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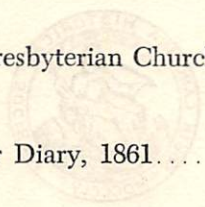
THE SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CHARLESTON, S. C.

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APRIL 1901



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THE BATTLE OF FORT SUMTER AS SEEN FROM MORRIS ISLAND

By F. L. PARKER

Francis LeJau Parker, a native of Abbeville District, was born September 22, 1836, at Rocky Grove Plantation. In April 1861 he was stationed at Morris Island as Assistant Surgeon, C.S.A., later rising to the rank of Division Surgeon. He died in Charleston December 15, 1913. His eye-witness account of the bombardment of Fort Sumter has been contributed by his daughter, Miss Ellen Parker of Charleston.

11 April.

For days the community had anticipated commencement of hostilities, public suspense was at its height; for weeks troops, munitions of war, stores of all sorts were daily being carried to the different fortifications in the harbor. At last on the 11 inst. it was known that Gen. Beauregard had sent at 2 p.m. to demand the surrender of the formidable fortress, Fort Sumter. Dispatches continued from Major Anderson to Beauregard during the afternoon and during the night—see correspondence published in papers. In the meantime the different commands were ordered to look out for the signal shell from the battery at Fort Johnson. The last boat bringing troops and munitions of war left Morris Island at five o'clock. All eyes were turned towards the signal point. Eight o'clock came, no shell. Nine o'clock came and passed and still no sign of commencing hostilities. We began to think there would be no fight, men wondered why; some said they knew it would be so. At this time the troops at the batteries were dismissed, the sentinels placed at customary posts, men retired to their tents, disappointed and perplexed. The camp was noiseless, everything was hushed in sleep, the sentinels alone wakeful and alert kept guard, with unwearied eyes alternately turned to Fort Johnson and to the Bar, looking for the expected fleet. The guard boats, ever watchful, with their friendly lights sailed on the outskirts of the harbor, scanning the horizon for the first sign of Lincoln's men of war. All this time negotiations were going on between Charleston and Sumter, and so night passed on.

12 April.

4 a.m. Action opened by a shell from Fort Johnson on James Island, the sound of mortar awoke all camps. The sentinels gave the alarm and fired their guns. Men were seen emerging in hot haste from their tents

and running quickly to their respective batteries. Surgeons with bandages and lint in hand, with pocket case under their arms, with laudanum and chloroform and splints, all hurried to the posts assigned them. And now shell answers shell and batteries from the various points send back to each other their warlike sounds until the whole circle plays on Sumter, lighting up momentarily her guns' outlines, scarcely visible in the morning light.

There stands the bold defiant fort, as quiet as death. No light is seen, not a sign of life appears, not even a sentinel can be distinguished, but high above her floats her proud banner, the Stars and Stripes, the flag which for 75 years has never quailed before an enemy or fallen in disgrace.

The ball is fairly opened—Morris Island from end to end is alive with men—officers and aides hurrying to and fro, the mortars and batteries fire at regular intervals. The question is asked on all sides, what is Anderson doing? Why doesn't he return fire? Admiration bursts from all sides as the flag still waves defiantly aloft, seemingly careless of damage or of the shot and shell whistling around her. Major Anderson is not asleep. Sumter has opened. Crash goes her balls upon the iron battery¹ and the 42 pound battery; they strike on houses and ricochet far out into the marsh and creek. Shot succeeds shot; now she answers Moultrie and is paying her regards to the floating battery.² Our men are being

¹ One of four batteries located on Cummings Point, "this first iron-clad armored fortification ever erected" was designed and built by Col. Clement H. Stevens, a cashier in the Planters and Mechanics Bank of Charleston. The battery was constructed of heavy timbers reinforced by railroad T iron laid at an angle of approximately forty degrees.

"Fort Sumter was distant one thousand three hundred and ninety yards. Behind this 'slaughter-pen,' as many called it, the Palmetto Guard, Captain G. B. Cuthbert, fought through the 12th and 13th of April, 1861, pouring a heavy fire into the gorge of Sumter, which replied with a severe but ineffectual fire from her heaviest guns. At the close of the engagement 'Stevens' Battery' was almost intact, only an iron cove of porthole being displaced and one gun dismounted. Not a man of its garrison was hurt. This astounding success established the value of iron armor . . . and this experiment has revolutionized the navies of the world." *Yearbook of the City of Charleston, 1884*, p. 352.

² ". . . the 'floating battery' was protected by a high bulwark and slanting roof of heavy timber, covered with iron plates of one and a half to two inches thickness; its armament was four 42-pounders. It was frequently hit but not seriously damaged by the guns of Fort Sumter. The projector and constructor was Lieutenant J. R. Hamilton of Charleston, an ex-officer of the U. S. Navy and, later, of the Confederate Navy." John Johnson, *The Defense of Charleston Harbor* (Charleston, 1890), Ap. xxxvi.

The battery was located at this time off the west end of Sullivan's Island.

made acquainted with the sound of balls—they are falling all about us. The action is general.

10 a.m. Firing is perfectly regular, everybody is cool and calm; they neither fire before or after the minute—"no one is hurt", our men are getting used to the machine—a ball from Sumter comes, is buried in the sand or goes whizzing away into the marsh or up the Island; a moment after a hundred heads are seen upon our traverses watching for another ball from Sumter. There it comes; "Look out" is the cry; down go our men, not a head can be seen, the ball has passed; up again we go and so this continues. Now we have got the range. Our shells fall and burst upon the parapet, others fall within and burst. The rifle cannon, the point and iron batteries are telling on Sumter's walls, clouds of brick and mortar rise from her impenetrable walls. Our men watch with great interest every shot and mark its effect. Cries of that's a good one, hurrah for that one—bad—poor—try it again.

10½ a.m. The middle porthole of the iron battery struck by a 10-inch columbiad and the window so badly injured that the gun cannot be used immediately. They will send to town for blacksmith and instruments. Two other guns keep up the firing. The point battery is doing great execution.

1 p.m. Sumter's casemate guns dismantled or so injured that he has left the Morris Island side of the fort; he is combatting furiously with Moultrie and the floating battery, and occasionally at Fort Johnson. The fleet has arrived, is now off the Bar. It numbers three steamships and one transport vessel—*Pocahontus*, *Pawnee* and *Baltic*—they are signaling Fort Sumter. All eyes turned on these vessels; we will have hot work tonight, tide high between seven and eight.

7 p.m. Firing and shelling continue. Fort Sumter answers defiantly. Night black and stormy, rain is falling with lightning and thunder. Batteries are manned, everyone at his post, fleet expected every moment, hot work anticipated.

10 p.m. Tide going down, no signs of fleet, miserable cowards. Anderson has just signaled them. They answer but remain inactive, calmly gazing at the battle; the execrations of our men are loud against them and yet our navy officers say their commander⁸ is brave. Can it be so! We doubt it.

Rain is falling, night darker, if possible, than at seven o'clock. Our men disheartened at the cowardice of fleet, disappointed that the causal

⁸ Capt. Gustavus Vasa Fox.

batteries (built for a cause) are not to be engaged in the fight, drenched to the skin, are dismissed from the guns; shot from Fort Sumter has not raked the Island since one o'clock, but it is thought best to seek the Rat Holes. Numbers are crowded into these little cramped uncomfortable places. Tired with the fatigues of two days and nights of watching and work, we fall into a nervous, unsettled sleep. We may be aroused in the next hours to meet the evening's boats on the Beach. Again the sentinels, wrapped in cloaks, walk their lonely posts in the drenching wet. Occasionally the lightning flashes over the sea, their eyes are turned towards the menacing ships of war, but no boats appear, they still look calmly and basely upon the progress of the bombardment. Will they gaze inactively forever?

[13 April]

12½ a.m. at night. Secure in our ratholes we are now sound asleep. Just about us we hear the startling cry of sentinels, corporal of guard, bam! bam! boat in the traverses opposite Lamar's Battery; muskets are fired in quick succession; bam! goes a 24-pounder from Nordhen's Battery. The flash lights up the beach, one boat is seen, some of our men are on the water's edge—they seize the head of the boat, waist deep in water when the cry of "Clear the beach, we fire" rises above the din of musketry and shouts of men—the boat is free again—a clearance of our men is made—Leizeman's 24-pound howitzer belches forth, the grape-shot whistles over the heads of our men and splashes around the boat. It is now ascertained that there are but two occupants on board. These have thrown themselves flat in the bottom and vociferously cry "Friends, Southern Confederacy, don't shoot for God's sake!" Again the boat left to itself is carried down by the waves along the beach; now it is opposite to Leizeman's battery. His men with muskets in hand run to the beach, they join Lamar's men; now the musketry recommences, the frightened sailors cry lustily "Don't shoot, we are friends". The boat drifts unguided by the current, it approaches a second time the shore. Our men rush in and seize the two men, the causes of alarm. They prove to be two drunken fishermen who had brought two members of the Palmetto Guard to the Point in the afternoon. They had missed their way and had attempted to land until discovered, when fear deprived them of their senses. They are taken to Lamar's Battery where they fall asleep while reciting their adventures, more frightened than hurt. By this time the whole island with bags, nets and men, and two companies of Infantry are marched down to this part of the Island near the Point, in case of another surprise. The alarm subsiding and the rain still falling,

our men seek shelter in "ratholes" talk about the little skirmish and gradually fall asleep.

7 a.m. Saturday morning. No other alarm during the night; mortar and guns playing unceasingly on Sumter. The firing has continued all night through, less energetically than during the first day. Sumter replies briskly to Moultrie and floating battery. She seems to have forgotten Cummings Point and Morris Island batteries entirely. Her ceasements and parapets towards this side are badly battered, the walls seem completely honeycombed. The sun has risen, the lingering clouds are flying across the heavens, everything looks bright and cheerful, our men are in fine spirits and the firing is steady, continuous and determined. Sumter shows no signs of yielding.

8½ a.m. Most of our troops at breakfast, my mess are seated at table for first time in 40 hours. We are discussing the result of yesterday's shots. The little skirmish of last night is told and the laugh is at the expense of the two poor devils who caused the alarm, and who cried so lustily "don't shoot, we are friends". One remarks how quickly we are accustomed to Sumter's shots. Would our friends think we could so casually take our meal while amidst the cannon balls!! Our meal is over, we are lighting cigars when cheer after cheer reaches our ears. Out we run pell mell—Fort Sumter is on fire, hurrah, thousands stand on sand hills, embankments and traverses, the cheering is deafening. It goes on from hill to hill till it reaches the farthest end of the Island. Now we have him—but no, there wave the Stars and Stripes towering above the flames and smoke, cries of what a gallant fellow Anderson is, he is all pluck, pluck to the backbone. And now the shot and shell fall like hail on Sumter. Every battery redoubles its fire. Shells burst amongst the flames and shot after shot in quick succession, pound the front walls; brick and mortar fly. The eastern part of the building is the part on fire.

10½ a.m. Sumter still fires on Moultrie. Occasionally she pays her regards to the Floating Battery—flames are subsiding. Our efforts are directed towards the southern part of the building. The wind is favorable, if that part catches Sumter is ours.

12 M. Whole fort is on fire. Shells, hand grenades and cartridges burst momentarily on the parapets and ramparts—great cheering on our side. The Stars and Stripes still wave defiantly amongst the smoke and flames. We admire Anderson for his pluck but let fly our shot and shell with a will.

¾ to 1 p.m. Sumter's flag shot down by a ball from Moultrie or the Floating Battery, immense cheering, the hills swarm with men, slight cessation of firing on our side. It is thought that the gallant Major will take the opportunity of surrendering.

A consultation of the general's staff is held, it is determined to send a messenger to Sumter. Senator Wigfall of Texas, aide to General Beauregard, volunteered to go, a small boat is manned by two negroes. Gourdin Young of Palmetto Guard accompanies Wigfall—off they go, a dangerous experiment. All the points except Morris Island are pouring the missiles of destruction in and about Sumter. Every eye is turned to the little boat on her errand of danger and mercy. Shot and shell fall all around her, on she goes, will she reach the Fort?

Anderson raises the Stars and Stripes on southern ramparts—cheers for the gallant Major—he fights like a perfect devil—we call to the boat, flag up, come back, but no—they are too far to hear, on goes the fearless little boat. Moultrie, floating battery and mortar redouble their fire. Sumter enveloped in flames and smoke answers—she fights to the last moment—Islands silent.

¾ past 1. Boat reaches wharf, Wigfall crawls through a porthole pushing white flag before him, intense excitement.

½ past 1. White flag on battlements, hurrah! cries of white flag, great cheering, she surrenders, wildest scene on Morris Beach, immense cheering, Hurrah for South Carolina!

10 min. to 2 o'clock. Boat returning. Wigfall waving his hat—cheers—she nears the shore, he stands erect and shouts "Sumter is ours"—Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, three cheers boys,—boat in surf, men rush in and seize Wigfall and Young—they raise them on their shoulders, great cheering—Wigfall shouting, men scrambling, hats waving, hurrah for South Carolina. Now he communicates with General [James] Simons—hush, quiet a moment, interest intense.

Major Whiting, aide to Gen Simons, says for him Fort Sumter is unconditionally surrendered to Brig. Gen. Beauregard Confederate State Forces. Gen. Simons requests that the soldiers will now return to their posts, await the fleet, which we will treat as we did Fort Sumter—Three Cheers for Beauregard—such cheers as they were! Three for South Carolina and a thousand mouths expand, a thousand throats belch out hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, it was a good sight and a devilish cheer. Three cheers for Palmetto Guard—they are given with a will—everybody cheers for himself and for everybody else, and now such shaking of hands, such tossing of hats, such screams, such hugging. Damn it old

fellow, give us your hand, hand we give then held. Everybody goes and looks a drunk—everywhere you hear a little independent hurrah, let's take another drink.

¼ to 5 p.m. The excitement consequent upon the surrender of Sumter still continues unabated. Many hundreds of soldiers belonging to the Infantry from the upper part of the Island continue to come to the Point to get particulars and to receive the congratulations of their friends.

5 p.m. Fresh excitement is caused by the appearance of a boat from the fleet sailing for Moultrie. The sandhills and traverses are crowded by anxious spectators; one shot from G[regg] Battery across her bows—she keeps on, another shot splashes water all over her—hurrah shouts the crowd—in a moment her sails fall, she changes her course and rowing approaches Morris Island Shore, as she approaches sentinels are placed to keep off the crowd—officers communicate with her. Her commanding officer requests permission to visit Sumter—refused; Sumter's Commander is officially announced. Commander asks permission to come and take Anderson and men out, refused; boat is told to come again at 9 a.m. tomorrow for an answer on condition that no attempt is made on part of fleet to reinforce the fort.

9 p.m. Our Mess is once more together discussing events of the day and eating supper. It is the first time that we have all met together for forty hours.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S COLONIAL CONSTITUTION: TWO PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

Edited by JACK P. GREENE

Western Reserve University

One of the most important developments in the constitutional history of the British colonies in America was the gradual acquisition of power and prestige by the lower houses of assembly. Englishmen who came to the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought along a knowledge of the way things worked at home. Quite naturally, they tended to put that knowledge to use and to model their own institutions after those of the mother country. Authorities in England encouraged this tendency and by the last half of the seventeenth century were insisting that colonial institutions be patterned as closely as possible after their English counterparts. In fact, they even prescribed in the commissions and instructions to the royal governors the exact form that certain political, legal, religious, economic, and other institutions should take.

The governmental system worked out for the royal colonies was similar to the English. In each colony government was to revolve around a governor appointed by the imperial authorities and representing the King. An appointed Council composed usually of twelve of the more influential men in the colony was to assist him in both his executive and judicial duties and to serve as an upper chamber of the legislature. Its duties corresponded roughly to those of the House of Lords and the Privy Council in England. Finally, each colony was to have a representative assembly. Conceived in the image of the House of Commons, this assembly was to act as the lower house of the legislature and was to join with the governor and council in making temporary bylaws for the colony.

The colonists were not entirely satisfied with this constitution and found that, like other institutions of the mother country, it would not work in America precisely the way it had in England or in exactly the way English authorities planned. Consequently, they did not hesitate to attempt to change it. English authorities never intended for the lower houses of assembly to exercise great political power or to be more than "so many Corporations at a distance" with temporary law-making powers;¹ but almost from the moment of their inception they sought to restrict the authority of the governors and councils and augment their own power. By the middle of the eighteenth century they had become the dominant force in the

¹ An excellent statement of the imperial conception of the lower houses of assembly may be found in "A Short Discourse on the Present State of the Colonies in America with Respect to the Interest of Great Britain," 1729, Public Record Office, London, Colonial Office (hereafter CO) 5/463, pp. 156-7.