

“No One Wants to Be the Last to Die”

The Battles of Appomattox,
April 8–9, 1865

Chris Calkins
with Bert Dunkerly, Patrick A. Schroeder,
and Melody F. Bage



Savas Beatie
California

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Acknowledgments

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Numerous co-workers at Petersburg National Battlefield were instrumental in the research and completion of this project. John R. Davis, Chief of Interpretation, supported me entirely, allowing other duties to fall by the wayside as I spent months writing. My research company, James H. Blankenship, Jr, Historian City Point Unit, accompanied me on many field trips, offering perceptions of events and interpretations. His thoughts were greatly appreciated in checking the balance of this study. Other cohorts include Pat Graham, Pam Blystone, and Inez Baldwin, the "belle of Dinwiddie," who helped with typing and research. To Janice Mattox, I owe many thanks for wading through my handwritten manuscript and providing a copy for my editors.

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I dedicate these volumes to the people of Southside, Virginia, for this is their history, of which they should all be proud. The honorable men of the North and South certainly chose a beautiful place to end to the drama and bring peace to our country.

As with the first volume, I could not have finished without the generous help of many. Foremost, I wish to thank Ronald Wilson, Historian, Appomattox Court House, N.H.P. His review and suggestions added to the thoroughness of the text. I alone assume responsibility for errors that might be present. Mr. Robert K. Krick, Historian, Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania N.M.P., again graciously accepted the job of editor, meeting hurried deadlines against his own busy schedule. Harold Howard deserves praise for his continuing efforts to not only document Virginia battles and leaders in this series but memorializing those Virginians who served in the Confederacy. His work is a fitting tribute to those men.

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Finally, special credit should be given to my parents. Twenty-five years ago, they took me to Gettysburg, sparking my interest in the Civil War. They encouraged my study, and nurtured it to a point, causing me to pursue a career related to preserving the tangible evidence of that conflict. To them I express heartfelt thanks.

Chris Calkins
Petersburg, Virginia

Acknowledgments

(Savas Beatie, 2023 edition)

This monograph was published over three decades ago, dealing with the two engagements at Appomattox preceding the surrender on April 8–9, 1865. It was part of a series, *Battles and Leaders*, published by H. E. Howard, Inc. of Lynchburg, Virginia. Since it was part of a locally published voluminous series, it did not receive the proper attention. Due to its length, it was printed in two volumes, *The Battles of Appomattox* and *The Final Bivouac*. The period covered was April 8th, to the end of May 1865, with the Union Army marching to Washington D.C., and mustering out of the service.

There were two main purposes in writing this book. The first was to document the locations of the two battles fought immediately before and preceding the surrender of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The second was to determine the troop movements with each battle. These goals were accomplished by using primary sources, including first-person accounts, period area maps, a physical study of the terrain, and documenting locations with archeological evidence.

Initially, this monograph detailed the events between April 8th through the 12th, with the paroling and disbanding of Lee's army. During research, it became apparent that the story didn't end at Appomattox. While Lee's soldiers were allowed to return to their homes, Grant's men had to remain active as occupation troops for the area around Southside Virginia, the region they most recently passed through amidst the final campaign.

With Burkeville Junction as their staging area, they spread along the Richmond & Danville and South Side Rail Roads, occupying the major cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Lynchburg, and Danville. During the next month, they acted as Provost Guards, keeping the peace and protecting supply lines. The narrative ends with Federal troops being summoned to Washington to be mustered out, and finally go home.

The value of this book goes far beyond the material contained within and the interpretations developed, adding knowledge for future historians for generations to come. Consequently, the material presented has been put to good use positively. Historians working for the National Park Service at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park use this book as a basis for their interpretive programs, expanding public understanding of the significance of this site. More importantly, the troop movement maps were used by the National preservation group, American Battlefield Trust (formerly The Civil War Trust), to purchase over 557 acres of blood-soaked land, where the final contest took place at Appomattox. Being a part of saving land for future generations to enjoy is an honor few authors can claim.

As with the first editions of this study, numerous individuals played a role in its republication. First and foremost, I would like to thank Mrs. Caitlin Gills and Kandace McCabe, who reset the original typescript to the style needed for the current publisher, Savas Beatie. Both ladies have or currently serve as Virginia State Park employees at Sailor's Creek Battlefield, or High Bridge Trail.

Holding the torch at Appomattox, as the current National Park Service Historian, is Patrick Schroeder. We regularly compare notes or trade new information on the events before and after the surrender. He saw value in my earlier publication, *The Appomattox Campaign*, and had it reprinted in paperback to add to the small number of works written on this subject matter.

I would be remiss not to mention all my staff at Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park, who continually share the story of this episode in the final days of the American Civil War in the Old Dominion. Mrs. Barbara Dickerson and Mrs. Melody Bage, kindly reproduced, proofed, and read the document for final publication. Chief Ranger Lee Wilcox; Park Ranger, Maintenance, Ken Townsend; Education Specialists, Jim Godburn and Josh Lindamood; and the park's greatest cheerleader and Office Manager, Sandie Ingersol. These individuals have significantly contributed to this Virginia State Park.

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These individuals have contributed greatly to the development of a first-person living history program at the park. Beginning with Sergeant John Howard, lately of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry, and now a former Confederate soldier who would stay in the area as a farmer, and Lieutenant Calkins, 26th Michigan Infantry, who was assigned to the Provost Guard in Appomattox County during its post-war occupation. These two would represent the soldiers, both North and South, telling their stories to thousands of visitors to Appomattox. This program is still one of the park's main interpretive modes.

As one of the originals of this program, I would like to dedicate this volume to Mr. Harold E. Howard. May he rest in peace.

Preface

“Who will write the history of that march? Who will be able to tell the story? Alas! How many heroes fell!”

Former Confederate soldier Canton McCarthy posed this question to future historians concerning the Appomattox Campaign in his classic *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia* (1882). Since then, a few writers produced works detailing the final week of the war in Virginia, from March 29 to April 9, 1865. Of note are the publications by Burke Davis, *To Appomattox: Nine April Days, 1865* (1959), Burleigh Rodick, *Appomattox: The Last Campaign* (1965), Philip Van Doren Stern, *An End to Valor: The Last Days of the Civil War* (1958), and Morris Schaff, *The Sunset of the Confederacy* (1912). The authors provided human interest narratives on each day's events, without detailed information on the lines of march for each army, or accurate troop emplacements for the various engagements. Most accounts describe a commanding officer's point of view or a specific military command without presenting the whole perspective.

In *Thirty-Six Hours Before Appomattox* (1980), an endeavor was made to delineate the movements of each army on April 6 and 7, 1865. Additionally, it furnishes battle descriptions for the three engagements at Sailor's Creek, the two skirmishes for High Bridge, the capture of Farmville, and the Federal sortie at Cumberland Church. This monograph continues where *Thirty-Six Hours* terminated—the final day's march of the campaign on April 8, the engagement that evening near Appomattox Station, the Battle of Appomattox Court House on the morning of the 9th, and the subsequent surrender. Since the formal surrender between Generals Lee and Grant has been presented in other works, only what transpired within the ranks during the four-day stay at Appomattox will be discussed in this book.

The final chapters serve as a social history of how the surrender affected civilians and the soldiers of both armies. The occupation of Southside Virginia and the subsequent Danville Expedition, April 23–May 27, 1865, were attempts by Federal authorities to overcome the problems of a disrupted society caused by the war's ending and the slaves' emancipation. How the citizen soldiers handled this is a story worth recording.

One of the major problems, while preparing this study, was the lack of primary sources, especially Confederate. After the final drama, few participants took time to document their observations of what had taken place regarding the last two engagements before the surrender at Appomattox Station and Appomattox Court House. Because so little was recorded, one contemporary writer, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Tremain, remarked: "There has been quite a popular impression that, on the morning of the 9th, seeing the difficulty of his position, Lee quietly determined to surrender without an engagement and acted accordingly."¹ This understanding is still held by many Civil War historians who do not realize that the morning's battle was responsible for Lee surrendering.

Concerning that encounter, a member of the 1st Maine Cavalry noted: "The position of the troops at Appomattox has never been accurately shown, nor has the spectacular view, from the circling amphitheater of hills clustering on the west, south, and east of their historical village and crowned in glory with the Union blue, ever been pictured or described."² An 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry trooper added to this by giving his reasons for this oversight:

The operations which took place on the morning previous to the suspension of hostilities are the least understood of any that took place during the entire war; for all were so elated over the termination of the war and speedy return home, that they gave the detail of the engagement no thought until later years, when it was too late to definitely put the matter. All the official reports of the Appomattox Campaign are meagre in their account of this crowning event.³

Tremain added that he believed nobody understood what transpired that morning because "the battlefield was extensive; and, as the reports show, numerous small combats occurred upon it in different places and at about the same hour."⁴ By using existing primary source documentation, cartographic aids, ground investigation, and archaeological data, an attempt will be made to provide readers with a treatise on those memorable days in the history of our country. It will be their story, as told by numerous eyewitnesses. Their

1 Henry Edwin Tremain, *Sailor's Creek to Appomattox Court House*, La Royale (Part VIII), Amended Edition by J. Watts de Peyster, (New York: Charles H. Ludwig, Printer, 1885), 34.

2 Jonathan P. Cilley, "Report of the Last Campaign." *First Maine Bugle, Declares*, (Cincinnati, OH, September 30, 1928), 85.

3 *History of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry*, (Philadelphia: Franklin Printing Co., 1902), 156.

4 Henry Edwin Tremain, *Last Hours of Sheridan's Cavalry*, (New York: Bonnell, Silver & Bowers, 1904), 432.

prejudices will be apparent, and interpretations of the scenes taking place before them may vary. All viewpoints will be presented so that readers may come to their own conclusions.

The conduct of the men at Appomattox, North and South, is one all Americans should know and be proud of, for it makes our heritage one of the greatest. As to what happened in that small Virginia village, the inscription on a tombstone marking the resting spot of two brothers on opposing sides expresses it best: “Only God knows which one was right.”

Chapter I

April 7–8: Departure from Cumberland Church Battlefield by the Confederate Army

Friday Evening: April 7

April 7th was full of stressful decisions for General Robert E. Lee. With his army near Farmville, he hoped to cross to the north side of the Appomattox River, destroying bridges and thwarting rapid Federal advances on his rear. Lee's plans were partially successful, as they burned the wagon and railroad bridges. The problem lay three miles northeast at the High Bridge railroad crossing, where Confederates had wrecked four spans of the large structure, but the lower wagon bridge remained intact. Quick-moving infantry from the Army of the Potomac's II Corps crossed, threatening the Confederate flank.

Lee intended to issue rations at Farmville before moving south to Keysville to intersect the Richmond-Danville Railroad. He hoped to follow this route to Danville, into North Carolina, and combine forces with Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's command. Swinging south through Prince Edward Court House on the 7th, Federal Cavalry and the Union V Corps denied Lee this route. Quickly changing plans, Lee moved north, burning bridges over the unfordable Appomattox River, and giving his men a little respite. The crossing of the Federal II Corps on the span below the High Bridge guaranteed that rest would be brief.

As Gen. Lee rode from Farmville to Cumberland Heights, he was approached by the First Corps artillery commander, Brig. Gen. Edward P. Alexander. He suggested the army should have stayed south of the river, moving west following the South Side Railroad. Due to the approaching Federals, the 80,000 rations were not entirely issued, so they were sent west. Lee expected to intercept the wagons

or another supply train from Lynchburg, making Appomattox Station the logical meeting place.

Alexander's observation was a good one. The route to Appomattox Station, south of the river, was about 30 miles, while marching north via the Appomattox Court House and the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road was around 38 miles. When Alexander indicated this, Lee acknowledged, "I don't know if this map is accurate, and would like to question some citizens of the county about it, can you [?]" Locals confirmed the distances, but instead of issuing orders immediately, Lee replied, "Well there is time enough to think about that. Go now and attend to these matters here."

The situation perplexed Alexander. "Indeed, no man who looked at our situation on a map, or who understood the geography of the country," he wrote after the war, "could fail to see that Gen. Grant now had us completely in a trap. He had stood upon the hills at Farmville that morning and watched the last of our column go in. We were now in a sort of jug shaped peninsula between the James River and the Appomattox and there was but one outlet, the neck of the jug at Appomattox C. H. and to that Grant had the shortest road!"¹

To counter the II Corps approach on the 7th after crossing at High Bridge, Confederates set up an entrenched line around Cumberland Church three miles north of Farmville. During the day, they parried jabs against the defense barrier, keeping withdrawal routes safe. As darkness fell, Lee received the first dispatches from Grant concerning surrender. Headquartered in the church, Lee and his generals decided the time to capitulate had not arrived and issued orders for a night departure.

Major General William Mahone, whose troops were instrumental in staving off most Federal attacks that day, began leaving his position about 11:00 p.m. His orders were to leave an hour earlier, but he was delayed. Throughout the night, the Confederates quietly set out on another march like the one they had experienced on April 5–6.

Two primary routes were chosen for the army to follow on its westward journey. Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's combined First and Third Corps would leave by the Piedmont Coal Mine Road (modern Route 600), moving five miles north to Buckingham (or Maysville) Plank Road (modern Route 633). There, he would turn west, continuing through Curdsville. The army's Second Corps, under Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon, would leave by the Lynchburg Wagon Road (modern Route 635), paralleling Piedmont Coal Mine Road 2.5 miles before intersecting

1 E. P. Alexander, "Unpublished Memoirs, Paper #7" (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Library, Southern Historical Collection), 362–363.

with the Richmond Lynchburg Stage Road (modern Route 636). Turning west, Gordon would march toward New Store. The Confederate Cavalry under Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee followed the Second Corps.²

The van of Lee's army comprised a collection of artillery and wagon trains assigned to Brig. Gen. Reuben Lindsay Walker, chief of Third Corps Artillery. These batteries were considered excess artillery and sent on a different route at Amelia Court House on April 5th. Walker had taken his men north from Amelia via the Clementown Bridge over the Appomattox, then northwest to Cumberland Court House, passed through the Court House on the 6th, camping at Mrs. Ben Harrison's property. On the 7th, Walker's command proceeded down the Cumberland Court House—Farmville Road (modern Route 45), joining the main army again near Cumberland Church. Walker continued without waiting for the rest of Lee's men from Farmville, following roads through Curdsville, and arriving at New Store around 5:00 p.m. He and his men camped a mile west of the village.³

While parts of the Southern army moved out under cover of darkness, others waited around campfires until their units were called into line. Some tried to get some sleep. "The ground was as cold as a stone," recalled one Confederate, "and I awoke after a disturbed sleep stiff and sore in every joint."⁴

An 8th Virginia Infantry member recalled an incident with recently captured Union Cavalry Gen. J. Irvin Gregg, who was standing at a campfire, as "A straggling string of butter-nut Georgians were passing." The general was wearing his full uniform and his hat sported a black ostrich feather. "The fellow in full, but tattered butternut garb," continued the storyteller, "wore a very long tailed frock coat, with a straggling yellow goatee, and long yellow hair, surmounted by a butter-nut scotch cap. I fancied he was a chaplain. . . . As he passed Gregg he jerked off his butternut scotch cap, and with his other hand snatched Gregg's splendid hat and plume, and

2 *Farmville Herald*, February 5, 1926. A local Farmville sheriff, King Adams, stated that John Phillips of Company G, 3rd Virginia Cavalry, told him that General Lee established temporary headquarters in the old Blanton house near Blanton's shop in Cumberland County. Phillips was called by General Lee to act as a scout and direct the army on the best route to Lynchburg. A map in J. Watts de Peyster, *Cumberland Church or the Heights of Farmville*, Part VII, 1874, shows the church as Lee's headquarters; E. P. Alexander in *Unpublished Memoirs*, 600, states: "Lee went to a cottage near Mahone's lines and close to Cumberland Church to spend the night."

3 William Mahone, "On the Road to Appomattox," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, IX (9), January 1971, 4–11, 42–47; U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880–1901), Vol. 46 Series I, Parts 1 and 3, 43; Jennings Cropper Wise, *The Long Arm of Lee* (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell Co., Inc., 1915), Vol. II, 939.

4 Richard Barksdale Harwell, ed, *A Confederate Diary of the Retreat from Petersburg, April 3–20, 1865* (Atlanta, 1953), 15.

clapped the scotch cap on Gregg's head. . . . Gregg threw the scotch cap down, and stamped it into the mud."⁵

The night march was long and hard. J. E. Whitehorne of the 12th Virginia recalled, "The roads are in an indescribable condition and it is still raining. . . . We have been marching steady since midnight without halts except for the wagons to catch up." William McClerndon of the 15th Alabama also remembered the difficult march:

We had not marched over a mile when we turned off to the left and went marching through fields and woods. It was very dark and I noticed that occasionally we would pass a man standing still, and I learned the next day they were guides placed there for us to march out of a snare that we were in . . . as the day was breaking we came to a large white house surrounded by numerous outhouses, and a beautiful oak grove. We passed right through and came across some artillerymen burying two twelve pound brass Napoleon guns.⁶

Saturday, April 8

As day broke, the respective armies were introduced to a section of Virginia they had not seen before. The scenery made an impression on many. Various Confederates wrote about the lush untouched landscape: "We traveled unmolested all day through a picturesque country. We are now getting into a mountainous district," recalled one. "The country is undulating, and an elevated position brings a large section within view. On the west, the Blue Ridge rose in its morning garb, and on the east a broad plain of green, here and there broken by gradual elevations, appeared under the morning mists," penned another. "Had a good view of the Blue Ridge about forty miles distant," a third confirmed.⁷

General Lee followed Longstreet's route on the 8th, moving through Curdsville on the Buckingham Plank Road. Before the war, Curdsville had a population of 300, boasting a Masonic temple, tobacco warehouse, several mechanic shops, a small tavern, and a mill. Three miles to the north was Willis Mountain, a geological prominence discernible at quite a distance. The road was still in good condition

5 Mason Graham Ellzey, *Memoirs Of Surgeon Who Served in the Lynchburg Smallpox Hospital and Joined the 8th Virginia Infantry in 1864*. Possession of John Divine, Leesburg, VA.

6 J. E. Whitehorne, *Diary of Company F, 12th Virginia Regiment, Weisiger's Brigade, Mahone's Division* (Chapel Hill: UNC Library, Southern University Collection), 185; William August McClendon, *Recollections of War Times by an Old Veteran While under Stonewall Jackson and Lieutenant General James Longstreet* (Montgomery, AL, 1909), 231.

7 T. H. Pearce, ed. *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers* (Wendell, NC: Broadfoot's Bookmark, 1983), 262; William H. Stewart, *A Pair of Blankets, War-Time History in Letters to the Young People of the South* (New York: Broadway Publishing Co., 1911), 470; John Willis Council, *Diary 1864-65* (Raleigh, NC: NC State Department of Archives & History).

(most in Virginia had fallen into disrepair) as locals would later record that it was destroyed by the armies marching along it.⁸

General Gordon, on a shorter route to New Store than Longstreet, arrived first. His Corps assumed the lead, following R. L. Walker's artillery contingent. Longstreet, after passing through Curdsville, bore left off Plank Road onto another route going past the Clay and Hooper farms. This road intersected Lynchburg-Richmond Stage Road (Gordon's route) just east of the New Store Presbyterian Church. Longstreet waited for Gordon's men to pass before taking up a position behind him, while Fitz Lee's Cavalry acted as a rearguard to the marching column.

The day's march of April 8th was relatively calm for the Army of Northern Virginia. The Federal Army did not actively keep contact as it had earlier in the week. The exhausted soldiers moved without much complaint, minus those not issued rations in Farmville. Many left the ranks to forage. According to various sources, the local area was quite bountiful. As Confederate engineer, M. W. Venable put it, "The County of Appomattox [along with Buckingham and Cumberland through which they traveled that day] was one of the few in the state into which no Federal soldiers had been, during the whole time of the war." Venable recalled an incident, where he and a friend attempted to buy food using practically worthless Confederate currency:

Passing a home where nice fat hens seemed plentiful I went in and meeting the old gentleman of the house we inquired rather shamefacedly if he would sell two hens for twenty-five dollars apiece (Confederate \$). . . . "Gentlemen, I have lived here sixty five years, boy and man, and never asked more than a shilling (16 2/3 cents), for a chicken in my life."⁹

New Store

Most Confederates stopped to rest in the New Store area, presumably while the infantry corps were switching marching positions. The small community consisted of the home of Louis Dibrell Jones, a store named "Keswick," a cobbler's shop, and three offices. The Jones house and store were built around 1850. Jones added yellow stucco and guttering to his home around 1859. Jones kept the store

8 Christopher M. Calkins, *From Petersburg to Appomattox* (Eastern National Parks and Monument Association, 1983), 34. Walker's artillery evidently also went by this route on their march of the 7th. See Harry C. Townsend, "Diary," *SHSP*, 103; J. W. Council, *Diary*.

9 Matthew Walton Venable, *Eighty Years After, or Grandpa's Story* (Charleston, WV: Press of Hood Hiserman Brodhog Co., 1929), 61. See: Richard Barksade Harwell, *A Confederate Diary of the Retreat from Petersburg*, 15–16 for a story of a Confederate who went three miles from the line of march to forage from various residents.

from 1857 to about 1900. He built his "new store" about 100 yards east of an older one his father, William D. Jones, had kept.¹⁰

In this area, on the 8th, Gen. Lee formally relieved three generals of command: Richard H. Anderson, Bushrod R. Johnson, and George E. Pickett. Most of their commands had been captured or dispersed at Sailor's Creek two days earlier. While not specifically mentioned, their conduct in the battle (and others, like Pickett's at Five Forks on April 1st) influenced Lee's decision. Anderson was notified that he could return home or any place of his choosing, then report to Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge for orders. Johnson and Pickett may not have received Lee's order relieving them from command, or they chose to remain with the army. Both received paroles at Appomattox.¹¹

Desertion had been commonplace since Petersburg. With the disasters that befell the retreating army, many fell out when they came to the road that led home. April 8th was no exception. One man recalled: "Men who have stood by their flags since the beginning of the war now fall out of the ranks and are captured simply because it is beyond their physical endurance to go any further." An artillery officer noted that many "began to get hopeless as we left their homes behind and dropped out in great numbers." Although of questionable accuracy, an incident gives an idea of the demoralization. Leroy Cox, of Carrington's Battery (Charlottesville Artillery), wrote:

My last personal encounter with General Lee was on the day before the surrender [4/8] . . . We met General Lee sitting on his horse in the road. He said "Stop, young men, and get together you are straggling." I said, "General, we are just going over here after some water," and we started climbing over a fence. He said, "Strike for your home and fireside," and we struck."

Another example was shared by a Confederate Cavalry member, which was acting as the rear guard for Gordon's column on the Stage Road. A 24th Virginia Cavalry member observed: "as we moved along, signs of the demoralization of the

10 Appomattox File, C.H.N.H.P for interview with Clinton H. Jones by Ralph Happel, April 15, 1941.

11 Douglass S. Freeman, *R. E. Lee* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), Vol. IV, 111; Pulaski Cowper, ed. *Extracts of Letters of Major Gen'l Bryan Grimes, to His Wife* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards, Broughton & Co., 1883), 117; R. A. Brock, *The Appomattox Roster. A List of the Paroles of the Army of Northern Virginia Issued at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1962), 70. There is good cause to believe Johnson knew he had been relieved because his command was placed under Maj. Gen. Bryan Grimes. Pickett signed his parole on April 11 as "Maj.-Gen. Com'd'g Div'n.," so possibly he had not been informed of Lee's order. At Appomattox, the number of men paroled in Pickett's Division was 981; Johnson's Division amounted to 2,297. Anderson's Corps would then have been 3,278 men.

troops preceding us met us on every side. Muskets had been thrown away by the dozen, showing that the men had left the ranks in groups.” Frank Myers, of the 35th Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, noted, “Many of the men who had thrown away their arms and knapsacks were lying prone on the ground along the road-side, too much exhausted to march further, and only waiting for the enemy to come and pick them up as prisoners.”¹²

There were no confrontations between the armies that day, much to the surprise of the rear guard. “I was still in the rear,” stated Gen. Tom Rosser, “The enemy did not press me. No cavalry could be seen—it had mysteriously disappeared . . . and I spent the entire day marching leisurely in front of the Yankee Infantry without firing a dozen shots.” The shots mentioned had to do with another note from Gen. Grant concerning Lee’s surrender. The passing of this dispatch fell to the 35th Battalion and the 12th Virginia Cavalry, who held the rearguard position, acting as skirmishers. Around 9:00 a.m., a flag of truce was seen coming from the Federal II Corps. Captains Frank Myers and Marcellus French, members of White’s 35th Virginia Battalion, report what happened:

[A]bout nine o’clock, as the battalion was, as usual, drawn up in line facing the left, and Capt. Myers, with a few pickets, was a half mile from his people down a road that led towards the enemy, a party of four Yankees were seen approaching through the woods, and as they came very confidently along making no sign to the two Confederates . . . it was decided best to halt them with a shot from a Sharpe’s rifle, which resulted in the killing of the foremost Yankee, and in falling he displayed a white flag, which, until that moment, had not been seen, because of the pines. Both parties hastily retired.

[M]y Bn. in the rear and I am destroying everything in the shape of a bridge to stop the enemy . . . they sent me a flag of truce and I made them stop the column before I would send their communication.

Captain French, who advanced to receive the flag of truce with Lt. Charles A. James and Cpl. James Terrell, wrote:

My command was to act as the extreme rear guard . . . We followed the road on which the brigade had marched, on either side of which the landscape was almost entirely shut out by continuous woods . . . about nine o’clock that we came to a wide opening. A creek flowed

12 Burrell Cushing Rodick, *Appomattox: The Last Campaign* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965), 82, 92; Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, ed. *The Haskell Memoirs: John Cheaves Haskell* (New York: Putnam Sons, 1961), 91; William Todd Robins, *The Story of American Heroism as Told by the Medal Winners and Roll of Honor Men* (Chicago: The Werner Company, 1897), 634; Frank M. Myers, *The Comanches, A History of White’s Battalion Virginia Cavalry* (Baltimore: Kelly, Piet & Co., 1871), 388.

through its central valley, and the wooded crests of the two ridges running parallel to the creek were about three-fourths of a mile apart . . . We descended a long slope towards the creek, passed near a house with a gate across the road, and about a hundred paces farther crossed the creek and ascended the rising ground on the other side about two hundred yards from the gate.

[T]he long line of rifles as the skirmishers of the 2nd Corps of Federal Infantry began to emerge from the woods into the open field. They were advancing in line of battle . . . In a short time there were thousands of them in view as the line of battle entered the field for the space of half a mile in length . . . Some of them had gotten in my front and Captain Myer's men killed one of a party of four, without knowing that they carried a flag of truce until it was found by the body of the dead man. . . . a horse man dashed at full speed . . . he held up at the gate in the road . . . he informed me that General Williams . . . wished to deliver a dispatch for General Lee.

[General Williams] "You have fired on my flag of truce and three men have been shot trying to deliver it." I replied sharply, "That is the first and only flag of truce that I have seen to-day, and I have not fired on that." . . . Williams commanded the orderly to get out his flask, which he said contained "some very fine brandy cocktail from General Grant's headquarters."¹³

French reported that the flask was shared before he delivered the message to Lee. The general would not receive this message from Grant until that evening when he set up his headquarters outside Appomattox Court House.

Following French's vivid description, the location of this exchange was most likely near the Buckingham-Cumberland County line, east of present-day Sheppards along Route 636. If accurate, the II Corps van had marched about six miles that morning. However, another source places this incident at New Store.¹⁴

END OF PARTIAL EXCERPT

13 Rodick, 85; Festus P. Summers, ed. *Borderline Confederates* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), 103, states that it was 11 a.m. when the flag came in; Myers, *The Comanches*, 385–6. The 35th Virginia Battalion had been divided into two squadrons with Captain Myers leading and Captain French in the rear. During the morning of April 8, General Rosser sent his scouts on General Grant's Flank to find out what he was doing. They found his wagon train, lightly guarded, near the front of the army. Rosser urged Gen. R. E. Lee to allow him to turn back and attack this train but Lee did not respond (Munford Mss., 90).

14 *Farmville Herald*, February 5, 1926, "Lee Receives Grant Note at New Store." The article states, "Mr. Louis D. Jones, who lived in the village of New Store, and who was quartermaster there and therefore whose business it was to issue supplies to the Confederate soldier. . . . When General Lee rode up . . . he stopped under a cherry tree in front of the store, but did not dismount . . . [Jones] shook hands with General Lee and was engaged in conversation with him when he saw a blue-clad courier bearing white flag ride rapidly into view and stop. On seeing him Lee immediately dispatched a courier . . . [story continues about passing of the notes]" This information is probably erroneous.