

Subterfuge

Subterfuge was at play as Major Anderson devised a cunning strategy to occupy Fort Sumter amidst the rising tensions with South Carolina's forces. Recognizing the imminent threat to Fort Sumter, Anderson made the decision to evacuate the families of twenty women and twenty-five children from Fort Moultrie to Fort Johnson, presenting this move as a precaution against potential violence. Under the guise of ensuring their safety, Anderson chartered three schooners, intending to mislead observers about his true plans. While outwardly focusing on evacuation, his real goal was to quietly fortify Fort Sumter, a move that would significantly alter the course of events leading to the Civil War.

Anderson's strategy involved more subterfuge to maintain the illusion that Fort Moultrie was secure and that the garrison remained there. He instructed Engineer Foster to disable the fort's artillery, giving the impression that preparations for defense were underway. The goal was to convince anyone watching that the fort was being reinforced, while secretly preparing to transfer the troops to Sumter. As rain delayed the operation, Anderson continued to deceive others by keeping enough supplies at Moultrie to maintain the illusion of an ongoing defense while quietly packing supplies for the covert relocation. This tactic was a delicate balance of misinformation and strategic preparation, keeping his true intentions hidden from those who might interfere.

On December 26, Anderson set the plan into motion with careful instructions for the covert transfer of the garrison to Fort Sumter. Quartermaster Hall was stationed in the bay, ready to sail once the families were safely aboard, awaiting the signal of cannon fire from Moultrie as confirmation that the operation had begun. As preparations were finalized, two companies of soldiers, led by Captain Doubleday and others, were drawn into the clandestine operation, making their way toward the fort. Tension ran high as

the garrison's rowboats navigated the channel under the cover of darkness, their movements growing more anxious with each passing moment. The uncertainty of the operation's success loomed large, as any discovery could lead to a disastrous outcome.

As the boats made their way toward Sumter, the garrison's nerves were tested further when one of the rowboats encountered a patrol steamer. The tension was palpable, as the soldiers feared being discovered, but relief soon came when the steamer continued on its course, allowing them to continue their journey without interference. Upon reaching Fort Sumter, the soldiers were met with confusion, as workers inside the fort were initially hostile to the newcomers. Captain Doubleday had to assert control swiftly, ensuring that his men established a secure presence within the fort. Despite the challenges they faced, the operation was ultimately successful, and Anderson immediately communicated with his superiors and family, emphasizing the strategic importance of Fort Sumter while acknowledging the dangers that still loomed.

The success of the operation was soon reflected in the actions taken by the citizens of Charleston. The absence of Fort Moultrie's flag and the rising plumes of smoke signaled the change that had occurred overnight, alerting the city to the shift in power. This marked a clear fracture between Union and Confederate forces, with the symbolic act of raising the Union flag at Sumter marking a significant moment in the growing divide. Anderson's careful planning and the successful transfer of his command set the stage for further unrest, as the conflict that would lead to the Civil War became more imminent. The secrecy and strategy employed during this operation revealed just how high the stakes were, as the fort's control became a critical point of contention in the struggle between the Union and the Confederacy.