

## A HISTORY OF US

# 29 Mr. McLean's Parlor

*First battle of Bull Run:  
(also called First  
Manassas): July 21, 1861  
Second battle of Bull Run  
(also called Second  
Manassas): August 29–30,  
1862*

**After the war,** General Grant wrote his *Memoirs*. Sam Clemens (the writer Mark Twain) said it was the greatest writing by a military man since Julius Caesar. (Clemens was a partner in the publication, but the book is good and worth reading.)



**“I have probably to be Gen. Grant’s prisoner,” said Lee, “and thought I must make my best appearance.”**

Wilmer McLean didn’t like to be hassled. So when he retired from business he bought a comfortable farm with pleasant fields, woods, and a stream. He planned to live there quietly with his family. McLean’s farm was in Virginia, but not far from Washington. It was near an important railroad junction. The stream that crossed the farm was called *Bull Run*.

Do you think you know what happened on his farm? Well, you don’t know all of it. Let’s go back in time—to 1861. In April, you remember, the war began when Confederates in Charleston, South Carolina, fired their cannons at Fort Sumter. We are now in July of 1861. As yet there have been no big battles.

The two armies—North and South—are gathered near Manassas Junction. The Confederates are using Wilmer McLean’s farm

as a meeting place. One day some Southern officers are about to have lunch with the McLeans when the Union artillery zooms a cannonball at the house. It goes straight through the roof and lands in a kettle of stew. The shell explodes, so does the kettle, and stew is spattered all over the room!

That is just the beginning of farmer McLean’s troubles. Because of its railroad lines, Manassas is a strategic spot. Neither army wants the other to control it. After the battle of Bull Run, soldiers stay around, and, a year later, another battle is fought there. Wilmer McLean has had enough. He decides to move someplace very quiet. He wants to be as

**Wilmer McLean, destined to be “in at the beginning” (left, his Manassas house, where a cannonball fell through the roof) and...**



## WAR, TERRIBLE WAR

far from the war as possible. So he moves to a tiny, out-of-the-way village called Appomattox Court House.

Maybe Wilmer McLean had magnets in his blood: he seemed to attract historic occasions. In 1865 the two armies—North and South—found themselves at Appomattox Court House. A Confederate officer was looking for a place to have an important meeting. Wilmer McLean showed him an empty building. It wouldn't do. So McLean took him to his comfortable red-brick house. That turned out to be just fine. It was in Wilmer McLean's front parlor that Robert E. Lee officially surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant. In later years McLean is supposed to have said, "The war began in my dining room and ended in my parlor."

On April 9, 1865, Robert E. Lee—proud, erect, and wearing his handsomest uniform—walked into Wilmer McLean's parlor. Strapped to his side was a gorgeous, shining sword with a handle shaped like a lion's head. The sword was decorated with carvings and held in a fine leather scabbard.

General Grant and his aides couldn't help looking at the beautiful sword. They all knew that, according to the rules of war,



...“in at the death” of the Civil War, at his new home (above) in Appomattox Court House.

### Making Amends

**W**hen the Constitution was written, back in 1787, it had a terrible flaw. (What was that terrible flaw?) After the Civil War three amendments to the Constitution—the 13th, 14th, and 15th—were passed.

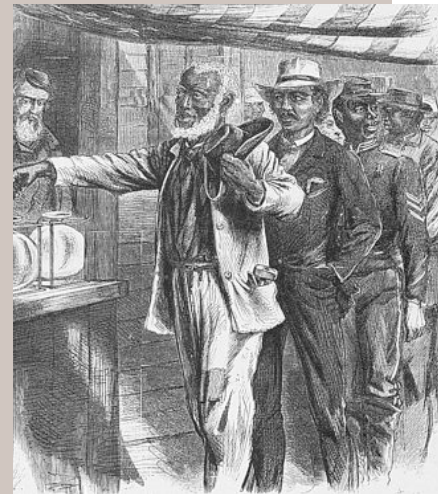
They corrected the flaw and did something else, too. The amendments added more of the spirit of the Declaration of Independence to the Constitution.

**The 13th Amendment,** adopted in 1865, prohibited slavery.

**The 14th Amendment,** adopted in 1868, gave equal protection of the law to ALL Americans.

**The 15th Amendment,** passed in 1870, said

that all citizens have the right to vote. Are women citizens? This amendment didn't say yes and it didn't say no, which was too bad. It would take another amendment to make that clear.



*Black men voting after the war. The vote gave blacks real power. Then (until well into the 20th century) they lost the vote and their power.*

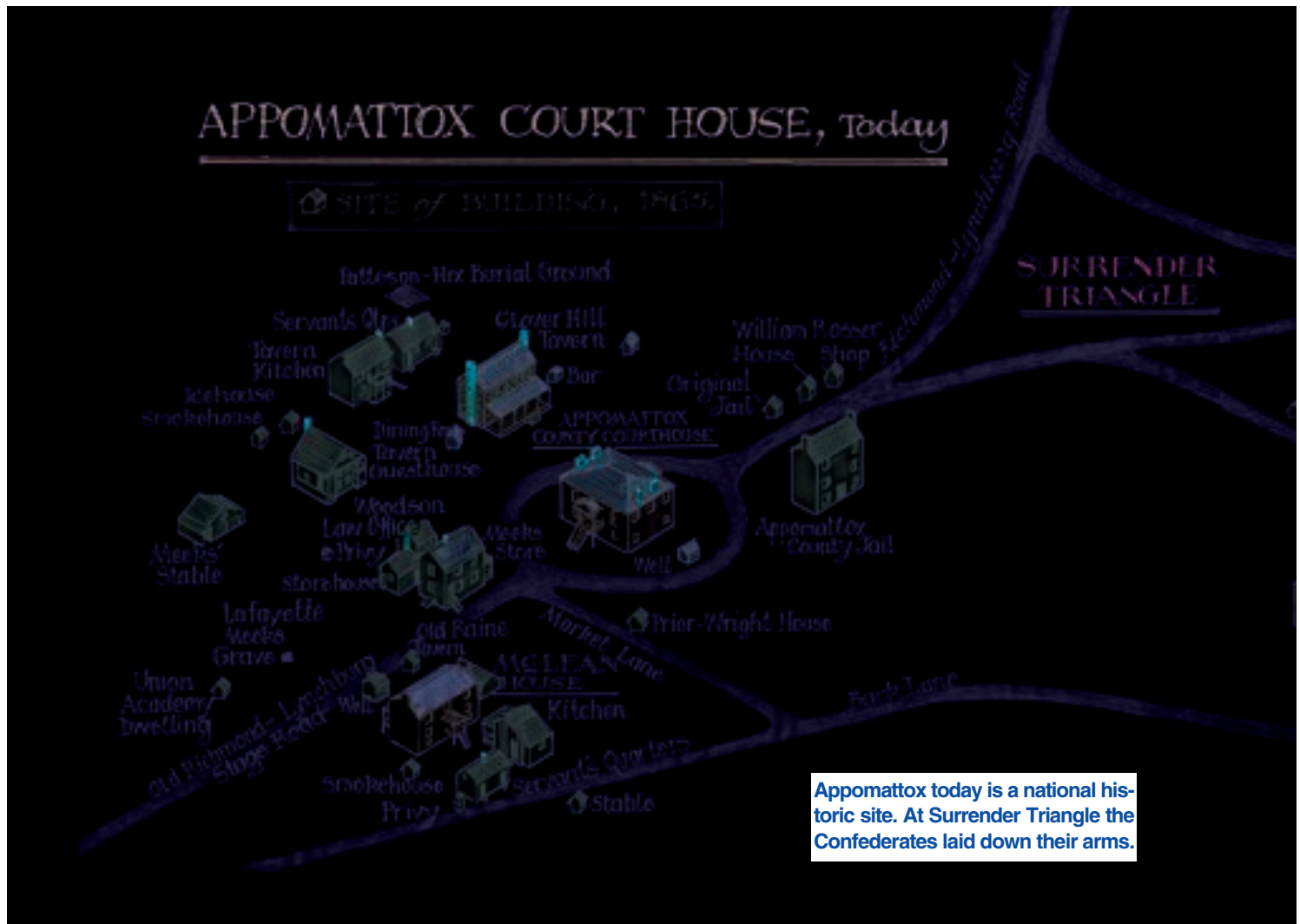
the defeated general must give his sword to the winner.

General Lee knew that, too. But he was not the kind of person who would bring an old sword to give away. He had brought his most precious sword. He had worn his best uniform. He held his head high. He knew he had fought as hard as he could. He had lost the war—fair and square—but he had not lost pride in himself and his men. Robert E. Lee's dignity and courage would be an example to his men when they returned to their homes. They didn't need to apologize for themselves, they had fought as well as men can fight.

*(The story continues on page 141)*



Lee (*left*, with Colonel Marshall) signs the surrender terms in the McLeans' parlor. Behind Grant are (*left to right*): Philip Sheridan, Orville Babcock, Horace Porter, Edward O. C. Ord, Seth Williams, Theodore Bowers, Ely Parker, and George Custer. (Including Custer was an error; he didn't enter the parlor.) Thomas Lovell painted this picture in 1965, during the Civil War's centennial.



Appomattox today is a national historic site. At Surrender Triangle the Confederates laid down their arms.

---



---

**WAR, TERRIBLE WAR**

General Grant understood that. Later he described his feelings on that day.

*I felt...sad at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and so valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought.*

But what should Grant do with Lee's sword? Keep it as a treasure to give to his children and grandchildren? Turn it over to the country to put in a museum?

Ulysses S. Grant didn't do either of those things. He wrote out the official surrender terms. They were kinder than anyone had expected. The Southern soldiers could go home, and—as long as they gave their promise not to fight against

the country again—they would not be prosecuted for treason. They must surrender their guns, but could take their horses. General Grant inserted a phrase in the document: the surrender did not include “the side arms of the officers.” No one in the room said anything about it, but they knew: Lee's sword would stay strapped to his side.

But there is something more important than a sword to remember about that ceremony in McLean's parlor. There were important words said there, and General Grant didn't say them; nor did General Lee. They came after the signing of the papers, when there were handshakes all around. General Lee was introduced to General Grant's staff. One of Grant's aides was copper-skinned Lieutenant Colonel Ely Parker. Lee looked at him for a moment and said, “I am glad to see one real American here.” Parker—a Seneca Iroquois—



VOL. XIV.....NO. 4225.

HANG OUT YOUR BANNERS



UNION

VICTORY!

PEACE!

Surrender of Gen-  
eral Lee and His  
Whole Army.

THE WORK OF PALM SUNDAY.

Final Triumph of the Army of  
the Potomac.

The Strategy and Diplo-  
macy of Lieut.-Gen.  
Grant.

Terms and Conditions of the  
Surrender.

What General Lee's feelings were, I do not know, as he was a man of much dignity, with an impassible face...his feelings... were entirely concealed from my observation.

—ULYSSES S. GRANT

Winslow Homer painted his *Prisoners from the Front* in 1866. At war's end, prisoners held by both sides were allowed to go home.



replied firmly, "We are all Americans."

Robert E. Lee—brave and heroic as he was—still didn't seem to understand why so many men and women had been willing to fight and sacrifice and die in this terrible war. *We are all Americans*. It was in those words.

Ely Parker knew we aren't all the same. Our skins are different colors, our religions are different, our abilities are different, our backgrounds may be different. So what is it that makes us the same? What is it that makes us *all Americans*?

An idea. We share an idea. That's what makes us alike. Other nations didn't begin with ideas; most began with barons and kings.

We started with a declaration that said *all men are created equal*. That new and powerful idea excited people all over the world. But our Constitution had not guaranteed that equality. This Civil War—terrible as it was—caused the Constitution to be changed for the better. Three constitutional amendments—the 13th, 14th, and 15th—would soon be passed. They would make sure that *we are all Americans*. They would give the nation *a new birth of freedom*.

## We Are All Americans



**E**ly Parker's real name was Donehogawa, and he was Keeper of the Western Door of the Long House of the Iroquois. As a boy, Donehogawa decided that he wanted to be successful in the world of white men and women. So he chose a white man's name for himself, and studied law. But when it came time to be admitted to the bar and become a lawyer, he was told that only white males were acceptable. Parker/Donehogawa was not the kind of person who gave up. He decided to try another profession. He went to college, became an engineer, and helped supervise the building of the Erie Canal. His work took him to Galena, Illinois, where he became friends with a clerk in a harness shop who was without prejudice. The clerk was named Ulysses S. Grant. When Grant became General Grant and needed an engineer he turned to his friend Ely Parker.

**A**fter the war, Parker/Donehogawa was a brigadier general; he became commissioner of Indian affairs for the government. He tried his best to help his people. U.S. citizens were pushing west and taking the Indian lands. No one—not even Ely Parker—could stop them. Parker resigned as Indian affairs commissioner and became wealthy as a Wall Street investor.