



BLUE AND GRAY DISPATCH

The Lady Slocomb: How Mobile, Alabama, Lost its Most famous Civil War Cannon to New Orleans

By Paul Brueske, April 13, 2020

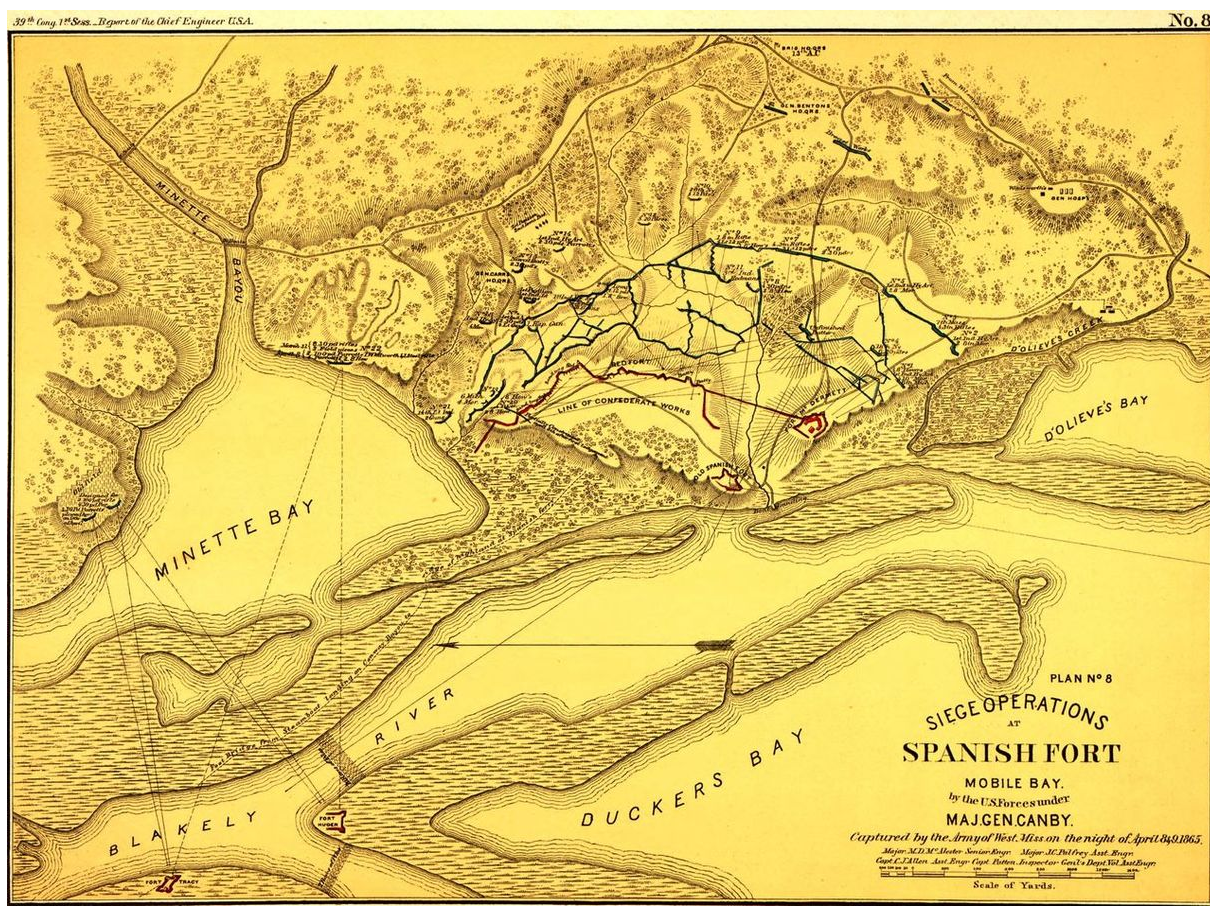
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The Lady Slocomb, Confederate Memorial Hall Museum, New Orleans

Many fascinating stories were produced during the campaign for the capture of Mobile in March 1865. One of the more interesting tales related to the last siege of that terrible war, involved the fate of a Confederate cannon that was used at the siege of Spanish Fort called the Lady Slocomb. In the 1890s this cannon was displayed prominently on Mobile's Government Street but vanished before the turn of the nineteenth century, ending up in New Orleans.

During the siege of Spanish Fort, the big cannon was located at a redoubt known as Battery Blair. The big gun was manned by the Washington Artillery's Fifth Company, which named it the "Lady Slocomb" after their captain's wife. The cannon caused the besieging Federals much suffering until two Union shells disabled it and killed three Southerners. The dismantled gun was placed on the ground nearby, where it rested for nearly 25 years. Before the cannon was moved to the city, a charge of canister in the barrel was discovered by the old veterans and removed.



Spanish Fort plan, 1865 | Library of Congress

After the war, the Blue and Gray Veterans Union, a group of Union and Confederate veterans living near Mobile, was organized on July 4, 1890, on the battlefield of Spanish Fort, Baldwin County, Alabama. It was there the veterans, to their amazement, discovered the old Lady Slocomb cannon—a big 8-inch Columbiad built at Tredegar, Virginia. On March 7, 1891, Augustus Sibley, owner of the land where the battle of Spanish Fort took place, sold the title to the cannon to the Blue and Gray Union for one dollar. The following week the big gun, at a cost of \$285.25, was transported to downtown Mobile, where it was dedicated as a monument commemorating the "Valor of American Soldiers and the Sweet Dawn of Peace."

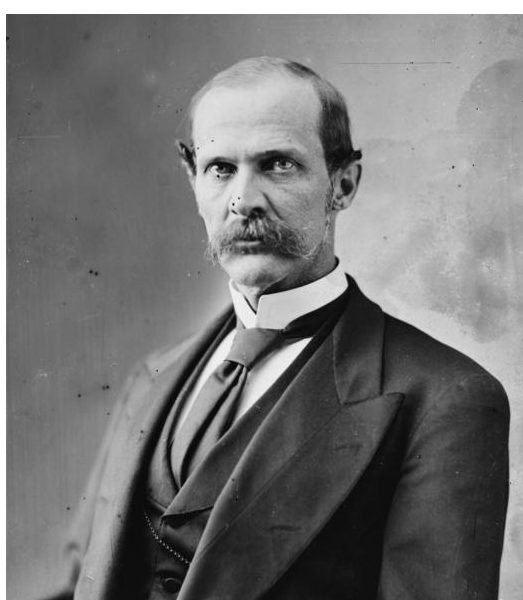
Mobile residents, Dr. Seymour Bullock and Thomas P. Brewer, were instrumental in forming the Blue and Gray Union and bringing the old cannon to Mobile. Bullock was the president of the organization and a Union veteran from New York relocated to Mobile to practice medicine. Brewer, an ex-Confederate, was vice president and had served as a captain with Hood's Texas Brigade. The two became friends through their association with the Blue and Gray Union and even traveled together to Washington, D.C., where they received confirmation that the Treasury Department had no claim to the title of the gun. However, a falling out in their friendship occurred, causing them to become mortal enemies. Their feud led to a tragedy at Navy Cove, 4 miles from Fort Morgan, where both men had summer cottages.

As Brewer fished from the shore on Thursday, October 15, 1891, Bullock approached in his boat and fired his shotgun, missing Brewer due to the rocking of the boat. Before he could shoot again, Brewer returned fire with his shotgun and killed Bullock. Following the shooting, Brewer surrendered himself to the sheriff. There were no witnesses; however, a subsequent investigation found both double-barreled shotguns had discharged one round. Brewer never served time, as it was determined to be a case of self-defense. He went on to become treasurer of the city of Mobile.

It is believed this tragic duel led the Blue and Gray Union to dissolve, allowing the veterans of the Washington Artillery in New Orleans the opportunity to make a bid for the Lady Slocomb. Henry Badger, a Confederate veteran, had paid for the transportation of the cannon from Spanish Fort to Mobile. When the Blue and Gray Union ceased to exist, ownership of the big gun was transferred to Badger, since he had paid for it to be transported. After he passed away on May 28, 1896, newspaper reports indicated his estate proposed selling the Lady Slocomb.



Capt. Cuthbert Harrison Slocomb, for whose wife the cannon was named



Senator Randall Gibson | LOC

Washington Artillery veterans had wanted the cannon in New Orleans ever since it came to Mobile. They, with the assistance of Louisiana Senator Randall Gibson, the former commander of the Spanish Fort defenders, had even petitioned the Secretary of the Treasury for the right to purchase it, but were denied. When Badger's estate offered the cannon to the highest bidder, they made every effort to acquire it. After much deliberation, it finally was decided the cannon should be sold to this group. In March 1899, the veterans from New Orleans arrived in Mobile to complete the purchase. After the big gun was moved to the Crescent City, at an unveiling ceremony on September 19, 1899, it was dedicated to the memory of Capt. Cuthbert Slocomb and "the men who gave their lives for its defense."

Today, the Lady Slocomb can still be seen outside the Confederate Memorial Hall Museum on Camp Street in New Orleans, directly across the street from the World War II museum. Many citizens of Mobile resented the removal of the old gun, and the topic remains a bitter subject to some.



The Lady Slocomb at Confederate Memorial Hall, New Orleans, between 1900 and 1906 | Library of Congress



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