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Phone 321 THE INTELLIGENCER

Reminiscences of the Secession Convention

(Written in 1901.)

At your request, I have prepared the following article on the constitutional convention of 1860, better known as the "secession convention." The paper comprises a part of the proceedings of the convention and incidents, and reminiscences of that eventful period.

The election of Mr. Lincoln as president of the United States, precipitated upon the country a political storm and sectional cry which had for nearly thirty years been gathering with great volume and force. The excitement in the south was very great, and in South Carolina it was intense.

In November, 1860, Gov. Gist convened the general assembly of South Carolina in an extraordinary session for the purpose of casting the vote of the state for president and vice-president of the United States, and further to see that the state should not in the emergency be suffering any detriment.

During the early days of the secession a remarkable public meeting was held in Charleston. Judge Magrath of the federal court, the district attorney and the collector of customs, resigned their offices, rather than continue to serve the federal government, especially under the incompetent administration of a purely sectional government. The meeting was one of the largest ever held in Charleston, and the great excitement was manifested. A strong committee was appointed, with Judge Magrath as chairman, to visit Columbia and urge the legislature to call a constitutional convention for the purpose of seceding from the union. The press of the state also very generally united in urging this course.

On the 13th day of November, 1860, the legislature enacted: "That a convention of the people of the state of South Carolina is hereby ordained to be assembled in the city of Columbia, on Monday, the 17th day of December, 1860, for the purpose of taking into consideration the dangers incident to the position of the state in the federal union established by the constitution of the United States and the measures which may be necessary and proper for providing against the same, and whereupon to take care that the commonwealth of South Carolina shall suffer no detriment.

By another provision of the same act, the election for delegates to the convention was to be held throughout the state on the 5th day of December. The general was unusually short. But on a matter of fact no canvass was necessary. There was a unanimous opposition to secession, and what there was, was by no means active or violent. Dr. Gov. Perry, J. P. Paterson, Esq., Judge O'Neill and a few other public men in the state, were

opposed to secession. In addition to the gentlemen named, there were quite a number of persons opposed to this movement, but they followed the conservative course mapped out by their leaders. The election passed off remarkably peaceful and quiet, and without undue excitement.

The convention assembled in Columbia the 17th day of December, in the Baptist church. The sessions of the convention were opened by prayer. There were four ballots for president, the last one resulting in the election of Gen. D. F. Jamison of Orangeburg. Quite a number of gentlemen were voted for by their friends. Col. Orr of Anderson, received a very handsome vote. Gen. Jamison made a short address, advocating immediate secession. B. F. Arthur, Esq., of Columbia, was elected secretary.

A resolution was adopted unanimously by the convention, declaring for secession for the very earliest moment.

The presence of smallpox in the city caused the convention as well as the legislature to adjourn to meet in Charleston on the following day.

The members of the convention as well as the members of the legislature left Columbia for Charleston at 4 o'clock a. m. on the 18th. From a newspaper report of the exodus of the two bodies, we have the following: "Four o'clock a. m. was the hour for leaving, and I can assure you that a scene ensued that baffles description. From 500 to 1000 persons were fleeing from the smallpox in a panic. Wise legislators, grave members of the convention, with a crowd of hangers-on, hastened to the depot of the South Carolina railroad. The first scramble was for the ticket office, and it was no small affair. Next was a contest for baggage and checks. This was a scene not often seen in the dignified capital of the state. Everybody was desirous of being first served, and, as a consequence, disappointment, sometimes vented in bitter curses, ensued. Soon the checks gave out, and with it the moving of the cars, the platform being piled up with baggage, and each owner thereof holding on thereto with the tenacity of poverty to a last change of linen. The prospect of being left with the smallpox was imminent, hence a rush was made, baggage in hand or on the shoulders as convenience suggested, to the cars."

The ordinance of secession was adopted by the convention unanimously, by a yeas and nays vote on Thursday, the 20th day of December, 1860. All the members of the convention, one hundred and seventy in number, were present, and voted in the affirmative. The convention met in Charleston, at 4 o'clock p. m. on the 18th and held

its sessions in St. Andrew's hall on Broad street. The house of representatives met in Hibernia hall and the senate found quarters in the court house.

At 7 o'clock p. m. the convention, Gov. Pickens and staff, both branches of the legislature and the people, assembled in Institute hall, on Meeting street to see the ordinance of secession signed and ratified. The crowd was the largest that ever entered the hall. The president of the convention called the "house to order." The ordinance had been enrolled on parchment and was signed by every member of the convention the election districts and parishes having been called in alphabetical order. When the signing was completed the president of the convention arose and said: "The ordinance of secession has been signed and ratified and I proclaim the State of South Carolina an independent sovereignty."

As the signatures were attached one by one, the applause was great, but when the president declared the act perfect, the wildest enthusiasm prevailed, thunders of applause, clapping of hands, shots, wailing of hats and other demonstrations of elation and joy took place. Out side of the hall, there was music and thousands of people were unable to gain admittance. Bonfires had been kindled in the streets, fireworks popped and blazed on all sides, and happiness reigned on the countenance of all. The 20th of December, 1860, was long to be remembered. It was regarded as the second independence of the state, and was hailed as the harbinger of peace, safety, prosperity and happiness. At a late hour the crowd retired, having realized apparently their only earthly hope.

The convention authorized the president to appoint Messrs. John A. Calhoun, W. P. Finley, J. D. Wilson, W. F. DeSaussure, Langdon, Cheves and M. E. Carr, "to prepare an address to the southern states."

A committee consisting of Messrs. John A. Inglis, R. B. Rhett, James Chestnut, Jr., James L. Orr, Maxcy Gregg, B. F. Dunkin and W. F. Hutson was appointed to draft all ordinances to be voted on by the convention.

Another number of important committees were announced from day to day.

In Charleston politics, or secession, was the shibboleth. The excitement preceding the election of delegates was unheard of. The signs were abundant. Across the streets, at prominent points on public and private buildings, there were flags, transparencies, palm-tree trees, the leaf, mottoes, etc., characteristic of the least on a restaurant was a life-size painting of Mr. R. B. Barnwell Rhett, which was illuminated each night. On the front of the theatre there was a painting representing Charleston at secession, thirty by twenty feet, handsomely executed.

Dispatches were received by the convention from distinguished citizens

of the southern states advising that prompt action was imperative, and that their states would ultimately follow our example.

On the 21st of December it was announced through a dispatch from Gov. Pettus that Mississippi had voted for secession, four to one. This was the second state to secede.

On the 24th of the same month, Gov. Perry of Florida was in Charleston. He was a native of Charleston and announced that his state was for secession. He was invited to a seat on the floor of the convention.

The 27th was a day of great excitement. Maj. Anderson evacuated Fort Moultrie an occupied Fort Sumter. Gov. Pickens called out the militia and occupied all the forts around the city. No blood was shed, but was regarded as almost certain.

The convention was in session on the Sabbath day.

Much discussion took place in the convention in secret and open session. December 31st was the last day of a most eventful year.

The convention authorized the governor to call into active service two regiments of soldiers to garrison the forts in the harbor.

The convention adopted a scheme for the formation of a southern confederacy.

On Saturday, the 7th day of January, 1861, the convention took recess, to be called together by the president.

The constitutional convention of Florida on the 7th day of the same month, adopted a resolution by a vote of 62 to 5, to secede from the union in a few days Alabama and Mississippi seceded.

On the 9th day of January, the "car of the West" endeavored to enter the harbor of Charleston to succor Fort Sumter, but was driven off by a few shots fired by Maj. Stevens.

The convention reassembled in Columbia, March 23rd. The constitution of the Confederate States was ratified by a vote of 146 to 16. And soon after the convention agreed to another recess, to be called together by the president, if necessary.

The battle of Fort Sumter occurred April 12th. Mr. John Maxwell, a delegate to the convention from Pickens was in Fort Moultrie during the fight giving his services to his state.

Chancellor F. H. Wardlaw, a member of the convention, died in Columbia on the 29th day of May.

The personnel of the convention was remarkable. Senators and representatives in congress, chancellors, judges and many other persons distinguished in all the avocations of life, were members of this body.

Two brothers, Judge D. L. Wardlaw of Abbeville and Chancellor F. H. Wardlaw of Edgefield were members of the convention.

The delegates of the secession convention numbered one hundred and seventy.

Chancellor B. E. Dunkin, whose home was in Charleston and who was also a native of Massachusetts, repre-

sented Georgetown in the convention. Two of the oldest members apparently of the convention were Messrs. McKee of Chester and Greaf of Sumter. Their heads were white with the frosts of many winters.

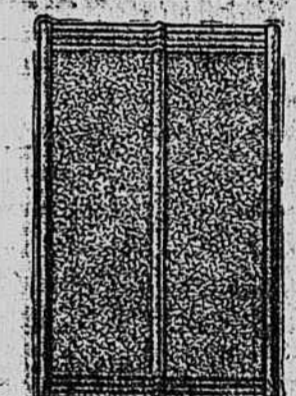
Chancellor Inglis presented the ordinance of secession to the convention and has always been credited with being the author of that important document.

The convention was in session Christmas day.

Hon. Edmund Griffin of Virginia, an aged gentleman, attracted much attention in Charleston when the ordinance of secession was passed and ratified by his shoulder constantly carrying on his shoulder a large piece of palmetto. His presence never failed to evoke cheers and applause.

The convention was in session December 30th--the blessed Sabbath! Col. R. C. Logan of Williamsburg was the youngest man in the convention. Robert A. Thompson, Wallhalla, S. C., May 9, 1901.

BURRIS' SHINGLES



Has recently saved two houses from fire. One on Franklin Street, where Mr. Geisberg lives. One on McCully Street owned by N. C. Burriss. This is well worth considering when you build a new house or need a new roof. Insurance is less where you use Burriss Shingles. We make a Barn Roof that never leaks. No nails exposed to the sun. See us before roofing your houses or phone us, and we will come to see you.

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As the most probable site for the new governor's mansion, when the legislature decides to call the present ramshackle structure surrounded by business houses.

Atlanta, July 21--The Phantom Circuit is the latest idea in telephone circles, and is being applied by the Southern Bell Telephone company, which has headquarters in Atlanta. Mr. George J. Yandl, the chief engineer of the system, in a recent article explained how three telephone conversations could be carried simultaneously over the four wires of two telephone lines without an error or confusion. The system is too complicated to be explained to a layman, but it works without any complications whatever. The adoption of new ideas similar to this has been responsible for a noticeable improvement in the service both local and long distance within the past few years.

Atlanta, July 21--Several hundred of the friends of J. Randolph Anderson, candidate for governor, met at the Kimball House late yesterday afternoon and organized a Fulton county Anderson club. The supporters of Mr. Anderson say that certainly he should prove a steady exponent of the true Jeffersonian Democracy, as he is a lineal descendant of the great Thomas Jefferson himself.

The Andersons, Andersons, the George Washington Bell telephone, and the name has not therefore been put in the direct line, but Mr. Anderson descends from one of Jefferson's daughters.

HERE IS SOMETHING NEW.

Telephone Wires Carrying Several Conversations at a Time.

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