

# Ovation

Ovation greeted the end of the Union's attempt to hold Fort Sumter as its surrender echoed through the nation, symbolizing a significant turning point. On the morning of April 18, Captain Gustavus Fox and Major Robert Anderson, aboard the *Baltic*, reflected on the traumatic events that had unfolded. As the *Baltic* neared Sandy Hook, Anderson, with a heavy heart, dictated a message to Simon Cameron, the Secretary of War, recounting the fort's destruction after enduring a 34-hour bombardment. Anderson's message highlighted the inadequate provisions, the damage to the fort, and the difficult choice to evacuate under the conditions set by Confederate General Beauregard. Despite the fort's surrender, Anderson noted that private and company property had been successfully salvaged, providing a small sense of accomplishment amidst the loss.

As the *Baltic* entered New York Harbor, it was met with resounding cheers from passing ships, a dramatic contrast to the solemnity of the situation in Charleston. President Abraham Lincoln, recognizing the efforts of Anderson and his team, expressed his gratitude both through official channels and a personal letter aimed at clearing any misunderstandings between the Union and its defenders. This acknowledgment, however, was bittersweet, as the nation's losses in the conflict remained palpable. A few months later, in Washington, Lincoln would reflect on the immense difficulties the country and its leadership faced, acknowledging the severe toll the war had taken on the nation and its citizens.

In the South, Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard basked in the success of his forces, proclaiming their strength and readiness for future battles. Southern leaders, emboldened by their victory, reveled in their newly won independence and the prospect of asserting their power. A prominent voice of the time, Mary Chesnut, recorded her thoughts in her diary, emphasizing the symbolic importance of the siege

and its significance in the broader context of the Civil War. She noted the stark division between the jubilant South and the anxious, uncertain North, as the country teetered on the edge of full-scale war. The emotional climate was electric with hope, anger, and a sense of destiny as the South solidified its resolve.

April 19 marked a turning point when Virginia, under immense pressure, officially seceded from the Union. For Edmund Ruffin, a committed Confederate, this was a moment of affirmation as he ended his self-imposed exile and celebrated the nation's trajectory toward war. The Southern states had been bracing for this decision, and as Confederate forces seized more strategic positions, the stakes grew higher. Ruffin felt a sense of satisfaction as he witnessed the South's resolve to break away from the Union, symbolizing a final stand for their values and way of life. News of Northern troop movements and the violence in Baltimore further galvanized the South, setting the stage for an inevitable conflict that would come to define a generation.

In Richmond, Virginia, the air was thick with anticipation as President Jefferson Davis and General Robert E. Lee led the charge for Confederate preparations. The city was alive with fervor, as volunteers flocked to enlist, eager to defend their homeland. Ruffin, along with many others, felt compelled to join the effort, spurred by a sense of duty and the hope that the Confederacy could swiftly win its independence. His pride grew when his son Charles enlisted in the Palmetto Guard, the prestigious militia of South Carolina. Ruffin saw this as a noble act, believing that his son's involvement would bring honor to their family and serve as a form of redemption for past grievances.

By the end of May, Charles, despite his lack of military experience, was stationed at the Palmetto Guard's camp near Manassas Junction, ready for the impending conflict. The anticipation of battle hung heavy in the air as soldiers prepared for what would come to be known as the First Battle of Bull Run. For Ruffin, this was a significant moment in his life and in the life of his family, marking the beginning of a journey fraught with uncertainty, loss, and ultimately, an enduring legacy of resistance against what they perceived as Northern aggression. The journey toward war had begun, and

with it, the formation of alliances, the establishment of ideals, and the clash of two societies on the verge of irrevocable change.