

General Orders No. 9

Robert E. Lee

April 10, 1865

Head Qrs Army N Va

[Appomattox Court House*]

After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield [sic] to overwhelming numbers. I need not tell the survivors of so many hard fought battles who have remained steadfast to the last, that I have consented to this result from no distrust of them. But feeling, that valor and devotion could accomplish nothing that would compensate the loss that would attend the continuance of the contest—I determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose finest services have endeared them to their countrymen. By the terms of the agreement Officers and men can return to their homes and remain until exchanged. You[†] will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed, and I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you His blessing and protection—With unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

R. E. Lee

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Source: Gilder Lehrman Collection Item 0035, available online at

<http://gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/american-civil-war/resources/surrender-robert-e-lee-1865>

* Appomattox Court House was the site of Lee's surrender to United States forces.

[†] These General Orders were addressed to the soldiers in Lee's army.

Notes