



THE MARCH THROUGH GEORGIA

In early May, General William Tecumseh Sherman moved his 110,000-man army out of Chattanooga into Georgia. There he would take on General Joe Johnston's 45,000 Confederate troops. Sherman's goal was to take the vital rail and industrial center of Atlanta, the Gate City of the South.

SOUTHERN REVENGE. Sherman outnumbered Johnston two to one, but the Confederates were counting on the Southern landscape to aid their defense. The rivers and mountains of northwest Georgia and its blistering heat would pose mean barriers to Sherman's advance. Johnston hoped to bleed the Union army badly enough that Lincoln would lose his bid for reelection. If that happened, the North might agree to talk.

As Johnston had hoped, the Union advance into the deep South was no Sunday picnic. The heat was exhausting. The dust turned blue Union coats to a uni-

form gray. Even the insects were savage. One Illinois soldier complained in his diary: "They will crawl through any cloth and bite worse than fleas." Desperate soldiers rubbed bacon grease on themselves to keep the pests away.

Still Sherman pressed on, and after a series of indecisive but bloody battles, Johnston's back was to Atlanta. Confederate President Jefferson Davis was never a believer in Johnston's military skills, and he'd had enough of the general's constant retreat in front of Sherman. Davis decided to remove Johnston from command, replacing him with John Bell Hood. Hood was a proven fighter, but he had never commanded a whole army. Now he would have to learn his trade while trying to stop the grim-faced Sherman.

DEFENDING ATLANTA. Hood, who had lost an arm at Gettysburg and a leg at Chattanooga, wasted no time. He immediately attacked the Yankees east and north of the city. Though Hood's forces stunned the Union troops, his bloody frontal attacks were failures. In the battle for Atlanta, Hood lost 12,500 men. He barely had enough to defend the trenches around the city.

Sherman slowly surrounded Atlanta, choking off vital roads and railroads. On September 1, the defeated Hood was forced to abandon the city. He burned the military and rail offices and marched south. The city was now a ghost town. Sherman sent a telegraph to his president: "Atlanta is ours...." The capture of the Southern jewel practically assured Lincoln's reelection.

CIVIL WAR FILMS

In 1915, the War Between the States was the subject of one of the first "epic" movies, a three-hour-long silent film. *Birth of a Nation*, directed by D. W. Griffith, brought the drama of war-torn Northern and Southern



families to the screen. The battle scenes achieved a realism unlike anything seen before. They remain impressive to this day.

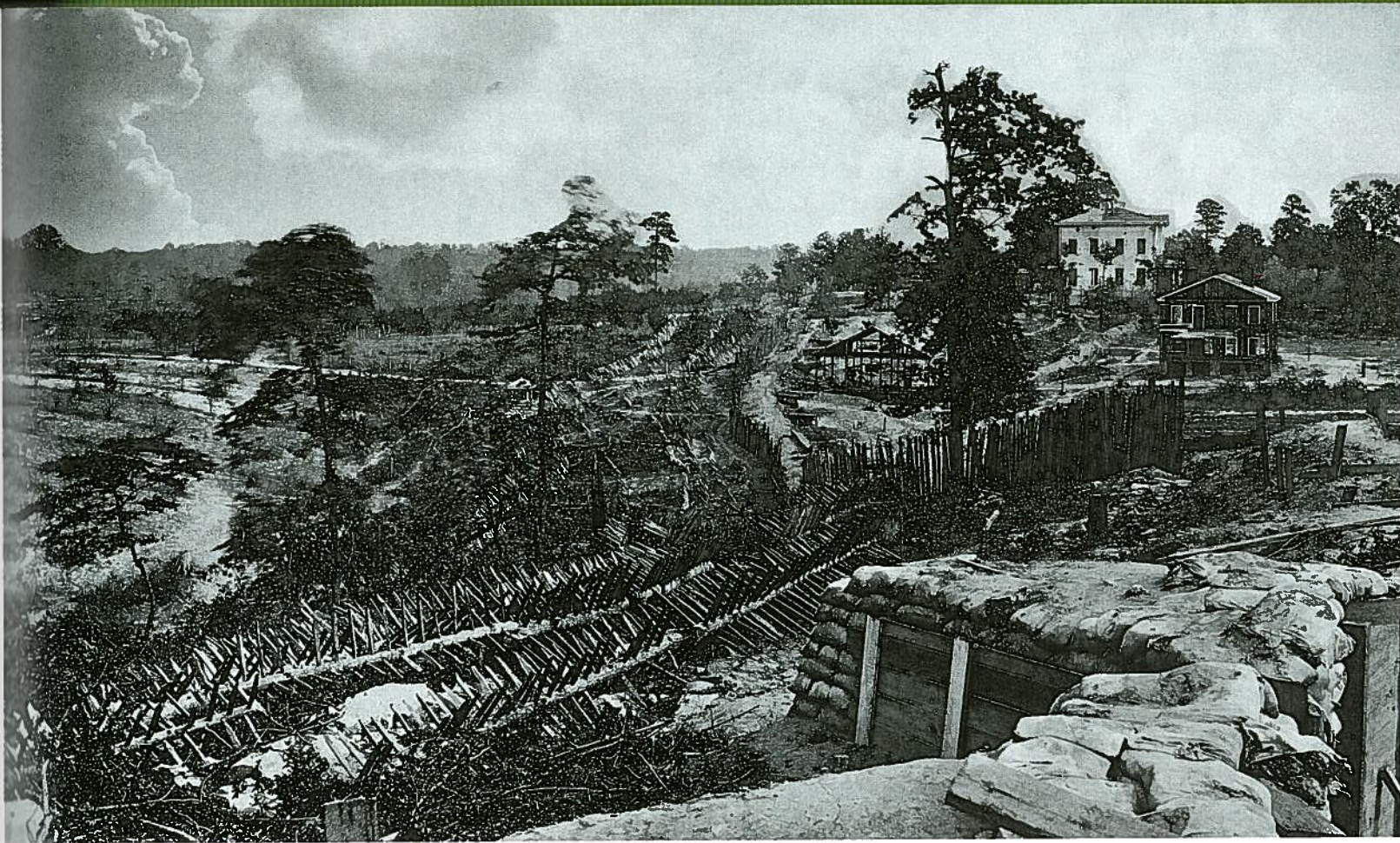
But the film was, and is, controversial. D. W. Griffith was a Southerner. He focused on specific Southern attitudes to the war, the South's defeat, and its aftermath. The abolition of slavery, then, is seen as a tragedy. Southern whites are shown suffering under the control of newly freed slaves. Ku Klux Klan members are portrayed as heroes who come to the rescue of defeated white Southerners.

When first released, *Birth of a Nation* aroused serious controversy, but disapproval was tempered. The film's technical and dramatic achievements were stunning. Even those who disagreed with some of the film's content were impressed with its artistic achievement.

In 1939, another Civil War film, *Gone With the Wind*, became one of the most popular Hollywood pictures of all time. Another epic,

this film focused on the trials of a selfish Southern woman who survives the Civil War, though most everyone around her keels over. As Atlanta burns and the Confederate army flees, a camera passes over a huge sea of dead and wounded Southern soldiers. After the war, former slaves don't become the enemy. But poor whites do, lording it over the former Southern aristocrats.

It wasn't until 1990 that Hollywood produced another epic on the Civil War. *Glory* (see photo) focused on the true story of the formation of the first all-black regiment in the United States Army. The effects of slavery are plainly seen in the former slave soldiers, but the film celebrates their courage and sacrifice. Here the institution of slavery is seen as the tragedy, the war to end it—righteous.



Atlanta bristled with barricades and guns. But Sherman would crack its defenses and bring Georgia to its knees.

TOTAL WAR. In taking Atlanta, Sherman had destroyed much of the South's ability to supply its soldiers. The Confederacy was now wide open for Sherman's next move—a march across Georgia to the Atlantic.

The general was determined to cut the heart out of Southerners' support for the Confederacy. By scorching their rich farmland and plantations, Sherman also aimed to teach Georgians a lesson they wouldn't forget. "We can make war so terrible," he declared, "and make them so sick of war that generations [will] pass away before they again appeal to it."

With Hood's army no longer a threat, Sherman promised "to make Georgia howl." He began by burning all military buildings within Atlanta. On the night of November 15, he left the rich Gate City of the South in flames. Atlanta, in Sherman's words, was now "a thing of the past."

SACKING GEORGIA. Sherman split his 62,000 troops into two columns. They marched on parallel routes southeast through Georgia. Sherman gave up his supply lines—they would slow him down too much. Instead, he gave his troops permission to "forage liberally on the country."

His men took him at his word, scavenging for food, looting every plantation in their path. "We had a gay old campaign," one Union private recalled. "Destroyed all

we could not eat, burned their cotton and gins, spilled their sorghum (molasses)...burned and twisted their railroads and raised Hell, generally."

On December 20, the Union army captured the sea-coast city of Savannah. The campaign across Georgia had been one of the most daring, successful, and

"War is the remedy our enemies have chosen, and I say, let us give them all they want...."

—General William Tecumseh Sherman



destructive in military history. In her diary of the war, Mary Chestnut wrote: "They say no living thing is found in Sherman's track, only chimneys, like telegraph poles, to carry the news of [his] attack backwards."

"War is hell," said Sherman, and he clearly practiced what he preached. But the bitter legacy of the general's march to the sea would be remembered for generations.



THE ROAD TO APPOMATTOX

Lee's Army of Northern Virginia spent the last half of 1864 and the winter of 1865 pinned down in trenches around Petersburg and Richmond. Grant, with 125,000 men, had Lee's 55,000 soldiers in a slow stranglehold. The armies were locked together. Grant was unwilling to waste his men in a frontal assault, while Lee didn't have the strength to try for a breakout.

BREAKING THE DEADLOCK. Grant was trying to curl around Lee's southern flank and cut off his supplies. The Rebels kept fending him off, but their lines were thinning.

All over the country, Southerners were losing battles. The soldiers in the trenches couldn't help but lose heart as they read reports of losses in the Shenandoah and Tennessee—not to mention Sherman's advance through Georgia. Lee's army was tired and sick. Men were deserting. Fewer supplies were making it to the front lines.

With spring coming Lee knew that he had to act. His

plan was to break away from Grant's grip and march south to join Joe Johnston, now facing Sherman in North Carolina. Lee hoped the combined Rebel armies could smash Sherman's force. Then they could wheel north to deal with Grant. It was the only hope Lee had.

THE GAMBLE FAILS. On March 25, Lee launched an attack against the Union Fort Stedman. He hoped to divert Grant long enough to get a running start south. The breakout failed, though, and a week later Grant had cut off Lee's last rail supply line. Lee let Jefferson Davis know that he'd better take his government out of Richmond.

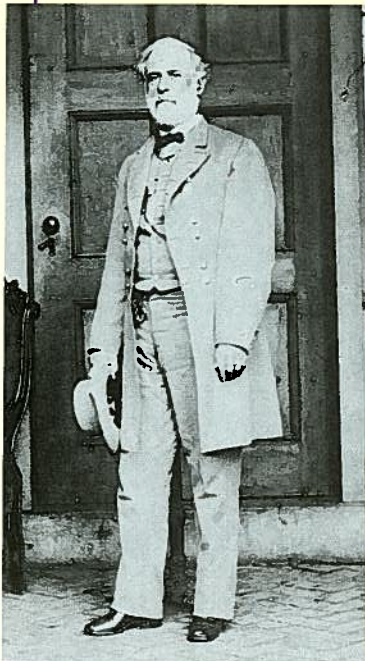
Lee now raced to keep his army alive. He drove his battered troops, now down to 25,000, westward toward Lynchburg, Virginia, and the rail line to North Carolina. His men had little food. They were weak from months in the trenches. Now they were desperately trying to escape the Federals closing in from the south and east.

Grant sent Philip Sheridan's cavalry to get ahead of Lee. The fast horsemen captured Lee's wagon train and scooped up railcars filled with the food the Rebels so desperately needed.

Trying to buy time, half of Lee's army tried to beat the Union infantry back at Saylor's Creek on April 6. All but a few of the barefoot, hungry, and exhausted Rebels were fought out. The Rebel lines collapsed. More than 6,000 Confederates were captured—a quarter of Lee's dwindling army.

Sheridan telegraphed Grant: "If the thing is pressed, I think that Lee will surrender." In Washington, Lincoln read the message, too, and replied: "Let the thing be pressed."

ROBERT E. LEE



Lee was fifty-four when the war began and widely regarded as the best soldier in the United States Army. After Fort Sumter was attacked, General Winfield Scott offered him command of all Union forces. But Lee could not bring himself to fight against his own Virginians. He resigned from the U.S. Army to command his home state's forces. The Confederacy now had the Union's best general. The South's military fortunes would soon be tied to Lee's brilliance on the field.

Lee's fame from his many victories and his deep sense of dignity made him a legend even during the war. Later, he became the lofty symbol

of the South's lost cause. But, in fact, he was simply a superb general, both on the attack and in defense.

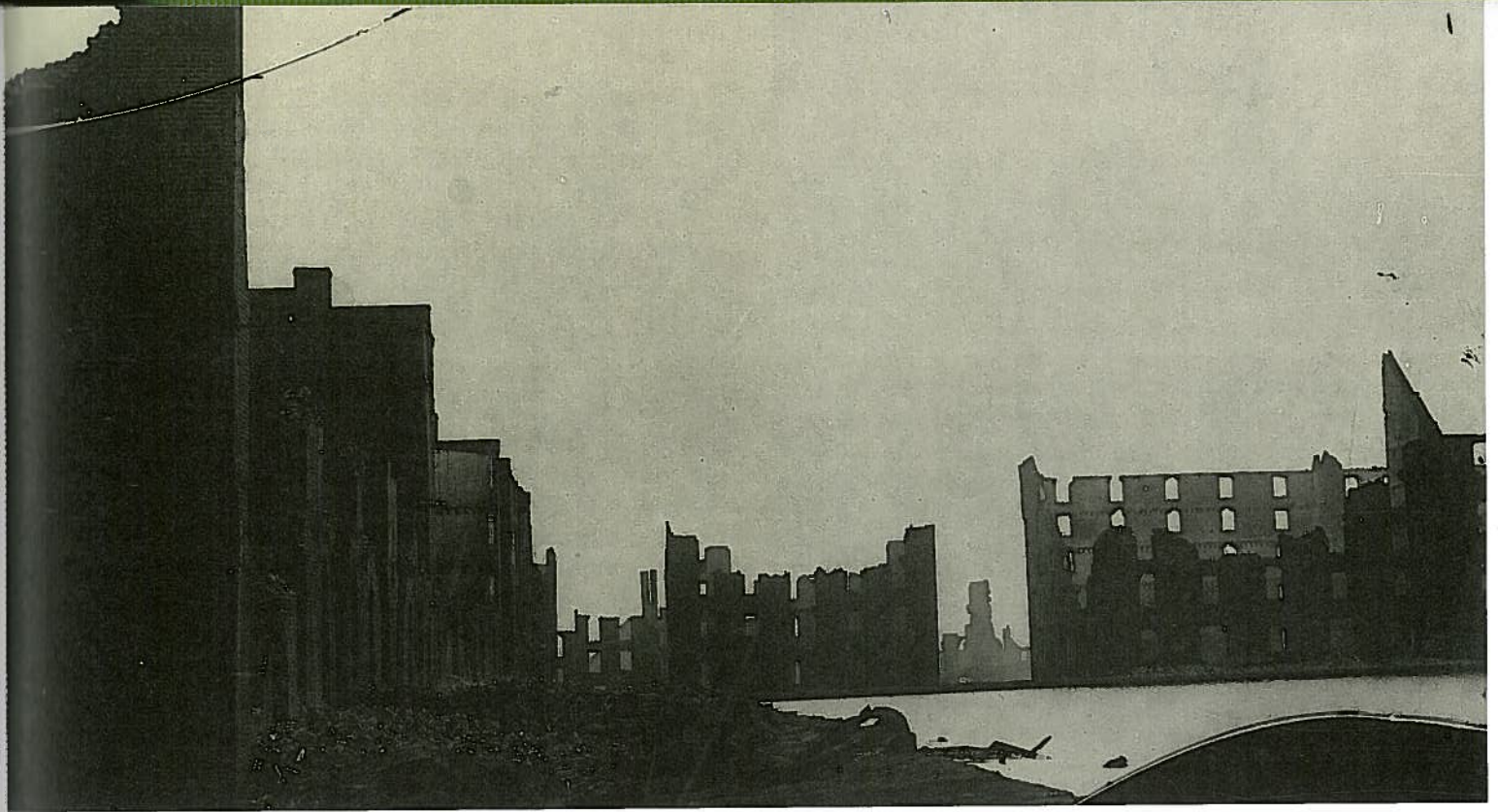
His campaign at Chancellorsville is considered a model of military field tactics. He often gambled by splitting his army, even when outnumbered, to gain the advantage. He was a good judge of just how much risk to take.

Still, Lee did make mistakes. At Gettysburg, the charge he ordered against General Meade's line turned into a disaster for the Rebels. But it was General Grant who proved to be the Union commander that Lee could not overwhelm. It wasn't that Lee didn't

understand Grant. He did. But Grant also understood Lee and knew how to beat him.

Lee's greatest gift to the restored Union, perhaps, was the way he made peace. Just before Appomattox, some urged him to scatter his army to the hills. From there they could fight a guerrilla war against the Union. But Lee refused—he knew that the war was over and peace had to be made.

Lee had never wanted this terrible struggle with the North. "I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than the dissolution of the Union," he said before the war began.



Richmond blazed as Rebel troops fled. The war had left much of the South in cinders.

END OF THE LINE. Lee brought his ragtag army into Appomattox Courthouse. Here was a quiet country village near a rail stop where rations for the troops were waiting. His men hardly looked like soldiers anymore. "Their clothes [were] all tattered and covered with mud, their eyes sunken and lusterless," one Confederate officer remembered. Yet these survivors were still willing to go on, still "waiting for General Lee to say where they were to face about and fight."

"There is nothing left for me to do but to go and see General Grant...[and] I would rather die a thousand deaths."

—Robert E. Lee

Courage alone, though, could not carry them. Sheridan had swept in front of Lee and captured their supplies. At dawn on April 9, Lee's men drove back the front line of Union cavalry. But behind them lay a solid wall of blue—it was the Union Army of the James. Lee's troops were hemmed in on all sides.

THE GENERALS MEET. Under a white flag of truce, Lee asked to meet with Grant to discuss surrender terms. The two generals met that afternoon in the home of Wilmer McLean. McLean was a Virginian who had fled his old home near Bull Run to escape the war's destruction. Now it had followed him here.

Lee arrived first, mounted on his horse, Traveller. He was wearing an elegant dress gray uniform. When Grant arrived, he was dressed in a private's dirty shirt and a plain blue coat. His trousers and boots were spattered with mud.

After some small talk about their experiences in the Mexican War, the two commanders got down to business. Grant recognized that this surrender would set the tone for the restoration of the Union—he wanted no bitterness or humiliation. He offered to let officers keep their own baggage and side arms. Confederate soldiers could keep their own horses. Grant wrote further that "each officer and man will be allowed to return to his home, not to be disturbed by United States authorities." Grant made arrangements for Lee's soldiers to be given food, then the two generals parted.

FINAL WORDS. Lee's men mobbed him after the surrender. Tears flowed down their faces. They couldn't believe the long war was actually lost. "Boys," he told them, "I have done the best I could for you. Go home now, and if you make as good citizens as you have soldiers, you will do well, and I shall always be proud of you."

The Union soldiers began to cheer the victory, and artillery began to boom salutes. Grant ordered it stopped. "We did not want to exult over their downfall," he wrote. "The war [was] over. The rebels [were] our countrymen again."

Lee's Army of Northern Virginia stacked arms and surrendered its battle flags on April 12, 1865. By the end of June, all Confederate forces had laid down their arms.



AFTERMATH

No U.S. holiday

celebrates the Union victory over the Confederacy. The Civil War was too hard and complicated for that. The wounds went too deep. The victory was bought in American blood on both sides.

Even after Appomattox, the war did not end easily. The South's other armies were still fighting, though most Confederates realized that the struggle was over. Lee's army, surrendered at Appomattox, had been the best hope for their cause. The surrender sent a thudding shock throughout the South. "We are scattered, stunned," wrote Mary Chestnut in her diary. "...Only the dead heroes left stiff and stark on the battlefield escape."

SHOCK AND MURDER. The shock of surrender in the South was followed by another shudder in the North.

President Lincoln, fresh from celebrating the war's end, was shot dead by an assassin. His murderer, John Wilkes Booth, was an actor and Confederate sympathizer.

Booth and his fellow conspirators had hoped to kill both Lincoln and Ulysses Grant as they attended a play in Washington's Ford's Theater. But Grant was not able to attend, and Lincoln was Booth's sole target. Shot from behind, the president was carried across the street and died the next morning on April 15.

The conspirators, including one woman, were hunted down, tried, and hanged. Booth was shot after being cornered in a Virginia barn. He saw the assassination as his chance to strike back at the Union. "Our country owed all our troubles to [Lincoln]," Booth said. "God...made me the instrument of his punishment."

For many, Lincoln's murder was a shock beyond belief. The president's body was carried by train across the North and back to Springfield, Illinois, for burial. The funeral procession retraced the route Lincoln took to Washington for his 1861 inauguration. Lincoln's parting words before leaving Illinois were haunting: "I now leave not knowing when or whether ever I may return."

A NEW ERA. With Lincoln's death, Andrew Johnson assumed office and continued the work of bringing the South back into the Union. With the bitterness produced by Lincoln's assassination, the healing of the country was made even more difficult.



Grant was the most successful Union general of the Civil War. An 1843 graduate of West Point, Grant didn't stand out as a cadet. During the Mexican War, though, he proved his military savvy in a variety of assignments.

Peacetime, however, brought hard times to Grant. He failed to provide a living for his family both as a farmer and a businessman and took to drinking. The Civil War, a tragedy for the nation, turned out to be

ULYSSES S. GRANT

Grant's salvation. Soon he was commanding volunteers on the Western rivers.

At the core of Grant's success was his steely self-confidence. He never lost his faith that he'd come up a winner in battle. After a shockingly bloody first day at Shiloh, William T. Sherman found his friend, dripping wet and exhausted, under a tree. "Well, Grant," Sherman said, "we've had the devil's own day, haven't we?" "Yes," Grant answered. "Lick 'em tomorrow." And so he did, driving the Confederates from the field.

Grant's belief in aggressive attacks was not popular with everyone. After the shocking casualties at Shiloh, Grant's commander, Henry Halleck, had him removed from command, and Grant considered resigning. But the war was Grant's destiny, and he returned to go after the Army of Northern Virginia, and its leg-

endary commander, Robert E. Lee.

Grant refused to be rattled by Lee's reputation for chewing up Federal commanders. One historian called it "four-o'clock-in-the-morning courage—you could wake up Grant at four in the morning, tell him Lee had just turned his right flank, and he would be as cool as a cucumber."

During the terrible fighting in the Wilderness in 1864, Grant had that coolness—in spades. He pulled up a seat on a log and whittled on a stick, occasionally giving orders to direct the battle. He never retreated from Lee, just kept dogging him south, waiting for an opening.

Finally Lee had no choice but to surrender. Grant's determination to wage war to the finish, whatever the cost, made him our first general who understood and practiced modern warfare.

All across the South, the armies of the Confederacy continued to surrender, one after another. Jefferson Davis fled south into Georgia, hoping to keep some form of Rebel government alive. Union cavalry finally captured him on May 10, 1865.

He was held for the next two years in a damp cell in Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Remarkably, he was never tried for treason against the United States.

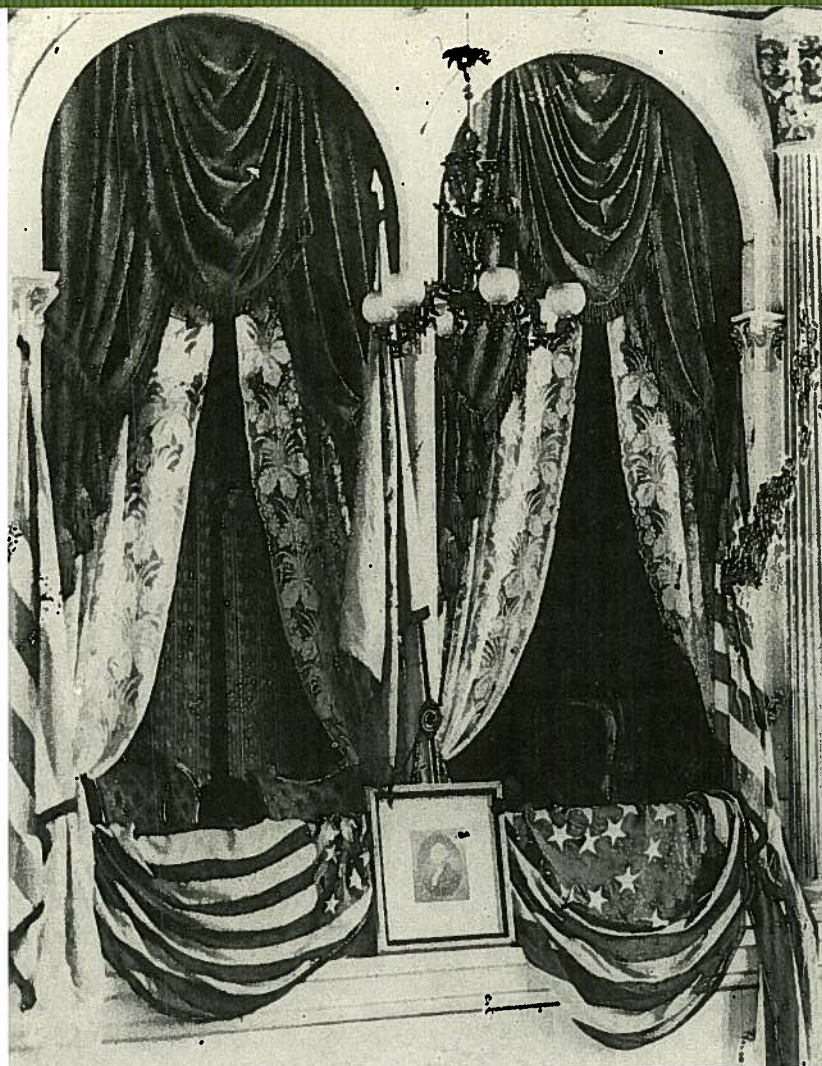
The last battle of the war was fought on May 13, at Palmito Ranch in far south Texas. Ironically, it was a Confederate victory.

A TRAGIC HOMECOMING. As if the long war had not brought enough misery, yet another catastrophe struck freed Union prisoners heading home. Crowded onto a Mississippi steamboat, most of the soldiers were asleep when the ship's boiler exploded. More than 1,700 men drowned or burned to death.

Across the South, thousands of ragged, hungry Confederate soldiers also made their way home. Veterans were often forced to beg or steal their food. Too many returned to find a burned-out chimney, a ruined farm, and their families scattered by invading Yankees.

The armies were soon gone. After a grand review through the streets of Washington in May 1865, the Union armies shrank from a million men to just 80,000 a year later. Still, the effects of war lingered for decades and were felt most strongly by the newly freed slaves.

PROMISE OF FREEDOM. The 620,000 lost lives had restored the severed Union. The national bloodletting had freed 4 million people from the cross of slavery. But that freedom took nearly a century to realize.



The balcony at Ford's Theater where Lincoln was shot. His death meant a harsher peace for the South, and more bitterness throughout the nation.

SOUTHERN OCCUPATION. The South saw its economy and way of life shattered by the war. Its political power was all but gone. Reconstruction, in part, a postwar occupation of the South, continued for twelve years. Congress divided the South, except Tennessee, into five military districts, and federal troops were sent in to monitor them. Though Reconstruction ended in 1877, the South did not immediately resume its former place in the political life of the country. Only in 1912 was a Southerner, Virginia-born Woodrow Wilson, again elected to the presidency.

FEDERAL CHANGES. In the victorious North, the federal government had changed forever. Prior to the war, the only federal agency that touched most citizens' lives was the post office. By 1865, the government in Washington had created a national paper currency (greenbacks) and a national banking system. It had even started the first national social welfare system—the Freedmen's Bureau, designed to aid freed slaves in the postwar South. This expansion of federal power has continued—and is argued about—to the present day.

"It seems to me that I have been dreaming a horrid nightmare for four years, and now the nightmare is over."

—Abraham Lincoln, April 3, 1865, twelve days before his death

Though the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, passed in February 1865, had legally freed the slaves, the restored Southern states enacted laws after the war that took back many expressions of that freedom. Blacks, denied most legal and political rights, were forced into a separate society. It was a world of back doors, servitude, threats, and lynchings for many of those set "free." Many emigrated to the North or into Western territories.

Not until the Civil Rights struggle of the 1960s did black Americans win equal voting rights and a chance at a decent education. The fight to preserve and expand those rights continues today.