

# Wigfall

## \*\*Wigfall, The Demon of Unrest: Chapter Summary\*\*

On Saturday, April 13, from Edmund Ruffin's perspective, the flag at Fort Sumter appeared to be missing, prompting concern among the officers at Moultrie who speculated that Major Anderson might be prepared to surrender. Brig. Gen. James Simons decided to cease fire and instructed former U.S. senator Col. Louis T. Wigfall, a boisterous and hefty Texan, to row to Sumter to ascertain the situation. Despite Wigfall's reputation for heavy drinking and passionate outbursts, he accepted the mission, eager to prove himself.

Wigfall commandeered a small, leaky boat with three enslaved oarsmen, disregarding warnings about its unsafe condition. Ignoring the risk, Wigfall insisted on proceeding to Sumter, driven by a sense of urgency for the trapped garrison. He informed Private William Gourdin Young of the Palmetto Guard that he was tasked with approaching Sumter under a flag of truce. However, he hadn't brought an actual flag, so they improvised a makeshift one from a handkerchief and Young's shirt threads, with Wigfall raising it dramatically, recalling iconic moments from history.

As they ventured further, they faced cannon fire from Fort Moultrie, which Young perceived as a warning to turn back. However, Wigfall remained steadfast in his determination to fulfill his mission. The boat, now taking on water due to increasing fire, struggled against the waves, yet they urged the oarsmen to row harder.

Upon nearing the fort, they encountered destruction: debris blocked their usual landing, and the main gate had burned away. When Wigfall and Young arrived at the fort, they found no one to greet them. Wigfall expressed a grim sense of foreboding about their surroundings, hinting at the peril of their mission. Young's anxiety about the escaping oarsmen led him to intervene forcefully to ensure their return.

Eventually, two Union officers, including Major Anderson, emerged from the ruins of Sumter. Confused by Young's presence and the boat outside, Anderson learned of Wigfall's intentions. As Young tried to safeguard the oarsmen against fleeing, he was assured by Anderson that they were safe, even amidst the chaos. This chapter encapsulates the tumultuous atmosphere and the backdrop of urgency that characterized the early moments of conflict at Fort Sumter.