Diary of the Seige of Ft Morgan

August 5th 1864 Friday

Heavy musketry firing at Ft Gaines about 5 a.m. – On getting up at 6 am saw Hartford & Brooklyn on right of the fleet – thought something "was up." Walked down to the Fort by the time I reached the parapet the whole fleet were under way & steaming slowly up in the following order – Single turretted monitors in advance double turretted next, then the Hartford & Brooklyn with double-enders lashed to their port sides, the three masters, & other Gunboats lashed two & two following – Opened on the Flagship about a mile – The Enemy did not open till within three Quarters when broadside after broadside [illegible] the very earth though apparently that was the only trembling for our men stood nobly to their guns – The action grows more terrific & the fleet are within two hundred yards of our Batteries & abeast of the Fort – Our shot tear crashing through their sides & now yells of triumph burst from the garrison: The foremost iron-clad Tecumseh sinks to rise no more, a tomb for one hundred & six Corpses, from only escaping from death to our Great Hour Notwithstanding all our efforts, and no men could do more the fleet passed by & steered for the western shore – The Gunboat Gaines was sunk, the Selma captured, but the Tennessee heroically followed their fleet and for two hours & a half fought their three remaining monitors & the 17" men opran

which passed - She fought nobly & not until the Admiral was severely wounded & her Captain slightly her smoke stack & steering gear cut away did she surrender - The enemy bear high testimony to her valor - We know not yet what damage she did - One man killed [illegible] & 3 pints wounded are our only casualties & miraculous seems our slight loss to us - The Fern had 2 killed & 8 wounded the Gaines 2 killed & 3 wounded, the Selma 8 killed & 7 wounded - Two of our guns were dismounted but have been remounted - The Fort is in as good fighting condition as ever - The siege has commenced & God only knows how long it will last, though in the end there can be no favorable result - Write up to Lily a man who escaped - The enemy sent in a flag of truce & obtained permission to send their wounded & ours to Pensacola - They shelled Ft Powell in the rear this evening - It cannot hold out - The good of the service I think, demands that we evacuate this Fort, but for the morale of the thing, we have determined to hold out to the last - I have been on my feet & at work all day & am very weary - Have as yet got no quarters fixed up - We are very cheerful & I only wish that our loved ones could be as much so for I know they will be much distressed, particularly as to the probable result of the siege - In Place is our only hope as naught else (but evacuation) can save us from Captivity -

Aug 5th (Saturday)

Took a bath first thing & turned out the whole Command to building a traverse across the Sallyport. The Morgan tried to run to Town last night & I believe succeeded. Shelled Gaines this evening. Ft Powell was evacuated last night & apparently blown up. The enemy's flag of truce boat went out to Pensacola this morning. She landed the bodies of Lt Comstock & Jno Murray C.S.N. The latter was a classmate of mine. both died bravely. We hurled them this evening a little back of our quarters in the sand hills. We have not been disturbed to day.

Aug 7th (Sunday)

A flag of truce was seen going to the enemy from Ft Gaines to day. Signalled to them to know the cause of it & fired two guns to call attention. No reply being given we have grave suspicions. I believe that they are negotiating for terms as the moral tone of the Garrison is stated as being very bad. There was no firing to day and everything is as quiet as a Sunday evening on Royal St in Mobile. The Garrison still hard at work building a traverse in front of the sally port. The enemy's flag of truce returned to day from Pensacola. Sent a letter to Lydia by Capt Neville who went up in Company with Capt Vass from Mobile. Genl Page went over to Gaines this evening. Mr Carter preached this evening on Faith showing that our moral physical & social life have for their basis faith. I never viewed the subject from that point before.

August 8th Monday -

Genl Page returned from Ft Gaines about 12 last night - He found that Col Anderson was aboard of the fleet negotiating terms, & fearing that he might have already surrendered he returned leaving orders that when Cold got back he was to be sent over here under arrest & for Maj Johnson to take Command and hold out to the last - About 10 am this first the enemy were reported marching into Ft Gaines & by the time I reached the ramparts here I saw our colors lowered & the emblem of infamy & disgrace hoisted above the heads of those who had surrendered without striking one blow for defence & ignobly cringed before the foe had attacked - Humiliation & sorrow were in our hearts, but indignation soon expelled from our hearts all other feelings, and the determination to wipe out that stain from our Brigade ~~that~~ in every pulse - The garrison was assembled in the Citadel & Genl Page made a few earnest & touching remarks upon the spectacle we had just witnessed - The old hero was cheered loudly - All of us love him almost as a father - Capt Johnston, & Cary & Maj Lee also spoke & the speakers as well as many of the audience wept tears of shame for their Country men though scarce deserving of the name - Thus are we alone of this Bay left to stem the tide & uphold the honor of our cause -

Col Jackson got back from Mobile about 1 P.m. having come down in a small boat, eluding the enemy's vessels He was welcomed with the cheers of the Garrison. Work on traverse going on as usual. We expect the enemy to turn their attention to us tomorrow.

August 9th Tuesday.

At sunrise this morning two of the enemy's ironclads entered Navy Cove shortly after their transports landed troops there & as it was now our turn, all the buildings right of the fort were burnt.

As our old residence was wreathed with flame & smoke, one happy link of the past was crumbled, & told me too plainly that here Lydia would never more set her foot. The whole Garrison is hard at work.

Two monitors & two or three gunboats opened a heavy fire on us though only one man was slightly wounded. One shell entered my office tore down one side, upset chairs & splintered desks & then laid down at our feet without bursting, within three feet of me & several of us who were setting around.

Our escape was miraculous for had that shell burst these pages had been unwritten. They stopped firing about two P.m. & sent in a flag of truce demanding the unconditional & immediate surrender of the Fort. Our reply can be easily guessed. They fired a few more 15 inch shot. Made ~~all the~~ every preparation tonight to meet an assault. Am very weary & the Garrison pretty well worn out.

August 10th Wednesday

Last night the Yankee line was at Batty Bragg & their outposts close to the Fort. One man deserter from us & another tried to desert but is now in the Guard House. The men hard at work last night & today also. Officers work with the men showing a good example & commendable spirit. In fact there never was a better morale in any garrison & every man does his duty. They have been severely tested, & I believe will stand anything which mortals can endure. The Yankees are hard at work along their line which is this side of the "New Redoubt". Genl Page assumed immediate command of the Post to day retaining me as Post Adjt. We are much obliged to the enemy for being so quiet as we are allowed to go on peacably with our work. Fresh meat to day & the rations of sugar & coffee issued. Raining off & on all day. Wind S.E., veering to the North at night.

August 11th Thursday. 7th day

So far, so good though our time of trial not yet come in its most trying form. Ourselves & the Yankees hard at work, they erecting we building. The single turretted monitor lying about a mile from the Wharf, but it is no use of firing upon her as our shot would rebound harmless from her sides. Tree glad she does not open on us, as to say the least

those 15 inch shells are annoying. The glooming weather has brought to me sad thoughts to day about home where I know they are all anxious about me, & about her who may suffer while I am gone and whose daily tears will be her only consolation, for I know the poor little pent up heart will nearly burst now that she is certain that her only love, & support are taken from her, but may Providence in its goodness soothe & provide for her in my absence, as I know none other could.

August 12th Friday.

Fair morning. About 10 am the Yankee sharpshooters opened under us & there has been quite vigorous rifle firing all day though with no loss on our side. The garrison hard at work still on traverses. The enemy's Battery is visible this morning though no Guns seem as yet to have been planted. Rainy this evening. Pass the time in reading, playing Chess, smoking & attending to my duties which are not very arduous, though I have dismissed my clerk in order that one more man might be added to the working party. Every man must now put his shoulder to the wheel. Lt Smith is much better, so it seems to me. Carters house was fired to day. The Yankee S Shooters are on the edge of the parade ground, & some of them post this side of the New Hospital

They are very daring -

August 13th, Saturday -

Last night all the remaining wooden buildings around the Fort were burnt out - Sharpshooting pretty brisk & "minnie's" whizzing all over the Fort - We had a quite spirited engagement with the Tennessee this evening - She seemed to be trying to run out but I think we persuaded her to turn back though we struck her repeatedly & do not think she was materially damaged - "Nobody hurt" on our side - Late this evening the of the double turretted monsters opened on us & sent her shells into the Fort with remarkable precision, & much to our annoyance - Capt Hughes was slightly wounded in the head - Cook Co C 1st Ala very severely in side - Chapman Co C severely in hand & thigh by a minnie ball - I am afraid they will not let us rest tonight -

August 14th Sunday

The monitor kept up the bombardment during the whole of last night & up to eight o/c this morning - Cook Co B 1st Tenn dreadfully wounded in face - The casemates are not safe; the shells have no respect for them & roll in & out at pleasure - The men are at work building traverses for them - Worked last night till 1 A.M.

No desertions, though there have been 10 in the last five days - I hope we have now got rid of our bad stock -

The land batteries & monitors opened on us this evening & are now shelling. Men hard at work. Pleasant day otherwise

August 15th Monday

The enemy continued their firing throughout the night & during to day. We have inaugurated morning prayer meetings to take place at 6 am at the sally port. One man while going to it this morning was struck dead by a fragment of a shell. Another shell, 15 inch, entered Capt Johnstons flank casemate dismounted two howitzers & burst wounding 6 men of Co A 1st Fern. Last evening our flag staff was shot away & a rifle 32 in the lunette Batty dismounted. The Yanks make it pretty hot for us in here & no place is safe. We are in the hands of the almighty & may he be merciful to us. The men are in good spirits, at least apparently, & hard at work. There is a perfect rain of balls from their sharpshooters & no one can show his head above the parapet. The greatest danger is from the falling & flying bricks when a shell strikes. They shower in every direction. Their land batteries are already battering our walls & as there is some danger of our magazine being heached we are destroying a portion of our powder though we will retain about 60.000 lbs enough to blow the Fort to atoms should an accident to the magazine occur.

Wish the Genl would let us open on their works, as it is rather an unpleasant thing to lie still & be shot at without even firing a shot though it were useless - No similar instance to ours has been presented in this war. Entirely cut off & with 350 men hemmed in by a fleet of Forty vessells besides a large land force, confined in a small circle scarce large enough to drive a cart in, with a certainty of captivity & perhaps death before us, resistance is heroism & it is our unanimous resolve to sell this Fort at a costly price - They out number us nearly 20 to 1 & have more than a gun for every man we have - God has been merciful in saving us almost miraculously from a greater loss of life, & may he also guard our absent loved ones - The men are still hard at work - The two double tunnelled monitors & 4 gunboats went up the bay this evening - The monitor & land Batteries at us again this evening - One 15 inch shell pierced the flank casemate of Co A 1st Tenn & burst inside but fortunately nobody was in at the time -

August 16th Tuesday,

We opened on the enemy's camp & works last night & continued firing nearly all night - They of course replied & the balls moaned, shrieked & whistled through the air, but Mr Yank cant fire very accurately when somebody is shooting at him - It is a very fine

thing to stand off Cooly, aim the gun as if at target practice, & fire at a parcel of poor devils Cooped up in a pile of bricks, When there is no danger in the way, but when both sides talk Mr Ted is rather nervous - We have found out one thing & that is if our shot do no material damage they lessen that done to us - Heavy firing last evening in the direction of Mobile - All quiet, except Sharpshooters, till 1 o/c to day. They then opened on us from three different Batteries two of which have just been completed - Their fire was splendid until we opened & then the shots were rather wild - A sentry on the ramparts had his head & shoulders torn off by a parrot shell. The poor fellow cried "Look out, below!" for the shot that hurried him to eternity - My Casemate was struck two or three times & if their firing is continuous must soon be breached - We will have a time of it before we get through with our defence. Think being shut up this way is very unhealthy & even in quiet times would not be pleasant, though I do not mind it & am only anxious about those far away. Lydia's trials are greater than any bodily suffering I could have. We all have are cheerful that is most are seemingly so - The sharpshooting ceases at dark & I have just been up, on the parapet - under cover of night to take a little fresh air, & look around by the light of the moon - all is destruction without - Every building lies in ash with

the chimneys standing as relicts of the past - As I am writing, 8½ pm the monitor is firing; as the shot just passed it seemed to carry the atmosphere on its course, the noise of a 15 inch firecracker is not the softest music imaginable - Well, Good night!!

August 17th Wednesday

We opened on them about 9½ last night & just pinned it in - they closed firing at 12 -

All quiet this morning except their sharpshooters - Took a swim - Yanks commenced firing from their Batts this evening - A private Co a 1st Tenn wounded on post in 10 places by the bursting of a shell, a wound in the abdomen will probably terminate fatally as the piece of shell cant be extracted.

August 18th Thursday -

Something this morning & evening but the enemy are so hard at work that they have given us snatches of quiet - Their rifle pits are within 700 yds & one battery on the east about 800 yards, the others are about a mile distant - Took a swim this evening - Fine weather & nothing unusual to day -

Tis hard to endure our imprisonment but as no better awaits us we are content to remain for the credit of the thing - Tis about bed time so will close - Henry quite sick so no cooking -