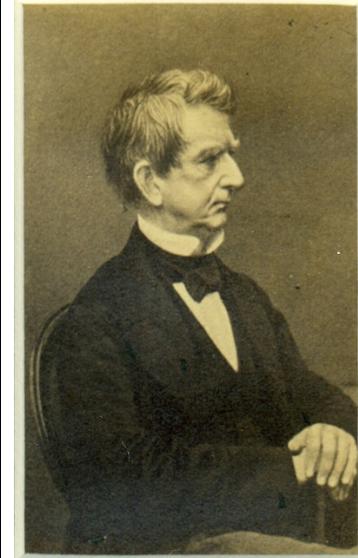


## Chapter 321 – Seward Oversteps His Bounds And Lincoln Reacts Forcefully



**Dates:**  
April 1, 1860

**Sections:**

- Seward Offers Up A “Foreign War” Plot That He Might Lead In Lincoln’s Place

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Date: April 1, 1861

### Seward Offers Up A “Foreign War” Plot That He Might Lead In Lincoln’s Place



William Henry Seward (1801-1872)

April Fool’s Day concludes with one other telling incident that will define the relationship between Henry Seward and Abraham Lincoln over the remaining four years of their time together.

Seward believes that he is clearly superior to the President in seeing “the big picture” affecting the destiny of the nation. For him that involves finding any way possible to bring the seceding states back into the Union. But he is no longer certain that evacuating the forts would produce that outcome, even if he could finally convince Lincoln to go along.

What is needed, he thinks, is a different strategy, something so compelling that the South will be persuaded to heal the breach and come home. His intricate mind lands on finding a “common enemy” such as Spain, and provoking a conflict with them over something the South might fight for in unison with the North, such as acquiring Cuba or other potential plantation territories.

With this in mind, he sends a memorandum to Lincoln in which he politely offers to take the lead in the current crisis if it is producing too much strain on the President.

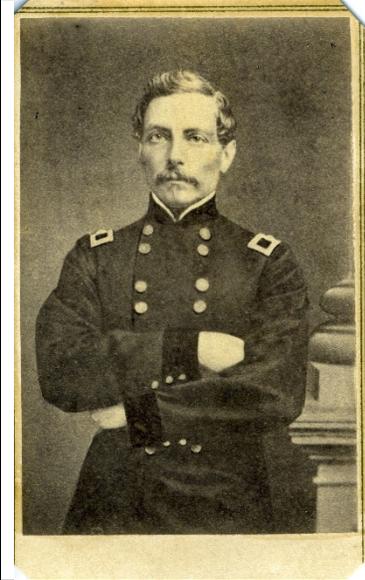
Lincoln is taken aback by the proposal, but decides to use it to put Seward in his place and establish the working relationship he wants and needs going forward. He summons Seward and tells him straight out that Ft. Sumter must be defended and that the final decision belongs with him:

*If this must be done; I must do it.*

His tone with Seward is gentle, not harsh, and he insures him that he his support as Secretary of State will be crucial to this and all future decisions during his presidency.

It is generally agreed that from that time forward. Seward will always remain willing to openly and aggressively offer advice to Lincoln, without ever again overstepping his bounds.

## Chapter 322 – Lincoln Sends Messengers To Charleston While Monitoring The Virginia Convention



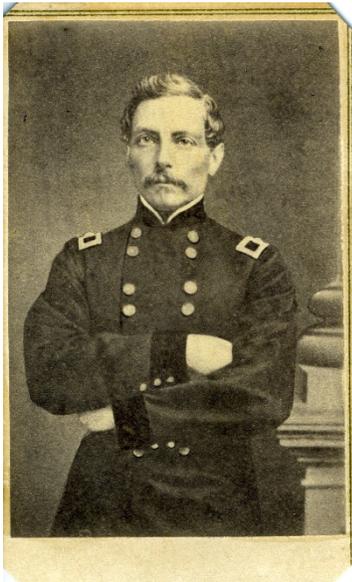
**Dates:**  
April 2, 1860

- Sections:**
- The South Puts The Squeeze On The Ft. Sumter Garrison
  - Lincoln Keeps His Eye On The Virginia Convention
  - Two Messengers Are Dispatched To Charleston

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 2, 1861

### The South Puts The Squeeze On The Ft. Sumter Garrison



The sideways drift in negotiations over Ft. Sumter causes War Secretary Leroy Walker to increase the pressure on Major Anderson.

The form comes by way of rations.

Anderson already writes a note to Washington on April 1 saying that his food is running out and estimating that, at best, he could hold on for ten days or so.

Walker ups the ante on April 2, ordering that no more provisions be allowed into the fort.

The order goes to forty-two year old Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard.

Beauregard is born on a sugar plantation outside New Orleans to French Creole parents. He graduates from West Point as an engineer and is twice wounded en route to capturing Mexico City with General Scott.

Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard  
(1818-1893)

After touting Jefferson Davis to head the Confederacy, he is rewarded by being named the first Brigadier General in the Confederate Army.

His supreme self-confidence and flamboyant personality make General Beauregard eager to lead an assault on Ft. Sumter.

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 4, 1861

### **Lincoln Keeps His Eye On The Virginia Convention**

Within Lincoln's cabinet there is agreement that if Virginia stays in the Union, it might swing the entire Upper South and the Border states to follow suit, and perhaps even cause a return by the seven early seceders. This will prove to be more wishful thinking, but on April 4 the President wants to hear the latest news from the Virginia convention, already under way for two months.

To do so, he invites John Baldwin, a pro-Union delegate, to the White House for an update.

Seward still hopes that Lincoln will use the time to tell Baldwin that he will evacuate Sumter if Virginia ends its session without seceding.

But the President simply probes his guest as to why the convention hasn't ended already, to demonstrate the state's loyalty to the Union.

Baldwin levels with Lincoln, saying that the delegates are in a wait and see mode regarding the outcome at Ft. Sumter, and that, if shots are fired by either side, secession will follow. When Lincoln pushes back on that assessment, Baldwin responds:

*Mr. President, I did not come here to argue with you. I am here as a witness. I know the sentiments of the people of Virginia and you do not.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 4, 1861

### **Two Messengers Are Dispatched To Charleston**

After Baldwin leaves, Lincoln decides it is time to communicate directly with Governor Pickens in Charleston, and, if possible, visit Ft. Sumter and Major Anderson.

He enlists a State Department clerk, Robert Chew, to hand Pickens a message, while denying him the authority any on-the-spot reply. The message reads:

*I am directed by the President of the United States to notify you to expect an attempt...to supply Ft. Sumter with provisions only; and that, if such an attempt be not resisted, no effort to throw in men, arms or ammunition, will be made without further notice, or in case of an attack on the fort.*

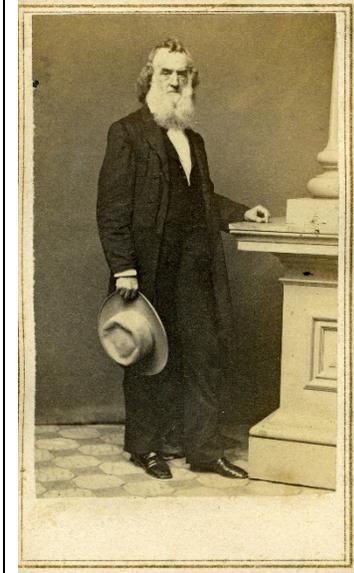
This wording reflects the President's passive-aggressive approach to dealing with Ft. Sumter.

On one hand he promises not to initiate the use of force – while, on the other, making it clear that he fully intends to keep Sumter in Union hands.

That way, if violence breaks out, it will be the other side that fires the first shot.

In addition to Chew, Lincoln also dispatches Lt. Theodore Talbot to Charleston, on the outside chance that he will be allowed to enter the fort and report on conditions there.

## Chapter 323 – Confusion Reigns As The Federal Expeditions To The Forts Head Out



**Dates:**  
April 4-8, 1860

**Sections:**

- An Angry Gideon Welles Confronts Lincoln About The Sumter Expedition
- Captain David Porter Takes Off On His Own To Florida
- The Sumter Expedition Heads Out Amidst Press Coverage

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 4, 1861

### An Angry Gideon Welles Confronts Lincoln About The Sumter Expedition



Gideon Welles (1802-1878)

On April 4 Lincoln learns that Anderson is almost out of food.

He responds by drafting a note to the Major in Cameron's name, saying that reinforcements are coming, and that he should hold out as long as possible, surrendering only if starvation risks the life of his men.

He then sends for Lt. Fox who is leading the Sumter expedition. He says that the voyage is a go, that it will include both provisions and soldiers, and that Fox needs to launch it in the next two days.

In a panic, Fox heads to Naval Secretary Gideon Welles for support. His main request is to for the frigate *Powhatan* and Welles signs off on the order – totally unaware that it has already been promised to Meigs for his secret mission to Ft. Pickens in Florida.

All seems well until that evening when Lincoln's personal secretary, John Nicolay, suddenly appears to inform him that the President and Seward have already assigned *Powhatan* to another naval initiative.

Welles is outraged by this intrusion on his authority, and arrives at the White House near midnight with Seward in tow to demand an explanation.

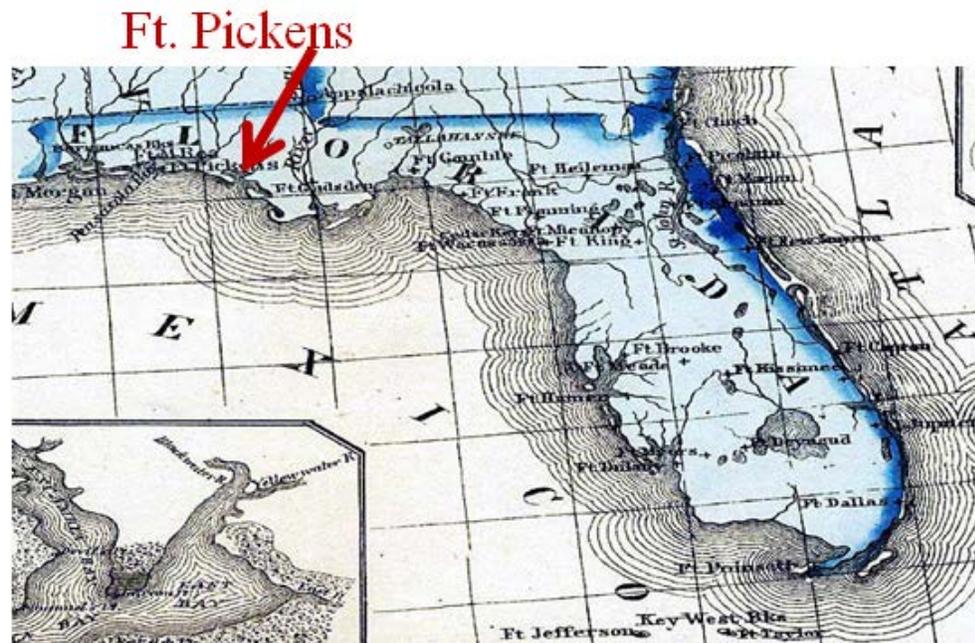
Lincoln apologizes to Welles and dissembles, saying the mistake was an accidental oversight on his part. But by now his concerns about Anderson's fate have risen, and he changes course, telling Welles that Fox can have *Powhatan* for Sumter.

This solves the immediate flare up, while leaving Seward angry about his pet Ft. Pickens project, and Welles still totally unaware of it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 6, 1861

### Captain David Porter Takes Off On His Own To Florida



Map Showing Ft. Pickens In The Gulf Of Mexico

An upset Seward is slow to notify Meigs and Keyes about Lincoln's change of heart, and by the time the news arrives at the Brooklyn Naval Yard, Captain David Dixon Porter has already left aboard *Powhatan*, on his way to Pickens.

A speedy tugboat chases him down some fifteen miles away off Staten Island, and hands him a note signed by Seward to abandon his voyage.

He refuses to do so, telling the messenger:

*This is an unpleasant position to be in, but...I received my orders from the President and shall proceed and execute them.*

The rest of his fleet soon follows: Meigs aboard the transport ship *Atlantic* and Keyes on the *Illinois*.

Consistent with all of this planning confusion is the ultimate outcome regarding *Powhatan*.

For Lt. Gustavus Fox it means the loss of the crucial landing boats he needs on April 12 to bring his men and supplies into Ft. Sumter.

For the Ft. Pickens effort, *Powhatan* proves fairly trivial, no more than an excess ornament on what will be an easy and successful operation.

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 8, 1861

### **The Sumter Expedition Heads Out Amidst Press Coverage**

A shaken Lt. Fox, already two days behind the timetable handed him by Lincoln, has been scrambling to assemble his Sumter fleet and provisions.

He lines up the revenue cutter *Harriet Lane* and the *Baltic*, both in New York, along with *Pocahontas* at Norfolk, and *Pawnee* at Washington. He also locates 300 troops and supplies for up to a year.

**The Sumter Fleet**

<b>Ships</b>	<b>Propulsion</b>	<b>Tons</b>	<b>Cannons</b>	<b>Debarks From</b>
<i>Harriet Lane</i>	Steamer	730	1-4", 2-8", 1-9", 2-24#	New York
<i>Baltic</i>	Steamer	2723	Passenger	New York
<i>Pocahontas</i>	Steamer	558	1-10#, 1-20# 4-32#	Norfolk, Va
<i>Pawnee</i>	Steamer	1533	2-12#, 8-9"	Washington

Fox is on board *Baltic* when it leaves along with *Harriet Lane* on April 8; the other two ships do not get under way until two days later.

These departures are quickly picked up by the press, with James Pike of Greeley's *New York Tribune* breaking the story:

*The President is unwilling to strike the national flag and determined not to permit the garrison at Ft. Sumter to be starved out or abandoned...to a humiliating surrender.*

## Chapter 324 – Davis Runs Out Of Patience And Decides To Attack Ft. Sumter



**Dates:**  
April 8-9, 1860

**Sections:**

- The Hope For A Peaceful Evacuation At Sumter Vanishes
- Jefferson Davis Now Decides To Take Ft. Sumter By Force

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 8, 1861

### The Hope For A Peaceful Evacuation At Sumter Vanishes

Lincoln's two messengers meet with Governor Pickens on April 8 to notify him of the movement to resupply Sumter. After Robert Chew hands him Lincoln's note, Pickens wishes to reply. But the well-rehearsed Chew buys time by saying that he is not cleared to transmit any responses.

Lt. Theodore Talbot then asks permission to visit the fort, but Beauregard will have none of that – and the two messengers are soon back on the train to Washington.

Meanwhile in DC, Seward informs the Southern “commissioners” that their request to be recognized as officials of the new Confederate States government is denied.

These two meetings draw a quick response. Martin Crawford wires Beauregard in Charleston:

*The war policy prevails in the Cabinet at the hour.*

He has also picked up rumors about the Ft. Pickens expedition, and notifies Davis:

*Fort Pickens and Texas are the first points of military demonstration.*

Davis in turn sends a definitive order to Beauregard to block any attempt to relieve Sumter.

*Under no circumstances are you to allow provisions to be sent to Fort Sumter*

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 9, 1861

### Jefferson David Now Decides To Take Ft. Sumter By Force



Roger Pryor (1828-1919)

On April 9, CSA President Jefferson Davis tells his cabinet that he is ready to attack Ft. Sumter, the only question left in his mind is the timing.

He finds only one dissenter, and that is his Secretary of State, Robert Toombs who issues a dire warning:

*Mr. President, at this time it is suicide, murder and will lose us every friend at the North. You will wantonly strike a hornet's nest which extends from mountains to oceans, and legions, now quiet, will swarm out and sting us to death. It is unnecessary; it puts us in the wrong; it is fatal!*

But the others are unmoved by Toombs and the word goes to Charleston to finalize their preparations.

The gruff Texan, Louis T. Wigfall, reassures Davis:

*No one now doubts that Lincoln intends war. The delay on his part is only to complete his preparations.*

The long wait is about to end, and the city is overjoyed by the prospect.

Doubly so when Governor Pickens decides to open what was previously declared “private mail” to Sumter, and finds Lincoln’s April 4 note telling Anderson that reinforcement will be on the way soon – a clear conflict with the apparent assurances from Seward and others of a peaceful evacuation.

The sixty-seven year old fire-eater, Edmund Ruffin, is so excited that he picks up a rifle and joins the Palmetto Guard as a private.

The Virginia rebel, Roger Pryor, is in town to partake in the action and fire up the locals, saying:

*You have at last annihilated this accursed Union, reeking with corruption, and insolent with excess of tyranny.*

## Chapter 325 – Lincoln Hears Of Southern Threats To Invade Washington



**Dates:**  
April 8-9, 1860

**Sections:**  
• The Virginian John Minor Botts Warns Lincoln Of A DC Plot

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 8-9, 1861

### The Virginian John Minor Botts Warns Lincoln Of A DC Plot



As Davis is readying his attack of Ft. Sumter, Lincoln is clinging to the hope that the Virginia Convention will vote to stay in the Union and that war can be avoided.

On April 8 ex-Whig Congressman and Virginia Unionist, John Minor Botts, visits the White House after learning that a fleet has set out to relieve Ft. Sumter. He comes to plead with Lincoln to change his mind, saying that the move will lead to war.

Lincoln responds with the same emotional message he used with John Baldwin on April 4.

*I am no war man. I want peace more than any man in this country, and will make greater sacrifices to preserve it than any other man...*

John Minor Botts (1802-1869)

Botts is convinced of Lincoln's sincerity, and returns the following day to warn the President that southern forces are planning to attack and subdue Washington.

Lincoln immediately sends Botts to see General Scott who stiffens the city's defenses with additional troops from New York and Pennsylvania.

## Chapter 326 – The Confederates Begin Their Attack On Ft. Sumter



**Dates:**  
April 11-12, 1860

- Sections:**
- Anderson Sees Signs Of An Imminent Attack
  - The Battle For Sumter Begins

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 10-11, 1861

### Anderson Sees Signs Of An Imminent Attack



On April 10, General Beauregard receives the order from Jefferson Davis to bombard Ft. Sumter when his preparations are complete.

From the parapet of the fort, Major Anderson spots a flurry of increased activity at the batteries which envelop him and orders his men to man their guns.

Time seems to stand still on both sides until 4pm on April 11 when a dingy arrives at Sumter under a white flag bringing three representatives from Beauregard: his military aide-de-camp, Lt. Colonel Alexander Chisolm, Captain Stephen D. Lee, and the spokesman for the party, ex-Senator James Chestnut.

Anderson greets Chestnut, who presents a demand that the fort be evacuated post haste. He also outlines the terms for departure: all men will be granted paroles and returned by ship to Northern ports; they will be allowed to carry their arms and personal possessions with them; and may salute the flag as they depart.

Robert Anderson (1805-1871)

The Major asks for a moment to confer with his officers, who are unanimous in rejecting the offer.

Anderson returns and delivers the news to Chestnut, saying:

*I will await the first shot, and if you do not batter us to pieces, we shall be starved out in a few days.*

The last part of this reply captures Chestnut's attention, as a possible way to avoid being labeled the aggressor in a civil war. Once back in Charleston, he wires Anderson's comment to Montgomery for their reaction. At 9:20pm word comes back from War Secretary Leroy Walker:

*Do not desire needlessly to bombard Fort Sumter.*

This comes with an instruction to return to the fort and ask Anderson if he would state a precise date and time for a peaceful departure. At 11pm that night Chestnut is back at Sumter seeking an answer.

When Anderson says that he will hold out four more days, until April 15, when his food runs out, an exasperated Chestnut heads back to report the disappointing news to Davis.

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 12, 1861

### **The Battle For Sumter Begins**



Edmund Ruffin (1794-1865)

General Beauregard's orders are now crystal clear:

*Reduce the fort as your judgment decides to be most practicable.*

He moves almost immediately, with much of Charleston still gathered near the harbor at night, after waiting all day to cheer the start of the action.

At 3:20am he follows military protocol with Chestnut back at Sumter handing Anderson a note that firing will begin one hour hence.

While still looking out to sea for the arrival of the anticipated reinforcements, the garrison braces for the bombardment.

It comes at 4:30am on April 12 from Ft. Johnson to the southwest, fired by Captain George James, as a signal shot to unleash the other batteries. Seconds later, Edmund Ruffin is given the honor of firing from Cummings Point, landing a 64 lb. shell that hits the outer wall.

Inside of Sumter, Major Anderson has only 700 shells at his disposal, and he waits until 7:30am to return fire, with Captain Abner Doubleday pulling the first lanyard. To protect his men, Anderson also abandons his heavy guns along the exposed parapet and utilizes only the lower batteries which peak out from behind five feet of solid concrete.

The Confederate pounding continues unabated, with the only hope for the garrison appearing on the horizon in the late morning.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Sidebar: The Remarkable Defenders Of Ft. Sumter

In addition to Major Robert Anderson, a host of other members of the Ft. Sumter garrison will go on to earn high military honors in the upcoming Civil War. Included here are subsequent Major Generals Abner Doubleday, Samuel Crawford, Truman Seymour, John Foster and Jefferson C. Davis. Another defender, artillery Captain Norman J. Hall, will earn fame at several battles, including Gettysburg, where his brigade turns back Pickett's Charge along Cemetery Ridge.



MAJOR ABNER DOUBLEDAY,  
1862. Photo: Unknown.  
Reproduced with the permission of the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C.

Abner Doubleday  
(1819-1893)



Samuel Crawford  
(1829-1892)



Truman Seymour  
(1824-1891)



John Foster  
(1823-1874)



Jefferson C. Davis  
(1828-1879)

## Chapter 327 – Reinforcements Arrive Off Charleston But Circumstances Prohibit An Attack



**Dates:**  
April 12, 1860

**Sections:**

- Lt. Fox's Expedition Approaches Sumter But Then Turns Away

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 12, 1861

### Lt. Fox's Expedition Approaches Sumter But Then Turns Away



*USS Constitution*

Aside from the sheer courage of Anderson and his men within the fort, all they have to hope for is a last second rescue by the naval fleet supposedly on its way.

The fact is that it has arrived, at least in part, as of 3am on April 12, some ninety minutes before the Confederates open fire.

But the mission continues to be plagued by the lack of coordination evident from the beginning.

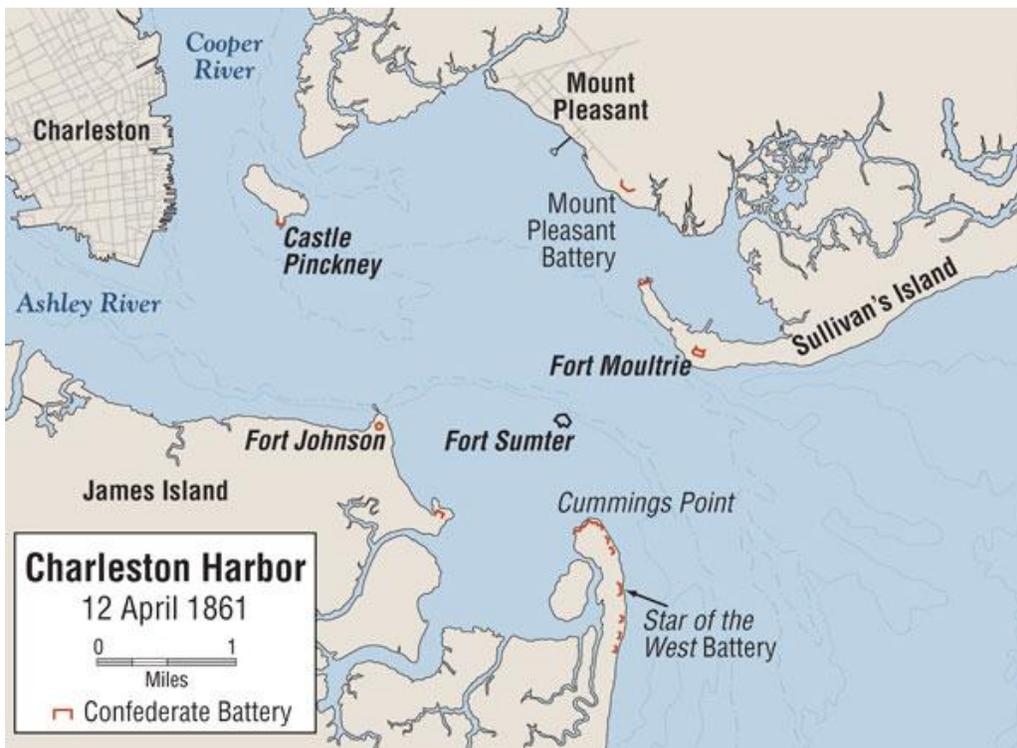
When the overall commander, Lt. Gustavus Fox, traveling aboard the passenger ship, *Baltic*, reaches the designated rendezvous point ten miles east of the Charleston harbor lighthouse, he finds two of his four support craft present and two missing.

The *Harriet Lane*, departing from New York, appears, as does *Pawnee*, coming down from Washington. Absent, however, are *Pocahontas*, traveling from Norfolk with its 300 soldiers and heavy weapons, and *Powhattan* which, still unbeknownst to Fox, is on its way to Ft. Pickens – along with landing craft crucial to any amphibious landing at Sumter.

Fox is very concerned about proceeding with only a three ship fleet, but finally runs out of patience with waiting, and sets sail for Sumter. By the time he approaches the harbor, he hears cannon fire and sees smoke already rising from the fort. Instead of a peaceful landing, any attempt will need to be made under fire.

Fox is no coward, but neither is he a reckless fool, and so he tacks back east hoping to find that his two missing vessels have arrived. To his consternation, neither are there, and he again reverses course hoping to at least do something for Anderson and his men.

But again he is frustrated, this time by a storm which sets in on his approach and forces him to again turn back.



Map Of Charleston Harbor

## Chapter 328 – The Battle For Ft. Sumter Ends And The Civil War Begins



**Dates:**  
April 12-14, 1860

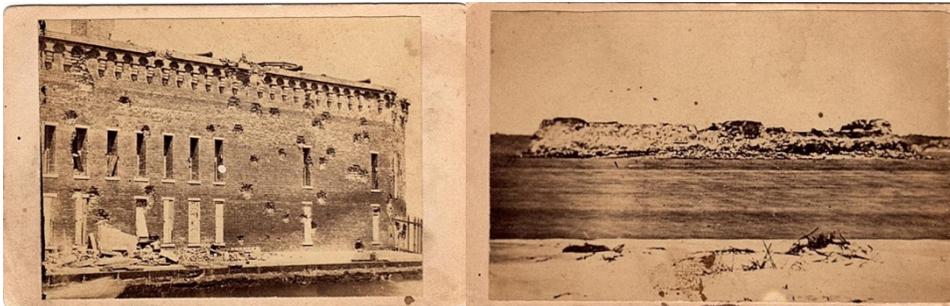
**Sections:**

- The Confederates Continue To Pound Sumter
- Major Anderson Surrenders
- A Fatal Accident Mars The Closing Ceremony

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 12-13, 1861

### The Confederates Continue To Pound Sumter



The Devastating Effects Of The Confederate Barrage On Ft. Sumter

The beleaguered defenders at Sumter actually see Fox's undermanned fleet trying to make their approach in the high seas late on April 12.

Its failure seals their fate.

Around midnight they examine the damage suffered so far by the fort.

While the entire structure is pock marked by rounds, the outer walls remain largely intact.

Inside it is a different story. Food has run out as has most of the wood needed for building fires.

Likewise, Anderson's supply of ammunition is almost gone, and he cuts back to firing only six cannon before ceasing to respond entirely by the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Meanwhile the *Pocahontas* finally arrives overnight and the prior day's storm blows over.

But by now there is nothing Lt. Fox can do to change the outcome.

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 13, 1860

### Major Anderson Surrenders



Louis T. Wigfall (1816-1874)

On July 13, General Beauregard decides that it is time to call off the slaughter.

He orders a boat be sent with Chestnut to again offer Anderson terms for surrender.

Before it can launch, the boisterous ex-Senator from Texas, Louis T. Wigfall, sets out on his own under a white flag and makes it to the door of the fort, where he is allowed to enter.

Wigfall says that he represents Beauregard and that if Anderson will agree to evacuate post haste, the same generous terms advanced earlier by Chestnut will hold.

Anderson agrees and runs up a white flag, just as the “official party” arrives.

After momentary confusion, agreement is reached that the fort will be **formally** surrendered on April 14 at noon.

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: April 14, 1861

### A Fatal Accident Mars The Closing Ceremony



A Staunch Defender Of The Flag

The Sumter garrison has been defeated, but its spirit is not broken, and Robert Anderson insists that the defense they have put up over the last four and one-half months be properly honored.

This includes a final roll call assembly for his troops followed by a planned 100 gun salute before the flag is hauled down.

All is going smoothly until the 46<sup>th</sup> round is fired and a spark lands amidst the remaining gunpowder setting off a violent explosion. A private named David Hough who is standing at attention nearby has his right arm blown off and dies almost instantly. Another private, Edward Galloway, suffers wounds that will prove fatal three days later.

Amazingly these are the only two deaths that occur on both sides during the battle.

Anderson is shaken by the tragedy, fires four more rounds to reach fifty, then salutes and lowers the flag, folds it carefully, puts it under his arm and leads the men out of the fort.

The battle for Sumter is over; the battle for the Union has just begun.