

Commander Porter's Mortar Flotilla

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Prologue

In late 1861, plans were made to clear the Mississippi River of Confederate fortifications, thus opening the river to Union river boat traffic. River gunboats, under command of Flag Officer Charles Henry Davis began the operation by clearing Confederate forts and artillery batteries down from the north. By early June 1862, Union gunboats had gained control of the Mississippi River as far south as Vicksburg. Captain David G. Farragut's West Gulf Blockading Squadron was charged with clearing the river up to Vicksburg. Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Wells, expressed the need for mortar boats to support Captain Farragut's expedition up the river and set about organizing such a flotilla. He placed Commander David D. Porter in command of the newly established Mortar Flotilla. On November 18, 1861, Secretary Welles ordered Commander Porter to proceed to New York, Philadelphia and Mystic, Connecticut to select schooners suitable to serve as mortar vessels. Twenty-two schooners were selected, all but two carrying at least a 13-inch mortar. Eight steamers were assigned to the flotilla to tow the schooners into position, when necessary [the schooners were propelled by sails], and to join in firing with the mortars.

Introduction

I describe deployment of the Mortar Flotilla and details of its support of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron as the vessels progressed up the Mississippi River. I have made only general references to the actions of the latter, such as is necessary to explain involvement of the Mortar Flotilla. In describing the actions during the naval engagements, I first provide a general account of events that took place, as reported by the officers in command of the operation. This is followed by accounts of individual ships, when available, as reported by captains of the involved vessels.

When first using the name of ship captains, other officers and crewmen, and other individuals, I give the full name (when available) and the exact title/rank. For simplicity's sake, in subsequent references, I use an abbreviated rank and the last name: Lt, Cdr (for both Lieutenant Commander and Commander), Capt, FO (Flag Officer), and Adm and Gen (for all admiral and general officer ranks). When referring to ships' names, except in rare instances, I do not use the article "the" preceding the name.

The primary source for my data is the *Official Reports of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*. Government Printing Office, Series 1: Vols. 18 (1904) and 19 (1905). For more detail regarding the West Gulf Blockading Squadron's involvement in clearing the Mississippi River, see *West Gulf Blockading Squadron in the Mississippi River*. University of Illinois Ideals, <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/126166>. 2023.

Preparation



Map of lower Mississippi River and adjacent Gulf of Mexico

Secretary Welles, on December 2, 1861, ordered Cdr Porter to proceed to New York and take command of his flotilla. The following vessels and their captains (at the time), were assigned to the Mortar Flotilla:

Sailing vessels.

Name of vessel.	Commanding officer.	Ordered.
SCHOONERS.		
		1862.
Adolph Hugel, [Philadelphia]	Acting Master H. B. Jencks	Jan. 18
Geo. Mangham, [Philadelphia]	Acting Master John Collins	Jan. 18
T. A. Ward	Lieutenant W. W. Queen	Jan. 18
C. P. Williams	Acting Master A. R. Langthorne	Jan. 18
John Griffith	Acting Master H. Brown	Jan. 18
Racer	Acting Master A. Phinney	Jan. 21
Matthew Vassar	Acting Master H. H. Savage	Jan. 24
Sophronia	Acting Master J. A. Darling	Jan. 29
Aretta	Acting Master Thos. E. Smith	Jan. 29
Orvetta	Acting Master F. E. Blanchard	Jan. 28
Sidney C. Jones	Acting Master Robt. Adams	Jan. 29
Henry Janes	Acting Master L. W. Pennington	Jan. 31
Dan Smith	Acting Master Geo. W. Brown	Jan. 31
Sarah Bruen	Acting Master A. Christian	Feb. 1
Para	Acting Master G. N. Hood	Feb. 1
Maria J. Carlton	Acting Master C. E. Jack	Feb. 1
Norfolk Packet	Lieutenant Watson Smith	Feb. 3
Oliver H. Lee	Acting Master W. Godfrey	Feb. 3
William Bacon	Acting Master W. P. Rogers	Feb. 3
BARKS.		
Horace Beals	Lieutenant K. R. Breese	Feb. 3
A. Houghton	Acting Master Newell Graham	Feb. 10
BRIG.		
Sea Foam	Acting Master H. E. Williams	Jan. 24

Steamers.

Westfield	Commander W. B. Renshaw	Jan. 31
Clifton	Acting Lieutenant C. H. Baldwin	Jan. 31
John P. Jackson	Acting Lieutenant S. E. Woodworth	Jan. 10
Owasco	Lieutenant John Guest	Jan. 21
Miami, [Philadelphia]	Lieutenant A. D. Harrell	Feb. 5
Harriet Lane, [Washington, D. C.]	Lieutenant J. M. Wainwright	Feb. 10
R. B. Forbes	Acting Volunteer Lieutenant Wm. Flye	Jan. 31

[Note. The steamer, *Octorara*, Commander Porter's flagship (although he was aboard other ships much of the time) is not listed here. *A Houghton* is not mentioned in any of the reports. Other officers commanded some of the vessels during the engagements up the Mississippi River.]

Name.	Armament.
Norfolk Packet.....	1 XIII-inch mortar, 2 32-pdrs., 2 12-pdr. howitzers of 750 lbs.
Oliver H. Lee.....	1 XIII-inch mortar, 2 32-pdrs. 57 cwt.
Para.....	Do.
C. P. Williams.....	Do.
Arletta.....	Do.
William Bacon.....	Do.
Sophonra.....	Do.
T. A. Ward.....	Do.
Sidney C. Jones.....	Do.
Matthew Vassar.....	Do.
Maria J. Carlton.....	1 XIII-inch mortar, 2 12-pdr. rifled howitzers.
Orvetta.....	Do.
Adolph Hugel.....	Do.
George Mangham.....	Do.
Horace Beals.....	2 32-pdrs., 1 30-pdr. Parrott.
John Griffith.....	1 XIII-inch mortar, 2 32-pdrs., 2 12-pdr. rifled howitzers.
Sarah Bruen.....	Do.
Racer.....	Do.
Sea Foam.....	Do.
Henry Janes.....	Do.
Dan Smith.....	1 XIII-inch mortar, 2 12-pdr. boat howitzers of 750 lbs.

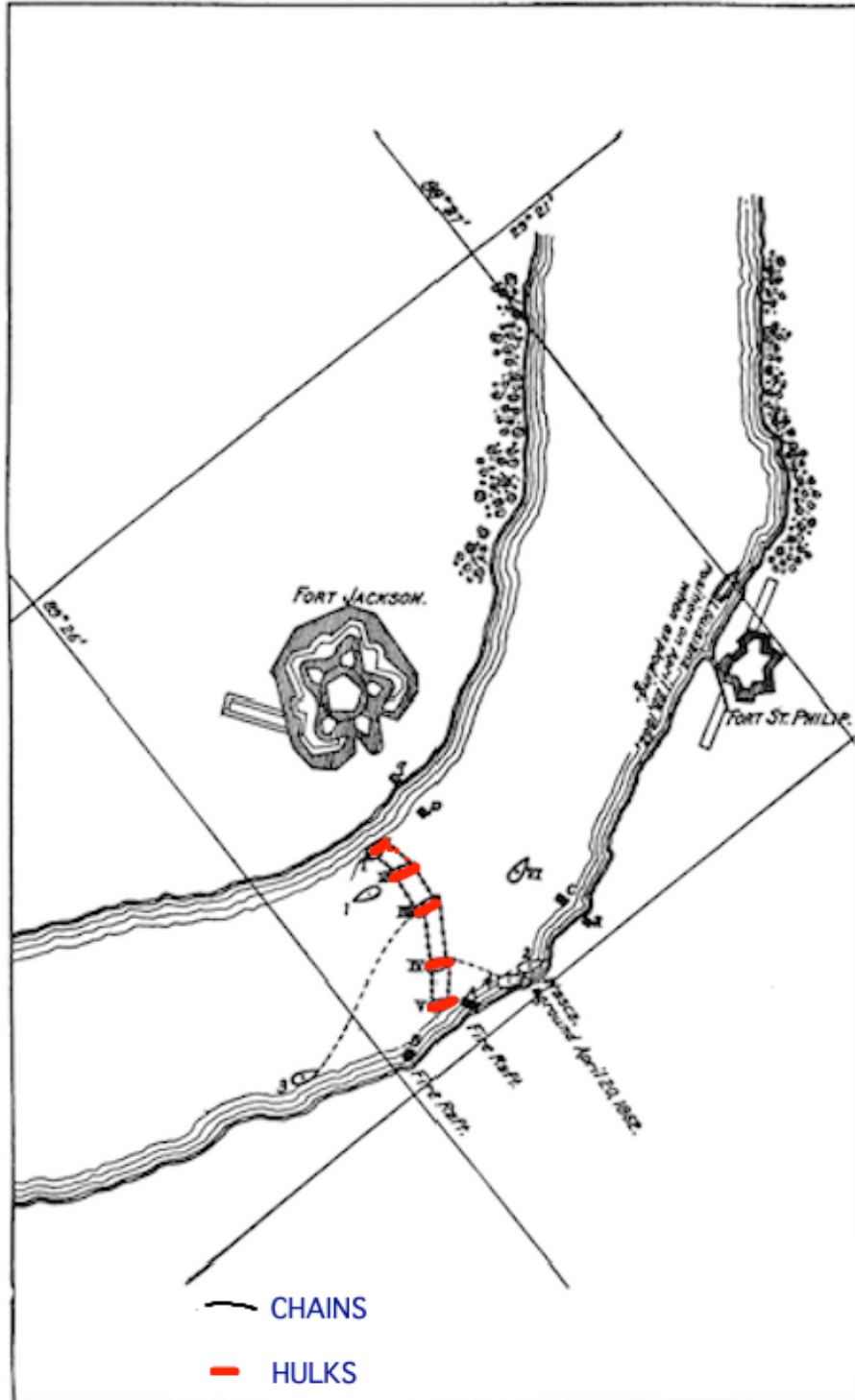
Armaments of the mortar schooners.

On January 18, 1862, Secretary Welles ordered Lieutenant Walter W. Queen to take the schooners *George Mangham* and *Adolph Hugel* to Hampton Roads, Virginia, pick up supplies and proceed to Key West. There, he was to await the arrival of Cdr Porter and the rest of the Mortar Flotilla. From Key West, the flotilla vessels would proceed to Ship Island off the Mouth of the Mississippi River. They and the West Gulf Blockading vessels assigned to the expedition would deploy from Ship Island.

Beginning January 31, Secretary Welles ordered other officers to report, with their vessels, for duty with the flotilla. Some reported to Cdr Porter at New York, others proceed directly to Key West to wait for arrival of rest of the vessels. By February 10, all ships assigned to the Mortar Flotilla were either at Key West or on their way there. *R B Forbs* was lost off Nag's Head, North Carolina, when she ran aground and was destroyed. By February 19, 15 of the flotilla vessels were at Key West. The rest arrived by March 2 and as soon as they were ready, left for Ship Island. Cdr Porter reported to Secretary Welles that all of the flotilla vessels had arrived at Ship Island by March 18 and had immediately begun moving toward the mouth of the Mississippi, passing over Pass a l'Outre the same day. *Harriet Lane*, *Owasco*, *Westfield*, and *Clifton* towed the mortars over the bar. At Flag Officer [recently promoted] Farragut's order, Cdr Porter moved the mortar boats to South West Pass to await orders to move up to Forts Jackson and St. Philip, guarding the mouth of the Mississippi River. For ease in deployment, Cdr Porter organized the mortar boats into three divisions: 1st Division, commanded by Lieutenant Watson Smith; 2nd Division, Lieutenant Walter W. Queen; 3rd Division, Lieutenant K. Randolph Bresse.

In the meantime, because of low water and unfamiliarity of the pilots with the bars, FO Farragut's Gulf Squadron ships were having problems maneuvering over the passes. Cdr Porter volunteered services of his steamers. The offer was accepted and after eight day's "laborious work", all the Gulf ships were anchored off Pilot Town on April 16.

Before the ships began moving up toward the forts, Cdr Porter sent Ferdinand Gerdes, Assistant Superintendent of the US Coastal Survey, along with two members of the Coastal Survey (John J. Oltmanns and Joseph S. Harris) in *Sachem*, protected by *Owasco*, to make a detailed survey of the river from Wiley's Jump up to Forts Jackson and St. Philip. In three days, the men were able to triangulate and survey seven miles of the river, up to and including Forts Jackson and St. Philip. All the time, the surveyors were under intense fire from the two forts and from riflemen concealed by brush along the riverbanks. On one occasion Oltmanns, while working in a boat from *Owasco*, was fired on with muskets from the bushes on the shore, a bullet striking an oar. The boat's crew drove off the attackers with musket fire. The survey also established the positions the Mortar Flotilla was to occupy in the attack on the two forts. When *Sachem* returned, Cdr Porter sent three of the schooners to within 3,000 yards of the forts, to try their range and durability.



Forts Jackson and St. Philip and the barriers.

Cdr Porter received little confidence from the captains of the West Gulf ships that the mortar beds and foundations of the schooners would hold up when firing began. They predicted the bottoms would drop out of the schooners by the tenth fire. Cdr Porter, however, was confident the mortar boats would hold up. He was proven correct when firing began.

Passage of Forts Jackson and St. Philip

On the 16th of April, FO Farragut was ready to move up his fleet and told Cdr Porter to commence firing as soon as his vessels were ready. The Mortar Flotilla moved up by sail or being towed and by the morning of the 18th all vessels were in position and ready to begin firing. Prior to moving up, Cdr Porter had the Mortar Flotilla vessel masts “dressed off” with bushes so the boats would “intermingle” with the “impenetrable mass” of forest trees and matted vines between the vessels and the forts. Because of the intervening trees, the boats could not be seen from the forts, or fired through by cannon shot. Observers on the mast heads, however, easily could see the forts and direct fire, the mortars firing over the woods. As the bushes were blown off when firing the mortars, they were replaced. The camouflage worked. Never once during the bombardment was one of the vessels seen from the forts. *Westfield*, *Clifton* and *Miami* towed the mortar boats into position, while Lieutenant John Guest was sent ahead in *Owasco* to clear out confederate riflemen in the nearby bushes and to cover the mortar boats from batteries in the forts.

The lead vessel, *Norfolk Packet* (Lieutenant Watson Smith) of the 1st Division was placed on the west side of the river, 2,850 yards from Fort Jackson and 3,600 yards from Fort St. Philip, followed by, in order: *Oliver H. Lee* (Acting Master Washington Godfrey), *Para* (Acting Master Edward D. Furber), *C P Williams* (Acting Master Amos R. Langthorne), *Arletta* (Acting Master Thomas E. Smith), *William Bacon* (Acting Master William P. Rogers), *Sophronia* (Acting Master Lyman Bartholomew). These were followed by the 3rd Division: *John Griffith* (Acting Master Henry Brown and Division Commander, Lieutenant K. Randolph Bresse), *Horace Beals* (Acting Master George W. Summer), *Sarah Bruen* (Acting Master Abraham Christian), *Racer* (Acting Master Alvin Phinney), *Henry Janes* (Acting Master Lewis W. Pennington), *Dan Smith*, (Acting Master George W. Brown), *Sea Foam* (Acting Master Henry E. Williams).

The six vessels of the 2nd Division were placed on the northeast shore of the river. The lead vessel, *T A Ward* (Lieutenant Walter W. Queen) was placed 3,680 yards from Fort Jackson. She was followed by: *M J Carlton* (Acting Master Charles E. Jack), *Matthew Vassar* (Acting Master Hugh H. Savage), *George Mangham* (Acting Master John Collins), *Adolph Hugel* (Acting Master James Van Boskirk), *Sydney C Jones*, (Acting Master J. D. Graham), *Orvetta* (Acting Master Francis E. Blanchard). [In his report on May 3, Lt Queen states that the schooner, *Orvetta*, was on the west bank and not under his command.]

When the Mortar Flotilla was in place, Cdr Porter signaled commence firing, each boat firing every ten minutes. Both forts immediately responded with all their guns. At first, the forts' gunners did not have the range, the shells going over the vessels. Firing rapidly, the enemy guns began to get the range. Cdr Porter inquired of FO Farragut if he could send up some of his ships to draw fire from the forts. He dispatched *Sciota* and *Pinola*. *Owasco*, being at the head of the mortar fleet, had borne the brunt of the enemy fire for an hour and fifty minutes. Although she had not been hit, Cdr Porter went aboard and told Lt Guest to retire downriver, as FO Farragut had sent up reinforcements.

By 12:00 Noon, the vessels of Lt Queen's 2nd Division on the northeast shore were receiving rapid fire that was scoring hits on the boats. Cdr Porter went on board *T A Ward* and

had Lt Queen reposition his mortars. One 120-pounder shell passed through the cabin of *T A Ward*, damaging the magazine and exiting near the water line. Her rigging was also cut up by shells going through it. *George Mangham* had a 10-inch shell hit near her water line. Although Lt Queen and Master Collins, *T A Ward* and *George Mangham*, respectively, both objected, Cdr Porter moved them 200 yards downriver and out of range of the forts' guns. The forts' gunners did not notice they had moved and continued firing into their former positions for another 2-3 hours.

At 5:00 PM, Fort Jackson was in flames and had ceased firing. It was later learned that the citadel had been set afire by the mortars, burning the clothing of the enemy troops and destroying the commissary. The enemy troops were in fear of the magazine exploding. Cdr Porter said, that had he known this, he would have continued firing on the fort. However, his sailors had had nothing to eat or drink since daylight. Neither did he know how well the mortar beds and the vessels had fared during the day's firing. Cdr Porter later said he had made his only mistake of the day when he ordered cease fire a little after sunset.

The Mortar Flotilla fired over 1,400 shells during the day, unfortunately, many of which exploded in midair owing to defective fuses. No accident occurred from careless firing and the mortar beds were found not to have been damaged from the firing of the mortars.

The mortars resumed firing again the morning of the 19th. Guns from the forts tried their best, but without success, to dislodge the vessels from behind the protection of the forest. The mortars fired as rapidly as their gunners could properly load, the enemy returning the fire with his heavy guns, most of which went over the Union mortar boats. At about 9:00 AM, *Maria J Carlton* was sunk by a rifle shot that passed down through the deck and magazine, exiting through the bottom. Cdr Porter, on *Owasco*, was alongside when *Maria J Carlton* was hit, allowing many of her stores and weapons to be saved by transferring them to *Owasco*. As she sank, the mortar fired its last shot just as *Maria J Carlton* slipped below the water. Only the upper rail remained visible. Two men were wounded. Her captain, Master Jack, went aboard *T A Ward* to assist Lt Queen.

On the second day, firing from the forts "was rather severe." Cdr Porter felt the mortars should move farther down, but was persuaded from so ordering by Lt Smith. The Lieutenant wanted to remain close in and firing "until something was sunk." One man was killed on *Arletta*, by a 10-inch shot hitting between the stop of the mortar bed and the mortar. The mortar itself was out of commission for only two to three hours. One or two men were wounded in the 1st Division the second day. A fire was ignited by the mortars in Fort St. Philip the second day, destroying the officer quarters. Fire from the mortars periodically silenced the enemy guns. Again, the fuses were so bad that Cdr Porter gave up trying for areal explosions over the forts, instead, using full length fuses so the shell burst after entering the ground. The shells went 18-28 feet into the ground before exploding, the earth rising up and settling back down in place. This resulted in little damage to the forts, but had a demoralizing effect on the gun crews. When shells struck the ramparts, they knocked off large pieces of the parapets and shattered the casements.

On the night of April 20, FO Farragut sent an expedition (*Itasca*, *Kineo* and *Pinola*), under command of Commander Henry H. Bell, upriver to break the chain barricade across the river. All mortar boats were ordered to fire on the two forts while the operation was in progress. This they did, so rapidly that often nine shells were in the air at a given time. The three vessels were

discovered and fired upon as they came within 3,800 yards of the forts. Fire from the mortars, soon silenced the enemy guns, however. After the chain was cut sufficiently to let ships through and as the vessels began moving back downriver, *Itasca* was swept ashore by the current. *Pinola* was able to get her off, the ships returning safely back to their anchorages.

Fire from the forts became especially rapid on the 21st, on one occasion 125 shells fell close to the vessels within an hour and a half. Only *Para* and *Norfolk Packet* were hit, however. The former had her rigging and masts damaged, the latter, a shell going through her decks and some of the rigging and crosstrees were cut up. One crewman wounded.

Because the forts' batteries were firing at the steamer masts sticking above the trees, Cdr Porter deemed it prudent to move three of the steamers two to three lengths farther downriver. Although the officers were annoyed to have to yield even an inch, Cdr Porter had to make certain his vessels were not destroyed. Divisions 1 and 2 ceased firing at 2:30 AM, the 21st; the 3rd Division continued firing until 4:00 AM.

When ammunition began running low on the 22nd and 23rd of April, the steamers went downriver to pick up ammunition to resupply the mortar boats. Although shells from the forts flew all about them, exploding in the air, falling alongside, and tearing up trees in the woods, none of the mortars was hit. For three days and nights, the officers and crewmen had little time to eat other than a few "comfortable meals." Cdr Porter divided the divisions into three watches of four hours each, firing from one division about 168 shells a watch, all together 1,500 over a period of 24 hours. The 23rd, the 2nd Division fired 12:00 AM to 4:00 AM, the 1st and 3rd Divisions, 4:00-8:00 AM. Resting of the crews resulted in more accurate firing. So fatigued were the officers and crews, they were seen "lying fast asleep on deck" while the mortar next to them thundered away, shaking everything around them "like an earthquake." The Confederates brought up two heavy rifled guns to bear on the head of the mortar boats. Fortunately, sometime the 23rd, a shell destroyed largest of the rifle guns.

Cdr Porter suggested to FO Farragut that he move his ships past Forts Jackson and St. Philip the night of April 23-24. The flotilla crewmen were almost overcome with fatigue and he was not sure his mortars would hold up, if passage were delayed any longer. FO Farragut agreed with Cdr Porter, the attack was set to begin shortly after midnight April 24.

The order to move toward the forts was given at 2:00 AM the 24th. The Mortar Flotilla steamers were sent up to enfilade a strong water battery of six guns and the barbette guns commanding the approach to the forts. When FO Farragut's flagship weighed anchor, the steamers, *Harriet Lane* (Lieutenant W. D. Wainwright) in the lead, followed by *Westfield* (Cdr William B. Renshaw), *Owasco* (Lt John Guest), *Clifton*, (Lieutenant C. D. Baldwin), *J P Jackson* (Lieutenant Selium E. Woodward) and *Miami* (Lieutenant H. Davis Harrell) began moving up, 70 fathoms apart. *Harriet Lane* came to anchor 500 yards off Fort Jackson, as the trailing vessels closed up. At 3:28, the Gulf Squadron Ships, *Cayuga* leading, were approaching the forts. The enemy batteries opened fire on the Gulf ships at 3:45, the mortars returning fire, beginning at 3:50. As soon as *Hartford*, *Brooklyn* and *Richmond* passed the flotilla, the steamers opened up with shrapnel. Ten to fifteen minutes later, the forts returned "a most terrific fire on the ships." The Mortar Flotilla at the same time opening a "vigorous fire" on the forts. In a few minutes the firing became general and for over an hour, the noise was deafening. Because the forts' gunners assumed the ships were farther out, almost all their shells went over the Mortar Flotilla vessels. One crewman was killed and one wounded on *Harriet Lane*. None of the other ships was hit.

The steamer *John P Jackson* had been commandeered by FO Farragut to tow *Portsmouth* ahead of the mortar boats, to enfilade the water batteries at Fort St. Philip, but as the two vessels got underway, the current carried them downstream. Lt Woodworth persisted, however, towing *Portsmouth* into position, 900 yards from the fort, but arriving after the Gulf vessels had passed the fort. The enemy batteries opened on *John P Jackson* and *Portsmouth*, but the gunners were so fatigued by the constant bombardment, their aim was inaccurate. The two vessels then drifted down and out of range of the enemy fire. *Portsmouth* had a few shots into her hull and rigging, with one or two killed or wounded. *John P Jackson* was not hit.

After the last ship, *Iroquois*, had passed the forts, at 4:45 AM, the signal was made for the Mortar Flotilla to cease fire and retire downriver. The flotilla's mission had been accomplished. Immediately thereafter, Cdr Porter sent Lt Guest and *Harriet Lane*, under a flag of truce, up to the forts, demanding their surrender. The commander of the forts, Brigadier General Joseph K. Duncan, answered, "The demand is inadmissible." Later in the afternoon, Cdr Porter, in accordance with orders from Secretary Welles, forwarded by FO Farragut, sent six mortar boats downriver to prepare for sea and blockading service: *Arletta*, *C P Williams*, *Oliver H Lee*, *T A Ward*, *George Mangham*, and *Dan Smith*.

Cdr Porter loaded ammunition on the remaining mortars in preparation for sending them upriver again. Before this was accomplished, FO Farragut informed Cdr Porter his fleet had safely passed the forts. Unknowingly, however, FO Farragut had failed to destroy four steamers and a 4,000 ton steam battery (*CSS Louisiana*) armed with 16 heavy guns, all now under protection of the forts. The Mortar Flotilla remained below the forts and began throwing shells on *Louisiana* and into Fort Jackson, to keep pressure on the enemy. There was no response from the forts.

Cdr Porter ordered six schooners to the rear of Fort Jackson to blockade the bayous so the garrison could not escape or obtain supplies. The commander determined to make another attempt to get the forts to surrender. He sent Lt Guest up once more to demand surrender of the forts. Cdr Porter offered to let the men retain their side arms, but they had to agree not to serve against the United States until formally exchanged. Also, the forts should be given up undamaged, including the cannon, muskets, provisions, all "munitions of war", the vessels under the guns of the forts, and all other public property.

By then, men in the forts, dissatisfied about being surrounded and with no hope of success, were bordering on insurrection. A representative of Gen Duncan, under a flag of truce, came aboard *Harriet Lane* on the 29th proposing to accept the terms of surrender for Forts Jackson and St. Philip. Cdr Porter immediately moved up in *Harriet Lane*, along with *Westfield*, and the Gulf Squadron vessels, *Winona* and *Kennebec*. He invited Gen Duncan and Lt Colonel Edward Higgins (commanding officer of Forts Jackson and St. Philip), and any others they wanted present, to come aboard *Harriet Lane*. The capitulation was drawn up and signed in the ship's cabin. The steamers and *Louisiana* were not included in the surrender document, because the Confederate Army was not responsible for the Naval ships. As the capitulation document was being drawn up, an officer came below telling the group that two steamers lying alongside *Louisiana* had set her afire.

Cdr Porter had assumed *Louisiana* had also surrendered, but he was denied the opportunity to capture her. She was fully ablaze before the fire was discovered. Soon shells in the guns began exploding and when the ropes tying her to the bank burned through, the vessel began floating down river. As *Louisiana* came abreast of Fort St. Philip, she exploded, scattering

fragments in all directions. When the smoke cleared, the ship was nowhere to be seen, having sunk to the bottom of the river.

The forts formally surrendered the next day, April 29. Cdr Renshaw accepted the surrender of Fort Jackson, Lieutenant Edward T. Nichols (*Winona*), Fort St. Philip. The terms of the capitulation were followed. The forts were delivered without further damage and nothing had been removed. Cdr Porter then turned his attention to the three steamers [Note. There is no mention in the reports fate of the fourth steamer.] half a mile upriver, under command of Commander John K. Mitchell, one of which had been scuttled. Lt Wainwright, in *Harriet Lane*, was sent upriver to fire over the ships. When he did, Cdr Mitchell surrendered the two remaining ships.

Cdr Porter then joined the six mortar boats and some of the steamers at Ship Island to partake in blockading the western Gulf ports and other duties. On May 7, the steamers were sent to Mobile Bay to determine possible sites to deploy mortars and to buoy the approaches to the harbor should West Gul Blockading ships need to enter the bay. Unfortunately, weather conditions were such the steamers were forced to return to Ship Island. The flotilla vessels continued participating in blockading duties until June 3, when FO Farragut alerted Cdr Porter he was going to attack Vicksburg and needed the help of the Mortar Flotilla.

Casualties.

Killed.—James Laver, ordinary seaman on board the *Arietta*; native of Isle of Jersey; struck by an 8-inch solid shot on April 18.

Slightly wounded, disabled.—Michael Brady, carpenter's mate of *Norfolk Packet* red 32; native of New York; struck by a fragment of shell on April 19.

Three others [Not named.] on *Maria J Carlton* were wounded.

Ship Reports

[Note. Some of the timing, distances and other details in the reports of the Cdr Porter and mortar division commanders vary from those in ship captains' reports. I have presented the information as given in the reports. There is no way of determining as to why the differences.]

Steamers

[Note. Although taking part in the action, a report for *Octorara* was not filed.]

Owasco (Lt John Guest)

Owasco moved up past the mortar ships the morning of April 13 to protect *Sachem* and the coastal survey men as they surveyed the river from Willys Jump up to Forts Jackson and St. Philip. When *Owasco* was in position, the surveyors went ashore in her gig and began working along the left bank. As *Owasco* was protecting the survey men and boats, the remainder of the Mortar Flotilla steamers passed her by, going up to provide distracting fire on Forts Jackson and St. Philip. *Owasco* fired canister into the bushes on the left bank, clearing away Confederate

riflemen located there. The next day, work continued on the right bank, up to the forts, also supported by *Westfield* (Cdr Renshaw). As *Owasco's* gig shoved off Lt Guest saw three enemy steamers, within gunshot upriver. *Owasco* fired four shells from the 11-inch gun and three from the rifle gun. The steamers moved upstream and out of range of *Owasco's* guns. On the 15th, the party was landed on the left bank to finish the survey on that side of the river. *Miami* (Lieutenant A. Davis Harwell) provided additional support that day. After the surveyors had finished, *Owasco* fired an 11-inch shell into Fort Jackson to try the range. The fort fired twice in return, one shell passed over the ship, landing a quarter of a mile, astern. The other shell landed short, just ahead of *Owasco*.

On the 16th, *Owasco* and Cdr Porter, accompanied by three mortar schooners moved up near the forts for the mortars to check the range of Fort Jackson. The next day *Owasco* was engaged in towing mortar schooners into position below Forts Jackson and St. Philip. On the 18th, she steamed up beyond the mortar schooners on the right bank. When at 9:05 AM, the forts fired two shots at her, *Owasco* returned fire with her 11-inch gun, both forts keeping up "sharp firing" on her. Lt Guest concentrated his fire on the closer Fort Jackson. Twenty minutes later, the lead mortar schooner opened fire, followed by the others. At 10:00, *Iroquois*, followed by the other Gulf Squadron, ships moved up to support the Mortar Flotilla, dividing the enemy fire among the Union vessels. *Owasco* maintained her position and fired for the next two hours and forty-five minutes.

Having expended all her ammunition, *Owasco* went down to the ordnance ship, *Sportsman*, and loaded up on ammunition. Unfortunately, the ship had no cartridge bags. The crew spent the night sewing up and filling cylinders. By the morning of the 19th, *Owasco* was ready for action. She moved up to her former position, once more firing into Fort Jackson. Again, the return fire from the forts was "very sharp." After firing 55, 11-inch shells and 12 from the rifle gun, Cdr Porter ordered *Owasco* to cease fire and withdraw down river. She spent April 20-23 resupplying ammunition to the mortar schooners, often under continuing heavy fire from the forts.

When the general attack started at 3:15 AM the 24th, *Owasco* took her position third in line of the steamers. She opened fire with shrapnel at 4:00 AM continuing a deliberate fire until 4:45, taking care not to fire in the direction of the Gulf ships which were passing the forts. Cdr Porter signaled "retire from action" at the same time he signaled cease fire. As *Owasco* started to move downstream, Lt Guest observed *Itasca* (Lieutenant Charles H. B. Caldwell) running into the shore, with smoke issuing from her. Assuming her to be on fire he immediately steered *Owasco* alongside with a fire hose ready. Lt Caldwell informed him the ship was not on fire. A shot had gone through one of her boilers. Lt Guest sent two of his boats to assist *Itasca* and moved on downstream.

At 9:30 AM, Lt Guest was ordered to fly a flag of truce and move up to demand the surrender of Forts Jackson and St. Philip. Just as *Owasco* came within range of the forts, Fort Jackson fired two shots ahead of her. Lt Guest stopped the engine and sheered across stream. Then, Fort St. Philip fired a shot which passed over *Owasco*. Lt Guest moved his ship downstream and anchored next to *Harriet Lane*, out of range of the forts. An hour later, a boat came from Fort Jackson flying a flag of truce. Lt Guest went out to meet and deliver the demand for

surrender. The officer apologized for firing on the Union flag, taking the demand for surrender and returning back to Fort Jackson. He returned shortly saying the demand was rejected.

On the 25th and 26th, *Owasco* was engaged in reconnoitering the river. She again, on the 27th, was sent under a flag of truce, to deliver the written demand for the surrender of the forts. *Owasco* then moved down to Head of Passes to overhaul some of her machinery.

Harriet Lane (Lieutenant J. M. Wainwright) [reported only for 24th]

The crew of *Harriet Lane* was called to order at 1:30 AM the 24th, in preparation to get underway. The forts' batteries opened fire on the Gulf Squadron ships at 3:45, the mortars returning fire, beginning at 3:50. At the same time, *Harriet Lane* and the rest of the steamers moved rapidly upriver. Soon after passing the lead ship of the mortars, *Harriet Lane* came under fire from the forts. Although the shells were fired rapidly, they were high, going over the steamers. *Harriet Lane* dropped anchor 500 yards from Fort Jackson and opened fire on the fort, with shell and shrapnel, at 4:20. At 4:30, a shot hit *Harriet Lane*, carrying away one of the stanchions and part of the railing between the wheelhouses. Fragments of the shell killed a crewman and wounded another manning the 9-inch gun on the quarterdeck.

Harriet Lane maintained her position, firing rapidly until the last Gulf ship had past beyond the range of the forts' batteries at 4:50. The signal to retire downriver was made at 4:50. Four rockets were fired by the Flag Ship at 4:55 AM, signaling cease fire. *Harriet Lane* ceased firing and came to anchor astern of the Mortar ships.

John P Jackson (Lieutenant Selium E. Woodworth)

John P Jackson, in response to Cdr Porter's 7:00 PM the 23rd, order to tow *Portsmouth* (Commander Samuel Swartwout) up to enfilade Fort Jackson the next morning, dropped down and made fast to *Portsmouth*. Just after midnight, *Portsmouth* broke loose and drifted down river. Because she had not yet gained a full head of steam, it was 3:30 AM before *John P Jackson* was able to retrieve *Portsmouth* and start upstream. When in the assigned position, Cdr Swartwout ordered Lt Woodworth to stop. *Portsmouth* dropped anchor and *John P Jackson* cast off. A masked water battery, joined by guns from both forts, immediately fired on the two vessels. *John P Jackson* opened up on the battery with her port guns and the 9-inch gun, keeping up the fire until out of range of the fort. She was struck twice by shell fragments, but was not damaged and incurred no casualty. *John P Jackson* dropped anchor remained below the forts.

Miami (Lieutenant A. Davis Harwell)

On the 18th, *Miami* began moving three mortar boats upriver, into position below Forts Jackson and St. Philip. The forts' guns opened fire on the Union vessels at 8:50. *Miami* fired her guns three times in return before moving down out of range of the enemy guns. She steamed downriver at 5:30 AM, the 19th, put a hawser to a mortar ship and towed her into position. From then, through the 23rd, *Miami* joined the rest of the Mortar Flotilla mortars and steamers in firing on the two forts.

Miami weighed anchor at 2:00 AM, the 24th, took up her assigned position in the line of battle and at 4:30 AM, when within range, opened fire on Fort Jackson. She continued firing until ordered to cease firing at 4:50 AM. Although enemy shells fell all around her, *Miami* was not hit. Shortly after 12:00 Noon, Cdr Porter ordered Lt Harwell to take on board Gen Butler and his staff

and move to Pilot Town. There, he picked up transports and proceeded to Isle au Breton Bay where a regiment of Gen Butler's troops were taken aboard the transports. The Army troops were landed at Quarantine Station, above and to the rear of Fort St. Philip. *Miami* continued ferrying troops until the forts surrendered the 29th. She then transported 750 troops to New Orleans, arriving there on May 1.

Clifton (Lieutenant C. H. Baldwin)

Clifton spent the day of April 17 towing mortar schooners into position to fire on Forts Jackson and St. Philip. For the next six days she was employed in resupplying the mortar vessels shells and powder, as well guarding the mortars from fire rafts during the night. Much of the time, *Clifton* was under constant fire from the enemy batteries. She was not hit, however.

Clifton got underway morning of the 24th, moving into position in the line of battle and proceeded up near Fort Jackson. She opened fire with the two forward 9-inch guns and at times with the 9-inch after pivot gun and 32-pounder forward broadside gun. When FO Farragut's Gulf vessels had passed beyond the forts, *Clifton* ceased firing and drifted down out of range of the forts' guns.

Upon the surrender of the forts on the 28th, *Clifton* was sent 16 miles downriver to bring up a portion of Gen Butler's Army forces lying there. On the afternoon of the 28th, with five companies on *Clifton*, she towed a large transport carrying 1,300 troops, all under command of Brigadier General John W. Phelps, upriver. The Army troops were put ashore at both forts. Lt Baldwin then put crews aboard two captured gunboats and transferred 250 prisoners from the gunboats to the Union officer in charge of Fort St. Philip. Later, she towed a transport with "a large number" of troops aboard upriver to New Orleans, arriving the 1st of May.

Westfield (Commander William B. Renshaw)

Westfield spent the morning of April 18 towing mortar schooners upriver to their assigned positions below Forts Jackson and St. Philip. That done, Cdr Porter directed Cdr Renshaw to move farther upriver and drive away an enemy steamer that was approaching the lead mortar schooner. The steamer turned and fled upstream on the approach of *Westfield*. Being within easy range of Fort St. Philip, *Westfield* fired ten shots into the fort with her rifle. At the same time, the fort threw rifle and 10-inch shot and shell "thickly around" her. *Westfield* was not hit, however. From the 19th through the 23rd *Westfield* was busy supplying the mortars with ammunition.

Westfield, in company with the rest of the Mortar Flotilla steamers, moved up the morning of the 24th to engage Forts Jackson and St. Philip. At 3:45 AM, *Westfield*, from 600 yards out, opened fire with all her guns on Fort St. Philip. She remained there firing until Cdr Porter signaled cease fire. *Westfield* then steamed downriver beyond the range of the forts. In spite of the heavy cannonading from the two forts, *Westfield* was not hit, the shells going over her.

Mortar Schooners

Henry James (Acting Master Lewis W. Pennington)

Henry James did not participate in the attacks on Forts Jackson and St. Philip. On April 25, Master Pennington was ordered, by Cdr Porter, to prepare for sea, which he did. After receiving

additional orders on the 26th, *Henry James* sailed to blockade Bastian Bay, Northwest of the mouth of the Mississippi River, and nearby Fort Livingston. There, she was joined by the three-masted *Kittatinny*, of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, and the Mortar Flotilla schooners, *George Mangham* and *Orvetta*. At 7:30 AM the next morning, a flag of truce was flying over the fort. Boats from *Kittatinny* and *Henry James* took crewmen to the fort. They found that the 330 troops who were stationed there had departed earlier, under command of Colonel Théard, for New Orleans. Master Pennington remained at the fort until 4:00 PM, the 27th, when he moved *Henry James* back to blockading Bastion Bay, leaving *Kittatinny* to occupy the fort.

First Division Lieutenant Watson Smith

Norfolk Packet, at the head of the other mortar schooners of the 1st Division, on the 18th, moved up the left bank to within 2,950 yards of Fort Jackson and 4,260 of Fort St. Philip. There, she anchored a little offshore, with lines lashed from the bow to adjacent trees. The other boats of the division were similarly tied up behind her, in close order, to a distance of 3,620 yards below Fort Jackson. *Norfolk Packet* and the other mortars began firing at 10:00 AM, each ship firing once every ten minutes until the flagship, *Harriet Lane*, signaled cease fire at 6:30 PM. One man on *Aletta* was killed.

At 7:30 AM, April 19, the 1st Division mortars commenced firing again, once every twenty minutes, until 8:45 AM, when the interval was shortened to ten minutes. The mortars ceased firing at 4:00 PM, the division, in watches, continued firing the rest of the night at ten-minute intervals.

From the 20th through the 23rd, firing continued by divisions, in watches, at ten-minute intervals except from 8:00 PM until 12:00 Midnight, the 20th, when the entire flotilla fired rapidly to protect an expedition to cut the chain barrier near the forts. Beginning the 21st, fire from Fort St. Philip was becoming troublesome. *Norfolk Packet* and *Oliver H. Lee*, behind her, were directed to fire on the fort. No further casualties were incurred by the 1st Division mortars April 20-23 and there was no damage, other than occasional cutting of the rigging by shell fragments.

At 3:30 AM the 24th, as Adm Farragut's ships began moving past Forts Jackson and St. Philip, the Mortar Flotilla began firing rapidly on the two forts. By 4:45, with a few exceptions, the Gulf ships had passed beyond the forts and the Mortar Flotilla ceased firing.

***Norfolk Packet* (Lieutenant Watson Smith)**

At 9:20 AM, the 18th, *Norfolk Packet* fired her mortar on Fort Jackson from 3,800 yards. At 9:30 AM, she pulled anchor and ran up to within 3,340 yards of the fort and opened fire at 10:00. The fort first fired on the mortars at 8:40. *Norfolk Packet* continued firing at ten minute intervals until 6:30 PM, when the cease fire signal was run up. A shell from the fort struck *Norfolk Packet* near the mainmast head.

On the 19th, *Norfolk Packet* commenced firing at 7:30 AM, every 20 minutes, until 8:45, when she began firing at ten-minute intervals, continuing until 4:00 PM. At 1:15 PM, a shell exploded near the masthead, shooting away the main throat halyard block and cutting two shrouds of the main rigging. A carpenter's mate was wounded by the blast. She began firing again at 8:00 PM, at Fort Jackson, from 3,340 yards, continuing until 12:00 Midnight.

On the 20th, *Norfolk Packet* opened fire on Fort Jackson, from 3,340 yards, at 8:00 AM, firing every ten minutes until 4:00 PM and every 20 min from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. At 8:00 PM, she resumed firing, every five minutes, until 12:00 Midnight. Fort St. Philip opened fire on *Norfolk Packet* at 9:30 PM, the shots falling close by, but did not hit her.

Norfolk Packet reopened firing at 4:00 AM the 21st, one shell every ten minutes until 8:00 AM, when ceased fire was signaled. She fired again, at ten-minutes intervals, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. On the 22nd, *Norfolk Packet* fired on Fort Jackson from 12:00 AM the until 8:00 AM. At 9:10 AM, a nine-inch shell from Fort Jackson struck alongside and exploded, throwing fragments in all directions. One fragment cut the spring stay and penetrated both decks, landing in the hold. It also cut her best hawser in several places. *Norfolk Packet* resumed firing from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, now on Fort St. Philip, from 4,760 yards. At 8:00 PM, she fired on Fort Jackson, continuing until Midnight. *Norfolk Packet* had fired every ten minutes throughout the day and night. There had been no reply from either fort. On the 23rd, she fired on Fort St. Philip every twelve minutes from 8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon. At 6:00 PM, she reopened on Fort St. Philip every ten minutes. Again, there was no reply from the forts.

At 3:30 AM, the 24th, *Norfolk Packet* began firing, continuing to do so until the last Gulf Squadron ship had passed beyond the range of the enemy guns, at 4:45. *Norfolk Packet* broke loose from her anchoring at 5:00 AM and ran afoul of No. 4 mortar boat [There is no matching of numbers and names in the reports.], carrying away *Norfolk Packet*'s starboard rail and boat davit, as she drifted a mile downriver. *Clifton* took her in tow at 9:45 AM, leaving her at anchor astern of the 3rd Division mortars. *Norfolk Packet* moved downriver with the rest of the mortar ships at 5:30 PM, coming to anchor with her port anchor off Pilot Town, at 8:00 PM.

Oliver H Lee (Acting Master Washington Godfrey)

Oliver H Lee upped anchor at 7:30 AM the 18th and ran a hawser, to the steamer [Name not recorded.] that would tow her to her assigned position, departing upriver at 8:15. She arrived within 3,300 yards of Fort Jackson at 9:00, dropped anchor, ran a hawser to a tree ashore and began firing. *Oliver H Lee* fired on Fort Jackson until 5:00 PM, expending 58 shells. All hands were called to quarters at 5:30 AM the 19th and fired on Fort Jackson until 2:00 PM. About three hours later, she raised anchor, drifted 500 yards downstream and came to anchor. At 8:00 PM, *Oliver H Lee* pulled up the anchor and ran a hawser to a steamer that towed her back into position, 3,200 yards below Fort Jackson. She dropped the starboard anchor, ran a hawser ashore and commenced firing into the fort. At 12:00 Midnight she ceased firing, remaining in position. She fired a total of 51 shells the 19th.

Oliver H Lee began firing on both Forts Jackson and St. Philip, starting at 8:00 AM, the 20th, continuing until 7:00 PM. She resumed firing from 9:00 PM until 12:00 Midnight, this time on Fort Jackson. A total of 72 shells were expended this day. The crew was called to quarters at 4:00 AM the 21st and fired on Fort Jackson at intervals throughout the day, for a total of 28 shells. On the 22nd, *Oliver H Lee* began firing on Fort Jackson at 12:00 AM, continuing until 4:00 AM. A shell exploded over the deck at 7:00 AM. The crew then replaced the green tree branches that had be blown away when firing the mortar. At 9:30, she upped anchor, drifted 200 yards downstream to anchor again, 3,440 yards from Fort Jackson. From there fired on the fort. At 4:45 PM, the anchor broke loose and the tide took her across Sophronia's bow. Master Godfrey signaled for a steamer to tow her back into position. *Oliver H Lee* was in position at 9:00 PM and

began firing at 9:30. She fired until 12:00 Midnight, having expended 67 shells. The next day, *Oliver H Lee* fired 31 rounds on Fort Jackson from 8:00 AM until 8:00 PM.

On the 24th, all hands were called to quarters at 1:30 AM, in readiness for firing in support of FO Farragut's Gulf Squadron ships passage of Forts Jackson and St. Philip. The Gulf boats began passing the mortar boats at 2:30. At 3:00, a shot was fired from one of the forts. The Mortar Flotilla was ordered to commence firing. *Oliver H Lee* ceased firing at 7:03, as FO Farragut's vessels had passed beyond the range of the forts' guns. She dropped down a bit more below the forts at 7:00 AM and went to anchor. At 5:00 PM *Oliver H Lee* was ordered to sail downriver to South West Pass. She fired 16 shells the 24th.

Para (Acting Master's Mate Edward G. Furber)

Para was taken in tow by *Clifton* at 8:00 AM the 18th, moving her to anchor, at 10:30 on the port bank, below Fort Jackson. She fired upon the fort at 11:00, continuing until 2:10 PM, resuming again at 3:00 PM, continuing for the next five hours. On the 19th, *Para* fired on both Forts Jackson and St. Philip from 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM and again from 8:00 PM until 12:00 Midnight. On the 20th, *Para* fired from 4:00 AM to 8:00 PM and 10:00 PM until 1:00 AM the 21st. At 4:00 AM, the 21st, *Para* resumed firing on Fort Jackson. A shell exploded in the mortar, because of a faulty fuse at 9:00 AM, disabling the gun. At the same time a shell from the fort struck and severely damaged the foremast. The mortar was ready to resume firing at 12:00 Midnight. She kept up firing until 4:00 AM, the 22nd. *Para* once again began firing at 12:00 Noon, continuing to 4:00 PM and firing again from 8:00 PM until 12:00 Midnight. The 23rd, *Para* fired from 8:00 AM until 12:00 Noon. On the 24th, she commenced firing on Fort Jackson at 2:45 AM, as FO Farragut's ships began passing the forts. At 7:10 AM, she ceased firing. *Para* upped anchor at 5:00 PM and moved downriver, coming to anchor on the port bank [not report where] at 10:45 PM.

C P Williams (Acting Master Amos Langthorne)

C P Williams was towed into her firing position at 9:00 AM the 17th and began firing at 8:00 AM the next morning. She kept firing on Forts Jackson and St. Philip until Cdr Porter signaled cease fire at 6:00 PM. *C P Williams* resumed firing at 8:00 AM the 19th, continuing at ten-minute intervals until 8:00 PM. She was then ordered to fire at twenty-minute intervals until 10:00 PM, at which time *C P Williams* started firing at ten-minute intervals until 12:00 Midnight. Most of her fire was directed at Fort Jackson. On the 20th, *C P Williams* fired as fast as the gun crew could reload from 6:00 AM until 12:00 Noon. The 21st, she fired every ten minutes from 4:00 AM until 12:00 Midnight, except for 4:00 to 6:00 PM, when she fired every five minutes. The 22nd, *C P Williams* fired every ten minutes from 12:00 AM to 4:00 AM. She resumed firing, at ten-minute intervals at 12:00 Noon, ceasing fire at 4:00 PM. *C P Williams* began firing at five-minutes at 8:00 PM and ceased firing at 12:00 Midnight. The next day, *C P Williams* fired every ten minutes, 8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, then at five-minute intervals until 12:00 Midnight.

On the 24th, *C P Williams* began firing at 2:45 AM as FO Farragut's ships moved past the forts. She ceased firing at 4:30 AM and at 8:00 AM, upped anchor and stood downriver. At 12:00 Noon the 25th, she came to anchor off Pilot Town, remaining there until at 4:00 PM, when *C P Williams* was ordered to get underway to blockade Berwick Bay.

William Bacon (Acting Master William P. Rogers)

William Bacon was fired on by Forts Jackson and St. Philip at 8:45 AM the 18th. The flagship signaled open fire at 9:30 AM, *William Bacon* firing her first shot at 10:00 AM, continuing to fire on both forts until 6:30 PM. The ship was then secured for the night, having fired 39 shells. *William Bacon* commenced firing again at 6:40 AM the next morning, Cdr Porter ordering, at 8:30, the mortars to fire at ten-minute intervals. The forts began returning the fire at 8:45. *William Bacon* continued firing until ordered to stop at 4:20 PM. She resumed firing, at ten-minute intervals, from 8:00 PM to 12:00 Midnight.

All hands were called out to make ready for firing at 6:30 AM, the 20th. Firing commenced on Fort Jackson at 8:00 AM. The Confederates began returning the fire at 9:35. *William Bacon* continued firing until 12:00 Midnight. She resumed firing at 4:00 AM the 21st, continuing to 8:00 AM, not resuming until 4:20 PM and then for only an hour and a half. At 12:00 AM, the 22nd, she began firing again on both forts until 4:00 AM. All first Division mortars, including *William Bacon*, began firing at 12:00 Noon, ceasing at 4:00 PM. At 8:00 PM she resumed firing, ceasing at 12:00 Midnight. On the 23rd, *William Bacon* fired 8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon and 6:00-8:00 PM.

William Bacon commenced firing at 4:00 AM, the 24th, as the Gulf Squadron ships went upriver and attacked the two forts. She ceased firing at 5:30, the Union ships having passed the forts. Repairs were made to the boat during the rest of the day. At 5:30 AM, the 25th, *William Bacon*, along with the rest of the 1st Division mortars, upped her anchor and dropped down to South West Pass. At 2:30 PM the mortars were ordered to set up the rigging and prepare for sea.

Arletta (Acting Master Thomas E. Smith)

At 3:30 PM April 16, Cdr Porter came aboard *Arletta*, and sailed upriver, coming to anchor one and three quarters miles below the forts at 4:00 PM. Both Forts Jackson and St. Philip fired on her, but all shells fell short. *Arletta* fired five shells to establish the range. Three fell inside the fort. At 5:00 PM, *Arletta* weighed anchor and stood downstream to anchor with the other mortars. At 6:00 AM, the 17th, a large fire raft was seen coming down the river. *Arletta's* crew manned boats and towed it ashore, away from the Mortar Flotilla vessels. The crew was engaged in covering the masts and rigging with tree limbs in the afternoon when another large fire raft was observed heading for the mortar boats. Again, *Arletta* sent out boats to tow it ashore and extinguish the fire.

Early morning of the next day, *Arletta* was towed up into range of the forts and at 9:00 AM and ordered to commence firing. The forts returned the fire, the shells, again, falling short. An 8-inch solid shot hit the face of the mortar at 4:30 PM, knocking the trucks off the mortar and causing "other trifling damage." One crewman, Seaman James Lebar, was mortally wounded. *Arletta* ceased firing at 5:30 PM having fired 96 shells. At 9:20 AM, April 19, *Arletta* began firing, one shell every 20 minutes. Return enemy fire did not hit *Arletta*. She ceased firing at 12:00 Midnight. *Arletta* fired 68 rounds during the day's engagement. On the 20nd, *Arletta* fired from 8:00 AM until 12:00 Midnight, expending 78 rounds. Return fire from the forts did not hit her.

On the 21st, *Arletta* began firing at 4:00 AM, firing five shells before running out of ammunition. At 4:00 PM, *Arletta* received 48 13-inch shells from *Owasco* and fired until 5:00 PM. On the 22nd, *Arletta* fired on both forts from 12:00 AM to 4:00 AM, on Fort St. Philip, 12:00 Noon to 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM to 12:00 Midnight on Fort Jackson. She fired a total of 90 rounds on the 22nd. The next day, *Arletta* fired 36 rounds.

On the 24th, *Arletta* commenced firing on Fort Jackson at 3:30 AM, as FO Farragut's Gulf Squadron ships began moving upriver to pass the forts. The Gulf ships having moved up beyond the range of the two forts, she ceased firing at 5:00 AM, after expending 22 rounds. At 5:00 PM *Arletta* got underway to move downriver, anchoring at the forks of the river in South West Passage.

Sophronia (Acting Master Lyman Bartholomew)

At 8:15 AM, the 17th, a fire ship came down toward the Union ships. *Sophronia* sent out her first and second cutters to intercept the ship. The crews put out the fire and towed her ashore. The next morning, *Sophronia* moved upriver at 8:00 AM, coming to anchor and tying up to the shore 3,000 yards below Fort Jackson. Fort Jackson opened fire at 9:00 AM. Two Mortar Flotilla steamers returned the fire, the mortars joining in at 10:00, firing once every ten minutes. *Sophronia* ceased firing at 5:30 PM, having fired 60 shells. On the 19th, *Sophronia* fired from 7:00 AM until 4:00 PM and again from 8:00 PM to 12:00 Midnight, firing a total of 88 rounds during the day. On the 20th she fired from 8:00 AM until 8:00 PM, rested for two hours and resumed firing until 12:00 Midnight. *Sophronia* fired 81 shells the 20th. The next day she fired 4:00-8:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM, a total of 33 shells. The 22nd, she fired 12:00 AM-4:00 AM, 12:00 Noon-4:00 PM and from 8 PM to 12:00 Midnight. Ninety-three shells were fired. The 23rd, she fired 30 shells from 8:00 AM-12:00 Noon and 6:00-8:00 PM.

On the 24th *Sophronia* commenced firing at 3:30 AM, as FO Farragut's Gulf ships began moving up to pass the two forts. She continued firing until 5:00 AM (29 shells), when the ships had passed up and beyond the forts. *Sophronia* dropped downriver at 11:00 AM and anchored near the flagship until 4:00 PM when ordered to drop on down and anchor at Pilot Town, arriving there at 5:00 AM the 25th.

Second Division
Lieutenant William W. Queen

T A Ward was at the head of the 2nd Division mortars as they were towed into position, on the eastern bank. She came to anchor at 8:30 AM, April 18, 3,900 yards below the fort. The rest of the division followed, in order: *Matthew Vassar*, *George Mangham*, *Adolph Hugel*, *Maria J Carlton*, and *Sidney C Jones*. *Orvetta* had been assigned to the western bank, thus not under command of Lt Queen for this engagement.

Both Forts Jackson and St. Philip immediately opened fire on the Union vessels. At 8:45, the mortars began firing back at Fort Jackson, as the shells from the fort fell all around the boats. *T A Ward* was hit causing considerable damage. She dropped 300 yards down, followed by the three boats behind her. Lt Queen transferred to *Sidney C Jones* as the mortars moved down. As soon as they were in their new positions, all four mortars actively engaged the fort again. There was now no intervening trees or other obstructions to shield the target from the boats. The gunners could observe the effects of each shot. The division kept firing all day, not stopping even

to eat. At 5:30 PM, smoke was rising from a building outside the fort and shortly thereafter, three fires were seen inside the fort, soon coalescing into one large fire, engulfing the citadel. The signal to cease fire was raised on *Harriet Lane* at 6:00 PM.

Cdr Porter signaled at 9:00 PM for the 2nd division to drop down 800 yards and be ready to move to the opposite side of the river early the next morning. The ships were towed across the river the morning of the 19th and by 8:30 AM, all had resumed firing into Fort Jackson. The Gulf Squadron ship, *Hartford*, moved up and anchored off the beam of *T A Ward*, but when *Hartford* saw she was drawing enemy fire on the mortars (all falling short), she moved back down out of range of the fort's guns. Shot and shell from the fort fell all around the mortar vessels, but save for one, did no damage to the mortars. About 10:AM, *Maria J Carlton* was struck by a shot which passed through her magazine and out through the bottom, sinking her. The division ceased firing at 12: 00 Midnight, continuing firing by watches, each division taking a watch.

The 20th was "uneventful" up to 10:35 PM. At this time the entire Mortar Flotilla fired rapidly, as the vessels provided cover for *Pinola*, *Kineo* and *Itasca*, who had been sent up to cut the chain barrier below the two forts. The three Gulf ships, their mission completed, moved back downriver at 12:35 AM the 21st. The Mortar Flotilla continued firing by watches until early AM the 24th. At 2:30 AM, the 24th, the Mortar Flotilla commenced firing as cover for FO Farragut's Gulf vessels that were beginning their run upriver past the two forts. The mortars fired as rapidly as possible until 5:30 AM, by which time the fleet was above the range of the forts' guns.

[Note. Although taking part in the engagement, Master Savage did not file a report for *Matthew Vassar*]

T A Ward (Lieutenant William W. Queen)

At 7:30 AM the 18th, *Miami*, towed *T A Ward* upriver to her position opposite Fort Jackson for the ensuing bombardment. At 8:00, she came within range of the fort's guns and began receiving fire. At 8:30, *T A Ward* dropped anchor and began returning the fort's fire. A shell immediately struck *T A Ward* on the port quarter, but did no harm. Half an hour later, a rifle shot cut away the forward shrouds of the port main swifter, passing through the wardroom bulkhead, pantry, stateroom, deck, storeroom, over the extra magazine, exiting through starboard quarter six inches above the water line. *T A Ward* slipped anchor, dropping downriver, out of the action, to repair the damage. At 11:00 AM, she moved back upriver to her old position and resumed firing on the fort at 11:15, continuing until 6:00 PM. *T A Ward* upped anchor at 8:00 PM, dropped down 800 yards, coming to anchor with the port anchor.

Clifton took *T A Ward* in tow at 5:00 AM the 19th, moving her to the west side of the river, where she took her position at the head of the 2nd Division mortars. She began firing into Fort Jackson at 7:30, continued until 12:00 Noon. Several shots were fired in her direction, but all went over the boat. *T A Ward* fired "very briskly" from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. On the 20th, *T A Ward* fired from 12:00 AM to 12:00 Noon and again from 8:00 PM to 12:00 Midnight; she fired from 8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon and 6:00 to 8:00 PM, the 21st; and from 4:00 to 8:00 AM and 4:00 to 6:00 PM, the 22nd. On the 22nd, *T A Ward* was hit at 4:45 PM, the shell carrying away the starboard axletree. At 5:00 PM, she received a new truck and axletree from *Horace Beals* and resumed

firing. The 23rd, she fired 12:00 AM-4:00 AM, 12:00 Noon-4:00 PM and 8:00 PM to 12:00 Midnight.

The crew was called to quarters at 2:30 AM, the 24th, to commence firing in support of FO Farragut's Gulf Squadron ships as they moved upriver past Forts Jackson and St. Philip. Firing ceased at 5:30 AM. *T A Ward* fired again from 4:00 to 5:00 PM, after which she joined the other mortar boats in moving downstream. *T A Ward* expended a total of 362 shells during the seven-day engagement.

Maria J Carlton (Acting Master Charles E. Jack)

Maria J Carlton began firing at 9:30 AM the 18th, firing until 7:00 PM. On the 19th, the crew went to quarters at 8:30 AM and commenced firing. At 10:00, a round from Fort Jackson hit *Carlton* on the quarter deck, near the hatch. It broke a beam and some carlines, continuing through the magazines and on out the starboard quarter. The vessel began to fill rapidly. Master Jack sent up signals that *Carlton* was disabled. Several ships came to her assistance, but the vessel was sinking rapidly. The crew tried to save as much as possible and place aboard the other ships. As the water covered the berth deck, the crew transferred to the ships standing by her before she sank. Three crewmen were slightly wounded.

George Mangham (Acting Master John Collins, Jr)

On the 18th, *George Mangham* proceeded upriver at 6:30 AM, coming to anchor on the east side of the river. She opened fire on Fort Jackson at 9:30. After firing a few shots, she repositioned several yards downriver. She fired 77 shots from that position, ceasing fire for the night at 6:30 PM. The next morning, at 6:00 AM, *George Mangham* was towed across the river to the west side. She fired into Fort Jackson from 9:00 AM until 8:00 PM. On the 20th, she fired from 12:00 AM-4:00 AM and 10:45 AM-12:00 Noon; the 21st, from 8:05 AM-12:00 Noon and 6:00-8:00 PM. From the 22nd through 5:00 AM the 24th, *George Mangham* fired morning and night, ceasing fire when FO Farragut's Gulf ships had steamed up beyond range of the forts. At 5:00 PM the 25th, she upped anchor, moved down through Head of the Passes, coming to anchor in Baratavia Bay at 7:30 PM the 26th.

Adolph Hugel (Acting Master H. B. Jencks)

Adolph Hugel was towed up to her position on the right bank, across the river from Fort Jackson, coming to anchor at 9:00 AM, the 18th. She immediately began bombarding Fort Jackson, continuing until 12:00 Noon, when was ordered to drop a short distance downriver because her present position was too exposed to enemy fire. As soon as in the new position, *Adolph Hugel* resumed firing until 7:00 PM. Again, she was ordered downriver, this time to beyond the range of Forts Jackson and St. Philip. Shells fired, 64. At 7:30 AM the next day *Adolph Hugel* was towed back in range of the forts, anchoring this time on the left bank. As soon as she was in place, *Adolph Hugel* commenced firing on Fort Jackson, ceasing at 12:00 Noon, having fired 75 shells.

Adolph Hugel continued firing the 20th, expending 83 shells. Firing the 21st was by divisions from 12:00 AM until 12:00 Noon, *Adolph Hugel* firing 29 shells. There is no indication in the reports that *Adolph Hugel* fired the rest of the day. Enemy fire dropped all around, but she was not hit. Firing the 22nd, was by division. Tree limbs were added to the masts and rigging to

replace those blown off when firing the mortar. She fired 67 shells. The 23rd, *Adolph Hugel* fired 12:00 AM to 4:00 AM, The rest of the day, firing was by divisions. *Adolph Hugel* expended 29 shells. Neither fort fired on the 23rd.

At 3:30 AM, the 24th, the Gulf Squadron ships got underway, steaming upriver toward the two forts. *Adolph Hugel* began firing "briskly" on the forts at 4:00 AM, in support of the Gulf ships. She ceased firing as soon as the Gulf ships were beyond range of the forts' guns. From 4:00-6:00 PM, *Adolph Hugel* fired at the enemy gunboats anchored near the forts. She fired 35 shells during the day. At 6:00 PM, *Adolph Hugel* got underway to move downriver, coming to anchor at Head of the Passes at 11:30 PM.

Orvetta (Acting Master Francis E. Blanchard)

At 7:00 AM, the 18th, *Orvetta* was towed upriver by *Westfield*, to her position on the left bank, 3,880 yards from Fort Jackson. She began firing on the fort, at ten-minute intervals, at 10:00 AM, continuing until 6:30 PM. The next day, she commenced firing at 8:00 AM, continuing all day and night. Accuracy was much better than on the 18th. Fort Jackson returned fire as soon as *Orvetta* commenced firing the 19th. *Orvetta* continued firing until 6:00 PM. The entire flotilla resumed fire at 8:00 AM, the 20th, each ship firing at ten-minute intervals, continuing until 4:00 PM, when ordered to fire every 20 minutes. At 9:00 PM all ships were ordered to begin firing at five-minute intervals. *Orvetta* ran out of ammunition at 10:30 PM. She received a supply of 61 shells from *Owasco* at 6:00 AM the 21st and resumed firing, again at twenty-minute intervals at 9:00 AM. At 12:00 PM, she received an additional 128 shells and fired at Fort Jackson from 6:00-8:00 PM.

On the 22nd, *Orvetta* fired at twenty-minute intervals from 4:00-8:00 AM. She received 112 shells during the morning. *Orvetta* fired at twelve-minute intervals from 4:00-6:00 PM. The 23rd, she fired on Fort Jackson from 12:30 AM until 4:00 AM, at twelve-minute intervals and 12:00 Noon-4:00 PM, at ten-minute intervals. She began firing into Fort Jackson at 3:30 AM the 24th, as the Gulf ships steamed up past the two forts. *Orvetta* ceased firing at 5:30 AM and at 5:00 PM dropped down to anchor at Head of the Passes at 11:00 PM. *Orvetta* was not hit during the engagement.

Third Division **Lieutenant K. Randolph Breese**

On April 18, *John Griffith* (Lt Breese's divisional flagship), along with *Racer* and *Sarah Bruen* were taken in tow by *Clifton* and moved to their assigned positions astern of the 1st Division on the left bank of the river. They anchored the following distances from Fort Jackson: *John Griffith*, 3,900 yards; *Racer*, 3,940 yards; *Sarah Bruen* yards, 3,980. About 10:00 AM, *John Griffith* opened fire on Fort Jackson, followed by *Racer* and *Sarah Bruen*. After the 1st Division rear vessels had moved up, the rest of the 3rd Division vessels sailed up, taking their positions ahead of *John Griffith* at the following distances from the fort: *Henry Janes*, 3,630 yards; *Dan Smith*, 3,730 yards; *Sea Foam*, 3,850 yards. At about 2:15 PM, they also opened fire. All six vessels continued firing until 6:37 PM, when cease fire was signaled. On the 19th, the division began firing at Fort Jackson at 6:25 AM, at ten-minute intervals, until 8:00 PM.

Firing on Fort Jackson began at ten-minute-intervals, at 4:00 AM, the 20th, continuing until 8:00 AM, and again at ten-minute intervals from 10:13 AM-4:00 PM, then at twenty-minute intervals until 10:10 PM. The division then began firing as rapidly as possible, until 12:33 AM, the 21st, in support of *Pinola*, *Kineo* and *Itasca* as they attempted to cut the cable barrier below the two forts. On the 21st, the division fired at fifteen-minute intervals from 12:33 AM-4:00 AM. Firing resumed at 12:00 Noon-4:00 PM and, 8:00-12:00 Midnight, all at ten-minute intervals; the 22nd, 8:00 AM-12:00 Noon and 6:00-8:00 PM, again at ten-minute intervals; 23rd, 4:00-8:00 AM, at ten-minute intervals and at twelve-minute intervals from 4:00-6:00 PM.

On the 24th, the 3rd Division began firing at ten-minute intervals at 12:00 AM, continuing until 3:40 AM, when the forts opened fire on FO Farragut's Gulf vessels as they began their run past the forts. At this time all 3rd division mortars began rapid fire, ceasing fire at 4:52 AM, when the Gulf ships had passed upriver beyond the range of the forts. All ships in the division fired from 5:30-5:48 AM at enemy steamers near Fort Jackson and from 3:55-5:04 PM at Fort Jackson. At 5:20 PM, the division began moving downriver, coming to anchor at Pilot Town.

Horace Beals (Executive Officer, Acting Master George W. Summer)

Although the bark, *Horace Beals*, was armed with two 32-ponder and one 30-ponder cannon, she did not take part in firing on the forts. She served as a supply vessel for the Mortar Flotilla. During the engagement, loaded with ordnance stores, she was towed up to 600 yards behind the 1st Division vessels. She resupplied mortar vessels with ammunition during the seven days of bombardment. She took on the articles saved from *Maria J. Carlton* and a 10-inch gun carriage and ammunition from *John P Jackson*. Shots and shell fragments fell on *Horace Beals*, but casualties were not incurred. She remained near the forts until 9:30 AM, the 24th, when she moved down river to join the flotilla boats at Pilot Town.

John Griffith (Acting Master Henry Brown)

John Griffith raised anchor at 6:00 AM, the 18th and was towed upriver to her position on the left bank of the river, 3,900 yards below Fort Jackson. Lines were run out and tied up against the shore. *John Griffith* commenced firing on the fort at 11:00 AM. Fort Jackson returned fire, most of the shells falling short. *John Griffith* kept up firing until 6:30 PM, having fired 68 shells. The enemy fire slackened off during the afternoon. On the 19th, *John Griffith*, now 3,840 yards from the fort, began firing at 6:30 AM, continuing until 8:00 PM; shells fired, 91. She commenced firing at 4:00 AM, the 20th, ceased firing for an hour, 8:00-9:00 AM, resuming firing until 5:30 PM. *John Griffith* began firing rapidly at 10:00 PM to cover *Pinola*, *Kineo* and *Itasca* as they cut the chain barrier below the forts. When the three ships dropped downstream after completing their mission, *John Griffith* fired at five-minute intervals until ceasing at 4:00 AM the next morning. She had fired 119 shells during the 20th and early the 21st.

John Griffith began firing at 12:00 Noon, the 21st, continuing until 4:00 PM and again from 8:00 PM-12:00 Midnight the 21st; 51 shells were fired. On the 22nd, *John Griffith* fired 8:00 AM-12:00 Noon, 6:00-8:00 PM and 9:30-10:00 PM, expending 56 shells. She fired 4:00-8:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM the 23rd, 38 shells.

On the 24th, *John Griffith* began firing on Fort Jackson at 4:00 AM, as the Gulf Squadron ships began steaming past Forts Jackson and St. Philip. She ceased firing at 5:00 AM, the Gulf

ships having passed beyond range of the forts. Cdr Porter came aboard at 4:00 PM to order *John Griffith* to shell the floating battery (*CSS Louisiana*) lying under cover of Fort Jackson. She fired a few rounds making a total of 54 for the day and at 5:00 PM, sailed downriver to anchor at Head of the Passes.

Damage incurred during the seven-day engagement included: foresail (used in covering the rail) damaged beyond repair; water-closets forward torn away, a plank off the bulwark in front of the mortar started; doors and windows in front of the cabin broken; the barometer damaged, unfit for use.

Sarah Bruen (Acting Master Abraham Christian)

April 18, *Sarah Bruen* shelled the forts 10:00 AM-6:30 PM, firing a total of 61 shells and on the 19th, 88 shells from 7:00 AM-8:00 PM. At 10:00 AM a round shot went through the foremast. On the 20th, she fired on Fort Jackson, 4:00-8:00 AM, commencing again at 10:00 AM at Fort Jackson, continuing until 4:00 AM the next morning, 113 shells. The 21st, *Sarah Bruen* fired at the fort 12:00 Noon-4:00 PM and 8:00 PM until 12:00 Midnight, 56 shells; the 22nd, she fired at Fort Jackson, 8:00 AM-12:00 Noon and 6:00-8:00 PM, 49 shells; on the 23rd, 36 shells were fired from 4:00-8:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM.

On the 24th, *Sarah Bruen* began slow fire, once every ten minutes, at 12:00 AM, beginning rapid fire at 3:45 to cover FO Farragut's ships moving past the fort. She ceased firing at 5:10, the ships then out of range of the forts' guns. *Sarah Bruen* was ordered to fire again, this time on enemy vessels lying under Fort Jackson's guns, from 4:00-5:10 PM. She fired 67 rounds during the day's engagement. Her only damage was a hole through the foremast.

Racer (Acting Master Alvin Phinney)

Racer had been towed upriver to her designated position below Fort Jackson at 1:00 PM the 17th. Once there, she anchored, tied up to the shore and trimmed the masts and rigging with tree limbs, to blend in with the adjacent dense foliage. When at 9:00 PM, an enemy fire boat drifted downriver toward the mortar boats, *Racer* sent two of her boats to assist others in towing the fire boat to the bank and in extinguishing the fire. At 10:15 AM the next morning, *Racer* commenced firing on Fort Jackson, at ten-minute intervals until sundown, 50 shells. On the 19th, she began firing at 6:30 AM, continuing until 7:00 PM, firing a total of 88 shells. The 20th, she fired at ten-minute intervals from 4:00-8:00 AM. She resumed firing at 11:00 AM, at 10:00 PM, increasing the rate to every five minutes until 12:00 Midnight. *Racer* fired 117 shells on the 20th.

From 12:00 Midnight to 4:00 AM, the 21st, she fired a shell every 15 minutes. At 11:00 AM, resupplied with 48 shells from *Miami*, *Racer* began firing at 12:00 Noon. She was ordered to cease firing at 4:00 PM and to recommence at 8:00 PM. *Racer* ceased firing at 12:00 Midnight, having expended 62 shells. April 22, she fired from 8:00 AM-12:00 Noon. Resumed firing from 6:00 PM until 8:00 PM, for a total of 46 shells. Master Phinney only reported having fired 28 shells the 23rd.

Racer began firing on the two forts at 12:00 AM the 24th. At 2:00 AM, she commenced firing very rapidly as the Gulf Squadron ships approached Forts Jackson and St. Philip on their way upriver. *Racer* ceasing firing when the Gulf ships were beyond the reach of the enemy batteries. At 8:00 AM, she fired several rounds at enemy boats anchored under protection of the forts' guns. And again, at 4:00 PM, at two or three enemy vessels lying near the forts. *Racer* fired

81 shells the 24th. *Racer* was hit on the port side of the deck, abreast of the fore hatch. At 5:00 PM, Lt Breese ordered *Racer* to move downriver to the South West Pass. She became becalmed at 10:00 PM and anchored for the night near Head of the Passes, the next day moving to anchor at Pilot Town.

Henry Janes (Acting Master Lewis W. Pennington)

At 9:00 AM April 18, one of the Mortar Flotilla steamers came alongside *Henry Janes*, taking her in tow and moved her up to below Fort Jackson. *Henry Janes* dropped anchor and tied up to a tree on the bank. At 1:00 PM, she began firing on Fort Jackson at fifteen-minute intervals. *Henry Janes* fired 24 shells that day. From April 19-22, she continued firing with the rest of the 3rd Division mortars. At 11:00 PM, the 22nd, a shot from one of the forts' guns cut off three of the fore shrouds and the jib halyards in four places. Two pieces of shells, from Fort Jackson, fell on the deck, causing no damage. On the 23rd, *Henry Janes* continued firing on Fort Jackson with the rest of the division. On the 19th, she fired 97 shells; 20th, 113; 21st, 55; 22nd, 40; 23rd, 34.

On the 24th, *Henry Janes* commenced firing at 12:00 AM in preparation for FO Farragut's Gulf ships engaging the forts as they steamed past on their way upriver. When the Gulf ships began moving up at 2:30 AM, *Henry Janes*, along with the rest of Mortar Flotilla, began firing as rapidly as possible until the Gulf ships were above and out of range of the forts' guns. At 4:00 PM, *Henry Janes* fired for an hour and a half on *Louisiana*, lying under the guns of Fort Jackson. Having fired 52 shells, *Henry Janes* ceased firing at 5:30 PM, and was ordered to proceed downriver to South West Pass. She anchored at 10:00 PM, two miles above Head of the Passes.

Dan Smith (Acting Master George W. Brown) [Note. There is no report for April 17-19.]

Dan Smith was called quarters at 4:00 AM, the 20th and, along with the rest of the division, began firing at 9:00 AM, keeping it up all day. The two forts "fired briskly" in the morning, but did not hit *Dan Smith*, most shots falling short, the rest going over the mortar boat. At 1:00 PM, the enemy ceased firing until 8:00 PM. At 8:30 PM, the mortars were ordered to begin firing as frequently as possible. Ten minutes later, the entire Mortar Flotilla began rapid fire to provide cover for *Pinola*, *Kineo* and *Itasca*, who had been sent up to cut the barrier chain across the river below the forts. At 2:30 AM 21ST, the three ships, their mission completed, moved downriver and Divisions 1 and 2 ceased firing. The 3rd Division, including *Dan Smith*, continued firing, at ten-minute intervals, until the 4:00 AM. *Dan Smith* had fired 119 shells.

At 12:00 Noon, the 21st, all 3rd Division ships began firing again. Fort St. Philip fired on the ships at 1:30 PM, the shells falling short. At 2:00, there was "hot fire" from both forts, shells falling all around *Dan Smith*. Also, at 2:00 PM, a shell exploded directly above *Dan Smith*, the pieces falling all around her, but none hit boat. She ceased firing at 4:00 PM, resuming from 8:00 PM until 12:00 Midnight, having fired 55 shells. *Dan Smith* began firing again at 8:00 AM, the 22nd, continuing until 12:00 Noon. At 10:00 AM, a shell passed near the mast head, going into the water near her stern. At 11:00 AM and again at 3:00 PM shots passed between her masts, the first hit the deck of the nearby *Oneida*, wounding several men. The second went into the water close to *Dan Smith*. *Dan Smith* resumed firing from 6:00-8:00 PM. There was no fire from the forts after 6:00 PM. *Dan Smith* expended 67 shells. On the 23rd, *Dan Smith* fired 4:00-8:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM for a total of 65 shells. The two forts did not fire during the 23rd.

At 12:00 AM, the 24th, the 3rd Division commenced firing at ten-minute intervals. At 3:40 AM, FO Farragut's Gulf ships got underway to move up past the forts. Both the Gulf vessels and Mortar Flotilla opened fire on the forts at 4:00, firing as rapidly as possible. The engagement lasted only one and one fourth hours, at which time all the Gulf ships were beyond the range of the forts' guns. The mortars ceased firing at 5:15 AM. At 7:40 AM *Dan Smith* was ordered to fire on *Louisiana*, lying just above the forts. At 8:15, she fired another shot at the enemy vessel, striking her near the water's edge. At 4:00 PM, *Dan Smith* fired on a battery abreast of Fort Jackson, ceasing at 5:15. Fifteen minutes later, *Dan Smith* began moving downriver. She expended 66 shells during the day's engagement.

Sea Foam (Acting Master Henry E. Williams)

Master Williams called all hands to quarters at 5:30 AM April 18 and sent *Sea Foam*'s first cutter to bring back tree limbs with which to disguise the ship. Cdr Porter came alongside at 12:00 Noon and ordered *Sea Foam* to sail up to her position below Fort Jackson. She was in place, anchored, tied up to the shore and began firing at 2:35 PM. *Sea Foam* fired until 6:40 PM, expending 43 shells. All hands were called to quarters at 5:00 AM the 19th and began firing at twenty-minute intervals from 7:00 AM until 8:00 AM, when the Cdr Porter ordered firing every ten minutes. At 12:00 Noon, Master Williams was told to fire every five to ten minutes until 8:00 PM, when cease fire was signaled. *Sea Foam* fired 88 shells during the 19th.

The next day *Sea Foam*, went to quarters at 4:00 AM and fired a mortar circle for fifteen minutes, beginning at 7:45 AM. She resumed firing at 10:10, firing until 12:00 Noon. *Sea Foam* fired again 12:15-6:19 PM and 10:20 PM-4:00 AM, the 21st. She fired 111 shells during the 20th and early morning, the 21st. On the 21st, *Sea Foam* fired 12:00 AM-4:00 AM, 12:05-4:00 PM and 8:00 PM-12:00 Midnight, expending 71 shells. The 22nd, she fired 8:00-12:00 Noon, 6:00-8:00 PM (52 shells) and on the 23rd, 4:00-8:00 AM (firing in "quick succession") and 4:00-6:08 PM. Total shells fired the 23rd, 51.

The 24th, *Sea Foam* shelled Fort Jackson from 12:00 AM-4:53 AM. At 3:00 AM, FO Farragut's Gulf vessels were seen coming upriver, to run past the forts. At 3:38, his ships engaged the forts as did the 3rd Division mortars, firing in "quick succession." *Sea Foam* and the other ships of the division averaged firing every two and one half minutes until cease fire was ordered at 4:53. Between 6:24-7:08 AM, *Sea Foam* fired on Fort Jackson. At 7:00 AM, an enemy ram drifted downriver. *Sea Foam* shifted the port gun to starboard and fired three shots from a broadside at the ram, until ordered to cease fire. She fired on Fort Jackson from 4:00-5:10 PM. Five minutes later *Sea Foam* was ordered to drop downriver to South West Pass. She fired 60 shells on the 24th.

On To Vicksburg



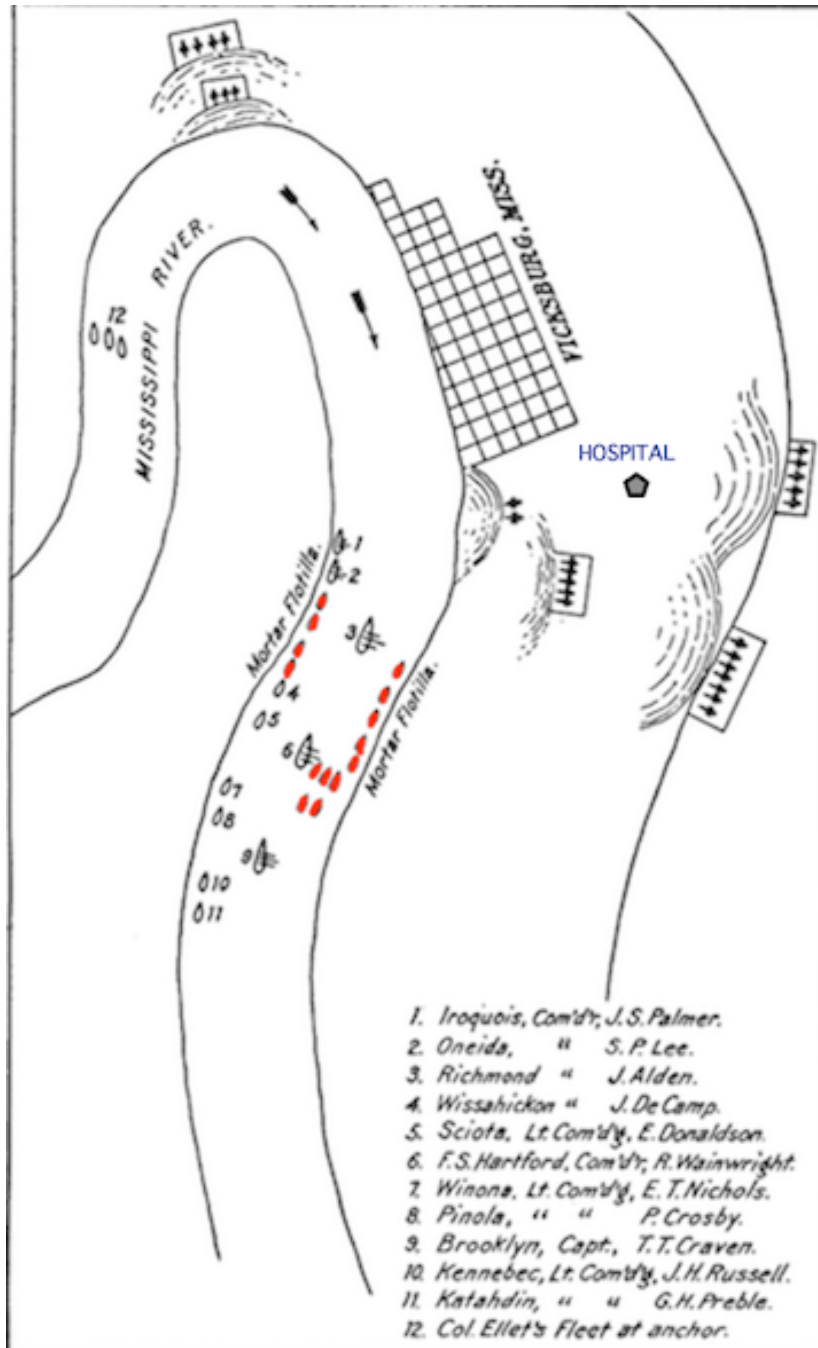
Mississippi River, New Orleans to Vicksburg.

Flag Officer Farragut, responding to President Lincoln's June 3, 1862 request to take Vicksburg, asked Commander Porter to send his mortar boats up to Vicksburg to support the attack on the city. Cdr Porter, on Jun 9, had the Mortar Flotilla (19 mortar boats) with him at New Orleans, ready to go up the Mississippi River. The flotilla departed New Orleans on June 13, with 16 mortar schooners towed by flotilla steamers, arriving below Vicksburg on the 20th. Lieutenant K. Randolph Breese was left at New Orleans to bring up the remaining vessels. He

was detained from leaving when *Sea Foam* became grounded badly on a sand bar and could not be refloated.

On June 19, Cdr Porter reported that on his way up to Vicksburg, with the Mortar Flotilla, he had observed Confederate batteries being put up at Ellis Cliffs and Quitman's landing. Those at Ellis Cliffs were already in place and opened on the flotilla with rifle cannon and musketry. Return fire, grape, shrapnel and shells from the flotilla steamers, *Owasco* and *John P Jackson* along with shells from the mortars, *George Mangham*, *Arletta* and *Sarah Bruen* the 30 and 32-pounders from *Horace Beals*, silenced them. At Quitman's landing, work was still in progress on the fortifications. Fire from the flotilla drove away the men, disrupting their work.

On the 21st, Cdr Porter, in *Octorara*, with a mortar schooner alongside, steamed up to Vicksburg to draw fire from the gun emplacements so as determine ranges. The Vicksburg batteries let them get in "good range" before they all opened fire. None of the shells struck the two Union vessels. Having the range information he needed, Cdr Porter had *Octorara* fired four 100-pound rifle shots on the batteries and then moved the two vessels back down to the rest of the flotilla. There, Cdr Porter awaited FO Farragut and his West Gulf Squadron ships to arrive.



Location of Mortar Flotilla (red) and FO Farragut's Gulf ships below Vicksburg, June 28. [Note. The number of Mortar Flotilla vessels do not match those in the reports.]

FO Farragut told Cdr Porter, on June 26, to begin shelling the heights above Vicksburg as soon as his (Porter's) boats were in the best place to enfilade the battery below the hospital. As soon as the mortars had the range, the fleet would run up and open fire on all the fortifications. Cdr Porter spent the night of the 26th getting the mortars in position, nine on the right side, under command of Lieutenant Watson Smith and seven on the left side, commanded by Lieutenant

William W. Queen. The vessels on the right side of the river were 2,500 yards from the main battery and 2,200 yards from the water battery. The left vessels, about 700 yards farther off [The map locations are not accurate.], were somewhat exposed, but were covered with tree branches making them difficult to see for accurate fire from the forts.

Once in position, the mortar boats began firing at the Vicksburg batteries, mainly to get the ranges fixed. All the enemy batteries returned the fire, but none of the vessels was struck. On June 27, the mortars opened rapid fire at 5:45 AM. The batteries returned the fire, but within an hour, the gunners were driven from their guns. The flotilla steamers also fired on the batteries with their rifle guns. The flotilla bombardment continued throughout the day. Only, *C P Williams* was hit by enemy fire. A 7-inch shell hit and lodged in her bow. Cease fire was signaled at sunset, to give the crews a rest. Firing resumed at 8:00 PM. At 8:30, Cdr Porter sent Lieutenant John Guest, in *Owasco*, up abreast of the town to fire incendiary shells. Unfortunately, the mission was a failure, as the shells failed to explode.

John P Jackson, while attempting to get into her assigned position in front of the lower water battery the morning of June 28, was struck by a 7-inch rifle shot. It entered on the starboard side of the forward bulkhead, passed obliquely through the forward wheelhouse, destroying the wheel, passing out through the hurricane deck. The right foot of one of the steersmen was shot off and his left foot injured. *John P Jackson* was unmanageable, but with the aid of a jury-rigged tiller, she was able to remain in position to fire in support of the Gulf Squadron ships passing Vicksburg.

As FO Farragut's Gulf ships got ready to move past Vicksburg at 3:00 AM the 28th, Cdr Porter's flotilla steamers got underway and moved up to enfilade the water batteries as the Gulf ships passed by. The leading Gulf ships were a little ahead of schedule and came within range of the lower batteries before the flotilla steamers were in position to begin firing.

Five of FO Farragut's Gulf ships went on ahead, in spite of heavy fire from the enemy batteries. By then, the steamers were in position and began throwing in "quick fire." Most of the mortars had begun firing as *Richmond* passed. *Hartford* moved past the mortars at 4:00 AM, and along with the other Gulf ships, fired broadsides of grape, canister and shrapnel as they moved past the city. The mortars kept the lower batteries mostly silent during passage of FO Farragut's Gulf ships. Unfortunately, the mortars could not reach the upper batteries, which subjected the passing vessels to severe fire until they were above the range of the enemy batteries.

As *Hartford* passed *Octorara*, the latter's wheel ropes got jammed below and she began drifting downstream, out of action and heading into the lower flotilla vessels. As *Octorara* went by *Miami*, Cdr Porter (on *Miami*) hailed her captain [Name not recorded.], telling him that once in control of the ship, to move back up to within 600 yards of the batteries. He also ordered *Westfield*, *Clifton* and *John P Jackson* to go ahead until *Octorara* could be brought back under control. *Owasco* (Lt Guest) and *Harriet Lane* (Lt Wainwright) earlier had been ordered, at their discretion, to fire on the Vicksburg batteries. This, they were doing "most effectually."

The river off Vicksburg was so narrow and the current so strong, it was impossible to maneuver the Mortar Flotilla ships for effective firing and still leave room for the Gulf ships to pass. *Octorara* finally got her wheel ropes cleared and steamed back to the front of the flotilla steamers, all of them firing cover for passage of *Brooklyn*, *Katahdin* and *Kennebec*, then

approaching the Vicksburg batteries. *Brooklyn* got a little beyond the mortar vessels, but no farther. She moved back down stream, followed by the other two Gulf ships.

When *Brooklyn* had approached the lower batteries, the flotilla steamers obstructed her passage, causing her to stop engines, impeding her progress. Neither could she fire on the enemy batteries for fear of hitting the steamers. *John P Jackson* was hit by another 7-inch rifle shot in her starboard wheel, cutting away one-half of the bridge piece supporting the other end of the shaft, immediately under the pillow block. Two grape shots struck her, causing no damage.

As *Clifton* (Lieutenant C. H. Baldwin) went to the assistance of the floundering *John P Jackson*, and while in the act of taking her in tow, *Clifton* was hit by a 7-inch shell that passed in her port bow, went on in through the boiler, scalding to death six men and severely scalding several others. The steam forced eight or ten men into the water, one of whom drowned. *John P Jackson* then became the "helping ship", picking up crewmen out of the water, from the now completely disabled *Clifton*. When *Westfield* (Cdr William B. Renshaw) moved in to assist *John P Jackson*, she was hit on the frame of her engine by heavy a rifle shot. Fortunately, it did not go through, causing only a short delay in *Westfield's* firing.

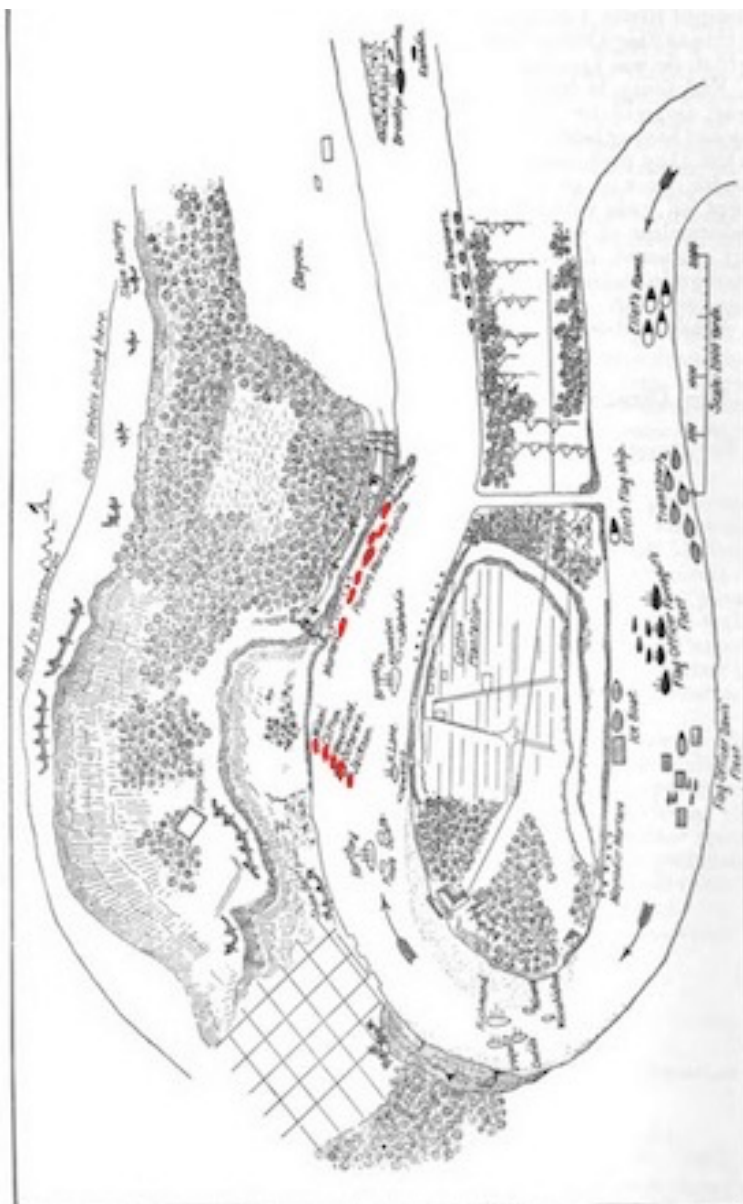
Octorara ceased firing, drifted down to *Clifton*, taking her under tow and moving downriver beyond the range of the enemy batteries. *John P Jackson* also drifted downriver and out range of the Vicksburg batteries. The Gulf Squadron vessels having either moved up past Vicksburg or dropped down below the city, there was no need for the Mortar Flotilla to continue firing. Cdr Porter signaled the flotilla to retire under cover of the woods and to make necessary repairs. Cdr Porter's Mortar Flotilla had been under fire for sixty-five minutes.

Mortar Flotilla. Casualties on the 28th.

On the *Clifton* there were 8 killed and 1 wounded: Thomas Collins, gunner's mate; Robert Sargeant, ship's cook; John Burke, ordinary seaman; William Morris, captain's cook; John B. Carlton, landsman; and George B. Dewvent (colored), wardroom steward, killed; and John Hudson, master-at-arms, severely wounded. John Connor, second-class fireman, was drowned.

On the *Jackson*, Alexander Grenwall, seaman, was severely wounded. if not mortally.

FO Farragut received orders from Secretary Welles on July 8 to direct Cdr Porter to take twelve mortar boats to Hampton Roads, leaving Cdr Renshaw to command the remaining mortars (*Sidney Jones, John Griffith, Orvetta, Henry Janes, Sarah Bruen, Oliver H Lee*) at Vicksburg. Cdr Porter sailed on *Octorara* with the twelve mortar boats on July 10. He arrived at Hampton Roads August 10, with *Norfolk Packet, Arletta, Para, Racer, William Bacon, T A Ward, Adolph Hugel, Matthew Vassar, George Mangham, and Dan Smith*. [Note. There is no mention in the records as to why *C P Williams and Sophronia* did not arrive with Cdr Porter.]



Location of the Mortar Flotilla (red) on July 15, when the Gulf ships moved down past Vicksburg.

On the 15th of July, the Gulf Squadron ships that were above Vicksburg moved back down past the city. All but one of the six mortars of the 2nd Division were below Vicksburg, on the right side of the river, just out of range of the lower batteries. *Sidney C Jones* (Acting Master Charles E. Jack) had been lying defenseless, aground, about a mile farther upriver, on the same side, since shortly after the Gulf Squadron ships had passed Vicksburg the 28th. Cdr Renshaw ordered the mortars be towed upriver, to within range of the Vicksburg batteries. Only the steamer, *Westfield*, was available to tow the mortars into position. All the rest were towing the Cdr Porter's twelve mortar schooners downriver, on their way to Hampton Roads.

About 10:00 AM, the mortar schooners were ordered towed up into position to support the Gulf ships as they came down past the city. They were also to be prepared, should the

Confederate ram, *Arkansas*, come down to attack the Mortar Flotilla. Lt Bresse, in *Horace Beals*, went ahead to select places for the mortar boats. As he did this, he also was going to see what could be done for *Sidney C Jones*. As he started upriver, the latter was seen to be on fire and shortly afterwards blew up. Because of a misunderstanding between Cdr Renshaw and Master Charles E. Jack, the latter had set fire to and blown up the vessel.

About 1:30 PM, *John Griffith* (Master Brown), *Orvetta* (Master Blanchard) and *Henry Janes* (Master Pennington) towed by *Westfield*, headed up toward Vicksburg, reached their assigned positions at 1:40 and commenced firing. *Sarah Bruen* (Master Christian) and *Oliver H Lee* (Master Godfrey) were to have been towed by the army transport, *Laurel Hill*, but the hawser had broken and she was unable to tow the mortars. Cdr Renshaw moved *Westfield* back downriver and towed the two mortars into position. The Mortar Flotilla boats were fired upon by rifle guns from the Vicksburg batteries and musketry from the woods on the opposite bank, as they were placed in position to fire. The musketry fire was silenced by Union shore batteries made up of men from the Mortar Flotilla. [Cdr Porter had placed the batteries, under command of a Captain Nim, ashore prior to the 28th, to support flotilla boats in firing on the Vicksburg batteries.]

Except for an hour during a heavy rain, each of the mortars fired one round every 7-10 minutes on the Vicksburg batteries, until fire was heard, at 6:45 PM, from the Gulf ships coming down past the batteries. The mortars then fired as rapidly as possible until all the ships were beyond the range of the lower batteries. *John Griffith* fired on the water batteries, the other four boats on the batteries on the hills. When the Gulf ships were safely beyond the range of the Vicksburg batteries, cease fire was signaled and the mortar schooners ordered to retire downstream. *John Griffith* fired 63 shells, *Orvetta*, 30, *Henry Janes* 60, *Oliver H Lee* 49, *Sarah Bruen* 32.

Epilogue

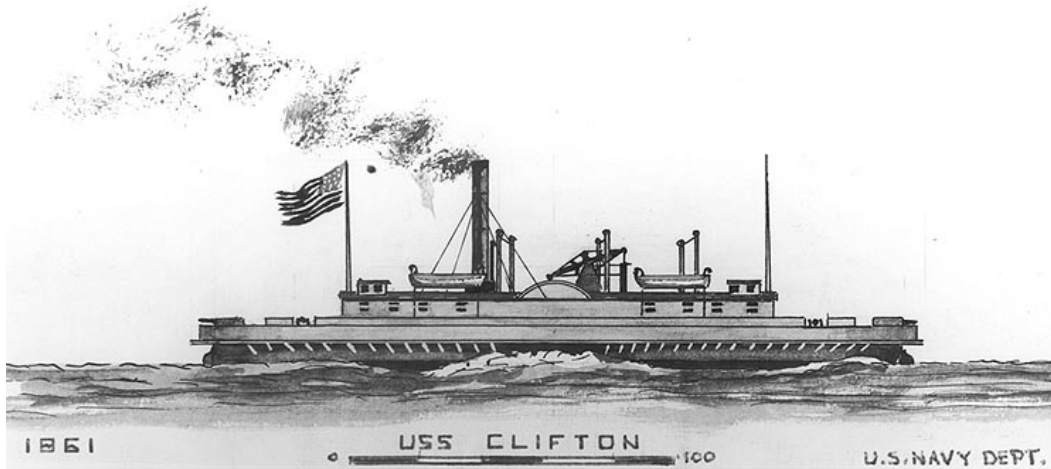
Flag Officer Farragut, moved his ships back to the Gulf, resuming blockading duties for the rest of the war. Commander Renshaw was sent, with *Harriet Lane*, *Owasco*, *Clifton*, and *Westfield* to take part in the capture of Galveston, Texas. The Commander and *Westfield* entered the harbor on October 4, 1862. The Confederates withdrew from the city, and the Union Army occupied Galveston. Because there were too few troops to hold the city, Rear Admiral [Promoted, July 16.] Farragut was told to leave his ships in the harbor to protect the Union Army troops. On January 1, 1863, the Confederates, under command of Confederate Major General John B. Magruder recaptured the city. Two Confederate vessels, *Bayou City* and *Neptune* engaged Cdr Renshaw's ships, capturing *Harriet Lane*. *Westfield* ran aground and was destroyed by its crew. A premature explosion of the magazine killed Cdr Renshaw and some of the crew. *Owasco* and *Clifton* escaped.

Commander Porter was promoted to Acting Rear Admiral and placed in command of the Mississippi River Squadron. After Vicksburg fell, he led the Union naval vessels in the Red River Campaign March 10-May 22, 1864. In late 1864, he was transferred to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. After the war, he was Superintendent of the Naval Academy, eventually being promoted to Admiral, the second man to hold this rank. Admiral Porter died February 13, 1891.

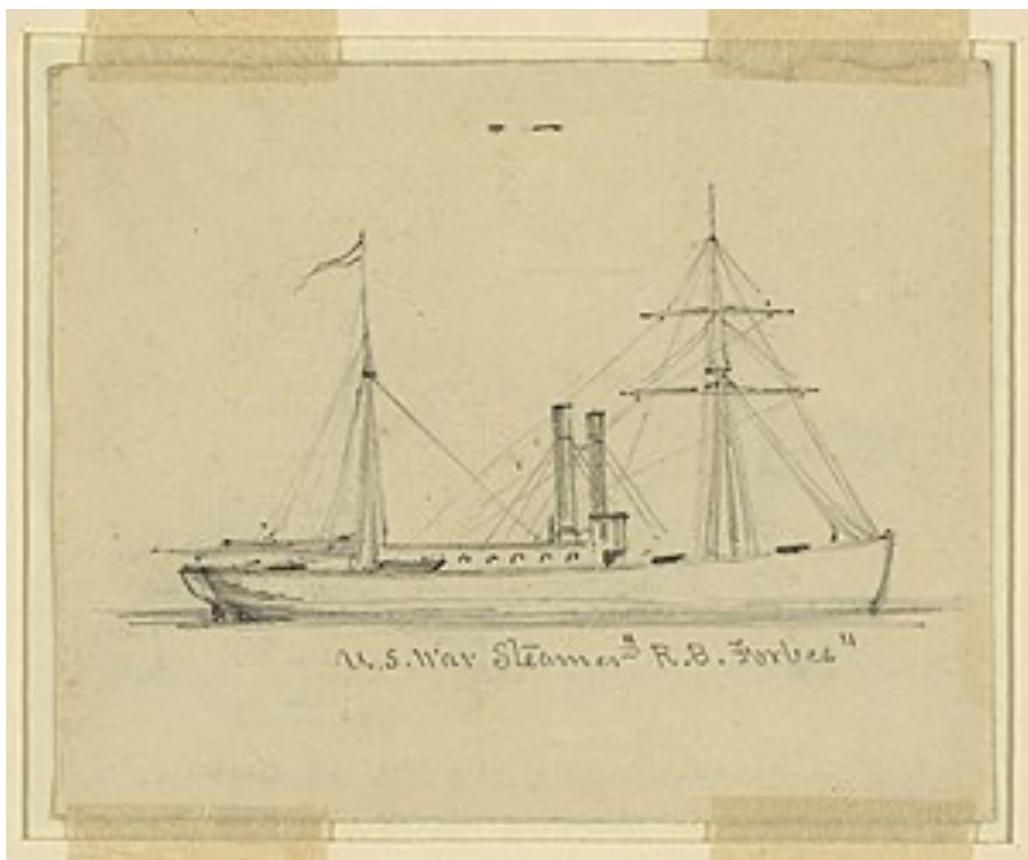
Ships

Steamers

Photo # NH 63707 USS Clifton. Artwork by Erik Heyl



USS Clifton



USS E B Forbes

Photo # NH 57514 USS Harriet Lane Reproduction of an artwork by Clary Ray



Harriet Lane



John P Jackson



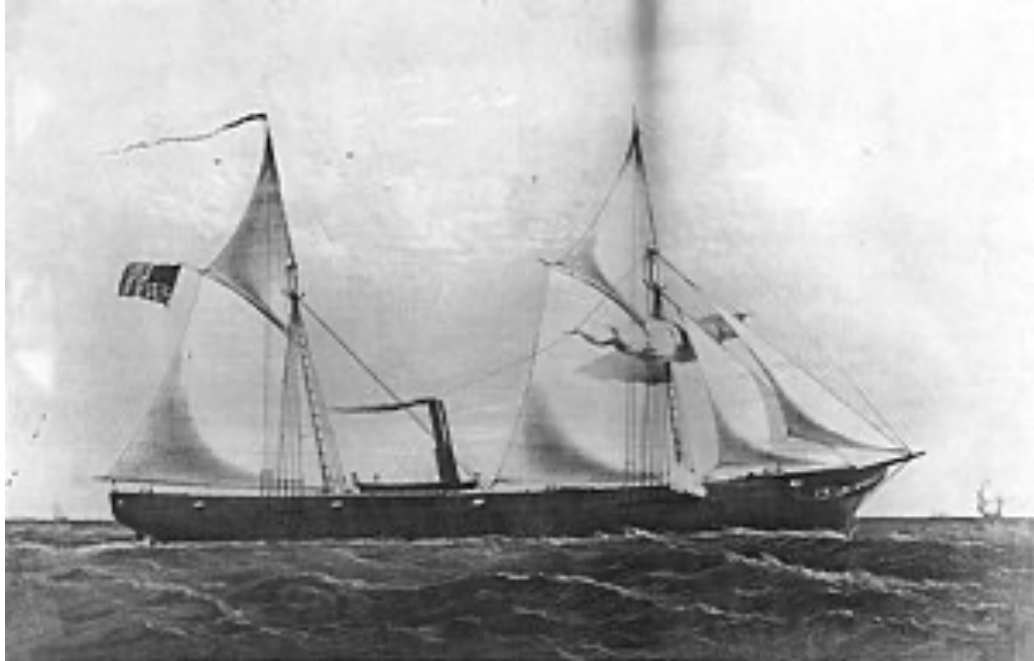
USS Maria J Carlton, Middle



USS Miami

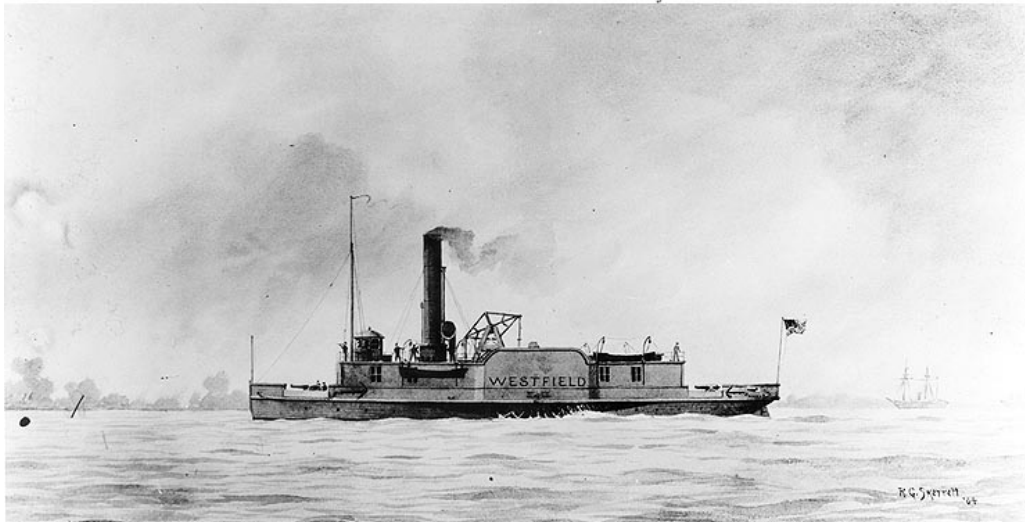


USS Octorara



USS Owasco

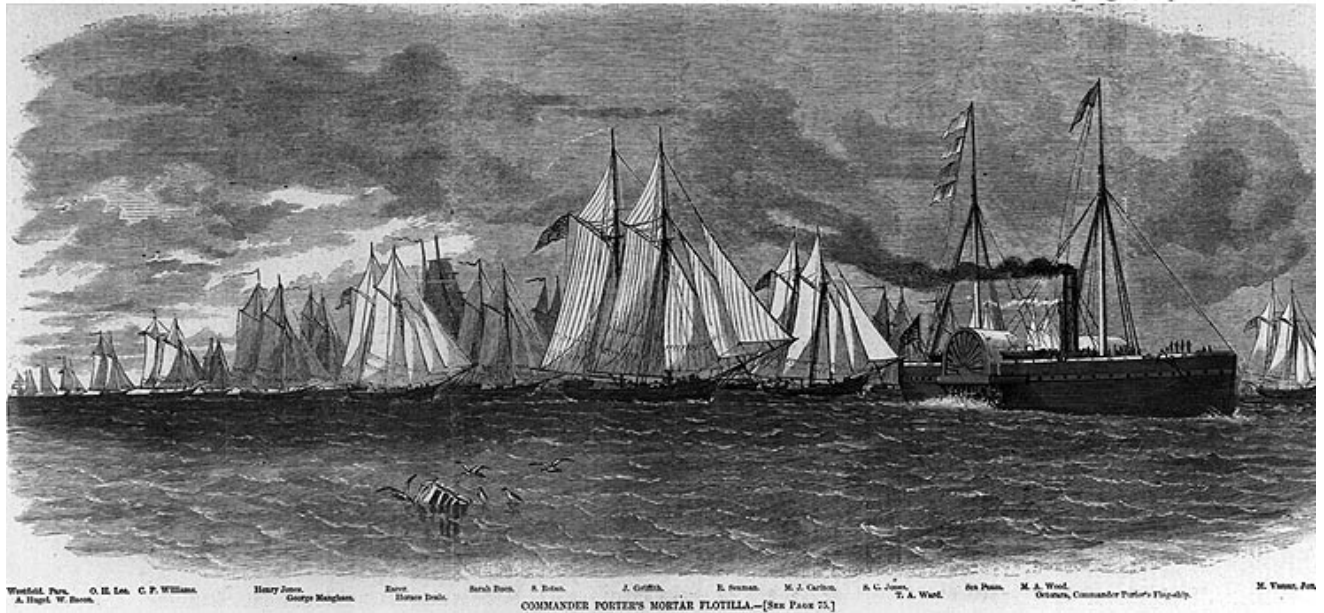
Photo # NH 48488 USS Westfield. Artwork by R.G. Skerrett



USS Westfield

Mortar Schooners

Photo # NH 59061 "Commander Porter's Mortar Flotilla", used in the New Orleans campaign, April 1862



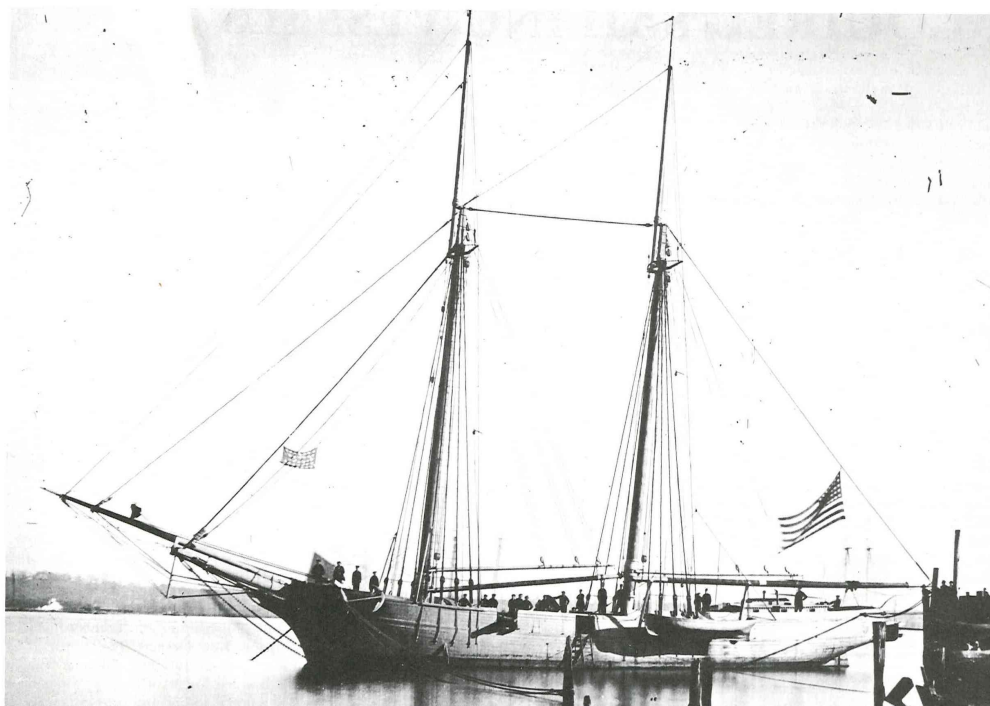
Porters Mortar Flotilla



Mortar schooner, perhaps USS Horace Beals⁵



Mortar Schooner No. 7, Name unknown. Note tree branches attached to tops of the masts. (Naval History and Heritage Command)



Unknown Mortar Schooner, New Orleans 1862.



Deck of Mortar Schooner, Name unknown.