

# To Lift a Columbiad

To Lift a Columbiad, the preparations at Fort Sumter were marked by both physical challenges and strategic planning as Major Anderson and his team worked tirelessly to ready the fort's defenses. The crew's primary task was to position massive fifteen-thousand-pound ten-inch columbiads—heavy artillery designed for long-range fire—on the fort's highest tier to ensure they were positioned for maximum effectiveness. The installation of these massive weapons required an innovative approach, and the engineering team designed a block-and-tackle apparatus to aid in lifting the columbiads. Although lifting the first piece required immense strength and coordination, the crew successfully positioned the cannon at the fort's highest point, marking a key milestone in their preparations. However, this achievement was only the first of many obstacles they would face, as the challenges of securing Fort Sumter for the impending conflict would only grow more complex.

The second columbiad, however, presented unforeseen complications. As the crew attempted to lift the second piece of artillery into place, a critical component of the lifting mechanism failed. This caused the columbiad to crash to the ground, where it partially buried itself, presenting a significant setback to the crew. Despite the failure, no one was injured, and the soldiers displayed remarkable ingenuity by repurposing the damaged gun into a functional mortar. This modification allowed them to fire projectiles at steeper angles, overcoming the problem posed by the gun's placement and maintaining their fortifications. The ability to adapt to such setbacks, turning a seemingly disastrous situation into an opportunity, spoke volumes about the resilience and resourcefulness of the soldiers stationed at Fort Sumter.

Once the damaged gun had been modified and the lifting mechanism repaired, the crew successfully lifted the third columbiad into place without further incident. Meanwhile, Captain Foster, the chief engineer, worked to reinforce the fort's defenses

even further. One of his critical contributions was the construction of a six-foot-high barrier, referred to as the "manhole," which allowed only one soldier to pass at a time. This barrier was strategically placed at the fort's main gate, a vital entry point, in an effort to limit access and bolster security in the event of an assault. In addition to reinforcing the gates, Foster's defensive innovations included the placement of 225 explosive shells along the fort's parapet, strategically primed to fall onto any invading soldiers. These measures were intended to inflict heavy damage on the enemy and protect the fort from any attempted breach, contributing significantly to the fort's fortification.

Foster's creativity in defending the fort extended beyond conventional methods, incorporating unconventional traps that would prove crucial in the event of an attack. Among these were "thunder barrels," which were explosive-filled barrels designed to detonate upon contact, and "fougasses," pits packed with explosives placed at strategic locations. These ingenious defenses were intended not only to deter but to severely damage any attacking forces, with the goal of inflicting as much damage as possible on the enemy while minimizing risk to the fort's defenders. The fort's defensive measures even included the strategic placement of mines under the wharf, further enhancing the fort's overall protection. Foster's meticulous attention to detail and his willingness to innovate in the face of adversity helped to ensure that the fort's defenses were as formidable as possible, giving the soldiers stationed there a fighting chance against a potential assault.

While the soldiers at Fort Sumter were focused on preparing for the inevitable conflict, life within the fort was not solely centered on war. Despite the growing tensions and the constant preparations for an impending assault, the soldiers still managed to engage in leisure activities that helped maintain morale. They took part in games, fishing, and even enjoyed outings on a six-oared barge during their Sunday breaks, which provided brief respite from the looming threat of war. However, these moments of relaxation were in stark contrast to the harsh realities they faced, with the soldiers enduring a shortage of essential supplies such as candles and soap. With few

resources at their disposal, the soldiers had to become resourceful, finding creative ways to deal with their limited provisions. Their ability to adapt to these challenges, balancing the demands of war with moments of camaraderie, played an essential role in maintaining the morale needed to face the uncertainty ahead.

Despite these lighter moments, the atmosphere at Fort Sumter was one of unease and anticipation. The fort's defenders, under Major Anderson's leadership, remained steadfast in their resolve to protect the fort and uphold the Union, but the impending threat of war was a constant weight on their minds. The tension between preparing for battle and managing everyday life within the fort underscored the complexity of the situation. The soldiers' resilience and ingenuity in the face of such harsh conditions—both physical and emotional—were critical in ensuring the fort's defense was as strong as possible. As they continued their preparations, the soldiers at Fort Sumter remained determined to fulfill their duty, even as the shadows of war loomed ever closer.