

“The garrison at Fort Morgan consisted of five companies of Alabama Artillery (Regulars); one company, 21st Alabama Infantry; and two skeleton companies, Tennessee Heavy Artillery; in all, about five hundred men, from which should be deducted the sick and extra men; leaving for active service between four hundred and four hundred and twenty-five.”

“For several days before the battle, August 5th, 1864, we knew that the Federals were taking preparations for an attack, and many shots were exchanged between the fort and vessels that came within range, or nearly so; and, for several nights, gun detachments remained at their posts on the ramparts, expecting the fleet to attempt the passages of the fort. I was on duty as “Officer of the Day” from 9 a.m., August 4th, to 9 a.m., August 5th, and I was up on the ramparts all night, watching.

“My battery was bastion 4, over the lighthouse battery, and the most prominent on the fort. It consisted of five guns: one six-inch rifle, built in Selma (AL); one ten-inch smooth-bore; and three thirty-two pounders, banded and rifled. There was less than fifty guns on the fort, and only some thirty-five of these were on the channel and gulf sides. All of these could not be brought to bear on one object at the same time, as the field of fire was limited.”

“By daylight on the morning of the 5th, I observed maneuvering in the fleet, and saw it heading for the bay, sent an orderly, notifying General Page, who ordered the long roll, and the men stood to their guns. The officer of the Day, who is really for the time of his tour the executive officer of the fort, was required to be in full dress uniform.”

“As soon as I saw we were in for a fight I threw my coat and sash on a pile of shells in the battery, so I could move about with more freedom. Then I picked up these after the fleet had passed in and I put them on to find the coat skirts nearly cut away, and the sash nearly cut in two by a piece of shell, which had exploded in the battery.”

“As our guns were not very effective against the Monitors, being of mostly small caliber, we did not open on them at long range. The Monitor Tecumseh fired the first shot, which struck the base of the lighthouse. Then General Page ordered me to begin firing, which I did and also all the batteries that could bear on the fleet. We only used rifle guns on the monitors; those of less caliber being held for the wooden ships, now coming within range. The noise from the firing was terrific; Commands to the nearest men had to be yelled, and the smoke obscured the hulls of the wooden ship, that we had to guess by their masts about where to direct our guns.

“At this time I observed confusion on the Monitor Tecumseh, and reported to General Page who was near me. He said, ‘Give her another shot,’ which I directed myself. She had been struck by a torpedo and turned turtle. Fourteen men escaped, and about one hundred went down with her. Our guns did not have much effect on Monitors, but the wooden ships were severely punished. The Oneida, the last ship in the line, suffered most (Whiting’s shot struck the Oneida’s boiler wounding and scalding 30 or 40).”