

The Knapsack

Raleigh Civil War Round Table
The same rain falls on both friend and foe.

May 11th, 2026
Our 301st Issue



<http://www.raleighcwrt.org>

Volume 26
Number 5

May 11th, 2026, Meeting Features Robert M. “Bert” Dunkerly, M.A., Speaking on “Surrenders of the Civil War”

The Raleigh Civil War Round Table meets in the auditorium of Raleigh’s Springmoor Life Care Retirement Community, located at 1500 Sawmill Rd., Raleigh, NC. This is in the northeast quadrant of the intersection of Sawmill Road and Creedmoor Road, aka NC Hwy 50. **Residents of Springmoor attend free of charge.**

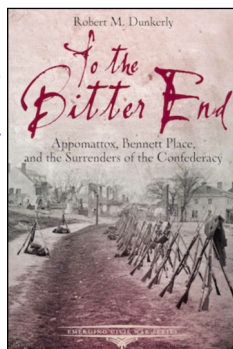


Robert M. “Bert” Dunkerly

Our May meeting at Springmoor is scheduled for **Mon., May 11th, 2026**, starting at 6:30 p.m. with socializing and light refreshments. The program, which begins at 7:00 p.m., features Robert M. “Bert” Dunkerly speaking on *Surrenders of the Civil War*.

As the war approached its end, most of us know the details of Appomattox in Virginia and Bennett Place in North Carolina, but what about the other surrenders? Bert will delve into the lesser-known surrenders in Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas, and discuss how the war ended and how that set up the early stages of Reconstruction.

Bert’s presentation focuses on the events covered in his book *To the Bitter End: Appomattox, Bennett Place, and the Surrenders of the Confederacy (Emerging Civil War Series)*. (Savas Beatie, Mar. 19th, 2015).



Actively involved in historic preservation and research, Bert Dunkerly is a historian, award-winning author, and speaker specializing in the American Revolution and the Civil War. He holds a degree in History from St. Vincent College and a Master’s degree in Historic Preservation from Middle Tennessee State University.

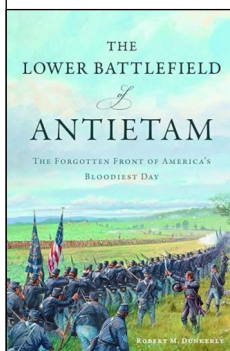
Bert has worked at 14 different historic sites and is a member of the *Emerging Civil War Speakers Bureau*. His research interests include military history, archaeology,

colonial life, and historic commemoration. He has worked at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, and has spent years analyzing the final months of the war. Bert is currently a Park Ranger at Richmond National Battlefield Park.

Bert has authored ten books and over twenty articles about the Civil War, including several in the *Emerging Civil War Series*. Dunkerly has served as president of the Richmond Civil War Round Table, taught classes at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture and at Central Virginia Community College. He also writes for the *Emerging Civil War* and *Emerging Revolutionary War* blogs.

Beyond his writing, he frequently gives presentations and book talks at Preservation Virginia and various Civil War Round Tables. Bert has visited over 400 battlefields and over 700 historic sites worldwide. When not reading or writing, he enjoys hiking, camping, and photography.

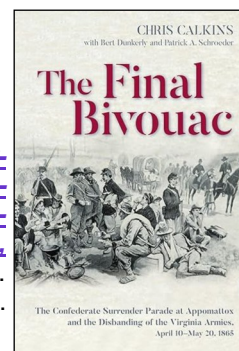
In addition to *To the Bitter End*, Bert Dunkerly’s Civil War authored or co-authored oeuvre includes the following books, listed in reverse chronological order:

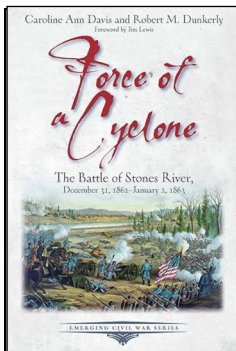


The Lower Battlefield of Antietam: The Forgotten Front of America's Bloodiest Day (Civil War Series)

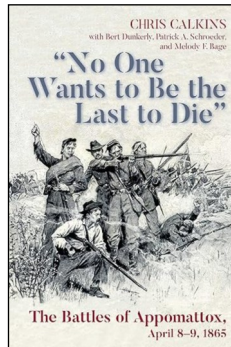
by Robert M. Dunkerly. (The History Press, Jul. 15th, 2025)

The Final Bivouac: The Confederate Surrender Parade at Appomattox and the Disbanding of the Virginia Armies, April 10–May 20, 1865 by Chris Calkins, Robert M. Dunkerly, et al. (Savas Beatie, Mar. 19th, 2025)

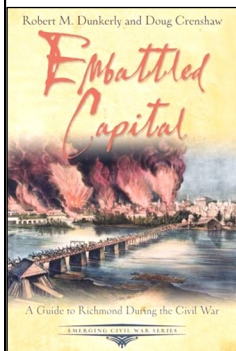




Force of a Cyclone: The Battle of Stones River, December 31, 1862–January 2, 1863 (Emerging Civil War Series) by Caroline Ann Davis, Robert M. Dunkerly, et al. (Savas Beatie, Jul. 15th, 2023)



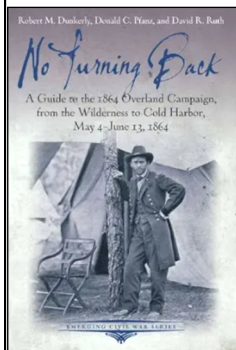
"No One Wants to be the Last to Die": The Battles of Appomattox, April 8-9, 1865 by Chris Calkins, Robert M. Dunkerly, et al. (Savas Beatie, Feb. 27th, 2023)



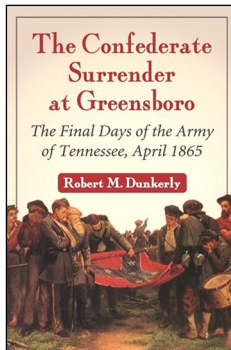
Embattled Capital: A Guide to Richmond During the Civil War (Emerging Civil War Series) by Robert M. Dunkerly and Doug Crenshaw. (Savas Beatie, Jan. 12th, 2021)



The Long Encampment at Seven Pines: June 2-28, 1862 (Emerging Civil War Digital Shorts Book 4) by Robert M. Dunkerly and Edward S. Alexander. (Emerging Civil War, May 31st, 2017)



No Turning Back: A Guide to the 1864 Overland Campaign, from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor, May 4 - June 13, 1864 (Emerging Civil War Series) by Robert M. Dunkerly, Donald C. Pfanz, et al. (Savas Beatie, April 9th, 2014)



The Confederate Surrender at Greensboro: The Final Days of the Army of Tennessee, April 1865 by Robert M. Dunkerly. (McFarland & Company, Jul. 3rd, 2013)

A full listing of Bert's **Emerging Civil War** articles can be found [here](#).

Who Really Attended the Surrender Meeting in Wilmer McLean's Parlor?

By Bob Graesser, Editor

In keeping with our May speaker's topic of **Surrenders of the Civil War**, I thought it appropriate to ask the question **"Who actually attended Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in the parlor of Wilmer McLean's home in Appomattox Court House, VA, on April 9th, 1865?"**

I first collected data by conducting an online focused search for documentation and paintings/illustrations describing who attended the **Surrender Meeting**. The result of the search has been incorporated into three tables, labeled 1, 2, and 3. Each table shows the same list of alleged attendees in the same order. The list is ordered from top to bottom as to the likelihood that a given person was actually in McLean's parlor that day. The set of most-likely attendees occupies the top half of the table with each name presented in **Bold Blue**.

Table 1 on page 3 shows the list of alleged attendees plus the rank and position(s) they held at the time of the Meeting. The people on that list and the order of their appearance were all determined from the data collected and shown on **Table 2** on page 4.

In my research for **Table 2**, I came across five document sources and six painting/illustration sources, each purporting to name the attendees from their point of view. A total of twenty-seven individuals were mentioned as being in one or more of the eleven groupings by source. The column headers for documents, **"A"-"E"**, are defined in the **Texts Key** at the bottom of page 4. The column headers for paintings/illustrations, **"F"-"K"**, are defined in the **Paintings Key** on the top of page 5. A thumbnail-sized picture of each painting/illustration is included for context. These paintings/illustrations will be found in a larger size later in this article. The bottom of page 5 includes footnotes for a number of the individuals for one or more of the groups in which they appear.

After collecting the data on these twenty-seven alleged attendees across the eleven sources, for each person I then placed an **"X"** in each source box where he had been mentioned as being a member of that group. For each person, I then added up his **"X"**s and placed that number in his **"Hits"** column. If an alleged attendee was mentioned by all eleven sources, then he got a perfect score of **"11/11"**.

I then ranked the twenty-seven alleged attendees from most mentions to least mentions and sorted the list in descending order. The number of hits per individual ranged from eleven down to one. Nine of the alleged attendees were mentioned in all eleven source lists. We can say with confidence that they each were in McLean's parlor at some point during the **Surrender Meeting**.

But what about the alleged attendees that were only on some of the source lists? One individual had ten hits. Another, nine. That seems safe. But as we go down the sorted list and the number of hits keeps dropping, at what point do we draw the line? **(Continued on p. 7→)**

Table 1. Military Ranks & Positions Held by Attendees at the Surrender Meeting in Wilmer McLean's Parlor on April 9th, 1865, in the Village of Appomattox Court House, VA

#	Side	Rank	Alleged Attendee	Position
1	C	General	Robert E. Lee	Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia and general in chief of the Confederate armies
2	C	Lt. Col.	Charles Marshall	Lee's aide-de-camp and the only other Confederate in the room
3	C	Lt. Col.	Walter H. Taylor	Lee's Adjutant
4	U	Lt. Gen.	Ulysses S. Grant	General in chief of the Union armies
5	U	Maj. Gen.	Philip Sheridan	Commander of the Army of the Shenandoah
6	U	Maj. Gen.	Edward O.C. Ord	Commander of the Army of the James
7	U	Lt. Col.	Ely S. Parker	Grant's military secretary who drafted the final surrender documents
8	U	Lt. Col.	Orville E. Babcock	Grant's aide-de-camp who escorted Lee to the McLean House
9	U	Lt. Col.	Horace Porter	Grant's aide-de-camp who provided an account of the meeting and later wrote a biographical memoir, <i>Campaigning with Grant</i>
10	U	Lt. Col.	Theodore S. Bowers	Grant's assistant adjutant general (assistant chief of staff)
11	U	Brig. Gen.	John A. Rawlins	Grant's adjutant general (chief of staff)
12	U	Brig. Gen.	Seth Williams	Grant's inspector general and former colleague of Lee at West Point
13	U	Lt. Col.	Adam Badeau	Grant's military secretary and aide-de-camp
14	U	Brig. Gen.	Rufus Ingalls	Grant's chief quartermaster of the armies operating against Richmond and Petersburg
15	U	Capt.	Robert Todd Lincoln	Grant's aide-de-camp and son of President Abraham Lincoln
16	U	Col.	Michael R. Morgan	Grant's chief commissary of subsistence of the armies operating against Richmond and Petersburg
17	U	Col.	George H. Sharpe	Grant's chief of intelligence and assistant provost marshal general
18	U	Lt. Col.	Cyrus B. Comstock	Grant's senior aide-de-camp
19	U	Brig. Gen.	George A. Custer	Commander of the 3rd Cav. Div. of the Army of the Shenandoah, which helped block Lee's retreat on April 9th, 1865
20	U	Capt.	William McKee Dunn, Jr.	Grant's aide-de-camp
21	U	Lt. Col.	Frederick T. Dent	Grant's aide-de-camp and brother-in-law
22	U	Maj. Gen.	Charles Griffin	Commander of the V Corps, which had arrived just in time to block General Lee's retreat on April 9th, 1865. April 10 th Commissioner.
23	U	Brig. Gen.	John G. Barnard	Grant's chief engineer of the armies in the field
24	U	Maj. Gen.	George Gordon Meade	Commander of the Army of the Potomac
25	U	Lt. Col.	James W. Forsyth	Sheridan's chief of staff
26	U	Maj. Gen.	John Gibbon	Commander of the Union XXIV Corps, which helped block Lee's retreat on April 9th, 1865. April 10 th Commissioner.
27	U	Maj. Gen.	Wesley Merritt	Sheridan's second in command as commander of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Shenandoah. April 10 th Commissioner.

Based on the number of attendance list mentions as shown in **Table 2** on page 4, in addition to Lee and Grant, a total of fourteen soldiers, shown in **bold blue**, attended at least some part of the 90 minute **Surrender Meeting** in Wilmer McLean's parlor as observers and/or witnesses to Lee's surrender to Grant. Some stayed only a few minutes at the beginning to meet Lee. Some stayed for longer periods of time to observe the negotia-

tions. A handful of Grant's top aides were invited by Grant to attend the entire 90 minutes, first to observe the negotiations and then to witness Lee and Grant signing the final surrender documents. Some arrived near the end just to witness the signing. Lee, Grant, Marshall, and Parker were present in the parlor for the entire time. Confederate Lt. Col. Walter H. Taylor plus the ten Union soldiers listed at the bottom of the table did not attend.

Table 2. Frequency of Mention of Attendees at the Surrender Meeting in Wilmer McLean's Parlor on April 9th, 1865, in the Village of Appomattox Court House, VA

			Number of Mentions:	Printed Text					Paintings / Illustrations						
#	Side	Rank	Alleged Attendee	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	Hits
1	C	General	Robert E. Lee	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11
2	C	Lt. Col.	Charles Marshall	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11
3	C	Lt. Col.	Walter H. Taylor										X^		1/11
4	U	Lt. Gen.	Ulysses S. Grant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11
5	U	Maj. Gen.	Philip Sheridan	X†	X†	X†	X†	X†	X†	X†	X†	X†	X†	X†	11/11
6	U	Maj. Gen.	Edward O.C. Ord	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11
7	U	Lt. Col.	Ely S. Parker	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11
8	U	Lt. Col.	Orville E. Babcock	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11
9	U	Lt. Col.	Horace Porter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X♦	X	X	X#	X♦	11/11
10	U	Lt. Col.	Theodore S. Bowers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11/11
11	U	Brig. Gen.	John A. Rawlins	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		10/11
12	U	Brig. Gen.	Seth Williams	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	9/11
13	U	Lt. Col.	Adam Badeau	X	X		X	X	X		X	X			7/11
14	U	Brig. Gen.	Rufus Ingalls	X	X	X		X	X		X	X			7/11
15	U	Capt.	Robert Todd Lincoln	X	X	X	X	X	X						6/11
16	U	Col.	Michael R. Morgan	X		X		X	X					X	5/11
17	U	Col.	George H. Sharpe					X%	X%						2/11
18	U	Lt. Col.	Cyrus B. Comstock	X•	X•		X•						X•		4/11
19	U	Brig. Gen.	George A. Custer							X*	X*		X*	X*	4/11
20	U	Capt.	William McKee Dunn, Jr.		X		X								2/11
21	U	Lt. Col.	Frederick T. Dent				X					X			2/11
22	U	Maj. Gen.	Charles Griffin							X			X		2/11
23	U	Brig. Gen.	John G. Barnard									X‡			1/11
24	U	Maj. Gen.	George Gordon Meade										X♥		1/11
25	U	Lt. Col.	James W. Forsyth										X		1/11
26	U	Maj. Gen.	John Gibbon										X#		1/11
27	U	Maj. Gen.	Wesley Merritt										X		1/11
			Attendees Named:	16	16	14	16	16	16	11	13	15	17	12	
			Attendees Shown:	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	16	11	17	16	18	15	
			Year Created:						2001	1965	1895	1888	1867	1867	

Table 2. Texts Key

Key	Text Source
A	National Park Service's official list
B	U.S. National Archive's official list
C	As one of Grant's aides-de-camp, Horace Porter published a biographical memoir Campaigning with Grant . (The Century Co., 1897); this is his first-person list — the standard against all other first-person lists
D	The Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library list of primary members serving on his military staff in April 1865
E	Article: Surrender at Appomattox marks beginning of end to Civil War The United States Army by David Vergun (April 7 th , 2015)

Table 2. Paintings Key (Continued)

Key	Painting	Description
F		Painting: <i>The Surrender</i> by contemporary artist Keith Rocco, (2001) based upon research by National Park Service historians and curators.
G		Painting: <i>Surrender at Appomattox</i> by Tom Lovell (1965) was done for the April 1965 issue of <i>National Geographic</i> magazine (Vol. 127, No. 4) on the 100 th anniversary of the surrender
H		Painting: <i>Peace in Union</i> by Thomas Nast (1895)
I		Illustration: <i>The Surrender at Appomattox Court-house</i> by Walter Taber (1888) from Vol. 4 of the book series <i>Battles & Leaders of the Civil War</i> , published by <i>The Century Company</i> . Taber's work became the visual standard for the event, influencing later famous renditions, such as the 1965 centennial painting by Tom Lovell.
J		Lithograph: <i>The Room in the McLean House, at Appomattox C.H., in which GEN. LEE surrendered to GEN. GRANT</i> , by John Ludlow Morton (1867); published by the firm of Major & Knapp Engraving, Manufacturing & Lithographic Co.
K		Painting: <i>The Surrender Scene Inside the McLean House</i> by Louis Mathieu Didier Guillaume (1867)

Table 2. Footnotes

Footnote Marker	Marker Name	Footnote
^	Caret	While Lt. Col. Taylor, Lee's adjutant, had been at Lee's side through nearly every major battle of the war, he specifically asked to be excused from the surrender meeting. His decision was largely emotional; he later wrote in his memoir, <i>Four Years with General Lee</i> , that he simply could not bear to witness the heartbreak of the formal surrender. Because Taylor was so closely associated with Lee throughout the war, post-war lithographs and recreations of the surrender often incorrectly depict him standing in the room behind Lee. Because Taylor opted out, Lt. Col. Charles Marshall, Lee's military secretary, was the only Confederate staff officer who accompanied General Lee into the McLean House parlor.
†	Dagger	Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, himself, years later stated <i>I was not there</i> . How is this possible when all eleven sources list him as present? Again, semantics: Sheridan and most of Grant's staff were asked to leave the parlor for a time.
◆	Diamond	Horace Porter is incorrectly given the rank of Lt. Gen. by two sources. His rank was Lt. Col. Only U.S. Grant was a Lt. Gen.
#	Number Sign	According to https://civilwar.si.edu/_appomattox_mcleanhouse.html , the figure on the left is Horace Porter. But the name under the figure in the painting says "Gibbon". Also, there is no name under the figure in the painting to Meade's immediate right (our left).
*	Asterisk	While many famous paintings and lithographs of the scene include Brig. Gen. George A. Custer, historians consider this artistic license. While the formal <i>Surrender Meeting</i> took place, Custer was reportedly outside the house, either on the front porch or front lawn, visiting with former West Point classmates who were serving in the Rebel army. Three sources back this up: 1) The official records of the National Park Service (Appomattox Court House) explicitly list the officers present in the parlor; Custer is notably absent. Their historical summaries clarify that his presence in popular paintings (like those by Tom Lovell) is artistic license. 2) In his <i>Personal Memoirs</i> , Grant's own account details specific staff members who accompanied him into the house. Custer is not among them. 3) In his book <i>Campaigning with Grant</i> , Horace Porter, an aide-de-camp to Grant and an eyewitness inside the room; presents a detailed list of attendees. Custer is not included.
●	Bullet	Lt. Col. Cyrus B. Comstock had been detached from Grant's immediate staff earlier that spring for a critical assignment in the Deep South. Stationed in Alabama, Comstock was serving as the Chief Engineer for Maj. Gen. Edward Canby's forces during the Mobile Campaign. On the same day Gen. Robert E. Lee was surrendering at Appomattox, Comstock was supervising the storming of Fort Blakeley, which led to the capture of Mobile, Alabama. Official records and Comstock's own biography confirm he was hundreds of miles away in Alabama at the time of the <i>Surrender Meeting</i> .
♥	Heart	Historical paintings and lithographs of the surrender occasionally include Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade for symbolic reasons, but official records from the National Park Service confirm he was not physically in the parlor. Meade had been suffering from stomach issues and a fever for several days and was traveling in an ambulance at the time. He remained with his troops in the field during the <i>Surrender Meeting</i> .
%	Percent	Col. George H. Sharpe, mentioned by only one text source and one painting/illustration source, was indeed present at the <i>Surrender Meeting</i> , and is the exception to the rule. See the Editor's comments on p. 10.
‡	Double Dagger	Brig. Gen. John G. Barnard was in the village of Appomattox Court House but did not attend the <i>Surrender Meeting</i> .

Table 3. Various Ranks Held Concurrently by Attendees at the Surrender Meeting in Wilmer McLean's Parlor on April 9th, 1865, in the Village of Appomattox Court House, VA

#	Side	Alleged Attendee	Active (Volunteer) Rank	Permanent (Regular Army) Rank	Brevet (Volunteer) Rank	Brevet (Regular Army) Rank
1	C	Robert E. Lee	General	General		
2	C	Charles Marshall	Lt. Col.			Capt./Maj./Lt. Col.
3	C	Walter H. Taylor	Lt. Col.			
4	U	Ulysses S. Grant	Lt. Gen.	Lt. Gen.	Col./Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.	
5	U	Philip Sheridan	Maj. Gen.	Maj. Gen.	Col./Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.	Brig. Gen.
6	U	Edward O.C. Ord	Maj. Gen.	Maj.		Col./Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.
7	U	Ely S. Parker	Lt. Col.	Capt.	Brig. Gen.	
8	U	Orville E. Babcock	Lt. Col.	Capt.	Lt. Col.	Maj./Col./Brig. Gen.
9	U	Horace Porter	Lt. Col.	Capt.		Maj./Lt. Col.
10	U	Theodore S. Bowers	Lt. Col.	Capt.	Brig. Gen.	
11	U	John A. Rawlins	Brig. Gen.	Brig. Gen.	Maj. Gen.	Maj. Gen.
12	U	Seth Williams	Brig. Gen.	Lt. Col.	Maj. Gen.	Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.
13	U	Rufus Ingalls	Brig. Gen.	Maj.	Maj. Gen.	Lt. Col./Col./Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.
14	U	Adam Badeau	Lt. Col.	Capt.		Lt. Col./Col./Brig. Gen.
15	U	Robert Todd Lincoln	Capt.			
16	U	Michael R. Morgan	Col.	Maj.		Lt. Col./Col./Brig. Gen.
17	U	George H. Sharpe	Col.		Brig. Gen.	
18	U	Cyrus B. Comstock	Lt. Col.	Maj.	Maj. Gen.	Brig. Gen.
19	U	George A. Custer	Brig. Gen.	Capt.	Brig. Gen.	Maj. Gen.
20	U	William McKee Dunn, Jr.	Capt.	Capt.		
21	U	Frederick T. Dent	Lt. Col.	Maj.		Col./Brig. Gen.
22	U	Charles Griffin	Maj. Gen.	Capt.	Maj. Gen.	Maj./Lt. Col./Col./Brig. Gen.
23	U	John G. Barnard	Brig. Gen.	Lt. Col.	Maj. Gen.	Col./Maj. Gen.
24	U	George Gordon Meade	Maj. Gen.	Maj. Gen.	Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.	Brig. Gen.
25	U	James W. Forsyth	Lt. Col.	Capt.	Brig. Gen.	Maj./Lt. Col./Col./Brig. Gen.
26	U	John Gibbon	Maj. Gen.	Capt.		Lt. Col./Col./Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.
27	U	Wesley Merritt	Maj. Gen.	Capt.	Maj. Gen.	Brig. Gen./Maj. Gen.

For the regular army, promotions during peacetime come extremely slowly. During wartime, promotions can come quickly. So it is that the Civil War soldiers on this list could have had up to four concurrent ranks:

One's **Active (Volunteer) Rank** was the rank held by each attendee on April 9th, 1865. If he had been with the army prior to the Civil War, he would have a concurrent **Permanent (Regular Army) Rank**. When peace was restored, he would automatically revert back to this rank.

For example, George A. Custer was a brevet (acting) major general in the Civil War and reverted to captain after the war before eventually being promoted to lieutenant colonel in the Regular Army.

On April 12th, 1861, the official size of the U.S standing (permanent) Regular Army was 16,402 officers and men.

Despite this official "***paper strength***," only approximately 14,657 personnel were actually present and fit for duty. This small force was largely decentralized, with most troops scattered across roughly 80 remote outposts in the Western territories to manage frontier defense.

Finally, there were two **Brevet Ranks**, one for the Volunteer Army and one for Regular Army, in which one could receive a commission (promotion) giving a military officer higher nominal rank without a concomitant bump in pay. This was usually given for gallantry, bravery, initiative, death or incapacitation of a senior officer, etc.

[Ed.: This table is important, because officers in the Civil War often held brevet ranks, and many times are referred to by this rank. To keep a level playing field, I confirm the soldier's active (volunteer) rank and use that instead of any brevet rank he might currently hold.]

(Continued from p. 2)

I arbitrarily drew the line after 17. Col. George H. Starke. Why? The reason is that not all sources are equal as to reliability and credibility. For the text sources, Columns “A”-“E”, the level of reliability and credibility decreases from left to right. Columns “A” and “B” are the U.S. National Park Service and the U.S. National Archive. These government agencies have had the resources and decades to investigate and evaluate primary source data such as letters, diaries, newspaper articles, etc. concerning the **Surrender Meeting**.

A second difference in source material arises when one compares the text data versus the paintings/illustrations data. For example, Wilmer McLean lost a lot of possessions to souvenir hunters immediately after the meeting ended. Yes, he was paid in gold for some of the items. But a number of objects disappeared without compensation.

Eventually, Wilmer McLean contracted with Major Wilmer Scott (sometimes referred to as Captain Wilmer Scott) to produce a commemorative artwork. [Ed.: *what are the odds that both their names were “Wilmer”?!*] McLean had famously moved from Manassas (site of the first major Civil War battle) to Appomattox (site of the last “major” battle and the surrender that followed) to escape the war, only to have it end in his front parlor. He had hoped, in vain it turned out, to recoup financial losses by selling a “correct” depiction of the surrender.

Scott was tasked with commissioning an artist to create the lithograph based on the room where the meeting occurred. The most famous resulting work is the 1867 lithograph entitled *The Room in the McLean House, at Appomattox C.H., in which GEN. LEE surrendered to GEN. GRANT*. This is the thumbnail picture “J” in the Painting Key on p. 5 as well as the picture shown directly below. Ultimately, McLean’s venture was a financial failure, as he struggled to market the prints effectively.



The lithograph features a line-up of 18 notable Union and Confederate officers, including Lee and Grant, along with key military figures like Philip Sheridan, George Custer, and George Meade. Several individuals depicted, including Custer and Meade, were included for artistic, rather than strict, historical accuracy regarding the scene inside the parlor. So much for creating a “correct” depiction of the surrender. In Table 2, Columns “A” and “B” (the two government text sources). Both exclude Custer and

Meade from their lists.

Where Was Custer?

While the formal meeting took place, Custer was reportedly outside the house, visiting with former West Point classmates who were serving in the Confederate army. Although he was not in the room for the signing, Custer is inextricably linked to the event because of a “relic” taken from the parlor.

For \$20 in gold, Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan purchased the small oval table on which Grant had drafted the surrender terms. Sheridan then presented the table to Custer as a gift for his wife, Libbie Custer, along with a note praising Custer’s “gallantry” during the final campaign. Libbie Custer eventually donated the table to the Smithsonian Institution, where it is now on display at the National Museum of American History.

Where Was Meade?

Although Meade was the commander of the Army of the Potomac, which had been pursuing Lee’s forces since May 1864, he was approaching Appomattox from the east and remained with his troops in the field during the meeting. Meade had been suffering from stomach issues and a fever for several days and was traveling in an ambulance at the time. Grant proceeded to the meeting with only his immediate staff and a few generals, Sheridan and Ord, who happened to be nearby.

What About Lt. Col. Cyrus B. Comstock?

Both Column “A” and “B”, i.e., the U.S. National Park Service and the U.S. National Archive, include Lt. Col. Comstock as being present in the parlor during the **Surrender Meeting**. According to them, Comstock had spent much of the final months of the war detached to coordinate major engineering efforts, such as the siege of Mobile, Alabama. Supposedly, he had returned to Virginia just in time for the final campaign. So, what’s the beef?

There are several lines of evidence that put Comstock still in Alabama during the meeting on April 9th. On the very day Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Comstock was supervising the storming of Fort Blakeley, which led to the capture of Mobile, AL—the last major Confederate stronghold on the Gulf Coast. There were witnesses.

While some lithographs or paintings of the surrender occasionally include various staff officers for artistic completeness, official records and Comstock’s own biography confirm he was hundreds of miles away in Alabama at the time of the meeting.

A Question of Semantics

From Sheridan’s posthumously-published 1888 memoir focusing primarily on his military career we learn that after being presented to Lee, he, Maj. Gen. Ord., and nearly all of Grant’s staff withdrew from the parlor to wait for the surrender agreement to be finalized. They re-entered the room only after Lt. Col. Babcock announced that the surrender had been made. Their presence had been billed as observers and then as witnesses to the

signing. It's unclear that this was the case.

What we do know is that Lee, Grant, Lt. Col. Charles Marshall (Lee's aide-de-camp and the only other Confederate in the room), and Lt. Col. Ely S. Parker (Grant's military secretary) were present in the parlor for the entire duration of the meeting. It seems that others, members of Grant's staff as well as high-ranking officers, came and went. This may be the source of the confusion and chaos that resulted from different sets of attendees being formed into unique groupings.

As to the meeting, itself, there were four phases. In the first phase, Grant initiated some small talk to break the ice. That ended after a bit when Lee reminded Grant of the business at hand. In phase two, they discussed what the surrender terms should entail. In phase three, they each wrote out a brief letter, which were then transcribed into ink copies.

Grant's letter, drafted by him in his own hand, contained the Terms of Surrender. It was five sentences long and was formally copied by Parker. It allowed Confederate officers and men to return home if they pledged not to take up arms again.

Lee's letter, drafted by him in his own hand, contained the acceptance of Grant's terms. It was three sentences long and was formally copied by Marshall.

The fourth and final phase was for each to sign their own letter. A more detailed set of Articles of Agreement was drafted the next day, April 10th, by a group of six Commissioners, three from each side. These individuals had been named during the April 9th meeting. This document detailed the logistics of how Lee's army would disband, including the parking of artillery and the distribution of parole papers to individual soldiers. The Union Commissioners (Griffin, Gibbon, Merritt) show up as alleged attendees to the April 9th meeting when, in fact, they only appeared in McLean's parlor the next day, April 10th.

The Painting/Lithograph Sources

Over the years, a number of paintings have been commissioned to commemorate the **Surrender Meeting**. I have selected five of them as representative. These are mentioned in the **Paintings Key** ("F"-**K**) and will be discussed here.

K. *The Surrender Scene Inside the McLean House* (1867) by Louis Mathieu Didier Guillaume is con-



The Knapsack

sidered to be one of the most accurate records of the room's décor. It shows the placement of the furniture, including the specific vases and horsehair sofa that the National Park Service later used to replicate the interior.

These sketches are vital because Union officers began taking the original furniture as souvenirs almost immediately after the generals departed, making it impossible for later photographers to capture the room as it appeared during the historic meeting.

This painting is a notable interpretation of the event, placing a large group of Union officers in the room, whereas historical accounts often suggest a smaller, more intimate gathering during the actual signing. One thing Guillaume got right is that the 5'10.5" Lee is correctly shown to be taller than the 5'8" Grant. At the time, the average height of a U.S. soldier was 5'8", making Grant of average height. The average height of an American male in general in the mid-eighteenth century was 5'6". The tallest Civil War soldier was thought to have been Union Private David Van Buskirk at roughly 6'10.5" tall. In comparison, a typical English or French soldier of the mid-1860's was between 5'5" and 5'6" tall, while the average height of a U.S. soldier today is 5'9".

One thing Guillaume got wrong are the heights of the officers standing in front of the far wall. Those nearest the bookcase with glass doors are shorter than the horizontal wooden frame holding the top panes of glass. Compare this to the men in the painting ("**F**") *The Surrender* by Keith Rocco (2001). The men closest to the bookcase are taller than that horizontal wooden frame. The original blueprints for McLean's house indicate that the ceiling in the parlor is 8'6" above the floor. That would make those two men about 4' tall. Guillaume was forced to do this in order to squeeze together most of the men across the far wall.

J. *The Room in the McLean House, at Appomattox C.H., in which Gen. Lee surrendered to Gen. Grant*



(1867) by John Ludlow Morton was commissioned by Wilmer McLean (as previously shown on p. 7) and published by the firm of Major & Knapp Engraving, Manufacturing & Lithographic Co. The figures in this 1867 picture are (l. to r.): Porter, Custer, Comstock, Babcock, Marshall, Lee, Taylor, Sheridan, Grant, Rawlins, Griffin, Gibbon, **Unknown**, Meade, Parker, Forsyth, Merritt, Bowers, and Ord. The soldier labeled **Unknown** is not ident-

ified in the picture's legend but some have thought it to be Maj. Gen. Joshua L. Chamberlain, a hero of Gettysburg who presided over the formal surrender of arms by Lee's Army of Northern Virginia on April 12th, 1865.

The person in question is standing just to Meade's right (our left) but further back in front of the bookcase. Meade



Maj. Gen. Joshua L. Chamberlain

Unknown

is facing to our left, is centered in front of the bookcase, and has a full beard and receding hairline.

Are these two gentlemen the same person. I think not. Chamberlain has a much fuller mustache and no hair

on his jaw line. What else is wrong with this lithograph? The original has a set of captions running across the bottom of the picture. Each caption gives the name of the person directly above it.

The left-most person, we are told, is Horace Porter but his caption reads "**GIBBON**". In addition, Custer, Comstock, Taylor, Griffin, Gibbon, Meade, Forsyth, and Merritt are all listed as being in the picture. (They almost sound like the name of a law firm!) And yet, none of them were present in the parlor according to evidence presented in **Table 2**.

Finally, there are 18 individuals in the picture. None of the other ten lists had more than sixteen attendees mentioned. Fully six of the eleven lists, or slightly over one-half, have exactly sixteen mentioned. Sixteen is most likely the actual number of people that were present in the parlor at some point during the approximately ninety minute meeting.

I. **The Surrender at Appomattox Court-house** (1888)



by Walter Taber from Vol. 4 of the book series **Battles & Leaders of the Civil War**, was published by **The Century Company**. Taber's work became the visual standard for the event, influencing later famous renditions, such as the 1965 centennial painting by Tom Lovell.

H. **Peace in Union** (1895) by Thomas Nast.



Thomas Nash's Santa Claus

Thomas Nast was a political cartoonist and editorial journalist who had a quarter-century career at **Harper's Weekly** newspaper (1862-1886). He published almost 2,200 illustrations and cartoons. Overall, he caricatured 450 different people, including the modern visual caricature of Santa Claus!

On April 9th, 1895 — exactly 30 years after Appomattox and almost ten years after Grant died — Nast completed **Peace in Union**, a nine-by-twelve foot picture of the participants and witnesses at the surrender. The picture had been commissioned the previous year by Herman Kohlsaas, a wealthy Chicago entrepreneur and friend of Nast, who knew Grant in 1860 when both of them and future Brig. Gen. John Rawlins lived in Galena. Kohlsaas donated Nast's masterpiece to the Galena public library on April 27th, Grant's seventy-third birthday.

In addition to Sheridan and Rawlins, the painting portrayed Parker (between Grant and Rawlins on the right). Nast romanticized the picture by depicting Grant and his staff in dress uniforms.

G. **Surrender at Appomattox** (1965) by Tom Lovell



was commissioned for the April 1965 issue of **National Geographic** magazine (Vol. 127, No. 4) on the 100th

anniversary of the surrender. The artwork is celebrated for its meticulous historical accuracy and composition, showing Lee seated at a marble-topped table while Grant and other Union officers look on. From left to right, they are: Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan (standing far left), Lt. Col. Orville E. Babcock, Lt. Col. Horace Porter, Gen. Robert E. Lee (seated), Lt. Col. Charles Marshall (standing behind Lee), Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant (seated), Maj. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord, Maj. Gen. Seth Williams, Lt. Col. Theodore S. Bowers, Lt. Col. Ely S. Parker (Grant's military secretary, standing behind Grant), Maj. Gen. George A. Custer (standing far right with a red kerchief). As noted before, Custer was not present.

F. **The Surrender (2001)** by contemporary artist Keith Rocco, based upon research by National Park Service historians and curators.



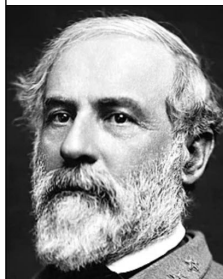
[Ed.: Although Col. Sharpe, Grant's chief of intelligence, is depicted in this painting, he appears in none of the other five paintings and is mentioned as being present in only one of the text documents ("E"), and that was neither of the two reliable government lists ("A" & "B").

Again, it comes down to semantics. Technically, he was not there to observe the discussion. Nor was he there to witness the signing of the surrender documents. Instead, toward the end of the meeting, when Lee mentioned that his men were starving, having not eaten in several days, Grant called Sharpe in to provide his intelligence assessment. Sharpe's accurate estimate of 25,000 starving Confederate soldiers allowed Grant to immediately order enough rations for them. Thus, Sharpe popped in and popped right back out, mostly unnoticed. Some of Grant's other staff members may have had the same experience.]

The Surrender Meeting Attendees

The following pages present a thumbnail sketch of each of the sixteen officers who were most likely to have attended the Lee-Grant **Surrender Meeting** in Wilmer McLean's parlor. The officers will be discussed in the order in which they appear in **Table 1** (the order is the same for **Tables 1, 2, and 3**).

1. Gen. Robert E. Lee (Jan. 19th, 1807 – Oct. 12th, 1870)



Gen.
Robert E. Lee

The Final Week

After the Confederate army had been devastated by casualties, disease and desertion, the Union attack on Petersburg, Virginia, finally succeeded on April 2nd, 1865. Gen. Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, was forced to abandon Richmond that same day.

Leading the remnants of his much-reduced army in a retreat westward, he attempted to escape to the southwest to join up with Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee in North Carolina. However, on April 9th, after just seven days, and with the remnants of his army surrounded, Lee attempted a final breakout. When this failed, Lee was left with a profound sense of duty and a somber acceptance of defeat. He famously told his staff that morning, "**There is nothing left for me to do but to go and see General Grant, and I would rather die a thousand deaths**".

The surrender would take place later that same day in Wilmer McLean's parlor in the village of Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

Morning Preparations

After a failed breakout attempt early that morning, Lee realized continued fighting would be a "**useless sacrifice**" of his men.

To meet Grant, Lee dressed "**faultlessly**" in his finest gray dress uniform, including a red silk sash and a ceremonial sword, in stark contrast to Grant's mud-spattered field attire. However, according to one source, Lee and his staff had had to abandon the wagon containing their wardrobes toward the end of the retreat, and could only continue with the clothes on their backs, so each chose to wear the best outfit they had.

Witnesses noted that Lee appeared grave but composed, spending much of the morning pacing while waiting for Grant's response to his request for a meeting.

The Meeting at McLean's House

During the **Surrender Meeting**, which began around 1:00 p.m., Lee maintained a formal and dignified bearing:

He initially engaged in brief, "**awkward**" small talk with Grant about their service in the Mexican War before politely steering the conversation back to the business at hand.

Lee specifically requested that his men be allowed to keep their horses and mules for spring planting, noting it would have a "**happy effect**" on his army.

After reading Grant's written terms, Lee remarked they were "**substantially the same**" as previously discussed and signed the acceptance letter drafted by his aide, Charles Marshall.

He also admitted his troops were starving, living on "*parched corn*," and "*gladly accepted*" Grant's offer of 25,000 rations.

Departure and Farewell

Around 3:00 p.m., Lee exited the McLean House and stood on the porch, smiting his hands together in a distracted "*reverie*" while waiting for his horse, Traveller.

As he rode back to his lines, his soldiers crowded around him, many in tears. He told them, "*Men, we have fought through the war together; I have done my best for you; my heart is too full to say more.*"

The day after his surrender, Lee issued a formal *Farewell Address (General Order No. 9)* to his army. Then he rode back to his home in Richmond.

2. Confederate Lt. Col. Charles Marshall (Oct. 3rd, 1830 – April 19th, 1902)



Lt. Col. Charles Marshall

As General Robert E. Lee's military secretary and aide-de-camp since March 1862, Lt. Col. Charles Marshall handled the essential logistics and paperwork for the Confederacy, penning all of Lee's communications. He was also Lee's assistant adjutant general; this administrative title allowed him to issue orders and manage the documentation for the Army of Northern Virginia.

On April 9th, 1865, Lee's other senior aide, Walter Taylor, declined to attend the emotional proceedings. Therefore, Marshall became the only Confederate officer who accompanied Lee into the *Surrender Meeting* with Grant and his staff of approximately a dozen Union officers.

Marshall played several critical roles throughout the day:

Earlier that morning, after Lee and Grant had agreed to meet, Lee sent Marshall with an orderly into the village to scout ahead for a suitable location for the conference. Marshall encountered local Appomattox Court House resident Wilmer McLean, who eventually offered his own brick home after Marshall rejected a more dilapidated building.

After Grant wrote the surrender terms, Lee directed Marshall to draft the formal letter of acceptance, which Lee then signed.

The following day, April 10th, Lee tasked Marshall with writing *General Order No. 9*, Lee's famous final address to the Army of Northern Virginia.

3. Lt. Col. Walter H. Taylor (June 13th, 1838 – Mar. 1st, 1916)

Confederate Lt. Col. Walter H. Taylor, Robert E. Lee's adjutant and a devoted staff officer, was not present at the McLean House during Lee's surrender to Grant. Instead, Lt. Col. Charles Marshall, Lee's military secretary, took his place.



Lt. Col. Walter H. Taylor

While Taylor had been at Lee's side through nearly every major battle of the war, he specifically asked to be excused from the *Surrender Meeting*. To justify his absence, Taylor claimed he was exhausted after having already taken two long rides that day to carry messages between the lines. Lee accepted this explanation and allowed him to remain behind.

Taylor's decision was actually largely emotional; he later wrote in his memoir, *Four Years with General Lee*, that he simply could not bear to witness the heartbreak of the formal surrender. He "*shrank from this interview*" and did not want to see his commander endure the "*trying ordeal*" of surrendering to Grant.

Earlier that morning of April 9th, Taylor had been with Lee when they met Union officer Orville Babcock under an apple tree to arrange the meeting. While the surrender took place, Taylor remained at the Confederate camp or in the immediate vicinity rather than entering the village with Lee. Despite missing the meeting, Taylor remained a central figure in Lee's circle. Just days later, he appeared in the famous series of photographs taken by Mathew Brady on the back porch of Lee's home in Richmond.

While he missed the meeting in the parlor, Taylor remained active in other capacities. Throughout the morning of April 9th, he helped facilitate the flag of truce and the delivery of communications between Lee and Grant. Taylor witnessed Lee's emotional return to the Confederate camps after the meeting. He later provided detailed firsthand accounts of the army's reaction to the surrender in his memoirs. In the days following the surrender, he assisted Lee with the final paperwork of the army and accompanied him back to Richmond on April 12th. Because Taylor was so closely associated with Lee throughout the war, post-war lithographs and recreations of the surrender often incorrectly depict him standing in the room behind Lee.

Interestingly, another officer named Richard Taylor (a Confederate Lt. Gen. and son of former U.S. President Zachary Taylor) surrendered his own forces in Alabama a few weeks later, but he was not involved in the Appomattox proceedings.

4. Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant (April 27th, 1822 – July 23rd, 1885)



Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant

The Final Week

On April 2nd, Union Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered a general assault on Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's forces; Lee abandoned Petersburg and Richmond, which Grant captured. A desperate Lee and part of his army attempted to link up with the remnants of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army. Sheridan's cavalry stopped the two armies from converging, cutting them

off from their supply trains. Grant sent his aide, Lt. Col. Orville E. Babcock to carry his last dispatch to Lee demanding his surrender. Grant immediately rode west, bypassing Lee's army, to join Sheridan who had captured Appomattox Station, blocking Lee's escape route. On his way, Grant received a letter from Lee stating Lee would surrender his army. The **Surrender Meeting** took place in the parlor of Wilmer McLean's home in the village of Appomattox Court House.

On April 9th, 1865, after the **Surrender Meeting**, Grant acted with remarkable magnanimity and emotional restraint, famously stating, **"The war is over. The rebels are our countrymen again."** His demeanor was characterized by a lack of triumphalism and a focus on national reconciliation rather than the humiliation of his adversary.

Appearance and Demeanor

Grant arrived at the McLean House in a mud-splattered field uniform, wearing the boots and blouse of a private with only his general's shoulder straps to indicate his rank. This stood in sharp contrast to Lee's immaculate dress uniform.

Despite the victory, Grant later wrote in his memoirs that he felt **"sad and depressed"** at the downfall of a foe who had fought so valiantly for a cause that he [Grant] personally believed was **"one of the worst for which a people ever fought."**

Grant had been suffering from a severe migraine for days; he noted that the pain vanished instantly the moment he read Lee's letter agreeing to the **Surrender Meeting**.

Actions During the Meeting

To ease the tension, Grant initiated small talk about their service during the Mexican-American War, recalling that they had met once before.

When Lee asked for the terms, Grant sat at a small oval-topped table and hurriedly wrote them out by hand.

Key Concessions

Grant allowed Confederate officers to keep their sidearms and private baggage.

After Lee explained that his cavalry and artillerymen owned their own horses, Grant verbally agreed to let every man who claimed a horse or mule take the animal home for spring planting.

Upon learning Lee's army was starving, Grant immediately ordered 25,000 rations to be sent to the Confederate camp.

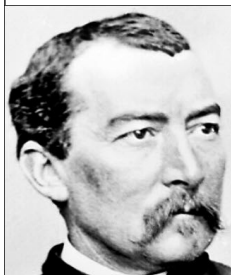
Post-Meeting Restraint

When Union troops began firing a 100-gun salute to celebrate the victory, Grant ordered them to stop immediately, saying, **"The Confederates were now our prisoners, and we did not want to exult over their downfall."**

As Lee rode away from the McLean House, Grant stepped onto the porch and raised his hat in a silent sa-

lute, a gesture his staff emulated.

5. Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan (Mar. 6th, 1831 – Aug. 5th, 1888)



Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan

As the commander of the Union cavalry, Maj. Gen. Phillip H. Sheridan had been the **"spearhead"** of the pursuit that finally cut off Lee's westward escape route on the morning of April 9th, 1865. This forced Lee to realize that further fighting was futile and put into motion Lee's surrender later that day. Sheridan was notoriously aggressive and initially suspected Lee's request for a truce was a deceptive tactic to gain time. He only reluctantly consented to a sus-

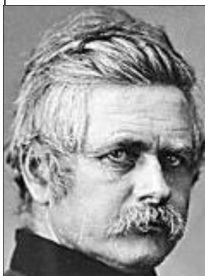
pension of hostilities once he was convinced a formal **Surrender Meeting** was truly imminent.

Sheridan's presence as a witness in the **Surrender Meeting** is well-documented in historical records and memoirs. Sheridan was part of the dozen or so high-ranking combat commanders and staff officers who accompanied General Grant into the house about 30 minutes after General Lee had arrived.

Following the signing, Sheridan famously purchased the spool-turned small oval pine side table Grant used to write the surrender terms from Wilmer McLean for \$20 in gold. Sheridan presented this table to Elizabeth **"Libbie"** Custer, the wife of General George Armstrong Custer, as a tribute to her husband's role in the campaign, with a note stating that no person had contributed more to the end of the war than her husband.

While Sheridan was definitely present at the meeting, some historians and period witnesses have provided conflicting accounts of exactly where he stood or when he entered the room, leading to varying depictions in famous surrender paintings.

6. Maj. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord (Oct. 18th, 1818 – July 22nd, 1883)



Maj. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord

As the commander of the Army of the James, Maj. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord had played a crucial role in the final pursuit of Lee's forces, leading his troops on a grueling forced march of over 30 miles in 21 hours to block the Confederate line of retreat.

His arrival with the XXIV Corps on the morning of April 9th was just in time to block Lee's last western escape route and was a decisive factor that convinced Lee that further resistance was impossible. This act was later described by Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman as one of the **"chief causes of Lee's surrender."**

Ord was one of the senior Union commanders who accompanied Grant into the parlor to witness the historic surrender event. Following the formal meeting,

Ord, for \$40 (roughly \$840 today), purchased the square marble-topped table at which Lee had sat and signed the surrender documents. The original table now resides in the Chicago History Museum.

Ord is frequently included in historical paintings and lithographs of the scene, often shown standing near other top commanders like Sheridan.

7. Lt. Col. Ely S. Parker (1828 – Aug. 31st, 1895)



Lt. Col. Ely S. Parker

Before the war, Lt. Col. Ely S. Parker had been a trained lawyer (though barred from practicing because he wasn't considered a citizen) and a civil engineer. His administrative precision was highly valued by Grant, who trusted him to handle the most sensitive paperwork of the war's conclusion.

As Grant's military secretary plus a Seneca Indian and a Chief of the Six Nations, Parker played a critical and symbolic role in the surrender proceedings. Upon being introduced to

Parker, Lee reportedly stared at him for a moment and remarked, *"I am glad to see one real American here"*. Parker famously replied, *"We are all Americans, sir."*

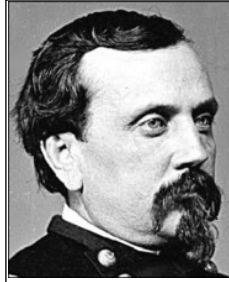
It is well known that Parker was chosen to transcribe Grant's penciled surrender terms. As the highest-ranking Native American in the Union Army at the time, Parker's presence at the surrender is considered one of the most significant moments for Indigenous history during the Civil War.

What is much less well known is that Parker was not Grant's first choice! After Grant had drafted the terms in pencil in his manifold order book, he first asked Lt. Col. Theodore S. Bowers, Grant's assistant adjutant general (assistant chief of staff), to perform the transcription to ink. Bowers, after three failed attempts, and ruining several sheets of paper, gave up because he was too emotional to write. Grant then turned to Parker, who had the best penmanship on his staff. Without hesitation or quiver, Parker transcribed the formal ink copies of the surrender terms in a steady, clear hand. The documents were then signed by both Grant and Lee.

Parker remained in the room for the duration of the meeting as a witness alongside other members of Grant's staff. Because of his role in drafting the document, Parker is a central figure in almost every historical painting of the McLean House parlor scene.

8. Lt. Col. Orville E. Babcock (Dec. 25th, 1835 – June 2nd, 1884)

During the week-long pursuit, Grant had been in contact with Lee, imploring him to give up and stop the bloodshed. Back and forth went the messages, until Lee was finally cornered on April 9th. At this point, enter Union Lt. Col. Orville E. Babcock, one of Grant's trusted aides-de-camp. As such, he played a pivotal role in the events of that morning, as the liaison who physically facilitated the meeting between Grant and Lee.



Lt. Col. Orville E. Babcock

Grant had sent Babcock into the Confederate lines to deliver the letter that officially agreed to meet Lee and discuss surrender terms for the Army of Northern Virginia. Under a flag of truce, Babcock found Lee resting under an apple tree near the village of Appomattox Court House, VA, and personally escorted him and his aide, Col. Charles Marshall, into the village. Now, since Appomattox Court House was the county seat, such an important meeting would normally have been held in the courthouse, itself. However, the courthouse was closed because of the holiday.

In the Christian religion, Palm Sunday is celebrated yearly to commemorate Jesus Christ's triumphant ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, to the adulation of his followers, one week prior to what would become known as Easter. Christ would be crucified on Good Friday, five days following Palm Sunday. In parallel to this, President Lincoln, himself, would be assassinated on Good Friday, April 14th. Coincidence or not, this would contribute to Lincoln's martyrdom.

While Babcock stayed with Lee, Marshall scouted for a suitable alternate meeting location. Coming across resident Wilmer McLean, when asked for a suitable surrender location, McLean first showed Marshall an empty house, practically devoid of furniture. When this was turned down as unbefitting such a historic event, McLean then offered his own home, a brick structure and one of the finest buildings in the sleepy village. This Marshall accepted. He then brought Babcock and Lee to the McLean house.

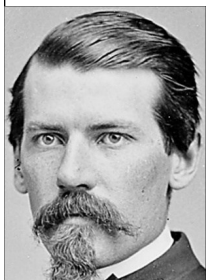
While waiting for Grant to arrive, Babcock sat with Lee and Marshall for a time on McLean's front porch. Witness accounts note that Babcock was remarkably polite and respectful, helping to maintain a dignified atmosphere during the tense wait. The three then entered McLean's house at approximately 1:00 p.m. They would wait approximately 30 minutes in the parlor before Grant's arrival. While waiting for Grant to arrive, Babcock was seen frequently looking anxiously out the window to watch for the Union commander's approach. At some point, Lee expressed concern that the fighting might resume if Grant didn't arrive soon. Babcock wrote a brief note to Union commanders in the area, informing them that a truce was in effect and negotiations were imminent, which helped prevent further bloodshed that morning.

Lee's message accepting Grant's offer to meet to discuss terms of surrender had found Grant early that morning with Lee's army interposed between McLean's home and himself. Grant would have to ride 20 miles to circumnavigate Lee's army without being, himself, captured. Following Grant's arrival around 1:30 p.m., introductions were made and some small talk ensued. After a bit, Lee reminded Grant what they were there for, and the meeting began in earnest. Babcock remained in the room as one of the approximately dozen Union officers

who were official witnesses to the discussion and signing of the surrender documents.

Babcock is a prominent figure in historical paintings of the scene, such as the Keith Rocco painting ([Table 2, Paintings Key "F"](#)), where he is typically depicted standing near Grant. Babcock was later given the honor of carrying the official news of the surrender to the War Department in Washington, D.C.

9. Lt. Col. Horace Porter (April 15th, 1837 – May 29th, 1921)



As an aide-de-camp to Grant, Lt. Col. Horace Porter was a key witness to the surrender and later became one of the event's most prominent chroniclers. Porter initially waited on the front lawn while Grant and Lee began their private meeting. He was later summoned into the parlor with the rest of the staff to be formally presented to General Lee.

Lt. Col. Horace Porter

Porter took detailed field notes during the meeting, providing a detailed description of the scene, famously comparing the somber atmosphere to entering a *"sick-chamber"* where a patient is dangerously ill. These notes later became the basis for his biographical memoir, *Campaigning with Grant*, which focuses on Porter's firsthand observations while serving as Grant's aide-de-camp during the final year of the Civil War, April 1864 through the surrender at Appomattox.

Porter's book remains the most vivid, authoritative, and widely quoted eyewitness account of the surrender, and is used by historians to reconstruct the events of that afternoon. In it, Porter documented the pre-surrender conversation between Grant and Lee, noting a polite exchange that touched on their shared service in the Mexican War, personal appearances, and nostalgia for the pre-war army. Following this interlude, Porter then noted that Lee redirected the conversation to the business of the surrender. Porter also famously provided specific details on the contrast between Grant's mud-spattered uniform and Lee's pristine dress attire.

Immediately after the meeting, Porter purchased one of the chairs from the McLean parlor for \$20 in gold. He then assisted in the logistical flurry, helping to process the *"famous telegram"* announcing the surrender and the orders to distribute rations to the starving Confederate army. At this time, Grant presented the headquarters flag that had been carried through the Wilderness campaign to Porter as a token of his service.

Returning to *Campaigning with Grant*, the *Surrender Meeting* is but a small part of Porter's memoir. The book provides an intimate portrait of Grant's daily habits, personal traits, and specific conversations that Porter claimed to have recorded in field notes. Historians often rank it as one of the most important primary sources for understanding Grant's leadership style and character, second only to Grant's own memoirs. However, some modern historians have questioned the accuracy of Porter's verbatim accounts, suggesting he may have embel-

lished certain scenes or conversations years after the war. Porter remained a loyal supporter of Grant throughout his life, eventually serving as his personal secretary during the first term of Grant's presidency.

Porter is often depicted in historical illustrations and paintings of the event, typically shown standing with other staff members such as Parker and Seth Williams.

10. Lt. Col. Theodore S. Bowers (Oct. 10th, 1832 – Mar. 6th, 1866)



Lt. Col. Theodore S. Bowers

As Grant's Assistant Adjutant General and a senior aide-de-camp, Lt. Col. Theodore S. Bowers was a key member of the military staff in the parlor that afternoon. When it came time to write the formal copy of the surrender terms in ink, Grant originally asked Bowers to perform the task. However, Bowers was reportedly so overcome with emotion and *"shaken by the magnitude of the occasion"* that he was unable to write. Because Bowers could not complete the assignment, the duty fell to Lt.

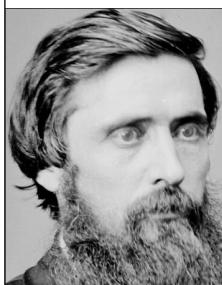
Col. Ely S. Parker, Grant's military secretary, who famously drafted the final document. Bowers remained in the room for the duration of the meeting as a formal witness to the signing of the documents.

During the meeting, Grant instructed Bowers to prepare an order for 30,000 rations to be delivered to Lee's starving troops. Despite his *"shaking hands"* during the transcription, Grant highly valued Bowers' administrative skills and unswerving fidelity. Later that afternoon, Bowers transcribed the official telegram Grant sent to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to report Lee's surrender.

Bowers died tragically young on Mar. 6th, 1866, at the age of 33 when he was killed instantly in a freak accident after falling between two moving cars while boarding Grant's train at Garrison's Station, the halt serving West Point.

Bowers is frequently depicted in historical paintings of the event, such as Keith Rocco's *"The Surrender,"* which is based on research by National Park Service historians.

11. Brig. Gen. John A. Rawlins (Feb. 13th, 1831 – Sept. 6th, 1869)



Brig. Gen. John A. Rawlins

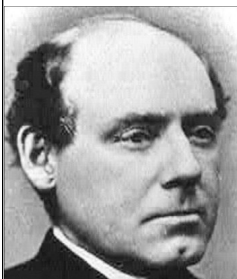
As Grant's Chief of Staff and one of his closest confidants, Brig. Gen. John A. Rawlins was among the dozen Union officers permitted to witness the formal surrender of Lee in Wilmer McLean's parlor. Despite his declining health due to tuberculosis, which he had contracted in 1863, Rawlins remained at Grant's side throughout the Appomattox Campaign.

Just before arriving at the McLean House, Grant, who had been suffering from a severe migraine headache for days, upon

reading Lee's letter agreeing to meet; handed the message to Rawlins to read aloud to the staff, and exclaimed that his migraine had been cured!

Rawlins had become Grant's aide-de-camp in May 1862. They had met in 1854 while both were residing in Galena, Illinois. During the war, his rise had mirrored that of Grant; as Grant advanced to command all Union forces, Rawlins' administrative responsibilities and rank increased accordingly to manage the headquarters operations. After the war, when Grant won the presidency in the election of 1868 and assumed office in March 1869, he named Rawlins as his Sec. of War. Tragically, Rawlins' tuberculosis worsened and he died on Sept. 6th, 1869, after only 5 months into his term, aged 38.

12. Brig. Gen. Seth Williams (Mar. 22, 1822 – Mar. 23, 1866)



Brig. Gen. Seth Williams

As the Inspector General on Grant's staff, Brig. Gen. Seth Williams played a significant and personal role during the [Surrender Meeting](#). Williams was a key member of the Union delegation and was one of the approximately dozen Union officers who entered the McLean House parlor to witness the drafting and signing of the surrender documents.

Known as one of the most-liked men in the Union army for his ["discriminating tact"](#) and courtesy, Williams helped maintain the dignified and respectful atmosphere of the meeting. Some historical accounts note that Williams assisted in drafting or finalizing the surrender documents alongside Parker.

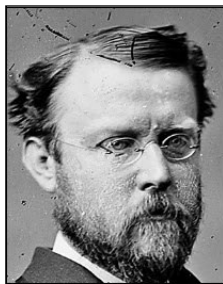
Williams and Lee had had a prior relationship; Williams had served as the Adjutant at West Point while Lee was the Superintendent. Thus it was that in the days leading up to the surrender (specifically April 7th and 8th), Williams was the officer entrusted by Grant to carry the initial messages across the lines to Lee, calling for the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. Some accounts indicate that Williams also helped finalize the initial ["feeler"](#) messages to Lee from Grant. During the [Surrender Meeting](#), Lee reportedly stopped to speak with Williams directly, acknowledging their former acquaintance. As such, Williams was the only Union officer afforded this distinction by Lee.

While Williams served as an Inspector General on Grant's staff at the time of the surrender, he had previously been the long-serving Adjutant General of the Army of the Potomac under several commanders, including George Meade.

Williams tragically would die of a brain ailment described as an ["inflammation"](#) just one day after his forty-fourth birthday.

13. Lt. Col. Adam Badeau (Dec. 29th, 1831 – Mar. 19th, 1895)

As one of Grant's military secretaries and aides-de-camp



Lt. Col. Adam Badeau

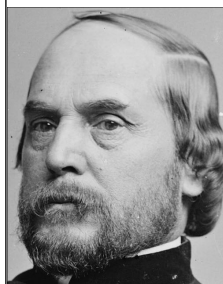
Lt. Col. Adam Badeau was among the dozen officers who were eyewitnesses to the surrender proceedings. While Grant and Lee initially began their meeting with only a single aide each, i.e., Parker and Marshall, Grant eventually invited the rest of his staff, including Badeau, into the parlor to be formally presented to Gen. Lee.

After the war, Badeau became Grant's official biographer. His work, [Military History of Ulysses S. Grant from April 1861 to April 1865—Vol. III](#) (1881), provided one of the primary detailed descriptions of the parlor and the conduct of the two generals during the meeting. Badeau drew heavily on his firsthand experiences and access to headquarters records to document the surrender for history and to identify the key officers present in the McLean House parlor during the surrender. While the meeting began privately, Badeau notes that numerous Union officers were present in the room as silent observers while terms were finalized.

Three days after the meeting at Appomattox, Grant assigned Badeau to serve as the president of the Relief Commission of Richmond, where he managed humanitarian aid for approximately 15,000 citizens in the captured Confederate capital. Badeau later assisted Grant with the research and fact-checking for Grant's own [Personal Memoirs](#), though he left the project before its completion following a dispute over pay and credit.

In Keith Rocco's famous historical painting of the surrender, which is based on extensive research, Badeau is depicted in the back row leaning forward.

14. Brig. Gen. Rufus Ingalls (Aug. 23rd, 1818 – Jan. 15th, 1893)



Brig. Gen. Rufus Ingalls

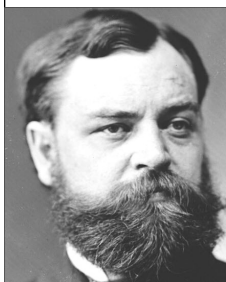
As the Chief Quartermaster for the combined Union armies, and a member of Grant's staff, Brig. Gen. Rufus Ingalls was one of the approximately a dozen Union officers who witnessed the surrender of Lee in Wilmer McLean's parlor. Like many officers in the room, Ingalls was a West Point graduate (Class of 1843) and had previously known Lee from their service in the U.S.-Mexican War. Ingalls' presence underscored the immense logistical effort that had supported Grant's campaign, which ultimately forced the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Ingalls was a long-time friend of Grant (they were roommates at West Point), and Grant valued his presence during this historic moment. Even while the meeting was in progress, Ingalls was responsible for the massive logistical feat of sustaining the Union army at the end of a rapid pursuit. Immediately following the meeting, he was tasked with coordinating the transportation of supplies to the area, including 25,000 rations Grant promised for Lee's starving soldiers.

Like many others in the room, Ingalls participated in the

unofficial **"auction"** of the McLean furniture. He purchased a small table from the parlor for \$10, which he kept as a memento of the occasion.

15. Capt. Robert Todd Lincoln (Aug. 1st, 1843 – July 26th, 1926)



Capt. Robert Todd Lincoln

As the eldest son of President Abraham Lincoln, **Capt. Robert Todd Lincoln** had been serving on Grant's staff as an assistant adjutant since Feb. 1865, after his father personally wrote to Grant asking for a staff position that would keep him away from frontline combat. According to fellow staff officer Horace Porter, Robert was **"exceedingly popular"** with the other aides and insisted on performing his share of the hard work without special treatment.

Lincoln was part of about a dozen Union officers who accompanied Grant into the McLean parlor to witness the meeting with Lee. Immediately following the surrender, Robert traveled back to Washington and, on the morning of April 14th, personally provided his father with a formal, firsthand description of the Surrender Meeting—hours before the President was assassinated that evening at Ford's Theater.

Lincoln was the last living person to have been in McLean's parlor when the surrender occurred. In historical depictions, such as Keith Rocco's painting **"The Surrender,"** he is often shown standing behind Grant's chair.

16. Brig. Gen. Michael R. Morgan (Jan. 18th, 1833 – Sept. 16th, 1911)

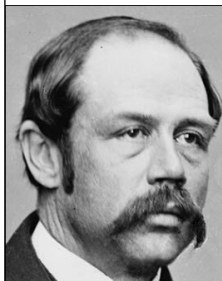
As a member of Grant's staff, Brig. Gen. Michael R. Morgan served as the Chief Commissary of Subsistence for the armies operating against Richmond. He was also one of the roughly dozen senior Union officers Grant formally presented to Lee during the meeting. Morgan stood as an official witness to the signing of the surrender documents. His role was crucial in the immediate aftermath of the meeting, as Grant tasked him with coordinating the delivery of 25,000 rations to the starving Confederate troops after Lee's mention that his men had been without food for several days.



Brig. Gen. Michael R. Morgan

As the Chief Commissary, Morgan was responsible for ensuring the Union's own supply lines remained intact during the rapid pursuit of Lee's army, a feat that allowed Grant's forces to stay in the field and eventually corner the Confederates at Appomattox. Morgan's work also ensured that the **"generous terms"** Grant offered—which included feeding the defeated army—could be carried out immediately, helping to transition Lee's soldiers from combatants back to **"countrymen."**

17. Col. George H. Sharpe (Feb. 26th, 1828 – Jan. 13th, 1900)



Col. George H. Sharpe

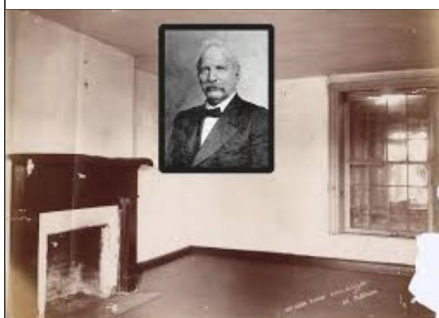
Col. George H. Sharpe was present at the McLean House on April 9th, 1865, serving in his capacity as the head of the Bureau of Military Information—the Union's primary intelligence agency. His role during and after the surrender meeting was as follows:

Sharpe was one of the roughly dozen hand-picked officers who entered the parlor with Grant. His presence was a testament to his value as Grant's **"spymaster,"** as his intelligence reports had been instrumental in predicting Lee's movements throughout the Appomattox Campaign.

Sharpe's most critical task began immediately after the meeting. Because his department maintained the most accurate records and rosters of the Confederate forces, Grant assigned him to oversee the printing and distribution of nearly 30,000 parole passes, including the one issued to Lee. Sharpe coordinated the massive clerical effort. He worked closely with John Gibbon to utilize the portable printing presses that produced the official documents allowing Lee's men to return home.

Like many officers present, Sharpe purchased a **"relic"** from the surrender room. He famously spent \$10 in gold but there is disagreement as to what he received. His **"relic"** was either the pair of brass candlesticks that had been on the table where the surrender documents were signed, or else one of the chairs from the McLean parlor.

The Wilmer McLean Parlor, Circa 1890



This is the only known photograph of the original parlor room where Lee's surrender occurred, taken by Adam H. Plecker around 1890. In 1893, the McLean House was sold to a group of speculators who planned to dismantle

it and move it to Washington, D.C., as a Civil War museum.

After the dismantling was completed, the speculators ran out of money and the pile of loose bricks and lumber sat outside in the elements for decades before wood rot made any thought of reconstruction, at least with that material, impossible. The original house design was saved and in 1940, the house was rebuilt from scratch on its original foundation. 5,000 of the original bricks were still available and in good enough condition to be reincorporated into McLean House 2.0. The gentleman in the inset image within the photograph of Wilmer McLean's parlor is Adam H. Plecker, himself.

Civil War-Ending Confederate Surrenders — On the Land

#	1865 Date	Surrendering Confederate Forces		Capturing Union Forces		Location
		Entity	Leader	Entity	Leader	
1	April 9th	Army of Northern Virginia	Gen. Robert E. Lee	Army of the Potomac / Army of the Shenandoah / Army of the James	Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant	Appomattox Court House (McLean House)
2	April 26th	Army of Tennessee	Gen. Joseph E. Johnston	Army of the Tennessee / Army of the Ohio	Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman	Bennett Place, Durham Station, NC
3	May 4th	Dept. of Alabama, Mississippi, & East Louisiana	Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor	Army of West Mississippi	Maj. Gen. Edward Canby	Citronelle, AL
4	May 10th	Confederate Govt. (Capture)	President Jefferson Davis	4th Michigan Cavalry	Lt. Col. Benjamin Pritchard	Irwinville, GA
5	May 10th	Dept. of S. Carolina, Georgia, & Florida	Maj. Gen. Sam Jones	Union District of Florida	Brig. Gen. Israel Vogdes	Tallahassee, FL
6	May 11th	Northern Arkansas Forces	Brig. Gen. M. Jeff Thompson	Dept. of the Missouri	Maj. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge	Chalk Bluff, AR
7	May 26th	Trans-Mississippi Dept.	Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith	Army of West Mississippi	Maj. Gen. Edward Canby	New Orleans, LA
8	June 2nd	Dept. of the Trans-Mississippi (Official signing)	Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith	Union Forces	Maj. Gen. Edward Canby	Galveston, TX
9	June 23rd	Indian Territory Forces (Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, etc.)	Brig. Gen. Stand Watie	Union Forces	Lt. Col. Asa C. Matthews	Doaksville, Indian Territory

At Appomattox Court House on April 9th, 1865, Grant, expressed his hope that Lee's surrender would *"lead to a general suspension of hostilities, and be the means of preventing any further loss of life."* Upon the surrender, Grant told his men, *"The war is over. The rebels are our countrymen again,"* effectively signaling that the legal and moral justification for further fighting elsewhere had vanished. In his *Farewell Address (General Order No. 9)*, Lee told his troops

that he consented to the result because *"valor and devotion could accomplish nothing that would compensate for the loss that must have attended the continuance of the contest."* Lee's surrender and Grant's generous terms—which allowed soldiers to go home *"unmolested"* as long as they obeyed the law—became the template for the cascading series of surrenders shown above that followed Lee's example.

Civil War-Ending Confederate Surrenders — On the Sea

#	1865 Date	Surrendering Confederate Commerce Raider		Recipient		Location
		Vessel	Captain / Commander	Entity	Leader	
1	May 10th	<i>CSS Nashville</i>	Lt. John W. Bennett	West Gulf Blockading Squadron	Rear Admiral Henry Knox Thatcher	Nanna Hubba Bluff, Tombigbee River, Alabama
2	May 19th	<i>CSS Stonewall</i>	Capt. Thomas Jefferson Page	Capt. Spanish-General of Cuba / East Gulf Blockading Squadron	Gen. Domingo Dulce y Garay / Acting Rear Admiral Cornelius K. Stribling	Havana, Cuba
3	June 3rd	<i>CSS Missouri</i>	Lt. Jonathan H. Carter	Mississippi Squadron	Lt. Commander W. E. Fitzhugh / Acting Rear Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee	Shreveport, Louisiana
4	July 10th	<i>CSS Rappahannock</i>	Lt. Charles M. Fauntleroy	U.S. State Dept. / U.S. Navy	Representatives	Calais, France
5	Nov. 6th	<i>CSS Shenandoah</i>	Lt. James Iredell Waddell	HMS Donegal / British Royal Navy	Captain James Paynter	River Mersey, Liverpool, England

While land forces could receive news within days, Confederate ships were often thousands of miles from any port and had no way to receive orders or news of the war's end. The most famous example, the *CSS Shenandoah*, was in Micronesia at the time of Lee's surrender and later moved to the Arctic Ocean to target Union whaling fleets. Ships had to rely on encountering neutral vessels or finding months-old newspapers to learn about events in the United States. Without

official word of the Confederacy's collapse, captains felt duty-bound to continue their missions. Once naval commanders realized the war was over, they faced a legal crisis. Because they had continued to sink ships after the official surrender of the government, they feared being treated as pirates rather than prisoners of war. This led the *Shenandoah* to sail all the way to Liverpool, England, to surrender to British authorities rather than risk surrendering to the U.S. Navy.

News of the RCWRT



Upcoming 2026 RCWRT Meetings

Meetings are held in the auditorium of the Springmoor Life Care Community, located at 1500 Sawmill Road in north Raleigh, NC. Light refreshments starting at 6:30 p.m. will precede the program, which starts at 7:00 p.m.

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
May 11 th , 2026	Robert M. "Bert" Dunkerly, M.A.	Surrenders of the Civil War
June 8 th , 2026	Mark Laubacher	A Surgeon's Life Aboard the USS Monitor
July 2026	N.A.	Summer Hiatus
August 2026	N.A.	Summer Hiatus

A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE



Brig. Gen.
Edward Porter
Alexander

When I first joined the Army of Northern Virginia in 1861, I found a connection of my family, Wilmer McLean, living on a fine farm through which ran Bull Run, with a nice farmhouse about opposite the center of our line of battle along the stream. Confederate Brig. Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard made his headquarters at this house during the first affair between the armies—the so-called battle of Blackburn's Ford, on July 18th. The first hostile shot which I ever saw fired was aimed at this house, and about the third or fourth went through its kitchen, where our servants were cooking dinner for the headquarters staff.

I had not seen or heard of McLean for years, when, the day after the surrender, I met him at Appomattox Court House, and asked with some surprise what he was doing there. He replied, with much indignation: *"What are you doing here? These armies tore my place on Bull Run all to pieces, and kept running over it backward and forward till no man could live there, so I just sold out and came here, two hundred miles away, hoping I should never see a soldier again. And now, just look around you! Not a fence rail is left on the place, the last guns trampled down all my crops, and Lee surrendered to Grant in my house."* McLean was so indignant that I felt bound to apologize for coming back, and to throw all the blame for it upon the gentlemen on the other side.

— Brig. Gen. Edward Porter Alexander, *Century Mag.*



Wilmer McLean



The Knapsack

is the official newsletter of the RCWRT and is published around the 1st of each month.

(April 2026 Circulation: 387)

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Readers are encouraged to submit photos, events, & articles for publication to Bob Graesser, Editor (RaleighCWRT@yahoo.com; 919-244-9041)

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Phil Ferrell	Board Member
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ald	

Paying Memberships / Total Members: 122 / 148

We welcome two new members as of April, 2026:
From Raleigh: Chip Stokes & his son Ward Stokes.

CWRT Congress News & Events



Mike Movius is the founder and president of the CWRT Congress. He is also the former president of the Puget Sound CWRT in Seattle, WA. Mike publishes a monthly emailing of Civil War-related News & Events. The most recent issue (05-06-2026) can be accessed from your internet browser at the following URL: <https://mailchi.mp/cwrtcongress.org/cwrt-congress-news-events-15966270?e=09bb052ae9>



The Raleigh Civil War Round Table was formed on March 12th, 2001 and is a 501(c)(3) "tax exempt organization."

We meet on the second Monday of each month. Annual membership dues are \$30 (individual and family) and \$10 for teachers. Student membership is free. Half-year memberships are available March through May for \$20. Dues should be submitted to Griff Bartlett, Treasurer, 908 Kinsdale Drive, Raleigh, NC 27615-1117 by Sept. 15th each year.