

# To Lift a Columbiad

In the chapter titled "To Lift a Columbiad," the focus is on the preparations and challenges faced by the soldiers at Fort Sumter under the supervision of Major Anderson. The primary goal was to position ten-inch columbiads—massive fifteen-thousand-pound guns—on the fort's highest tier for optimal effectiveness. The engineering team crafted a block-and-tackle apparatus to facilitate the lifting of these heavy weapons. Despite their efforts, lifting the first columbiad demanded significant brute strength, but the crew successfully positioned it atop the fort.

However, the installation of the second gun encountered a setback when a crucial element of the lifting mechanism failed, causing the gun to crash into the ground and partially bury itself. Thankfully, no one was injured, and the soldiers ingeniously repurposed the sunken gun as an improvised mortar capable of firing projectiles at steep angles, thus overcoming obstacles.

Undeterred, the crew repaired the lifting apparatus and proceeded with hoisting a third columbiad, which ascended without incident. Meanwhile, Captain Foster, the chief engineer, reinforced the fort's defenses by sealing the main gate and constructing a formidable six-foot-high barrier known as the "manhole," allowing only one soldier to pass at a time. This gate led to an eight-inch howitzer pointed directly at any invader.

Foster's imaginative defenses included the strategic placement of 225 explosive shells along the parapet, primed to fall onto enemy soldiers. Additional traps like "thunder barrels" and hidden pits filled with explosives, dubbed "fougasses," were creatively utilized to enhance the fort's strength. He even incorporated mines beneath the wharf to bolster protection.

Despite the grim preparations for warfare, life at Fort Sumter was not solely focused on combat. The soldiers engaged in leisure activities, playing games, fishing, and enjoying Sunday outings on a six-oared barge. However, their living conditions were challenging, marked by a shortage of candles and soap, forcing them to resort to innovative solutions for lighting and cleanliness as they prepared for the uncertainties of war ahead.