

Terms of Surrender at Appomattox Courthouse – Primary Source Text

Ulysses S. Grant to Robert E. Lee

Appomattox Court-House, Virginia April 9, 1865.

General: In accordance with the substance of my letter to you of the 8th instant, I propose to receive the surrender of the army of Northern Virginia on the following terms, to wit: Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate, one copy to be given to an officer to be designated by me, the other to be retained by such officer or officers as you may designate. The officers to give their individual paroles not to take up arms against the government of the United States until properly exchanged; and each company or regimental commander to sign a like parole for the men of their commands. The arms, artillery, and public property to be parked and stacked, and turned over to the officers appointed by me to receive them. This will not embrace the side-arms of the officers nor their private horses or baggage. This done, each officer and man will be allowed to return to his home, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their paroles and the laws in force where they may reside.

U.S. Grant, Lieutenant-General. General R. E. Lee.

Robert E. Lee to Ulysses S. Grant

Head-Quarters, Army of Northern Virginia April 9, 1865.

General: I received your letter of this date containing the terms of the surrender of the army of Northern Virginia, as proposed by you. As they are substantially the same as those expressed in your letter of the 8th instant, they are accepted. I will proceed to designate the proper officers to carry the stipulations into effect.

R. E. Lee, General. Lieutenant-General U.S. Grant.

The text above describes the surrender negotiations at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. Confederate General Robert E. Lee and Union General Ulysses S. Grant are trying to agree on the terms of the Confederate surrender.

Questions:

1. Describe how Robert E. Lee responds to Grant's terms. Does he accept or not accept? What is his next step?
2. Would you describe Grant's terms as outlined in his letter generous or demanding? Explain your answer.
3. What does Lee's response to Grant tell you about the condition of the Army of Northern Virginia?
4. What does Grant mean when he writes "...this will not embrace the side-arms of the officers nor their private horses or baggage."?

Answers

1. He agrees to Grant's surrender terms. His next step was to manage the surrender by making sure officers carried out Grant's demands.
2. Grant's terms, as far as surrenders go, were very generous. In his letter, he indicates there will be no prisoners. As long as the soldiers agree to stop fighting, they would be free to go home, rather than become prisoners of war.
3. The Army of Northern Virginia was likely in such a weakened state that Lee deemed them unable to continue the fight.
4. Confederate Officers will be able to keep their personal weapons (those not used in battle) and will be able to keep their horses and private property.