

Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

Documents Online

Title: Letter from Edwin Stanton to James Buchanan (Copy)

Date: July 16, 1861

Location: I-SpahrB-1959-9

Contact:

Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

Washington, July 16th 1861.

Dear Sir:

Your favor with the continuation of the historical sketch was duly received. Last evening Judge Black and General Dix met at my house and consulted together in regard to it. We concur in ~~the~~ opinion that a publication at present would accomplish no good. The public mind is too much excited on other topics to give attention to the past, and it would only afford occasion for fresh malignant attacks upon you from Bennett. His day, I think, is rapidly passing, and at all events a stronger impression will hereafter be produced when the public feeling is more tranquil. The narration appears to me to be a clear and accurate statement of

the events of the period to which it relates, with one exception of no material consequence in respect to which the recollection of Judge Black, Gen Dix and myself is somewhat different from the statement. Speaking of the order to the Brooklyn not to disembark the forces sent to Pickens unless that Fort were attacked, you mention it as having been made with the entire unanimity of your Cabinet and the approval of General Scott. That he approved is fully shown by Mr Holt's note to you; but our recollection is that in the Cabinet it was opposed by Judge Black, Gen Dix, and myself. I do not know that there is now any reason to question the wisdom of the measure; it may have saved Pickens from immediate attack at that time, and I have understood that Gen Scott says that Pickens could not have been successfully defended if it had then been attacked, and that he speaks of this as a blunder of the Confederates. In this view the wisdom of the measure is fully vindicated; and at the time it was supported by the Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy to whose departments the subject appertained.

So far however as your administration is concerned, its policy, in reference to both Sumter and Pickens are fully vindicated by the course of the present administration for forty days after the inauguration of Lincoln. No use was made of the means that had been prepared for reinforcing Sumter.

A republican senator informed me a short time ago that Gen. Scott personally urged him to consent to the evacuation of both Sumter and Pickens; and it is a fact of general notoriety, published in all the papers of the time and never contradicted, that not only the General, but other military men who were consulted were in favor of that measure. Whatever may be said of Bennetts malignity now, I think the public will be disposed to do full justice to your efforts to avert the calamity of civil War; and every month for a long time to come will, I am afraid, furnish fresh evidence of the magnitude of that calamity.

The impression that Mr Weaver had received an army appointment, proved to be a mistake; it was another Weaver who was appointed. Gen Dix is still here. He has been shamefully treated by the administration.

We are expecting a general battle to be commenced at Fairfax today and conflicting opinions of the result are entertained. With sincere regards

I remain as ever, truly yours
Edwin M. Stanton.

His Ex^{ty} James Buchanan.