



THE CIVIL WAR

GREAT
BATTLES
FOR BOYS

JOE GIORELLO
WITH
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The American Civil War

Great Battles for Boys
EXCERPT

by
Joe Giorello

The American Civil War
Great Battles for Boys

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Excerpt Edition

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Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[**Beginnings**](#)

[**The Battle of Fort Sumter**](#)

[More Books in the Great Battles for Boys Series](#)

BEGINNINGS



Members of the 6th Maine Infantry, circa 1860–1865. Photo by Mathew Brady, U.S. War Department.

THE CIVIL WAR was the bloodiest conflict in United States history. Between 600,000 and 800,000 soldiers died in this war—almost as many soldiers as all other U.S. wars combined.

No single event triggered this war. Instead, like most wars, it came about through a combination of current events, historical issues, and human nature. This book is mainly about the battles themselves, but let's quickly cover some of the things that

contributed to the Civil War. It will help you understand the battles.

Long before the Civil War, the South actually had more people than the North. But in the mid-1800s, the North's population began growing very quickly. The industrial revolution brought people to Northern cities for jobs in factories. Other people came to America as immigrants from countries such as Ireland and Italy and settled in cities such as New York and Boston. During this same time, the South's population wasn't growing much, except for slaves who were bought and sold to do most of the heavy labor, especially farming. By 1860, the North had far more people than the South. With the help of the productive factories, the North was also becoming richer, too.

The South's money came from farming crops, particularly cotton. The Southern farms—called plantations—stretched across huge areas and required a lot of hard work to maintain. Today, farmers can use modern equipment such as tractors. However, in the 1800s, farm work was done by people and animals such as mules and horses. To save money, Southern plantation owners bought slaves who did most of the work. Northerners also bought slaves, but not as many.

In the beginning, American slavery included both white and black people. The white people were often criminals or poor people who needed to pay off their debts. The black people came from Africa. They were kidnapped by their fellow Africans and sold to white slave traders who then shipped them by the thousands to places such as the United States. These kidnapped Africans were then sold to the highest bidder. Some of them later earned freedom after working for a certain number of years. However, most of them remained slaves their entire lives. Their children and grandchildren also became slaves. Slavery was a life of bondage.

Many free Americans—including some Southerners—hated slavery. But it was allowed to continue, especially in the South, for

economic and political reasons. There were also some bad cultural reasons. Sadly, many white people saw black Africans as inferior. Those prejudices ran deep in the mostly white North and South.

In the North, a movement to end slavery was started. A man named William Lloyd Garrison started publishing an anti-slavery newspaper called *The Liberator*. Week after week, Garrison wrote about why slavery was wrong. He wanted to persuade his readers to rethink their ideas about black Africans, many of whom were now African-Americans since they were born in America. Garrison's audience grew. In both the North and the South, people debated slavery. Some historians even believe that slavery would have eventually collapsed due to public opinion and the new economics of manufacturing.

But that's not what happened.

For one thing, white Southerners were scared.

In 1831, thirty years before the Civil War, a Virginia slave named Nat Turner launched a rebellion. He gathered fellow slaves, and together, they killed about sixty white people, including women and children. Turner was later caught, sentenced to death, and hanged.



The discovery of Nat Turner

Southern governments started passing new laws that placed further restrictions on the lives of slaves. For instance, it was against the law to educate slaves. Some laws were written that restricted the rights of black people—even if they weren't slaves. It became illegal for black people to gather in groups, even though the U.S. Constitution says all citizens have the right to "freely assemble." Even if there was a black church service, at least one white minister had to be there too.

In 1858, just three years before the Civil War would break out, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas were fighting to win the Senate seat for the state of Illinois. The candidates faced off in public debates. One of their debate topics was slavery.

Douglas was a Democrat. His party supported slavery, partly based on the United States Supreme Court's decision known as Dred Scott. That decision said that owning slaves was no different from owning any other property such as a house or land.

Lincoln was a Republican. His party was against slavery.

In their debates, Douglas claimed that if Abraham Lincoln won the Senate seat for Illinois, he would free all black slaves who would then move North and take jobs away from white people.

Douglas won the Senate seat.

But Lincoln later published his debate speeches. The book made him famous.

In 1859, two years before the Civil War, a man named John Brown led a rebellion of abolitionists. Abolitionists were white people who wanted to end—or abolish—slavery. Leading eighteen abolitionists, John Brown rode into the town of Harper's Ferry, Virginia. He wanted to seize all the weapons and ammunition stored in a federal arsenal there, and give the weapons to slaves, who would then launch a rebellion that would be even bigger than Nat Turner's.



John Brown

Brown and his men managed to take control of the armory. They also took some hostages. Incidentally, one of those hostages was the great-grandnephew of President George Washington. But Brown didn't have an escape route or rations for his men. Even more importantly, many slaves didn't join his militia. It wasn't long before the townspeople of Harper's Ferry surrounded Brown's militia and killed eight of his men. Soon after, a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel named Robert E. Lee arrived (remember that colonel's name). Lee captured Brown who was later hanged for treason.

Brown's rebellion didn't succeed. But it publicized the terrible tension surrounding slavery.

The divide between North and South grew.

By 1860, the South had more than four million slaves who did more than just work on plantations. They cleaned city streets. They worked as blacksmiths and bricklayers. They helped white families raise children. For Southerners, slavery was part of their lives—even the lives of people who didn't own slaves. Rather than having the federal government decide if slavery was legal, Southerners insisted that each state should choose. They didn't believe one national policy would work for every single state in the union.

Meanwhile, abolitionists continued to push for an end to slavery everywhere in America. Abolitionists said it was morally wrong for people to own people. Some Southerners agreed, but they didn't see how their states would survive economically if slavery suddenly ended. Many Southerners insisted the North just didn't understand this problem because the North didn't need slaves to survive economically.

The year before the Civil War broke out, the Republican Party nominated Abraham Lincoln for president. And who did he face? None other than Stephen Douglas who was nominated by the Southern Democratic party. However, this time, Lincoln won the race. On November 6, 1860, Lincoln became the sixteenth president of the United States.

Then the divide between the North and the South really expanded.

Within a month of Lincoln's win, the Southern state of South Carolina seceded from the United States. That meant it was breaking away from the U.S. to form its own government. In this case, South Carolina said it would no longer be part of the United States. Six more Southern states soon joined South Carolina—Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Four more states would later secede as well—Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas.

These eleven states called themselves the Confederate States of America. They elected their own president, Jefferson Davis, and they wrote their own Constitution.

You can compare the preamble (the opening words) of these two Constitutions.

The United States Constitution begins: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union ..."

The Confederate States of America Constitution begins: "We, the people of the Confederate States, each State acting in its sovereign and independent character ..."

Do you see the difference? The U.S. Constitution wanted a union of states. The Confederate Constitution wanted each state to be "sovereign," or in control of its own affairs.

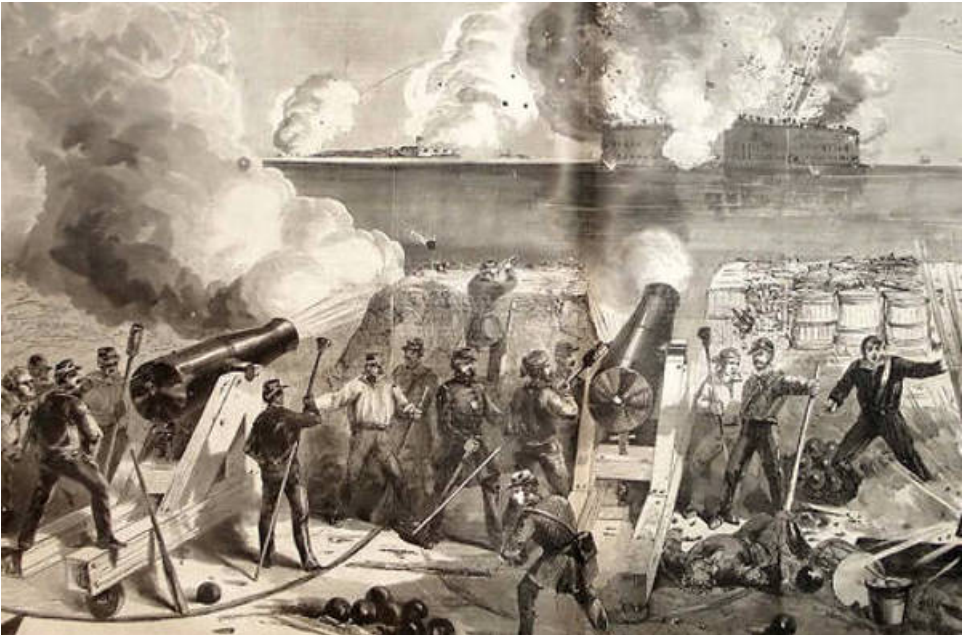
Hoping to keep the peace between the North and South, many people tried to negotiate. They held meetings, wrote essays, and discussed the problem extensively.

Unfortunately, the dispute wasn't settled by their actions. You're about to read how it was ended by the Civil War, the bloodiest conflict in American history.

It began with the Battle of Fort Sumter.

The Battle of Fort Sumter

December 26, 1860–April 14, 1861



THE BATTLE OF Fort Sumter was the battle that lit the Civil War's fuse.

By February 4, 1861, seven Southern states had seceded from the United States—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and South Carolina. They had declared their new government, the Confederate States of America, and had elected Jefferson Davis as president.

However, that caused a huge dilemma. If these seven states were no longer part of the Union—or federal government—who owned the U.S. military forts inside their state borders? For

instance, there was a federal fort named Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. Who should have control over it?

That question soon turned into a heated argument.

Positioned on the Atlantic Ocean, Charleston was a strategic military location. During both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, America had built forts around Charleston's harbor to protect it from British invasions. This map shows the city of Charleston in 1861. You can see how the city sits inside the harbor surrounded by forts, including Fort Sumter in the middle of the waterway.



Fort Sumter sits at the mouth of Charleston harbor, encircled by other forts

Fort Sumter was the most modern of the Charleston forts, but with decades of peace between America and Great Britain, the fort was now only garrisoned by a single soldier. Fort Sumter also wasn't fully built, in part because President James Buchanan—the

president right before Lincoln—cut back on military spending. Buchanan was hoping diplomacy, not warfare, would settle the angry divide between the North and South.

But Buchanan also realized that he needed to protect the forts around Charleston. He sent Major Robert Anderson to Fort Moultrie (see map). Anderson brought about 125 soldiers from the 1st U.S. Artillery—and about a dozen musicians. Why musicians? Back then, bugle players were an army’s alarm clock. They woke the troops by playing a tune known as “Reveille.” Other musicians helped with marching beats and ceremonies.

Fort Moultrie wasn’t a great fort. It was more like a stockade—a strong fence made of logs and earthworks. Anderson knew his men would be vulnerable to attacks at Fort Moultrie. He wanted to move his men to Fort Sumter because it was among the nation’s strongest fortresses with a five-sided layout and walls that were up to five feet thick. Fort Sumter could also hold 135 cannons.



U.S. Major Robert Anderson

Anderson asked for permission to move his men to Fort Sumter. Unfortunately for Anderson, the Secretary of War was John B.

Floyd, a Southern sympathizer. Floyd was officially working for the North but secretly sending arms and ammunition to the South—all while Anderson waited for permission to move his men to Fort Sumter. As the weeks went on, Anderson kept asking for permission, and Floyd kept telling him to wait. Floyd told him that negotiations were taking place.

But on December 26, 1860—five days after South Carolina declared its secession and one day after Christmas—Anderson realized he couldn't wait any longer. Under cover of darkness, he abandoned Fort Moultrie and relocated his men to Fort Sumter.

However, the men faced new problems. Only about fifty of Fort Sumter's cannons worked, and the ones on top of the fort were exposed to enemy fire. Part of the problem was in Fort Sumter's design. It was made to repel a naval attack, so all the guns were facing the water. That meant that the Southerners could attack the fort by land.

In January 1861, President Buchanan sent *Star of the West*, a merchant ship, with crucial supplies for Anderson's men. When the ship entered Charleston's harbor, the Southerners fired on it. *Star of the West* was forced to withdraw before it could deliver food and ammunition to Anderson's men. South Carolina's governor demanded President Buchanan surrender Fort Sumter to the Confederate States of America.

Buchanan refused.

The Confederacy decided to starve the Union forces. Without food, Anderson and his men would have to surrender.

But in March, that plan suddenly changed. Abraham Lincoln assumed the presidency and ordered the Southerners to withdraw from the other forts around Fort Sumter. Instead of withdrawing, the Confederacy started building up its military, taking full control of every fort around Fort Sumter. Confederate Brigadier General P.G.T. Beauregard was placed in charge of these Southern forces.

Beauregard and Anderson already knew each other. Anderson had been Beauregard's artillery instructor at West Point's military academy. After graduation, Beauregard worked as Anderson's assistant.

Now, they were battlefield enemies.



Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard

Beauregard demanded Anderson surrender Fort Sumter. Anderson refused. Beauregard then cut off all supplies to Anderson's men and stepped up drills for South Carolina's militias. Trained as a military engineer, Beauregard stocked Fort Moultrie with an arsenal of weapons. These weapons included Columbiads that fired shells at high angles over short distances. There were also Howitzers that shot projectiles at a sharp angle and cannons big

enough to fire 24- and 32-pound cannonballs. Beauregard even put cannons on a raft that was protected by an iron shield.

About 6,000 Confederates—from young boys to old men—stood ready to assault Fort Sumter. Lincoln again ordered them to leave, and once again, the governor of South Carolina refused.

It was a classic standoff.

On April 11, 1861, Beauregard issued his final demand. The federal Union could either abandon Fort Sumter or the Confederacy was going to fire on it.

Anderson refused to leave the fort.

The next day, April 12 at 4:30 a.m., some 4,000 cannons and mortars opened fire on Fort Sumter. Beauregard, hoping to conserve ammunition, ordered the guns to fire around the harbor in a counterclockwise sequence, with two minutes separating each shot.

Inside Fort Sumter, Anderson waited for daylight. Around 7:00 a.m., Union Captain Abner Doubleday fired on the Southern battery at Cummings Point. His shot missed. Like Beauregard, Anderson hoped to conserve ammunition. He used only the best cannons which were mounted on the fort's uppermost level, called the barbette tier.

However, Anderson's men had little protection from the Confederate artillery. First, it was coming from the surrounding land, and Fort Sumter was designed to repel naval attacks. Second, the Confederates positioned their cannons so that high-arching ballistics could clear the fort's walls and land inside. Third, Beauregard targeted the fort's wooden structures, including the barracks and officer quarters. As the Confederates' heated shot—cannonballs cooked inside a furnace to red-hot temperatures—landed inside Fort Sumter, the flames spread toward the main ammunition magazine where about 300 barrels of gunpowder were stored. Anderson was forced to seal the magazine, cutting off his own ammunition.

This Confederate bombardment lasted thirty-six hours—an entire day and a half.



Fort Sumter after the Confederate bombardment, as seen from the inside

Anderson's men were soon running low on ammunition. In those days, gunpowder cartridges were made of cloth. To keep up with the Confederate bombardment, Anderson's men started using their socks for cartridges. The fort was also down to only six cannons. Divided into twos, the cannons fired on the batteries at Cummings Point, Fort Moultrie, and Sullivan's Island. During all of this, Anderson was trying to conserve his ammunition.

Hope sprang up when federal ships carrying supplies for the men inside Fort Sumter. But the fierce Confederate artillery forced the ships to retreat. The following day, bad weather held back the ships. Anderson's supplies were dwindling fast.

On April 13 at 1:00 p.m., the Confederate firing knocked down the fort's main flagpole. Seeing this as a sign of victory, Confederate Colonel Louis Wigfall, a former U.S. senator, tied a white handkerchief to his sword and commandeered a small boat from nearby Morris Island. Wigfall—waving the handkerchief and dodging incoming rounds from Sullivan's Island—managed to reach Anderson at Fort Sumter.

"You have defended your flag nobly, Sir," Wigfall told him. "You have done all that it is possible to do, and General Beauregard wants to stop this fight. On what terms, Major Anderson, will you evacuate this fort?"

Anderson knew he was too low on ammunition to fight back. His men were starving and exhausted, plus Fort Sumter was on fire.

Anderson agreed to a truce.

On April 14, the Union surrendered Fort Sumter to the Confederate States of America.

The battle of Fort Sumter was over.

Anderson had only one condition for withdrawal. He requested a 100-gun salute to the United States' flag. Unfortunately, during the salute, a spark lit some cartridges, killing two Union privates and seriously wounding four members of the fort's gun crew. The 100-gun salute ended at fifty shots.

Anderson and his men were allowed to return to the North where they were treated as heroes.

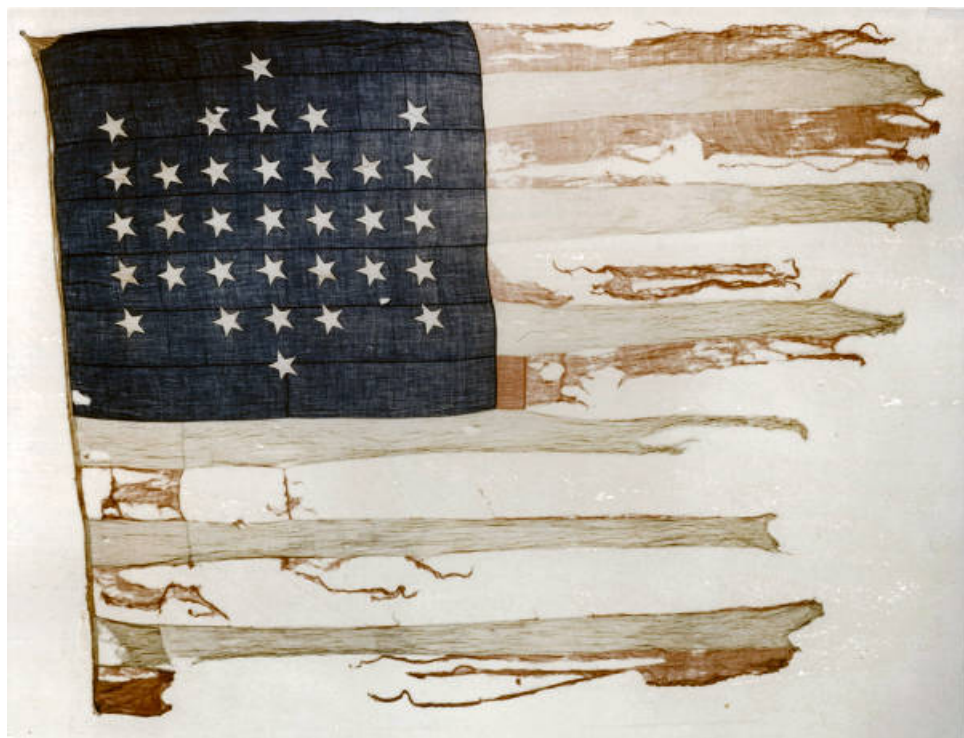
The Civil War had begun.

President Lincoln immediately called for 75,000 volunteers to stop the Southern rebellion. However, Lincoln's order provoked

four more Southern states to join the Confederacy—Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia.

Do you remember Secretary of War, John B. Floyd? On May 23, 1861, he became a brigadier general—for the Confederacy.

Although the Confederacy had gained four more states, it faced a new challenge. The sudden firing on Fort Sumter meant the South didn't have much time to organize or gather supplies for a major war. Southern leaders now turned to Great Britain and France, asking for arms and money. These foreign countries hesitated, wondering if the South had acted too aggressively and too soon. As a result, no help was sent to the South.



The United States flag that flew over Fort Sumter during the battle

WHO FOUGHT?

In most wars, nobody knows who fired the first shot.

But in the Civil War, we might know based on personal statements.

Some people believe the South offered the first shot on Fort Sumter to Virginia Congressman Roger Pryor. But Pryor declined the offer. "I could not fire the first gun of the war," he said.

Other people say Lieutenant Henry S. Farley fired a single 10-inch mortar round from Fort Johnson.

Yet another version says Edmund Ruffin pulled a lanyard on a cannon at Cummings Point, launching a 64-pound shell at Fort Sumter. Ruffin seems like the right candidate, based on his personal history.



Edmund Ruffin

Ruffin grew up farming and later developed scientific methods to increase crop yields. He was also an advisor to the Virginia State Legislature. Ruffin also strongly believed that slavery should continue, and he resisted any movement that wanted to end it. In fact, one reason Ruffin worked with such dedication on agricultural

sciences was that he wanted the South to grow so rich it could declare itself independent of the North. Ruffin was a true secessionist.

After John Brown's raid on the armory at Harper's Ferry, he began spending more time in South Carolina. Strong pro-slavery groups were forming there, and Ruffin joined a group called the "Fire Eaters." These men were pressing for Southern secession, even if it meant war.

When the war they wanted eventually broke out, Ruffin was sixty-seven years old—in those days, that was considered *very* old. He still joined the South Carolina Regiment, firmly believing that the South would conquer the North within days after the Fort Sumter attack.

Throughout the war, Ruffin continued to insist that the South would win. Even as the casualties mounted and food shortages increased, inflation soared, and the South fell into ruin, Ruffin and the Fire Eaters kept saying victory was coming.

In 1864, as the Civil War entered its third year, Ruffin returned to his Virginia plantation. His land was ruined as Union troops had salted his fields, making sure no crops would grow in that soil. They also looted Ruffin's house, burning or stealing all his possessions. His slaves were gone.

On June 17, 1865, after the Confederacy had surrendered to the Union, Edmund Ruffin, age seventy-one, wrote these words in his diary:

"And now with my last writing and utterances, with what will be my last breath, I here repeat and willingly proclaim my unmitigated hatred to Yankee rule—to all political, social, and business connections with Yankees, and the perfidious, malignant, and vile Yankee race."

"Yankees" was the name for Northerners.

After writing those words, Ruffin draped a Confederate flag over his shoulders, placed a rifle barrel in his mouth, and pulled the trigger.

Edmund Ruffin may have fired the first shot of the Civil War—and maybe the last, too.

BOOKS

Fort Sumter (Cornerstones of Freedom) by Brendan January

The Greatest Civil War Battles: The Battle of Fort Sumter by Charles River Editors

INTERNET

Videos bring this battle alive at History.com:

www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/fort-sumter/videos

Watch an animated map of the battle:

www.civilwar.org/learn/maps/fort-sumter-animated-map

Watch a reenactment of the Battle of Fort Sumter:

youtube.com/watch?v=BLHNKTptKzs

MOVIES

The Fall of Fort Sumter

The Civil War: Fort Sumter (PBS production)

Get the rest of the book at GreatBattlesForBoys.Com and Amazon!

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