

# A Confidential Visit

In "A Confidential Visit," set during December 11-14, Major Anderson at Fort Moultrie grapples with the rising tensions in Charleston harbor amidst impending conflict. Capt. Truman Seymour, an artillery officer and seasoned veteran, delivers a memorandum to Anderson, outlining defensive strategies against anticipated attacks. He suggests that the Carolinians might employ deceptive tactics, such as setting fire to a nearby building to divert attention during an assault. Seymour emphasizes the need for preparedness, warning that every precaution must be taken to safeguard the garrison's honor.

Samuel Wylie Crawford, the fort's only doctor, shares his concern in a letter to his brother, highlighting the revolutionary sentiment in South Carolina. He foresees the state's secession and the likely demand for federal properties, including Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter. Despite being new to Moultrie, Crawford notices the escalating hostility towards the Union and expresses the sorrow of witnessing such division. He believes the time for negotiation has ended and that war preparations are necessary against the "mad Carolinians."

On December 11, Major Anderson receives a secret visit from Assistant Adjutant General Don Carlos Buell, sent by War Secretary John B. Floyd. Buell conveys ambiguous instructions regarding the defense of the forts. While he urges Anderson to avoid provocation that might lead to conflict, he simultaneously advises that he should hold possession and defend the forts if attacked. Floyd's contradictory guidance reflects his internal conflict, acknowledging the garrison's limited capacity to protect Fort Sumter, Moultrie, and Castle Pinckney.

Anderson cautions that maintaining secrecy is increasingly difficult due to the charged atmosphere in Charleston. Even as Buell arrives, the news of the visit has already circulated, as reported by the local press. Despite these challenges, Anderson assesses the current situation as relatively calm but prepares for potential escalation, determined to handle whatever might unfold next.