

LEE’S SURRENDER ENDED AMERICA’S DEADLIEST WAR

Civil War generals made final negotiation at Appomattox Court House

By Donald Promnitz
CNHI News

The fighting that tore the nation apart started at Manassas when a cannonball flew through Wilmer McLean’s house, three months after the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter. It ended nearly four years later on April 9, 1865, at his second home in Appomattox Court House in Virginia. This time, the war came in the form of a knock at the door from a Confederate messenger, looking for a place where Gen. Robert E. Lee could negotiate the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia to the Union Army under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. McLean obliged. The two congregated in the parlor. When they walked out, the war was over. “The war began in my front yard and ended in my front parlor,” McLean said.



Wilmer McLean

The American Civil War was waged initially to preserve the Union following the secession of slave-holding states in the South. However, the conflict took on a new meaning with the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and the sacrifices of the Union Army were set in stone with the passing of the 13th Amendment on Jan. 31, 1865. The war divided not only the nation, but friendships and families along conflicting lines, while leaving the South devastated. Weary after four years of war, President Abraham Lincoln was ready to embark on the long road of reconstruction in his second term. His views favored a lenient, but gradual integration of the South back into the United States that would have ensured civil rights to the newly freed slaves. This was reflected in his second inaugural address, which he made the month before. “With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in,” Lincoln said. “To bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

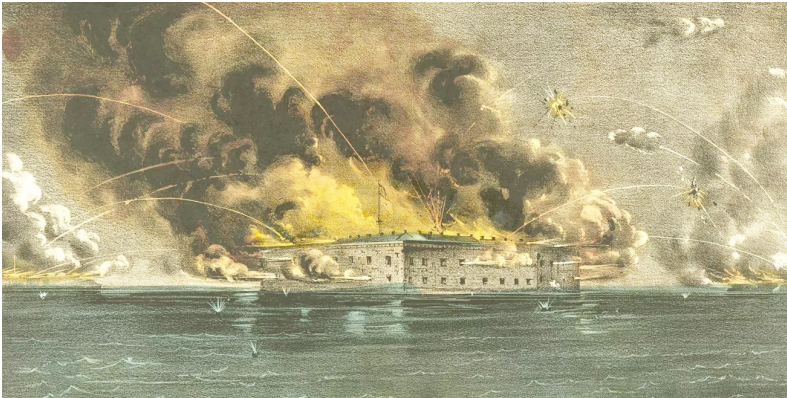
But Lincoln wouldn’t live to see a mended nation. Five days after Lee’s surrender, Lincoln went to celebrate the war’s end with a trip to Ford’s Theatre to take in a performance of “Our American Cousin.” Waiting for him was actor and Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth, who snuck into Lincoln’s balcony, and fired the gunshot that would end the president’s life. The nation itself would embark on a difficult road to reconciliation without the president who led the nation through the war also guiding them through the peace. Instead, his successor, President Andrew Johnson, took a more relaxed approach. This opened the way for Jim Crow Laws, the Ku Klux Klan and racial tensions that have lasted to this day. While scars remain 160 years later, progress has been made, and the southern states were woven back into the American fabric.



“The Surrender,” by Keith Rocco, a painting commissioned by the National Park Service, shows the known officers who were present for at least a portion of the meeting in the McLean Parlor, April 9, 1865.

National Park Service

CIVIL WAR STATS & FACTS



Library of Congress

On April 12, 1861, Confederates in South Carolina fired on Fort Sumter, starting the American Civil War.

States

Union	Confederacy
Maine, New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, California, Nevada, and Oregon	Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia. Border Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri

Casualties

Union	Confederacy
642,427	Total 483,026
110,100	in battle 94,000
224,580	diseases 164,000
275,174	wounded 194,026
30,192	prisoners 31,000

Deadliest battles

- **Gettysburg:** 51,116 casualties
- **Seven Days:** 36,463 casualties
- **Chickamauga:** 34,624 casualties
- **Chancellorsville:** 29,609 casualties
- **Antietam:** 22,726 casualties

SOURCE: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WHO WAS AT APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE

Gens. Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee are synonymous with the end of the Civil War at Appomattox Court House, but there were many other notable people present during the surrender. Here are a few:

■ **Ely Parker** (born Hasanoanda and later known as Donehogawa) was the highest ranking person of Native American descent in the Union Army in 1863.



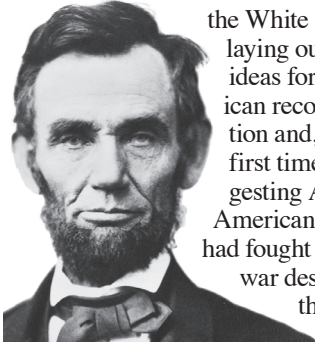
■ **George Peers**, resident of Appomattox Court House and Appomattox County Clerk for nearly 40 years.

■ **Alexander Stephens** served in Georgia’s state legislature and U.S. Congress before his selection as vice president of the Confederacy in 1861. Federal soldiers captured Stephens after the surrender and brought him to Fort Warren in Boston as a prisoner. Following his release, Stephens continued in politics and eventually became the 50th governor of Georgia in 1882.



PRESIDENT LINCOLN DELIVERS HIS LAST SPEECH

Two days after General Lee’s surrender, President Abraham Lincoln delivered his final public address. The president spoke from a window above the north door of the White House, laying out some ideas for American reconstruction and, for the first time, suggesting African Americans who had fought in the war deserved the right to vote.



“It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man,” Lincoln said. “I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.” Here are three important quotes from Lincoln’s speech, according to obamawhitehouse.archives.gov: “We meet this evening, not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army, give hope of a righteous and speedy peace whose joyous expression can not be restrained.” “By these recent successes the

re-inauguration of the national authority — reconstruction — which has had a large share of thought from the first, is pressed much more closely upon our attention. It is fraught with great difficulty. Unlike a case of a war between independent nations, there is no authorized organ for us to treat with. No one man has authority to give up the rebellion for any other man.” “In the present ‘situation’ as the phrase goes, it may be my duty to make some new announcement to the people of the South. I am considering, and shall not fail to act, when satisfied that action will be proper.”

ENDING THE BLOODSHED: THE LAST SURRENDERS OF THE CIVIL WAR

To many Americans the word Appomattox is synonymous with the end of the Civil War. But according to the National Archives, fighting continued as word of the surrender made its way across the south. The ‘Gray Ghost’ Since not everyone was yet in a surrendering mood, Chief of Staff Gen. Henry W. Halleck further advised that those who did not surrender would be treated as prisoners. He ended his telegram with one exception, “the guerrilla chief (Confederate Officer John) Mosby will not be paroled.” Mosby’s response, delivered to Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock on April 16, said he was not ready to surrender his command but would meet to discuss

an armistice. Hancock agreed to meet at noon on April 18. The “Gray Ghost” chose to disband his unit rather than surrender en masse to allow his soldiers to decide their own fates. Sherman pursues Johnston Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman’s forces clashed with Gen. Joseph E. Johnston’s army — the next largest in the South after Lee’s — at Averasboro, North Carolina, on March 16 and again at Bentonville in a multiday battle that ended on March 21. As the adversaries continued moving north, Johnston learned of the evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond and of Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. Word reached

Sherman of Lee’s surrender on April 11. On the same day, Johnston sent a letter proposing a suspension of operations to allow civil authorities to make arrangements for ending the war. More surrenders In addition to his Army of Tennessee, Johnston also surrendered various forces under his command in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Jefferson Davis’ capture The fleeing Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, was finally captured by Union cavalry on May 10, near Irwinville, Georgia. His capture was followed by the

surrenders of smaller Confederate forces in Florida, Georgia and northern Arkansas. Fighting Continues Confederate Lt. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith commanded the Trans-Mississippi Department. The department included Arkansas, most of Louisiana, Texas and Indian Territory. Two days after President Andrew Johnson declared the war “virtually at an end,” Union Col. Theodore Barrett attacked a smaller Confederate force, half his size, commanded by Col. John S. Ford at Palmito Ranch in Texas, May 12, 1865. Barrett was soundly defeated in what became the last engagement of the American Civil War.

TIMELINE

- **March 4, 1865** — President Abraham Lincoln is inaugurated for his second term as president in Washington, D.C.
- **March 25, 1865** — Attack on Fort Stedman, Petersburg, Virginia. Touted as “Lee’s last offensive,” Confederate troops under General John B. Gordon briefly capture the federal fort in the Petersburg siege lines in an attempt to thwart Union plans for a late March assault. By day’s end, the Confederates will be thrown out and the lines remain unchanged.
- **April 1, 1865** — The Battle of Five Forks, Virginia. The Confederate defeat at Five Forks initiates Gen. Robert E. Lee’s decision to abandon the Petersburg-Richmond siege lines.
- **April 2, 1865** — The Fall of Petersburg and Richmond. Lee abandons both cities and moves his army west in hopes of joining Confederate forces under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston in North Carolina.
- **April 3, 1865** — Union troops occupy Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia.
- **April 6, 1865** — The Battle of Sailor’s Creek, Virginia. A portion of Lee’s Army, almost one-third of it, is cornered along the banks of Sailor’s (or “Saylor’s”) Creek and annihilated.
- **April 9, 1865** — Battle of Appomattox Court House and Surrender, Appomattox Court House, Virginia. After an early morning attempt to break through federal forces blocking the route west to Danville, Virginia, Lee seeks an audience with Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to discuss terms. That afternoon in the parlor of Wilmer McLean’s home, Lee signs the document of surrender. On April 12, the Army of Northern Virginia formally surrenders and is disbanded.
- **April 14, 1865** — Lincoln is shot by actor John Wilkes Booth at Ford’s Theatre in Washington, D.C. On the same day, Fort Sumter, South Carolina, is re-occupied by Union troops. Lincoln dies a day later.
- **April 15, 1865** — Vice President Andrew Johnson is sworn in as 17th president of the United States.
- **April 26, 1865** — Johnston signs the surrender document for the Confederate Army of Tennessee and miscellaneous Confederate troops attached to his command at Bennett’s Place near Durham, North Carolina.
- **May 4, 1865** — Gen. Richard Taylor surrenders Confederate forces in the Department of Alabama, Mississippi and East Louisiana.
- **May 10, 1865** — Confederate President Jefferson Davis is captured near Irwinville, Georgia.
- **May 12, 1865** — The final battle of the Civil War takes place at Palmito Ranch, Texas. It is a Confederate victory.
- **May 26, 1865** — General Simon Bolivar Buckner agrees to terms of surrender of the Army of the Trans-Mississippi, which are agreed to on June 2, 1865. With this surrender of the last large Confederate army, the Civil War officially ends. (Confederate Brig. Gen. Stand Waite did not surrender until June 23, and one Confederate ship, the CSS Shenandoah, docked in Liverpool, England, surrendered to the Royal Navy on Nov. 6, 1865.)

— NATIONAL PARK SERVICE