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APPOMATTOX Court House  
April 9, 1865

Appomattox Court House, VA., April 9, 1865. Army of the Potomac; Army of the James. Appomattox Court House was the County Seat of Appomattox County, and is about 65 Miles nearly Due West of Petersburg. On the night of April 2 the Confederate army under Gen. R. E. Lee evacuated the entrenchment's about Richmond and Petersburg and started for Danville. Lee's object was to effect a junction with the Confederate forces under Gen. J. E. Johnston in North Carolina, but Gen. Grant Commanding the Union armies, divined the enemy's intentions and disposed his forces to intercept the retreat, thus forcing Lee to change his course toward Lynchburg. The crying need of the Confederate army was rations. For several days the men had nothing to eat but parched corn, and some had not even that. Early on the morning of the 7th, seven trains, loaded with Supplies for the Confederate army, arrived at Farmville, where the Petersburg & Lynchburg railroad crossed the Appomattox river, and the work of distributing rations was commenced. Before the work of unloading the trains could be completed Gen. Ord was so close upon Farmville that Lee ordered the remaining trains to Appomattox Court House, 20 Miles farther West, and moved his army toward that point by the roads on the north side of the River. Lee was detained by the 2nd corps, under Gen. Humphreys, within 4 Miles of Farmville all Day on the 7th, which Gave Gen. Sheridan an opportunity to push the Federal cavalry around to Appomattox Station and capture the trains, and again the Confederate army was without food or forage. From Farmville, on the evening of the 7th, Grant wrote the following letter to the Confederate commander:

"General: The result of the last week must convince you of the hopelessness of further resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia in this struggle. I feel that it is so, and regard it as my duty to shift the responsibility of any further effusion of blood by asking of you the surrender of that portion of the C. S. Army known as the Army of Northern Virginia."

Before this letter was received several of Lee's own generals had proposed to him to surrender. They saw that in the end defeat was certain, and realized that the longer the surrender was postponed the greater would be the suffering of their unfortunate soldiers. Concerning the condition of the Confederate army at this time, Badeau Says: "Lee had himself no idea of the strength of his command. The officers were involved in the demoralization of the men; they made no effort to prevent straggling, and shut their eyes on the hourly reduction

of their force, riding, dogged and indifferent, in advance of their commands. Only when the national columns caught up and attacked the rear did some of the old spirit seem to reanimate these jaded veterans. Whenever they were summoned to resist, they faced boldly around, and then, like wounded beasts, they struck out terrible blows. The fighting at Sailor's creek was as desperate for awhile as in any battle of the war, and the repulse of Miles on the 7th, the capture of a portion of Crook's Cavalry with Gregg himself at their Head, showed like the expiring flashes of a nearly burnt out fire."

To Grant's Letter Lee replied the same night: "General: I have received your note of this Date. Though not entertaining the opinion you express of the hopelessness of further resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia, I reciprocate your desire to avoid useless effusion of blood, and therefore, before considering your proposition, ask the terms you will offer on condition of its surrender."

Although the way for negotiations looking to a surrender was thus opened neither side remained idle. During the night of the 7th Lee withdrew from his position in front of the 2nd corps and hurried on toward Appomattox Court House, Humphreys following and Gen. Wright with the 6th corps moving on a Parallel road in an effort to cut off the line of retreat. The rations received at Farmville improved the spirits and physical condition of the Confederate soldiers, and, though Humphreys and Wright strained every nerve to overtake the enemy, at midnight on the 8th it looked as if Lee might reach Lynchburg. On the 8th letters were again exchanged between Grant and Lee. The former wrote:

"General: Your note of last evening, in reply to mine, of same Date, asking the condition on which I will accept the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, is just received. In reply I would say that, peace being my great desire, there is but one condition I would insist upon, viz., that the men and officers surrendered shall be disqualified for taking up arms again against the government of the United States until properly exchanged. I will meet you, or will designate officers to meet any officers you may name for the same purpose, at any point agreeable to you, for the purpose of arranging definitely the terms upon which the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia will be received."

Lee wrote: "General: I received at a late hour your note of today. In mine of yesterday I did not intend to propose the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, but to ask the terms of your proposition. To be frank, I do not think the emergency has arisen to call for the surrender of this army; but as the restoration of peace should be the sole object of all, I desired to know whether your proposals would lead to that end. I cannot, therefore, meet you with a view to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia; but as far as your proposal may affect the C. S. forces under my command, and tend to the restoration of peace, I should be pleased to meet you at 10

A.M. tomorrow, on the old stage road to Richmond, between the picket-lines of the two armies."

In the meantime Ord, with Griffin's (5th) Corps, Gibbon's (24th), and a division of the 25th, had been rapidly moving westward and about daylight of the 9th joined Sheridan at Appomattox Station, 5 Miles South of the Court House. Lee was now between two strong forces, though that fact was not known to him until a few hours later. He had reasons to believe that Sheridan was between him and Lynchburg and ordered Fitzhugh Lee, supported by Gordon's corps, to attack the Federal cavalry early on the morning of the 9th and open a way for the remainder of the Army. Sheridan dismounted and advanced a part of his command, with instructions to fall back gradually when attacked, thus drawing the enemy upon Ord's line of battle. This movement was successfully executed, but as soon as the enemy discovered the infantry he stopped his pursuit of the cavalry and began to fall back toward the Court House. Sheridan mounted his men and moved quickly around to the enemy's Left, While Ord advanced in Front. Custer, whose division was in Advance, was about to charge the trains and the confused mass of Confederates in his front, when A White Flag was displayed and hostilities were ordered to be suspended. A similar order was also sent to Humphreys and Wright, who at 11 A.M. had come up with the enemy's skirmishers, 3 Miles from Appomattox Court House. To Lee's letter of the 8th Grant had replied as follows: "General: Your note of yesterday is received. As I have no authority to treat on the subject of peace the meeting proposed for 10 A.M. today could lead to no good. I will state however, General, that I am equally anxious for peace with yourself, and the whole North entertain the same feeling. The terms upon which peace can be had are well understood. By the South laying down their arms they will hasten that most desirable event, save thousands of human lives, and hundreds of Millions of property not yet destroyed."

This was written and dispatched early on Sunday Morning, April 9, and immediately afterward Grant started for the Head of the column. At 10 A.M. Lee Rode out to the picket-line on the stage road, where he hoped to Meet Grant in accordance with his request of the Day before. There he was handed Grant's communication. Knowing that a large force was between him and Lynchburg and another close upon his Rear, Lee evidently changed his mind regarding the "emergency" that called for the surrender of his army. Writing in duplicate a request for an interview and asking a suspension of hostilities, Several Couriers were sent in different directions in search of the Federal General. One of these communications reached Grant about noon and he immediately replied as follows: "Your note of this Date is but this moment (11:50 A.M.) received, in consequence of my having passed from the Richmond and Lynchburg road to the Farmville and Lynchburg road. I am at this writing about Four Miles West of Walker's Church and will push forward to the front for the purpose of meeting you. Notice sent to me on this road where you wish the interview to Take Place will meet me."

Grant was then conducted to Sheridan's line of battle. In his Memoirs he says he found the troops very much excited, believing that Johnston was coming up from North Carolina and that Lee's action was all a ruse to gain time. He says the men declared that they would whip Lee's army in five minutes if he would let them go in. Grant, however, knew more about the location of Johnston's Army than did the men and besides he had no doubt that the Confederate general was acting in Good Faith. Lee was found at the house of A Mr. McLean in the village, his army being drawn up on Clover Hill, Just outside the Town. After some friendly conversation, Lee suggested that Grant reduce his terms to writing, in order that they might be more carefully gone over and considered. In response to this request Grant wrote the following:

"General: In accordance with the substance of my letter to you of the 8th instant, I propose to receive the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on the following terms, to wit: Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate-one copy to be given to an officer to be designated by me, the other to be retained by such officer or officers as you May designate, the officers to give their individual paroles not to take up arms against the government of the United States until properly exchanged, and each company or regimental commander sign a like parole for the men of their commands. The arms, artillery, and public property to be packed and stacked, and turned over to the officers by me to receive them. This will not embrace the side-arms of the officers, nor their private horses or baggage. This done, each officer and man will be allowed to return to their homes, not to be disturbed by United States authority as Long as they observe their paroles, and the laws in force where they May Reside."

In discussing the terms Lee said that the artillerists and cavalrymen of the Confederate army owned their own horses, and asked if it was to be understood that these men were to be permitted to retain them. Grant Told him that it was not so stipulated in the written proposition but that as most of the men were probably farmers, and would need their horses in the cultivation of their crops, the horses might be retained by the men, and that he would so instruct the officers left behind to receive the paroles of the troops. This verbal promise of the Union general was sacredly kept, thus leaving every Confederate soldier who claimed to own a horse or mule in full possession of the Same. Lee then sat down and wrote the following reply to Grant's proposal: "General: I have received your letter of this Date containing the terms of surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia as proposed by you. As they are substantially the same as those expressed in your letter of the 8th instant, they are accepted. I will proceed to designate the proper officers to carry the stipulations into effect."

Grant appointed Maj.-Gen. John Gibbon, Bvt. Maj.-Gen. Charles Griffin, and Bvt. Maj.-Gen. Wesley Merritt to carry into effect the terms of the agreement, and Bvt. Brig-Gen.

George H. Sharpe, assistant Provost-Marshal-General, to take charge of the rolls and paroles. Lee appointed Lieut.-Gen. James Longstreet, Maj.-Gen. John B. Gordon, and Brig.Gen. W. N. Pendleton. The commands of Gibbon and Griffin and Mackenzie's cavalry were left at Appomattox until the paroling of the surrendered army was completed, and to take charge of the public property. The remainder of the army was directed to move to Burkeville. As Lee's army was without rations, Grant directed that the trains captured by Custer at Appomattox Station on the 8th should be run back to that point and the Confederates supplied from their captured stores. According to the official reports the Union losses from March 29, the beginning of the Appomattox campaign, until April 9 aggregated 1,316 killed, 7,750 wounded and 1,714 missing. During the same period the Confederates lost not less than 5,000 in killed and wounded, and 46,495 were captured. In the final surrender 27,516 men were paroled, 22,633 stand of small arms and all the munitions of war belonging to the Army of Northern Virginia were turned over to the Federal authorities. The four years' war was at an end.

Source: The Union Army, vol. 5

**Source Information:**

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**Description:**

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