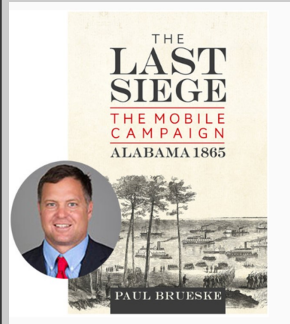




The August 2022 Newsletter
The August Meeting will be Tuesday, August 23, at 3:00 pm in the Meeting Room in the Museum on the Brewton College Campus.
Refreshments Will Be Served.
Masks are Optional.



The Program: Author Paul Brueske Will Discuss the Topic of His Book The Last Siege: the Mobile Campaign, Alabama 1865.

From the Haunted Bookshop website: As a lifelong resident of the Gulf Coast, Brueske became fascinated with studying local Civil War history, in particular the 1865 campaign for Mobile. The Last Siege, is a result of many years of research on the Mobile Campaign. He founded the Mobile Civil War Round Table and regularly gives talks on Civil War topics. He is currently the Head Track & Field Coach at the University of South Alabama. Brueske is a member of the Friends of Historic Blakeley State Park, the Mobile Historical Society, and the Mobile Optimist Club.

bble Hill

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The September Program

The speaker for September will be author Dale Cox who will present a program on his book The Fort at Prospect Point: The intro reads, "The deadliest cannon shot in American history was fired at the 'Negro Fort' at Prospect Bluff on Florida's Apalachicola River on July 27, 1816."

The October Program

Sierra Stiles will present a program on Turtle Point: Science Center



The Montgomery Motor Corps: Serving on the Home Front in WWI

The Montgomery Motor Corps was a World War I-era women's service organization formed to support home front activities. In 1918, more than one hundred women from some of Montgomery's most prominent families volunteered their time and automobiles to provide transportation to the troops stationed at Camp Sheridan. of the women who volunteered (<https://www.facebook.com/events/1456538121491087?ref=newsfeed>).



Battle of Burnt Corn Reenactment Brewton 2022

Volume 49 No. 8 August 2022

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ECHS Long Time Member and Society Trustee Darryl Searcy Passed Away this Month.

Charlie Ware wrote this biography of Darryl as part of a series on Significant People from Escambia County, Alabama.



Dr. Darryl Searcy Brewton (Botanist)

“Darryl Searcy was born in Conecuh County, Alabama but spent his early years in Missouri. He developed a love of plants at an early age and has gone on to make that his life’s work. He returned to Brewton to finish high school at W.S. Neal and upon graduation, was recruited to work for IBM.

“Since he was only 17 at the time, he had to wait a year before he could go to work but remained with IBM for the remainder of his career, taking time off for service in the Marines and completing his education, including two master’s degrees and a PhD in microbiology and systematic botany.

“Searcy’s early work at IBM involved development of the first machine readable tags that could be affixed to products to facilitate tracking and inventory. The system was originally designed for tracking plants on a worldwide basis. Searcy was dispatched to remote locations to help plant businesses identify their stock, create and affix the tags, and track the plants. This system was the forerunner of the modern bar code which is used throughout the world today.

“After 34 years with IBM. Searcy retired to Brewton where he has given his botanical expertise to numerous local projects including the nature trails at Burnt Corn Creek Park, the Turtle Point Environmental Science Center, and a number of local busi-

nesses.

“Shortly after retirement from IBM, Searcy was recruited to head up expeditions to find plant specimens for medicinal purposes for a major pharmaceutical company. He assembled teams that have made many trips to remote areas of the world, including all the great rain-forests, where they have identified, analyzed, and gathered thousands of plants to be used for pharmaceutical research. Searcy has made a point to interview local shaman and healers who are often a valuable source of knowledge of plants with healing properties.

“Searcy is a past president of the Escambia County Historical Society and has served the society in a number of capacities including documenting all the cemeteries, historic markers, and monuments of Escambia County. He has also classified and documented all the wildflowers of the Escambia area and produced a program containing over 6,000 photographs.”

Darryl has presented programs at the society’s monthly meetings and contributed articles to the Society newsletter about his explorations and adventures as well as stories of growing up in southern Alabama .

One of Darryl’s most significant contributions to Escambia County has been the documenting and photographing of county’s graves for the online site “Find A Grave.” He made a point of documenting Afro-American graves, which had not often been recorded.

We also mustn’t forget his contribution to the social hour after the formal program at meetings. Darryl always brought his special Banana Pudding.

We will miss the Banana Pudding, but most of all we will miss Darryl.



Horseshoe Bend National Military Park’s Annual Symposium At Auburn’s Pebble Hill Auburn, AL, Saturday, August 20, 2022, 10 am-12:30 pm

The theme for the symposium will be “The Federal Road,” and will feature presentations by the authors of the 2019 publication [The Old Federal Road in Alabama: An Illustrated Guide](#). Attendance is Free. No registration required.



Fort Mims Reenactment and Living History Event

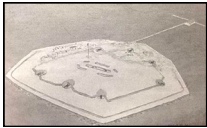
28 August, 2022, 9 AM-3 PM

This year will have a tomahawk throw, archery for all ages, a speaker telling of the life of Zachariah McGirth, and additional talks about Native Indian attire and weapons during the early 1800s.

Fort Mims, 1813 Fort Mims Road, Stockton, AL 36579.

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Last Siege: The Mobile Campaign, Alabama 1865



Fort Powell (1862-1864)

Sand fortification constructed by Confederacy to guard entrance into Bay from the Mississippi Sound. Located at Grant's Pass, northwest of Ft. Morgan and north of Ft. Gaines. Constructed on a half-acre artificial island of oyster shells and sand.

Of forts in lower part of bay, Powell only one constructed by Confederate forces, only one in lower bay defenses built using sand with wooden reinforcements instead of brick. Munitions destroyed by Confederates in evacuation, 1864. Remains visible under water until Hurricane Frederick in 1979 rendered it invisible.

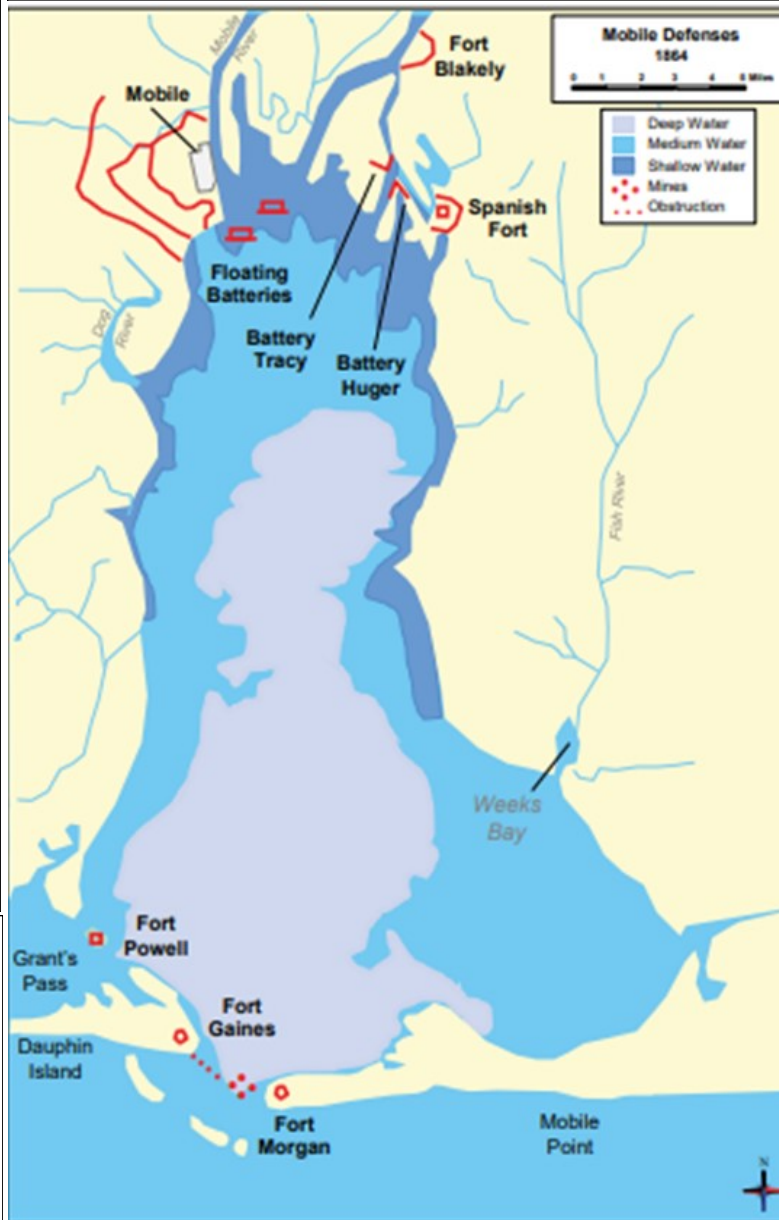
Spanish Ft. & Ft. Blakely; Batteries Huger & Tracy

Earthworks fortifications on upper part of Eastern Shore. All surrendered, 1865.

Confederates at Spanish Ft. evacuated, escaped to Blakely & Mobile. Huger & Tracy active after Spanish Ft. surrender. Spanish Ft. now subdivision; earthworks & trenches dot home owners yards.

Blakely surrendered in 1865 in last battle of the War. Blakely, now a park, has some reconstruction of fortifications.

Mobile Defenses, 1865



Mobile Defenses Created by Army University Press

Light Blue - Deep Water
 Medium Blue - Medium Water
 Deep Blue - Shallow Water
 Four Red Dots in a Circle - Mines
 Dots - Obstruction



Fort Morgan

Located on Mobile Point, at the end of Fort Morgan Peninsula.

Preceded by another fort, Fort Bowyer during the War of 1812, Fort Morgan is a Third System Masonry fort which are those with durable construction materials and uniformity. Fort built between 1819 and 1833.

The fort played a significant role in the Battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864. Surrendered in 1864. Preserved, now a museum.



Fort Gaines, Dolphin Island-established in 1821. Originally designed in 1818 as identical twin to Fort Morgan; work on the future Dauphin Island fort suspended in 1821. In 1857 construction continued; original plans were changed and it was redesigned in the pentagonal-shape it is today. Alabama state militia seized it on January 5, 1861 and completed construction. Remained in Confederate hands until August in 1864 when it fell in the same Union attack that brought down Fort Morgan. Preserved, a museum. However in danger from erosion from the proximity to the Gulf.

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Last Siege: The Mobile Campaign, Alabama 1865



Scott's Great Snake

It is sometimes called the "Anaconda Plan." This map somewhat humorously depicts General Winfield Scott's "Anaconda Plan" which resulted in an overall blockade (beginning in 1862) of southern ports and not only targeted the major points of entry for slaves/slave trade but also crippled cotton exports. Mobile and Mobile Bay circled in red.

The following article is taken from a video of a presentation by Paul Brueske on the Mobile Campaign:

The Blockade

The grand strategy of the Union was the blockade, to basically act like a snake constricting the south. Along the gulf coast, the one defiant blockade-running port that would have blockade runners going off to Cuba and elsewhere to bring in supplies, money and arms was Mobile. New Orleans fell very early in the war, 1862, but Mobile remained open. Ships from the city would regularly run the blockade.



Confederate Admiral Franklin Buchanan (1800-1874).

The Battle of Mobile Bay

The Battle of Mobile Bay was primarily a naval operation that was supported by the army. The Campaign for Mobile, was the other way around. It was primarily an army operation that was supposed to be supported by the



Union Admiral David Farragut, (1801-1870)

navy. The Battle of Mobile Bay is interesting because it pitted a northerner, Buchanan, who fought for the south against a southerner from Tennessee, Farragut, who fought for the north.

So you have Buchanan on the strongest ironclad ever, the Tennessee, and he took on the 18 gunboat fleet of Farragut. (The Union ships had sailed in a double line through the pass between Gaines and Morgan. The USS ironclad Tecumseh had hit a mine but the other ships

came through and sailed beyond the reach of the guns of the two forts.)

I'm not going to go into really a lot of details but this was a significant battle. This was one of three events during the war that kind of guaranteed that Lincoln got reelected. This was the first thing that kind of turned the tide. It was a significant battle. It sealed the port of Mobile. So, no more blockade running and it gave the Union the two forts, Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan, which later became staging areas for the invasion and siege of Mobile. It also gave the U. S. Navy a freedom of movement through a good portion of Mobile Bay.

So a significant battle but it did not capture Mobile and a lot of people are honestly saying, "Well Mobile wasn't that important. It was just important to seal the port." Mobile was still important in late March, April of 1865.

And, of course, this is the naval battle where Admiral Farragut reportedly said, "Damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead," a phrase that has been used in many settings, even popular music in the 20th century.

Mobile Is Important Take It Now

Known as the "Juneteenth General," Union General Gordon Granger, after his infantry units captured Forts Gaines and Morgan, was reassigned to Texas. There in a speech in Galveston on June 19th, he proclaimed that the institution of slavery was dead. Granger's proclamation formed the basis for the annual "Juneteenth" festivities, which celebrate the end of slavery.

Granger was an aggressive guy and he wanted to take Mobile as soon as possible. During the Battle of Mobile Bay he only had about 1500 troops but it turns

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Last Siege: The Mobile Campaign, Alabama 1865

(Continued from page 4)

out he probably could have taken Mobile and saved a lot of bloodshed had he taken it right then and there because there was hardly anybody in Mobile to defend it. I think Mobile had about 800 troops. Granger had 1500. There was nobody there because they were all fighting battles around Atlanta. So Mobile was sort of unprotected but Granger didn't know that.

General Canby, who was the commander of the Union army near Mobile, didn't think trying to take Mobile was a good idea. He declined and Farragut said, 'It would be an elephant and it would take a large army to hold it,' and again this was a naval operation and he had fulfilled his naval obligations. Farragut wanted to take Mobile but it really wasn't in his interests. It was in the army's interest as we'll later see.

And then there's Mobile. It's thirty miles to Mobile from the entrance to the Bay. Mobile is kind of tucked up at the top of the bay and what you'll find is Mobile's location was designed for defense because of the shoal waters and other obstructions. If you ever ride boats out and move around the bay, you've got to be careful because you could likely hit a sandbar.



General Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885)

Now this is why Mobile was still important as late as March 1865. Mobile was the terminus of two major river systems, the Tombigbee and the Alabama River that went up to Selma and north into other places. It was a big river system. Control of the river system was very important to end the war. To put that nail in the coffin of the Confederacy, you needed to capture

Mobile.

Grant had wanted to capture Mobile before Vicksburg. He always wanted to do it. As mentioned, Farragut felt the same way, if you look at some of the early transmissions. A lot of people felt that if the Union had attacked Mobile earlier it could have ended the war sooner but they weren't in a position of power at that time. Grant, when he really wanted to do it, kept getting overruled and it just lingered on, but a lot of

**"If it is the intention to make a dash on Mobile, the sooner it is done after the fall of Morgan the better."
General Gordon Granger to General Canby, 8/20/1864.**



Union General Edward Canby (1817-1873).



Union General Gordon Granger (1821-1876).

people thought the Union should have taken Mobile

Then there were two major railroad lines that terminated at Mobile Bay. There was the Mobile and Ohio Line which went all the way up to Tupelo, Mississippi. Even through it'd been cut, the Confederacy just repaired it. After the Battle of Nashville, the Confederates regrouped around Tupelo, at Verona, Mississippi, and they came down the Mobile and Ohio Railroad to Mobile and the rest of the army of Tennessee went on to North Carolina.

Then across the bay was the great Mobile and Northern Rail Line that ran along the border of Florida. So you have two functioning rail lines.

The Mobile and Great Northern ran up to Montgomery and parts of Georgia. So Mobile's value in 1865 was as a logistics center, a key logistics center to supply the Confederate forces that were still in the field.

Now, don't take it from me that Mobile was important. It wasn't Canby or Farragut or anyone else who wanted to capture it in 1865. It was Grant. He still wanted it as late as 1865. He was sending letter after letter to Canby to get the show on the road. Canby delayed too long. Canby was in charge of the Department of West Mississippi and Grant wanted him to get on the road and take Mobile. Grant was an aggressive guy. He didn't like a lot of wasted time.

The Confederate Defenders of Mobile

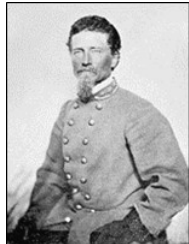
The army was under General Dabney Herndon Maury and the navy was under Ebenezer Ferrand. They were all part of the Department of East Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama under Richard Taylor who was the son of US president Zachary Taylor and also a former brother-in-law of Jefferson Davis, a pretty important guy and highly regarded. Maury was a little guy very gentlemanlike and intelligent but demanding. He was only about five foot three. One of his soldiers said of Maury, "He was every bit of a soldier, there just weren't that many inches of him." He was a competent commander.

Now there was a huge disparity in forces between the Union and the Confederacy as there was throughout the war, but especially at this time. The Union forces had

(Continued on page 6)

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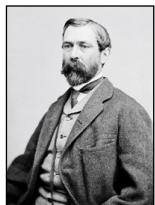


Confederate General Dabney Maury (1822-1900)

As Commander of the District of the Gulf in the war's last two years, Maury became known for his tenacious defense of Mobile.

After the war, he founded the Southern Historical Society and published numerous works on southern history.

The Defenders of Mobile



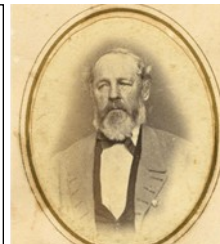
General Richard Taylor (1826-1879)

An American Planter, Politician, Military Historian, & Confederate General.

He was head of the Department of East Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Maury and Ferrand were both part of this department.

Farrand assumed command of the Mobile Navy Squadron following the capture of Admiral Buchanan during the Battle of Mobile Bay.

Farrand's squadron of gunboats supported the Confederate Army at Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely in the spring of 1865.



Commodore Ebenezer Farrand, C.S.N. (1803-1873)

(Continued from page 5)

over 45,400 troops including an enormous naval presence. It was actually 38 armed vessels, including six iron class, so a tremendous force. The Confederates only had less than 10,000 troops anywhere in that region, so vastly outnumbered.

However, what the Confederates had was four years to get ready for this. In west Mobile over by what would be today Murphy High School and midtown Mobile, they had three lines of enormous earth fortifications that they had built over four years. And there had never been any battles fought there so the fortification did its job. It deterred battles in the first place, so the Union never tried to attack Mobile from the west.

Best Fortified Place in the Confederacy

So there were vast fortifications surrounding the western approaches to Mobile. "The best fortified place in the Confederacy," General Joseph Johnson said. He came to Mobile after Vicksburg fell and toured the defenses. He said, "It is unbelievable," and time and time again when they actually entered



Samuel Henry Lockett (1837-1891)

the city, the Union troops just marveled at how strong the works were on the western side of the city.

At that time there was a Prussian commander named Victor von Sheliha. He was the chief engineer of the Department of East Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He caught a lot of flak because his defenses failed during a previous battle. He didn't feel like he had the support he needed to carry out his defensive plan so he was pretty upset at that time and this situation was affecting his work.

The Confederacy sent for Samuel H. Lockett who had designed the Vicksburg defenses. He was one of the chief engineers under Richard Taylor. Lockett was from Alabama but before

the war he had worked at what would become Louisiana State University, under General Sherman, who was the headmaster. Sherman thought very highly of Lockett and the school named the engineering building after him, highly regarded guy.

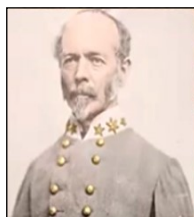
Above is a painting Lockett did of Sherman

(Continued on page 7)



Sherman

Union generals Grant and Sherman both praised his actions in the war, and became friends with Johnson afterward. He was appointed as commissioner of railroads under Grover Cleveland. He died of pneumonia 10 days after attending Sherman's funeral in the pouring rain in St. Louis, Missouri.



General Joseph Johnson (1807-1891)

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(Continued from page 6)

before the war. It is a life size painting which hung in one of the buildings at LSU, but in the 80's, some pranksters broke into the building and stole the painting. It was never found.

After the war, Sherman recommended Lockett as an engineer because of what he did at Vicksburg where the vast defenses worked for the Confederacy. After the war, Lockett actually went to work for the Egyptians as the military engineer for Egypt. He also helped build the Statue of Liberty, designing the base.

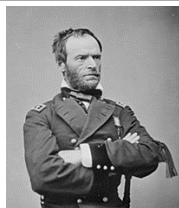
Sherman's Idea Was the Plan

General Canby was actually advised by Sherman about taking Mobile. Sherman had been stationed at Mobile before the war and before he was president of the school which became LSU. He lived in Mobile, knew a lot about Mobile and while he was besieging Atlanta, a major campaign, he was sending letters to both Henry Halleck, a senior Union Army commander in the Western Theater, as well as Canby.

He was telling Canby what route he should take, "To take Mobile, I would pass a force up the Tensas and across to old Fort Stoddard and operate in the direction of Citronelle. The Mobile and Ohio road (*railroad*) broken, the river occupied, Mobile would be untenable to the rebels" (*Sherman to Canby, August 17, 1864*).

Sherman basically advised Canby to go up the eastern shore, Baldwin County, across the bay from Mobile. That route was seen as the Achilles heel of Mobile's defense. The Confederacy hadn't put a lot of work there, on the eastern shore. Basically the Union-Forces' plan was to gain access to the Blakely River, to gain access and flank the city of Mobile. But as you'll see, when they acted on this plan they had a rough go of it.

Now, Richard Taylor, the commander of the Confederate forces in the Campaign for Mobile, his only hope



William Tecumseh Sherman (1829-1891). Photo by Mathew Brady of Sherman at Washington, D.C., in May 1865. The black ribbon of mourning on his left arm is for President Abraham Lincoln.



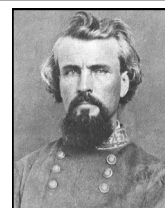
Henry Wager Halleck (1815-1872) was a senior Union Army Officer, Scholar, and Lawyer.

Halleck served as the General-in-Chief of the US armies from 1862-1864. He commanded operations in the Western Theater from 1861 until 1862, during which time, while the Union armies in the east were defeated and held back, the troops under Halleck's command won many important victories.

However, Halleck was not present at the battles, and his subordinates earned most of the recognition. Although Lincoln once described him as "little more than a first rate clerk," he served well as Chief of Staff, after Grant's appointment as General in Chief, keeping the Union Army well supplied.

for reinforcement was Nathan Bedford Forrest. Forrest was invincible up until this time. He never lost a battle he was in charge of. Now there were some others that didn't work out that some others were in charge of.

This guy was feared and rumors were constantly circulating that he was nearby and actually, Maury, in charge of defending Mobile, had brought him down earlier for a party just so that word would get out that he was in town to deter an attack.



Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest (1821-1877)

He was infamous and a scary guy in a very confident way, exceptional warrior. Basically he said, "If you can beat the forces in your front, we can relieve Mobile." So Forrest's plan was to send more forces down but little did Taylor realize the largest cavalry raid in the history of America was being launched from Tennessee.

So Alabama was being attacked from both ends, Canby from the south, Wilson's raid from the north.

The Union Army Moves Up the Eastern Shore

But Sherman's idea was the plan. So on St. Patrick's Day, March 1, 1865, the XIII Army Corps marched up from Fort Morgan along the peninsula and they had a hell of a deal. It was raining; the roads were bad.

Canby had 13,000 troops, heavy artillery, heavy wagons which were getting stuck in the mud. The men had to unload the wagons and pull their donkeys out of the mud. And they had to corduroy the roads, where they would chop pine trees down and lay them perpendicular

for the wagons to roll on. So really a rough go of it.

A lot of times the horses or the donkeys would get

(Continued on page 8)

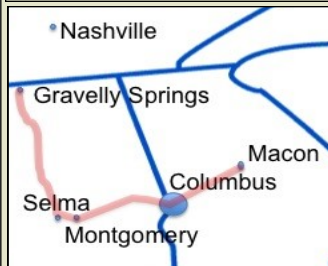
The ECHS *Journal* Section

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James H. Wilson
(1837-1925)
Originally a topographical

engineer, Wilson joined the cavalry in 1864, and in March 1865 was sent with more than 13,000 horsemen, known as Wilson's Raiders, through Georgia and Alabama to disrupt production centers. His cavalrymen captured Confederate president Jefferson Davis in May 1865. *Photo and Text* <<http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-2453>>.

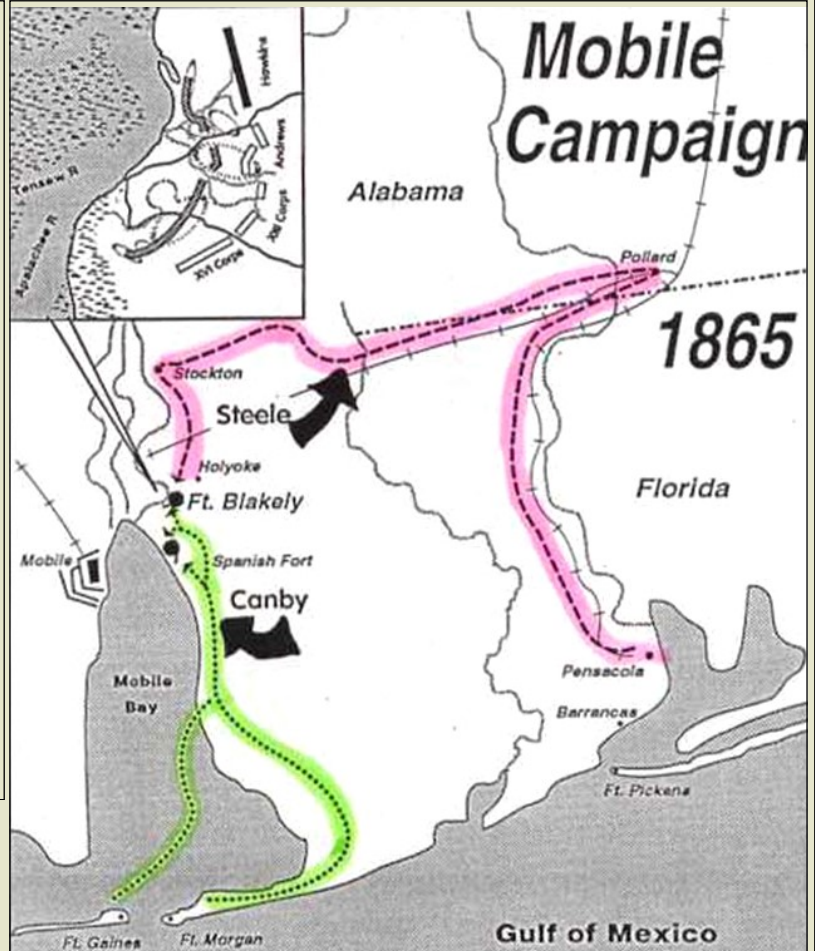


Wilson's Route

The Union Forces Move to Spanish Fort, March 17-April 9, 1865
Union Army XIII Corps marched up from Fort Morgan, encountered rain and mud, had a "Hard Go."

The XVI Army Corps under A. J. Smith came by boat across from Fort Gaines to Weeks' Bay.

General Steele marched up from Ft. Barrancas at Pensacola to cut off the railroad line at Pollard and prevent any Confederate reinforcements coming to Mobile from the east.



The Union Armies Converges on Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely. The Inset at the Top is Probably a diagram of Spanish Fort, Confederate Line on the Left, Union on the Right.

(Continued from page 7)

their ankles stuck in between the logs and break a leg and the men would have to shoot them. So the road was littered with these dead horses and donkeys. This march up the peninsula took the corps a while. They did not meet much resistance from the Confederates yet but the corps had a lot of stuff they had to go through.

Meanwhile, A. J. Smith and his corps, the XVI, known as the gorillas and composed of a bunch of Midwest farm guys, rough and famous for foraging and scavenging and stealing and everything else, had a nice leisurely ride by boat into



Andrew Jackson Smith
(1815 - 1897).

He commanded the XVI Corps in the final campaign against Mobile in 1865. Despite his many successes on military fields, and the trust he had earned from Generals like Grant and Sherman, A. J. Smith never received the same fame or glory as did many of his contemporaries. Part of this may have been due to how often he and his forces were moved around, which earned them nicknames like "the lost tribes of Israel" and "Smith's Guerrillas."

what's known as Bon Secour, Week's Bay and on up to a viewpoint called Marlow's Ferry. Today it's the Marlow Community. Remnants of the corps encampment are still there today.

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The Last Siege: The Mobile Campaign, Alabama 1865



This illustration of the Fort shows the movement by the Geddes Unit (black arrow), to break the north flank of the Confederate defenses. The Confederate lines are at the bottom of the Fort, near the River, the Union lines above.

The Treadway or bridge which the Confederates used to escape is show crossing the Blakely River to Fort Huger, an earthen fortification marked on a point of land.

(Continued from page 8)

The Feint on the Western Shore

At this time also, there was a feint. A brigade went up the western shore of Mobile Bay, went up the Mobile County side from Dolphin Island and it's just a brigade (3,000 to 5,000 soldiers), but they were instructed to make a lot of noise, the band to play constantly. This was a terrible band with inexperienced musicians, poorly trained, who made a lot of musical errors on this march, but they were instructed to play over and over again so it sounds like a large force is headed to the south of Mobile. The band plays over and again making the same errors and the men begin to laugh at them. Some think that the laughter and the band probably gave away that this operation was just a feint.

But what was interesting about this operation was Albert Cashier from the 95th Illinois. He went along on the trek. Albert had fought in most of the important battles of the western theatre of the war. Only thing, Albert was not a male. Albert was a female. Her name was Jenny Hodge. So she fought the war and no one ever found out Albert Cashier was a woman until the very end. It was hard for a single woman to find work at that time and she just basically carried on as a man throughout her life.



Albert Cashier
(1843 – 1915).

Although the inherently clandestine nature of the activity makes an accurate count impossible, conservative estimates of female soldiers in the Civil War puts the number somewhere between 400 and 750.

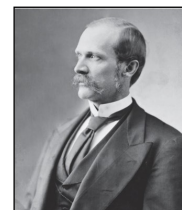
The Siege of Spanish Fort

The XIII and XVI Corps, combined now and under the overall command of General Canby, rendezvoused on the eastern shore near Spanish Fort and they went up in three columns through Fairhope and Daphne, Alabama. The XVI Corps was going to do a flanking movement on what is I-10 today and that's where a battle erupted. The Confederates thought they could whip these boys quickly but they were ill informed on the actual number of troops moving up the peninsula, so they had to fall back into the defenses of the two forts, Spanish and Blakely, that were designed to keep the Union out of the river system.

Spanish Fort is today a neighborhood, not a fort. It was besieged starting on March 27. Each and every day the Union Army would bring in more and more heavy artillery from Fort Morgan and Dolphin Island (*Ft. Gaines*). They would ship it up to the battle area and so

the operation's like a big python just squeezing around the floor, getting closer and closer, and getting more arms.

Spanish Fort was commanded by Randall Lee Gibson. Gibson was a 33 year old commander, Brigadier General, who had fought in most of the major battles of the western theatre. He was



Randall Lee Gibson
(1832–1892).

(Continued on page 10)

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**Antique
Civil War
Period
Demijohn
Gettysburg
PA 1860.**

“Our torpedoes were very rude. Some were demijohns charged with gunpowder. The best were beer-kegs loaded with gunpowder and exploded by sensitive primers. These were anchored in every channel open to an enemy.” General Dabney H. Maury

(Demijohns are large, glass, wine bottles.)

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highly educated, valedictorian at Yale, very smart guy, and he led the defenses, and by all accounts, both Union and Confederate, he did a really good job. Among his accomplishments, after the war, he served as a representative and senator from Louisiana and helped found Tulane. A building at Tulane is named for Gibson.

Now you’ve got to remember that at this point in the war, the Confederates in the western theater had suffered severe setbacks, at Nashville, Franklin, Atlanta, There were rumors that Mobile would be evacuated as soon as the troops entered the city or came anywhere near and that was the rumor going around in the camps. So the Union guys probably thought, “You know, these Confederates, they couldn’t possibly have any more fight left in them.” That sentiment was very far from the truth. In fact, the first week of the siege, I would argue, that the Confederates actually had the upper hand. They really took it to the Union forces.

Lucius Hubbard, shown here, went on to become governor of Minnesota. He was a Colonel at this point who was made a Brigadier after this campaign. He wrote a letter to his aunt noting that the Union forces were astonished at the resistance they met during this siege. It was unbelievable and this letter is indicative of a lot of letters and diary accounts that I’ve read. The Union Army couldn’t believe the resistance they were meeting at Spanish Fort.



**Lucius
Frederick
Hubbard
(1836-1913)**

Torpedoes (Mines) Confederacy’s Best Weapons

Part of the reason why Mobile’s defense was so good are these things, both sides used them, gumtree mortars. I had a cousin that worked for the Minnesota Historical Society and he actually

A gum-tree mortar is a barrel made from the trunk of a gum tree and bound with iron bands. It is conventionally bored with a powder chamber and vent.



showed me this gumtree mortar and it’s made from a gumtree in Baldwin County.

These would be brought up to the advanced rifle pits, they are very light, and they would be lobbed into Spanish Fort as shells. The Confederates also used these and lobbed them back at the Union forces.

Now the other thing unique about the Battle of Mobile is that nowhere else in the Civil War were more vessels sunk by torpedoes but not torpedoes as we would know them today. These were basically mines. Many of the torpedoes were made out of beer kegs, People in Mobile like to drink beer so what more effective weapon than a mine made out of a beer keg. These were a crude weapon but the best were kegs loaded with gun powder and sensitive primers.

So the Confederates used these. They weren’t that effective during the Battle of Mobile Bay because the salt water corroded a lot of them although one went off and sunk the Union Ship Tecumseh, but largely ineffective.

However, either the Confederates got better or the brackish fresh water wasn’t as corrosive and they were highly effective during the campaign for Mobile. They were so effective that the Union Army constantly complained, “We’re not getting any support at all.” The idea was the Union land forces would surround the Confederate forces from the east or west and then the Union navy would get behind them and the Confederates would be in trouble, but this didn’t happen.

On March 28, the Milwaukee, a state of the art gunboat hit a mine a mile and a quarter south of Spanish Fort. On the next day, a single turret ironclad hit a mine. Two ironclads down. Nothing happened on the third day. Than on the fourth day, the Osage hit a mine. Admiral

Thatcher, who had come down from the east coast to take over for Farragut, had lost three vessels in four days. It got worse. I think he ended up losing about eight ves-

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sels. It totally neutralized the U.S. Navy.

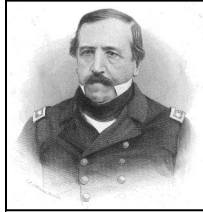
The Navy played very little role until maybe the last day of the siege of Spanish Fort. That's something that historians can appreciate, the effectiveness of these defenses of Mobile and the main thing was the torpedo.

Now this is the Milwaukee (which had been torpedoed and sunk). It was designed by James Eads, the famous engineer. Eads sent a barge into Mobile, had this vessel raised and transported to New Orleans and up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. Whenever you go over the Eads Bridge at St. Louis you are going over the Milwaukee because the vessel was melted down and the material was used in the construction of the bridge. Whenever you drive over the Eads bridge then, you are driving over something with a connection to Mobile.

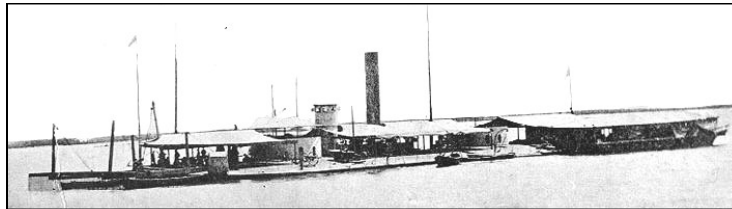
The Battle of Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely

James Geddes, shown at the right was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. He fought with the British military in India and then I think in the Crimea War. Then he migrated to Canada, found his way into the United States and joined the US army.

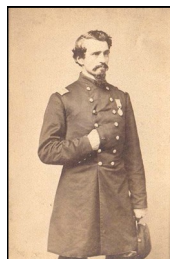
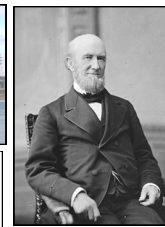
He was on the northern flank of Spanish Fort. It was a swamp and the Confederates thought it was impassable so the Confederates didn't fortify that area as much as they should have, in hindsight, but Geddes observed and thought, "You know, I think we can assault this." And finally he got the okay on April 8 because the Union Army was going to make a move.



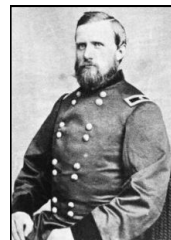
Rear Admiral Henry Knox Thatcher, Union Navy (1806-1880).



The Milwaukee, Eads Bridge at St. Louis and James Eads (1820-1887)



James Lorraine Geddes (1827 – 1887) was a soldier in India, a Brigade Commander in the Western Theater of the American Civil War, college administrator and professor, and military songwriter.



John P. Hawkins (1830-1914) served as a commissary officer and as a commander of Afro-American troops. His older sister Louisa was married to General Canby.

Canby was growing impatient with Spanish Fort, "We're going to move up and take it." So on April 8, the 8th Iowa attacks successfully and gained a lodgment in Spanish Fort, and at that point, the Confederates realize they cannot hold Spanish Fort. Gibson decides to evacuate.

If you ask any military person, evacuating a position in the face of the enemy is one of the hardest things you can do. Well, the Confederates evacuated Spanish Fort right under the noses of the Union soldiers, within speaking distance, in one of the most amazing escapes, although in the big picture, to no avail because the war ended shortly thereafter.

There were 2600 Confederate troops there. A little over 2000 escaped. The guys in the advanced rifle pits, who were attacked in the Union assault, didn't

make it out and were probably captured. However, the Confederates did have a predetermined escape route, a little white footbridge about eighteen inches wide that they had built over the river.

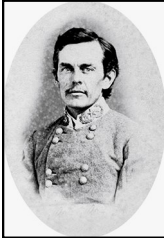
Two artillery positions are still there. I actually found the pilings to the footbridge. I did a little video which I have to be careful about sharing. We have a lot of relic hunters in Mobile because there's a lot of stuff to be found nearby.

While Canby's forces are at Spanish Fort, Frederick Steele leads a column of odds and ends up from Fort Barrancas (Pensacola), including a division of Afro-American troops, the second or third largest contingent deployed during the war, a very large force. John Hawkins, commander of the Afro-American troops, was Canby's brother-in law. He had with him a division, roughly 5,500 troops. They marched up from

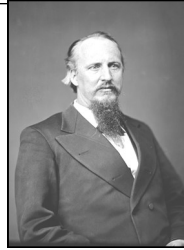
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General Bryan Morel Thomas (1836 1905) was a soldier, farmer, marshal, and educator. At Blakely his command, mostly "boy reserves," held the right side of the Confederate defense. On April 9, after the Union Army's successful assault, he was captured, held prisoner at Fort Gaines and released in June.



Confederate Defenders of Spanish Fort

At left, Photograph of Francis Marion Cockrell (1834-1815) made in Mobile in 1864. At Right, Cockrell as a U. S. Senator. He was a Confederate military commander and American politician from the state of Missouri. He served as US senator from Missouri for five terms.

In 1865, Cockrell commanded a division in defense of Fort Blakely, Alabama. On April 9, 1865, shortly before the war ended, Cockrell was captured there but was paroled on May 4.

Cockrell's First Missouri Brigade was considered one of the finest on either the Confederate or Union side, and Cockrell himself is widely recognized as one of the best combat brigadiers of the entire war.

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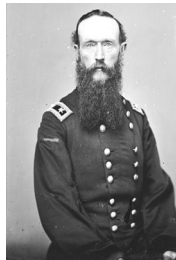
Pensacola along the Florida, Alabama state line.

The Siege of Fort Blakely

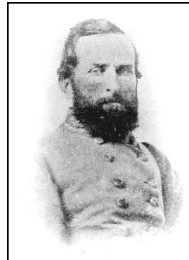
On his march, Steele's force met General Clanton, the Confederate who basically started the Battle of Shiloh. He was a pretty tough guy and didn't always think clearly. Steele's forces fought a running battle with this Confederate General as they marched up from Barrancas. Finally, at Bluff Springs, Clanton is wounded and captured.

Steele's force continues they go up to Pollard and cuts the railroad lines.

Steele's force then marches up to Weatherford's plantation in north Baldwin County and down and descends on Blakely. Steele's force were half or more than half the forces besieging Blakely.



General Frederick Steele (1819-1868). Steele's force of African American soldiers, officially designated the "Column from Pensacola," were part of Major General Edward Canby's Army of West Mississippi between February 18, 1865, and May 18, 1865. His troops fought at the battles of Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely.



James Holt Clanton (1827 - 1871) was an American soldier, lawyer, legislator and a Confederate Army Brigadier General during the Civil War. Following the war he returned to practicing law and later was murdered in a private feud in Tennessee.

(burg).

So this guy was well respected. He had his veterans at Blakely but they were battered. Their numbers were

So there were two forts on the Blakely River defending Mobile, Spanish Fort and Blakely. Blakely fell under attack on April 1. The attack lasted about a week. So at the siege of Fort Blakely, the fort located about four miles north of Spanish Fort, you have Brian Thomas who had a boy brigade basically. The Confederates robbed the cradle basically to outfit this command of mostly teenager boys from Alabama. Then you also have Francis Cockrell, who commanded the Missouri Brigade, very famous and very seasoned brigade in the western theatre.

Grant commented at one of the battles, outside of, I think it was Champion Hill, that Cockrell led the most amazing counter charge he'd ever seen in the war.

(Champion Hill was the decisive encounter in the Battle of Vicks-

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way down by this point in the war. They had sustained heavy, heavy losses, everybody from the drummer boy to the commanding general, most of them many times. In fact, part of the reason this brigade was sent to Mobile is because the brigade knew they would be operating behind defensive works and that was the best place for them.

Cockrell was another southerner that went on to acclaim. He was a favorite of Theodore Roosevelt. Cockrell served in the U.S. Congress for thirty years. Eventually he left Congress. He was a Democrat and Roosevelt was a Republican but nevertheless, Roosevelt had a lot of respect for Cockrell and he appointed Cockrell to various committees, including a survey, when he was 77/78 years old of boundary lines between the New Mexico territory and Texas. So, Cockrell basically supervised. That is another example where a southerner is in charge of a project that literally shapes the U. S.

Siege of Blakely and Batteries Huger and Tracy

The siege of Blakely was essentially a massive attack. The Union was very upset about the Confederate soldiers escaping from Spanish Fort. The Union Army had been conducting a siege of the fort for two weeks and the Confederates escaped. The Union leaders had wanted Spanish Fort and they wanted to end the war. So they didn't want the same thing to happen at Blakely. So, on April 9, about three hours after Lee surrendered at Appomattox, the Union forces assaulted Fort Blakely and the Fort fell.

That's a picture of General Steele (above). He's an animal lover, as you can tell from this picture, but at some point during the siege, his horse got away from the handler and ran into the Confederate works. The general never saw his horse again. He was very upset about losing the horse.



General Steele with His Horse .



Isaac Williams Patton (1828 – 1890) was an American soldier and politician who served as the 28th Mayor of New Orleans from 1878 until 1880. After the surrender of Vicksburg he retreated to serve at Mobile Bay. He then fought at The Battle of Spanish Fort before he and his men finally surrendered in early May 1865, a month after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House. Isaac Patton is a great-granduncle of WWII General George S. Patton.

Now at Blakely, which is a state park, you can see the battle field, which is well preserved. Fourteen Medals of Honor were awarded for action during this battle. So Blakely fell, Spanish Fort fell, and the next day Mobile sounds the evacuation alarm. The Confederates know they can't hold Mobile because the Union army now has access to the river system and can besiege the city. So the city is in trouble and the only things in the Union Army's way are two batteries, Huger and Tracy, which are commanded by Isaac W. Patton.

He was a veteran of Vicksburg and a pretty tough guy from a military family. For two days these two batteries had been holding back. They didn't have a lot of ammunition. Now the two batteries for two days unleashed their fury on occupied Spanish Fort. They held nothing back and used up their ammunition. Comments on the ferociousness of the attack by the batteries registered surprise since only one wounded soldier was evacuated on April 11.

After the war, Patton became the Major of New Orleans. He was related to George Patton of World War II fame. Isaac is his great uncle. George Patton had once commented, "Fixed fortifications are monuments to the stupidity of man." However, Isaac Patton did pretty well with Huger and Tracy.

Mobile Surrenders

Mobile falls and the Confederates, who have evacuated the city, go back to Meridian and the Confederate Navy goes up to Demopolis. Basically a couple of weeks later there is the final surrender. Mobile fell on April 12. When they reached the city, the Union Army had marched up Bay Shell Road which was made out of white sea

shells. The Major of Mobile had come down to surrender. The Confederate forces had already evacuated from the city.

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**Maj. Gen.
E.R.S. Canby,
USA**

Truce at McGee's Farm



General Canby, on the other hand, reached the meeting place accompanied by his staff in dress uniforms, a full brigade of Union troops and a military band.

The Confederate general arrived at Magee Farm on a handcar propelled by two African Americans. A single officer, Colonel William Levy, accompanied them.



**Lt. Gen.
Richard
Taylor, CSA**

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The Mayor didn't have a white flag. He put a white bed sheet on the back of a horse and buggy and surrendered to representatives of the U.S. Navy and Army.

General Maury, the Confederate General who was in charge of defending the city said, "The people of Mobile had evinced during the whole war a deep devotion to the cause of their country." The women of Mobile would make care packages. They would send them over to Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely and, you know, even when the Forts were captured, the Union troops started eating the food there which was, by most accounts, far superior to what they had been issued by the U.S. Army.

General Maury had a cousin who also served in Mobile, Harry Maury. Harry Maury is the most interesting individual to serve in the war. In an article in *TocWoc, a Civil War Blog*, Fred Ray says of him, "Henry Maury was one of those outsized, swash-buckling, insanely brave 19th Century figures who



**Harry Maury (1827-1869)
From an article in Alabama Heritage, No. 98, Fall 2010: "The enigmatic Colonel Maury of the Fifteenth Confederate Cavalry.**

"Col. Harry Maury--both rogue and hero--marked his place in history at the head of a mounted regiment, rooting out the disloyal and dangerous along the Gulf Coast."

The Fifteenth Confederate Cavalry was organized in September 1863 from the 3rd Florida Cavalry Battalion and several independent Alabama companies and saw action in the Mobile Campaign near the end of the war.

actually lived the life that Errol Flynn only acted. 'Harry Maury,' wrote a Mobile newspaper, 'was in every essential a character. Nature stamped him a genius, and as Nature seldom bestows her gifts pure and unalloyed, she gave him this one with all the eccentricities and

drawbacks that belong to it."

So the people of Mobile really supported the effort of the war even though there were a few Unionists in Mobile. General Thomas Kirby Smith, the commanding officer of occupied Mobile, said this about the people after the siege, "You hear that there is Union incentive, that perhaps not 10 percent of his people are secessionists but my word for it is that not a man, woman or child that has lived in Mobile but who prays death and destruction to the damned Yankees."

Surrender at McGee Farm and Citronelle

So on April 29 General Canby met with Richard Taylor just north of Mobile at McGee farm. The two met at a ceasefire agreement. Canby offered the same

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terms that Sherman offered General Johnston, very generous terms giving Taylor the key issue, that the Confederates would regain their rights as American citizens.

However the agreements were disallowed. Canby though, in a meeting the next day at Citronelle was allowed to give the same terms that Lee had received from General Grant, which were very generous. The generals met the next day and this was an usual surrender.

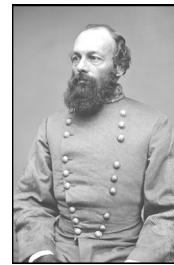
The meeting at McGee Farm was held outdoors, It was the last surrender east of the Mississippi, and it could be argued it was the last surrender of the war of an intact force.

The Trans Mississippi did technically surrender a little bit later but they had already largely disbursed. Kirby Smith didn't even show up for a meeting in New Orleans where Richard Taylor signed what could be considered a "Clear the Records Book." I would argue that the last actual surrender of an intact force took place in Citronelle, Alabama on May 4, 1865. At McGee's farm the Oak tree where the parlay between Taylor and Smith took place is now called the Surrender Oak.

On May 25, about 21 days after the surrender, an explosion took place in Mobile and what happened is the Union forces gathered all the munitions and black powder and they decided to load it into a warehouse on the Mobile River, which is not far from businesses, industry, restaurants and hotels. An explosion occurred. No one knows how it happened. It obliterated eight to nine square blocks of downtown Mobile, killed over 300 people, destroyed everything in the area. People in Springhill, seven miles away, were knocked off their feet. On Dolphin Island, the Union soldiers occupying the island thought Mobile was under attack by a military force.



Thomas Kilby Smith (1820 – 1887)
He was a lawyer, soldier, and diplomat from the state of Ohio. After the fall of Mobile, he assumed the command of the Department of Southern Alabama and Florida.



General Edmund Kirby Smith (1824 – 1893), a senior officer of the Confederate Army who commanded the Trans-Mississippi Department (comprising Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, western Louisiana, Arizona Territory and the Indian Territory) from 1863 to 1865.

On June 2, 1865, Smith surrendered his army at Galveston, Texas, the last general with a major field force. He quickly escaped to Mexico and then to Cuba to avoid arrest for treason. His wife negotiated his return.

Did the Mobile Campaign Matter?

Yes. Mobile was a logistical center. Mobile was an important part of Grant's grand strategy to end the war. Mobile was the second largest city, second only to Richmond, remaining under Confederate controls at this point. A valuable logistical center, it was the last siege of the war, Blakely was the last major battle and the largest battle fought in the state of Alabama, and it guaranteed the end of the war, led to the last actual surrender of the war.

It was also unique for a military historian because it illustrated the advancement of warfare from the beginning of the war to the end. At Mobile, the battle was much more like

a World War I battle than a civil war battle. You had hand grenades, you had land mines, you had sea mines, you had ironclad vessels, you had combined naval and army operations that were coordinated, you had siege warfare, you had trench warfare. So if you examine Mobile that is kind of the first time all those things were put together.

Although historically it's been understudied, because it happened so late it didn't have a lot of impact on the final outcome of the war, it has a lot of significance to a military historian who studies these things like the torpedoes and how effective they were.

It deserves recognition. The guys who fought here didn't have the benefit of hindsight. Both sides fought like the war depended on them and there were acts of bravery as the fourteen medals of honor that were awarded at Blakely and the one at Spanish Fort that would rival any battle of the war. So it happened and it deserves recognition.

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