



SITE OF FIRST
GRAND HOTEL
USED AS HOSPITAL
DURING WAR
BETWEEN THE STATES
ERECTED BY MOBILE CHAPTER
UNITED DAUGHTERS OF THE
CONFEDERACY
1948



• THE •
MILITARY
LEGACY



est. 1847
Grand Hotel
GOLF RESORT & SPA

ONE GRAND BOULEVARD • POINT CLEAR, AL 36564
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THE
GRAND HOTEL
• POINT CLEAR, ALABAMA •

READY, AIM, FIRE

Since opening its doors more than 170 years ago, the Grand Hotel has played an important role in society and with the military. The Grand Hotel was originally built in 1847 as a two story building with 40 rooms. Over the years, The Grand Hotel has hosted guests from American Presidents to leaders from around the world to generations of families from across the country. Guests originally traveled to the Grand Hotel by steamboats and docked at what is now the Marina.

During times of war, the Grand Hotel was very important to the military. The Grand Hotel was used as a hospital during the Civil War. During World War II the hotel was used by the U.S. Air Force for training. We have provided a more detailed account of the Grand's military history in this brochure.

Each afternoon a cannon is fired to salute today's military and those who have passed through this historic hotel over the years. The cannon is similar to the ones used across the country when the Grand Hotel first opened in 1847.

Every day a procession around the historic Grand Hotel grounds starts in the hotel lobby and concludes with the firing of the cannon at approximately 4:00 p.m. We hope you will join our Grand Salute to the Military.

A GRAND MILITARY HISTORY

When the War Between the States broke out in 1861 the South found out quickly that they were at a disadvantage because most of the industrial facilities needed for all sorts of goods, from ship building to the every day items such as salt, meat, clothing, and yes, weapons, were located in the North.

The North realized that keeping supplies from the Confederate troops was crucial and thus devised the "Anaconda Plan". As the name suggests, this strategy was intended to squeeze the Confederacy until it surrendered. The Union Navy would cut off overseas and Western trade by a tight blockade both on the

Mississippi River and the Southern Coast. It was vital for the Confederacy to participate in what was called blockade running.

By 1863, large blockade runners could only operate in and out of four ports: Wilmington, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Mobile, Alabama and Galveston, Texas.

In an attempt to counteract the Union Navy, especially the Iron Clads, the Confederates introduced the torpedo. Before the Civil War it was an explosive device floated towards enemy ships. However, these torpedoes could be seen on the surface, allowing time for reaction. Underwater torpedoes were the new invisible weapon and were widely used at the entrance to Mobile Bay to aid the blockade runners in their delivery of goods to the Port of Mobile.

On August 5, 1864 Admiral Farragut led a rather large Union Naval fleet into Mobile Bay to block the delivery of goods. They were met at the pass between Fort Morgan on the Eastern side of the bay and Fort Gaines on the Western side with a barrage of torpedoes. One torpedo hit the "unsinkable" Iron Clad, the Tecumseh, sinking it in two minutes.

This infuriated Admiral Farragut but he was determined to stop the blockade runners. This is when he made the famous statement "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead." Over the next three weeks Farragut's vessels and the Union Army finally forced the defenders of Fort Morgan to surrender. The Port of Mobile was then closed to blockade runners, but the City of Mobile remained in Confederate hands until 1865.

During this time the Grand Hotel was turned into a base hospital and was guarded by a garrison of the 21st Alabama Infantry. Most of those sent to the Grand Hotel for recovery were soldiers from Missouri that were injured during the Battle of Vicksburg in 1863. This battle took place in Vicksburg, Mississippi, some 250 miles away from the Grand Hotel.

More than 300 soldiers died while in the hospital at the Grand Hotel. These soldiers are buried shoulder to shoulder in a mass grave near the hotel at Point Clear Cemetery. The identities of the soldiers were kept in the hotel until a fire in 1869 destroyed the records of those buried. A monument to the unknown soldiers and a 7-inch naval gun used at

Fort Morgan have been mounted at the cemetery along with a commemorative plaque. A fence topped with cannon balls surrounds the marker.

Admiral Farragut indeed fired weapons on the Grand Hotel grounds. A hole was found in the wall of the Gunnison House, which is the site of the Grand's Conference Center today. While the Gunnison House was being torn down years ago, writing near the hole stated - "compliments of Admiral Farragut."

OPERATION IVORY SOAP

During World War II, the Grand Hotel was the focal point for "Operation Ivory Soap" training. Colonel Thompson contacted the then owner, Mr. Strat White-Spunner, and used the hotel as his base of operations. As a donation to the war effort, Mr. Roberts turned the Grand Hotel and its facilities over to the U.S. Army Air Force to be used as its Maritime Training School. Basic seamanship, marine, and aquatic training for the Army officers and men of the aircraft repair and maintenance units were held at the Grand Hotel. Operation Ivory Soap training began on July 10, 1944.

Using the Grand Hotel, officers and men moved in and began living in "Navy style." All personnel referred to the floors as decks, kept time by a ship's bell and indulged in the use of tobacco only when the "smoking lamp" was lit. The courses included swimming, special calisthenics, marching, drill, navigation, ship identification, signaling, cargo handling, ship orientation, sail making, amphibious operations and more. Two men from each ship were also trained to be underwater divers.

During a five-month period, the school turned out 5,000 highly trained Air Force seamen. Afterwards, the men and their ships went to war, as did Colonel Thompson. The men of Operation Ivory Soap participated in the landings in the Philippines, Guam, Tinian, Saipan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Fighter aircraft and B-29s took off from these bases and flew continuous missions over Japan. The men who trained at the Grand Hotel were instrumental in saving many lives, as well as aircraft.