

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.cdcwrt.net



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Major Anderson Raises Flag at Ft. Sumter



Maj. Robert Anderson secretly moved his garrison to Ft. Sumter during the night of December 26-27. South Carolinian officials are furious, and Washington is on edge. Even though war may be imminent, attitudes in the North are changing rapidly. It appears that disruption of the Union is threatened by the secession of South Carolina, and Anderson's move is in defiance of that state's actions. Carolina's secession document centers on slavery, and this may change the country's attitudes over radical abolitionists. Read more inside.

DECEMBER MEETING
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2015

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

Upstate New York State on the Brink of War: Abolitionists, The North and the March Toward Civil War

Nick Thony

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 – 7:15 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:15 – 7:45 p.m.**
Discussion	**7:45 - 8:15 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

***The December meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, December 11, 2015. Our special speaker is Nick Thony. His presentation is titled* "Upstate New York on the Brink of War: Abolitionists, The North and the March Toward Civil War."**

Mr. Thony will discuss "The No Compromise With Slaveholders" tour, which was organized by Susan B. Anthony in the winter of 1861. Anthony, along with several other notable abolitionists, staged events in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, and Albany, which called for the "immediate and unconditional emancipation, even at the cost of a dissolution of the Union." Throughout the tour, the abolitionists faced formidable, and, at times, violent opposition.

In Buffalo, members of the Seymour and Fillmore family organized a mob which took control of the abolitionists' meeting.

In Rochester, the Common Council ordered the removal of the abolitionists' flag and forced the owner of the hall they rented to withdraw his contract.

In Albany, more than one hundred citizens petitioned the mayor to prevent the abolitionists from meeting in the city.

Nick hopes this presentation will shed some light on the motivations of both the abolitionists and those who opposed them given the tour's close proximity to Southern secession and the first shots of the Civil War. Neither group knew that in Charleston harbor, events were moving towards a fateful decision that Major Robert Anderson would make in late December 1861 (see front cover of this newsletter).

Nick was born in Sullivan County, New York. He received a bachelor's degree in political science and master's degree in history from SUNY Albany. He published a small article which details the abolitionists' experience in Albany, in this year's winter edition of the New York Archives Magazine.

Nick's area of interest is 19th century American politics and he is currently working on a project about the Albany fire of 1848 and another which explores upstate New York newspapers during the Civil War.

NOTE: The December meeting is also the holiday meeting for the CDCWRT. Any member who has a holiday dish they would like to share, is invited to bring it to the meeting.

BOARD MEETING

A Board meeting was held on November 16th. The treasurer reported $908.20 in the regular account and $9816.32 in the preservation account.

Rosemary Nichols and the Board wanted to thank in the newsletter, all those who attended the 5th Sue Knost Memorial Conference. The Board also wanted to thank the speakers who donated their time and energies, and did not accept honoraria. Likewise the Board wanted to thank those who provided sponsorships and ancestor remembrances. Jointly, this allowed the conference to break even. In content, the conference was a great success and attendees and speakers all heartily agreed on this.

The editor wishes the membership to know that the goal of the five sesquicentennial conferences was to provide members and the local community quality conferences on lesser-known aspects of Civil War history. Often there were New York State connections. The financial costs and staff efforts are substantial. Therefore membership participation is essential. Although the financial details have generally not been shared, the editor wants the members to see this year's finances.

Expenses

- Catering - $1184.75
- HVCC room charge - $400
- Hotel rooms - $749.00
- Printing - $140.94
- Travel expenses - $156.35
- Misc. - $67.45

Total Expenses - $2698.49

Income

- Registration fees - $1400 (28 attendees
- Sponsorships - $1150
- Ancestor remembrances - $170
- Raffle - $65
- Book sales - $99

Total income - $2884

The net difference was $185.51. In one respect, the goal was met….to present a quality conference and break even. But this occurred only because of the Board's decision to scrap a Friday night banquet with speaker and a Sunday program. This meant fewer speakers and topics. And the returning speakers, who had been lined up a year in advance, felt so committed to the conference that they did forego honoraria. I believe everyone was disappointed in the number of attendees, and this will have an effect on future conferences, trips, and other special events.

ELECTIONS OF NEW BOARD

At the December meeting, the membership will vote on the proposed slate of candidates. Any member in good standing can be nominated from the floor prior to the elections.

President – Erin Baillargeon
Vice President – Mark Koziol
Secretary – Rosemary Nichols
Treasurer – Fran McCashion
At Large – Steve Muller
At Large – Mike Mahar
At Large – Gene Gore

The Board and membership wish to thank the out-going Board for their leadership and dedication this past year.

UP-COMING MEETING/ EVENTS

On Friday, January 8, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will be the annual Potpourri Meeting where members make short presentations. Pete Lindeman will talk about "The Crooked Gun." Dave Swart will present the letters of Samuel Denison, a soldier in the 121st NYVI. Gene Gore will present a history of Charles Caleb, a member of the 27th and 31st Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

On Friday, February 12, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Edythe Quinn, who will present "Freedom Journey – Black Civil War Soldiers in Westchester County.

On Friday, March 11, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Michelle

Hamilton, who will present "Lincoln and Spiritualism."

On Friday, April 8, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Jamie Malinowski, who will talk about Commander Will Cushing.

On Friday, May 13, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Mike Reetz, who will talk about Brigadier General Horace Porter.

On Friday, June 10, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor David Hochfelder, who will talk about the Freedman's Savings Bank.

ANDERSON AND FT. SUMTER

Robert Anderson was born in Kentucky. He graduated from West Point in 1825 and fought in the Mexican War where in the Battle of Molino del Rey, he was wounded 5 times after his command held out for 2 hours against forces on 4 sides. As a result he hated war. He served on the staff of Gen. Winfield Scott and the two developed a close relationship, like father and son. Anderson later taught in the department of Artillery at West Point for two years. Anderson's scholarly work on artillery became the bible on the subject. On November 15, 1860 he received his orders to proceed to Fort Moultrie immediately.

Why was Anderson chosen? He had been born in a slave state, married the daughter of a famous Georgian politician, had been previously stationed at Moultrie, was a friend of Sen. Jefferson Davis, Sen. Crittenden of Kentucky and Gen. Scott. He was a gentle sort, well-mannered, a dutiful husband to a sick wife, a good father, a loyal servant of the Army, and a man of deep-rooted principles, very much like Robert E. Lee. He was a military hero and scholar. He hated politics and politicians and was vaguely sympathetic to the south. His position on slavery was ambiguous. He did oppose secession, but was a man of peace.

As Anderson settled into his new command, he knew that men in Charleston were openly making threats about Moultrie, and the fort's vulnerability was an invitation to disaster. There were still two big sand dunes several hundred yards east of the fort that would allow sharpshooters to fire DOWN into the garrison. Pinckney and Sumter were virtually unguarded. On November 24th Anderson requested permission to send 30 workmen with an officer to Pinckney to make repairs and train the workmen to use artillery pieces. He also stated that Moultrie needed reinforcements immediately.

Anderson's report brought no response. Four days later on November 28th Anderson wrote a second official report again stating that the south Carolinians had discovered Moultrie's weak points and knew how to attack the fort. He stated that if no reinforcements were to be sent, the best place for his command would be at Sumter.

On December 1st Anderson sent a third report after he met with two Charlestonians who informed him that as soon as South Carolina seceded, the state would demand the forts in their harbor, and would assault them if they were not handed over. He also reported a rumor that an artillery battery was being built on Sullivan Island to prevent him from receiving additional supplies or men.

Major Robert Anderson was now between a rock and a hard place. He was under orders from Secretary of War Floyd to take no actions that would precipitate a response from the South Carolinians, and at the same time he was to secure the safety of Ft. Moultrie. No reinforcements were to be sent to him, but he was expected to guard Moultrie, Sumter and Castle Pinckney. He was denied access to the U.S. Arsenal in Charleston for muskets and ammunition. He was not to discuss any of his conflicting orders with his officers. He had sent three communications to Floyd requesting guidance and finally Floyd responded to Anderson's December 1st letter. Floyd ordered him to NOT reduce the height of the sand dunes around Moultrie in the mistaken

belief that the dunes were on private property with homes on them.

Reinforcements would not be sent, nor actions taken purposefully that might add to the excited state of the public mind. Floyd was confident the South Carolina government could restrain acts of popular violence, but if one of the forts was attacked or if Anderson had "tangible evidence of a design to proceed to a hostile act," then – and only then –he could move the garrison to any of the forts he chose. If he were attacked, Floyd expected him to defend himself to the last extremity.

Floyd also showed his note to President Buchanan whose only comment was to modify the order of fighting to the death. Floyd wrote Anderson that if his garrison were attacked by so superior a force that resistance would be futile and loss of life useless, it would be his duty to yield and make the best surrender terms possible. Such surrender would be the conduct of an honorable, brave and humane officer. Anderson was ordered to not share this with his officers unless absolutely necessary. This note was received on December 23rd. In the meantime, the Mercury newspaper in Charleston published a detailed article on Ft. Sumter with pictures. It stated that whoever held Sumter could defy a naval attack. It implied that taking the fort in its present condition would be easily done by a landing party with scaling ladders placed in its open embrasures.

On December 17th, the South Carolina convention met. David Jamison was chosen leader and he noted the North was jealous of the South, had become aggressive, and that every northern state had passed ordinances nullifying the federal fugitive slave laws. On December 20th the convention, without debate, voted for secession. There was frenzied celebration in the city with fireworks, bonfires, parades, cannon salutes and bell tolling. Gov. Pickens authorized two steamboats to steam back and forth between Moultrie and Sumter each evening.

In spite of Christmas season, militia units from outside Charleston began arriving and Anderson received reports that scaling ladders were being prepared. The major spent Christmas evening attending a party his officers were giving. He did not mention that he had decided on a bold stroke. He was going to move the garrison across to Ft. Sumter in small boats. He knew from newspapers that the secession commissioners were departing for Washington to demand the forts be turned over to South Carolina. He guessed that Buchanan would not receive them on Christmas Day, but that they would meet with the President on December 26th. Anderson suspected Buchanan would not accede to their wishes. The commissioners would telegraph the President's reply on the 27th. Therefore, he would have to make his move on Christmas night, hoping that the spies and the two patrol boats would be less vigilant then. A full moon would provide some light.

He told no one of his plans; he needed a ruse. There were about two dozen wives and families of men at Moultrie. He could not leave them at Moultrie, but they could not be expected to be ready quickly or to keep children quiet in an open boat in the harbor. He told no one of his plans; he needed a ruse. There were about two dozen wives and families of men at Moultrie. He could not leave them at Moultrie, but they could not be expected to be ready quickly or to keep children quiet in an open boat in the harbor.

He announced that he wanted to put the families out of harm's way and to house them temporarily in the empty structures at Ft. Johnson. The enlisted men's families had been ordered to pack their belongings, along with a large amount of commissary stores. They and the supplies would be shipped on 3 large schooners to Ft. Johnson perhaps on Christmas Day. Local spies of course learned of the coming transfer, but remained unconcerned, because the removal of families was not a threat and seemed quite appropriate. Anderson also worried that once he abandoned Moultrie, there would be a period

of time that his men would be vulnerable in the boats and unloading supplies at Sumter. He decided to spike the guns at Moultrie and burn the wooden gun carriages.

December 25th dawned with nasty weather. Anderson decided to postpone for 24 hours, still informing no one of his plans. On December 26th it was 40 degrees, foggy with a misty rain, but Anderson hoped it would improve. He told some of his staff that he wanted to relocate the families that day. He told only Capt. Foster about the real mission. In the early afternoon the families were placed on board and at 3:00pm Anderson told Lt. Hall the secret plan. Hall was to take the 3 schooners to Ft. Johnson but keep everyone on board on the excuse that Hall had to determine the best place to land them. When he heard 2 signal guns from Ft. Moultrie, he was to head for Sumter. Hall was to tell the Southern captains of the boats that he did not find acceptable accommodations at Ft. Johnson.

Sunset would be shortly after 5:00pm and moonrise at 5:42pm. Anderson would use 3 six-oared barges for the transfer of his garrison. Messages had been sent to the Lt. Meade at Castle Pinckney and Lt. Snyder at Sumter to come with their boats to Ft. Moultrie that afternoon. Around 5pm Anderson informed Capt. Doubleday of the move to Sumter. Doubleday was to have Co. E. ready to move in 20 minutes. He then raced to tell his wife. The officers' wives were not included in the move to Sumter and were to be left behind at Moultrie. They were to spend the evening in the home of the chaplain and his wife and then arrange for transportation north. The same message went to Co. H and the rest of the command.

Anderson's plan was for the garrison to cross in two waves. He, Doubleday and Co. E would go in the first wave. The trip to and from Sumter would take an hour. The boats would return for Co. H. and the band members. Lt. Jeff Davis would remain at Sumter to load and man the cannon that pointed toward Sumter. He was to fire on any patrol boat that interfered with the crossing. Capt. Foster would remain with a rear guard to spike the guns and burn the carriages of the cannon facing Sumter. When the boats finally returned for the rear guard, they were also to grab as much ammunition as they could plus any other artillery paraphernalia.

The sea was calm and as Doubleday's boat got to the middle of the channel, one of the steam-powered patrol boats appeared. They took off their winter coats and threw them over their muskets to hide polished surfaces that might reflect moonlight. A patrol boat stopped about 100 yards off and then slowly moved away apparently satisfied. When the 3 boats landed at Sumter, some of the workmen, who lived at Sumter during the repairs, cheered; others who were Southern sympathizers were hostile. Soldiers with bayonets quickly restored order. As the second wave left Moultrie, another steamer appeared. The rear guard prepared to fire their cannon, but the steamer passed oblivious to the boats in the channel. Moultrie then fired the two signal guns, and Lt. Hall headed for Sumter with the families and provisions. They arrived just before 8:00pm.

Much still needed to be done. About 100 of the workmen could not be trusted. They were paid and were taken to Charleston the next day. Fifty-five were trusted and were asked to stay. One barracks was designated for women and children and bunks were made using wood shavings as bedding. The morning would reveal that the fort had glaring weaknesses. Although 15 cannon had been mounted, they all pointed out to the Atlantic and were long range guns. The guns could not prevent an assault on the esplanade or gorge wall. The embrasures on the first tier were chest high and were covered with simple wooden shutters which could be knocked aside with a hammer. The embrasures on the second tier were all 8 foot by 8 foot openings easily accessed by troops with scaling ladders. Anderson's garrison was too small and would have to stretch itself too thin to stand along the top walls.

Residents in Charleston heard the signal guns but mistakenly assumed they meant that Gov. Pickens had approved the militia takeover of Ft. Sumter. The signal meant that Sumter was safely theirs. Just after dawn on December 27th, smoke was noted over Sullivan Island and the astonishing news arrived in Charleston that Anderson had skipped over to Sumter and Moultrie was burning. The leaders of South Carolina were apoplectic. It was one thing for their state to secede from the United States, but it was completely unacceptable for Anderson and Sumter to consider seceding from South Carolina. A delegation of two officers was sent to meet with Anderson.

The delegation claimed an agreement existed between Buchanan and former governor Gist that the forts would be turned over to South Carolina. Anderson said he knew of no such agreement. Militia had been preparing to attack Moultrie and that he moved to Sumter to AVOID bloodshed. The delegation stated the governor wanted Anderson to return to Moultrie. Anderson respectfully declined and sent a message to Pickens. When the delegation returned to Charleston, Pickens ordered the militia to seize Castle Pinckney and Ft. Moultrie.

By moving against Pinckney, Pickens was committing an act of military aggression against the United States, thus making any prospect of peace unlikely. The governor and the local press argued that Anderson had started it, and that Pinckney actually belonged to South Carolina and it was simply loaned to the United States, and that "the spiking of guns and burning of carriages was as much an act of war as loading and firing the guns." After the delegation had left Ft. Sumter, Anderson ordered everyone to gather on the parade ground. He had something in mind.

After the Revolutionary War, each ex-colony adopted its own flag. To most Americans the flag was merely one more symbol of their country, along with the eagle. The artillery branch became the first branch to use a flag officially in 1834, mostly because they manned seaport fortifications. Infantry began using it in 1841. Until Robert Anderson altered history on December 27th, the symbol most used by the US Army was a coat of arms: the eagle, shield, arrows and olive branch. Anderson had read the hot-blooded speeches of South Carolina's politicians. He felt desperately isolated. His hatred of war, and his orders from Washington, made him suppress his private rage. Anderson had served his entire adult life under the flag and understood that the army emphasized that the flag's honor had to be defended.

Each coastal fort had an American flag – a huge garrison flag (20 feet by 36 feet) that was meant to be seen from great distances. It was noon when Anderson raised the American flag over Sumter. The soldiers were on the parade ground along with the workmen and women and children. Anderson stood by the flagstaff with the flag draped over the hands of a sergeant. Maj. Anderson took off his hat, knelt on the ground and bowed his head. Others knelt and Rev. Harris thanked the Lord that the garrison made it safely across. He prayed the flag they were preparing to raise, would soon float over a united nation that would remain prosperous and at peace. He asked God that this flag never be dishonored. Anderson then rose to his feet and the huge garrison flag rose in the air as the band, on the rampart, played The Star Spangled Banner. The men shouted great huzzahs. The rear guard was still at Ft. Moultrie, and they cheered when they saw the flag.

Anderson's simple, normal act of raising the flag a couple of weeks later was depicted in Harper's Weekly and Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper simultaneously. By then Sumter had stopped being one of dozens of forts in seceded states. Sumter had been "important" for several weeks, but now it became an emotional magnet and deeply stirred national patriotism. Anderson's transfer to Sumter, then his raising of the flag above it, tied the hands of first Buchanan and then later, Lincoln. December 28th was fair, but it started to rain on the 29th and became nasty on the 30th. The next day 1860 passed into the history books.