

**Transcription, Letter from John Gibbon
To his Wife, April 11, 1865
Gibbon Family Papers, Collection 2031**

Born in Pennsylvania, Gibbon was a Major General during the Civil War. His almost daily letters provide details on the waging of the War. In a letter dated April 11, Gibbon references his letter of the 9th announcing the surrender of the Confederacy, but that letter is lost. In the surviving letter, though, he gives a full account of the surrender. As one of three officers commissioned to take the terms to General Lee, his description matches the lithographs in the drawers.

Appomattox C. H. Va.
April 11th 1865, 4 A. M.

My Dearest Mama:¹

I wrote you yesterday of the surrender of Lee's army or rather my letter was written night before last, for it is now 4 o'clock in the morning, and having waked up I find it impossible to get to sleep again, and have concluded I cannot occupy the time more profitably than by writing to you an account of how things have progressed since yesterday morning. Genls. Griffin, Merritt, and myself were appointed to carry into effect the terms of the surrender. The 5th Corps and mine are left to take charge of the captured property whilst the balance of the army returns to Burk's station. Early in the morning I rode down to the C.H. where Genl. Grant was awaiting an interview with Genl. Lee. Soon after our arrival Genl. Lee came riding up attended only by two orderlies. He looks pretty much the same as usual, but older, and his face has a very sad expression. I did not see him smile once during the interview. He has the same quiet, subdued, gentlemanly manner, for which he was always noted. On being called up by Genl. Grant to the spot where the two sat on their horses talking a few yards in front of where the staff officers were assembled, I shook hands with Genl. Lee and his manner was exactly the same as of old when we knew him at West Point,. He had appointed Genls. Longstreet, Gordon and Pendleton as the officers on the side to meet us and agree about the times of the surrender, and as soon as the preliminaries were arranged. Genls. Griffin, Merritt and myself with a number of other rode thro' their lines to Genl. Longstreet's staff. All the forms of hostile armies are still kept up between us, and as yet no general communication between the forces has been permitted. As we rode along thro' the mud and rain the men flocked to the side of the road to see us just as our men do on similar occasions. They were very quiet made no demonstration of any kind, and rather gave me the impression that like ourselves they were glad it was over. They did not look however at all like people who were conquered and that rather pleased me than otherwise. We found Genl. Longstreet absent but the other two Maj. Genl. Gordon and Brig. Genl. Pendleton were sent for. The latter arrived first. He is Genl. Lee's chief of artillery, and looks very much like him, and must be nearly as old. He is a graduate of the Academy (in 1830 I think) Genl. Gordon I had met the day before. He is a man about my height and made with a very pleasant face and remarkably polished manners He is a native of Georgia, but at present a citizen of Alabama. He has been frequently wounded and bears on his left cheek the deep scar of a wound received at Antietam We have all taken a great fancy to him. We arranged to meet immediately in a house in the town and to work and then rode back towards our lines attended by Wilcox. Genl. Lee (Rooney or W.H. T. Lee) and several staff officers and soon overtook Genls. Heth and Pickett riding into our lines with Ingalls and Seth Williams. We met Genls. Lee and Longstreet on the

¹ He addressed his wife, Fannie, as Mama in his letters. She and their four children were in Baltimore.

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road and the latter turned back with us. A number of them went to call on Genl Grant, and he soon afterwards left on his way towards Petersburg. We then assembled in a room and went to work discussing the various details of the surrender. We were disposed to be liberal and finding them inclined the same way we formed no difficulty in agreeing upon every point that was raised, and I do not think that any six men could have had a more harmonious meeting, or settled every thing in more satisfactory manner. I will send you shortly the written argument signed by the six Genls. and bring to you when I come home the table upon which it was signed to be kept in as an heir-loom in the family. Genl. Sheridan gave to the owner of this house where I hear Genls. Grant and Lee also held their conference a \$20 gold piece. (Gold we hear is down to 110) for the table upon which was signed the original agreement for the surrender and when I first came here I met Genl. Custer carrying it off as a trophy on his shoulder! Genl. Lee's cavalry marched up and laid down their arms in the afternoon and today the Infantry and artillery are to be given up. Lance's div. of my corps is to witness the ceremony and receive the arms and as soon as the matter is all concluded my corps goes to Lynchburg, and then returns to Burk's station [sic] where all the rest of the army is going to await news from Sherman's army. I shall probably get off tomorrow. I sent you the endorsements (printed by my free press) which is to be placed upon the Regimental rolls signed by the several commanders and the addition below signed by Genl. Grant's Provost Marsahl Genl.

We have had to supply Lee's army with rations they being entirely without any. As for the poor horses and mules many of them will die from the want of forage. They look terribly tired and worn down. Some of the men have had nothing to eat for three days but parched corn, and I cannot help respecting men who have fought so long and so well in support of their opinions, however wrong I may think them. The officers say very little about politics, but I think they have pretty much come to the conclusion that the Southern Confederacy has come to an end, as we all certainly do. All those of the old army when we met seem not to have changed at all, and many references were made to old and happier times. Soon after the surrender I received a note from the wife of an old friend of mine Dr. Guild, Genl. Lee's chief Med. Director, saying she was in a house close by and asking me for protection. I sent Ned to her at once and found she was in a house occupied as Hd.Qr. by Gen. Merritt who promised to take care of her. She was in the house during the battle, and expected to be killed every minute. I pity the poor woman in time of war who have to witness any of its horrors. I went to her myself in the morning and found her very much excited, but the Dr. soon after arrived and she became better reconciled to he position. I have seen Osman Latrobe who is safe and unhurt, as I telegraphed you day before yesterday when communicating the fact that I was not dead as I understand some miserable correspondent reported. He had better keep out of my way if wants to retain a whole skin. Osman I think will go to Baltimore and I have urged him to do so as I can see no objections to it. Please to show this letter to Mr. & Mrs. L. and any other of your friends you choose and then send it to Mr. Wells 34 So. Front St., Phila. Who will return it to you after he has read it. When you will even get it I cannot tell but I dare say you will find matters of interest in it if it is stale news for long before get this the whole country will be ablaze with the news of Lee's surrender

Your son J.G.