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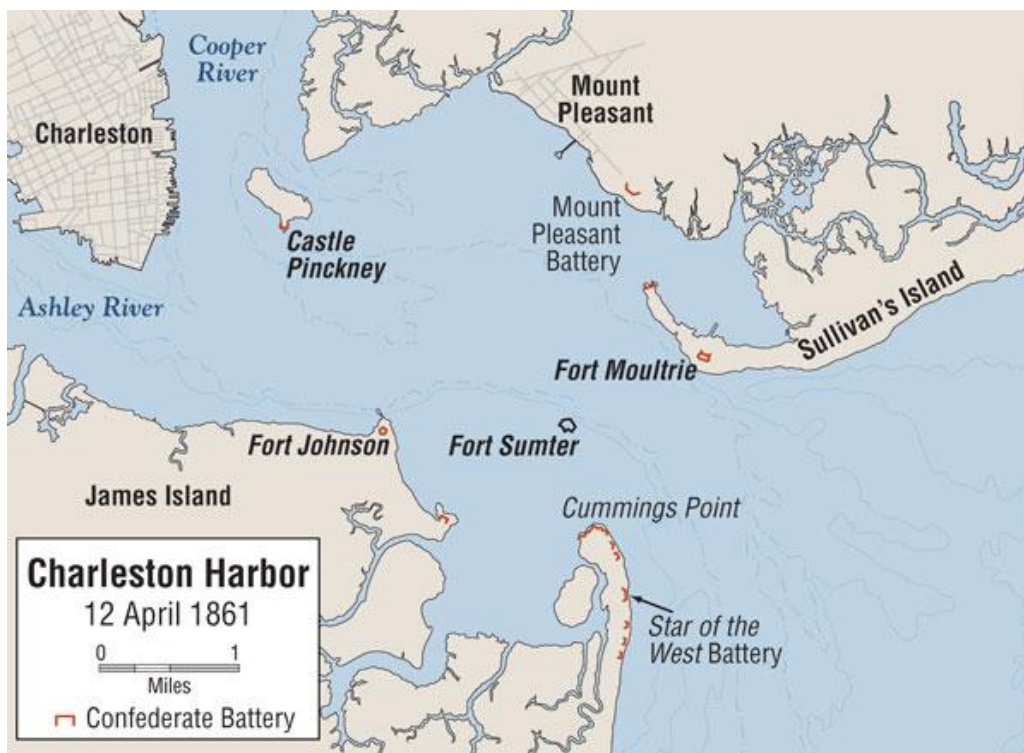
When the overall commander, Lt. Gustavus Fox, traveling aboard the passenger ship, *Baltic,* reaches the designated rendezvous point ten miles east of the Charleston harbor lighthouse, he finds two of his four support craft present and two missing.

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