

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Fort Morgan

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Morgan

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Mobile Point

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

first

STATE

Alabama

CODE

01

COUNTY

Baldwin

CODE

003

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

**OWNERSHIP**

**STATUS**

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

\_\_AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_COMMERCIAL

PARK

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_BOTH

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_OBJECT

\_\_IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_YES UNRESTRICTED

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_NO

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

Fort Morgan Historical Commission (fortifications)  
Department of Conservation (park)

NAME

State of Alabama;

General Services Administration (USS Tecumseh)

STREET & NUMBER

Box 236 (Historical Commission)

CITY, TOWN

Mobile Point

STATE

Alabama

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Baldwin County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Bay Minette

STATE

Alabama

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Soon after the War of 1812 the War Department determined to build strong and permanent fortifications along the Gulf of Mexico Frontier and sister fortifications on Mobile Point and Dauphine Island were planned to command the entrance to Mobile Bay, Alabama. Fort Morgan, on Mobile Point, was designed by Simone Bernard, a French engineer and former aide-de-camp to Napoleon who, after joining the U.S. Army in 1816, was active in developing a national defense system on the eastern seaboard and the Gulf of Mexico. His designs conformed to the theories of de Vauban, who revolutionized fort construction in eighteenth century France.

The star-shaped Fort Morgan is remarkable as an example of a very large masonry fort of the early nineteenth century and also for the particularly fine craftsmanship of its brickwork, still visible, especially in the interior chambers. The plans for the fort called for it to mount 118 cannon, to hold 100 men in peace time and 900 men during war, and to cost \$632,000. Construction began in 1819 and was finished in 1834, although the fort was not completely fitted for use until November 1836. An estimated seven to eight million bricks were used in its construction. Slave-owners were paid \$150 per year for the use of their slaves to work at the fort site, at the brick yards and on the barges, and a total of about 3,000 were employed building the fortification.

The fort was essentially of three parts. The first constructed was the central fortification the ten-sided citadel. Next came the pentagonal fort with its five bastions and five curtains of casements on the interior and high scarp walls facing a dry moat on the exterior. This was surrounded by a steep outer wall.

The citadel had ten sides, each side furnished one room 50 by 18 feet and 20 feet high. A porch 10 feet wide was attached to the inner wall of the citadel, and there was a fire-place at the end of each room. Each room had one door which led to the porch through the center of its inner walls. There were 4 windows in the inner wall of each room and 12 loop-holes about four inches square at the throat, in the outer wall. There were 60 loop-holes arranged in three tiers on the exterior. The air was damp in the rooms because the heavy masonry walls were not lined with wood. The citadel was planned to accommodate 312 men and 21 officers. During the siege of the fort August 22, 1864 the citadel's wooden roof caught fire and the building burned. Today only the outline of the brick foundation is visible at the center of the parade and half of that was concealed, or was removed, by the construction of Battery Duportail.

Specifications for the fort, as given in a 1824 report, said that the plane of the site was horizontal and four feet above mean high tide. The command of the structure over the plane is 28 feet, that is 32 feet above high water. The height of the scarp wall is 24 feet, and that of the counterscarp is 12.9 feet. The five curtains and flanks of the star-shaped fort were casemented--each of the curtains was divided into seven casemates, each containing one piece or ordnance, and each flank has a casemate containing two caronades. Each of the five sides of the interior fort has seven huge arches. There are fine masonry arches within arches, and arches at cross angles throughout the fort. The

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES September 12, 1814  
August 5-22, 1864

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Simone Bernard, designer

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Morgan, overlooking the entrance to Mobile Bay commemorates the famous sea battle of August 1864, which sealed off one of the last two Confederate ports in the Civil War. The fort played a crucial part in the unsuccessful defense of the bay, and did not surrender until siege and constant shelling had reduced it to rubble.

Mobile Point and Fort Morgan were reactivated as military installation and training ground during the Spanish-American War and World Wars I and II and contain evidence of military occupation dating from Civil War through 1945, including the sunken ironclad, U.S.S. Tecumseh, which lies offshore northwest of the fort, and several ca. 1900 batteries, as well as some frame buildings used as barracks in this century.

## History

Mobile Bay is a conspicuous feature of the northern shore of the Gulf of Mexico. It was called the Bay of Spirito Sancto by the Spanish, who visited it four times between 1520 and 1560. In the seventeenth century the French began to explore the area, and in 1701 they founded the town of Mobile. It remained the capital of Louisiana for 17 years. A small fort at the site, Fort Louis, was occupied by British troops after the treaty of Paris in 1763 and renamed Fort Charlotte. In 1780 the Spanish governor of Louisiana took advantage of British preoccupation with the American Revolution to capture Mobile, Pensacola and peninsular Florida for Spain. Mobile remained under Spanish rule until 1813, but its inhabitants continued to be French. General James Wilkinson occupied Mobile for the United States in April 1813 and began erection of a new fort on Mobile Point, later named Fort Bowyer.

After successfully concluding the Creek War in 1814, Andrew Jackson came to Mobile and directed preparations to meet the expected British invasion. On September 12, 1814, a force of 130 British troops and 600 Creek Indians landed on Mobile Point with orders to isolate the 160 Americans in Fort Bowyer under Major William Lawrence. Four days later a naval attack by four British vessels was made on the fort. The Americans sank one ship and forced a British retreat. American losses were four killed and four wounded; the British had lost 160 men, with 70 wounded. This small victory was a great boost for the American cause and had a significant effect on the Treaty of Ghent. On February 6, 1815, 13 British warships and 5000 regulars overwhelmed the fort, but news of the peace treaty arrived soon after and the British withdrew.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Appleman, Roy Edgar, Fort Morgan State Park, Pictorial Report NPS report of Regional Supervisor of Historic Sites, November 19, 1938.  
Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, based on "The Century War Series" edited by Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel. New York: The Century Co., 1884, 1888.

(cont'd)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 250  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	16	40,28,4,0	334,48,5,0	B	16	40,28,6,0	334,4,4,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	16	40,13,9,0	334,4,0,7,0	D	16	40,17,9,0	334,4,8,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The entire Mobile Point area was considered part of the Fort Morgan installation, and batteries, barracks, earthworks and other dependencies were located all around Mobile Point, outside of Fort Morgan proper. The land attack which finally forced the fort's surrender in 1864 was made by Union troops marching from the east, and all the land in the present reservation was undoubtedly part of the battleground.

(cont'd)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C.

DATE

10/4/75

TELEPHONE

STATE

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law B9-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

**NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**

Landmark  
 Designated: 12/9/60  
 Date  
 Boundaries: 10-3-75  
 Chief: Conlan W. [unclear]  
 Arch: [unclear]  
 Date  
 Director: [unclear]  
 Date: 10/2/75

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PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
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<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
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<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
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CONTINUATION SHEET Fort Morgan ITEM NUMBER #7 PAGE 2

arches were built to house cannon that ran on semi-circular tracks and to support the large guns which were mounted on top of the fort. Cannons under the arches shot upward over the outer wall of the fort.

Undoubtedly there were a number of auxiliary structures surrounding Fort Morgan itself on Mobile Point at this time, namely barracks, administration buildings, storage areas, and probably a hospital, however, none of the other Civil War period structures are extant. While Fort Morgan was under construction soldiers were still garrisoned at nearby Fort Bowyer which burned in the 1820's, but its ramparts remain today. The lighthouse at the entrance to the bay is the third Sand Island lighthouse constructed at the site. The second lighthouse was a 200 foot tall masonry tower, destroyed by Confederate soldiers because the Federal soldiers began to use it to spy on ships coming in and out of the bay.

In preparing Mobile Point for possible attack, soon after the outbreak of Civil War, the Confederates cleared virgin pine, umbrella trees and scrub oaks for almost three miles on the east side of the fort to build breastworks and trenches. As part of this defense system, they also built Battery Bragg, a brick fortification approximately one mile from the fort near the gulf, and Battery Gee farther to the east.

In 1890 erosion had eaten away the western shoreline near the fort so severely that Fort Morgan itself was in danger of flooding and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began building a seawall, completed in 1906, which now surrounds Fort Morgan and all the remaining former military installations on the Mobile Point reservation.

With the need for better protection for guarding the port of Mobile, mortar batteries were built within the reservation around the end of the century. Battery Bowyer was built in 1895, Battery Duportail, a black concrete structure was completed inside Fort Morgan itself in 1898, and Batteries Schenk and Thomas, along the shoreline, and Dearborn at the entrance to the reservation were completed in 1900. The reservation became a large military training base in 1898 and many large frame barracks and other buildings were constructed, a few of which remain, (see maps and photographs).

During the 1930's the Alabama Relief Administration established a camp for transient labor on Mobile Point to clean up the reservation and State park. Then The WPA and CCC also established a camp there for workers who built the paved Dixie Graves Parkway from Gulf Shores to Fort Morgan, completed in 1937. During this period, under CCC supervision, a considerable amount of repair work was completed on Fort Morgan. The interior and parade grounds were repaired, as well as sections of the brick walls and the hot shot furnace. The land was graded to the original level and some of the concrete platforms of the post-Civil War period were removed.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fort Morgan ITEM NUMBER #7 PAGE #3

From 1941-45 Mobile Point was again a military base and two large 155 mm cannons were installed on top of the old fort itself and used for training the Coastal Artillery, while the rest of the reservation was headquarters for patrol activities guarding the nearby coast and Mobile Bay.

After 1945 the reservation returned to its State park status. Fort Morgan itself is well maintained, with much of the original brickwork intact, especially on the interior, as well as some of the original massive metal work and a few pieces of early ordnance. Battery Duportail, a heavy concrete installation with artillery fittings remains in the center of the fort. During the past decade a small museum has been constructed north of the main entrance to the fort.

Currently the State Department of Conservation maintains the 435 acre reservation and they have allowed some limited private and commercial building with it. They have also demolished all but a few of the ca. 1900 frame structures. The Alabama Historical Commission, through the Fort Morgan Historical Commission maintain the fortifications and presently has jurisdiction over the structures plus 50 feet surrounding each. The State Historical Commission is attempting to save some of the other historic structures and to have the private, non-historic features removed from the park. The General Services Administration (federal government) has jurisdiction over the U.S.S. Tecumseh, sunken offshore of the park.

The U.S.S. Tecumseh (also listed separately on the National Register) lies upside down in approximately 29 feet of water at the entrance to Mobile Bay, about 300 yards north-west of Fort Morgan, where she sank after hitting a mine on the morning of the Battle of Mobile Bay, August 5, 1864. The ironclad monitor, because of the seniority of her commander, Captain T.A. Craven, was assigned by Farragut to lead the Union fleet into battle.

In an attempt to protect the lead wooden ship, the Brooklyn, Craven decided to risk the mines and engage the large Confederate ram, the Tennessee. Just as the Tecumseh swung out of the line of the safe channel, at 7:33 a.m., a violent explosion shook the hull, and in less than a minute the ship rolled over to port and sank bow first. Of the 114 crew aboard only 21 survived.

To clear the decks for battle action all the Tecumseh's gear and equipment had been packed away below and it is expected these artifacts are intact and number in the thousands. Salvage teams from the Smithsonian and U.S. Navy have made exploratory dives and found that a covering of sand and mud has protected the ship and its contents from

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fort Morgan ITEM NUMBER #7 PAGE #4

normal underwater deterioration. The single turreted ironclad is the only survivor of the nine monitors built in the Canonicus class, and had a deck 225 feet long and 43'8" at its widest point. (From the National Register form, "U.S.S. Tecumseh," prepared by Karel Yasko, General Services Administration, April 21, 1975.)

Fort Morgan, the Tecumseh and remains of some earthworks and trenches are the most obvious evidences of the Civil War period, but the entire section of Mobile Point now maintained as a State park was important, first as part of the Confederate defense system, and later as the scene of a major battle, and then as a Union fortification and camping ground.



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CONTINUATION SHEET Fort Morgan ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE #2

In 1819 plans were made to construct a permanent fortification on Mobile Point. It was completed in 1834 and named after General David Morgan, a Revolutionary War hero. The fort was peacefully transferred from Federal troops to the Alabama militia on January 5, 1861, in a futile attempt to forestall a civil war. Mobile was blockaded soon after the war began, but no attempt was made to capture the port until August 5, 1864.

Mobile Bay gradually widens from the city to the gulf a distance of 30 miles. The entrance was protected by a long narrow arm of sand, with Fort Morgan, one of the strongest large brick forts equipped with three tiers of heavy guns and a battery of seven powerful guns at the water's edge on the beach, on the extreme western point. Across the channel from Fort Morgan, and perhaps 3 miles distant, is Dauphine Island, a narrow strip of sand with Fort Gaines at its eastern end, a small brick and earthwork fort mounting a few heavy guns, but too far away from the ship channel to cause much uneasiness to the Union fleet during the battle.

Admiral David Farragut, with 18 warships, including several ironclad monitors, and 5,000 troops under General Gordon Granger, had orders to close the city. The main entrance was guarded by Forts Morgan and Gaines, while a Confederate fleet, including the massive iron-clad Tennessee waited inside the harbor.

August 5, Farragut's fleet passed the Confederate forts. The lead ship, Tecumseh struck a Confederate mine and sank. When the second ship hesitated, Farragut exclaimed, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" His flagship took the lead and the fleet followed him into the bay with no further sinkings. The Confederate gunboats were quickly put out of action, leaving the Tennessee to engage the Federal fleet alone. After two hours of battle, she struck her colors.

The forts were then assailed by land and water. Fort Gaines surrendered the next day, but Fort Morgan held out until August 23, and it took more than Farragut's broadsides to reduce Fort Morgan. The entire front wall was reinforced by enormous piles of sand-bags to enable its four feet eight inches of solid brick to withstand the broadsides of the fleet, which had to pass at close range under the guns of the fort, due to the obstructions in the harbor. A siege-train had to be brought from New Orleans a land attack made by the troops under General Granger August 22. Not until 3,000 missiles had been hurled into and around the fort by the combined guns of the army and navy, which surrounded it, did the garrison of Fort Morgan surrender, after a twelve hour siege.

The garrison consisted of five companies of Alabama Artillery, one company of 21st Alabama Infantry and two skeleton companies of Tennessee Heavy Artillery--in all about 500 men, and about 100 of these were ill, under Brigadier-General Richard L. Page. At noon

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fort Morgan ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE #3

August 22, 1864, Page wrote the following report to Major-General D.H. Maury:

I held the fort as long as it was tenable. The parallels of the enemy had reached the glacis, the walls were breached, all the guns save two were disabled. The wood-work of the citadel being repeatedly fired by the shells of the enemy endangered the magazines. All my powder was destroyed, every gun effectively spiked and otherwise damaged, and indeed, the whole fort (everything that could prove of value to the enemy) is now a mass of debris. I turn this over to their forces at 2 o'clock today. The garrison behaved gallantly. . .

This battle closed one of the last two operating ports in the Confederacy. Mobile itself was defended by 15,000 men and was not captured until April 11, 1865.

Union forces immediately occupied the fort August 23, 1864 and soon made basic repairs to the fort. September 5, 1864 General Canby landed thousands of federal troops here to take part in the campaign of Spanish Fort and Blakely, and the troops made camp in Navy Cove, just north of Fort Morgan, for five months.

After the Civil War, years passed with only a few military caretakers and lighthouse keepers occupying the reservation. Then plans were made for the construction of coastal defense batteries. Battery Bowyer was the first to be constructed in 1895, followed by Battery Duportail (built within the walls of Fort Morgan). After the Spanish-American War in 1898, Batteries Thomas, Schenk and Dearborn were completed with wooden barracks, officers' homes, hospital and other buildings. Fort Morgan became an active training base for artillery corpsmen during World War I and after the war the fort was abandoned as a training base.

In 1927, the State of Alabama purchased the old fort to create a State park and employees of the Public Works Administration during the 1930's repaired the old installations and cleared away some of the aftermath of years of military use and abandonment. Alabama was advised in 1941 that Fort Morgan was needed again as a military base, and the Navy, Coast Guard and 50th Coastal Artillery came to guard against attack by German submarines. After the war the reservation was returned to the State of Alabama which has maintained it as a park ever since.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fort Morgan ITEM NUMBER #9 PAGE #2

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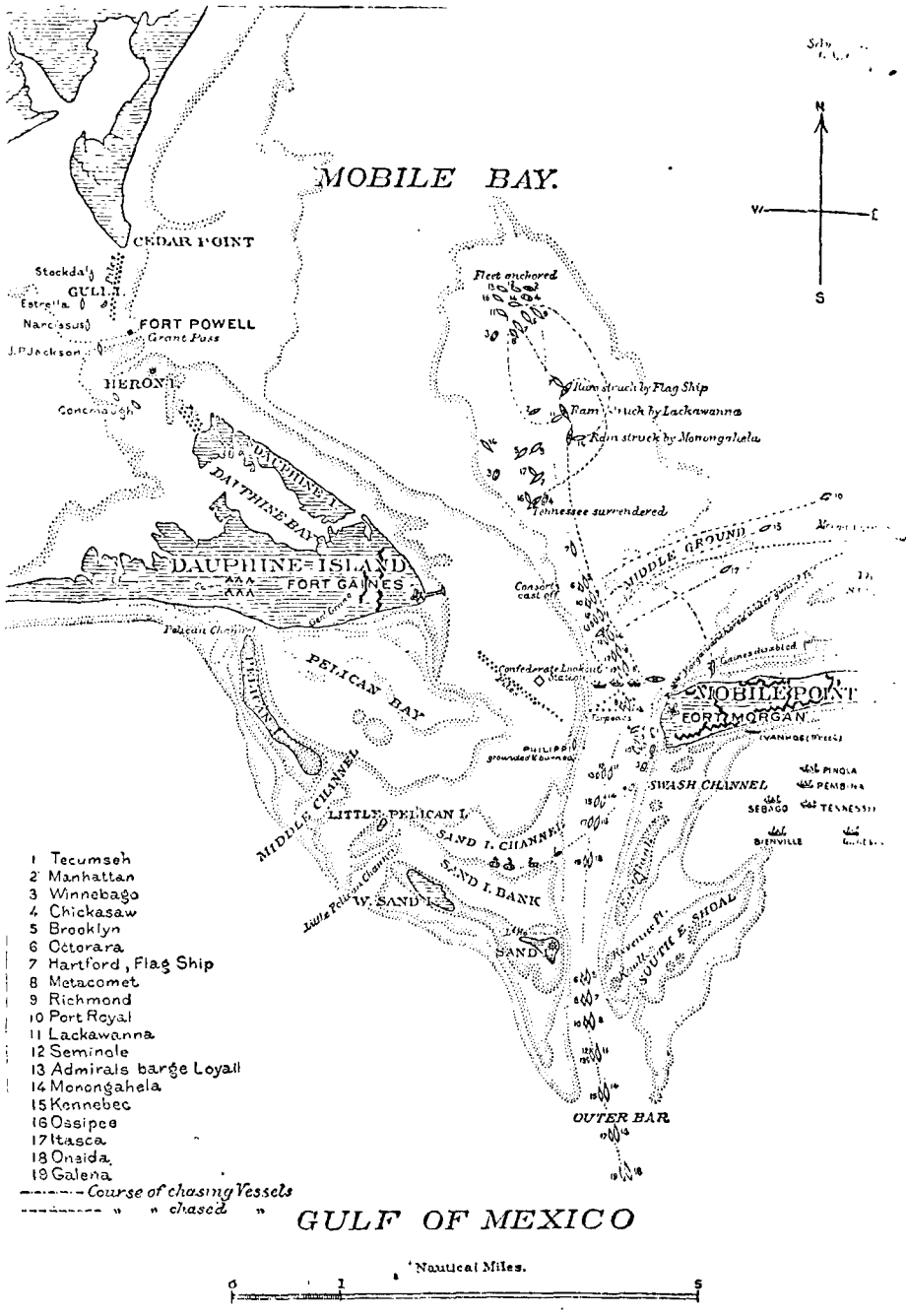
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CONTINUATION SHEET Fort Morgan ITEM NUMBER #10 PAGE #2

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The NHL boundary includes the whole reservation, currently maintained by the State and enclosed within the seawall. As indicated on the enclosed USGS Fort Morgan quadrangle map the boundary is coterminus with the seawall which nearly surrounds the site. At the west, however, the boundary departs from the terminus points of the seawall and follows the coastline. The U.S.S. Tecumseh (located on the USGS map at the point of the red cross hatch) is a non-contiguous but essential element of the national historic landmark and is bounded by a circle with a 600 foot diameter.



from Battles and Leaders  
of the Civil War  
edited by Johnson & Buell,  
The Century Co. N.Y. 1884, 1888  
p. 384.

MOBILE BAY

TO GULF SHORES →

