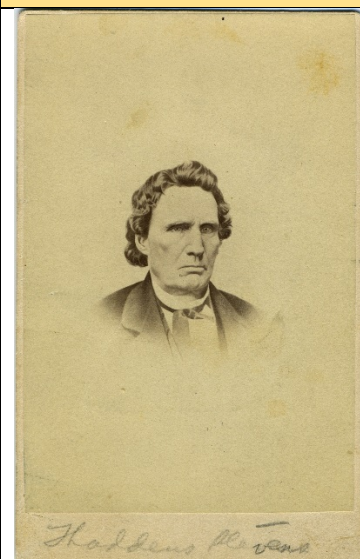


## Chapter 302 – Three More Southern States Secede As Leaders Call For Calm



**Dates:**  
January 9-20, 1860

- Sections:**
- The Rush Toward Warfare In Charleston Is Paused As Three More States Secede
  - Jefferson Davis And Henry Seward Call For Calm
  - Davis And Others Attempt To Stall Fighting At Ft. Sumter

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Date: January 9-11, 1861

### The Rush Toward Warfare In Charleston Is Paused As Three More States Secede

Still without orders from Washington, Anderson decides to send Lt. Norman Hall ashore with a message denouncing the attack on the *Star*, and stating that he intends to turn his guns on any future ship trying to enter the harbor.

Governor Pickens replies that the “first act of positive hostility” was the move from Moultrie to Sumter, and thus the repulse of the supply ship was fully justified.

As this exchange continues, the decision is thrown into relief by events on a broader stage – namely the secession of three other Southern states: Mississippi, Florida and Alabama.

#### Secession Timing: First Four

Dates	States
December 20, 1860	South Carolina
January 9, 1861	Mississippi
January 10, 1861	Florida
January 11, 1861	Alabama

This means that South Carolina is no longer acting in isolation against the federal government, but now becomes a part of the broader confederation long sought after by the original state “fire-eaters.”

The message that now comes to Governor Pickens both from within his inner circle and from the other “seceders” is that the South is ill prepared to fight a potential civil war and needs to buy time to prepare.

Even within Charleston harbor his military advisors tell him that a bloody siege will be needed to reduce Sumter, and that the return fire from Anderson's troops will do severe damage to the other city defenses.

Still Pickens decides to make one more attempt to capture the fort with rhetoric. On January 11, 1861, his envoys arrive with a letter demanding his surrender. Anderson reads it and replies on the spot:

*I cannot do what belongs to the Government to do. The demand must be made upon them and I appeal to you as a Christian, as a man, and as a fellow country-man, to do all you can to prevent an appeal to arms.*

He then makes a suggestion that will profoundly affect the national struggle, proposing to...

*Send an officer, with a messenger from the Governor, to Washington (and) will do anything that is possible and honorable to prevent an appeal to arms.*

Governor Pickens is delighted by this outcome, and Lt. Norman Hall and Isaac W. Hayne, the South Carolina Attorney General, depart for DC that same day.

The effect of Anderson's action will be a "pause" in the conflict, which gives both sides the opportunity to contemplate their next moves.

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Date: January 10-12, 1861

### **Jefferson Davis And Henry Seward Call For Calm**



Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868)

One man already thinking ahead is Jefferson Davis of Mississippi. His state votes to secede on January 9, and he anticipates that Florida and Alabama will follow, which they do over the next two days.

If the trend continues, Davis envisions an independent Southern confederation forming up, along the lines of that proposed thirty years ago by John C. Calhoun. He is, however, uncertain about the likely response by the existing federal government. Will it allow a peaceful exit or attempt to stop it by force? If the latter, the seceding states will need time to organize a command structure and prepare to defend itself.

For Davis, this means that the conflict in Charleston harbor must be kept in check long enough for the new coalition to develop its strategies in unison.

On January 10, 1861, he tells his Senate colleagues that he will be withdrawing on January 21 to serve his home state – and pleads with them to allow Mississippi and other Southern states to leave peacefully.

Two days later, on January 12, another voice at the center of the turmoil is heard in the upper chamber.

It belongs to Senator Henry Seward of New York, assumed by all to be headed into Lincoln's cabinet, and by many to emerge as the real power behind the presidency.

Seward warns the packed assembly of the perils that would follow Disunion. It would mean...

*Perpetual civil war...(and) not only arrest, but also extinguish, the greatness of this country.*

That said, his audience awaits word from the incoming administration on how the crisis will be averted. But Seward has little to offer. He is willing to support iron clad protections maintaining slavery in states where it already exists, and offers up the notion of routing transatlantic railroads along both southern and northern routes to help bind the nation together around commerce.

Beyond that, his plea is for “calm” – a call not dissimilar from that issued by Jefferson Davis before him.

Those most distressed by Seward’s remarks are the Northern abolitionists, or “ultras.” In addition to second term Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, who despises Seward as a “compromiser,” the acerbic Pennsylvanian, Thaddeus Stevens, has this to say:

*I listened to every word, and by the living God, I have heard nothing.*

An exasperated Seward tells his wife at the time:

*I am the only hopeful, calm, conciliatory person here.*

For those, particularly in the military, who see a much greater and more immediate threat from the South the question is whether either Seward or Lincoln really grasp the danger. This uncertainty will continue as the transition of power draws nearer.

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Date: January 13-20, 1861

### **Davis And Others Attempt To Stall Fighting At Ft. Sumter**

On January 13, the two messengers from Charleston – Lt. Norman Hall and A.G. Isaac Hayne – arrive in Washington.

Hayne brings with him another blistering letter from Governor Pickens demanding that Buchanan turn Ft. Sumter over to South Carolina.

This kind of ultimatum is precisely what the other seceding states most wish to avoid, and ten Senators, led by Clement Clay of Alabama and Jefferson Davis, harangue Pickens and Hayne to withhold the note.

Pickens is not pleased, but Hayne ends up holding delivery of the letter for the next two weeks.

This reprise is welcomed by Buchanan, but it doesn’t end the turmoil swirling around him

On January 15, his reluctant Treasury Secretary, Philip Thomas, resigns after less than five weeks on the job. His replacement is John Dix, an ex-army officer and ex-Senator, currently serving as postmaster of New York City.

On January 19, a fifth domino falls, as the state of Georgia secedes. This is a particular blow to the President, given his closeness to his former Treasury head, Howell Cobb.