

Confession

Confession plays a significant role in understanding Major Anderson's emotional turmoil as he faced pivotal decisions during the lead-up to the Civil War. While stationed at Fort Sumter, Anderson's efforts to communicate were hindered by prolonged mail delivery delays of three to four days, which deepened his sense of isolation. With distrust surrounding the telegraph system due to fears of interception, the mail became the only reliable means of communication for both Union and Confederate forces, despite its own set of vulnerabilities. This lack of reliable communication only intensified the strain on Anderson as he tried to stay connected with his superiors while contending with the looming threat of conflict.

On April 7, Anderson was shocked to receive an unexpected copy of President Lincoln's orders to resupply Fort Sumter, under a plan devised by Captain Gustavus Fox. This revelation directly contradicted Anderson's previous understanding that the fort would be evacuated, causing confusion and concern. The following day, on April 8, Anderson wrote a private letter to his friend, Adjutant General Thomas in Washington, asking that the letter be destroyed after reading. In it, Anderson expressed his fears that Fox's expedition would be perceived by the South as a betrayal, which could escalate tensions further and nullify previous diplomatic assurances made to Confederate commissioners. Anderson conveyed a sense of hopelessness, feeling it was now too late to offer any advice on the plan that he saw as potentially disastrous for all involved.

In his letter, Anderson also shared his frustration with his previous lack of knowledge about Fox's expedition, admitting that he had been misled by Lincoln's aide, Ward Lamon. He reflected on how he had been under the impression that the fort would be evacuated, making the orders to resupply feel like an abrupt betrayal of trust. Anderson's statement, "We shall strive to do our duty," reflected his commitment to

his military obligations, yet he also confessed, “my heart is not in the war which I see is to be thus commenced.” His inner conflict was clear: although he was determined to fulfill his duty, he did so with a heavy heart, understanding that the path set before him would lead to a larger and more violent conflict.

Ultimately, Anderson’s letter, which revealed his emotional and moral struggle, never reached its intended recipient. Instead, it ended up being found on a desk in the Charleston Hotel, a silent testament to his personal distress amid the broader turmoil surrounding Fort Sumter. The letter serves as a snapshot of Anderson’s internal battle, torn between loyalty to his country and the recognition that his role in the war was forcing him to make decisions he was not fully prepared to accept. This moment of personal confession underscored the weight of responsibility he felt, knowing that his actions would be part of a much larger historical movement that would soon engulf the nation. As tensions mounted and conflict seemed inevitable, Anderson’s moral and emotional struggles would become emblematic of the difficult choices faced by many in the early days of the Civil War.

This chapter sheds light on the emotional challenges faced by individuals like Anderson, who found themselves caught between personal beliefs and the demands of duty. His internal conflict was not unique, as many officers and soldiers of the time were forced to reconcile their loyalties to their respective sides with the broader implications of the war. The discovery of Anderson’s letter highlights how, even in times of conflict, personal dilemmas were deeply intertwined with the unfolding historical events. His decision to pen such a heartfelt confession, only for it to be lost amid the chaos, underscores the personal cost of the war, as individuals were swept up in the tide of history, often without the clarity or support they desperately needed.