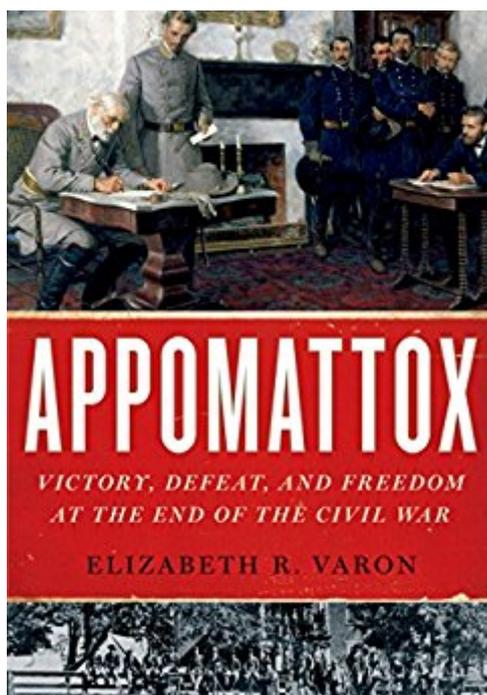


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# Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, And Freedom At The End Of The Civil War



## Synopsis

Winner, Library of Virginia Literary Award for Nonfiction Winner, Eugene Feit Award in Civil War Studies, New York Military Affairs Symposium Winner of the Dan and Marilyn Laney Prize of the Austin Civil War Round Table Finalist, Jefferson Davis Award of the Museum of the Confederacy Best Books of 2014, Civil War Monitor 6 Civil War Books to Read Now, Diane Rehm Show, NPR Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House evokes a highly gratifying image in the popular mind -- it was, many believe, a moment that transcended politics, a moment of healing, a moment of patriotism untainted by ideology. But as Elizabeth Varon reveals in this vividly narrated history, this rosy image conceals a seething debate over precisely what the surrender meant and what kind of nation would emerge from war. The combatants in that debate included the iconic Lee and Grant, but they also included a cast of characters previously overlooked, who brought their own understanding of the war's causes, consequences, and meaning. In Appomattox, Varon deftly captures the events swirling around that well remembered-but not well understood-moment when the Civil War ended. She expertly depicts the final battles in Virginia, when Grant's troops surrounded Lee's half-starved army, the meeting of the generals at the McLean House, and the shocked reaction as news of the surrender spread like an electric charge throughout the nation. But as Varon shows, the ink had hardly dried before both sides launched a bitter debate over the meaning of the war and the nation's future. For Grant, and for most in the North, the Union victory was one of right over wrong, a vindication of free society; for many African Americans, the surrender marked the dawn of freedom itself. Lee, in contrast, believed that the Union victory was one of might over right: the vast impersonal Northern war machine had worn down a valorous and unbowed South. Lee was committed to peace, but committed, too, to the restoration of the South's political power within the Union and the perpetuation of white supremacy. These two competing visions of the war's end paved the way not only for Southern resistance to reconstruction but also our ongoing debates on the Civil War, 150 years later. Did America's best days lie in the past or in the future? For Lee, it was the past, the era of the founding generation. For Grant, it was the future, represented by Northern moral and material progress. They held, in the end, two opposite views of the direction of the country-and of the meaning of the war that had changed that country forever.

## Book Information

File Size: 6001 KB

Print Length: 315 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (September 6, 2013)

Publication Date: September 6, 2013

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00EQ363VW

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #448,794 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #34

in Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields >

Appomattox #775 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Civil

War #2057 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Military

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## Customer Reviews

There are few more iconic moments in American history than the April 9, 1865 surrender of Robert E. Lee to Ulysses Grant at the McClean house in Appomattox, Virginia. Although armies remained in the field, the surrender, for practical purposes, ended the Civil War. In her new book, "Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom at the End of the Civil War" (2013) Elizabeth Varon examines the events leading to Appomattox, the surrender conference itself, and the aftermath of Appomattox through the assassination of Lincoln and continuing into the Reconstruction Era. Varon argues that the pictures many Americans hold of the Appomattox surrender is "largely a myth" because it masks disagreements over the nature of the Civil War and the subsequent peace that remained unresolved well after the end of the conflict. The Longbourne M. Williams Professor of American History at the University of Virginia, Varon has written extensively on the Civil War. Varon maintains that Union supporters and Confederate supporters had differing understandings of Appomattox. These differences were personified in the two commanders, Grant and Lee. Grant saw the Union victory as the triumph of "right over wrong". He believed that the magnanimous surrender terms he offered were ways of vindicating the Union war effort and of encouraging the Confederates to return peacefully to the Union. Grant looked forward, Varon argues, to a United States which would pursue moral and material growth. Varon further argues that Lee viewed the surrender as the triumph of "might over right". The South lost the war due to the North's superiority in men and

resources rather than due to any deficiency in the valor of the soldiers or to moral fault in the cause for which they fought.

Appomattox! A name which will live in historical memory in the mind of the nation. On Palm Sunday April 9, 1865 the immaculately dressed Robert E. Lee general of the Army of Northern Virginia tendered the surrender of his forces to General U.S. Grant in a small parlor in Appomattox Virginia. This famous event is known to every schoolchild and the myths and legends surrounding it are well known. Now it is the task of Dr. Elizabeth R. Varon a Civil war scholar of note and professor of history at the University of Virginia to dispel the myths surrounding the surrender ceremony and give us a 21st century view of the momentous occasion Varon has accomplished an impeccable job of researching original sources such as soldier s letters, newspaper accounts and memoirs to give us a first hand understanding of Appomattox and its implications. Among the things I learned by reading this scholarly work are":a. Robert E. Lee was a white supremacist who was against African-American equality. He wanted the South to be restored to the Union with all of its ante-bellum society of white rule preserved. This view of Lee will not set well with Lost Cause and Lee worshippers but it is the truth of the great general s views. Lee opposed the Radical Republicans favoring the approach of President Andrew Johnson who pardoned thousands of Confederate soldiers and wanted reconstruction to maintain the white society of Dixie.b. Ulysses Simpson Grant viewed the Civil War as a huge step in achieving racial citizenship and equality for African-Americans. He favored the Civil Rights Bill which was vetoed by President Andrew Johnson. Grant allied himself with the Republican Party as did James Longstreet, William Mahone and John Mosby.

Elizabeth Varon Appomattox: Victory, defeat, & freedom at the end of the Civil War NYC: Oxford Univ Press, 2014.â € 1 map. 32 images (numerous portraits). Notes. Index with names predominating.â € This book provides much more than a recounting of the conclusive defeat of Leeâ™s Army of Northern VA. It provides a solid summary of the transition from active warfare to reconstruction / restoration efforts (1865-1867). A central bridge is the quite different perceptions of the â€ terms of surrenderâ™ as it impacts the interregnum between active, â€ formalâ™ warfare and the Presidential Reconstruction efforts by Lincoln & Johnson. A good starting point for â€ wrappingâ™ your mind around & attempting to understand Reconstruction.â € Varon employs literary & artwork sources in her analysis of the meanings attributed to the surrender at Appomattox and sectional perspectives on â€ restorationâ™ & â€ reconstruction.â™ This reviewer is currently reading on

wartime & postwar Reconstruction efforts in order to have a reasonable working knowledge for attending a CW conference on that subject AND to beginning an initial attempt to "wrap" his mind around that topic. The additional books on my reading list (in probable reading & overlapping time span sequence) are: Gregory Downs *After Appomattox: Military occupation & the ends of war* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2015. 6 longitudinal maps on military post locations. 6 images. Notes. Index. 8 statistical appendices on the number of U.S. Army posts, soldiers, & soldiers / post; mostly longitudinally with some by region. Statistics regarding U.S.

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