

It was a chill gray morning, depressing to the senses. . . . We formed along the principal street, from the bluff bank of the stream to near the Court House on the left—to face the last line of battle, and receive the last remnant of the arms and colors of that great army which ours had been created to confront. . . . We were remnants also: Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York; veterans, and replaced veterans; cut to pieces, cut down, consolidated, divisions into brigades, regiments into one. . . .

Our earnest eyes scan the busy groups on the opposite slopes, breaking camp for the last time, taking down their little shelter-tents and folding them carefully as precious things, then slowly forming ranks as for unwelcome duty. And now they move. The dusky swarms forge forward into gray columns of march. On they come, with the old swinging route step and swaying battle-flags. In the van, the proud Confederate ensign—the great field of white with canton of star-strewn cross of blue on a field of red, the regimental battle-flags with the same escutcheon following on, crowded so thick, by thinning out of men, that the whole column seemed crowned with red. At the right of our line our little group mounted beneath our flags, the red Maltese cross on a field of white. . . .

The momentous meaning of this occasion impressed me deeply. I resolved to mark it by some token of recognition, which could be no other than a salute of arms. . . . Before us in proud humiliation stood the embodiment of manhood: men whom neither toils and sufferings, nor the fact of death, nor disaster, nor hopelessness could bend from their resolve; standing before us now, thin, worn, and famished, but erect, and with eyes looking level into ours, waking memories that bound us together as no other bond—was not such manhood to be welcomed back into a Union so tested and assured?

Instructions had been given; and when the head of each division column comes opposite our group, our bugle sounds the signal and instantly our whole line from right to left, regiment by regiment in succession, gives the soldier's salutation, from the "order arms" to the old "carry"—the marching salute. Gordon at the head of the column, riding with heavy spirit and downcast face, catches the sound of shifting arms, looks up, and, taking the meaning, wheels superbly, making with himself and his horse one uplifted figure, with profound salutation as he drops the point of his sword to the boot

toe; then facing to his own command, gives word for his successive brigades to pass us with the same position of the manual—honor answering honor. On our part not a sound of trumpet more, nor roll of drum; not a cheer, nor word nor whisper of vain-glorious, nor motion of man standing again at the order, but an awed stillness rather, and breath-holding, as if it were the passing of the dead!

As each successive division masks our own, it halts, the men face inward towards us across the road, twelve feet away; then carefully "dress" their line, each captain taking pains for the good appearance of his company, worn and half starved as they were. The field and staff take their positions in the intervals of regiments; generals in rear of their commands. They fix bayonets, stack arms; then, hesitatingly, remove cartridge-boxes and lay them down. Lastly—reluctantly, with agony of expression—they tenderly fold their flags, battle-worn and torn, blood-stained, heart-holding colors, and lay them down; some frenziedly rushing from the ranks, kneeling over them, clinging to them, pressing them to their lips with burning tears. And only the Flag of the Union greets the sky!

What visions thronged as we looked into each other's eyes! Here pass the men of Antietam, the Bloody Lane, the Sunken Road, the Cornfield, the Burnside-Bridge; the men whom Stonewall Jackson on the second night at Fredericksburg begged Lee to let him take and crush the two corps of the Army of the Potomac huddled in the streets in darkness and confusion; the men who swept away the Eleventh Corps at Chancellorsville; who left six thousand of their companions around the bases of Culp's and Cemetery Hills at Gettysburg; these survivors of the terrible Wilderness, the Bloody-Angle at Spottsylvania, the slaughter pen of Cold Harbor, the whirlpool of Bethesda Church!

Here comes Cobb's Georgia Legion, which held the stone wall on Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg, close before which we piled our dead for breastworks so that the living might stay and live.

Here too come Gordon's Georgians and Hoke's North Carolinians, who stood before the terrific mine explosion at Petersburg, and advancing retook the smoking crater and the dismal heaps of dead—ours more than theirs—huddled in the ghastly chasm.

Here are the men . . . who broke the Fifth Corps lines on the White Oak Road, and were so desperately driven

back on that forlorn night of March 31st by my thrice-decimated brigade. . . .

Here passes the proud remnant of Ransom's North Carolinians, which we swept through Five Forks ten days ago—and all the little that was left of this division in the sharp passages at Sailor's Creek five days thereafter.

Now makes its last front A. P. Hill's old Corps, Heth now at the head, since Hill had gone too far forward ever to return: the men who poured destruction into our division at Shepardstown Ford, Antietam, in 1862, when Hill reported the Potomac running blue with our bodies; the men who opened the desperate first day's fight at Gettysburg. . . .

Now the sad great pageant—Longstreet and his men! What shall we give them for greeting that has not already been spoken in volleys of thunder and written in lines of fire on all the riverbanks of Virginia? . . .

Now comes the sinewy remnant of fierce Hood's Division, which at Gettysburg we saw pouring through the Devil's Den, and the Plum Run gorge; turning again by the left our stubborn Third Corps, then swarming up the rocky bastions of Round Top, to be met there by equal valor, which changed Lee's whole plan of battle and perhaps the story of Gettysburg.

Ah, is this Pickett's Division?—this little group left of those who on the lurid last day of Gettysburg breasted level cross-fire and thunderbolts of storm, to be strewn back drifting wrecks, where after that awful, futile, pitiful charge we buried them in graves a furlong wide, with names unknown!

Thus, all day long, division after division comes and goes, surrendered arms being removed by our wagons in the intervals, the cartridge-boxes emptied in the streets. . . .

Then, stripped of every token of enmity or instrument of power to hurt, they march off to give their word of honor never to lift arms against the old flag again till its holders release them from their promise. Then, their ranks broken, the bonds that bound them fused away by forces stronger than fire, they are free at last to go where they will; to find their homes, now most likely stricken, despoiled by war. . . .

Passing between Federal ranks on April 12, Lee's Confederates laid down their arms and battleflags in a final ceremony. Gen. Joshua L. Chamberlain, supervising the field that morning, described and J. R. Chapin sketched what must have been one of the most moving scenes of all the war. The extract above is from Chamberlain's memoir, *The Passing of the Armies*.



APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE

national historical park, virginia



*Here on Palm Sunday, April 9, 1865, Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered the most renowned and successful of all Confederate armies to Union commander Ulysses S. Grant. When Lee laid down his sword, the once-mighty Army of Northern Virginia numbered only some 28,000 weary veterans, little more than a third of Grant's hard-pursuing force. Bidding farewell to the army, Lee thanked his men for four years of "unsurpassed courage and fortitude." The war was over, an era had spent itself. In Washington, President Lincoln's thoughts now turned to the problems of peace and reunion.*

For 9 months, from June 1864 to April 1865, Grant's Army of the Potomac besieged Richmond and Petersburg, last strongholds of Lee's army and the Confederate government. The campaign was a study in attrition. As losses, captures, and desertion thinned Lee's defensive line, Grant was strengthened by the arrival of armies from other theaters. In the last important battle of the war, at Five Forks on April 1, a Union victory compelled Lee to evacuate his position to save his army. The next day the Confederates marched away from Petersburg and headed west, intending to pick up rations at Amelia Court House, then proceed down the railroad to Danville, and ultimately join forces with Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, operating in North Carolina. To continue effective resistance, Lee had to be both resupplied and strengthened.

Warfare now became a matter of rapid movement, as Lee retreated and Grant pursued aggressively. For the Confederates, disaster piled upon disaster. At Amelia Court House, Lee's hungry and exhausted veterans found no rations waiting. At Jetersville a strong Union force blocked the retreat south and caused Lee to turn west toward Lynchburg. At Saylor's Creek the Confederate rearguard was cut off and over 6,000 men captured. At Farmville, Lee barely beat Grant across the Appomattox, but the race was so close that the main bridge went undestroyed, and Grant continued to press hard on Lee's heels.

By Saturday night, April 8, in camp just east of Appomattox Court House, Lee realized that his army was trapped. The men were without shoes and clothing, the animals without forage. For a while Lee thought there might be a slim chance to cut through the rapidly moving Federals, get to the rations at Appomattox Station, and resume the march to Lynchburg. But the light of Union

campfires to the south, east, and west dimmed that hope.

At a council of war that evening, Lee and his generals decided on one last try the next morning. If only cavalry lay ahead of them, then perhaps they could break out. At dawn on April 9, Lee sent Gen. Fitzhugh Lee with cavalry and Gen. John B. Gordon with infantry to drive back Union horsemen seen on the ridge west of the village of Appomattox Court House. They brushed aside the cavalry, only to run into Union Gen. E. O. C. Ord's infantry. Ord stopped the Confederates cold, pushed them back, and by 10 a.m. had themselves advanced to the western outskirts of Appomattox Court House.

Lee now faced his last decision on a field of battle. As an informal truce brought quiet along the battleline, Lee sought to arrange a meeting with Grant to discuss surrender terms. His only alternative was more futile bloodshed and the destruction of his fast dwindling force.

About 12:15 p.m. Lt. Col. Orville E. Babcock, aide to Grant, delivered a note to Lee informing him of Grant's willingness to confer on terms. At Lee's direction, Col. Charles Marshall, his aide, went off to find a suitable meeting place. A messenger finally found Grant and turned him toward Appomattox Court House, where Lee, Marshall, and Babcock now waited in the parlor of Wilmer McLean's house.

Grant arrived on the village outskirts about 1:30 and was directed to a red-brick house in a locust grove. Walking his horse to the house, he dismounted and climbed the wide steps. For a conquering general on so momentous an occasion, Grant was pretty casually dressed. He wore the uniform of a private soldier, with the tacked-on insignia straps of a lieutenant general, and his pants and boots were spattered with mud.

Rising when Grant entered, Lee started across the room and the two shook hands briefly with

quiet greetings. Lee, by contrast, was dressed faultlessly, with a sash of deep red silk and his finest sword buckled to his side. Then Grant's staff entered the room and lined the walls. After some talk, mainly of old army days, Lee turned the conversation to the matter at hand. Grant's terms were generous: all men would be set free upon their promise never to take up arms against the U.S. Government again; officers could keep their sidearms and horses; and men in the ranks who claimed to own horses or mules could keep them, as Grant put it, "to work their little farms."

"This will have the best possible effect upon the men," said Lee. "It will be very gratifying and will do much toward conciliating our people."

The terms and acceptance were drafted in final form and signed by Lee and Grant. By 4 o'clock the ceremony was over.

Lee stepped out on the porch oblivious of the Union officers standing respectfully with bared heads in the yard. "Traveller," his horse, was brought up, and Lee, roused from his reverie, mounted, raised his hat, and slowly rode through the village and back across the river. There he told his men that they had been surrendered.

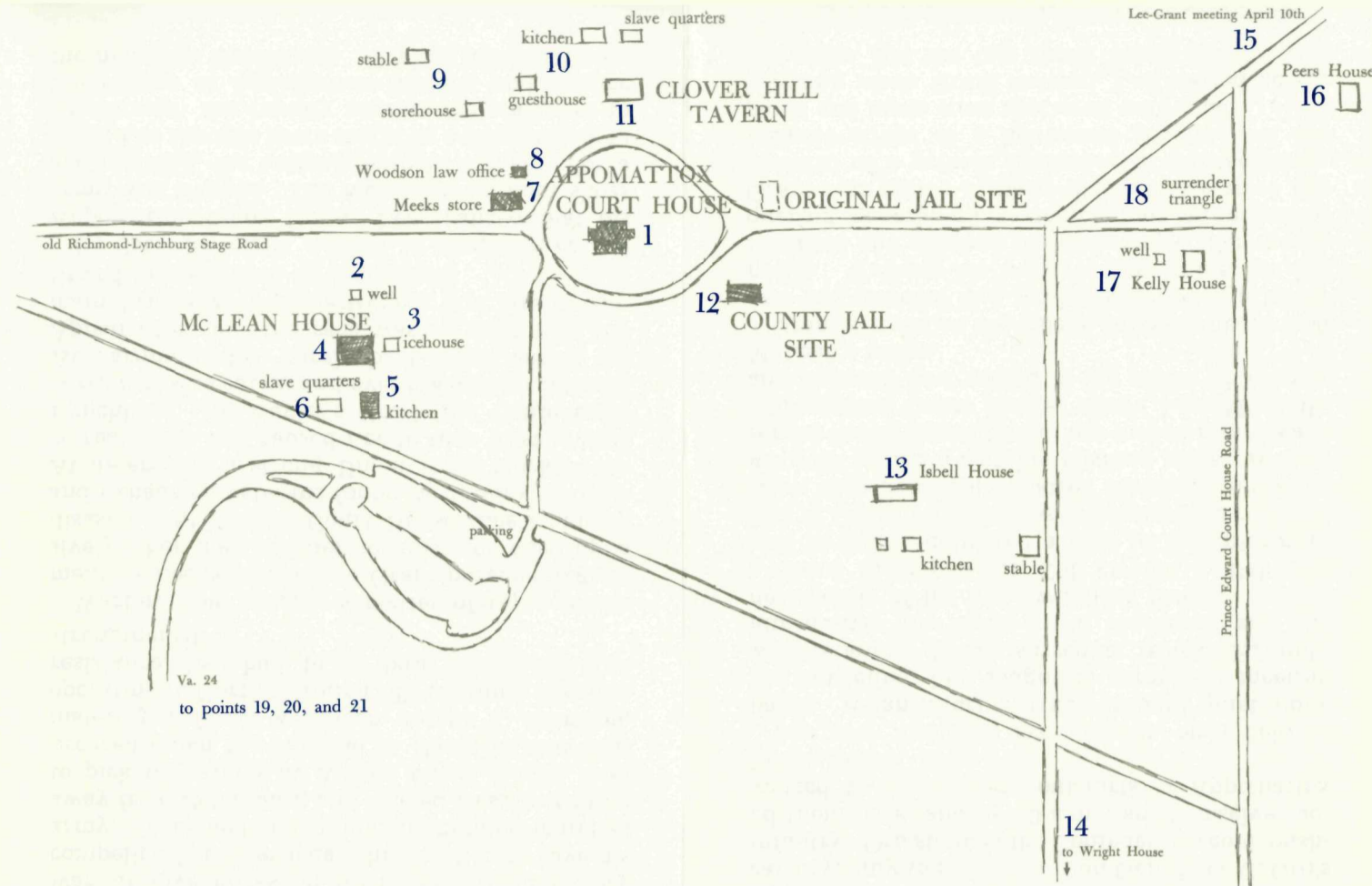
On April 12 Lee's veterans marched as a unit for the last time. Crossing the river at a shallow ford, they filed up the steep hill and past lines of blue-clad soldiers to stack their arms at the eastern edge of the village. Many wept as they laid their battle flags across the weapons, but some tore the banners into bits, rather than surrender them, and passed out the pieces. All told, 28,231 Confederates were paroled at Appomattox, as 80,000 Federals watched silently or stood guard in the village.

Though a few other units would yet have to surrender, and the Confederate political leaders were still at large, the war was now over. In McLean's yard, violets and daffodils bloomed in a requiem of sorts, and tomorrow the sun would rise on one Nation, not two.

## A GUIDE TO THE VILLAGE

Appomattox Court House was an obscure Virginia village when engulfed in April 1865 by a hundred thousand men of Lee and Grant. A Federal soldier noted at the time that it consisted of only a handful of dwellings, a tavern, and a court house, "all on one street, and that was boarded up at one end to keep the cows out." There were other structures as well: law offices, blacksmith shops, stores, and a variety of buildings. And a hundred paces from the central square stood the residence of Wilmer McLean in whose parlor occurred the last high drama of the war. Two years earlier he had left his plantation at Bull Run, the scene of the war's first major clash, and moved with his family far back into the hill country "where the sound of battle would never reach them." Then, in one of the remarkable coincidences of the war, the armies had inexorably borne down on them again.

Today the surrender village closely reflects its 1865 appearance. For an orderly tour we suggest that you begin at the visitor center (the restored court house), where exhibits and illustrated talks recount the events of a hundred years ago. The map and text that follow will be your guide through the park.



### 1. Court House Building.

The Confederates used this building during the war as a recruiting station. Why Lee and Grant did not meet here is still a mystery.

### 2. McLean Wellhouse.

The McLeans drew their water from this 40-foot well, and during the surrender thirsty soldiers of both armies drank together here.

### 3. McLean Icehouse.

Here ice cut from the frozen Appomattox River was packed in sawdust and stored underground until summer.

### 4. McLean House.

The house in which Lee surrendered was a comfortable two-story dwelling, built in 1848 and purchased by McLean in 1863. After the war, McLean sold pictures of the house, but still failed financially. Four years later his creditors auctioned off his property, and McLean moved to Alexandria, Va. In 1893 the house was torn down with the intention of reerecting it in Washington, D. C., as a museum, but nothing was ever done. Left exposed to the weather and souvenir hunters, the brick and wood almost completely disappeared over the next half a century.

### 5. McLean Kitchen.

Food prepared here was brought into the warming kitchen in the house before being served in the dining room.

### 6. McLean Slave Quarters.

One of the few log structures in the village.

### 7. Meeks General Store.

Much of the social life of the village centered around this store. It was a gathering place for talk, besides serving as the local apothecary (drug store) and village post office. Soldiers who wrote home about the surrender probably mailed their letters here.

### 8. Woodson Law Office.

John M. Woodson was one of several lawyers practicing in Appomattox County during the war. His plainly furnished office is typical of the rural lawyer of the time.

### 9. Storehouse and Stable.

The white wooden building to your left is a storehouse, which was built before the war. Beyond the plank fence is the stable.

### 10. Tavern Guesthouse, Kitchen, and Slave Quarters.

These three buildings, part of the Clover Hill Tavern group, are some of the oldest in the village. Before the war they served travelers on the stageline. Union officers were probably quartered in the guesthouse in April 1865.

### 11. Clover Hill Tavern.

Built in 1819 for stage travelers, this tavern took its name from a nearby plantation. When the site was chosen as the seat of government for the new county of Appomattox in 1845, circuit riders, farmers, and merchants became more frequent visitors, greatly increasing the tavern-keeper's trade. It was here that most of the Confederates' paroles were printed.

### 12. County Jail Site.

Only the foundations of the first county jail are still visible today. The second jail stands across the road.

### 13. Isbell House.

In 1865 Commonwealth Attorney Lewis D. Isbell was living in this house. The night before the surrender Lt. Col. Augustus Root, 15th New York Cavalry, led a raid on the village. Fierce Confederate musketry brought him down, fatally wounded, in front of the house.

### 14. Mariah Wright House.

The broad chimneyed house at the end of Bocock Lane belonged to Mariah Wright in 1865. Shortly before the surrender conference, Federal soldiers captured the house and camped there for the night.

### 15. Lee-Grant Meeting, April 10.

On the little knoll before you, overlooking the North Fork of the Appomattox River, Lee and Grant met on the morning of April 10. While sitting on horseback they talked informally for a half hour about paroles and the chances of further resistance in the South.

### 16. Peers House.

From the front porch of his home, George T. Peers, clerk of Appomattox County in 1865, watched the Confederates lay down their arms and battle flags on the morning of April 12.

### 17. Kelly House.

Lorenzo D. Kelly, village carpenter and handyman, died before the war came to Appomattox Court House, but his mother was still living, and she probably saw the stacking of arms in front of her home.

### 18. Surrender Triangle.

On April 12, 1865, 3 days after the McLean House meeting, the Confederates stacked their arms in this triangle, and the name "Appomattox" passed into history.

Points 19, 20, and 21 can best be reached by auto. After leaving the parking lot turn left on Va. 24. Point 19 is about 1.7 miles down the road.

### 19. Lee's Headquarters.

After surrendering at the McLean House, Lee returned to this spot to tell his men, many of whom were still unyielding, that the war's end had come.

Turn left on leaving this point and proceed down Va. 24 for 2 miles. Point 20 is on the right.

### 20. Confederate Cemetery.

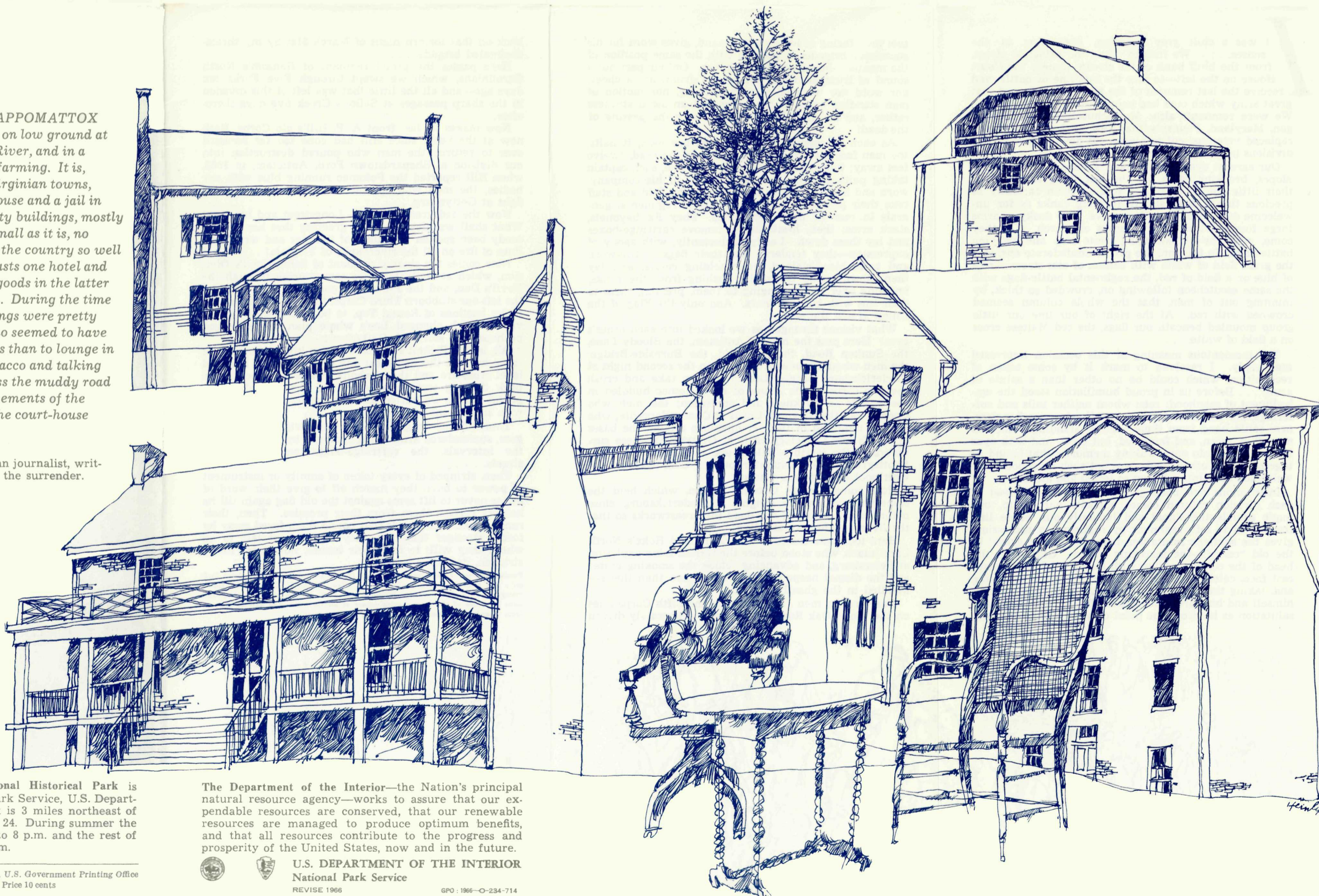
Most of the soldiers who fought and died here were taken back home for burial. A few were left behind, among them these Confederates and one Union soldier. Turn right on Va. 24. Point 21 is 1 mile down on the left.

### 21. Grant's Headquarters.

After sending word of the surrender to President Lincoln, Grant camped here under a locust tree during the night of April 9. The next day, his task done, he set out for Washington, traveling by way of Richmond.

"THE LITTLE VILLAGE OF APPOMATTOX COURT-HOUSE . . . is situated on low ground at the source of the Appomattox River, and in a district devoted exclusively to farming. It is, therefore, small even among Virginian towns, containing, besides the court-house and a jail in ruins, only some twenty or thirty buildings, mostly the dwellings of farmers; but small as it is, no other collection of houses in all the country so well merits the name of town. It boasts one hotel and one country store, the stock of goods in the latter sadly needing to be replenished. During the time of my visit, both of these buildings were pretty constantly occupied by men who seemed to have no other business on their hands than to lounge in some easy attitude chewing tobacco and talking to each other, or watching across the muddy road and pools of rain water the movements of the soldiers quartered opposite in the court-house yard."

—John Richard Dennett, a Canadian journalist, writing in *The Nation* shortly after the surrender.



Appomattox Court House National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The park is 3 miles northeast of the town of Appomattox, on Va. 24. During summer the park is open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and the rest of the year from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Department of the Interior—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—works to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service  
REVISE 1966  
GPO : 1966-O-234-714