

# Preparations

Preparations for the looming conflict were at the forefront of Major Robert Anderson's mind on Wednesday, April 10, as the situation at Fort Sumter became increasingly dire. The primary concern was the dwindling food supply, which had forced Anderson to implement half rations for the garrison. These rations, he predicted, would only last two more days, barely covering the period until dinnertime on April 12. The soldiers, in an effort to conserve what little they had, resorted to scavenging rice from broken window glass that had been left behind from previous events. Assistant Surgeon Crawford, in his journal, vividly documented the desperation felt among the men, who were struggling to make do with what was available. The officers, including Major Anderson, became highly resourceful, even admonishing one officer, Doubleday, for wasting a single piece of cracker. The troops were reduced to a mere cracker each morning and evening, supplemented by rice and coffee at supper. In a moment of unexpected resourcefulness, Doubleday managed to save a potato that had been inadvertently stepped on, further highlighting the extreme measures taken to preserve their meager provisions.

As the situation became more tense, Anderson took proactive steps to ensure the safety of his men and prepare for the worst. That night, anticipating potential conflict, he ordered the soldiers to relocate their bedding from the barracks into the fort's casemates. This was a calculated move, meant to provide them with more protection should a sudden attack occur. Meanwhile, on the Confederate side, General Beauregard expressed his concern regarding the arrival of a Union fleet. The overcast skies and strong winds in the bay made it difficult to spot any incoming ships, yet Beauregard remained cautious. He predicted that the tide would rise around eight p.m., which would improve the navigability of Charleston's harbor, potentially allowing the Union fleet to approach the fort under the cover of darkness. The Confederate

forces were clearly preparing for a confrontation, and every available resource was being utilized to fortify their defenses.

In an effort to prevent any Union fleet from reaching the fort, a team of soldiers and enslaved individuals worked to fill three outdated vessels with flammable materials. These vessels were placed strategically in a channel near Fort Sumter, where they could block the path of enemy ships. The plan was to ignite the vessels should the Union ships approach, using them to light up the channel and obstruct the advancing fleet. This was a last-ditch effort to stop the enemy from coming closer, providing the Confederacy with a tactical advantage and potentially buying valuable time. The soldiers, knowing the odds were stacked against them, worked diligently to execute these plans, fully aware that any misstep could lead to a swift and brutal confrontation.

This chapter highlights the desperation and urgency felt by Major Anderson and his men at Fort Sumter. The scarcity of resources, particularly food, underscored the dire conditions under which they operated. The preparations were fraught with uncertainty, as neither side knew when or where the attack would occur, making every decision feel like a matter of life and death. Despite the lack of resources, Anderson's leadership and ability to adapt to the circumstances ensured that his men were ready for whatever lay ahead. At the same time, the Confederate forces were equally engaged in preparing for battle, driven by their own set of challenges and strategies to defend Charleston. Both sides, caught in a tense standoff, knew that the actions taken in these final hours would set the stage for what was to come, marking the beginning of the Civil War.

This period before the actual attack at Fort Sumter was characterized by a high level of anxiety and uncertainty. Both sides understood that the next steps would determine the outcome of the confrontation, with every resource being used to prepare for war. Anderson's careful rationing of food and his tactical moves to safeguard his men reflected the weight of responsibility he bore. Similarly, Beauregard's strategic placement of the flammable vessels in Charleston Harbor revealed the Confederate

commitment to blocking any Union advance. As both sides readied themselves for battle, it was clear that this was more than just a military conflict; it was a test of endurance, resourcefulness, and resolve, with the fate of the nation hanging in the balance.