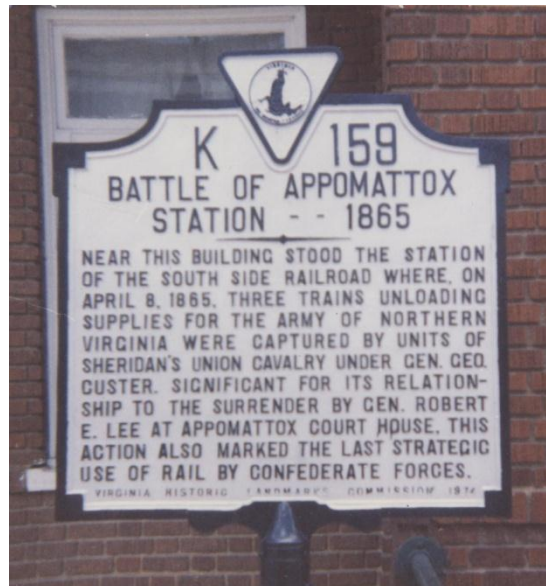


**APPOMATTOX COUNTY, VIRGINIA DURING
THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES**



by Harriett A. Chilton

1985

APPOMATTOX COUNTY, VIRGINIA DURING

THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

Appomattox County, Virginia was a peaceful and prosperous place to live in 1860. It was a small county of 314 square miles, with 8891 inhabitants, about half white and half black. Agriculture was the main livelihood of the people and tobacco, wheat, corn and oats were the chief crops raised. A number of industrial sites included a saddlery, cabinet shop, blacksmith, pipe factory, corn mill, grist mill, tannery and two steam saw mills. There were twenty-four churches in the county, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian, also two academies and nineteen private schools.

Most of the residents were farmers, overseers or laborers. Other occupations were tanner, carpenter, harness maker, saddler, ditcher, brick mason, lumberman, blacksmith and the like. A few men were employed on the South Side Railroad and some on the packet boats which plied the James River on the northern boundary of the county.

But this peaceful existence was soon to be shattered by the winds of war. Due to the unsettled condition of the country following the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency in 1860, a large portion of the citizens of Appomattox County met at the courthouse on January 10, 1861, resolved to arm the militia and volunteer companies of the county as soon as possible, so as to defend "the persons and property of the citizens of the county and the institutions of Virginia from any and all attack or aggressions that may be made upon them." The County Court was called upon to raise the means necessary for that purpose.

A special session of the County Court met on January 12, 1861 to petition the Virginia Legislature to authorize them to raise money to arm the militia and volunteer companies. Present at this meeting were Justices Zaccheus E. Cheatham, William M. Hannah, John M. Harris, Christopher Moore, William H. Carter, James G. Patterson, Jesse T. Davidson, Edward O. Robertson, Charles J. Fore, James N. Gilliam, Spencer Gilliam, William T. Pankey, John H. Marshall, William A. Trent and Ethelbert LeGrand.)

The Court unanimously appointed Lewis D. Isbell and Thomas H. Flood a committee to petition the Legislature to authorize the County Court to issue bonds for the sum of six thousand dollars, in the sum of one hundred dollars each, redeemable at the pleasure of the Court within ten years after date, the interest on the bonds to be paid semi-annually at the Bank of Virginia in Lynchburg, Va. The committee urged speedy action, "not knowing at what time in the present disturbed condition of the country, attacks and aggression may be made upon the citizens of the county who are wholly unprepared for defense." (A copy of this petition is attached.)

On January 19, 1861 the Virginia General Assembly passed an act empowering the county courts in the state to arm the militia as they deemed expedient, to negotiate loans as necessary, and to levy taxes for the purpose of paying the interest and redeeming the bonds.

Knowing that a decision on the subject of secession was imminent, the Virginia General Assembly authorized a convention, to be made up of delegates from each county, to meet in Richmond on February 13, 1861 to decide the course that the Commonwealth would pursue. Fort Sumter was fired upon on April 12 and three days later President Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops. This call had an adverse effect upon the people of Virginia (Governor Letcher's reply was, "You have chosen to inaugurate civil war."). On April 17 the Richmond Convention passed the Ordinance of Secession by a vote of 85 to 55, subject to approval of the people at a special referendum. The Secession Convention authorized the Governor to call into the service of the state as many volunteers as might be necessary to "repel invasion and protect the citizens of the state in the present emergency." On April 23 the Convention provided for the appointment of a "commander of the military and naval forces of Virginia" and Governor John Letcher appointed Robert E. Lee to that post.

Appomattox County responded to the Governor's call for defense troops by organizing the volunteers into companies of infantry and cavalry. This was a time of much patriotic fervor and there was constant drilling in the fields around the courthouse. The Appomattox Invincibles were organized on April 26, 1861, commanded by Captain James E. Robertson, later by Captain Samuel H. Overton. They became Company A of the 44th Virginia Infantry. A tribute of Respect upon the death of two members of their group, Harvey C. Walker and John E. Hill, was inserted in the Lynchburg Daily Republican on February 4, 1862 (a copy is attached to this document). They were reorganized on March 27, 1862 as Company A of the 20th Battalion, Virginia Heavy Artillery and were stationed at Battery Number 9, Richmond Defense.

The Appomattox Greys were organized on May 7, 1861, commanded by Captain Thomas F. Mathews, later by Captain William T. Johnson. They became Company H of the 18th Virginia Infantry and were inducted into the Confederate Army on July 1, 1861. In July they were engaged in the First Battle of Manassas. They fought in many battles in Virginia, in the Battle of Sharpsburg at Antietam, Maryland, and in the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on July 3, 1863 where many of them were taken prisoner and imprisoned at Fort Delaware and Point Lookout, Maryland, including my Great-uncle Private Joel T. Cawthorn. They were on guard duty at Petersburg, fought in the Battle of Saylor's Creek and were paroled at Appomattox Court House.

On May 24, 1861 the Appomattox Rangers, a cavalry company, were organized by Captain Joel W. Flood (grandfather of the late Senator Harry Flood Byrd, Senior). Later they were commanded by Captain Charles E. Webb, who died in the hospital in Richmond on June 30, 1864, and at the end of the war by Captain Joseph Watt Carson. They became Company H of the Second Virginia Cavalry and fought in the First and Second Battles of Manassas. At the latter my Grandfather, Private Robert Alexander Cheatham was seriously wounded and spent the rest of the war in various hospitals. The Second Virginia Cavalry participated in more than one hundred and seventy-five engagements of various types through the four years they were in the Confederate Army. This cavalry group, along with most of the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia succeeded in cutting its way through the Federal lines at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865 and disbanded a day later in Lynchburg, Virginia, at the same spot where they had been mustered in four years before, then called the Fairgrounds, now called Miller Park, when it

became clear that it would be impossible to reach General Joseph E. Johnston's forces in North Carolina.

The Appomattox Liberty Guards were organized on June 10, 1861, with William H. Abbitt as Captain and later George W. Abbitt. They became Company B of the 46th Infantry Regiment, also known as 1st Regiment of Infantry, Wise's Legion. (The Lynchburg Daily Republican of February 6, 1862 reported that R. W. S. Hannah, First Lieutenant of the Appomattox Liberty Guards died on December 17, 1861 at White Sulphur Springs Hospital.) Captain Robert E. Kyle and Captain Crawford H. Jones organized artillery companies, but they were disbanded and the men joined other companies. Also, some men living at the edge of the county joined companies in other jurisdictions.

In May 1862 the General Assembly authorized organizing Home Guards in each county to operate as county guards and police during the war. They consisted only of those not subject to military duty. My Grandfather, Chapman Hunter Chilton, was Captain of the Appomattox Home Guard unit. He was not subject to military duty as he walked with a cane due to a boyhood leg injury.

The Appomattox Reserves, Company I of the Third Virginia Reserves, were organized on April 20, 1864 with John W. Johns as their first Captain and Joseph H. Godsey as the second. They constituted a reserve force for state defense and detail duty. They were stationed as defense troops at the High Bridge which carried the South Side Railroad over the Appomattox River at Farmville, Virginia. They took part in the Battle at the High Bridge on April 6, 1865 upon General Lee's retreat from Richmond. I have always been told that the Appomattox Home Guards were called out to help defend the bridge at that time, so possibly they served with the Reserves.

After most of the able-bodied men of Appomattox County had left for service with the Confederate Army, only women and servants were left to till the fields to produce food for their families and to fill the increasing requests for food for the soldiers at the front. Much credit is due to the black citizens who performed with great faithfulness in this time of need. Scarcity of almost everything was felt immediately, once the war began. In August 1861 the Governor appealed to all the citizens of the Commonwealth to furnish articles of clothing for the soldiers, and by the next year farmers were urged to bring in old castings, plow points, etc. needed due to the shortage of iron for cannon balls. The Appomattox County government went on as usual, but most court procedures were replaced by efforts to care for the families of those in the army.

Clothing became hard to get and scraps left over from making soldiers' uniforms were pieced together to make children's clothing, caps and slippers, and the smallest pieces were woven into carpets. Spinning and weaving were revived though they had been largely supplanted by textile factories for some years. Old spinning wheels and looms were located and older people who knew how to use them were encouraged to teach younger people the necessary skills. Sheep were valuable for their wool so were not used for food. Knitting became almost a universal occupation among the women.

Increasing shortages of coffee, tea and sugar were felt and substitutes were found. Sorghum was useful in place of sugar so the planting of sorghum increased. Ground sassafras roots were used in lieu of coffee and also were used for medicinal purposes. Parched corn, wheat and sweet potatoes were also substituted for coffee, and tea was made from raspberry leaves. By 1864 the Lynchburg papers were reporting that only turnip salad was available in the market - no beef, no chicken and no potatoes. The lack of salt was a continuing problem.

In his Recollections of Appomattox County, Mr. George T. Peers, for many years County Clerk, told of the supply of salt being cut off by the blockade of the Southern ports. He wrote, "To provide a supply of salt, not only for the families of soldiers but for the whole people of the county....a contract was made with the salt works of Southwest Virginia to ship it here in carload lots at the expense of the county, to be distributed to the people by a committee appointed by the court....the supply being scant, this was done by distributing to each family so many pounds for each member, proportioned according to the weight shipment. A 'salt day' was a great and exciting day at the railroad station. A representative from almost every family in the county would come with a little white bag and the family's proportion was weighed out, listed and delivered. Salt was very precious and had to be kept with great care, and it was not unknown for one neighbor to have to borrow a cup from another neighbor before the next 'salt day'."

When the Federal troops began to appear in Appomattox County, the citizens buried their valuables to keep them from being stolen. One family took up the bricks from the hearth and placed their silver beneath them. I have a silver spoon which was buried under the asparagus bud in the garden at my Grandmother's home, along with the other family silver, to keep the Yankees from stealing it. The Federal soldiers went from house to house, stealing food, horses, and any valuables they could carry away. My Grandfather's faithful servant, old Uncle Isaac, would take the horses to the far side of the property and hide them in the woods when word came of invading looters approaching. One time my Grandfather had just gotten in his corn crop and spread it on the upper floor of the corn house. He covered it with corn cobs so that the corn could not be seen. Two Yankees came through looking for food, one climbed the ladder to the upper story and called down to his companion, "There's nothing up here but corn cobs." They stole a few chickens and departed.

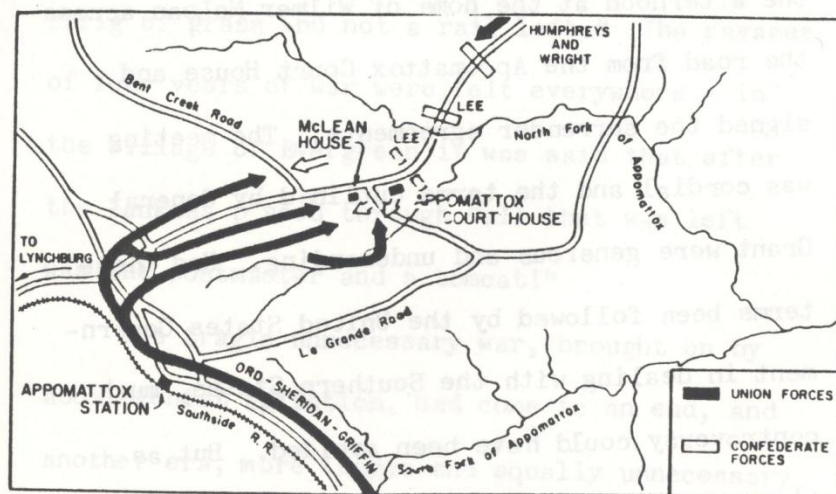
These were times of sacrifice and suffering but sadder times were coming. Thursday, April 6, 1865 was court day at Appomattox Court House, and a large crowd had gathered. Refugees from Richmond were moving west (Richmond had fallen on April 3), and Gov. William Smith, fleeing the stricken capital, stopped to address the crowd from the hotel porch near the courthouse. A sense of impending doom swept over the listeners. The long procession of refugees kept up through Friday, April 7 and again on Saturday, April 8.

That day, Saturday, April 8, saw the Battle of Appomattox Station which resulted in the capture by the Federal troops of four Confederate supply trains and the destruction of one of them by fire. General Robert E. Lee had ordered the supply trains sent to Appomattox Station from Lynchburg to feed his starving troops. Major General Philip H. Sheridan with his Federal Cavalry had received word early that morning at Prospect Station that railroad trains of supplies had arrived at Appomattox Station from Lynchburg, so immediately he ordered cavalry troops

under Major General George Custer and Major General Wesley Merritt to advance and capture them. They arrived about sundown, were surprised to find General Lindsay Walker and the Confederate artillery parked a short distance from the depot, and a sharp exchange of gunfire ensued.

The Confederate artillery, under the command of Brigadier General R. Lindsay Walker, Chief of Artillery, 3rd Corps, had moved ahead of the Confederate army and parked for the night about three miles beyond the courthouse town, toward Appomattox Station on the South Side Railroad. With General Walker were the Donaldsonville and Washington Batteries and the Richmond Howitzers. Around sundown Brigadier General Martin W. Gary's Seventh South Carolina Cavalry Brigade reached Appomattox and formed the rear-guard of the Confederate Artillery under General Walker. When they arrived at the scene of the action, some were dismounted and put in with the artillery and others were deployed as skirmishers. One member of Gary's Brigade, Major Edward M. Boykin, wrote, "Our men fell in between the guns, and then began one of the closest artillery fights, for the numbers engaged and the time it lasted, that occurred during the war."

The Confederate artillery opened fire on the attacking Federal cavalry, causing fearful havoc among Custer's troops, with relatively small casualties on the Confederate side. A Federal officer, Major S. B. Howe died in Liberty Baptist Church where the wounded were taken, and was buried temporarily in the church graveyard. Legend tells us that his coffin was made from the shutters of the church. The battle went on until 9 p.m. General Walker withdrew towards Appomattox Court House, the Federals captured many pieces of abandoned artillery and wagons, and took a large number of prisoners. The fire from the burning train and the clash of cannon could be seen and heard at Appomattox Court House where General Lee and his army were camped. Thus ended the last battle of the Army of Northern Virginia except an engagement the next morning when Lee's army attempted to break through the cordon of enemies which blocked the road to Lynchburg.



Appomattox Court House, 9 April 1865

With General Lee's army reduced to a few thousand soldiers without adequate food, the last hope of continuing the unequal contest was lost with the capture of the supply trains. The next day, April 9, General Lee tried to cut through the Federal troops surrounding his small army, in order to get to Lynchburg and his supply base, but his soldiers were outnumbered about five to one and completely surrounded by the Union Army. Surrender was inevitable. General Robert E. Lee and Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant met in the afternoon at the home of Wilmer McLean across the road from the Appomattox courthouse and signed the surrender agreements. The meeting was cordial and the terms outlined by General Grant were generous and undemanding. Had these terms been followed by the United States Government in dealing with the Southern States, much controversy could have been avoided. But as always - the soldiers win the war and the politicians lose the peace.

A traveler, George Wythe Munford, who passed through the surrender area a few weeks afterwards wrote, "I passed yesterday through the battlefield at Appomattox Court House. For thirteen miles on both sides of the road as far as the eye could see, one eternal scene of desolation and destruction. The debris of the battlefield are scattered in every direction - broken wagons, cannon carriages, caissons, all cut down or burnt, and cannon balls, grape shot and shell....not a sprig of grass and not a rail left." The ravages of four years of war were felt everywhere - in the village of Evergreen it was said that after the Yankees passed through "all that was left was the postmaster and a tomcat!"

The tragic unnecessary war, brought on by abolitionist agitation, had come to an end, and another era, more tragic and equally unnecessary was about to begin.

Harriett A. Chilton
3108 Annandale Road
Falls Church, Va. 22042
January 15, 1985

At a meeting of a large and highly respectable portion of the citizens of the County of Appomattox, held at the Court House, on the 10th day of January 1860, it was resolved with great unanimity, that it was important to arm as soon as possible the Volunteers, or Militia Companies of the County, in such manner, as to defend the persons and property of the citizens of said County, & the institutions of Virginia, from any and all attacks or aggressions that may be made upon them; The County Court then in session was called upon to raise the means for the said purpose, whereupon, an order of the said Court was made directing all the acting Justices to be summoned to attend at the Court house on the 12 day of January 1861. And

At a special Court for the County of Appomattox at the Court house the 12th day of January 1861. Present. J. E. Cheatham, W. McHamant, Jno M. Smith, Chris Moore, Wm A. Carter, J. L. Patterson, J. F. Davidson, Edward Robertson, Charles J. Fore, Jas W. Gilliam, Spencer Gilliam, Wm T. Purkey, John A. Marshall, Wm A. Trent & Estelbert L. Evans. Esqrs. Justices

It is unanimously ordered, that Lewis D. Debel and Thomas A. Hood, be appointed a committee to petition the Legislature of Virginia to pass a law, to authorize the County Court of Appomattox to issue the bonds of the County, for the sum of six thousand dollars, in sums of one hundred dollars each, redeemable at the pleasure of the Court within ten years after date; the interest

on said bonds to be paid semiannually at
the Bank of Virginia at Lynchburg; and
that Mr. M. Hannah presiding Justice
of the Court, be authorized to issue, and dis-
pose of the said bonds for the purpose of raising
the money for the said County Court, and
further to authorize the said Court to make
levies from time to time, for the purpose
of paying the interest and redeeming the
said bonds.

Attest
Geo. L. Pugh

Original Petition on File at Virginia State
Library, Richmond, Virginia.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of Virginia
The Petition of L. D. Debell and Thomas
N. Flood a committee appointed by the County Court
of Appomattox County at a special term of said
Court held at the Court house on the 12th day
of January 1861. Respectfully represents unto
your honorable body, that in accordance with
the wishes of a large number of the citizens of
said County expressed in a public meeting held
at the Court house on the 10th day of January 1861
the said Court, a majority of the acting Justices
being present made an order a certified copy
of which, together with an extract from the
proceedings of the public meeting aforesaid
is here annexed as a part of this petition
to which your attention is particularly
directed.

To remove the objects set forth in the said
order of Court, it is necessary to have your aid.
Your petitioners are fully impressed with the
importance of speedy action in the premises
not knowing at what time in the present
disturbed condition of the County, attacks
and aggressions may be made upon the Citizens
of the County, who are wholly unprepared for defense.
They therefore pray that you will immediately
pass such a law, as will enable the said County
Court to accomplish the objects set forth in the
order aforesaid, and as in duty bound, your
petitioners will ever pray &c

W. Jones

Cof J
Jan 15

L. D. Debell ^{Com}
Th. N. Flood

Lynchburg Daily Republican

Lynchburg, Virginia

February 4, 1862

Tribute of Respect.

CAMP IN CRAB BOTTOM, }
HIGHLAND CO., VA, }
January 26th 1862.

To night, at a meeting of the Appomattox Invincibles, Co. A. 44th Va. Regiment, Sergeants D. James Evans and C. W. Hunter, and Corporal T. A. Goode were appointed by the company a Committee to draft resolutions expressive of their sentiments and feelings, relative to the death of Sergeant Harvey C Walker, and Jno E Hill. The Committee after a brief retirement reported the following:

Whereas, Providence, in his dispensations, has seen fit to take from our midst our associates and comrades in arms, Jno E Hill, on the 19th of October 1861, and Sergeant Harvey C Walker, on the 6th of December, 1861, who had endeared themselves to us by their kindness, generosity and many social qualities, therefore, be it

Resolved. 1st, That we most deeply regret their death and sensibly feel their loss, and in their demise we have been deprived of two of our most active and efficient members, the country two of its willing and gallant defenders, and Liberty, on whose shrine they sacrificed their all, two of its zealous advocates and faithful worshipers.

2nd, That we tender the parents and relatives of the deceased our deepest and most sincere sympathies in their bereavement.

3rd, That a copy of these resolutions be sent the families of each of the deceased, and to the Lynchburg Republican for publication.

SERGEANT D JAMES EVANS,
CORPORAL T A GOODE,
SERGEANT C W HUNTER,
Committee.

Prisoner Camp Point Lookout Md.
July 6th 1864

Dear Father.

I will write you a few lines to let you hear from me I am well at this time and enjoying a good health as I ever did I get along here as well as the most of men I believe considering my situation - - - The Boys that are with me of my Company are all well and doing very well They all send their regards to their friends and etc.

I received a letter from Uncle Sam Thornhill of Missouri a few days ago he was well and all his family. Uncle Nelson & family was all well - both of them have been very kind to me since I have been a Prisoner They send me money whenever I want it so I get along very well.

I will have to close my short letter write soon and you get this for I would be very glad to hear from you for I have not heard from ^{you} some time.

let me hear from my Dear Brother sure -

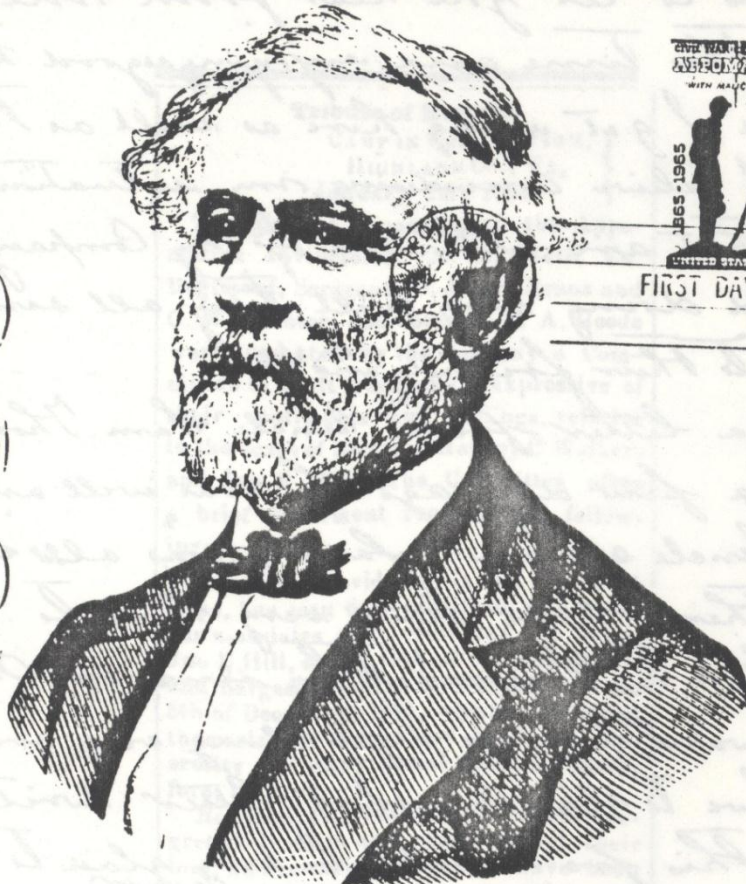
My love to all. good bye

Your Son Joel T. Cawthorn
Co. B. 7th Division

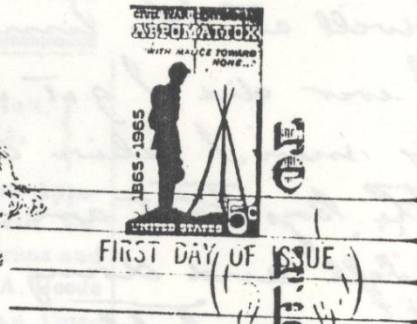
Care of Major Weymouth. Prov. Marshal. Pt. Lookout
Maryland

Letter from Private Joel T. Cawthorn, 18th Va. Infantry, to his father, Rev. John H. Cawthorn, Evergreen, Appomattox County, Va. Written from Prisoner-of-War Camp, Point Lookout, Md. July 6, 1864.

GENERAL LEE'S FAREWELL ADDRESS



HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA



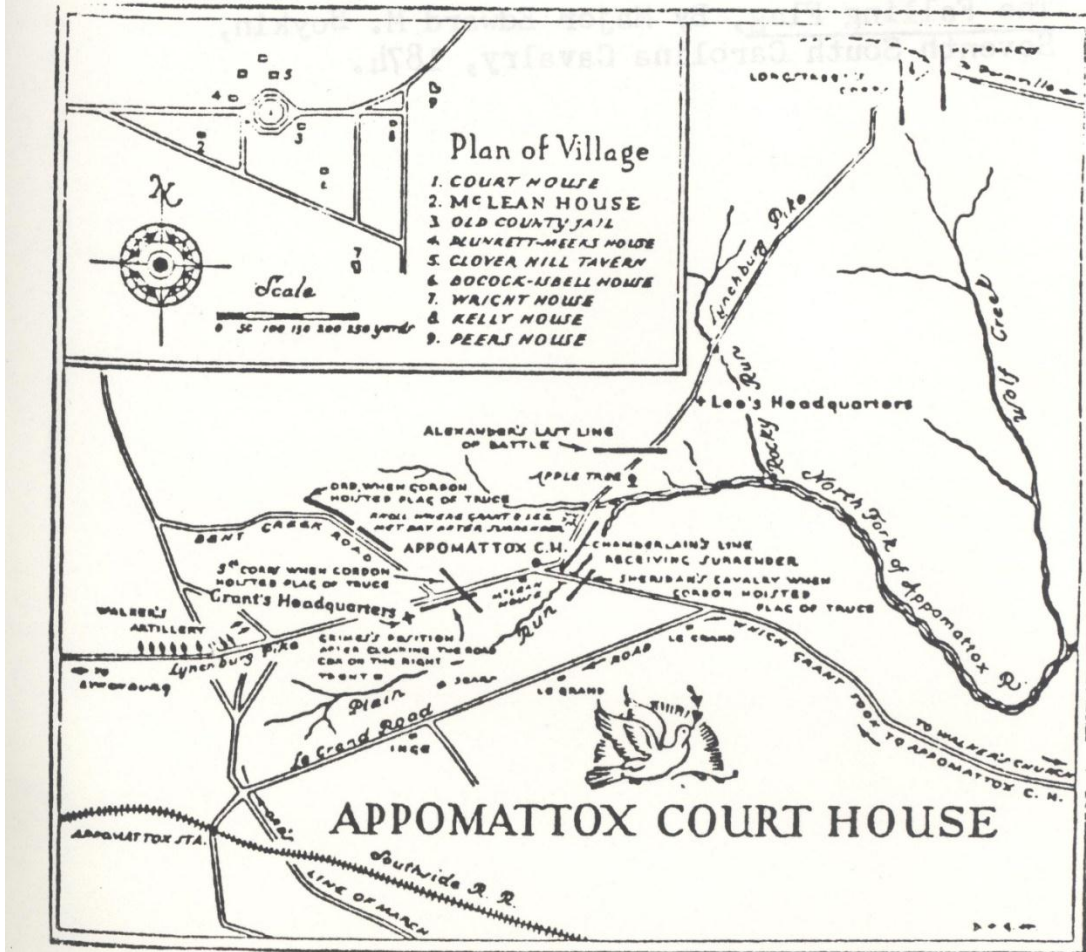
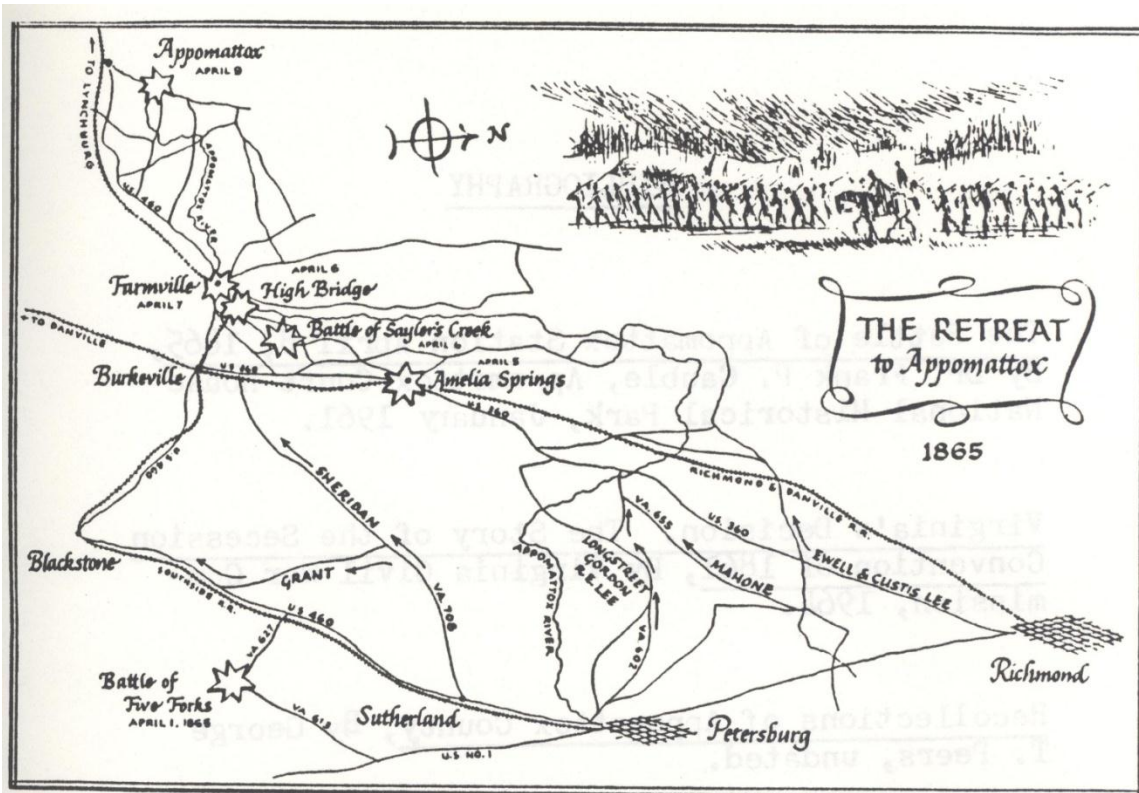
OFFICE, ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, }
APRIL 10TH, 1865.

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 continuation of the contest, I have 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 there until exchanged.

You will 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 an affectionate farewell.

[Signed] **R. E. LEE, General.**



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