



# The Spectacle

## From the Office Down the Hall

Some themes are universal. Even a casual search through songbooks, poems, letters and memoirs from virtually any culture or time quickly demonstrates this fact. Salted throughout human history are songs of unrequited love, stories of coming of age, and stanzas celebrating underdog heroes prevailing against unbeatable odds. But more important to us is another theme that appears over and over: the often heart-rending story of leaving home—frequently just ahead of advancing troops. In an 1840 novel, author Alessandro Manzoni, writes, “Don Abbondio cries, “they’ll be here tomorrow!” ...and their thoughts turned towards that which they were leaving at home exposed to plunder.” In 1861, Robert E. Lee wrote to Mary: “ruffians’ might cross the river and plunder the house...I grieve at the necessity that drives you from your home.”

By outward appearances, I should be the last person able to empathize with Lee. In my career as a park ranger, I have left home many times—Virginia is the fourteenth state that I have lived in. Fortunately, there have been no armies at my back and I have always enjoyed the thrill of new places and meeting new friends with every move. Yet my roots are quick to tap the wellspring of each new place, and the actual move, the tearing away of whatever tendrils I have managed to put down, is hard—even for me.

So perhaps it is this universal theme of leaving that is responsible for some of the power of the story of Arlington House. It was here, in this home, that Robert E. Lee faced a difficult choice and set wheels in motion that would ultimately remove his family forever



Arlington House on an April morning

from the land where their relatives were buried. And everyone I speak with, no matter where they are from, seem to quickly grasp this very personal story. I have told this story to Americans unsure of where they were; to children, sure only that they were tired; and slowly, hesitantly through interpreters, to visitors with no knowledge or native empathy with American history. It does not matter. They all intuitively understand the central facts of the Lee family experience. They understand that the Lees made a hard choice and left their home. It is a universal theme. Upon leaving Russia in 1972, Joseph Brodski said, “No matter under what circumstances you leave it, home does not cease to be home. No matter how you lived there—well or poorly.”

This month, we will again display some rooms at Arlington House in a state of planned disarray in remembrance of the Lee family’s hasty departure. When you come in to work, take advantage of these scenes of hurried packing to relate this universal theme to visitors. This is the busy season, but thanks to you and the time you give us, a lot of visitors who might otherwise simply pass through the house will get a chance to relate to this universal story. Thank you for your help.

Kendell Thompson  
Site Manager  
Arlington House,  
The Robert E. Lee Memorial

# Area Special Events

## May 1

Living history hike to Maryland Heights at the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry, WV. See the strategic spot that commanded the town and the area. More info: [www.nps.gov/hafe](http://www.nps.gov/hafe) or 304-535-6298.

Living history, "1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery," encampment, demonstrations and talks at Fort Ward Museum in Alexandria, VA. Noon-4 pm. Free. 703-838-4848 or [www.fortward.org](http://www.fortward.org).

## May 1-2

Living history weekend commemorates the April 1863 Jones-Imboden Raid at Pricketts Fort Park near Fairmont, WV. Free with admission. The park is located two miles from exit 139 off I-79. Details: [www.prickettsfort.org](http://www.prickettsfort.org).

Living history, "School of the Piece," artillery school activities at the Jackson's Mill Historic Area, off Route 19 near Weston, WV. Open for public viewing 10 am-5 pm. Free with admission. 304-269-5100 or [www.jacksonsmill.com](http://www.jacksonsmill.com).

Reenactment and living history, weekend includes battle reenactments, encampment, horse races, period music and more at the Inn at Kelly's Ford near Culpeper, VA. 9 am-9 pm Saturday, 9 am-3 pm Sunday. \$5 daily. 540-399-1779 or email [kellysfordinn@aol.com](mailto:kellysfordinn@aol.com).

Civil War Weekend at the Historic Blenheim Estate, 3601 Old Lee Highway in Fairfax, VA. Living history demonstrations and special tours of Blenheim. \$3 adults, \$5 additional for attic Civil War graffiti tours. Details: [www.ci.fairfax.va.us/CityHistory/BlenheimCivilWar.htm](http://www.ci.fairfax.va.us/CityHistory/BlenheimCivilWar.htm) or 800-545-7950.

## May 2

Living history examines military law at Harpers Ferry at the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, WV. Free with admission. [www.nps.gov/hafe](http://www.nps.gov/hafe) or 304-535-6298.

Hike, ranger-led 1.5-mile walking tour covers newly acquired park land on the southern section of the Antietam Battlefield, MD. Covers the last phase of the battle and interpretive ideas for the new property at the Antietam National Battlefield. 1:30-4 pm. Free with admission. [www.nps.gov/anti](http://www.nps.gov/anti) or 301-432-5124.

## May 6-9

Seminar, "In the Footsteps of Jackson II," one of the Chambersburg Civil War Seminars, based in Lexington, VA. 717-264-7101 or email [chaden@chambersburg.org](mailto:chaden@chambersburg.org) for details.

## May 7-9

Reenactment, Battle of Spotsylvania 140th anniversary event in Spotsylvania County near Fredericksburg, VA. Demonstrations and living history all weekend. Camps open 1 pm Friday, 10 am Saturday and before dawn Sunday. Battles at 6:30 pm Saturday, before dawn and 11 am Sunday. Candlelight tour Saturday night. Fee charged. Click for schedule. Details and updates: [www.spotsylvania140th.com](http://www.spotsylvania140th.com).

## May 8

Special program/tour, "Doors Open Gettysburg: Inside American Treasures." Open houses 10 am-4 pm at some of Gettysburg's most historic structures. Includes Schriver, Rupp, Rose, Leister and Warfield houses, the railroad station, the Trostle Barn and the Majestic Theater. Sponsored by the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, PA. All free. Call 717-334-0772 extension 225 or email [dneil@friendsofgettysburg.org](mailto:dneil@friendsofgettysburg.org).

Bus Tour of Bermuda Hundred sites in Chesterfield County, south of Richmond, VA. See the places associated with the 1864 campaign against Richmond's "back door." Leaves 9 am from "Castlewood," 10201 Iron Bridge Road. \$65 includes box lunch. Space limited. Reservations, more info: 804-777-9663.

Living history, "Tillie Pierce: A Young Girl's



Experience at Gettysburg," at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, MD. 11 am-3 pm. Free with admission. 301-695-1864 or [www.civilwarmed.org](http://www.civilwarmed.org).

Walking tour, "Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade," at Gettysburg, PA. A Civil War Education Association tour. \$125. Details: 800-298-1861 or [www.cwea.net](http://www.cwea.net).

## May 8-9

Living history encampment and demonstrations by a US Artillery unit at the Pennsylvania Memorial in the Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, PA. [www.nps.gov/gett](http://www.nps.gov/gett) or 717-334-1124 extension 422.

Hike, full battlefield walking tours cover each phase of the battle at the Antietam National Battlefield, MD. Early-action tours begin at 9:30 am, later-phase tours begin at 1:30 pm. Free with admission. [www.nps.gov/anti](http://www.nps.gov/anti) or 301-432-5124.

Living history, Fort Clifton Music & Crafts Festival in Colonial Heights, VA. Includes Civil War living history and displays at this Appomattox River Confederate fortification. 10:30 am-5:30 pm. Free. 804-520-9390 or [www.colonial-heights.com/FortCliftonFestival.htm](http://www.colonial-heights.com/FortCliftonFestival.htm).

## May 9

Guided tour of the site of a Confederate Civil War camp and a freedman's farm on President James Madison's estate, Montpelier, near Orange, VA. Estate was used during the winter of 1863-64 by South Carolina troops. 2 pm. Free with admission (\$11 adults). 540-672-2728 or

## Area Special Events (continued)

[www.montpelier.org](http://www.montpelier.org).

### May 10-13

Tours, "The James Taylor Sketchbook," follows the Civil War artist in Shenandoah Valley and Mosby country with Ed Bearss. Based in Winchester, VA Details: [www.blue-and-gray-education.org](http://www.blue-and-gray-education.org)

### May 15

Civil War Day in Falls Church, VA. Living history, period music, balloon program, 1845 farmhouse tours, bus tour of local sites and more at Cherry Hill Park, 312 Park Ave. Free (\$2 for bus tour). Box lunches available. 10 am-4 pm. 703-248-5171.

Walking tour, "Pickett's Charge," at Gettysburg, PA. A Civil War Education Association tour. \$125. Details: 800-298-1861 or [www.cwea.net](http://www.cwea.net).

Battle of New Market Ceremony at Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, VA. Full-dress event honors the cadets who died in the 1864 battle. 2 pm. Free. 540-464-7207.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House was the home of Robert E. Lee and his family for thirty years and is uniquely associated with the Washington and Custis families. It is now preserved as a memorial to General Lee, who gained the respect of Americans in both the North and the South.

**Arlington House**  
**The Robert E. Lee Memorial**  
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway  
Turkey Run Park  
McLean, VA 22101

**Phone**  
703-235-1530

**Web Site**  
<http://www.nps.gov/arho>

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Living history encampment and demonstrations by both sides at "The Angle" in the Gettysburg National Military Park, PA. [www.nps.gov/gett](http://www.nps.gov/gett) or 717-334-1124 extension 422.

Living history encampment and demonstrations by a Michigan unit at the Pennsylvania Memorial in the Gettysburg National Military Park, PA. [www.nps.gov/gett](http://www.nps.gov/gett) or 717-334-1124 extension 422.

### May 15-16

Living history interpretive tours commemorating the 140th anniversary of the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, VA. Check [www.nps.gov/frsp](http://www.nps.gov/frsp) for details.

Living history, anniversary program at Drewry's Bluff, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. VA. Displays, talks, tours and Confederate navy living history. 10 am-5 pm Saturday, 10 am-4 pm Sunday. Free. 804-226-1981 or [www.nps.gov/rich](http://www.nps.gov/rich).

### May 16

Walking tour, "Antietam." A Civil War Education Association tour. \$125. Details: 800-298-1861 or [www.cwea.net](http://www.cwea.net).

### May 21

Special program, panel discussion and other activities commemorate the 141st anniversary of the authorization of the United States Colored Troops. 11:30 am-2 pm. Location TBA. Free. Call Dr. E. Curtis Alexander, 757-547-5542, or email [bellsmill@blackwordsonline.com](mailto:bellsmill@blackwordsonline.com) for details.

### May 21-23

Tour, "The Peninsula Campaign and Seven Days Battles," headquartered at Pamplin Historical Park near Petersburg, VA. Includes tours of Fort Monroe, Mariners' Museum, Dam No. 1, Seven Pines, Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill and many other sites connected with the 1862 campaign. \$249. 877-PAMPLIN or [www.pamplinpark.org](http://www.pamplinpark.org).

North-South Skirmish Association's National Competition at Fort Shenandoah near Winchester, VA. Civil War weapon live firing demonstrations and competition. Free to spectators. 248-258-9007 or [www.nssa.org](http://www.nssa.org).

### May 22

Living history, "Civil War Photographer," field photography studio demonstrations at Fort Ward Museum in Alexandria, VA. Noon-4 pm. Free. 703-838-4848 or [www.forward.org](http://www.forward.org).

Living history, "Confederate Surgeon," at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, MD 11 am-3 pm. Free with admission. 301-695-1864 or [www.civilwarmed.org](http://www.civilwarmed.org).

### May 22-23

Living history encampment and demonstrations by a Pennsylvania unit at the Pennsylvania Memorial and the US Sharpshooters at Little Round Top in the Gettysburg National Military Park, PA [www.nps.gov/gett](http://www.nps.gov/gett) or 717-334-1124 extension 422.

Living history, "Getting the Message Through," simultaneous signal corps demonstrations at Washington Monument State Park (South Mountain) and the Antietam National Battlefield, MD. 1 pm. Park fees apply. 301-432-8065 or [www.nps.gov/anti](http://www.nps.gov/anti) (Antietam).

Reenactment, living history and 140th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Wilson's Wharf (Fort Pocahontas) at the James River near Sherwood Forest Plantation off Route 5 between Richmond and Williamsburg, VA. Details: [www.fortpocahontas.org](http://www.fortpocahontas.org).

### May 22-23

Living history and reenactment, "The Battle of Lewisburg" on the Greenbrier campus of the New River Community & Technical College in Lewisburg, WV. Camps open 10

## Area Special Events (continued)

am-8 pm Saturday with speakers, exhibits, and battle reenactment. Dance (all welcome) 8 pm Saturday. Speakers, living history begin noon Sunday with a funeral cortege for an officer killed in battle beginning at 3 pm followed by a ceremony at the Confederate cemetery. [www.battleoflewisburg.org](http://www.battleoflewisburg.org). All free.

### May 26-30

Conference, "The Campaign and Battle of the Wilderness," based in Richmond. All-star cast of historians gives lectures and leads tours of the battlefield. A University of Virginia Civil War Conference. Details: [www.uvacivilwar.org](http://www.uvacivilwar.org) or 800-346-3882.

### May 27-31

Fredericksburg, VA Area Civil War Weekend: "Lest We Forget," annual event features tours, living history, a river cruise and Memorial Day activities at the National Park. Click for schedule. 800-654-4118 or [www.fredericksburgvirginia.net](http://www.fredericksburgvirginia.net).

### May 29-30

Living history encampment and demonstrations at Meade's Headquarters and a Virginia unit at Spangler Spring in the Gettysburg National Military Park, PA. [www.nps.gov/gett](http://www.nps.gov/gett) or 717-334-1124 extension 422.

Special programs and exhibits, "Defend and Protect: Arming the American Soldier," at the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, WV. Free with admission. [www.nps.gov/hafe](http://www.nps.gov/hafe) or 304-535-6298.

Civil War Weekend at the Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown, VA. Living history, military demonstrations and a Confederate field hospital are featured. Memorial Day ceremonies at the Yorktown National Cemetery. Park fee applies. 757-898-2410 or [www.nps.gov/colo](http://www.nps.gov/colo).

### May 30

Special programs at Ellwood, a Union headquarters during the Battle of the

Wilderness (near Routes 3 and 20 west of Fredericksburg, VA). 1 pm period music concert, 2 pm talk on the "Last Days of Stonewall Jackson," 3 pm Civil War medicine demonstration and 3:30 pm ceremony. More info: [www.nps.gov/frsp](http://www.nps.gov/frsp).

Special program, Confederate Memorial Day Service, at the Old City Cemetery in Lynchburg, VA. first celebrated in 1866. 3 pm. Free. 434-847-1465 or [www.gravegarden.org](http://www.gravegarden.org).

### May 31

Memorial Day program at the Fort Harrison National Cemetery, just off Route 5 east of Richmond, VA. Noon. Free. 804-226-1981 or [www.nps.gov/rich](http://www.nps.gov/rich).

Memorial Day Parade and Ceremonies at the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, PA. 2 pm. 717-334-1124, extension 422 or 431 or [www.nps.gov/gett](http://www.nps.gov/gett).

# Significant Historic Events in May

**May 1858**

Robert E. Lee supervised the planting of the Arlington corn crop, “his first big venture as a farmer.”

**May 1, 1838**

Lieutenant Lee returned to his duties in St. Louis, Missouri, bringing with him Mrs. Lee, Custis and Rooney from Arlington.

**May 2, 1861**

From Richmond, Lee wrote to the Rev. Cornelius Walker, “I shall need all your good wishes and all your prayers for strength and guidance in the struggle in which we are engaged and earnestly and humbly look for help to him alone who can save us and who has permitted the dire calamity of this fratricidal war to impend over us. If we are not worthy that it should pass from us, may he in his great mercy shield us from its dire effects and save us from the calamity our sins have produced.”

To his wife, Lee wrote:

“...I want you to be in a place of safety...Nor can any one say where safety can be found...Make your preparations quickly to be ready for any emergency...”

“I have just received Custis’s letter of the 30th enclosing the acceptance of my resignation. It is stated it will take effect on the 25th of April.

**May 3, 1861**

It was probably on the afternoon of Friday, May 3 (or possibly Saturday, May 4) that Mrs. Lee, sitting in the morning room copying an oil portrait of her youngest son, was surprised by Orton Williams with the news that United States troops would cross the Long Bridge and take possession of Arlington Heights.

“Now the moment she had long dreaded was upon her. Heartsick, she and her daughters set the servants [slaves] to packing. First off, she had the family silver packed in sturdy boxes to be dispatched to Richmond early next morning. Next she stowed the

Washington and Custis family letters and papers, together with some smaller mementoes and valuables, in another box; her husband’s papers went into still another.”

**May 4, 1861**

Early in the morning, Orton Williams returned and told Mrs. Lee that the planned movement of United States troop into Virginia had been postponed, but that she should continue to prepare for the inevitable.

**May 4, 1864**

The Army of the Potomac, commanded by General Ulysses S. Grant, crossed the Rapidan River. “It was the beginning of the big Federal push in Virginia that culminated in the siege of Petersburg and finally Appomattox.”

**May 5, 1861**

Mrs. Lee, writing to her 16-year-old daughter, Mildred, told her that she would not leave Arlington “even if the whole Northern Army were to surround it” except to relieve the minds of her husband and oldest son and “leave them free to perform their duty.” Her frustration was directed at the leaders of the United States government, who, she said, seemed to be “without honor & without pity.” The silver and valuables had been sent to Richmond and to Ravensworth, but “the rest of our effects must take their chance.”

**May 9, 1864**

GWP Custis wrote Francis Nelson, the manager of his Pamunkey properties, urging him to expand fishing operations on the estates because the canals and railroad had contributed to an increased demand for fish.

**May 9, 1861**

The New York Daily Tribune named Robert E. Lee to its list of “ingrates and traitors.” The article mentioned Lee’s connection to the family of George Washington and speculated that if GWP Custis were still alive, “He would have good cause to be bowed down in grief and sorrow to behold his son-in-law following in the footsteps of Benedict

Arnold!”

Mrs. Lee, writing to her husband in Richmond, told him that all their wine, stores, and pictures, as well as the piano, had been sent to Ravensworth. Other valuables had been sent to Richmond. Arlington, she said, was never “more beautiful, perfectly radiant. The yellow jasmine in full bloom & perfuming the air, but a death like stillness prevails everywhere, you hear no sounds from Washington, not a soul is moving about.”

**May 10, 1842**

GWP Custis participated in the 200th anniversary of celebration of the first settlement of Maryland at St. Mary’s. As the guest of the Philodemic Society and faculty of Georgetown College, Custis composed a poem for the occasion, highly sympathetic to the Catholic founders, which was designed to be sung to the tune of the “Star Spangled Banner.” “When the crowd demanded an encore, he got his friend, Father George Fenwick of Georgetown College, and a granddaughter of Charles Carroll to assist him, and together, the three sang the ode...”

**May 10, 1861**

“The Confederate government in Montgomery placed Virginia Maj. Gen. Robert E. Lee in command of Confederate troops in Virginia.”

**May 10, 1863**

Stonewall Jackson died of pneumonia after the amputation of his arm. The next day, Lee wrote his son, Custis, in Richmond, “You will have heard of the death of General Jackson. It is a terrible loss. I do not know how to replace him. Any victory would be dear at such a cost. But God’s will be done.”

**May 10, 1865**

Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured by United States troops near Irwinville, Georgia, and the confederate government ceased to exist. President Andrew Johnson proclaimed armed resistance to the United States government

## Significant Historic Events in May (continued)

virtually at an end.

### May 11, 1861

Lee, writing from Richmond, again admonished his wife to “complete your arrangements & retire further from the scene of war. It may burst upon you at any time.....It is sad to think of the translation, if not ruin it may bring upon a spot so endeared to us. But God’s will be done. We must be resigned.”

Mrs. Lee wrote her daughter Mildred, who was attending Mrs. Powell’s School in Winchester, “I must confess I was both hurt & mortified that a daughter of mine, at a time when her Father’s life is in peril, her home in danger of being trampled over by a lawless foe, if not leveled to the ground, should allow a disappointment about a bonnet to be so deep in her mind...”

### May 11, 1911

The tombstone that now marks the grave of Pierre Charles L’Enfant was dedicated with President William Howard Taft presiding. “By an Act of Congress, the stone was designed and sculpted as a belated tribute to L’Enfant. The focal point of the monument is the reproduction of L’Enfant’s original plan for the city sculpted into the white marble top. Accompanying the map on top of the stone is a tribute to L’Enfant: ‘Engineer—Artist—Soldier.’”

### May 12, 1861

In a letter to her husband, Mrs. Lee suggested fortifying the “Culvert” at Arlington against a Federal invasion, and said that Custis had laughed at her suggestions. “The last ten days have seemed an age of agony & suspense. Oh, that something bright should dawn upon us.”

### May 13, 1832

Startled by the news that his wife was expecting her first child, Robert E. Lee wrote Mary, “Take care of yourself. Don’t ride on horseback, or go into crowds, or hurry about the house.” Despite Mrs. Custis’s beliefs about church going, Lee told his wife not to

go to church: “Suppose the carriage was to break down, what would you do then?”

### May 13, 1864

Private William Christman, a farmer from Pennsylvania and a member of the 76th Pennsylvania Infantry, became the first soldier to be buried at Arlington—more than a month before the cemetery was officially authorized on June 15. The first Confederate soldier, L. Reinhart of the 23rd North Carolina, was buried at Arlington a few days later.

### May 15, 1861

Mrs. Lee and Custis Lee probably left Arlington to join the Lee girls at “Ravensworth,” Fairfax County, Virginia, the home of Mrs. Lee’s Aunt, Anna Maria Goldsborough Fitzhugh.

### May 16, 1862

During the Peninsular Campaign, General George McClellan established his personal headquarters at the White House estate, the property of the Lee family on the Pamunkey River.

### May 21, 1830

William Henry Fitzhugh, brother of Mary Lee Fitzhugh Custis and brother-in-law of GWP Custis, died as a result of a fall from a horse. Always a strong supporter of the American Colonization Society, he had given much of his time in recent years to educating his slaves for their eventual freedom, and in his will, he directed that they be freed by 1850 and that those who consented to go to Africa be given their passage and a bonus besides.” There were no children, so his widow, Anna Maria Goldsborough, received a life estate in his property with the remainder to his niece, Mary Custis.

### May 23, 1861

Virginia voters ratified the Ordinance of Secession which had been passed by the Virginia secession convention on April 17. The margin of victory for ratification was more than 6 to 1.

### May 24, 1861

Beginning on the night of May 23, United States troops crossed the Potomac at Washington and occupied the Virginia shore, fanning out toward Alexandria. A regiment of Zouaves crossed by boat to Alexandria, itself. The Virginia ends of the bridges were seized, and by sunrise, fortifications were going up. The occupation was accomplished with only one military casualty, that of 24-year-old Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, a friend of President Lincoln, who was shot by a civilian, James Jackson, for hauling down a Confederate flag that had been flying over the hotel. Both Ellsworth and the hotel keeper (who was also immediately killed) became martyrs to their respective sections.

### May 25, 1861

Brigadier General Samuel P. Heintzelman rode over from Alexandria to Arlington House. The slaves told him that “pictures and most of the furniture” had been removed. Poet Charles Russell Lowell also visited and claimed to have dined at Arlington House on “corn pone and milk.”

### May 26, 1831

Robert E. Lee wrote to his brother Carter and asked him to get his wedding clothes in New York. “I believe I will wear my uniform coat on the important night, & therefore white pantaloons must be in character...Let the material of all be the best & don’t let him charge too much.”

### May 26, 1861

The Eighth New York Regiment occupied “the grounds and residence” of Arlington. A letter to their commander, General C.W. Sandford, noted that their camp was “situated at the rear of the mansion, amid a beautiful grove of oaks...” and “commands a splendid view of the Potomac and the City of Washington.”

The overseer, McQuinn, complained to General Heintzelman “with tears in his eyes that some volunteers had shot his pet rabbits & chickens & frightened his wife.”

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

## Baked Oysters and Spinach

George Clark, the renowned cook who came to Arlington Heights from Mount Vernon with George Washington Parke Custis, was famous for his Maryland beaten biscuits, asparagus and oysters.

We don't know the recipes he used for these dishes, but a search for information on 19<sup>th</sup> century recipes for oysters has provided some interesting information regarding oysters in the American diet during its early history.

Apparently Native Americans on both coasts of North America considered oysters as a staple in their diets as indicated by the great piles of oyster shells in many coastline areas of the continent. Early Colonial settlers also consumed oysters in large quantities with the per capita consumption at 10 bushels per year! Oysters were still readily available in quantity during the time that George Clark was working his culinary magic at Arlington for the Custis and Lee families.

The following recipe, from *French Country Cooking*, by James Villas (Bantam Books), is one adapted for today's cooks with ingredients, most of which probably would have been available to the Custis and Lee families, and modern measurements and equipment.

1 ½ pounds fresh spinach, rinsed well and left wet  
¼ cup butter  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
large pinch of freshly ground nutmeg  
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
1 cup heavy cream  
1 cup fine dried bread crumbs  
1 quart shucked fresh oysters  
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill or 2 teaspoons dried

Place the spinach in large saucepan, cover, and steam over moderate heat about 5 minutes or until tender. Drain spinach, refresh under cold water, squeeze dry, and chop finely. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. In a large skillet, heat half the butter, add the onion, and sauté over moderate heat for 5 minutes, stirring often. Add the spinach, nutmeg, salt, pepper, and cream. Stir well and cook over moderate heat for about 2 minutes, stirring in a few breadcrumbs if necessary to thicken the mixture. Add the oysters and dill and stir well. Spoon the mixture into a well-buttered baking dish, sprinkle the top with bread crumbs, dot with remaining butter, and bake for 10-15 minutes or until top is golden brown. Makes six servings.

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## Significant Historic Events in May (continued)

**May 29, 1865**

“By Presidential Proclamation, Andrew Johnson granted amnesty and pardon to all persons who directly or indirectly participated in “the existing rebellion” with a few exceptions. All property rights were restored except as to slaves and in special cases. An oath was required that such persons would “henceforth fully support, protect, and defend the Constitution and to abide by the laws.

“This was a declaration for Lee, who had been waiting before deciding whether he would take the oath. The statement of the President’s intentions greatly relieved General Lee’s mind. It opened a way, he thought, for the South’s recovery. If the

states of the former Confederacy could regain the places they had held before 1861, they would be safe from rule by soldiers or by blacks. The future of the restored nation would then be bright.”

**May 30, 1837**

William Henry Fitzhugh “Rooney” Lee was born at Arlington, the third child and second son of Robert and Mary Lee. This time, Mary Lee had none of the complications that accompanied the birth of her daughter, Mary, two years prior to Rooney’s birth.

**May 31, 1862**

During the Battle of Seven Pines (Fair Oaks), Virginia, General Joseph E. Johnston was severely wounded. President Jefferson Davis

immediately assigned Robert E. Lee as his successor. For the first time, Lee was given command of a major army, the Army of Northern Virginia.

### AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please contact Delphine Gross no later than the 20th of each month with availability dates and times to be posted the following month (Please call by May 20th with June information). Even if you are a regularly scheduled VIP please contact Delphine to confirm your availability. Again, the contact number is (703) 235-1530 ext. 227. Please leave the dates and times you are available on the voice mail. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Spectacle is a monthly newsletter for the volunteers of Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.

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## Volunteers Needed

The roster of active volunteers is in dire need of additional names! If you know anyone interested in joining our ranks please refer them to Delphine Gross, Volunteer Coordinator (703) 235-1530 ext 227.

