

FIELD ARTILLERY IN THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES,

MAJOR JOHN PELHAM - "THE GALLANT PELHAM,"
AND
CAPTAIN JOHN MORTON - FORREST'S ARTILLERIST

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I. FIELD ARTILLERY IN THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES.

Artillery. The first weapons of mass destruction ever employed in this country. Artillery throughout the ages, whether land-based or on board ships at sea, has often been the deciding factor in military engagements. Numerically superior forces have often found themselves tasting bitter defeat due to the quantity and the quality of the opposing force's Artillery, and the gun crews that manned them.

- The Spanish Armada, with all of its strength and men, was no match for the cannons and cannoners of the English fleet.
- The British Army under General Howe, occupying Boston during the early days of the American Revolution, were no match for the cannons that Henry Knox brought from Ft. Ticonderoga and placed on the heights overlooking Boston harbor. The English's subsequent withdrawal from Boston back to Nova Scotia was probably the first major military engagement in American History that was totally decided by Artillery.

The King of Battle!

The best generals are those who have served in the artillery.-- Napoleon

Types of Artillery

The War Between the States saw many different types of Artillery used. There were cannons that were small enough to be disassembled and mounted on pack mules, cannons that were pulled by teams of horses, cannons that were mounted on rail cars and moved on tracks to keep the enemy from knowing where they were, as well as cannons mounted on fixed decks and fortifications.

John Gibbon's Artillerist's Manual, 1863 edition, describes two principal branches of artillery service.

- **Heavy Artillery.** Heavy artillery describes cannons that are more stationary or part of fixed fortifications. Heavy artillery is also known as siege and garrison artillery and is what you would see along Battery Row in Charleston, SC.
- **Field Artillery.** Field artillery was commonly referred to as light artillery, and is artillery that accompanies infantry and cavalry into the field. There are two different types: mounted artillery, in which only the drivers and officers were mounted, and horse artillery, in which all of the men were horsed. As a general rule, mounted artillery accompanied infantry and horse artillery accompanied cavalry.

Because there are so many types of Artillery, each with their own purpose and tactics, this presentation will focus on Field Artillery. Field Artillery primarily includes 3 types of ordnance: Mortars, Guns, and Howitzers.

MORTARS

These were designed to lob bombs and exploding shells over fortifications or obstructions and destroy personnel and equipment.

GUNS

These are relatively long-barreled cannon designed to fire projectiles with a nearly flat trajectory. The most typical Guns used included:

Name	Tube Length	Tube Weight	Bore Diameter	Range	Material
Six-Pounder, M1841	60 inches	884 pounds	3.67 inches	1520 yards	Bronze
Light 12-pounder, M1857	266 inches	1227 pounds	4.62 inches	1620 yards	Bronze
10-pounder Parrott, M1861	378 inches	890 pounds	2.9 inches	2000 yards	Cast Iron
20-Pounder Parrott	89 inches	1750 pounds	3.67 inches	2100 yards	Cast Iron
3-inch ordnance rifle	73 inches	816 pounds	3.0 inches	1850 yards	Wrought Iron

- **Napoleons.** The Six-Pounder and the Light 12-Pounder are familiarly known as the "Napoleon". They were also referred to as a "gun-howitzer", because they were capable of firing at a relatively high angle. These were full-size, smooth-bore cannons that were designed for medium- and long-range use. The 6lb. and the 12lb. Napoleons were so named for the weight of the cannon balls used (smooth bores are designated by the weight of the projectile, rifled bores by the width of the projectile). Early Napoleons were made of bronze, but there were many that were cast iron.
- **Rifled Guns.** These were used widely for the first time in the War Between the States. The three most common rifled are the Parrots, Ordinance, and James Rifles. The Parrot Rifle is a cast-iron gun that has a 13 inch reinforcing iron band welded over the breach to prevent the breach from rupturing from the pressure. The Ordinance Rifle is a larger wrought-iron cannon that had greater range and accuracy. The James Rifle was a cannon that was primarily made of bronze. However, bronze is too soft a metal for a rifled barrel, and many James Rifles became smooth-bores after a few battles.

HOWITZERS

Howitzers are shorter-barreled cannon designed to take a smaller charge. Their range is shorter and the trajectory of the projectile shows more arc. The most typical Howitzers used include:

Name	Tube Length	Tube Weight	Bore Diameter	Range	Material
12-Pounder	53 inches	778 pounds	4.62 inches	1100 yards	Bronze
24-pounder	65 inches	1318 pounds	5.82 inches	1325 yards	Bronze
Mountain Howitzer	37 inches	220 pounds	4.62 inches	900 yards	Bronze

- **Mountain Howitzers.** These were small, smooth-bore cannons that were designed for short-range use. Their size made them ideal for quick raids and

for use in mountainous and uneven terrain. These were typically made of bronze.

- **Field Howitzers.** These were larger, smooth-bore cannons that were designed for medium-range use, and were made of either bronze or cast iron.

There are other types of field Artillery that was used during the war, but these are the more typical categories.

Types of Ordinance

The War Between the States also saw the use of a wide variety of Ordinance (cannon shot). These include:

- **Solid Shot.** This was a steel ball (or bolt for rifled guns) that was used primarily for its demoralizing effect. Solid shot was frequently used when the opposing force was marching through a wooded area. For example, a 12lb. solid shot from a Napoleon could easily punch through a tree, causing the upper part of the tree to fall on the soldiers below. This would create confusion and fear. Solid shot was not very effective when fired in the face of an approaching enemy. However, because a solid cannon ball fired close to the ground will skip along the ground at tremendous speed, cannons would be set up at angles to approaching infantry and fire into their flanks. These cannon balls could easily damage or remove dozens of limbs, which would severely injure and kill those hit and terrify the rest. Solid shot was also used to damage opposing Artillery by breaking the axle or damaging the barrel. At the Museum at Gettysburg, there is a 24lb. Napoleon with a barrel ruptured about 24 inches from the breach that was caused by a cannon ball from an opposing gun entering the barrel of this cannon at the same time it was fired. The two balls collided and the pressure blew a hole in the bronze. This was typically long-range ordinance.
- **Shell.** This was a hollow ball/bolt that was filled with tightly packed powder. Shells had fuses that would be lit when the cannons were fired. This was used to damage opposing Artillery and other equipment, as well as personnel. This was typically long-range ordinance.
- **Case.** This was a hollow cylinder that was filled with 1 to 2 inch steel balls backed in resin. Case was designed to explode over the heads of approaching troops and rain these steel balls down at tremendous speeds. This was medium-range ordinance.

- **Canister.** This was also a hollow cylinder (often a tin can) that was filled with twisted bits of metal (shrapnel). When fired, the cylinder would hit the ground and rupture, causing the shrapnel to be released in the face of the opposing force. This was short-range ordinance (200 yards).
- **Double Canister.** This was when another tin can or bag of shrapnel was rammed into the cannon after a standard canister round had been rammed. The impact of the first cylinder into the other would cause both cylinders to rupture in the barrel, turning the cannon into a giant shot gun. This was also short-range ordinance.
- **Grape Shot.** This was primarily the navel equivalent to canister, although it was employed in Field Artillery on occasion. Rather than twisted bits of metal, the cylinder was filled with small steel balls (like bee bees or ball bearings).
- **Chain Shot.** This was primarily used in the navy to de-mast ships, but it was used on land as well. A cannon ball would be attached to center of a length of chain that was weighted at both ends. When fired, the chain would begin spinning, ripping apart anything it came in contact with. There was a brief attempt to fire a length of chain with a cannon ball on each end from two cannons in tandem, but since two cannons never fire at the same time, the cannon that fired second would find it's ball becoming the anchor, causing the other ball to begin spinning and killing all of the artillerists in the vicinity. In Georgia, there is a cannon outside of a county court house with two barrels sharing a common breach, which was developed to overcome the problem of two cannons firing at the same time. It never worked because, even with a shared breach, the cannon balls would not travel the same distance at the same speed down both barrels.

The Effects of Artillery

To say that Artillery played an important part in the War Between the States is a tremendous understatement. In fact, the first recorded deaths in the War Between the States occurred when three Federal soldiers mis-loaded a signal gun and it exploded.

The Generals of the Confederacy certainly understood the value and the impact of Artillery.

- During the Battle of Sharpsburg, General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was seen personally commanding a gun crew because the crew, which was firing canister, was overshooting the enemy.

- In August 1862, while attacking Stonewall Jackson near Groveton, Virginia, the Federals placed a mountain howitzer opposite the 15th Louisiana. The continuing howitzer barrage really enraged the Southerners. After repelling an attack by New York infantry, they charged the howitzer and captured it along with a large squad of Yankees. In the assault, the horses of the battery were killed. Wanting to keep the artillery but having no horses to haul them briefly presented a problem to the Southerners. They quickly resolved it. They harnessed the Yankees and compelled them to haul the artillery into the Southern lines.
- Major John Pelham was later bestowed the title of the “Gallant Pelham” by General Robert E. Lee on December 13, 1862 at the Battle of Fredericksburg, where, with one gun firing solid shot directly into the flanks of the advancing Federal army, he stalled the entire Federal charge on the Confederate right flank long enough for reserve Artillery could be brought up and the Confederate lines to be strengthened. As a result, Fredericksburg was a resounding Confederate victory, rather than a crushing defeat. One of JEB Stuart’s staff officers remembered Pelham’s actions in the following way.

I thought of young Pelham’s daring feat how, dashing forward far into the open field upon the Federal flank, he so raked the advancing lines with an enfilading fire from two pieces of his horse artillery as to compel them to pause and not only to confront him with a whole division of infantry, thrown into croquet at right angles with their main lines of battle, but likewise to concentrate upon him the fire of four batteries, besides the heavy guns on Stafford Heights; and how, notwithstanding these combined attacks, the boy artillerist maintained the unequalled duel for more than an hour, and until he was recalled by positive orders from his perilous position. Well might General Lee exclaim as he did to Jackson in regard to Pelham’s prowess: “It is inspiring to see such glorious courage in one so young;” and well might Jackson say of him, as he did to me that day: “He’s the best artillerist, for his age, I ever saw.”

- At the Battle of Shiloh, General Ruggles commanded at attachment of Mississippi Infantry. During the course of action during the Hornets’ Nest, Ruggles realized that his men were being cut apart. He saw an Artillery unit near by, and rode over to enlist their support. As they changed their position, he saw another unit and recruited them as well. After about 90 minutes, he had assembled 53 guns. When they opened fire, the sound was reported to be like that of a hurricane. Within minutes, the Federal Artillery was destroyed, and the surviving Federals had surrendered.

- The Artillery duel that preceded Picket's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg, which involved over 180 cannons, could be heard as far away as Pittsburgh.

It's interesting to note that the average life span of an artillerist in the War Between the States was about 5 months (1 battle for the two men in the front) serving on the gun, and about 9-11 months serving on the limber. A sharpshooter's primary responsibility, other than killing officers, was to kill cannon crews. During artillery duels, killing the opposing artillery was also a major focus.

II. MAJOR JOHN PELHAM – “THE GALLANT PELHAM.”

The young artillerist was born in Calhoun County, Alabama, and got his education at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point. He entered West Point in 1856, in one of the few classes which faced a five-year schedule before that experimental system was abandoned. Because of the five-year schedule, and because Alabama seceded so early in 1861, John Pelham never graduated from the Military Academy. His commission as lieutenant of artillery in Confederate service was dated March 16, 1861, just a couple of months before his comrades at West Point were to graduate.

Pelham was assigned to duty with Alburdis' Battery, Virginia Light Artillery. He commanded that battery at First Manassas and won mention in the official report of Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson. John Pelham was promoted to captain and permanent command of his own battery on March 23, 1862, just over a year after he had entered Confederate service. On August 9, 1862, Pelham earned the rank of major. Through the months of Confederate cavalry victories in 1862, Pelham was always on hand where General J. E. B. Stuart was, until Pelham had become firmly entrenched as a member of the general's military family.

Pelham has come down across the decades somehow larger than life. There was a strength of character about him, and an especially enchanting personal aura. His comrades thought so very highly of him that their tributes sound almost stilted. A member of A. P. Hill's staff who shared his room with Pelham early in the war remembered his onetime roommate as a “strikingly handsome and military looking young man, superbly mounted,” who was “a soldier born by education and by inspiration.”

Major John Pelham certainly earned the name “Gallant Pelham” long before Robert E. Lee granted him that title after the battle of Fredericksburg. During one battle, his guns were ordered into a small valley to cover a Southern advance. Pelham moved closer than his commander intended, and with three or four guns completely demoralized and defeated an artillery detachment much larger than his own. As the Southerners rushed into the gap Pelham had created, the Stonewall Jackson remarked: “With a Pelham on each flank I could lick the world!”

Pelham displayed a genius for moving his guns to a point on the battlefield from which he could completely cover the enemy position, yet which was protected from their return fire. Every time his troops went to a dangerous position, Pelham led the way. This recklessness, carefully measured as it was, led General J. E. B. Stuart on

one occasion to send him a message in the midst of a battle, "Get back from destruction, you infernal, gallant fool, John Pelham!"

Fredericksburg.

Pelham's character and personality was said to match his military skill, and he attracted many volunteers to join his unit and others in the Confederate service. His most conspicuous battle was December 13, 1862 at Fredericksburg, where he blazed away at -- and confused -- the Army of the Potomac with a single gun.

The Federals, in large numbers, had crossed the Rappahannock on pontoon bridges during the two preceding days. Confederates awaited them in a strong position behind a railroad embankment, in front of which lay a broad field almost one-half mile wide. It was a stark killing ground across which the Federals must advance, but the Federal artillery blanketed the Southern guns and neutralized most of them.

As the first major infantry assault by the Federals got started, Confederates were cheered and Federals were startled by the sudden eruption of artillery which enfiladed the Federal line. It was Pelham, with two guns of the Virginia horse artillery commanded by Captain Mathias Winston Henry, who had been a classmate of Pelham's at West Point.

For a time the two guns fired, but one of them -- a Blakely -- soon went quiet. The solitary Napoleon kept up its roar despite a torrent of Federal fire hurled in its direction. Pelham took advantage of what cover the ground offered and moved repeatedly in a desperate attempt to avoid destruction. One onlooker summarized the affair with one simple sentence: "The enemy were in dense masses advancing straight toward our line of battle & Pelham was exactly on their left flank with his gun with no support whatever."

Pelham was using solid shot primarily, because of the devastating psychological effect such rounds had when crashing in from the side on a long line of troops. Even so, Pelham managed to "blow up a caisson for the Yankees," with a lucky round.

Once the Confederates were able to bring up reserve artillery to replace the guns silenced by the initial Federal bombardment, Pelham was ordered to retire from his exposed position. However, his fighting on this bloody day was only just beginning. Pelham was placed in charge of a melange of guns drawn from various sources, with the mission of continuing his flanking fire against the Federal lines from a somewhat safer and more oblique angle. The later fighting was just as bitter as the desperate drama with the single gun, however, as attested by a member of Stuart's staff who said Pelham's position was "the hottest place" he'd ever visited. The staff captain

found Pelham standing between two busy guns “& shells were crashing in every direction.”

Accolades poured in on John Pelham. Stuart, Jackson, Hill, and others praised the youthful major officially and unofficially alike. General Lee himself penned the best-known applause when, in a hurried initial report written to the Confederate Secretary of War on December 14, he referred to “the gallant Pelham” -- no given name, no rank, just “the gallant.” Since Lee’s official reports usually were couched in the most reserved of language, this departure must have thrilled Pelham. In the official report, submitted four months later, Lee referred to him more conventionally as Major Pelham of Stuart’s Horse Artillery. In the same report, he also conferred direct credit on Pelham, and spoke of “the unflinching courage that ever distinguished” the young officer.

Kelly’s Ford.

Pelham was destined to die just 94 days after his great feat at Fredericksburg at the Battle of Kelly’s Ford, the first purely cavalry fight east of the Mississippi river of any appreciable size. During the winter, General Fitzhugh Lee, commanding the Confederate Cavalry near Culpeper, Virginia, has been taunting Federal General William Averell about the inferiority of Federal cavalry. In late February, he left as especially challenging message before withdrawing from a raid. “I wish you would put up your sword, leave my state, and go home. You ride a good horse, I ride better. If you won’t go home, return my visit, and bring me a sack of coffee.”

With 3,000 cavalymen and a battery of six cannon, Averell set out on March 16, 1863 to accept Lee’s challenge and prove the worth of cavalry to his commanding officer, General Joseph Hooker.

Fitzhugh Lee quickly learned of Averell’s movement, but was unsure whether Averell would attempt to cross the Rappahannock at Kelly’s Ford or at Rappahannock Ford, four miles farther upstream and north of Kelly’s. Lee reinforced the 20 Confederates guarding Kelly’s Ford with 85 members of the 2nd and 4th Virginia Cavalry regiments, and began blocking the approaches to the ford along both river banks with obstructions formed by felled trees. He then moved his sharpshooters between both Fords, and posted the bulk of his horsemen and the artillery at Culpeper.

The Federals arrived at Kelly’s Ford early on the morning of March 17. After three attempts to cross at the ford, and a futile effort to cross further downstream, members of the 1st Rhode Island and 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry regiments road into the frigid waist-deep water. They suffered high losses, but managed to establish a foothold.

Federal reinforcements slashed across the river and scattered the Virginians. It took two hours to remove the obstructions, but finally the Federals were across. They decided to take a defensive position and wait for Fitzhugh Lee to attack.

Lee soon arrived, accompanied by Stuart and Pelham, and found the Federals entrenched behind a small stone wall. The 3rd Virginia was ordered to charge the Federal position. Pelham joined the 5th Virginia and led an attack on the Federal right. Finding a gap in the wall, the Virginians galloped through in an attempt to turn the Federal right and cut them off from the ford. Pelham reined in his horse, stood in his stirrups, waved his sword and shouted, "Forward! Let's get 'em!" Suddenly an exploding shell knocked Pelham off his horse and a sliver of metal deeply penetrated the back of his head. Shortly thereafter, a Federal countercharge drove the Virginians back.

After much more fighting, the Federals decided to withdraw, rather than face the larger force moving in from Culpeper. Averell left behind two wounded Confederate officers, along with a sack of coffee and a message: "Dear Fitz, Here's your coffee. Here's your visit. How do you like it?"

Although technically a Confederate victory, the Battle of Kelly's Ford extracted a high price from the Southerners. The Federals lost 85 men, but the Confederates lost 146. Confederate losses were magnified by the death of John Pelham, who died about 1 A.M. on March 18th. Stuart's chief of staff wrote that Pelham's "dauntless personal courage is proverbial through our young Confederacy," and added the suggestion that "had he been spared, another great battle would have made him a General I think." Stuart wrote Pelham's mother, "I loved him as a brother, he was so noble, so chivalrous, so pure in heart, so beloved."

John Pelham By James R. Randall

March 17, 1863

Just as the spring came laughing through the strife
With all its gorgeous cheer;
In the bright April of historic life
Fell the great cannoneer.

The wondrous lulling of a hero's breath
His bleeding country weeps --
Hushed in the alabaster arms of death,
Our young Marcellus sleeps.

Nobler and grander than the Child of Rome,
Curbing his chariot steeds;
The knightly scion of a Southern home
Dazzled the land with deeds.

Gentlest and bravest in the battle brunt,
The champion of the truth,
He bore his banner to the very front
Of our immortal youth.

A clang of sabres 'mid Virginia snow,
The fiery rush of shells --
And there's a wail of immemorial woe
In Alabama dells.

The pennon drops that led the sabered band
Along the crimson field!
The meteor blade sinks from the nerveless hand
Over the spotless shield.

We gazed and gazed upon that beauteous face,
While 'round the lips and eyes,
Couched in the marble slumber, flashed the grace
Of a divine surprise.

Oh, Mother of a blessed soul on high!
Thy tears may soon be shed --
Think of thy boy with princes of the sky,
Among the Southern dead.

How must he smile on this dull world beneath,
Fevered with swift reknown --
He -- with the martyr's amaranthine wreath
Twining the victor's crown!

III. CAPTAIN JOHN MORTON - FORREST'S ARTILLERIST.

Much has been written about the legendary exploits of the Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia. However, not enough has been written or told about the Artillery of the Army of Tennessee, and in particular, the Artillery of Nathan Bedford Forrest's Cavalry, which was under the command of Captain John Watson Morton. The remainder of this presentation will focus on Captain Morton and Forrest's love for and use of his Artillery.

Forrest knew the value of Artillery, just as his peers in the Army of Northern Virginia. He also knew that the threat of Artillery was sometimes more important than the use of Artillery. Forrest was famous for making the enemy think he had more forces than he actually did. This included moving his Artillery from one point to another to create the illusion of a superior force of guns. With the enemy preparing itself for the assault of a tremendous force, Forrest could achieve his real objectives and be gone before the Federals could regroup and give chase.

Captain John W. Morton, Jr.

John Morton was a 17-year old student at Western Military Institute of Nashville, TN, when President Lincoln called for the raising of troops to invade the South. Once Tennessee had passed the ordinance of succession, the students waited for no formal announcement nor dismissal from the classroom. The entire cadet core of 259 left the institute immediately to return home and join the first companies being formed.

He enlisted in a company of Zouaves, and was soon elected Lieutenant. After failing to get this company mustered into Confederate service, he enlisted in the 1st Tennessee Infantry. When that unit was ordered to West Virginia, his captain (who was also the family doctor) stated that he was too young and frail for the rugged country-side and sent him home to his mother. However, just across the bridge, several Artillery companies were being mustered the same day at Camp Weakley, so he reported there and was mustered in immediately.

When his Artillery company was transferred from State to Confederate service in July, 1861, Senior Lt. John Morton of Porter's Tennessee Battery was ordered to Ft. Donelson. During the battle for Ft. Donelson, Porter's Battery lost 37 of 48 guns and Lt. Morton was captured and taken prisoner, along with his 12 surviving men. He was sent to Camp Chase and then to Johnson's Island after the Battle of Shiloh.

Morton was very impressed with Forrest's daring escape from Ft. Donelson, and developed a strong desire to serve with such a leader. When he was paroled, he gladly accepted the orders to report to Murfreesboro because he knew that Forrest was not far away. He succeeded in having the 10 survivors of Porter's Battery assigned to him when he was placed in command of two siege guns on Stone's River Bluff. Not caring from the position or the character of the guns, he enlisted the aid of Major Graves, who was General Bragg's chief of Artillery, to be transferred to Forrest's command. Soon thereafter, Morton and his 10 men were sent to General Forrest with orders to take charge of his Artillery.

The Meeting Between Morton and Forrest

Knowing nothing of the friction between Forrest and Bragg, Morton confidently presented his orders to General Forrest, who looked at him sharply, and then said curtly: "I have a fine battery of six guns under Captain Freeman, and I don't propose to be interfered with by Bragg."

Taken aback, Morton replied: "I don't want to interfere with Cpt. Freeman. I am acquainted with him and nearly all of his men. But I want to go with you. I know it will not be long before you capture some guns for me."

Forrest told him to report the next morning and he would see what he could do. When Morton presented himself to Forrest the next morning, Forrest was annoyed with his persistence and told him that he needed to get orders from General Wheeler who was in command of that department before reporting for duty, which would supersede Bragg's orders.

Because preparations for a raid into Western Tennessee were progressing, Morton rode to Wheeler immediately, woke him up, received his orders, and reported to Forrest at 8 AM the next morning, having ridden 104 miles in 23 hours without a change in horse, and without food or rest.

After Morton left to meet with Wheeler, Forrest is quoted as having said the following to one of his staff: "I'd like to know why in hell Bragg sent that tallow-faced boy here to take charge of my Artillery. I'll not stand it. Cpt. Freeman shan't be interfered with!"

Morton's First Guns

Forrest was ordered to be part of the expedition into Western Tennessee, but, as usual, without sufficient supplies. Either it was his fame of being able to forage, or Bragg's detest of him, that was the cause. Morton requested muskets and the chance to advance with the Infantry until cannons could be captured for him. Forrest, seeing his enthusiasm, ordered Cpt. Freeman to send two guns and sufficient additional men to Morton so he could take the advance.

During the battle of Lexington, Morton noticed a section of Artillery stationed with the 11th Illinois that was covering the retreat of the 2nd West Tennessee Cavalry US. Morton trained his two borrowed guns on them with such success that they were soon abandoned. Now he found himself in possession of two 3" steel-rifled Rodman guns, fully equipped. He returned the two borrowed pieces from Cpt. Freeman and commanded these two Rodmans throughout the rest of the war. Even after promotion took away his immediate command of the guns, he always selected them for his personal supervision.

General Forrest had a more than ordinary affection for these two cannons as well. He was quoted on several occasions that he had no fear of the outcome of an attack if Morton and his Rodmans were with him.

On December 27, 1862, two mountain howitzers were consolidated with Morton's Rodmans to form Morton's Battery. The battery included three officers and 63 non-commissioned officers and men.

Un-Military Tactics

Nathan Bedford Forrest has long been accused of performing the impossible, earning him the nick name of "The Wizard of the Saddle." Many of Forrest's orders were outside his subordinates knowledge of military tactics, but Morton never had any doubt about their feasibility or success.

Conventional wisdom states that Artillery should be placed to the rear of the infantry and cavalry. This is because of their range and value (one cannon is easily worth 100 men). Forrest liked to use his Artillery at close range, often along side of or in advance of infantry and cavalry troops. The Battle of Parker's Crossroads is an example of where Forrest found the enemy in a strong position along the side of a narrow lane and ordered Morton to set up his Artillery at close range and "give 'em hell," which was a typical order Morton received from Forrest.

Morton's fire continued to force the Federals to retreat down the lane and into the open, and he continued to advance his guns right after them. The enemy had piled

rails along the road to delay the Confederate's approach and force them to leave the road and march through some nearby fields. One of Morton's shells struck the rails, glanced aside, killed three Federal officers, and wounded seven men.

The Federals finally surrendered, but while the officers were discussing terms and the Confederates were taking inventory of the captured stores (including three captured cannons), two additional Federal divisions attacked Forrest's flanks. The Artillery was ordered out between the enfilading lines of fire while Forrest rallied his men. The Artillery continued to fire as it withdrew, providing time for most of the command to escape. All cannons were safely removed, except for the three captured guns and one cannon that exploded during the fighting.

Forrest knew that if these two Federal forces joined together, they could prevent his escape back across the Tennessee. So, while they were still widely separated, he ordered Morton to attack one of them with the Artillery while he held back the infantry for the second attack. If it were not for the miscarriage of his orders, this tactic could have netted him the capture of the entire Federal force. However, even in the face of potential disaster, Forrest managed to withdraw the bulk of his force and all of his Artillery. His official report praised Morton and the Artillery for their fine actions that day.

The Battle of Chickamauga

During the Battle of Chickamauga, Forrest placed Morton's guns in the front, which had become Forrest's favorite style of using his guns. The cannons held the Federals in check until infantry support could be brought up to push back the Federals. Several Federal guns were captured, but when Federal reinforcements arrived, they had to be abandoned. Several of Morton's horses were killed while trying to withdraw the Rodmans, and Forrest, seeing the Federals charging with fixed bayonets and the cannons being pulled by hand through the dense brush, ordered his escort to dismount and use their horses to save the guns. This shows the importance Forrest placed on his Artillery. In fact, Forrest typically had the Artillery at the front of his columns, and rode with Morton at the head of the Artillery.

When General Walker arrived with Confederate reinforcements, he declared the actions of Forrest's men to be "unparalleled" and stated that his troops were deserving of "immortal honor for the part borne in the action." This battle, fought on September 19th, was Cpt. John Morton's 21st birthday.

General Cleburne's Division captured two guns during the battle, which were turned over to Morton. His battery now had six guns.

New Orders

On May 12, 1864, Cpt. Morton was promoted to Chief of Artillery. That April, most of the enlistments of the battery expired. On May 17, 1864, the members of the battery met and unanimously resolved to reenlist.

Morton's Battery, In the Field, May 17, 1864

The members of Morton's Battery, having called a meeting for the purpose of considering the necessity of reenlisting for the war, unanimously adopted the following resolutions:

Whereas our enemies are still occupying our soil, violating our hearthstones, and desolating our once happy homes, their efforts for our subjugation being determined and fraught with all the malice of a barbarous nation, we hereby

Resolve: 1. That we renew to our comrades in arms our pledges of fidelity, and extend to them our assurances that we will wield our arms as long as the invader's threat shall pollute our soil.

2. That we express our supreme confidence in our noble and daring leader, General Forrest, and, as in the past, desire no other assurance of victory than the justice of our cause and his presence in the field.

3. That Morton's Battery take the lead and set the noble example of reenlistment to the rest of our gallant command, and be the first to receive the approving smile of our glorious Forrest.

4. That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to General Forrest, and sent for publication to the Memphis Appeal, Mobile Advertiser, and the Daily Mississippian.

The only time Forrest ever spoke to Morton with anything ever approaching sternness, came later that month when Morton wanted to go to Columbus to see his father, who was going to give him the money necessary to buy a new horse. Forrest refused to allow him to leave camp, stating that he had a good officer and did not want him running off and getting married. Forrest then handed Morton the money necessary to buy the horse that he had picked out (\$750.00).

The “Bull Pups” at Brice’s Crossroads

Forrest’s men had affectionately nicknamed Morton’s guns as the “bull pups”. Morton’s artillery horses were tired from long marches through very deep mud. As they advanced the 18 miles to Brice’s Crossroads, their pace was so slow that the rest of the command passed them. As they continued, they could hear that a general engagement had begun, and messengers would dash up every few minutes with “hurry orders” for “Morton’s bull pups.” These messages would renew the efforts of the artillerists to get the horses to gallop. The last two miles were made in a frantic run, and the guns arrived on the battlefield at what has been described by General Stephen D. Lee as “the critical hour of the battle.”

The Confederates were being driven back. As Morton arrived, Forrest rode up to him and ordered the guns positioned on two slopes that were being hit hard. The Federals were at close range, but the guns advanced and, with the aid of the cavalry, captured two more 3 inch steel Rodmans. The men of the battery, delighted to have a complete battery of Rodmans, charged forward without waiting for orders, exchanging two bronze howitzers for the Rodmans, and turned the captured guns on the retreating Federals. The Federal retreat of infantry, cavalry, and wagon trains had entangled into a hopeless coil while making for the single bridge that crossed the Tishomingo Creek. Morton brought his guns near and inflicted a fearful carnage. The road to the bridge was too narrow to turn, so the teamsters and unwounded soldiers cut the horses loose, mounted them, and rode as fast as they could to the rear. Many took their chance of jumping the creek to get away from the Artillery fire.

The Confederates cleared the bridge by pushing everything into the creek and the cannons crossed over the creek to pursue the retreating Federals. The cavalry also advanced, attacking every time the Federals tried to halt their retreat.

Once Forrest’s entire command had grouped, Forrest gave what is believed to be the first time in the history of warfare such an order had been given.

Calling his Chief of Artillery to him, he said: “John, do you see that column coming up the road yonder?” pointing to the rear.

“Yes General,” was the reply.

“Well, I am going to take command of that column and move across this open field right in front of us and strike their column on the road right up yonder where that piece of artillery is. And when you hear Gause sound the bugle for the charge, you take your artillery and charge right down the road, and get as close as you can. Give ‘em hell right up yonder where I’m going to double ‘em up.”

Forrest had just ordered his Artillery to charge the enemy’s line of battle without support. When Morton heard the bugle, he ordered the guns limbered and moved the

batteries down the road at a rapid gallop. Halting within about 60 yards of the enemy's position on the hill, the guns were ordered into action.

Forrest's regiments had dismounted and were hiding in the trees. When the guns began firing, they charged the field and hit the Federals on their flank. The Federals made a gallant defense of their position, but could not withstand the terrible fire of Artillery at short range. The Federals only hope was to meet the Confederates in hand-to-hand combat to get clear of the cannons.

By this time, the Confederates had captured six cannons, and another battery was being attacked. The Federals fell back to this battery, and Morton ordered a hail of canister into their lines. The havoc was ghastly and the battery was abandoned, along with 10 day's rations loaded on 35 wagons.

Forrest was not done with the Federals, and even though he allowed the Artillery to rest, he encouraged his men to continue the pursuit. "Come on, men!" he shouted to the almost exhausted troopers, as they halted at a stream which the Federals were crossing. "In a rout like this two men are equal to 100. They will not stop to fight." The Federals were not allowed to stop a moment, and even the Confederate horseholders were allowed to take a turn at harassing them in their wild retreat.

The next day, the pursuit continued. It was easy to find where the Federals had passed, as they were throwing everything away (belts, haversacks, weapons, etc.). Forrest, with the Artillery at the front of the line, chased them back to Collierville in 36 hours, which is the same distance it took the Federals 9 days to travel prior to the battle. Morton had 15 horses fall dead during the pursuit from exhaustion. Forrest frequently pressed Morton to "keep the skeer on 'em, John." During the entire battle, Forrest personally ordered two Artillery charges. On their ride back to the battlefield, Forrest stated: "Well, John, I think your guns won the battle for us."

Burying the "Bull Pups"

During Forrest's raid on Memphis, a Federal advance cut off the retreat of the two Rodmans captured in 1862. Knowing Forrest's affection for the guns, instead of abandoning or spiking them, they dug a hole in the middle of the road and buried them. The mud in the road hid any traces of the grave. The Federals crossed over the grave on the march out and on the march back. Once Forrest's command had returned to Mississippi, Morton ordered a detachment of cavalry to resurrect the guns and return them. From that point on, the guns were regarded even more highly and, though in the front of every subsequent fight, were saved time and again by strenuous effort.

The Art of Illusion

As mentioned earlier, Forrest enjoyed making the enemy think he was in possession of a greater force than was actually there. The taking of the Fort at Athens, Alabama is the perfect example. Colonel Campbell, USA, commanded the garrison, and he refused to surrender to Forrest. When Forrest demanded a meeting, Col. Campbell agreed. When Forrest made it clear that he intended to take the fort one way or another, and that he had sufficient forces to do this, Col. Campbell demanded to see Forrest's forces. Forrest agreed, providing he had Col. Campbell's decision to surrender once the inspection was complete.

What followed was a wonderful piece of acting. Troops deployed, withdrew, reformed, and deployed again as different units. Artillery pieces were set up, withdrawn, moved, and set up again in a different place. Morton's eight guns were counted as 24 guns on Col. Campbell's inspection list. Col. Campbell delayed surrendering, hoping for reinforcements. Finally, Forrest demanded the surrendered, and Col. Campbell complied. His officers were so incensed at this that they wrote a resolution to General Sherman and General Grant making it clear that Col. Campbell had been duped and that they did not support the decision to surrender.

Oddly enough, reinforcements were only a mile away, engaged with the rest of Forrest's command, who were defending the road from Decatur. After due investigation, Col. Campbell's conduct was reported to be "disapproved by every one, and disgraceful in the extreme."

From Field Artillery to Shore Batteries

During the campaign against Johnsonville, Forrest set up his batteries along the Tennessee river to capture, disable, or destroy enemy gun boats or transports. The batteries were set up about a mile apart. The Mazepa, an unarmed transport with two barges was the first prize taken by the Artillery trap. The Anna was the next steamer to come through the trap. When the first battery opened up, the captain raised the white flag and then to raced past the troopers waiting on the shore. The guns disabled her, but she managed to float to safety.

The gunboat Undine came next, protecting a transport and two barges. They were allowed to sail past the first battery, but when they reached a position between the two batteries, both batteries opened fire. During the battle, the Cheeseman steamed into the fray, and all were compelled to surrender.

General Forrest ordered Morton to detach some of his artillery onto the newly captured steamers to create a fleet of gun boats. The cavalymen hoisted a commodore's flag on the Undine and prepared to use the fleet for an attack on

Johnsonville the next day. The remainder of Morton's artillery covered the fleet from shore. A rain storm came up, making it difficult to move the land-based guns.

The next day, passage was easier and the two gun boats soon outdistanced their protection. They ran into two Federal gun boats which immediately opened fire. The Undine was run aground and all men escaped, but the ship was recaptured before being scuttled and the Federals returned her to Federal service. The other ships returned to where Morton's batteries could provide protection, but were surrounded the next day by more gun boats and had to be run aground so the men could escape.

The morning of November 4th, 1864, Morton's guns arrived on in the hills opposite Johnsonville. Morton selected a place to set up his guns that provided him coverage of the fort, the docks, and the town, but was too high for the Federal guns to reach. Forrest granted him two guns and extra time to position the guns before opening the general engagement. The balance of the artillery was positioned evenly on either side. At 2PM, they opened fire. After 40 minutes, the gun boats, the docks, and the shore-front warehouses were a solid sheet of flames.

As Morton moved from gun to gun directing fire, he happened upon General Forrest serving as a gunner, accompanied by Generals Bell and Buford. Major Allison was acting as observer. When a shot fell short, General Forrest would exclaim: "a rickety-shay! A rickety-shay! I'll hit her next time!" Forrest did not know the proper artillery commands, but the three generals managed to inflict damage on the enemy. After each shot, generals Bell and Buford would push the gun back up the bank and into position. By evening, the Federals had withdrawn, leaving the all the stores burning to a pile of ash. The Federals estimated the loss at approximately \$2.2 Million.

Of Morton's men, Forrest had the following to say: "My thanks are especially due for their efficiency and gallantry on this expedition. They fired with a rapidity and accuracy which extorted the commendation of even the enemy. The rammers were shot from the hands of the cannoneers, and some of them were nearly buried amid the dirt which was thrown upon them by the storm of shell which rained upon them by the enemy's batteries."

Near the End

Morton writes very little about the Nashville campaign. It was evidently too painful for him to recall the senseless slaughter of the Army of Tennessee and of his faithful companions. During the engagements around Nashville, Morton engaged a Federal gun placed near a 100 year-old house called "Mansfield." Oddly enough, "Mansfield" became the residence of Morton and his wife after the war.

On February 25, 1865, the members of Morton's Battery met to discuss the rumors that the war was over and that General Forrest was arranging to take a colony of Confederates to Mexico. At the meeting, the following resolutions were passed:

Whereas we, the members of Morton's Battery, deem it an appropriate occasion, now that the dark clouds of gloom and despondency hang like a vast funeral pall over the whole length and breadth of our land, to renew our pledges of unswerving devotion and constancy to the great and holy cause of Southern Independence, to the accomplishment of which we dedicate anew our energies, or lives, and sacred honor;

Resolved: 1. That we believe our cause to be just and righteous, and our motives to be pure and patriotic. That we have an abiding faith in the integrity and wisdom of our leaders, in the bravery and devotion of our commanders in arms, and in the favor and assistance of Almighty God.

2. That we cheerfully acquiesce in whatever policy our wise and able President may deem it right to pursue, and that we here tender him our earnest and grateful thanks for the skillful and unsurpassed manner in which he has steered our noble Ship of State through the many breakers and quicksands that have threatened her destruction. Nor would we omit this opportunity of expressing our implicit confidence in our great and indomitable chieftain, under whose banner we have ever been victorious.

3. To the beautiful daughters of the South, and especially to those within the lines of the enemy, whose hearts have clung the closer the darker the clouds have gathered around us; in their cause also would we express our deep, unflinching devotion. The recollection of their wrongs will nerve our hearts in the dread hour of battle. By our holy memories of the past and by the flowing prestige of the future we swear the red cross banner of the South shall yet wave triumphant over our land, consecrated by the blood of free men and sanctified by the prayers of martyrs and patriots.

On April 30th, after his desperate fighting into and back out of Selma, Alabama, Forrest was notified of the surrender of the Confederate forces. Forrest then proceeded to Meridian to arrange for the relinquishing of his command.

Captain Morton, was encamped some five miles from the town of Gainsville. He took the muster roles of his command to headquarters and secured the paroles for his

men as well as fresh horses. When he returned, he made a farewell address before disbanding his men, encouraging them to return peacefully to their homes and make the best of conditions as they should find them. "I have but one more request to make of you, and that is that you take your guns to the place I have selected -- a spot on a group of trees about a half a mile from the place of paroles -- and park them. You have your paroles in your pockets; and if every one does not ride home on a good horse, it will be no fault of mine." It broke their hearts to surrender the Rodmans, and many of the men hugged the barrels and wept as they prepared to return home.

General Forrest sent Morton home with a letter to his father. It read:

Dear Sir,

It affords me pleasure to report the following to you of the conduct of your son, Captain John W. Morton, Jr.

He was ordered to report to me for duty by General Bragg, to take charge of my Horse Artillery, in November, 1862. His appearance was so youthful and his form so frail that (wishing stout, active men for my service) I at first hesitated to receive him; but his coming so well recommended by Colonel Hollenquest, General Bragg's Chief of Artillery, and others, I concluded to try him, having learned he was first lieutenant of "Porter's" famous Tennessee Battery, which surrendered at Fort Donelson February 16, 1862. He was highly complimented by General Buckner in his Official Report, and received from General Buckner the high appellation of "Gallant Lieutenant Morton, Our Beardless Boy."

I gave him command of a section of artillery, and moved with my first raid into Western Tennessee in December, 1862, and soon captured other guns, and placed him in command of the battery; and during this expedition that gallant and efficient manner in which he handled his guns won my confidence and esteem. He has been constantly with me since, in all my engagements, never absent from his post of duty, apparently happiest when in the thickest of the fight. He has held with great credit for twelve months past the position of Chief of Artillery of my corps. By this soldierly bearing, generous disposition, affable manners, strict attention to duty and the welfare of his men, uniform and true gallantry on so many fields, he has made many friends, and you may justly be proud of such a son. He has, with the troops of this department, surrendered his "Old" Battery, one of the best equipped and finest in the service.

I deeply sympathize with him and wish him such success and happiness in any vocation of after life.

Yours most respectfully, N. B. Forrest

Captain Morton enlisted when he was 17 years old, and was paroled when he was 21 years old. He had grown from a pale, frail boy, into a man. In closing, I include a poem written by Charles Edgeworth Jones of Augusta, GA.

Captain John W. Morton, C. S. A.

Of Forrest's brave artillery sons,
John Morton was the chief,
Who in the thunder of his guns
Oft sought his soul's relief.

As Pelham of the West, may he
Be hailed throughout the South!
His war-time eloquence, most free,
Came from his cannon's mouth.

In him our Wizard found a man
On whom he could rely;
And when his service first began,
His fame was made on high.