April 1865 – The Month that Saved America

Part II – Lee Surrenders and Lincoln Assassinated – April 8-14, 1865

“It was now a race for life or death”

- “I know that the men and animals are exhausted, but it is necessary to tax their strength.” --- Lee
- “Lee’s surely in a bad fix.” --- Grant
- “If the thing is pressed, I think Lee will surrender.” --- Grant
- “Let the thing be pressed.” --- Lincoln
Lee’s Last Stand

[22] **Battle of Appomattox Station** - April 8 - In the evening, Union cavalry captured four trains of supplies at the station intended for Lee’s army. Also captured nearby, after a brief engagement, were portions of the Confederate wagon train and twenty-five cannons.

**Lee’s Rearguard** - April 8 - General James Longstreet built breastworks here to protect the rear of Lee’s army, most of which was four miles south at Appomattox Court House.

[19] **Clifton** - April 8 - Grant and Meade stayed here and was where they received Lee’s second letter suggesting a peace meeting.

[20] **New Store** - April 8 - Gordon assumed the lead and Longstreet the rearguard

[17] **Cumberland Church** - April 7 - Union troops which had crossed the Appomattox at High Bridge attacked Lee’s forces.
Cumberland Church - April 7, 1865

- **Principal Commanders:** Maj. Gen. A. A. Humphreys and Gen. Robert E. Lee
- **Forces Engaged:** Corps
- **Estimated Casualties:** 910 total (US 655; CS 255)
- **Description:**
  - Near 2 pm on April 7th, the advance of the Union II Corps encountered Confederate forces entrenched on high ground near Cumberland Church.
  - Union forces attacked twice but were repulsed, and darkness halted the conflict.
- **Result:** Confederate victory
Overtures

- **April 7** – “The results of the last week must convince you of the hopelessness of further resistance” -- *Grant* to *Lee*
- **April 7** – “before considering your proposition, ask the terms you will offer” --- *Lee* to *Grant*
- **April 8** – “peace” was his “great desire” --- *Grant* to *Lee*
- **April 8** – “I do not think the emergency has arisen to call for the surrender of the army” --- *Lee* to *Grant*
Appomattox Station - April 8, 1865

- **Principal Commanders:** Maj. Gen. George A. Custer and Brig. Gen. Lindsay Walker
- **Forces Engaged:** Divisions
- **Estimated Casualties:** Unknown
- **Description:**
  - *Custer’s* division captured a supply train and twenty-five guns, driving off and scattering the Confederate defenders.
  - *Custer* captured and burned three trains loaded with provisions for Lee’s army.
- **Result:** Union victory
Early on April 9, the remnants of John Broun Gordon’s corps and Fitzhugh Lee’s cavalry formed line of battle at Appomattox Court House.

Lee determined to make one last attempt to escape the closing Union pincers and reach his supplies at Lynchburg.

At dawn the Confederates advanced, initially gaining ground against Sheridan’s cavalry.

The arrival of Union infantry, however, stopped the advance in its tracks.

Lee’s army was now surrounded on three sides.

“Lee couldn’t go forward, he couldn’t go backward, and he couldn’t go sideways.”

“Suddenly, below them, concealed in the woodlands, lay the inexorable logic of the mathematics of war: a solid wall of blue, some two miles wide, was advancing”

--- Jay Winik
The Specter of Guerrilla War

- Porter Alexander suggests Lee begin guerrilla warfare.
- “It [is] better to do right, even if we suffer in so doing, than to incur the reproach of our consciences & posterity.” --- Lee
- “We would bring on a state of affairs it would take the country years to recover from.” --- Lee
- “... as Christian men [we] have no right to consider only how this would affect us.” We must “consider its effect on the country as a whole.” --- Lee
- “... as for myself, you young fellows might go bushwacking, but the only dignified course for me would be to go to General Grant and surrender myself and take the consequences of my acts.” ---- Lee
- “I ask a suspension of hostilities pending the adjustment of the terms of the surrender of this army” --- Lee to Grant
“Most civil wars, in fact, end quite badly, and history is rife with lessons that how wars end is every bit as crucial as why they start and how they are waged.” --- J. Winik
Lee’s Surrender [2]

The McLean House
Appomattox Court House
National Historical Park

The McLean House
Appomattox Court House
National Historical Park
Officer’s Present

- Lee
- Marshall
- Sheridan
- Ord
- Grant
- Custer

Desks Used in Surrender

Lee’s Desk
The McLean House
Appomattox Court House
National Historical Park

Grant’s Desk
The McLean House
Appomattox Court House
National Historical Park
The Surrender

Confederate Troops Paroled

“The war is over… the rebels are our countrymen again; and the best sign of rejoicing after the victory will be to abstain from all demonstrations in the field.” --- Grant

Lee Leaves The McLean House
“Each group began in the same way, with cheers, and ended in the same way with sobs, all the way to the quarters.” – Confederate soldier

“I love you just as well as ever, general.” – Confederate soldier

“Blow, Gabriel, blow! My God! Let him blow! I am ready to die!” – Confederate soldier

“No Yankee will ever shoot us ...” – Confederate soldier

“There is rancor in our hearts which you little dream of. We hate you sir!” – former Confederate general

“Boys, I have done the best I could for you. My heart is too full to say more.” – R. E. Lee
Farewell to the Army of Northern Virginia

“After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources.

I need not tell the survivors of so many hard-fought battles who have remained steadfast to the last that I have consented to this result from no distrust of them; but feeling that valor and devotion could accomplish nothing that could compensate for the loss that would have attended the continuance of the contest, I determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose past services have endeared them to their countrymen. By the terms of the agreement, officers and men can return to their homes and remain until exchanged.

You may take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed, and I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you his blessing and protection. With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell.”

--- Robert E. Lee
“Bells tolled, guns fired, cannons roared, bonfires raged, steam engines whistled, fireworks exploded, speeches were delivered.” --- J. Winik

- A five-hundred-gun salute at daylight the next morning, April 10, shook Washington and rattled windows.
- “Give three good hearty cheers for General Grant and all under his command” --- A. Lincoln
- On the evening of April 11, Washington was again ablaze with lights, “in its brightest garb of joy ... all pervaded with a generous exaltation.”
- Lincoln’s focus was “recalling, as soon as possible, the Southern states back into the Union.”

1865 Thomas Nast illustration celebrates the end of the Civil War and the Union victory.
“I have always thought ‘Dixie’ one of the best tunes I have ever heard.

Our adversaries over the way attempted to appropriate it, but I insisted yesterday that we had fairly captured it.

I presented the question to the Attorney General, and he gave it as his legal opinion that it our lawful prize.” --- A. Lincoln
“We meet this evening, not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart.”

“... the surrender of the principal insurgent army, give hope of a righteous and speedy peace whose joyous expression can not be restrained.”

“A call for a national thanksgiving is being prepared, and will be duly promulgated.”

“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.

“We simply must begin with, and mould from, disorganized and discordant elements.”

“... the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States is to again get them into that proper practical relation.”

“Some twelve thousand voters in ... Louisiana have sworn allegiance to the Union, assumed to be the rightful political power of the State, held elections, organized a State government, adopted a free-state constitution, giving the benefit of public schools equally to black and white, and empowering the Legislature to confer the elective franchise upon the colored man.”
Colonel Ulric Dahlgren was killed outside of Richmond, near the King & Queen County Court House, on March 2 during a bungled raid on the Confederate capital, ostensibly to free Union prisoners.

Papers were discovered on Dahlgren’s body that supposedly contained orders on Union army stationery for a plot to assassinate Davis.

"The men must keep together and well in hand, and once in the city it must be destroyed and Jeff. Davis and Cabinet killed.”

The papers eventually found their way to President Davis Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin.
Suddenly, the great war was *personal* – *mano e mano*, Lincoln or Davis.

The documents were released to the Richmond newspapers and published on March 5, 1864.

The orders were widely circulated in the Confederacy and in Europe as evidence of Union barbarism.

Several Union leaders were accused of participation in the plot up to and including President Lincoln.

In the North, the papers were denounced as a forgery designed to weaken the Union's war effort.

Regardless of their credibility, the Confederate leaders believed that they were under attack.
April 12 and 13

- A formal surrender ceremony takes place at Appomattox Court House.
  - **General Joshua Chamberlain** accepts the arms and flags of the Confederate army led by **General John Gordon**.
  - Chamberlain gives the command, “Carry arms!” and Gordon orders the same – according “honor answering honor”

- **Sherman’s** troops battle Southern resistance in the outskirts of Raleigh, NC
- Federal troops occupy Mobile, AL
- Lincoln ends the draft and reduces requisitions for war supplies.
- **Sherman’s** army occupies Raleigh and advances on the current Confederate capital at Greensborough.
At 8:30 on Good Friday April 14

The Lincoln’s leave for “a light diversion at the end of a heavy four years.” --- John C. Waugh
Lincoln’s Box at Ford’s Theater