

## Final Days of the Armed Rebellion

### Timetable

**June 14-15, 1864** -- During the night Grant's army steals the march upon Lee by using a 2,100 foot pontoon bridge to cross the James River. Lee had predicted that if the Federals crossed the James then a siege of Petersburg would ensue resulting in a further retreat.

**September 19, 1864** -- Third Winchester -- This was the first of Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley campaign. Although Little Phil's planned pursuit failed to materialize, Early suffered 4,000 casualties or nearly 30% of his effectives.

**September 22, 1864** -- Fisher's Hill -- The second of the Federal's Shenandoah Valley campaign resulting in approximately 1,000 Confederate prisoners being taken. Additionally the Rebels were forced to abandon at least twelve invaluable artillery pieces.

**October 19, 1864** -- Cedar Creek -- The Federals counterattacked resulting leaving in 2,000 Rebel dead and wounded on the battlefield with another 1,000 comrades captured. Sheridan's total destruction of the Shenandoah Valley, the Confederate breadbasket continued unabated.

**December 10, 1864** -- Sherman's army reaches Savannah, concluding his March to the Sea that destroys a large portion of the Confederacy's war potential in Georgia.

**December 16, 1864** -- George Thomas routs John Bell Hood at Nashville, and his army begins to pursue the retreating Confederates.

**December 24, 1864** -- Upon reaching the Tennessee River, the Blue riders find the Confederates have completed their crossing at Muscle Shoals before removing or destroying all means of further pursuit.

**December 28, 1864** -- Thomas orders the end of the pursuit that had exhausted and debilitated 5,000 horses. Citing the terrible weather as well as logistical difficulties Thomas also orders his army into winter quarters, an order that Grant immediately countermands.

**January 13 -15, 1865.** Capture of Fort Fisher that commands the entrance to the Cape Fear River that leads to Wilmington, the Confederacy's last open port along the Atlantic.

**February 1, 1865** -- Sherman leaves Savannah to begin his Carolina campaign.

**March 2, 1865** -- Moving through terrible weather, Sheridan's cavalry strike at Early's flanks and front to obliterate Old Jube's little force at Waynesboro. In addition to capturing several battle flags, Sheridan captures 1,600 prisoners, 11 guns, and 200 loaded wagons.

**March 4, 1865** -- Lincoln's second inauguration. John Wilkes Booth is in attendance.

**March 21, 1865** -- After a three day battle at Bentonville, Johnston retreats to Smithfield, his army having fought its final battle.

**March 25, 1865** -- Fort Stedman -- Rebel forces attempt a pre-dawn breakout by attacking Fort Stedman located on the left of the Union lines. Although they breach Union lines to capture the fort, the Federals were too numerous, too well equipped, and too responsive for the Rebel plan to work. Confederates lose 4,000 casualties, or approximately 7% of Lee's army. Union casualties are half of the Confederates. . Fort Stedman will be the last offense ever launched by Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

Lee fully appreciates the consequences of losing the Fort Stedman gamble when he advises Jeff Davis the next day, "I fear now it will be impossible to prevent a juncture between Grant and Sherman nor do I deem it prudent that this army should maintain its position until [Sherman] shall approach too near

**April 1, 1865** -- Five Forks -- Five Forks, at the extreme of Lee's right flank, is the critical junction of the road that provides Lee's last line of supplies. And Lee can ill afford to allow the Federals to occupy this intersection.

Sheridan's cavalry reinforced with infantry, attack and collapse Pickett's detached division, resulting in most one-sided Union victory for over a year. Capture of the Five Forks intersection means the Federals can use the Boydton Plank Road to roll up the remainder of the Confederate's defense lines.

The Federals capture another 5,000-6,000 prisoners all of whom are offered their release and passes to return to their homes if they would merely swear allegiance to the United States government. However, fewer than 100 of the Rebels

opt to take the necessary oath, the rest of the prisoners staying loyal to the Confederacy (or perhaps not anxious to undertake a long difficult trek back to their homes).

**April 2, 1865** -- Harry Wilson crushes Nathan Forrest's cavalry at Selma, Alabama.

As the Confederates defenses began to collapse, Lee has no alternative except to order the evacuations of Petersburg as well as of Richmond. Mad melees ensue as governmental officials as well as other civilians tried to find ways to flee the cities. Fires set to tobacco warehouses turned into uncontrolled conflagrations sweeping through much of Richmond. Jefferson Davis, along with his family and most of the Confederate government, flee Richmond.

**April 3** -- Godfrey Weitzel, a Federal commander, accepts the formal surrender of Richmond. Federal troops (mostly Black) immediately begin to help put out the fires that are devastating Richmond.

**April 4, 1865** -- Amelia Court House -- Lee's first planned stop was this redbrick town -- where sustenance supposedly is waiting in boxcars on the railroad. When the Confederates arrive at Amelia C.H. on they find only ordinance, something the Rebels not only do not need but weight their starving animals can hardly haul.

**April 6, 1865** -- Sailor's Creek -- Miscues separate Lee's retreating column into three groups resulting in disastrous havoc as the Federals strike two of the separated segments from all directions. The turns into an unmitigated disaster for the Rebels almost as soon as the Union cavalry discover the vulnerabilities of the detached segments.

Observing helplessly from a distant hilltop, the normally stoic Lee could only bemoan "My God! Has the army been dissolved?"

The devastating outcomes of these battles, resulting in another 8,000 Rebel casualties, including eight generals taken prisoner, will greatly influence Lee's eventual decision to surrender.

**April 9, 1865** -- Appomattox -- At Appomattox Court House, as planned on Palm Sunday, Gordon's infantry and Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry form a line of battle in a last ditch, desperate effort to break out along the Lynchburg Road. Three regiments

of black regiments after rapidly marching twenty miles to take their positions along a stage coach road blocked the Confederates intended escape route. Within an hour Gordon reluctantly reports back to Lee “Tell General Lee I have fought my corps to a frazzle, and I fear I can do nothing unless I am heavily supported by Longstreet.” Upon learning of the failure of Gordon’s attack, and after eschewing Porter Alexander’s advice to disperse his army to become guerrillas in the woods and mountains rather than surrendering, Lee decides he has no choice but to meet Grant to discuss terms of surrender.

By mutual agreement the respective representatives arranged that their commanding generals would meet at McLean’s House in Appomattox C.H. Much to Lee’s surprise he is not taken prisoner. At Lee’s request, his men are allowed to keep their own horses and side arms; furthermore, after Lee mentions his army has not been fed for several days, Grant also orders that three days rations be distributed to the former Rebels.

**April 12, 1865** -- The formal surrender at Appomattox, although neither Grant nor Lee are present.

After hoisting the Stars and Stripes over Montgomery, Alabama, the original Confederate capital, Wilson turns east. Wilson next captures Columbus, Georgia, on April 16, capturing 1,200 prisoners plus 52 guns as well as a vast bootie of materiel.

**April 15, 1865** -- Lincoln dies from the assassin's bullet fired the previous evening.

Lee arrives at his home in Richmond. The Federals distribute 86,555 rations to Richmond residents during the week of Lee's arrival.

**April 21, 1865** -- The famous raider, John Mosby, disbands his band of rangers, most of whom surrender.

**April 24, 1865** -- In Charlotte, North Carolina, Jeff Davis, while continuing to flee from the Federals, holds his last cabinet meeting.

**April 26** -- Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, is shot and killed.

After a false start, Sherman and Joe Johnston agree to surrender terms similar to those previously agreed by Grant and Lee.

**May 4, 1865** - The last of Southern resistance – at least east of the Mississippi River – ends when Richard Taylor, who once led the Louisiana Tigers as part of Stonewall's Jackson's Valley campaign of 1862, surrenders.

**May 8, 1865** -- A military tribunal of nine officers begins the trial of Mary Surratt and seven other alleged conspirators in the assassination plot.

**May 9, 1865** -- Forrest sends his troopers home. Previously some Southern politicians tried to persuade him to continue some form of resistance, perhaps linking with Kirby Smith in Texas. Forrest responded, "Any man who is in favor of a further prosecution of this war is a fit subject for a lunatic asylum, and ought to be sent there immediately."

**May 10, 1865** -- Wilson's detachment of Union cavalry captures Jefferson Davis, his wife, and several staff members in the woods near Irwinville, Georgia. Some of Davis' group, including Breckinridge and Benjamin, manage to escape.

**May 26, 1865** -- West of the Mississippi, Simon Bolivar Buckner surrenders the last large group of Confederate soldiers, a capitulation not approved until June 2, 1865, by Kirby Smith.

**June 23, 1865** -- At Doaksville, in the Oklahoma Territory, a Confederate battalion of Indian tribes under the command of Cherokee leader Stand Watie (a.k.a. "De-gata-ga") finally surrender, the last Rebels to do so.

**June 30, 1865** -- The commission's verdicts are announced, all eight defendants being found guilty with four sentenced to die by hanging.

**July 7, 1865** -- Mary Surratt, the first woman to be executed by the Federal government, and three others are hanged.

**December 18, 1865** -- After approval by twenty-seven states the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery becomes the law of the land.

**1877** -- The last four Confederate states, Virginia, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas rejoin the Union.

There had been 76 battles with 6,000 skirmishes and engagements. With a population of one-tenth of today's population there were an estimated 750,000 deaths, two thirds caused by disease.