

Ominous Doings

Ominous Doings began to unfold as South Carolina's preparations for war became increasingly evident between December 28 and 31, 1860. Governor Pickens called upon local planters to construct gun batteries along vital locations such as the Santee River and Winyah Bay, urging them to defend their land with the same patriotic fervor as their Revolutionary War ancestors. On December 28, he took a significant step by prohibiting the shipment of arms to Fort Sumter, although mail delivery was still permitted, hoping this would prevent violence. Despite his efforts to maintain peace, Major Anderson observed the rapid construction of new military outposts by South Carolina forces, solidifying his belief that conflict was imminent. The growing fortifications and military presence made it clear that South Carolina was preparing for war, taking all necessary actions to strengthen its position as tensions continued to rise over the future of Fort Sumter.

On January 1, Major Anderson expressed his confusion over Governor Pickens's increasingly aggressive actions in a letter. He noted his ability to control Charleston's supply routes, which could prevent critical resources from reaching the state, a tactic he was prepared to use defensively if needed. Anderson recognized that such an action could exacerbate tensions, but he maintained that his measures would be strictly defensive. In his letter, he carefully analyzed the situation, understanding that the balance of power in Charleston and at Fort Sumter was fragile, and the next steps by both the Union and Confederacy would determine the future course of the conflict. Anderson's thoughtful reflection highlighted the precariousness of the situation and the pressure on him to manage the fort's defenses while trying to maintain peace amidst growing hostilities.

Anderson's leadership and decision-making were widely supported by military officials, many of whom considered his transfer to Fort Sumter a wise strategic move. Although

he had previously faced opposition from former War Secretary Floyd, Anderson's actions were increasingly praised by many in the U.S. Army, including the influential General Winfield Scott. This recognition boosted Anderson's confidence, as his efforts to protect the fort were viewed as critical to maintaining the Union's position in Charleston. His growing reputation as a leader willing to take necessary actions in the face of adversity became evident, especially as South Carolina's intentions became clearer. Anderson's leadership was crucial during a time of uncertainty, as the fort's defense became increasingly vital to preventing further Southern expansion and rebellion.

By December 30, General Scott had already devised plans to reinforce the fort's defenses, drafting a secret message to President Buchanan. In this letter, Scott recommended sending 250 recruits, along with additional weapons and supplies, to bolster Anderson's garrison at Fort Sumter. He requested that these reinforcements be sent with the utmost discretion, bypassing the War Department to avoid fueling tensions. Scott also proposed deploying the U.S.S. Brooklyn, a formidable steam warship, to demonstrate American military strength in the region. The presence of such a powerful vessel would send a clear message to South Carolina and any other Southern states considering secession, showing the Union's readiness to defend its interests. This move was both a strategic and symbolic gesture, meant to assert authority while avoiding immediate confrontation.

As New Year's Eve approached, Scott's orders became more specific: the commander of Fort Monroe was to prepare the Brooklyn, outfitting it with troops and munitions while keeping the movements of the ship secret. The secrecy surrounding the mission was paramount to avoid early detection by the Confederacy, which could have derailed the operation. Meanwhile, the garrison at Fort Sumter continued to wait for signs of reinforcements, hoping that the Union would fulfill its promises of support. Tension within the fort grew, with the soldiers feeling isolated and fearful of an impending siege by South Carolina forces. As the new year approached, the garrison's hope for relief was tempered by uncertainty, as they had no way of knowing whether the

reinforcements would arrive in time to stave off the growing threat of aggression.

The chapter paints a vivid picture of the escalating conflict and strategic maneuvering taking place during a time of rising tensions. Anderson's leadership at Fort Sumter, coupled with the actions taken by General Scott, reflected the Union's desire to maintain control over federal property in Charleston and assert its authority. The Union's response, including the dispatch of reinforcements and the demonstration of military strength through the U.S.S. Brooklyn, was part of a broader effort to prevent the South from gaining further ground in the conflict. Meanwhile, the soldiers at Fort Sumter were left to wait, isolated and uncertain, hoping that help would come before South Carolina could take decisive action. This period marked the beginning of the Civil War, as both sides prepared for the inevitable confrontation that would define the future of the United States.