDIES AND CUMULATIVE INDEX)

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AN AUGUST MORNING WITH FARRAGUT AT MOBILE BAY

Fort Morgan.



By  
Harrie Webster

## AN AUGUST MORNING WITH FARRAGUT AT MOBILE BAY

*by Harrie Webster, Third Assistant Engineer, U.S.S. Manhattan*

The Battle of Mobile Bay was fought on the fifth of August 1864 under the leadership of our greatest Admiral, the victorious Farragut. My point of view, and field of action will of necessity be somewhat limited, for I propose to describe that part of the great "Bay Fight," as the poet Brownell<sup>1</sup> calls it, which was taken by the Monitor *Manhattan*, on which I was serving as a third assistant engineer.

That portion of the Gulf of Mexico extending into the southern part of Alabama a distance of about thirty-five miles, offers to the student of American history a most interesting field.

The celebrated Spanish voyager and discoverer, Hernan[do] de Soto, first came in contact here with the aborigines of Alabama; and it is related that the gigantic chief, Tuscaloosa, received the Spanish Commander seated, his pride, as stern as that of De Soto, giving a dignity to the savage equal to that of his civilized adversary.

The Battle of the fifth of August, 1864, was not the first which Mobile Bay had witnessed, for almost fifty years before, on September 15, 1814, the roar of English guns woke the echoes of the bay in an attack by Perry, the British Admiral,<sup>2</sup> on a small work called Fort Bowyer, in which one vessel and upward of two hundred men were lost.<sup>3</sup> Fort Morgan occupies the site of old Fort Bowyer, and is situated on the main land at the western extremity of Mobile Point, and mounted, in August 1864 eighty-six guns of all calibers. In addition to this a "water battery," or supplementary work at the water's edge, mounted seven heavy guns which inflamed the channel.<sup>4</sup>

Fort Gaines stands on the opposite side of the channel from Fort Morgan, distant about three miles, at the eastern end of Dauphine Island. It mounted thirty guns,<sup>5</sup> and had a garrison of forty-six officers and eight hundred and eighteen men. The channel past Fort Gaines had been obstructed by the rebels with numberless piles, leaving but a single narrow channel open for the passage of vessels, and that channel lay so near to Fort Morgan that all ships were forced to run close to that fort on their way into the bay. About six miles northwest of Fort Gaines a narrow cut, called Grant's Pass, afforded passage between Mississippi Sound and Mobile Bay. A small work called Fort Powell was partly completed and located here.

In addition to the regular and visible means of offense and defense, the rebel authorities had planted the narrow channel thickly with torpedoes, and, as was found during the battle, not in vain.

The preparations for an attack on the defenses of Mobile Bay had been for a long time in view by the Navy Department, and as usual in those days, Admiral Farragut was looked upon as the man for the duty.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Brownell was a Rhode Island poet whose verse published in the *Hartford Evening Press* caught Farragut's eye. The Admiral secured Brownell a commission as master's mate, and he advanced to ensign with special duties as Farragut's secretary. Brownell was one of the most popular war poets.

<sup>2</sup> The writer meant Captain William H. Percy, commander of H.M.S. *Hermes*.

<sup>3</sup> In his *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana, 1814-1815* (Philadelphia: 1816), Major A. L. Larour lists British killed and wounded as 232 (p. 40).

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan has written that Fort Morgan's "armament at this time cannot be given with absolute certainty. He estimated its strength as follows: "Main fort seven X-inch, three VIII-inch and twenty-two 32-pounder smooth-bore guns, and two VIII-inch, two 6.5-inch and four 5.82-inch rifles. In the water battery there were four X-inch and one VIII-inch columbiads and two 6.5-inch rifles. Of the above, ten X-inch, three VIII-inch, sixteen 32-pounders and all the rifles, except one of 5.82 calibre, bore upon the channel. There were also twenty flanking 24-pounder howitzers and two or three light rifles, which were useless against the fleet from their position." A. T. Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters* (New York: 1883), pp. 219-220.

<sup>5</sup> Mahan lists 27 guns of all kinds. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

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*Harrie Webster, photographed above as a First Assistant Engineer and at right as a Rear Admiral, served on board the monitor Manhattan at Mobile Bay.*



Consequently as soon as the campaign on the Mississippi river had been brought to its brilliant conclusion by the surrender of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, the former on July 4th, and the latter four days later, it was generally understood that the next point of attack was to be the forts at the entrance to Mobile Bay.

Following the splendid achievements at Forts Jackson and St. Phillip, and Port Hudson, and the development of the novel tactics for passing well manned fortifications under fire, it was felt that if the problem was left to Farragut the task was already half done.

During the spring and summer of 1864, a large fleet of vessels had been gradually collected for the blockading of Mobile, in anticipation of the time when the blow was to be struck for the capture of this important rebel stronghold.

Among the vessels doing duty in the blockading fleet was the double-ender gunboat *Genesee*, Commander Edward C. Grafton, on board of which I had been serving since the preceding year. The *Genesee* had taken part in the campaign against Port Hudson, and following the capture of that important point, she had gone to Vicksburg, thence to Ship Island, and from there, late in 1863, to blockade duty off Mobile. Admiral Farragut had joined the fleet in the spring of 1864, in the *Hartford*, and renewed activity followed his arrival. Frequent rumors from shore, through deserters, and occasional newspapers, had convinced the Admiral that the enemy was improving [during] our delays, and it was known in April that the rebels were preparing to give us a warm reception should the union fleet attempt a repetition of the tactics of the previous year on the Mississippi.

Taking the experience of the blockading fleet off Charleston as a guide, it was held that without ironclads it was worse than useless to attack such fortifications as those at the entrance of Mobile Bay.

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General Order

For passing Port Hudson.

The Ships will each take a Gunboat on the Port side and secure her as well off as possible, so as to leave the Port Battery clear for the enemy's Battery on the Port side of the River going up. After we round the point opposite Port Hudson—

Each Ship will keep a very little on the Starboard Quarter of her next ahead, so as to give free range to her chase guns, without risk of damage from premature explosion of Shot or Shell—

The Captains will bear in mind that the object is to run the Batteries at the least possible damage to our ships, and thereby secure an efficient force above for the purpose of rendering such assistance as may be required of us by the Army at Vicksburg or if not required there, to our Army at Baton Rouge—

If they succeed in getting past the Batteries, the Gunboats will proceed up to the mouth of the Red River, and keep up the police of the River between that River and Port Hudson, capturing anything they can. Should any vessel be disabled so that she is unable to pass Port Hudson, she will use the Gunboat to the best advantage, if the Captain thinks he can get by, try it— if he thinks not, let the Gunboat drop her down below the range of the Batteries—

If both are disabled, then cut down with a light anchor or use the sails, as

Harrie Webster served under Farragut at the passage of Port Hudson as well as at Mobile Bay. Farragut employed much the same strategy for passing Forts Morgan and Gaines that he did at Port Hudson, as indicated by his above orders and sketch.

as in his judgment may seem best but  
 I expect to go by, who are able, and attend  
 the best protection against the enemy's fire,  
 is a well directed fire from our own guns,  
 shell and shrapnel at a distance, and  
 Grape when within 4 or 500 Yards —

Lt. H. H. H. H.  
 Rear Admiral

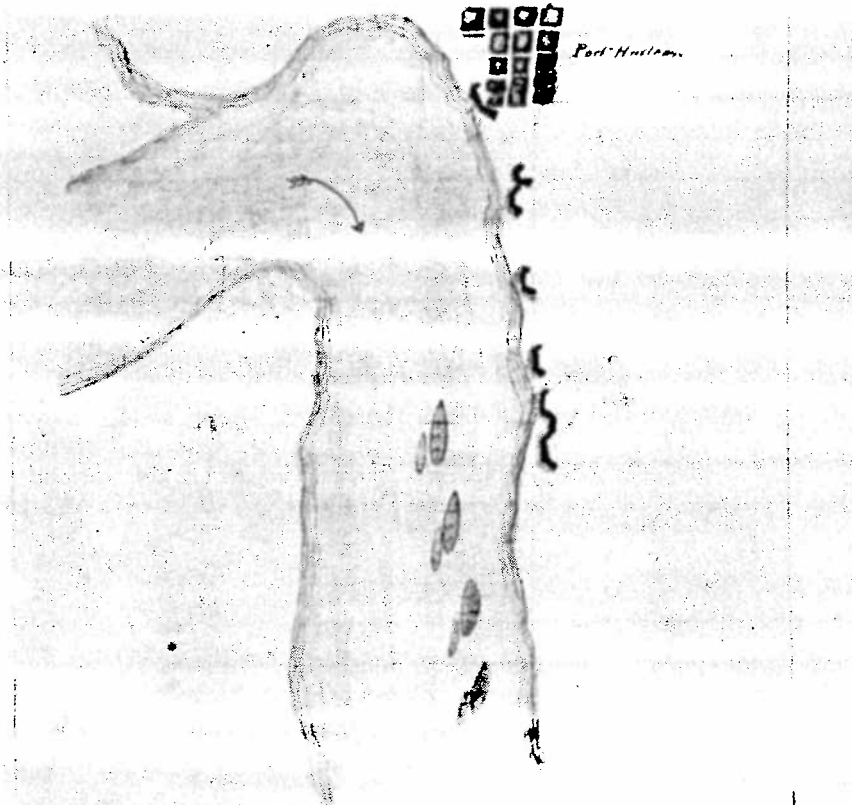


Diagram of Port Hudson



For various reasons it was a difficult matter to get ironclads for use on that part of the blockade, so that the days rolled up into weeks, and the weeks into months, before reports began to reach the West Gulf Squadron that the Navy Department had determined to reinforce that portion of the blockading fleet with Monitors.

During the months of waiting, the routine of blockade life went on, and May became June and June gave place to July before definite information reached us that two Monitors, the *Tecumseh* and *Manhattan*, had been detailed for duty in the Gulf of Mexico.

About the same time news from shore was received of the completion and successful trial of a formidable iron-clad ram by the rebels at Mobile, followed shortly afterward by the information that, although drawing considerable more water than was found on Dog River Bar, below Mobile, the ram had been safely taken into deep water, and the work of fitting her to attack the blockading fleet was in progress. [*Tennessee* crossed Dog River Bar on 18 May 1864.]

Of course, all such rumors and reports strengthened the feeling that without ironclads success was problematical, and the news from the north was watched with no little anxiety while waiting for the arrival of the needed reinforcement.

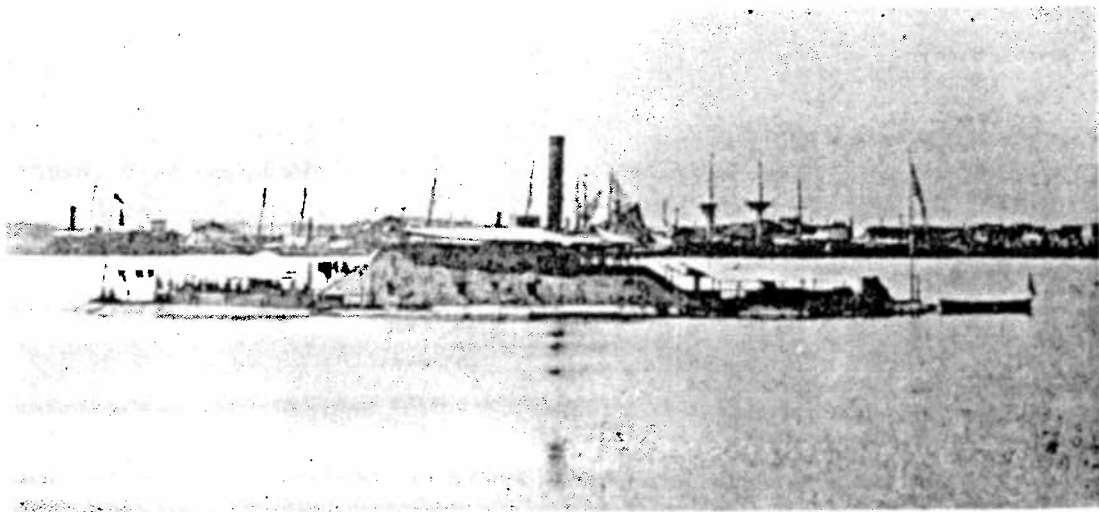
One day early in July the rebel ram made her first appearance to the Union fleet just inside the entrance to the bay, and, through the numerous glasses which were at once levelled at the formidable looking craft, it could be seen that the *Tennessee* was no mean adversary even for a Monitor. Later events proved the correctness of these surmises.

The continued delay in the arrival of our Monitors seemed to invite attack from the enemy, and it was not until long afterward that the reason for their non-activity was developed.

Among the blockading fleet was the *Galena*, at one time a partially protected corvette. Her want of success at Drury's Bluff on the James River had caused the Navy Department to remove her armor plating, leaving the ship an ordinary wooden sloop of war. But it appeared that the rebels were not aware of this change and still believed her to be [the] armored craft which had so stubbornly withstood the battering below Richmond. Acting on this belief Admiral Buchanan counseled against the policy of attempting to raise the blockade by an attack on the Union fleet, deeming it unwise to "risk too much upon a single throw, and win or lose it all."

Following this advice the rebel fleet remained inside of Forts Morgan and Gaines waiting for the opportunity which never came.

By the first of July the blockading fleet had reached such proportions that the celebration of the National Holiday of 1864 off [Mobile Bay] presented to the eyes of the rebels guarding the bay the



*Tennessee*, photographed here after her capture by the Union, was the key in Confederate naval defenses of Mobile Bay.





*The monitor Manhattan was the ship on which Webster served at Mobile Bay. Commander J. W. A. Nicholson, shown at right as a Commodore in the 1870's, was Webster's commanding officer.*



sight of more stars and stripes than had been assembled under one commander since the beginning of the blockade. By order of Admiral Farragut every ship in the squadron steamed as near to Fort Morgan as practicable, and fired the National Salute with shotted guns. From this time active preparations were made for the attack on the rebel works, and the movements of the four Monitors which were reported to have been assigned to the West Gulf Squadron were watched with the greatest interest. These ironclads were the *Manhattan*, *Tecumseh*, *Chickasaw* and *Winnebago*, the first two being regular Ericsson Monitors, built in New York, each carrying two fifteen inch guns in a single turret. The two last named were modifications of the monitor principle, were of much less draft, were armed with eleven inch guns mounted in the Eads turret on the disappearing plan, and their armor was much thinner than that of the *Manhattan* and *Tecumseh*. Their decks, instead of being flat, were heavily crowned. They were familiarly called "Turtle Back" Monitors. Each vessel was propelled by four screws and could steam five or six knots an hour.

These novel craft contained many of the ideas of their eminent designer, Captain James B. Eads, who long afterward became famous as constructor of the jetties at the southwest pass of the Mississippi River. The *Chickasaw* and *Winnebago* were armed with four guns each, mounted in [two] revolving [turrets], but the turrets were of but ten inches in thickness. Their eleven inch smooth bore guns, instead of being mounted in the usual way, were arranged with their muzzles projecting through a circular port in the turret, their elevation and depression being affected by hydraulic gear at the breech. This same gear took up the recoil of the gun, and also lowered the piece into the turret chamber for sponging and loading. The gun was hoisted into position and trained with the turret by the same force.

The *Manhattan* arrived at Pensacola about the tenth of July, and after making some needed repairs, rendered necessary by her long journey from New York, proceeded at once to her station off Mobile.

The *Tecumseh* did not arrive with the *Manhattan*, and the other two ironclads were detained at New Orleans by repairs and adjustments to their machinery.

On the twelfth of July I made official application to be transferred to the *Manhattan*, and on the twenty-second I was detached from the *Genesee* and ordered to report to Commander J. W. A. Nicholson

on board the *Manhattan*. I joined the ironclad two days later, on the twenty-fourth, inside of Sand Island, at the entrance to Mobile Bay.

My first experience on the Monitor was somewhat dampening. I had taken passage from Pensacola where the *Genesee* was at that time, in the *Monongahela*, and in one of her boats I was taken in to the *Manhattan*. A light swell was running, not enough to incommode a small boat, but on going alongside the ironclad, what with her naturally small freeboard and being prepared for action with full coal bunkers and shot lockers, her decks were completely awash, and as I stepped aboard I was wet to my knees, and my humble packing box, containing all my worldly goods, was swept by a gentle wave against the turret, where it was sized by a couple of sailors and speedily taken to a place of safety.

The fourth of August was busy. The *Tecumseh* had joined the fleet, the *Chickasaw* and *Winnebago* had arrived, and the wooden ships had completed their preparations for the fight which was to come off on the morrow. The following general orders were sent to each ship in the fleet, and show, as had already been shown at Forts Jackson and St. Philip, and at Port Hudson, what tactics were to be relied upon for victory, as on those memorable battlefields.

Strip your vessels and prepare for the conflict. Send down all your superfluous spars and rigging. Trice up or remove the whiskers. Put up the splinter nets on the starboard side, and barricade the wheel and steersman with sails and hammocks. Lay chains and sand bags on the deck over the machinery to resist a plunging fire. Hang the sheet chains over the side, [. . .] Land your starboard boats or lower and tow them on the port side, and lower the port boats down to the water's edge. [. . .] The vessels will run past the forts in couples, lashed side by side, as hereinafter designated. [. . .] each vessel will keep a very little on the starboard quarter of his next ahead, and when abreast of the fort, will keep directly astern [. . .] It will be the object of the admiral to get as close to the fort as possible before opening fire. The ships, however, will open fire the moment the enemy opens upon us [. . .] Use short fuzes for the shell and shrapnel, and as soon as within three or four hundred yards give them grape. [. . .] If one or more of the vessels be disabled, their partners must carry them through, if possible; but if they can not then the next astern must render the required assistance; but as the admiral contemplates moving with the flood tide, it will only require sufficient power to keep the crippled vessels in the channel. [. . .] <sup>6</sup>

Should any vessel be disabled to such a degree that her consort is unable to keep her in her station, she will drop out of line to the westward and not embarrass the vessels next astern by attempting to regain her station. Should she repair damages, so as to be able to reenter the line of battle, she will take her station in the rear as close to the last vessel as possible. [. . .]

Following these instructions, every ship carrying spars left nothing standing above the top masts, and the *Richmond* struck and landed even her top masts and topsail yards.

The wooden ships which took part in the battle were arranged as follows: *Brooklyn* with the *Octorara*; *Hartford* with the *Metacomb* alongside; *Richmond* and *Port Royal*; *Lackawana* and *Seminole*; *Monongahela* with the *Kennebec*; *Ossipee* and *Itasca*; and bringing up the rear was the *Oneida* and *Galena*.

The fifth of August broke clear and calm, and from where we lay, inside of Sand Island, with our consorts, the *Tecumseh*, *Chickasaw*, and *Winnebago*, the sounds of preparations in the fleet came floating over the water long before daybreak.<sup>7</sup> About five o'clock the first of the wooden fleet made their appearance, the *Brooklyn*, with the *Octorara* secured to her port side abaft the beam, steaming slowly in with the flood tide.

<sup>6</sup> This was Farragut's General Order No. 10, dated 12 July 1864. As indicated by the bracketed ellipses [. . .], Webster omitted sections of Farragut's orders. The author also unaccountably fails to indicate that the last paragraph comes from Farragut's General Order No. 11, dated 29 July 1864. The full text of both orders is published in the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Volume 21 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), pp. 397-98. Hereafter cited ORN.

<sup>7</sup> The log of *Manhattan* recorded ". . . called all hands up at 3." ORN I, 21, 824.

As one ship followed another it was a glorious and inspiring sight, and one never to be forgotten.

At each masthead floated an American flag, and in the soft morning stillness each drum beat, calling to quarters the crews of the advancing ships, could be heard with perfect distinctness.

In stately line and in compact order the fleet came steadily on, the hoarse shouts of command mingling with the sounds of rattling gun tackles as they lessened the distance between us.

At half past five the drum of the *Manhattan* beat to General Quarters,<sup>8</sup> and, as all preparations for the coming fight had been carefully made in advance, in a few minutes everybody was at his station, the battle hatches were secured in place, and we were ready for the fray. Early that morning it had been discovered that one of our fifteen inch guns had been disabled during the night, some traitor having spiked the gun by forcing a small rat-tail file far into the fuse vent putting that gun out of commission most effectually.<sup>9</sup>

Already the *Tecumseh* had weighed anchor, and had steamed slowly away for the channel, keeping well off toward Fort Morgan.

Commander T. A. M. Craven, in command of the *Tecumseh*, was senior to Commander Nicholson of the *Manhattan*, consequently took the head of the ironclads and kept well in advance of the oncoming fleet. At forty-seven minutes past six o'clock the boom of the first shot from the *Tecumseh*'s fifteen inch guns reached our ears, and we knew that the momentous battle had begun. A few minutes later the *Brooklyn* became engaged, and the fight was on. The first shot from the *Manhattan* was fired at five minutes past seven, and as it was the beginning of my fighting experience on a monitor I may be pardoned for a few words descriptive of the sensations and effects of a shot from a fifteen inch gun.

With the recoil of the gun a sudden tremor ran through the ship as though in collision followed an instant later by the roar of the explosion mingled with deep voiced rushing note of the shot as it leaves the muzzle of the gun. The turret chamber, or space directly below the gun was instantly filled with blinding smoke mingled with particles of burning powder, and in a few minutes the smell was forced into every part of the ship by the blowers which take their air for ventilation through the turret. The effect in the engine room was perhaps more marked than in other parts of the ship, being near the extreme after part of the vessel.

Shot followed shot in rapid succession, and the steady roar which filled the air told that every ship was under fire, and that the rebels behind the ramparts of Fort Morgan were doing their best to undo the tactics, which, under the gallant Admiral leading us today, had been so disastrous to their cause at New Orleans and Port Hudson. Our magazines were open, the officers and men were cool and collected, and but for the tremendous noises of the battle and the ever increasing clouds of powder smoke enveloping the ship, the situation below resembled ordinary drill.

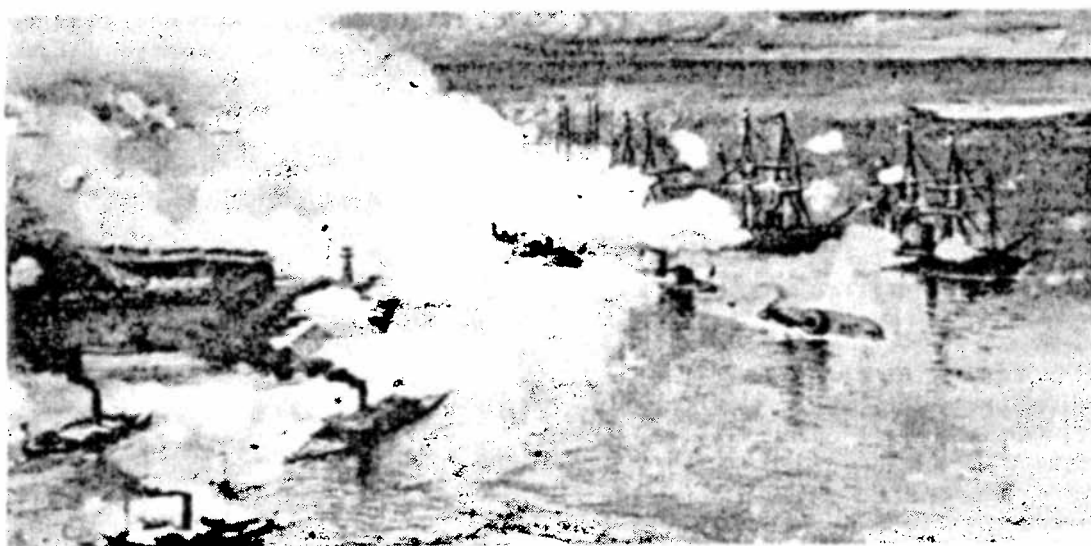
On account of the terrible heat in the engine room, which was 150 F. except directly beneath the blower-pipe, the engineers were assigned short periods of duty at their stations, and following a turn in the engine room, we were given a breathing spell in the turret chamber, then a spell in the turret at the handling levers, and then into the engine room again.

I had completed my first service in the engine room and in the turret chamber, and about fifteen or twenty minutes after seven I was at the levers in the turret. The turret was being slowly moved, first "right," then "left," as the guns were being brought to bear on the fort, near which we lay, and the gallant *Tecumseh* was a short distance ahead and on the starboard bow.

The frequent blows on our turret told that the enemy was not idle, and the steady roar from the guns of our wooden fleet was accented at frequent intervals with the savage explosion of a bursting shell, and once in a while could be dimly heard the peculiar crackling, singing noise made by shot smashing through the wooden walls of some unfortunate ship on our port side. The combination of sounds is impossible to describe, and each instant brought a new one. Shot, shell, grape and canister from the guns of our fleet flew over and past our turret, and as our huge piece sent its compliments ashore, the effect was almost deafening.

<sup>8</sup> *Manhattan*'s log recorded: "At 6 called all hands up anchor. At 6:20 beat to quarters, cleared ship for action." *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Neither the log nor any of Commander Nicholson's reports mention this episode.



*The fleet of Rear Admiral Farragut passes Fort Morgan. Tecumseh, leading the line of monitors, is shown sinking after striking a torpedo. Webster's ship, Manhattan, is directly astern of her.*

About half past seven, while the action was at its height, our gun had just been revolved for a shot at Fort Morgan, a momentary view was had of the *Tecumseh*, and in that instant occurred the catastrophe whereby a good ship filled with men, with a brave captain, in the twinkling of an eye vanished from the field of battle.

A tiny white comber of froth curled around her bow, a tremendous shock ran through our ship as though we had struck a rock, and as rapidly as these words flow from my pen the *Tecumseh* reeled a little to starboard, her bows settled beneath the surface, and while we looked her stern lifted high in the air with the propeller still revolving, and the ship pitched out of sight like an arrow twanged from the bow. We were steaming slowly ahead when this tragedy occurred and, being close aboard of the ill-fated craft, we were in imminent danger of running foul of her as she sank. "Back hard" was the order shouted below to the engine room, and, as the *Manhattan* felt the effects of the reversed propeller, the bubbling water round our bows, and the huge swirls on either hand, told us that we were passing directly over the struggling wretches fighting with death in the *Tecumseh*.

The effect on our men was in some cases terrible. One of the firemen was crazed by the incident. But the battle was not yet over. After coming to a standstill for a few minutes, during which the commotion of the water set up by the foundered ship passed away, the *Manhattan* steamed ahead into line and took the duty but now being performed by her lost consort. As the *Tecumseh* sank to the bottom, the crew of the *Hartford* sprang to her starboard rail and gave three ringing cheers in defiance of the enemy and in honor of the dying.

Perhaps some drowning wretch on the *Tecumseh* took that cheer in his ears as he sank to a hero's grave, and we may imagine the sound as it pierced the roar of battle, giving courage to some fainting heart as his face turned for the last time to the light of that sun whose rising and setting was at an end for him.

But Mobile Bay was yet before us. Immediately following the events just related, my tour of duty in the turret ended for the time being, and I once more returned to the engine room. The first effect of going from the cool air of the turret to the terrible heat of the engine room was that of a curious chilliness. This, in a minute or two, was succeeded by a most copious perspiration, so violent that one's clothing became soaking wet, and the perspiration coursing down the scantily clothed body and limbs, filled the shoes so that they "chuckled" as one walked.

At 150 F. the glass in a lantern will crackle and break, the lamps burn dimly, and it is impossible to handle any metal with the bare hands. Pieces of canvas, like flat-iron holders alone enable one to

grasp a hand-rail or valve handle. Of course frequent bulletins of the fight were brought to the poor devils sweating their lives out in the engine room, and we got some idea of what was going on, through the signal which at frequent intervals [came] from the pilot house.

"Ahead slow," "stop," "back," these told the phases of our part in the battle, and we knew that we were employed in quelling the fire of Fort Morgan at pistol shot range while the wooden fleet passed in by the ship channel on our starboard side.

During one of my turns at the training gear our gun was served with grape and canister, and it was marvelous to note the effect of the cart-load of iron sent hissing into the enemy's works from a fifteen inch gun. In the first place the noise of this mass of missiles tearing through the air was in striking contrast with the roar of a smooth projectile, and its effects even more marked: A cloud of dust marked by flying debris, the sound of smashing and tearing coming back from the point of impact, and, as the smoke lifted, destruction and ruin.

Of course it will be understood by this that we lay pretty close in shore, for our orders were to "silence everything at the water level during the passage of the wooden ships."<sup>10</sup>

So the formidable water battery commanding the channel received especial attention from our big gun, and gave no trouble after the first infliction of fifteen inch grape and canister.

And thus the battle raged, minute after minute, and we continued in serviceable condition, no one hurt thus far, and the turret intact, though heavily struck at frequent intervals.

The sounds produced by a shot striking our turret were far different from what I had anticipated. The scream of the shot would arrive at about the same time with the projectile, with far from a severe thud, and then the air would be filled with that peculiar shrill singing sound of violently broken glass, or perhaps more like the noise made by flinging a nail violently through the air. The shock of discharge of our own guns was especially hard on the ears of those in the turret, and it seemed at times as though the tympanum must give way. The sensations of the manipulator of the turning gear were not particularly pleasant. In addition to the frequent shocks to his ears, his position was such that the huge gun, as it was discharged, recoiled to the limit of the turret, and the space was so contracted that at first it appeared certain that a shocking death would follow every round. But it was really a place of perfect safety, and no one was injured at this station throughout the battle.

At about eight o'clock the fire on our port hand began to slacken, and the word was passed below that the wooden fleet had entered the bay and that the fight was over.

"Ahead slow" was the signal to the engine room, and as we gathered headway, steering for the wooden fleet inside, the guns of Fort Morgan again opened fire, and quite a number of shot and shell fell around us as we drew out of the line of fire.

Of course, after more than two hours of confinement below in the smoky torrid atmosphere of the monitor, we were all glad to take advantage of the lull in affairs and catch a breath of fresh air on deck. The sight there was inspiring. Astern lay the comparatively narrow entrance through which the fleet had but just passed, on the starboard quarter lay Fort Morgan, and sheltered by its protecting guns could be seen the huge ram *Tennessee* with her two consorts, the *Morgan* and *Gaines*, while some distance up the bay, in the direction of Mobile, lay the *Selma*, hotly engaged with the double ender gunboat *Metacomb* under Lieutenant Commander James E. Jouett.

The sky had become overcast in the bay, but outside the sun could be seen shining in fitful patches, and the fleet, under orders from the Flagship, had come to anchor in a sort of irregular circle, ready for further combat in case the enemy decided to stake the result upon a single-handed fight between the *Tennessee* and the Union fleet.

Every flag was flying, as when we saw the line slowly advancing in battle array at sunrise, and the number was undiminished save by the ship of the gallant Craven, the *Tecumseh*, which lay at the bottom but a few hundred yards away.

The gentle westerly breeze which had prevailed all the morning had gradually drifted the smoke of battle across the fort and so out to sea, and the rebel flag lazily flapped against the single staff within

<sup>10</sup> Farragut's instructions of 4 August to Commander T. H. Stevens of *Winnabago* indicated what he expected from the monitors: "The service that I look for from the ironclads is, first, to neutralize as much as possible the fire of the guns which rake our approach; next to look out for the [Southern] ironclads when we are abreast of the forts, and lastly, to occupy the attention of those batteries which would rake us while running up the bay." *ORNL*, 21, 404.

the works, and from the halyards of the ram. We had barely come to anchor, and were congratulating ourselves that the hard work of the day was over when, about a quarter of nine, a signal from the *Hartford* of "prepare to engage the enemy" told us that the fight was not yet over. As we hastened below, previous to securing our battle hatches, a glance toward Fort Morgan gave the reason for the signal.

The rebel ram *Tennessee* was slowly steaming from under the fort into the open bay, and as her direction became plain, it was evident that the final struggle was about to begin.

The ram was headed directly for the flagship, and by the time our gun was ready for action, the sharp firing told us that the fleet was engaged. Our anchor was weighed and we were well underway by nine o'clock, and as we entered the melee [at 9:20] the steady roar of big guns, the shrill whistle of shot and shell, and the occasionally heard hoarse voice of command, were evidences that all the fighting was being done at close quarters.

Shortly after going into action, word was sent below to secure everything for ramming, and we waited for breathless minutes for the shock which never came. The speed of the *Manhattan* was so low that the attempt to ram was a failure. Our engines were kept in motion, however, and the peculiar smashing sound which succeeded every discharge of our fifteen inch gun told us below that the ram was not far away. Several times the sound of cheering came below to us, but the most prominent sounds were those of shrieking shell and booming cannon. The battle had raged for nearly an hour, and the only news we had from deck was that the wooden ships were pouring an ineffectual fire from their eleven inch guns into the ram, and that several of the vessels had rammed her, with what effect, however, was not known. The fact, however, that the combat still raged was proof that no serious injury had been done to either side, and for aught we knew the fight might last for hours yet.

My tour of duties had once more brought me into the turret, and from occasional glimpses caught through our gun ports, I could see that the ram, battered and dented in a hundred places, her smoke pipe shot away flush with the top of her casemate, was keeping up the fight with the greatest vigor, but was stationary. Several shots at very close range had been delivered, and Captain Nicholson had said that the rebel flag was shot away when, almost on the stroke of ten, the command came "cease firing," and I saw that we were almost in contact; peering past the muzzle of one of our guns the flutter of a tiny white flag told that the ram had stopped fighting.

"For God's sake, don't fire; I surrender, I surrender," came faintly from the *Tennessee*, and as Captain Nicholson stepped to the side of the monitor with the question, "Who [*sic*] do you surrender to?" the answer came on the instant, "I surrender to you, sir; for God's sake, don't fire again; we are disabled."

By direction of our Captain, the First Lieutenant<sup>11</sup> stepped aboard the ram, now alongside, and, seizing the rebel flag lying in the starboard scuppers, brought it aboard the *Manhattan* and tossed it into the turret through a gun port.

The Battle of Mobile Bay was over. The surrender of the *Tennessee* took place on the stroke of ten o'clock, and as soon as the fact became known throughout the fleet every throat gave out its cheers in honor of the glorious victory.

A motly throng poured on deck from our engine room and turret chamber, but in whatever condition a man appeared, he broke into a cheer as soon as his eyes caught sight of the helpless shape of the ram lying near us, and showing so plainly the terrible ordeal through [which] she had passed in the fierce fight just ended. Cheer upon cheer broke from every ship as the ram was taken in tow by the *Chickasaw*, and slowly carried to the *Hartford*, a trophy of victory.

The condition of the *Tennessee* was in sorry contrast with her appearance a few hours before. Her smoke pipe had been shot away, giving her a particularly shorn, stubby look. Many indentations in her sloping armor showed where our shots had struck, and in a general way this formidable craft looked anything but warlike; and, as her steering gear was disabled, her movements were controlled by the *Chickasaw*. Her humiliation was complete.

<sup>11</sup> According to *Manhattan's* log: "Acting Master Robert B. Ely boarded her [*Tennessee*] by order of Commander Nicholson and received her colors which he brought on board this vessel." ORN I, 21, 824.



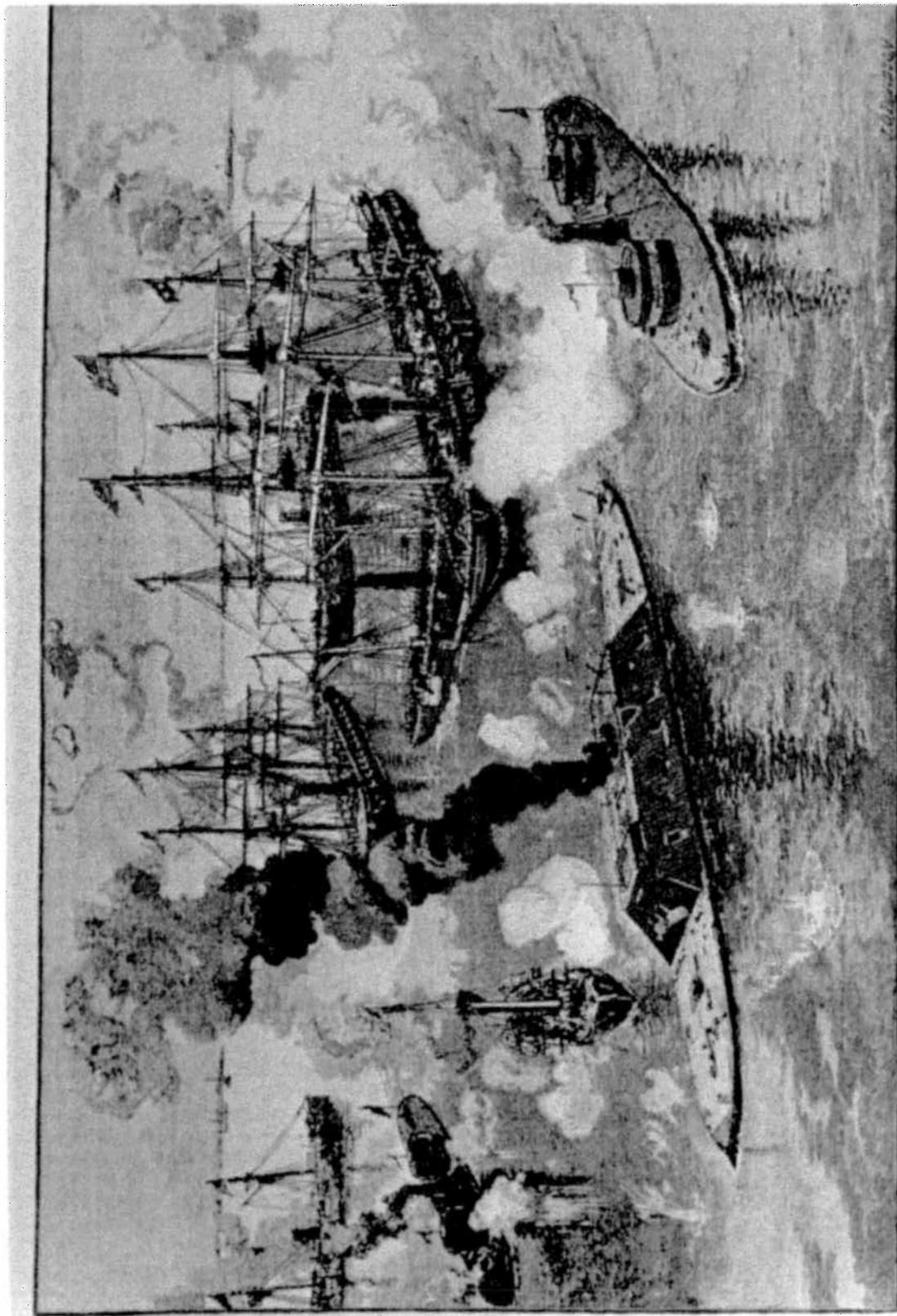
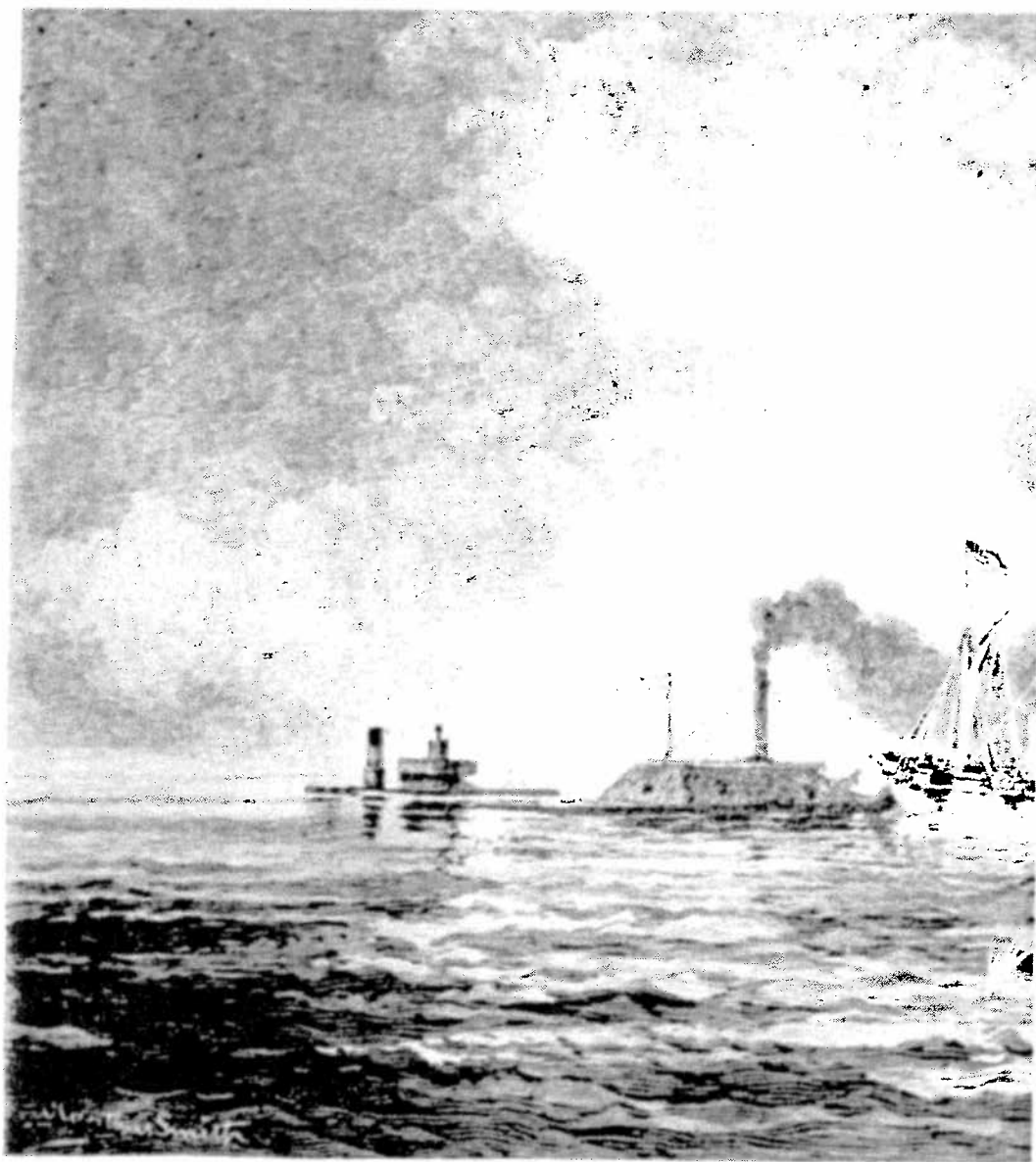


Illustration by  
JOHN W. WILSON

SURRENDER OF THE "TENNESSEE," BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY.

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WASHINGTON, D.C.



**THE "MONONGAHELA" RAMMING THE "TENNESS**

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5/27/13

KENT WALL

Dave Cliff is here -

It was fun getting to know you both during the Sturbridge wa meeting.

I very much appreciate your letting me examine ~~each~~ <sup>the</sup> 605. That was a real treat. That is one of the best condition Lueders Revolvers I have ever seen. And what history!

-over-

Your entire display was incredible.  
In fact, I voted for you as

"Best In Show".

Breese knew is still keeping me  
out to know everything that I saw.  
And, I'm doing my best to accommodate  
him!

All the best,

Kent

KENT WALL

5/27/13

Dear Cliff and Lynne -

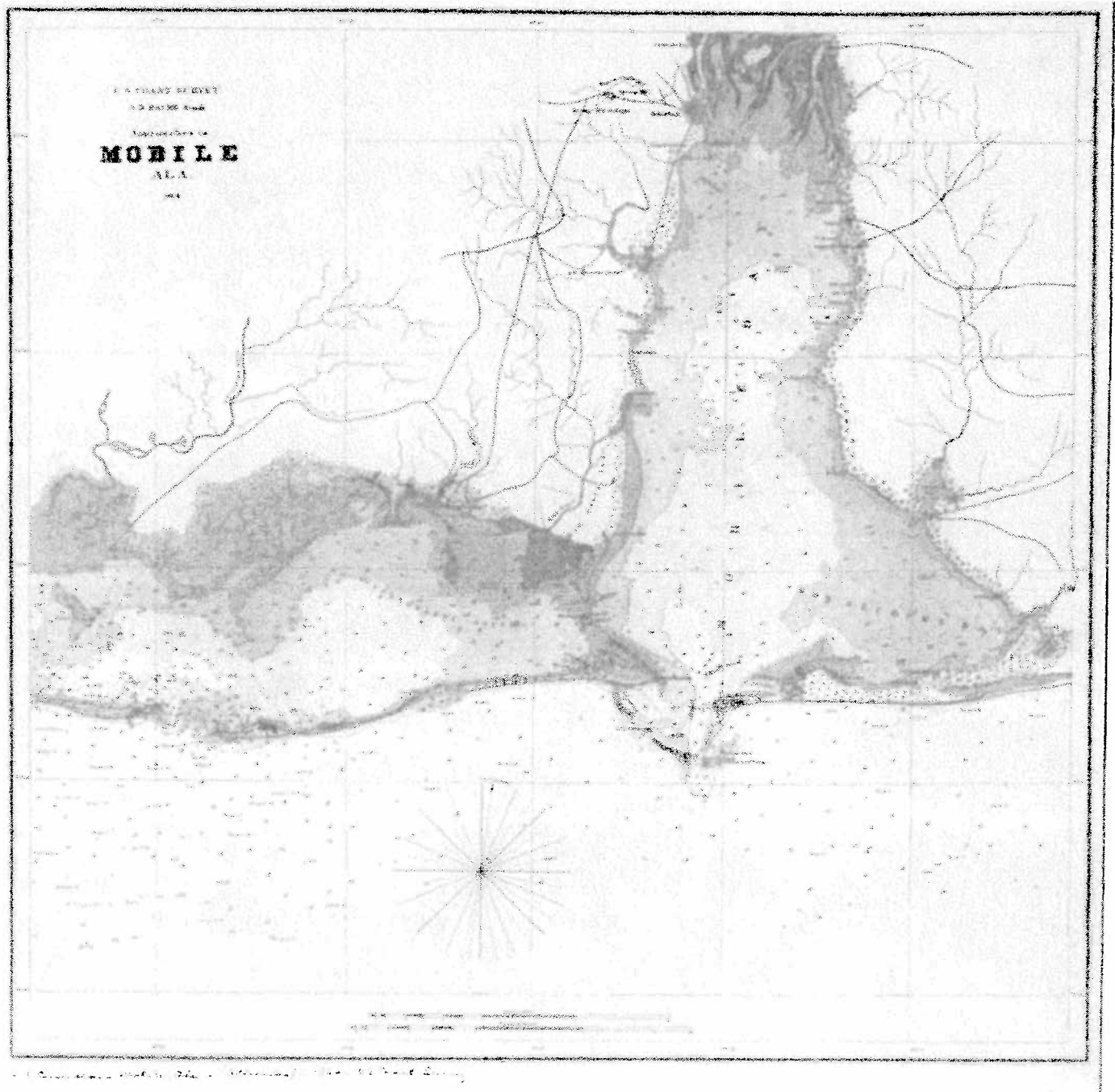
It was fun getting together with you both during the Sturbridge Ma meeting.

I very much appreciated your letting me examine Leech # 605. That was a real treat. This is one of the best condition Leech revolvers I have ever seen. And what history !

Your entire display was incredible . I voted for you as "Best In Show"!

Bruce Kusrow is still wearing me out to know everything that I saw. And, I'm doing my best to accommodate him!

All the best,  
Kent



**Approaches to Mobile, Ala. 1864.**

United States Coast Survey.

Created/Published  
[S.L., 1864]

Scale ca. 1:205,000.

Reference: LC Civil War Maps (2nd ed.), 109

Map of Mobile Bay showing forts, towns, soundings, and a few roads.

Description derived from published bibliography.

## The Battle of Mobile Bay (2008)

August 2-23, 1864

A combined Union force initiated operations to close Mobile Bay to blockade running. On August 5, Rear Admiral David Farragut's Union fleet of eighteen ships boldly entered Mobile Bay and received a devastating fire from Forts Gaines and Morgan and other points. After passing the forts, Farragut engaged in a slow-motion slugfest with the Confederate ironclad CSS Tennessee, under the command of Adm. Franklin Buchanan. After forcing the Tennessee to surrender, Union forces besieged Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan, which controlled the mouth of Mobile Bay. By August 23, Fort Morgan, the last big holdout, fell, shutting down the strategic port. The city, however, remained uncaptured.

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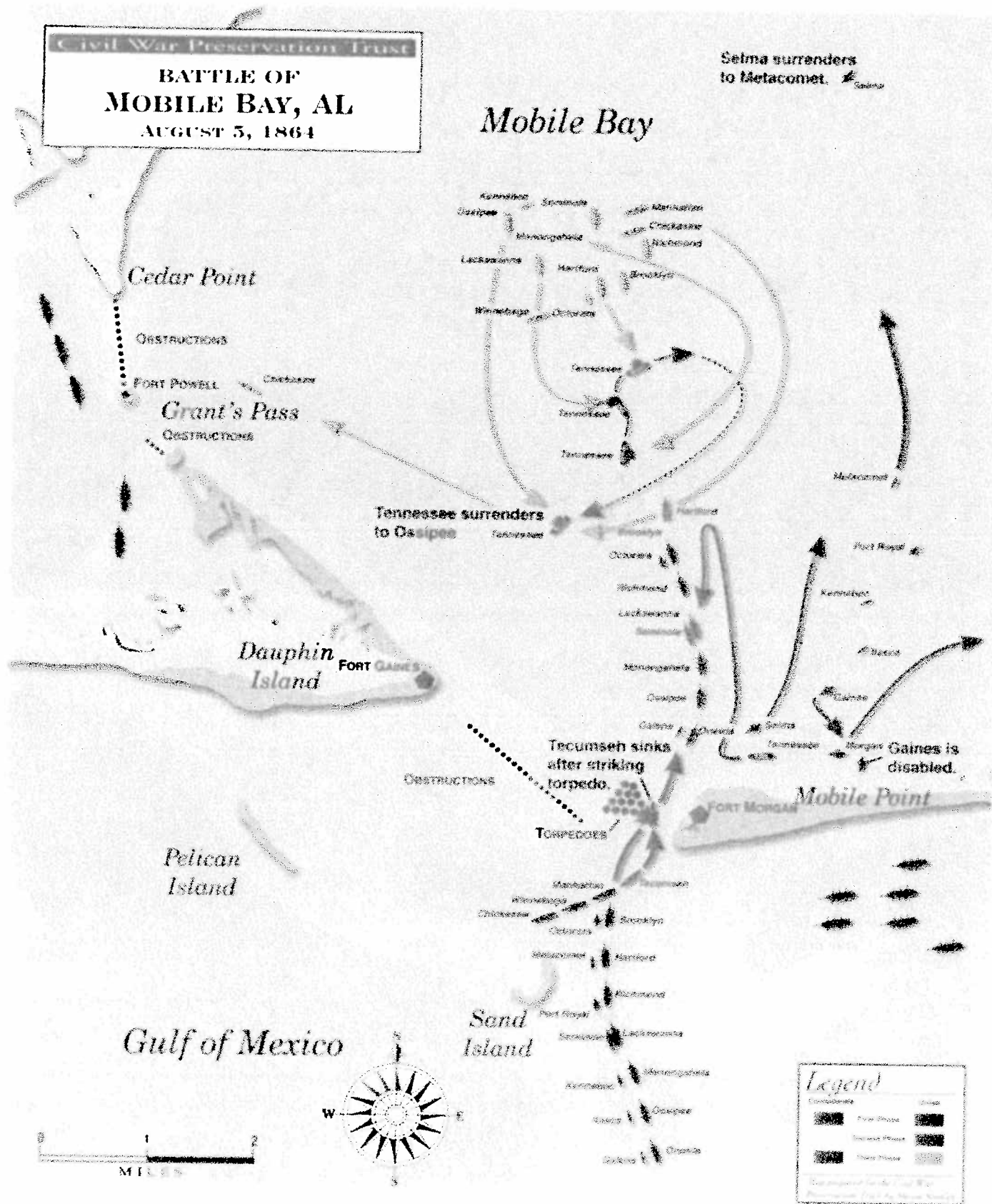
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# Maps of Mobile Bay, Alabama (1864)

## BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY

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- 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, 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.

*This article originally appeared in the Winter 2008 issue of Hallowed Ground, the Civil War Preservation Trust's award-winning membership magazine.*

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- 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.



USS Tecumseh strikes a torpedo and sinks near Fort Morgan (Library of Congress)

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.

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 100 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 un-jam 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

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 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.

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.

While the *Tecumseh* went down, the *Brooklyn* was edging even closer to the mine field 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

- 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.

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Biography David Farragut

Biography Franklin Buchanan

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 starshaped 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 woodenhulled 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.



Admiral David G. Farragut, leader of the attack.

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# Damn the Torpedoes!

THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY

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BY CRAIG L. SYMONDS



Confederate ironclad CSS Tennessee engages the USS Oreida while under fire from the USS Chickasaw (Painting by Tom Freeman [www.tomfreemanart.com](http://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 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

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Battle Overview

Battle Maps

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## The Battle of Mobile Bay

August 2-23, 1864

A combined Union force initiated operations to close Mobile Bay to blockade running. On August 5, Rear Admiral David Farragut's Union fleet of eighteen ships boldly entered Mobile Bay and received a devastating fire from Forts Gaines and Morgan and other points. After passing the forts, Farragut engaged in a slow-motion slugfest with the Confederate ironclad CSS Tennessee, under the command of Adm. Franklin Buchanan. After forcing the Tennessee to surrender, Union forces besieged Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan, which controlled the mouth of Mobile Bay. By August 23, Fort Morgan, the last big holdout, fell, shutting down the strategic port. The city, however, remained uncaptured.

### HISTORY ARTICLES

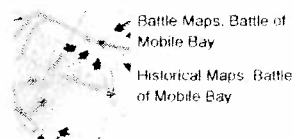
Damn the Torpedoes! The Battle of Mobile Bay by Craig Symonds

Fort Morgan and the Battle of Mobile Bay (NPS)



### RECOMMENDED BOOKS

### MAPS



### MOBILE BAY IN PHOTOS

See photos from where Farragut "Damn'd the Torpedoes!"

[GALLERY »](#)

### MOBILE BAY RESOURCES

[Wikipedia: The Battle of Mobile Bay](#)  
[Wikipedia: Fort Morgan](#)  
[Historic Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island](#)

### THREATS

#### MOST ENDANGERED

This battlefield was identified as our greatest threat *History Under Siege™* in 2006 • 2007 • 2009 •

### BATTLE FACTS

#### LOCATION

Mobile and Baldwin County, Alabama  
[Google map »](#)

#### DATES

August 2-23, 1864

#### UNION COMMANDER

David G. Farragut

#### CONFEDERATE COMMANDER

Franklin Buchanan

#### ESTIMATED CASUALTIES

[UNION DEATHS](#) 156  
[UNION WOUNDS](#) 1,000

#### RESULT

[UNION VICTORY](#) 100%



Fort Morgan Historic Site

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Setting the Stage: Historical Context**Locating the Site: Maps**

1. The blockaded coasts
2. Mobile Harbor and vicinity

**Determining the Facts: Readings**

1. The Battle of Mobile Bay
2. The Defense of Fort Morgan:  
The Report of Brig. Gen. Richard L. Page
3. Personal Account of the Battle of Mobile Bay  
by Harrie Webster, USS *Manhattan*

**Visual Evidence: Images**

1. Ironclad monitor
2. USS *Monitor* watercolor
3. Battle of Mobile Bay
4. Plan of the battle
5. The gulf side of Fort Morgan  
after the battle
6. Lighthouse and hot shot furnace  
after the battle

Putting It All Together: Activities

- 1. Decisions in Warfare**
- 2. The Perils of New Military Technology**
- 3. Building a Fort**

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This lesson is based on Fort Morgan, one of the thousands of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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## Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans

# Fort Morgan and the Battle of Mobile Bay

Under the early light of dawn, Union Adm. David Farragut began his attack on Mobile Bay, Alabama. Aware of the danger near Fort Morgan, Farragut ordered his captains to stay to the "eastward of the easternmost buoy" because it was "understood that there are torpedoes and other obstructions between the buoys."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the lead ironclad, the USS *Tecumseh*, unable to avoid the danger, struck a mine and sank into the oceans depths. Yet, against all odds, the seasoned admiral ordered his flagship, the *Hartford*, and his fleet to press forward through the underwater minefield and into Mobile Bay.



(Fort Morgan State Historic Site)

Although Farragut was a champion of the "wooden navy," he agreed to include four new ironclad ships modeled after the USS *Monitor* in his attack fleet. It was widely believed that these warships were unsinkable. But the *Tecumseh* indeed sank that summer morning, August 5, 1864, unexpectedly killing the majority of its crew and demonstrating the deadly effects of advances in technology such as the torpedo. For in the words of one Confederate soldier reminiscing on the ill-fated ship, "She careens, her bottom appears! Down, Down, Down she goes to the bottom of the channel, carrying 150 of her crew, confined within her ribs, to a watery grave."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Official Records. Navies, vol. 21, 398.

<sup>2</sup>"Fort Morgan in the Confederacy: Letter by Hurieosco Austill." *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 2, (Summer 1945), 256.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**[About This Lesson](#)[Getting Started: Inquiry Question](#)**RELATED INFORMATION**[How to Use a TwHP Lesson](#)[Lessons on Related Topics](#)



## A trophy

### from the

### Bay Fight

The most sanguinary and desperate naval battle of the Civil War was the famous engagement in Mobile Bay on the morning of August 5, 1864.

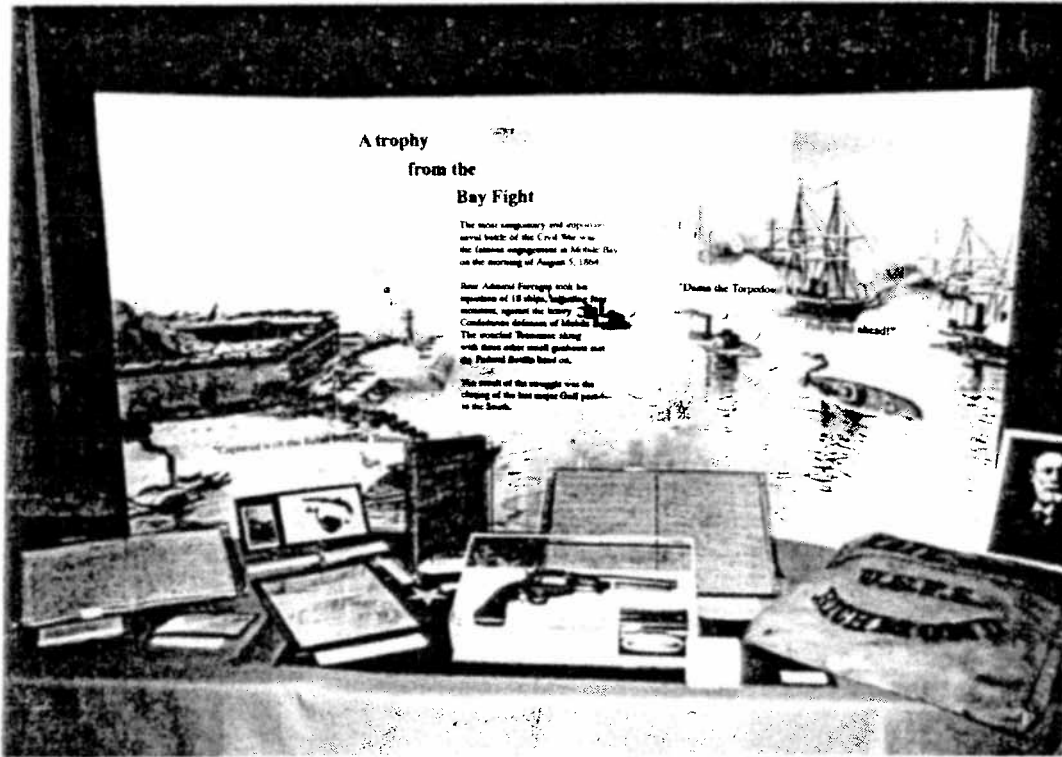
Rear Admiral Farragut took his squadron of 18 ships, including the ironclads, against the heavy Confederate defenses of Mobile Bay.

The wounded Tennessee, along with three other small gunboats and the Federal fleet's last ship, the USS Alabama, were the only ships that escaped.

The result of the struggle was the capture of the last major Confederate port on the Gulf.

"Damn the Torpedoes!"

ahead!"



**JOHN H. FRIEND, JR.**

FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING  
107 SAINT FRANCIS STREET - SUITE 2200  
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36602-3322  
(334) 432-3158

March 17, 1996

Dear Cliff:

Many thanks for Milliken's August 5th diary. This is the only diary entry I have for the Seminole, so I am most grateful.

The picture of Harrington's Colt revolver is also most interesting and much appreciated. I have found where Harrington went aboard the Tennessee immediately after her surrender, which certainly helps authenticate the weapon as having come from that vessel. Momentos of revolver size or smaller were probably abundant and free for the taking. Not so during the Korean War, where I was forbidden to bring home a fine Chinese burp gun. I will continue to pursue Caldwell Delaney's belief that Admiral Buchanan might be the revolver's owner, but so far no luck.

I noticed that the Milliken diary has two dates on the cover page: Texas, February 12, 1864 and Off Mobile, April 7. Could I impose on you to send me the other entries made off Mobile. My book begins in the Spring of 1864 and if any of Millikens entries should be used, I would give you full credit for the quotes.

Again, thanks for the information. I look forward to meeting you and discussing the Battle of Mobile Bay, also my favorite subject.

Sincerely,

  
John H. Friend, Jr.

P.F. Harrington (Born June 6, 1844 in Dover Del.)

9/20/61	-	Appointed Acting <u>Midshipman</u> at the Naval Academy	
		( <u>article photo</u> )	17 yrs. old
10/1/63	-	Promoted to Acting Ensign	19
8/5/64	-	" (Battle of Mobile Bay)	20
5/10/66	-	" <u>Master</u>	22 ( <u>CVD</u> )
2/21/67	-	" Lieut. (Monongahela)	23
3/12/68	-	" <u>Lieut. Commander</u>	24 ( <u>Peery CDV</u> )
5/28/81	-	" Commander	37
3/1/95	-	" Captain (commanding officer U.S.S. Puritan)	51
1903	-	" Rear Admiral	59
6/6/06	-	Retired as Rear Admiral	62
10/20/37	-	Died in Yonkers, N.Y.	93







M. CLIFFORD YOUNG  
M. Clifford Young  
170 FLETCHER STREET  
86 Fairfield Street  
BOSTON 16, MASS.  
Boston 16, Mass.



# "Memphis Daily Appeal"

Grenada, Miss. September 4th, 1862

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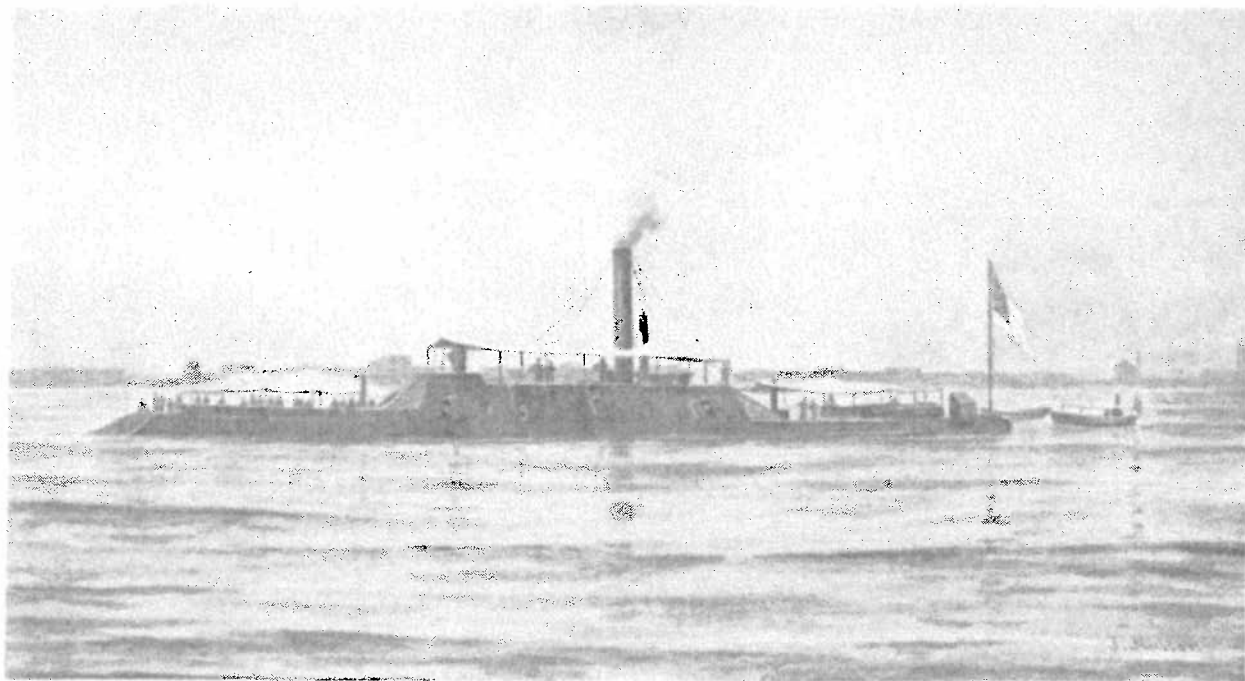
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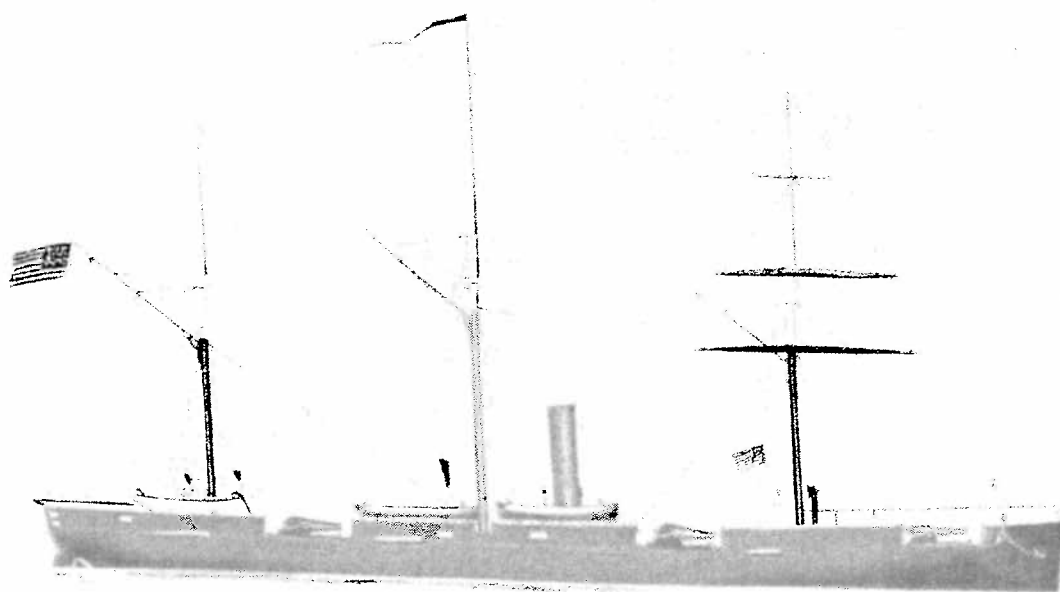
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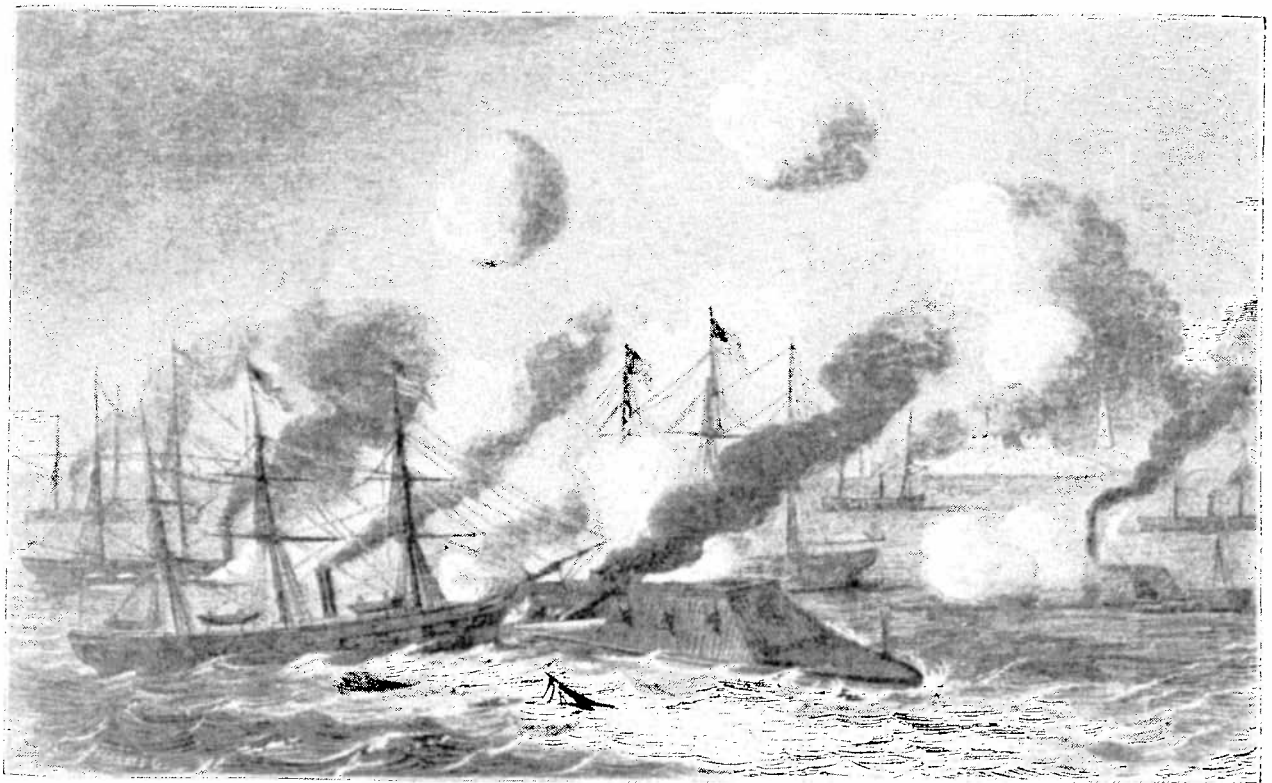


C. S. RAM TENNESSEE.

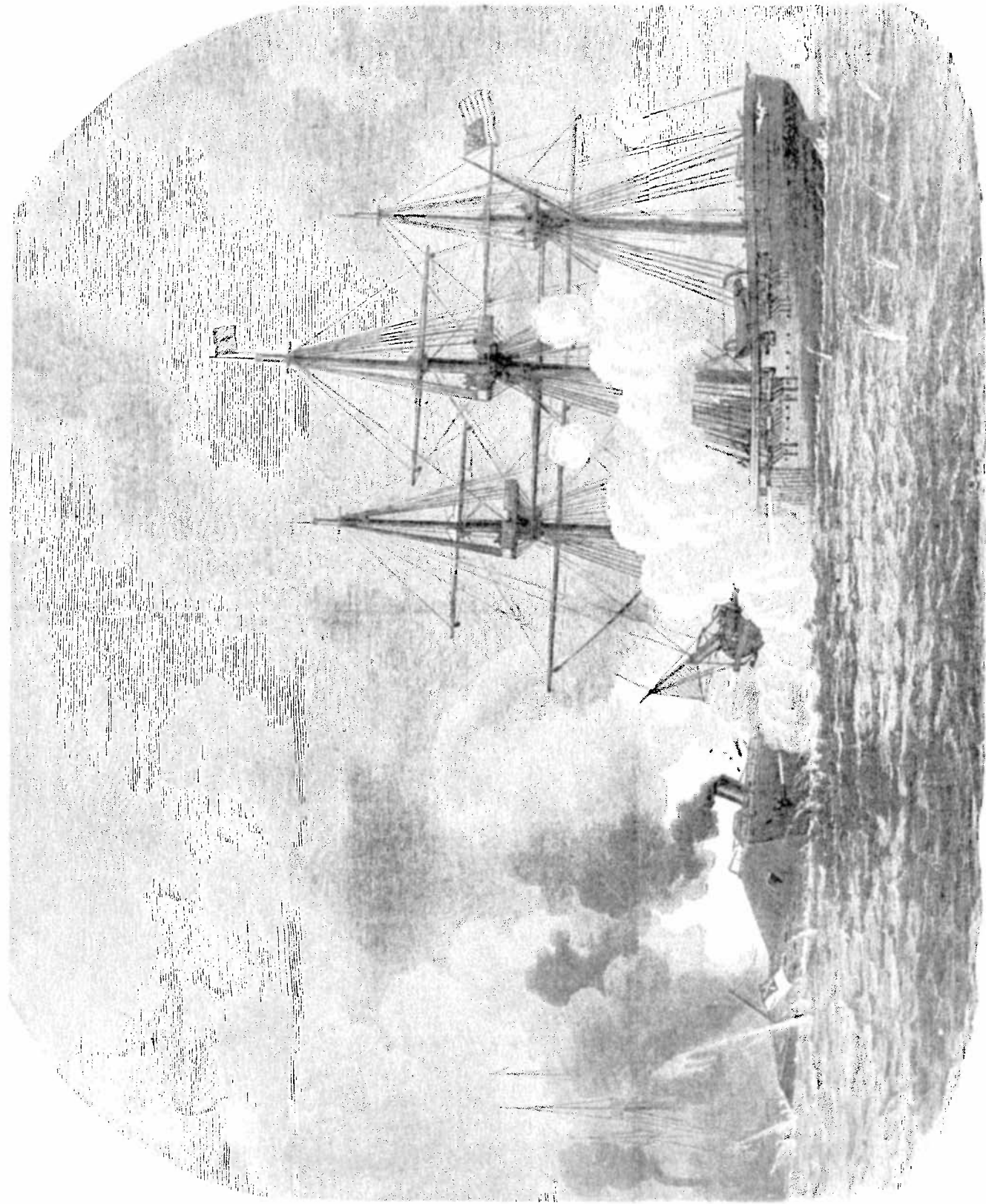


UNITED STATES STEAMER MUNONGAHELA.

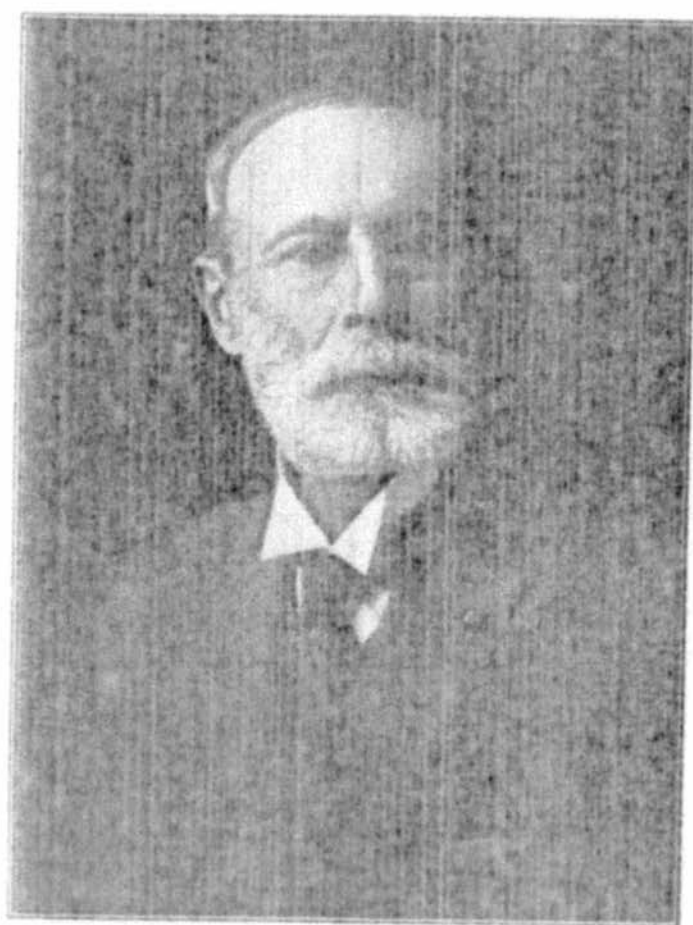




CAPTURE OF THE RAM TENNESSEE BY FARRAGUT (MOBILE BAY).



THE NAVAL COMBAT IN MOBILE HARBOR.—THE FLAGSHIP "HARTFORD" ENGAGING THE CONFEDERATE RAM "TENNESSEE."  
FROM A SKETCH BY E. H. HUGH.



THE NATHAN Cyclopedia of AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY

*P. F. Harrington,*

## Actions with the Forts ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

waived his rank and was assisting the Confederate commander in keeping the troops in hand. Owing to the strong construction of the interior of the fort, and its division by the heavy traverses, the Federals were compelled to take the traverses one at a time, driving the Confederates from gun-chamber to gun-chamber. The final stand was made by part of the garrison at Battery Buchanan, near the end of the point. But this was also taken. None of the guns of the main fort was spiked, the men fighting the serviceable ones until the last extremity, but those of Battery Buchanan were spiked by the few occupants, who had left the work before the surrender of Fort Fisher, taking with them all the boats that might have served for the escape of a large part of the remaining garrison. Shortly after ten o'clock in the evening of January 15, 1865, resistance ceased in Fort Fisher, and the place was surrendered.

The defenses of the city of Mobile had been pronounced by General Joseph E. Johnston the strongest in the Confederacy. To guard the city itself there were three heavy lines, the outer consisting of fifteen redoubts, the inner of sixteen enclosed forts, and the middle one of nineteen bastioned forts and eight redoubts. The harbor forts were designed to sustain attacks on both the land and water fronts. On the eastern side lay Fort Morgan, at Mobile Point, and on the western side Fort Gaines, on Dauphine Island; while Fort Powell guarded the bay entrance of Grant Pass, that admitted small boats north of Dauphine Island. Just below the city were ten batteries, placed to command the channel. Torpedoes and rows of piles blocked the channels, with here and there an opening through which a vessel might crawl.

Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines had been United States fortifications, but were taken by the Confederates at the beginning of the war. Morgan had sixty guns, with a water battery in front, and Gaines was armed with thirty guns. Besides these land defenses, the Confederates had the ram *Tennessee*, probably the most powerful vessel ever constructed for their

[250]





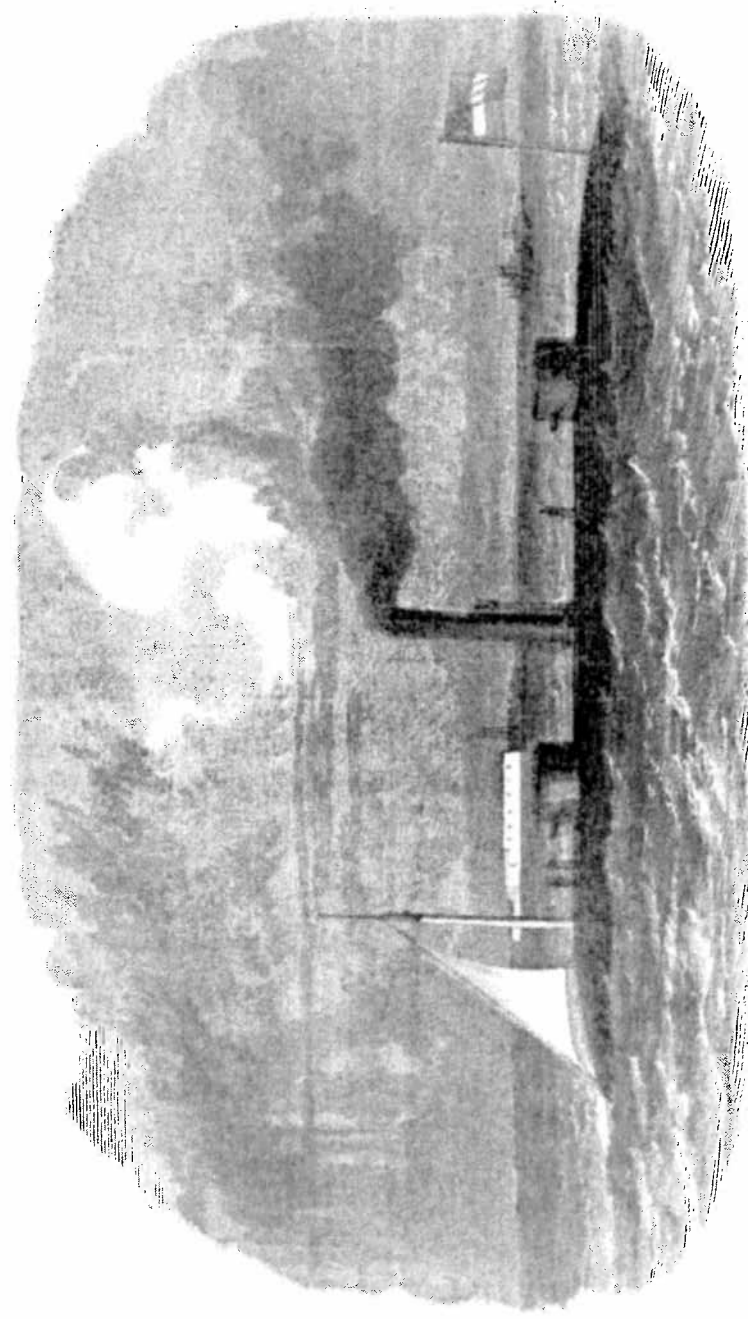
### THE NEW REBEL RAM.

ON this page we print a sketch representing the rebel Ram at Mobile. The object of this Ram is the same intended to have been accomplished by the famous *Manassas* against our fleet off New Orleans in October, 1862, viz., the annoyance of our blockading vessels. The *Red-mo-d*, which survived the attack of the *Manassas* without any serious damage, is now off Mobile, and probably has no fears of annihilation from this new monster. The Ram is turned by means of a screw, and the picture represents her as seen from a point near Sand Island.

### COLUMBIA, S. C.

We publish below some sketches illustrative of Columbia, the capital of South Carolina, and of the Richmond Jail, in which are confined Union prisoners captured in the vicinity of Charleston.

One of these sketches,

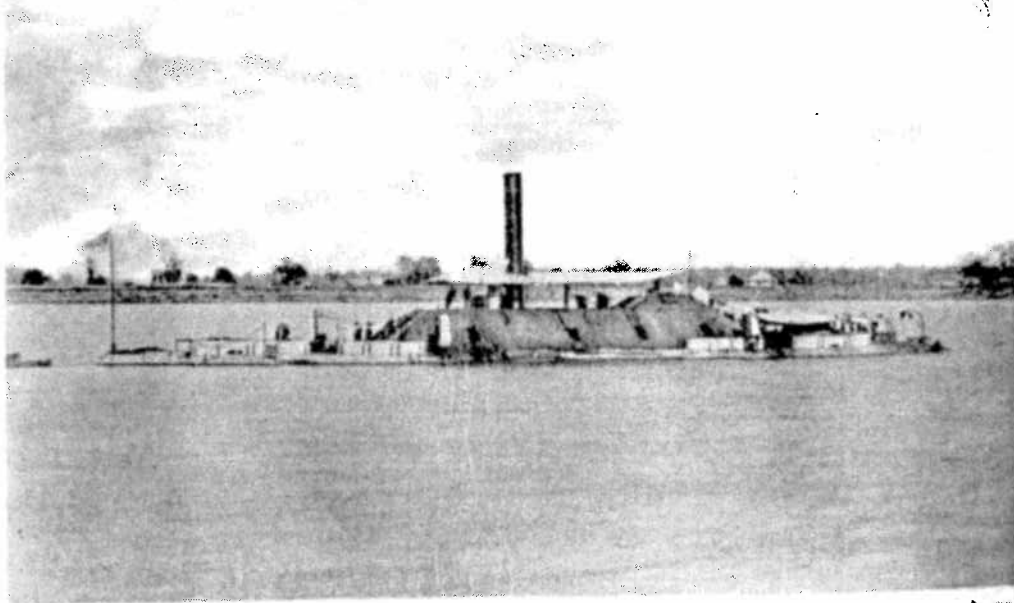


THE NEW REBEL RAM AT MOBILE.—[FROM A SKETCH BY AN OFFICER ON BLOCKADE DUTY.]

perhaps, a lifting of the hat and scratching of the head, or a spasmodic jerking of the foot at every other step, as though seeking vent for their feelings of disappointment and regret. By this corner passed the veteran regiments from the army of Northern Virginia to reinforce Bragg before the battle of Chattanooga.

The sketch entitled Old Maggie represents a portion of the room occupied by the army officers. The long table is made to serve for meals by day and as a bed at night. Underneath it is the box in which is kept the corn-meal served with fresh meat every three or four days. Above are the water-bucket and cup, with the large pan in which Old Maggie, the colored cook, brings the meat and soup which she has prepared. Some shelves are seen against the walls, on which the soldiers pile their cups and bowls and their packages of purchased rations.

The picture at the right of the above represents the other portion of the



REBEL IRONCLAD TENNESSEE

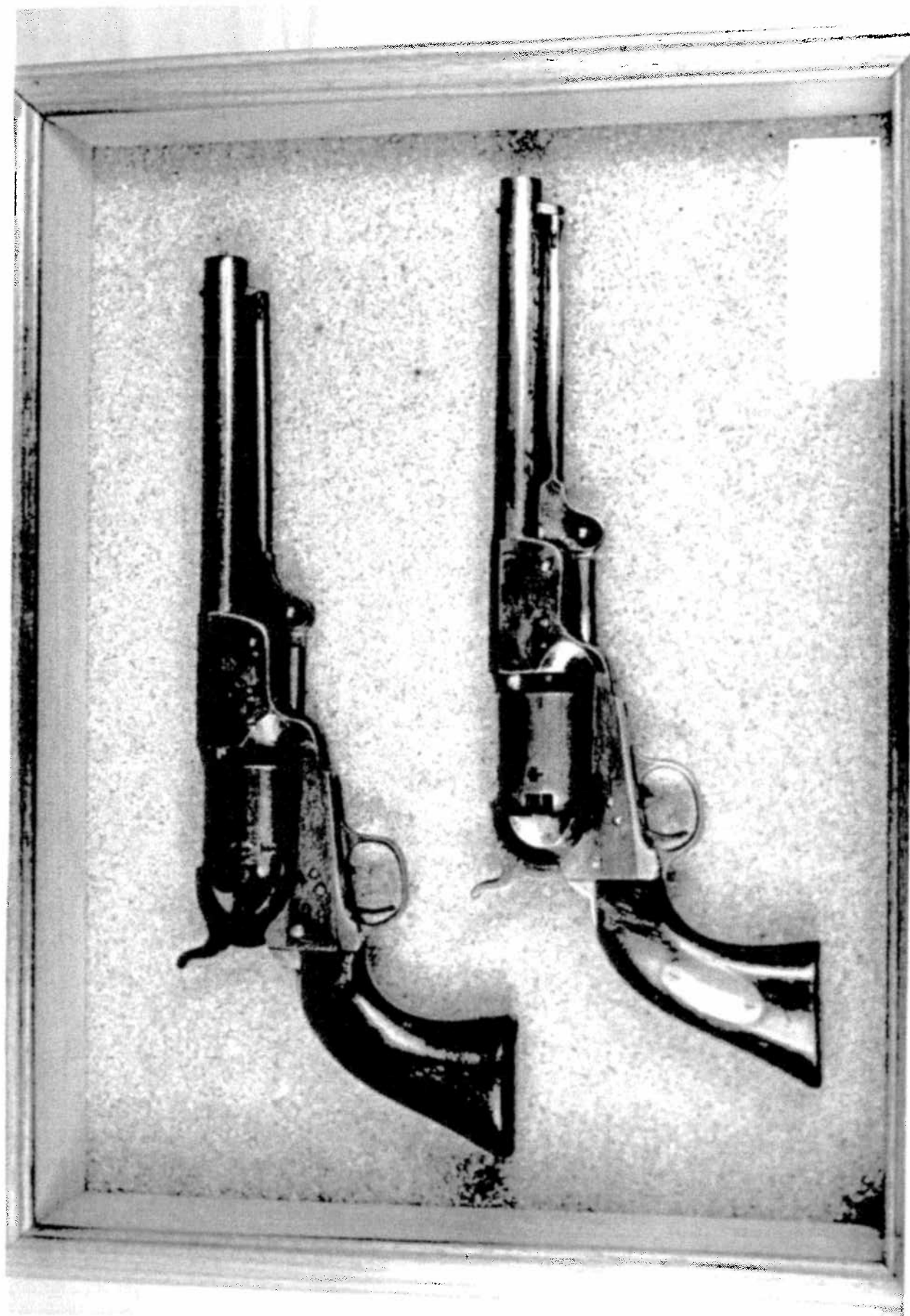
1218

*The most feared enemy for Farragut were not the mines—called “torpedoes”—but the dreaded Rebel ironclad Tennessee, shown here after her surrender in a photo probably made in New Orleans. Built like almost all Confederate ironclads, she had the strengths and weaknesses of her type. Her four 6.4-inch and two 7-inch Brooke rifles were no match for some of Farragut’s heavy cannon. (1.C)*



The Battle of Mobile Bay, Alabama





## A trophy from the Bay Fight

The most sanguinary and important naval battle of the Civil War was the famous engagement in Mobile Bay on the morning of August 5, 1864.

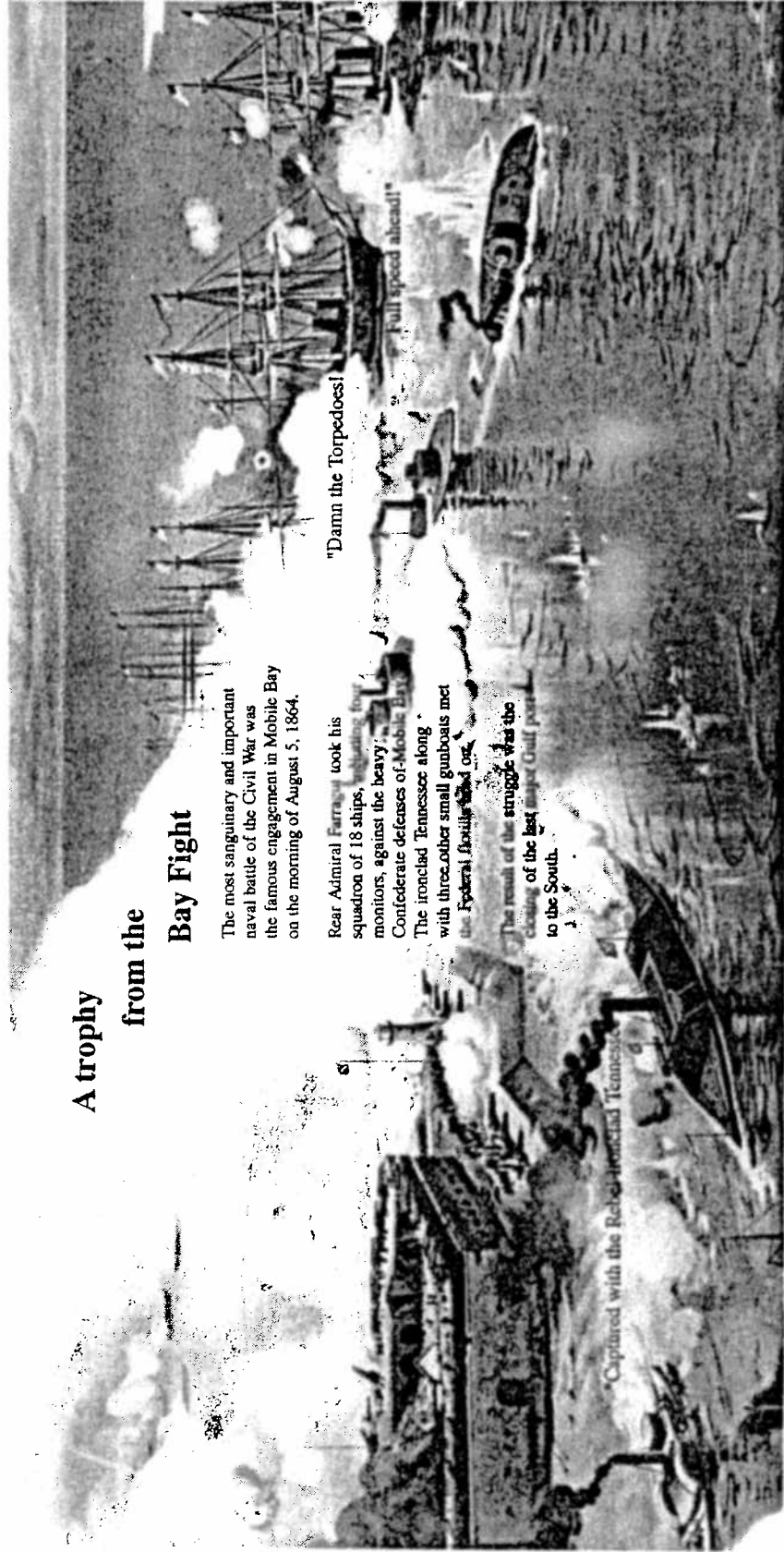
Rear Admiral Farragut took his squadron of 18 ships, monitors, against the heavy Confederate defenses of Mobile Bay. The ironclad *Tennessee* along with three other small gunboats met the Federal fleet and lost.

The result of the struggle was the closing of the last major Gulf port to the South.

Captured with the Rebel ironclad *Tennessee*

"Damn the Torpedoes!"

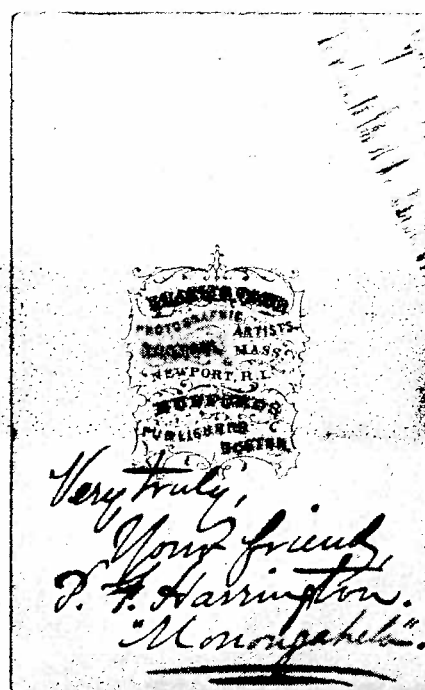
"Pull speed ahead!"



KODAK

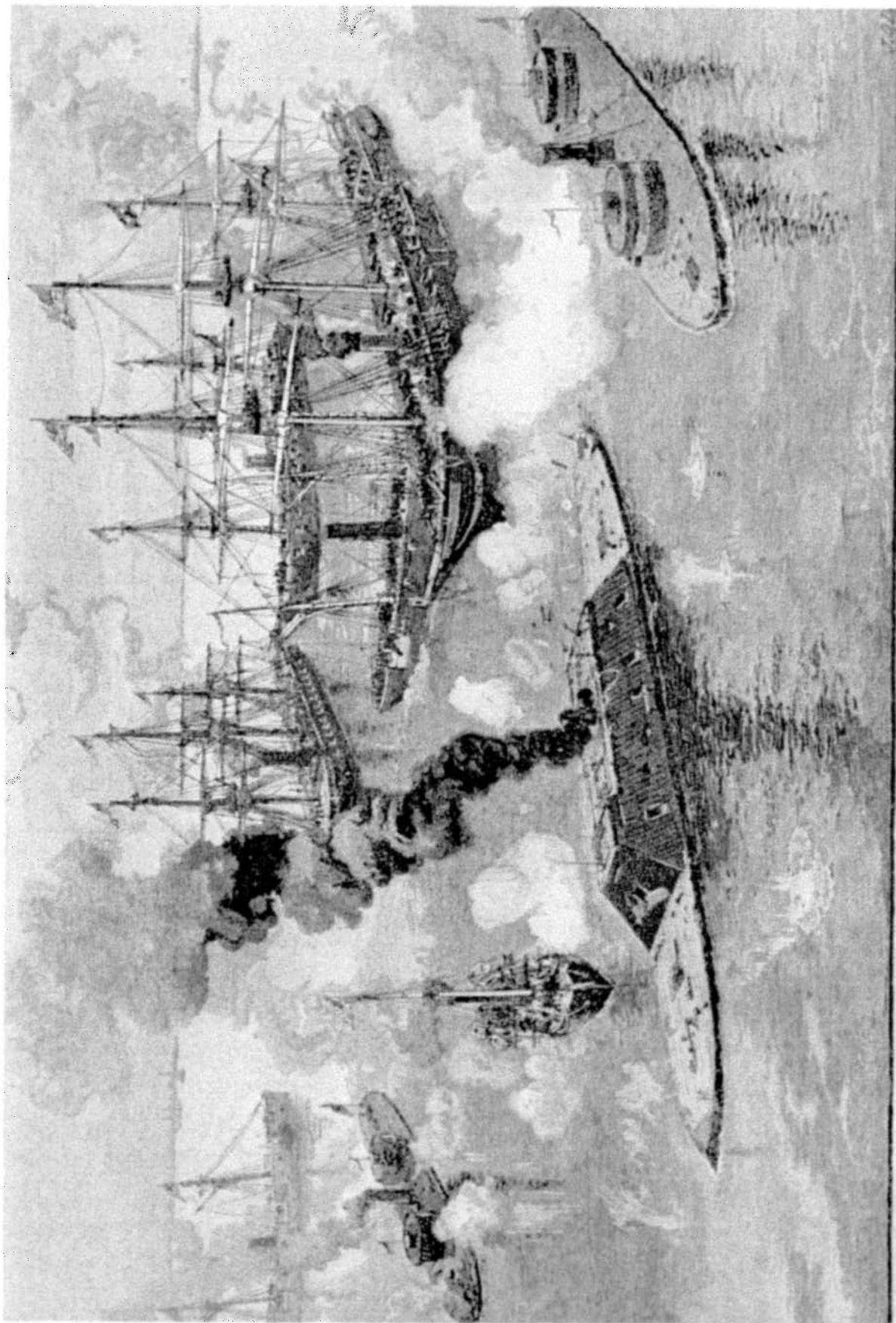


ACTING MIDSHIPMAN P.F. HARRINGTON, U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY



# PURNELL FREDERICK HARRINGTON

Born in Dover, Del. June 6, 1844, he was a descendent of Richard Harrington of England who settled in Kent County, Md. between 1650 & 1670. Appointed midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy Sept. 1861, he was ordered into active service in Sept. 1863. Promoted to acting Ensign Oct. 1, 1863. He served on the Ticonderoga, Niagara and was attached to the steam-sloop Monongahela, West Gulf Blockading Squadron, 1864-5. He saw service in the blockade off the coasts of Florida, La. and Texas. He served in The Battle of Mobile Bay, August 5, 1864 and in all actions against the Confederate defenses of Mobile Bay during the summer of 1864. He retired June 6, 1906 as Rear Admiral and died in Yonkers, N.Y. Oct. 20, 1937.



THE "TENNESSEE," BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY.

THE "TENNESSEE," BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY.

THE "TENNESSEE," BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY.

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THE "TENNESSEE," BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY.

SURRENDER OF THE "TENNESSEE," BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY.

FOOT MORGAN.