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EXCEPT for a few weeks in April 1865, Appomattox plays virtually no role in Virginia history. Only the end of the most dramatic episode in our national life—secession, war, defeat, and peace—sets it apart from scores of other little villages scattered throughout the Old Dominion. However, in a strange way, just as the Revolution and changes it wrought made possible the restoration of a colonial capital at Williamsburg, events in the final decades of the nineteenth century have enabled Appomattox to recapture much of the flavor of its brief moment of glory. Both communities were abandoned as seats of government, experienced long periods of decay and quiet repose, and then within the past forty years have enjoyed new life and prosperity as centers of tourism and historical interest.

Despite all that has been written about what happened at Appomattox Court House by men such as Douglas Southall Freeman, Bruce Catton, and Burke Davis, that little community and the surrounding countryside have remained largely a stage for their heroes—generals, colonels, and privates playing out the final act of a great drama. Who the people of Appomattox were, how they lived, and what they were doing during those tense April days in 1865 has sparked little interest. Of course, civilians in the midst of armies rarely elicit much concern, and research has been hampered by destruction of nearly all county records in a fire that consumed the courthouse in 1892 and ignited a successful campaign to move local government to “new” Appomattox, a railroad depot three miles away.

As Virginia counties go, Appomattox is relatively young. It was established in 1845 after a decade of agitation by area residents seeking a more convenient county seat, one closer to their homes, a cry echoing down through the corridors of our national experience. Representatives in the General Assembly from Buckingham and Campbell counties (which lost considerable territory to this new entity) opposed creation of Appomattox, while those from Prince Edward and Charlotte gave it their blessing. Within a few days legislators also carved Doddridge and Gilmer counties

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out of what is now West Virginia, presumably in an effort to maintain the delicate trans-Allegheny balance of those years.

The “capital” of this new county was Clover Hill, a long-established stage stop nestled in pleasant rolling country, complete with a tavern, one or two stores, and a few homes.¹ Had the county been created a few years later it is quite possible that local leaders would have set up shop on the new South Side Railroad which shortly laid east-west tracks three miles south of Clover Hill. Thus, almost from its inception, Appomattox Court House was subject to economic strains as railroad interests (as well as those of the James River and Kanawha Canal which was demonstrating new vigor along the county's northwestern border) thwarted its growth and development. The result was a few more houses and some increase in commercial activity at old Clover Hill after 1845, but not much. Only about thirty families, white and black, ever lived in or near the county seat.

This new county, encompassing 345 square miles, had a population of about 9,000, a figure that has remained virtually unchanged to the present day. (In 1970 the total population was 9,784.)

Population, 1850-1870

	1850	1860	1870
White	4,209	4,118	4,414
Free Black	185	171	4,536
Slave	4,799	4,600	—
Total	9,193	8,889	8,950
Foreign-born	10	6	10
Free households	785	821	1,919

Since Appomattox County had no towns, free blacks (about thirty of them headed up their own households, the rest living as servants with whites) tended to gather in little enclaves. Some had respected trades such as blacksmith, cooper, wheelwright, ditcher, or farmer, but most were tenants or day laborers. One black woman, Mary Christian, apparently owned her slave husband, Stephen, in 1850, but ten years later she had granted him his freedom. None of these free blacks held much property other than a small farm of perhaps thirty to fifty acres.

The daily life of this tobacco-corn-hog society was dominated, to a great

¹ See Marion Ethel Smith, “Clover Hill: Early History of an Old Appomattox County Landmark,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LVII (July 1949), 269-273.

extent, by a small coterie of families, each of them enjoying an era of prominence. The key to their success was, not surprisingly, such things as agricultural lands and political leverage. In 1845 elderly Hugh Raine owned the Clover Hill Tavern and much of the surrounding village property. He was eager to sell out and found an enthusiastic buyer, Samuel D. McDearmon, then about thirty years of age. McDearmon, the new county's first spokesman in the General Assembly and a real estate speculator with swashbuckling tendencies, soon suffered financial ruin, but not before he had trumpeted the glories of little Appomattox for all to hear:

This is one of the handsomest locations in Virginia, in the midst of a fine and healthy country, noted for its intelligence and moral standing, on the great thoroughfare between Lynchburg and Richmond and Farmville, and within a few miles of the James River Canal, for a long series of years free from the visitation of fevers and other malignant diseases, which have ravaged other sections of the country. Being the county seat of a wealthy and enterprising community and possessed of so many natural advantages, no situation could afford more attractions to capitalists or professional men, who may wish to locate themselves permanently with a sure prospect of patronage, or tradesmen who desire liberal and profitable encouragement. I am sure I say enough to ensure the attendance of willing and spirited bidders [at an auction], when I say that Clover Hill, known from the seaboard to the Mountains, is for sale.²

Sadly, McDearmon had not said enough and was much too deeply involved in this venture for his own good. In 1850 he owned a mill and lands worth \$38,000, an impressive sum on paper. A decade later he was technically penniless, having consigned whatever he could salvage from the wreckage of his dreams to his wife, and was eking out an existence as a railroad inspector.

In addition to Raine (whose heirs continued to own the famous brick house which Wilmer McLean bought in 1863) and the ill-fated McDearmon, two other families loom large during these mid-nineteenth-century years: the Bocoeks and the Floods. By contrast, they usually were well-established planters with strong political ties at local and state levels. Henry F. Bocoek, son of the first clerk of courts, succeeded to that office when his father died in the late 1840s, remaining in power until 1860 when he moved to Lynchburg. His brother or cousin, Thomas Stanhope Bocoek (1815-1891), was undoubtedly the best-known citizen of Appomattox County in his day. Lawyer, state legislator, congressman, sole speaker of the Confederate Congress, and stalwart Democrat, for some four decades he was a

² Lynchburg *Republican*, November 6, 1845.

force to be reckoned with. Henry and Thomas, like McDearmon, both dabbled in Clover Hill real estate, but neither got in over his head. And Thomas also moved to Lynchburg soon after the Civil War to establish a law practice there.

A third member of the Bocoek clan experienced a meteoric turn of fortune at mid-century, presumably as the result of a fortuitous marriage. In 1850 Willis P. Bocoek was a lawyer-farmer, age forty-two, with lands worth \$8,000. Master of thirty-four slaves and a bachelor or widower, he lived with a thirty-year-old white laborer named Jesse Carter who served as an overseer of sorts. Bocoek was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851 and in the latter year became state attorney general, a position he held under several governors. Sometime in the 1850s he married a South Carolina heiress and in 1860 owned five farms encompassing over 2,000 acres, and a mansion assessed at \$3,145—in all, real estate valued at \$106,140, and personal property and forty-seven slaves worth \$253,161, making Willis P. and Manning L. Bocoek by far the wealthiest couple in Appomattox County.³

The genesis of Flood wealth and power seems to have been Dr. Joel W. Flood, who in 1850 owned 121 slaves and lands worth \$50,450. Upon his death a few years later, his holdings were divided among his widow, Eliza, a son, Joel, and Thomas H. Flood, perhaps a nephew or cousin. Unlike McDearmon and the Bocoeks, the Floods—at least in these years—displayed little ostensible interest in politics.⁴

In general, most residents of Appomattox County found the 1850s good times as demand for tobacco and better water and rail communications aided their agricultural world. The number of households with slaves increased slightly during that decade (440 to 494), a reflection of an improving economy; yet the most marked increase was among families with only a handful of blacks, up from 182 to 245. In 1850 nineteen local planters owned real estate worth at least \$10,000 and nine of them were masters of more than fifty blacks (not assessed as property that year). A decade later 179 local residents held land and slaves worth more than \$10,000 and, of that number, fifty-eight had aggregate wealth in excess of \$25,000. Nevertheless, although the annual tobacco crop nearly doubled during the decade

³ Most of these statistics come, of course, from U. S. census returns. In 1870 Colonel Bocoek, as he was called, owned property worth \$20,000 and headed a household consisting of two teachers and their families, neither of them named Bocoek. His wife was not listed in the 1870 census.

⁴ The best-known of Flood descendants are Joel's son, Henry ("Hal") D. Flood (1865-1921), "Hal" Flood's nephews, Richard E. and Harry Flood Byrd, and the latter's son, Harry Flood Byrd, Jr.

(from 964,100 to 1,777,355 pounds), this "boom" had its darker side as well. Improved farm land declined from 198,016 to 85,297 acres, all forms of livestock (except milch cows) were fewer in number at the close of that decade, and wheat and corn were largely forgotten in the scramble for tobacco dollars.

In 1850 a handful of industrial outlets included several grist and lumber mills, a few tanneries, shoe and machine shops, and a short-lived but impressive ironmongery. Although these usually were small, part-time affairs employing about seventy-five workers during any twelve-month period, each little enterprise made a vital contribution to the general well-being of the community. They turned out animal meal, flour, and lumber, provided leather and footwear, and both made and repaired tools and machinery. Much of this work was done on shares, planters and farmers often providing the raw materials, the mill owner or manufacturer keeping part of the product as payment for his time and labor. The iron mill, located near Stonewall on the James River Canal, was for a year or so (1849-1851) an awesome sight. It occasionally employed as many as fifty laborers and produced as much as 300 tons of pig iron a month; however, this operation (Hutchinson & Plunkett) closed its doors sometime in 1851.

Except for the demise of that enterprise, the industrial scene changed little in the 1850s and 1860s, although by 1870 the few mills and shops within the county seem to have expanded somewhat. All workers, by the way, were male, with the exception of two women employed in lumber mills during the 1860s. The first post-Civil War census revealed that Appomattox had nine steam engines (189 horsepower in all) and seventeen water wheels with 228 horsepower capacity. Counting everything in sight, a zealous enumerator found fifty-three industrial establishments with 167 workers, yet of that number only nine (all of them flour-lumber mills) turned out goods worth more than \$5,000 per year.

During these same decades the county could boast of perhaps a dozen general stores, four of them at or near the Court House. The best-known of these—now re-created by the National Park Service—was run by Francis Meeks. Ledgers still in existence reveal that Meeks and others stocked sewing materials and accessories such as pins, ribbons, lace, braid, whalebone, hooks, eyes, and buttons; coffee, sugar, and various spices, whiskey, crockery, ink, soap, and cheese; and manufactured products such as tooth brushes, spectacles, gloves, pencils, combs, knives, kitchen utensils, nails, screws, and hammers. Fruit (lemons, apples, oranges, figs) was sold from time to

time on a seasonal basis, but customers apparently drank very little tea, an item rarely found on the shelves of these stores. Soon after the Civil War coal oil lamps began to replace candles and patrons also could buy "parlor" matches to use with those lamps, as well as dress patterns and hoop skirts, two other recent innovations as far as local customers were concerned.

East-west travel was made relatively easy by stage lines, canal boats, and railroads, each of which in turn enjoyed an era of popularity. In the early 1850s trains left Petersburg at 9 A.M. and arrived at Lynchburg at 4:40 P.M. The east-bound flyer departed from Lynchburg at 8 A.M., reaching Petersburg at 3:10 P.M., fare: \$5.00.⁵ Within the county there were station stops about thirty to forty-five minutes apart at Spout Spring, Appomattox Depot, and Evergreen. Those traveling short distances or heading north and south went by wagon, horseback, or on foot. State revenue returns of 1847 indicate there were only seventy-four coaches, ten carryalls, and five gigs in Appomattox County. This means that many members of the area's 750 or so free households had to walk, ride horses, or use farm wagons or carts wherever established modes of communication did not exist.

The cultural-social world of a community lacking towns, newspapers, and colleges was simple, rural, and static but not necessarily dull. Before 1865 about 400 students each year attended nineteen one-room elementary schools, all of them technically private institutions, although county fathers begrudgingly spent some money on the education of deserving paupers. In 1860, for example, local officials appropriated \$412 for such individuals, compared to \$6,000 coming from private sources to support free schools. Academies in Reedy Spring and the Concord-Spout Spring area enrolled about twenty to fifty pupils who had completed their basic education. One of these institutions seems to have been in existence throughout these decades; the other had a rather spotty history, closing down and then re-opening from time to time. Schools for freedmen appeared after the Civil War, but the times were hectic and confused, and records are scanty.

In 1867 a local representative told the House of Delegates that Appomattox had 1,200 school-age children: 556 white, 644 black. He said his community needed fourteen white and sixteen black teachers and school construction totaling \$12,000. Three years later, according to the federal census, only 255 students, four of them black, were attending elementary classes in the county. But in 1871 Virginia's pioneer state superintendent

⁵ Herbert C. Bradshaw, *History of Prince Edward County, Virginia* (Richmond, 1955), p. 330. Slaves traveling alone were required to produce two passes from their masters. One was left on file at their point of departure, the other they carried with them.

reported that 507 white students were enrolled in thirteen schools and 352 blacks were attending six schools. If true, it is readily apparent that these one-room structures were woefully overcrowded.

Religious life in Appomattox County was dominated by Baptists, with Methodists and Presbyterians trailing behind. In 1860 there were twenty-four churches, half of them Baptist. Ten years later the number of Baptist congregations had swelled to fifteen, three of them probably separate black groups; however, there now were only five Methodist churches (instead of nine) while Presbyterian bodies had increased from three to four, making the same total number of churches as in 1860: twenty-four. Despite this shake-up, the pulpit was an obvious center of local social life and had close ties to the educational realm since ministers often were teachers as well. Until 1865 at least, the message of the Gospel was heard by both races as they joined together under one roof and forgot momentarily the gulf separating their worlds.

Weddings, funerals, fairs held in Lynchburg, and court days when the militia might muster and strut about a bit provided occasional entertainment. Court sessions held on the first Thursday after the first Monday of each month fostered a "market day" of sorts in and around the little Court House village. At that time goods, produce, and slaves were bought and sold; and, if elections were imminent, political speeches and other forms of electioneering could be heard.

Two holidays loomed large in these years: Christmas and the Fourth of July, although before 1865 slaves undoubtedly viewed "Independence Day" with some skepticism. In July 1845, to mark their new independent status, local residents staged an especially lavish celebration complete with "a most excellent barbecue," thirteen formal and innumerable "informal" toasts, and considerable levity. State, national, and Revolutionary worthies, agricultural education, peace, growth of American might and power, civil and religious liberty, the fair ladies of the community, and the county militia—all were saluted in glowing terms. Bartholomew Cyrus, a feeble veteran of the struggle for independence, uttered this plea: "May the feeling which filled the hearts of the Patriots of the Revolution be justly appreciated by the youth of the present day."

Although blacks played a small part (if any) in these patriotic gatherings, Christmas was a general holiday enjoyed by everyone. Fannie Berry, a talkative ex-slave interviewed by WPA workers in 1937, said she and her friends in Appomattox lived "jus' fo' Christmas to come round." Everyone

was happy and "Marse always send a keg of whiskey down to de quarters by Old Uncle Silas, de house man. Old Joe would drink all he kin long de way, but dey's plenty fo' all."⁶ Christmas of 1861 was especially festive. On December 30 Evelyn Dupuy Gilliam, whose family owned land in both Appomattox and Buckingham counties, wrote to her fiancé in camp in northern Virginia telling of dancing and parties at the Bococks, Floods, and Trents (families who lived at or near Appomattox Court House). She said that the Sweeneys of banjo fame "played for us all Christmas" and "the Misses Faulkners danced all the time."⁷ These young ladies were daughters of Charles James Faulkner (1806-1884), a Martinsburg congressman, who was minister to France from 1859 to 1861. One of his daughters (Ann Holmes Faulkner) was the second wife of Thomas Bocock and this connection caused the family to select Appomattox County as a place of refuge during the war. Another daughter, Ella, married Joel Flood in 1862.

The political rally, a bit of almost exclusively white male hoopla, although women and blacks could look on and cheer or applaud if they wished to do so, was yet another type of social gathering. Sometimes there were gigantic fish fries enlivened by a brass band imported from Lynchburg. One such affair was held by the Whigs in 1845 but, despite such efforts, Appomattox was Democratic territory throughout these years.

From all indications the county greeted secession with considerable enthusiasm. In November 1860 John Breckenridge, spokesman for the southern wing of the Democratic party, received 563 votes to 221 for Constitutional Unionist John Bell. Stephen A. Douglas, candidate of the northern Democrats, got ten votes, Abraham Lincoln, none. Soon volunteers were forming companies, four of them made up largely of local men and boys—the Appomattox Rangers, the Appomattox Grays, the Appomattox Invincibles, and the Appomattox Liberty Guards. Joel Flood headed up the Rangers and W. T. Johnson, a postwar sheriff, was the first captain of the light infantry Grays. The last of the Invincibles (composed for the most part of militia) fell into enemy hands at Saylor's Creek during the final days of the war. And the Liberty Guards, part of Henry Wise's brigade, were well represented at the surrender ceremonies, probably sixty of the Guards laying down their arms almost within sight of their homes.

Until the final days of that struggle Appomattox County had no direct experience with guns, smoke, and battle. Instead, local citizens wrestled

⁶ See Charles L. Perdue, Jr. et al, *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville, 1976), p. 49.

⁷ John Baxter Moseley Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond (Mss2M8525b3).

with shortages, inflation, and similar abnormal conditions and did their best to aid the southern cause. Lacking towns and substantial hotel facilities, it was not a true refugee center, although the Faulkner family of West Virginia became wartime residents and that conflict's most famous refugee, Wilmer McLean, fled south from Manassas to Appomattox Court House after the battles of Bull Run.

County court met regularly but had little to do. Litigation was rare, real estate was not changing hands, and the authorities spent much of their time collecting taxes and devising means to aid families of indigent soldiers. Elections were held as usual and as soon as war began all able-bodied free blacks were drafted into public service. The sheriff sent several of them to work on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad; others constructed fortifications at Manassas in 1861 and dug trenches in the Richmond area in 1864.

The community's most pressing problems were shortages of metal, salt, medicine, sugar, coffee, cloth, and herbs. Coins were one of the war's first casualties, and soon those who did not resort to barter were collecting handfuls of hurriedly printed paper notes in denominations from twenty-five cents to two dollars issued by banks in nearby Farmville.⁸ Salt, brought from Southwest Virginia, was distributed by county authorities on "salt" days. Each family sent a representative with a white box to get a portion, the county furnishing small amounts free to those unable to pay. As for medicine, sugar, coffee, seasonings, and cloth, local citizens had to improvise or revert to "old time" practices and get by as best they could. However, since Appomattox was on a railroad which operated throughout the entire war, anything available in the markets and stores of Richmond, Petersburg, Farmville, and Lynchburg could be had *if* one was willing and able to pay the price. And by the last months of that struggle prices could be staggering. One young lady complained bitterly to a local friend in December 1864 of being unable to get a used umbrella in Danville for less than \$75. A few days before hostilities ended, Willis Inge, who lived near Appomattox Court House, paid \$700 in Confederate bills for a barrel of flour.

Even before prices reached astronomical heights local spirits were sagging. Defeats at Antietam, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg, the ever-tightening Union blockade, and extremely cold weather during the winter of 1863-1864 all took their toll. "The most of our Soldiers that I have conversed with," a teen-age girl wrote in December 1864, "are of the opinion that the

⁸ Plans were afoot to organize the first bank in Appomattox County in 1860, but it is unlikely that it began operating at that time; hence local residents relied upon banks in Farmville or perhaps Lynchburg for much of their wartime currency.

South [might] Just as well give up & cry whiped at once for we cant possibly carry on the war much longer."⁹ Despite these bleak prospects, the true situation was hidden from both slaves and free blacks as long as possible. Charles H. Diuguid, a well-known blacksmith and one of the free Negroes forced to work for the Confederate cause, vowed he never heard much about the fighting until after Lee surrendered. "The rebels said the yankees were whipped all the time."¹⁰

By the first week of April 1865 it was impossible to disguise the South's plight any longer. With the fall of Petersburg, General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and both the Confederate and Virginia governments headed west by the only routes open to them, the James River and Kanawha Canal, and the South Side and Richmond & Danville railroads. Enemy pressure forced Lee to change his objective from Danville to Lynchburg. As a result he ordered supplies sent eastward on the South Side to Farmville. On April 7 his men had limited success when they tried to get rations at that point, but Lee soon had to order the trains moved on to Appomattox Depot. Since the enemy by forced marches got there first and blocked the way west, Lee's decision assured nearby Appomattox Court House of its unique role in American history.

Late on Saturday, April 8, Lee and perhaps 10,000 men reached the vicinity of the Court House, unaware that Yankee cavalry were closing in on the Depot three miles away. Lee's futile efforts to break through this barrier on the evening of the 8th and the morning of the 9th led to the famous meeting with General Grant at Wilmer McLean's home. Much has been written concerning the deplorable state of the Confederate forces at this time, and it is certainly true that they were hungry and tired and hundreds were straggling off into the woods, convinced that this march could end only in defeat.¹¹ The Army of Northern Virginia, outnumbered and outgunned, faced almost certain annihilation had Lee elected to run the gauntlet to Lynchburg. On the other hand, the Yankees had moved so far so fast that they were as exhausted as their adversaries. But here similarities end. The Federals could readily get food and supplies once their officers let them rest, their weariness was merely temporary, few of them were deserting, and they only had to stay put to attain victory. Also, the

⁹ Elvira Woodson Papers, Duke University, Durham, N.C.

¹⁰ Case No. 4889, Southern Claims Commission Records, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

¹¹ Diaries of these stragglers indicate no great shortage of food in Appomattox County in April 1865, in fact, quite the opposite (see Richard Barksdale Harwell, editor, *A Confederate Diary of the Retreat from Petersburg, April 3-20, 1861* [Atlanta, 1953]).

immediate situation has to be viewed in the context of Sherman's devastation in Georgia and the Carolinas, the loss of Richmond, and a general malaise which had sapped Confederate morale for a year or more.

According to contemporary accounts, stragglers and refugees (among them Governor "Extra Billy" Smith and various other state officials) began moving through Appomattox County as early as Wednesday, April 5. Local residents had only rumor to tell them what was happening and, unaware of what lay ahead, probably "hunkered down" and made the best of a bad situation; for, after all, these transient folk could be almost as destructive as Yankees. Most of those living in the Court House village appear to have been there on the evening of the 8th and presumably stayed indoors and out of sight during skirmishing that occurred in the next few hours. There is no evidence of widespread flight to other regions and with good reason. No one was certain that two armies would clash in their midst and, whether they did or not, it was prudent to (a) remain at home to protect one's possessions from the ravages of soldiers, marauders, slaves, and rapacious neighbors and (b) take possible advantage of the chaos to acquire a few items others had temporarily abandoned. Since local civilians technically were "the enemy" until peace was concluded, it is most unlikely that anyone (except perhaps Wilmer McLean) saw much that occurred as generals and colonels went about the business of ending the Civil War.

Among the most revealing sources on life in Appomattox in April 1865, as well as in prewar years, are the files of the Southern Claims Commission (1871-1880) in the National Archives. Twenty-nine local residents sought compensation from the federal government for property damage suffered during the Civil War. However, only five individuals received even partial payment, most claimants being written off as disloyal. (One lady, widow of a Confederate soldier and now wife of a southern veteran, vowed her sympathies actually lay with *both* sides during the conflict, a statement investigators found difficult to accept.) Black residents, if slaves, were placed in the awkward position of trying to prove ownership of property as of April 9, 1865, the precise day that their subordinate status came to an end. Also, the United States government demanded not only loyalty and proof of ownership and loss, but evidence that those who seized goods were not stragglers or Confederate troops. What strikes one about these claims is, if alleged losses were even partially true, farms in and around Appomattox Court House certainly did not lack foodstuffs, animals, and fodder during the first week of April 1865.

These records also shed light upon a small, select group of "virtually free" blacks who, although enslaved, worked apart from their masters and shared their earnings with them. Albert Johnson, a blacksmith who had a small shop near the Buckingham County line, operated in this fashion. He tried to collect \$250 for a horse Union soldiers took from him but was unable to provide sufficient proof of the incident. York Wright, another slave blacksmith who resided at the Court House, told a complex tale. Owned by John Sears, he worked overtime, saved his money, bought tools, raised hogs and chickens, and sometimes (he boasted) earned as much as \$600 a year. Wright lived alone; his wife and growing family were the property of Schuyler Coleman and lived on his farm. On April 11 a group of Union soldiers set out to capture Jefferson Davis and asked Wright to show them the road to Lynchburg. When he got back to his home, other Yankee troopers were stripping it of food, bacon, flour, chickens, and tools. A Union officer who heard of Wright's loss took pity on him and gave him a new forge. This he took to Coleman's place for safekeeping and Coleman kept it. Wright sought \$141 but got nothing since federal officials concluded this was a case of simple plunder.

For the most part, life in Appomattox conforms to the standard Reconstruction picture. A company of Pennsylvania soldiers—several of whom married local girls—were in residence until the end of 1865, and an assistant provost marshal or a Freedman's Bureau representative (one man frequently holding both jobs) lived in the Court House village for several more years. There are hints of minor racial troubles from time to time, but records are too scanty to develop a coherent story. This is how Fannie Berry, reminiscing six decades later, recalled these tempestuous years:

... after while de Yankees went on back up North, an' den de po'hickories gut tah actin' up. Dey would put on de ole uniforms de Yankees done lef' behind an' go ridin' all over de lan' at night in bands jus' ah shootin' up all de niggers dey saw. De would shoot 'em daid an' ride on. An' some one finally sent word up No'th to de Yankees an' de Yankees come aridin' back an' dem ole whites was jus' as nice an' pleasant fo' a while as could be. Long as de Yankees was roun'. But don't you know, Yankees come back tuh Appomattox three times fo' de whites leave us po' niggers alone?¹²

At least two of the Pennsylvania troopers and an English-born doctor who came south with them settled in the area for a time and fished unsuccessfully in county political waters, but by the 1870s they had departed. The

¹² Perdue, *Weevils in the Wheat*, p. 44.

change from Confederate to Union rule seems to have had little effect upon local government since technically disfranchised citizens continued to hold minor offices (1865-1870). Stores opened for business, schools for both races appeared, crops were planted, and farmers tried to adapt to a new, but strange, labor system. Since Appomattox had no towns and a slim majority of blacks, Radical Republicans were not much interested in what happened there, especially after 1867 when for state election purposes it was grouped with Prince Edward County creating a secure block of Negro votes.

Yet in two particulars postwar Appomattox was unique. Peace left the county with the very tangible residue of two large armies—horses, mules, wagons, tools, and so on—and also made it a tourist attraction. George Wythe Munford (1803-1882), formerly secretary of the Commonwealth and a candidate for governor in 1863, wrote to his wife in mid-April 1865 to assure her that he and a friend living in the area had not yet given up the fight and refused to seek a formal pardon from the triumphant North:

Dick has not been injured by the Yankees at all, indeed he has rather been benefitted, for when they broke up their camp at Appomattox Court-house, they left great numbers of wagons & gear, spades, picks, shovels, iron of every description suitable for farm purposes, trace chains and a great many useful things, besides many broken down horses & mules. His negroes went up, as did almost all from the neighboring farms and brought back two fine wagons and four or five horses & mules & much other plunder. Several of the horses & mules after resting will be serviceable.¹³

Munford apparently had accompanied state officials to Lynchburg and perhaps Danville but, seeing the futility of the situation, took temporary refuge with "Dick" who lived somewhere south of Appomattox Court House. On April 30 he again wrote his wife, this time describing the residue of war to be seen in and around that village:

I passed yesterday through the battle-field of Appomattox Courthouse. For thirteen miles both sides of the road as far as the eye can reach—one eternal scene of desolation & destruction. The debris of the battle field are scattered in every direction—Broken wagons, cannon carriages[,] caissons all cut down or burnt and cannon balls, grape shot & shell enough for an army's supply for two great battles. No effort has been made to collect these things. The people of the Country have gathered up every other valuable. What they will do for a living is past my comprehension. Not a sprig

¹³ Copies of this correspondence can be found in the files of Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. Actually, these items caused considerable trouble on the local scene. Until disciplined by federal officers, William Hix, sheriff in April 1865, used his authority to seize as much gear as possible. He and his cronies even rode through the countryside confiscating goods and possessions from their neighbors in surrounding counties. In addition, litigation concerning true ownership of horses, mules, and wagons that once belonged to the two armies continued for several years.

of grass & not a rail left. I saw at least five hundred dead horses still remaining on the ground in a horrid state of decay, rendering it odious to pass along the road. Strange the buzzards and other animals that prey on carrion do not touch them. That has been the case all through the war.

Within a very few weeks—even as the last of the war's casualties either were being buried or, if they had recovered, were departing for home—the first wave of itinerant artists, reporters, and other curious folk began arriving in Appomattox. John Richard Dennett, who toured Virginia in July and August of 1865, has left us a very complete picture of that village and other nearby communities.¹⁴ He apparently spent a few hours at the Court House, not much impressed with its poorly stocked stores, the lone hotel, and lounging farmers who idled about spitting tobacco juice, drinking apple brandy, and letting blacks do all of the work. Dennett had a long chat with Wilmer McLean, rather bitter because souvenir hunters had ravaged his home (General George Custer apparently was among them), taking virtually everything even remotely connected with the surrender-signing ceremony except an ink stain on a window seat.

A decade later a correspondent of the Lynchburg *Republican* who visited the little village on court day thought the McLean House looked "forlorn," though he agreed the community had a picturesque setting amid hills and streams. At about the same time a resident of Pamplin's Depot wrote to the *Republican* describing the flurry of economic activity to be seen in his region only a few miles to the east. Wheat, corn, and tobacco crops looked good, merchants were stocking their shelves, clay pipe bowls (a rather unusual local product) were worth \$2.50 to \$20 per thousand, and hen-nest grass to pack them in was selling for \$1 per 100 pounds.

The significance of these comments is clear. The economic and social life of the county was gravitating toward the railroad and the villages strung out along its tracks. The days of Appomattox Court House as the seat of local government were numbered; and, even if flames had not destroyed the original courthouse erected in the 1840s, it is possible that county business would have moved southward to the Depot as the influence of old Clover Hill dwindled. These trends are, of course, sad to contemplate, yet fire and economic decay actually laid the groundwork for Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. Had the little village demonstrated much vigor during the last half of the nineteenth century, restoration of that community with its historic surrender site might well have been impossible.

¹⁴ *The South As It Is, 1865-1866*, edited by Henry M. Christman (New York, 1965), pp. 34-69.