

The Citadel

The Military College of South Carolina



The Citadel

It was April of 2013 that I was invited to speak on the campus of The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. I was told that it was the only campus in America, who had a Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp on a college campus. It was a great privilege that stirred me to want to know more about this military institute.

On December 20, 1860, South Carolina secedes from the Union and then six days later, the day after Christmas, Major Robert Anderson, the commander of the United States troops in Charleston. He would withdraw his men to the island fortress of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Quickly the South Carolina militia swarmed over the abandoned mainland batteries and trained their guns on the island. Fort Sumter was the key position for preventing a naval attack on Charleston, so secessionists were determined not to allow federal forces to remain there indefinitely. More importantly, South Carolina's claim of independence would look empty if United States federal forces controlled its largest harbor. On January 9, 1861 the U. S. S. “*Star of the West*” approached the island fortress to give support. Cadets from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina fired on the “*Star of the West*,” striking the ship three times and causing it to retreat back to New York.

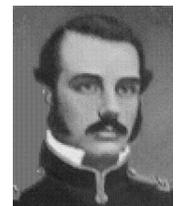


Robert Anderson

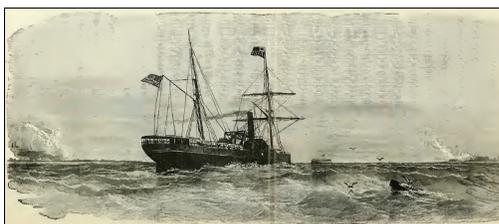


George Edward Haynesworth

In the **1901 Confederate Veterans Magazine, Volume 9**, this account is given, “*On January 9, 1861, Cadet **George E. Haynesworth** fired the first gun of the war. The gun was aimed a few feet in front of the steamer *Star of the West* when she was attempting to reenforce Fort Sumter, at that time in possession of the United States forces under Maj. Robert Anderson... The Cadet Battery (State cadets of the South Carolina Military Academy) consisted of the old-fashioned twenty-four pounders mounted on barbettes, stationed on Morris Island, Charleston Harbor, opposite the channel by which the *Star of the West* approached. The cadets were commanded by the gallant Maj. **P. F. Stevens**, afterwards brigadier general in the Confederate army. The second gun, aimed directly at the steamer, which struck her, but being nearly spent had not sufficient force to penetrate, was sighted by Maj. Stevens and fired by Cadet Moultrie Horlbeck. At the third shot the steamer wheeled and put back to sea.*”¹



Peter Fayssoux Stevens



Star of the West

We have been taught that the “*Star of the West*” was only coming on peaceful terms. Simply put, just not true. From the book entitled *Battles of America by Sea and Land*, Volume 3, published in 1878, it gives us this history lesson, “*The *Star of the West*, Captain John McGowan, a well-known merchant steamer, was chartered by the government and quickly laden with supplies. To prevent suspicion, she was cleared for New Orleans and Havana. At sundown on the 5th of January she left her wharf at New York, and when well down the bay she took on board, under cover of the night, four officers and two hundred and fifty artillerymen and marines, with their arms and ammunition.*”²

The point to be made, it was a cadet, a Confederate cadet by the name of George Edward Haynesworth who fired the first gun in the “*War of Northern Aggression*,” because Lincoln sent Union reinforcement to Fort Sumter. These cadets from The Citadel, felt the need to take a stand,

to make a statement to do what was right for their home state. In the book, "History of Higher Education in South Carolina," published in 1889 we are told, "Up to the close of the school in 1861 about eighteen hundred had entered, and two hundred and forty had graduated. Of the graduates, nearly every one entered the army, and four, Hagood, Jenkins, Law, and Capers, became brigadier-generals, Jenkins fell at the Wilderness. Of the others, 'a number served as colonels, lieutenant-colonels, majors, captains, and lieutenants; some were surgeons, some chaplains, two served in the C.S. Navy, while the remainder represented almost every grade of the service.' Of the graduates, nearly twenty per cent, died in service." ³

Endnotes

1. S. A. Cunningham, Editor & Proprietor, *Confederate Veteran*, Volume 9 (Nashville, 1901), 404.
2. John Laird Wilson, *Battles of America by Sea and Land*, Volume 3 (New York: James S. Virtue, 1878), 20.
3. Colyer Meriwether, *History of Higher Education in South Carolina* (Washington: Government Printing Company, 1889), 71.