

Chapter 311 – Tyler’s Peace Conference Is Another Failure



Dates:
February 25, 1860

Sections:
• Tyler’s Peace Conference Fizzles Out In The End

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Tyler’s Peace Conference Fizzles Out In The End



Washington City, Site Of Tyler’s Peace Conference

Lincoln’s arrival at the Willard Hotel causes a stir among the delegates to Tyler’s Peace Conference, just coming to an end.

As with their many predecessors, the “old gentlemen” have failed to arrive at any breakthroughs despite three weeks of steady debate.

In the end, on February 25, the outcome becomes nothing more than a rehash of the key components in the “Crittenden Compromise,” centered around extending the 36’30” Missouri Compromise line and its sanctions across the remaining western territories – an approach continuously rejected by the Republicans in Congress.

James Guthrie, head of the Committee of 21, along with many other Southerners are left in despair over the outcome.

A steady stream of them call upon Lincoln once he arrives. Included here are Kentuckians Guthrie, John Crittenden and ex-Governor, Charles Morehead; John Bell of Tennessee, who ran against Lincoln in the election; the staunch Unionist, Alexander Doniphan of Missouri; and a host of Virginians.

All plead with Lincoln to understand the impact of the Republican's refusal to expand slavery on the South and to assure him that the secessionists are not bluffing. There is nothing "artificial" about the crisis and it will not "go down of its own" if left alone.

Whether these words alter his thinking about the crisis is unknown, but one incident suggests they may have. It involves his meeting with the venerable Virginia statesman, William Cabell Rives, a fellow Whig, whose long career includes time in the House and Senate and as Minister to France under Taylor. When Rives tells Lincoln that Virginia will secede if force is used against South Carolina, the President-elect reportedly offers an urgent response.

Mr. Rives, Mr. Rives, if Virginia will stay in, I will withdraw the troops from Fort Sumter.

With only a week left until he is sworn in, avoiding the prospect of bloodshed is very much on Lincoln's mind as he crafts his Inaugural Address.