

## Chapter 270 - Florida Threatens To Seize Ft. Pickens

Time: 1834 Forward

### History Of The Fort

Suddenly another Southern challenge appears, this time relative to Ft. Pickens.

The fort is a pentagonal structure located on Santa Rosa Island below the city of Pensacola in the far western Florida panhandle.

Its history goes back to 1834 when the United States was continuing to strengthen its seaside defenses after the War of 1812. It was named after Andrew Pickens, a hero of the Revolutionary War before serving as a member of the U.S. House from South Carolina.

Once constructed it is largely neglected.

Troops are no longer even garrisoned there since after the Mexican War, and a fire in 1858 destroys much of the interior.

Still it remains symbolic of federal control over Florida after the state's January 10 secession.

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Time: January 15, 1860

### A Momentary Reprieve Follows An Ultimatum To Surrender The Fort

In command of all federal forces around Pensacola at the time is 32 year old Lt. Adam Slemmer.

He hears rumors of impending hostilities as early as January 7, but has no orders from Washington on how to proceed. So, like Robert Anderson at Ft. Sumter, Slemmer decides to act on his own.

He abandons Ft. Barrancas, located on land overlooking Pensacola Harbor -- spiking the guns there, and consolidating his small accumulation of 51 soldiers and 30 sailors at Ft. Pickens.

On January 15, an emissary sent by Florida Governor Madison Perry arrives with a demand that Slemmer surrender and evacuate the fort.



Adam Slemmer (1828-1868)

Slemmer refuses and prepares for a fight.

Unbeknownst to him, what prevents an immediate battle is a message from Davis and his military strategists waving Governor Perry off from any immediate action.

*We think no assault should be made. The possession of the fort is not worth one drop of blood to us. Measures pending unite us in this opinion. Bloodshed now may be fatal to our cause.*