

Mobile National Cemetery
1202 Virginia Street
Mobile, Alabama 36604

Description

The Mobile National Cemetery, located in Mobile County, was established in 1865. The original national cemetery consisted of three acres in the southwest corner of the Magnolia Cemetery which were donated by the city for use as a national cemetery. The cemetery was expanded in 1936 by purchase of a parcel diagonally southeast across the intersection of Virginia Avenue and Owens Street (referred to as the Annex). Graves are marked with upright marble headstones.

The lodge, located in the southeastern portion of the cemetery, was constructed circa 1880 according to a design by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs. The Second Empire design is a reverse "L" shape with a one-story porch giving a generally rectangular plan. The structure is brick with bold self-quoining over an elevated concrete foundation. There are six-over-six double-hung windows on the first floor and gable windows on the upper story. The mansard roof over the second floor is slightly concave. In 1931, a single-story sun parlor was added off the dining room or west side of the lodge. In 1936, a single-story screen porch was added to the east, with a second story sleeping porch over the sun porch addition. The sleeping porch was carefully designed to retain the concave line of the original roof. During this renovation, the entire structure was stuccoed for a uniform appearance. The new stucco treatment transformed the quoining into square corner pillars. The original porch has been enclosed and stuccoed to create a new office, and the entry stairs are now located on the west to provide an entrance from the entry road.



The utility building was constructed in 1936. It is a brick structure over a concrete foundation and consists of a two-bay garage under an asbestos shingle roof. The side wall has three six-over-six windows. A smaller three-bay garage and toilet room are additions.

The octagonal-shaped rostrum, constructed in 1892, resembles a bandstand. The base is of brick with recessed panels on each face. Square wrought iron standards at each corner connect a wrought iron railing and supported twisted rope columns.

Noted Burials

One Medal of Honor recipient is buried in the national cemetery: John Drury New, Private First Class, U. S. Marine Corps. His grave (Section 7, Grave 2147) is marked with a special marker inscribed with a replica of the medal of the United States Marine Corps and the words "MEDAL OF HONOR."

Significant Monuments/Memorials

76th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment Monument – Erected in 1892 by the survivors of this regiment in memory of their comrades who died in the Battle of Port Blakely, Alabama, April 9, 1865. The monument contains eight sections, and all but the foundation and top is constructed of Vermont marble. The brick foundation supports a square main base and monument body base, and the main body of the shaft is topped by a crown base and crown collar. Atop the collar is a crown composed of a metal eagle on a ball. The monument is located in Section 1.



Confederate Fortifications Monument – A granite monument between Sections 7 and 8 to mark the Confederate Fortifications, a mound which is the remains of an old Confederate breastwork. The monument was erected in 1940 by the Electra Semmes Colston Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and is located in the Annex to the cemetery.



CSS Alabama Monument – A bronze plaque, mounted on a granite base, dedicated to the officers and men of the CSS Alabama who perished during the attack of the USS Kearsarge on June 19, 1864. The monument is located near the rostrum.



CSS Hunley Monument – A granite monument located near the rostrum.

CSS Mobile Bay Monument – A bronze plaque mounted on a concrete base, dedicated to those who lost their lives in the Battle of Mobile Bay.



Battle of Coffeerville Monument – A brass plaque on a concrete base marking the burial site of soldiers who fought in the battle of Coffeerville.

Civil War Activity in Area

With the fall of New Orleans and the conquest of much of the Tennessee-Mississippi area by Federal arms, Mobile Bay assumed a position of primary importance to Confederate economy. Rear Admiral David G. Farragut had wanted to attack Mobile early in 1863, but had been held to Mississippi River duty by the demands of the Vicksburg and Port Hudson campaigns.

In January 1864, he was ordered to the Gulf and authorized to reduce Mobile. This task required the support of land forces, and not until August 1864 were these available. Early on the morning of August 5, Farragut gave the signal for the attack, and his flotilla steamed up the broad bay, the Brooklyn in the lead.

It was the admiral's desire and intention to get underway by daylight, to take advantage of the inflowing tide, but a dense fog came on after midnight and delayed the work of forming the line. It was 5:45 a.m. before the fleet was in motion. The line moved slowly, and it was an hour after starting before the opening gun was fired. This was a 15-inch shell from the Tecumseh, and it exploded over Fort Morgan. Half an hour afterward, the fleet came within range and took position across the entrance to the bay and raked the advance vessels fore and aft, doing great damage, making it impossible to respond effectively. Gradually the fleet came into close quarters with Fort Morgan, and the firing on both sides became terrific. The wooden vessels moved more rapidly than the monitors, and as the Brooklyn came opposite the fort and approached the torpedo line, she came nearly alongside the rear monitor. At this critical moment, the Brooklyn halted and began backing and signaling with the army signals. The Hartford was immediately behind and the following vessels were in close proximity, and the sudden stopping of the Brooklyn threatened to bring the whole fleet into collision, while the strong inflowing tide was likely to carry some of the vessels to the shore under the guns of the fort.

Admiral Farragut ordered the monitors to go ahead, but the Brooklyn halted and the whole fleet became a stationary point-blank target for the guns of Fort Morgan and of the rebel vessels. It was during these few perilous moments that the most fatal work of the day was done to the fleet.

Due to the Hartford's position, only her few bow guns could be used, while a deadly rain of shot and shell was falling on her. Her men were being cut down by the scores and unable to make reply. Another signal message from the Brooklyn told of the sinking of the Tecumseh, and another order to go on was given but not obeyed.

Finding that the Brooklyn failed to obey his orders, Farragut hurriedly asked the pilot if there was sufficient depth of water for the Hartford to pass to the left of the Brooklyn. Receiving an affirmative reply, he immediately ordered the Hartford ahead at full speed. As Farragut passed the Brooklyn, a voice warned him of the torpedoes, to which he replied, "Damn the torpedoes."

The Hartford and her consort, the Metacomet, passed over the dreaded torpedo ground and rushed ahead far in advance of the rest of the fleet. The Hartford was now moving in an area with shallow water on either side, so it was impossible to move except as the channel permitted. The Confederate gunboat, Selma, kept directly in front of the flagship and fired her fore and aft



guns, doing more damage than all the rest of the enemy's fleet. The Gaines and the Morgan were in shallow water and received more damage from the Hartford's broadsides than they were able to inflict. The Hartford was suffering chiefly from the fire of the Selma, which was unquestionably managed more skillfully than any other Confederate vessel. Captain Jouett, commanding the Metacomet was given consent to cut loose and take care of the Selma. In an instant, the cables binding the two vessels were cut, and the Metacomet, the fastest vessel in the fleet, bounded ahead. The Gaines had been crippled by the splendid marksmanship of the Hartford's gunners and had run aground under the guns of the fort, where afterward she was set on fire, the crew escaping to the shore. The gunboat, Morgan, retreated to the shallow water near the fort. The Hartford, having reached the deep water of the bay, came to anchor.

The Tennessee, after remaining near Fort Morgan while the fleet had made its way four miles above to its anchorage had suddenly decided to settle at once the question of control of the bay. Single-handed, she came on to meet the whole fleet, consisting now of ten wooden vessels and three monitors. At that time, the Tennessee was believed to be the strongest vessel afloat, and the safety with which she carried her crew during the battle proved that she was virtually invulnerable.

Because of the slowness of the monitors, Admiral Farragut selected the fastest of the wooden vessels to begin the attack. The Monongahela and the Lackawanna were ordered to "run down the ram." The Monongahela, with her prow already somewhat weakened by a previous attempt to ram, at once took the lead. The Monongahela, going at full speed, struck the Tennessee. The Lackawanna was close behind and delivered a similar blow with her wooden bow, simply causing the ram to lurch slightly to one side. As the vessels separated, the Lackawanna swung alongside the ram, which sent two shots through her and kept on her course for the Hartford, which was now the next vessel in the attack. The two flagships approached each other, bow to bow, iron against oak. It was impossible for the Hartford, with her lack of speed, to circle around and strike the ram on the side; her only safety was in keeping pointed directly for the bow of her assailant. It was a thrilling moment for the fleet, for it was evident that if the ram could strike the Hartford, the latter must sink. As the two vessels came together, the Tennessee slightly changed her course, the port bow of the Hartford met the port bow of the ram, and the ships grated against each other as they passed.

The Tennessee now became the target for the whole fleet, all the vessels of which were sailing toward her, pounding her with shot, and trying to run her down. As the Hartford turned to head for her again, it ran in front of the Lackawanna, which had already turned and was moving under full headway with the same objective. The Lackawanna struck the Hartford on the starboard side, cruising halfway through, knocking two portholes into one, upsetting one of the Dahlgren guns, and creating general consternation. For a time, it was thought the Hartford would sink. The admiral, finding there were still a few inches to spare above the water's edge, instantly ordered the ship ahead again at full speed, after the ram.

The unfortunate Lackawanna, which had struck the ram a second blow, was heading for her once more, and another collision seemed imminent. The admiral became excited, not realizing that the Hartford was as much to blame as the Lackawanna. He asked if someone could say "For God's sake, get out of your way and anchor" by signal, and ordered that it be done. The army signal officer on the Lackawanna had taken his station in the foretop, and just as he

received the first five words, "For God's sake, get out," the wind flirled the large United States flag at the mast-head around him, so that he was unable to read the conclusion of the message.

As the Tennessee left the Hartford, she became the target of the entire fleet, and at last the concentration of solid shot from so many guns began to tell. The flagstaff was shot away, the smoke-stack was riddled with holes, and finally disappeared. The monitor, Chickasaw, succeeded in coming up astern and began pounding away with 11-inch solid shot, and one shot from a 15-inch gun of the Manhattan crushed into the side sufficiently to prove that a few more such shots would have made the casemate untenable. Finally one of the Chickasaw's shots cut the rudder-chain of the ram and she would no longer mind her helm. The Chickasaw was pounding away at her stern, the Ossipee was approaching her at full speed, and the Monongahela, Lackawanna, and the Hartford, were bearing down upon her, determined upon her destruction. Just as the Ossipee was about to strike her, the Tennessee displayed a white flag, hoisted on an improvised staff through the grating over her deck. The Ossipee reversed her engine, but was so near, that a harmless collision was inevitable.

Suddenly the terrific cannonading ceased, and from every ship rang out cheer after cheer, and the weary men realized that at last the ram was conquered and the day won.