

**BIOGRAPHY
OF
WILMER McLEAN**

**APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
VIRGINIA**



OCTOBER 31, 1969

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OF
WILMER McLEAN
MAY 3, 1814 - JUNE 5, 1882
APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
VIRGINIA**

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INTRODUCTION

Because of the fortunes of war, on April 9, 1865, the obscure Virginia village of Appomattox Court House became famous throughout the civilized world.

At the same time, the McLean House, where Grant and Lee held their surrender conference, became one of the best-known houses in America.

Who was Wilmer McLean, the man who opened his home to this historic meeting and shared its moment of glory? Why was he living at Appomattox Court House? When did he arrive? When did he leave? What are the facts about his life?

For a hundred years, countless individuals have expressed opinions about McLean which have been little more than products of their imagination. He has been popularly regarded as the man who ran away from the war at Manassas only to run into it again at Appomattox Court House. Research on the life of McLean has long been needed to supply essential information and to correct false impressions.

A biography of any man is always far more than the story of an individual, because every man always reflects and illuminates the times in which he lived. It is hoped that this study of the life of Wilmer McLean will throw new light upon some of the most momentous days in American history, and help to expand

the knowledge of what happened in the parlor of the McLean House on that historic April day in 1865, when our nation's greatest war came to an end.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Wilmer McLean was a descendant of one of the historic clans of Scotland. In Scotland, the name was originally spelled Macghillean, but down through the years it has been spelled Maclean, McClean, McLean, McLaine, McLane, and in a variety of other ways.¹

Even close relatives among the McLeans have disagreed about the proper way to spell their name. Wilmer spelled it McLean; his father preferred McClean; Bethannath Hodgkinson, Wilmer's maternal grandfather, wrote it McClane.

Since McLean was the spelling used by Wilmer, and is now the generally accepted form, it is employed throughout this study for all references to the McLean family.

Anthony McLean, an older brother of Wilmer, compiled considerable material for a McLean family history, but his papers were unfortunately destroyed during the Civil War when Alexandria was occupied by Federal troops, and he never actually wrote anything about his family except a few pages of recollections. Nevertheless, this brief account contains much valuable information not available elsewhere.²

The history of his Scottish forebears fascinated Anthony McLean, and he once made a trip to Glasgow, Scotland, in an attempt to find the ancestral home of the McLeans.³ He had his picture made while he was dressed in a Scottish tartan and

cap, and gave his two sons the old Scottish names of Malcolm and Donald.⁴

Anthony McLean said that his paternal grandfather was Donald McLean, who came to America in the eighteenth century from the Isle of Mull, one of the inner Scottish Hebrides in northwest Argyllshire, and settled in eastern New Jersey, near the Atlantic coast. Donald must have arrived in America some years before the Revolution, because his son, Daniel, the father of Wilmer, was born in New Jersey on October 2, 1770.⁵

Donald McLean married a lady from New Jersey who was still living on January 1, 1822. At that time, their son, Daniel, bequeathed in his will an annual sum of \$120.00 "for the comfortable support of my mother during her life to those who have the charge of her should they require this compensation."⁶

Donald McLean's relatives loved the sea, and two of his brothers are said to have been sea captains. This sea-faring tradition persisted among Donald's children, and his daughter, Hannah, who was Wilmer's aunt, married Captain John Sommers, who commanded his own vessel and finally died at sea of yellow fever. Captain and Mrs. Sommers were the parents of eight children, large families being the rule rather than the exception among the McLeans.⁷

There is no evidence that Daniel McLean, the father of Wilmer, ever had any experience as a sailor, but he must have

been well acquainted with the shipping business, and before he moved to Virginia he probably heard many favorable comments about the port of Alexandria from some of his sea-faring relatives and friends. Alexandria was first of all a noted port, and the largest single group of records on Alexandria in the National Archives has to do with maritime matters.⁸

Wilmer McLean's maternal grandfather was Bethannath Hodgkinson, a Revolutionary soldier, who was born in Burlington, New Jersey. His grave is in the churchyard at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, marked by a tombstone that is still well preserved and inscribed with the information that he was born in Burlington on January 17, 1746, and died there on October 23, 1831.

The house in which Bethannath Hodgkinson spent the last years of his life was built in 1797 and is still standing at 372 Wood Street, Burlington, New Jersey. It was restored and is now occupied by the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. A. Morrisey. The lot on which the house is built adjoins the churchyard of St. Mary's Episcopal Church.⁹

Strangely enough, this house which was occupied by Wilmer McLean's maternal grandfather is located a relatively short distance from the "Grant House", where General U.S. Grant resided for a while in 1865-1866.¹⁰

Bethannath Hodgkinson was the son of the Rev. Peter Ayers Hodgkinson, a clergyman of the Church of England, who was born

in Dublin, Ireland, and is said to have been the first Hodgkinson to come to America. The Rev. Mr. Hodgkinson married Lucretia Leeds of New Jersey, thought to be a descendant of Daniel Leeds, who made the first survey of New Jersey for the Crown.¹¹

Parson Hodgkinson selected a biblical name for his son, but in Joshua 19:38 the name is spelled with a single "n". The name on the tombstone in St. Mary's churchyard has two "n's" and is the spelling followed in this study.

During the Revolution, Bethannath Hodgkinson served as a soldier in a Pennsylvania regiment, and there is a family tradition that he made the famous crossing of the Delaware with George Washington on Christmas Day, 1776. One of the well-known pictures of Washington crossing the Delaware portrays a man in the boat with him who is wearing a Scottish bonnet, and some members of the family have maintained that this Scotsman was Bethannath Hodgkinson. Other relatives have said Hodgkinson merely helped to secure the boats for Washington's crossing.¹² Whatever assistance he might have given was certainly rendered as a civilian, because he did not actually join the Pennsylvania militia until 1777.

Another family tradition is that Hodgkinson rode in the same carriage with Lafayette when the French hero visited Philadelphia in 1825. It is possible that this might have

happened, because Hodgkinson was still alive at that time, but the Curator of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania states that his staff is unable to find anything in the Society's records to substantiate this claim.¹³

Anthony McLean said that his grandfather was a "natural born mechanic and up to the time of his death had a shop in his yard with tools of various kinds, where he amused himself making all sorts of toys and little articles for his children and grandchildren."¹⁴

After the Revolution, Bethannath Hodgkinson never applied to the government for a soldier's pension, and therefore there is no information about him on any of the pension lists.

He was married twice. His first wife, Catherine Zimmerman, was the grandmother of Wilmer McLean. She was from Pennsylvania, because she and her husband obtained their marriage license there and are said to have been married in Philadelphia in 1771. Her burial is mentioned in the publications of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania. She died on October 28, 1785.¹⁵

Bethannath Hodgkinson and Catherine Zimmerman Hodgkinson were the parents of three children: Lucretia (November 28, 1775-September 8, 1821); Elizabeth (1778-1857); and Anthony (1785-1827). All were born in New Jersey and all later made their home in Alexandria, Virginia. Before she left New Jersey, Lucretia married Daniel McLean, the father of Wilmer.

Catherine Zimmerman Hodgkinson's death in 1785 accounts for the fact that Elizabeth Hodgkinson was living with the Daniel McLeans in Alexandria in 1799.¹⁶ In those days, it was the custom for motherless children to be placed in the home of some of their close relatives. Later on, Elizabeth Hodgkinson must have assisted with the upbringing of some of the motherless and fatherless McLean children, one of whom was Wilmer.

Bethannath Hodgkinson's second wife was Mary (Bunting) Wright, who was buried beside her husband in the churchyard of St. Mary's Church in Burlington, New Jersey. The inscription on her tombstone says that she was born in Mansfield, New Jersey, on July 23, 1755, and died in Burlington, New Jersey, on July 24, 1842. She and her husband both lived to be more than eighty years of age; she was eighty-seven and he was eighty-six when they passed away.

Bethannath Hodgkinson and Mary (Bunting) Wright Hodgkinson were the parents of two children: Anne (1792-1878) and Susan (1795-1845). Anne married John Mackason of Philadelphia, and their daughter, Sarah, became the wife of Anthony McLean, the brother of Wilmer. Susan married W. S. Bartram, the son of John Bartram, the famous Philadelphia botanist.¹⁷

Like the McLeans, the Hodgkinsons also loved the sea and were connected with the shipping business. Wilmer's maternal

aunt, Elizabeth Hodgkinson, married Captain John P. Guthrie, who commanded a letter of marque and was never heard from after the War of 1812.¹⁸

Anthony Hodgkinson, Wilmer's maternal uncle, commanded a vessel, partly his own, and "died of consumption brought on by exposure on the deck of his vessel, wrecked in the Indian Ocean."¹⁹ In the War of 1812, he was captured by the British, and in a letter to his father dated January 8, 1813, stated that he had been a prisoner in Liverpool for twenty-eight days but hoped to be released very soon. One of his ports of call was Oporto, a city in western Portugal.²⁰

Captain Anthony Hodgkinson and Daniel McLean were always the best of friends, and Anthony was one of the witnesses to Daniel's will on January 1, 1822.

Daniel McLean and Lucretia Hodgkinson were married in New Jersey sometime in the early 1790's, because their first child, Bethannath, was born on November 25, 1795. Soon after their marriage they moved from New Jersey to Alexandria, Virginia, where they resided until the time of their death in the early 1820's.

Many individuals with Scottish blood had settled in Alexandria a number of years prior to the arrival of the Daniel McLeans. One Alexandria historian says: "Not only were the most prominent merchants of that nationality, but the vessels

that came into port here were generally owned and commanded by Scots sea captains, and for years before the Revolution, and particularly towards its close, this section gained many valuable citizens of Scottish birth."²¹

Between the years 1749 and 1800, according to another Alexandria history, the largest immigration was from Scotland.²²

As early as 1744, William Ramsay, a merchant from Scotland, became interested in the trade of the Upper Potomac and was always foremost in schemes to aid the town of Alexandria.²³

A Concise History of the City of Alexandria, Va., published in 1883, listed the original homes of many of the prominent citizens of Alexandria. George Coryell, Daniel McLean, and Samuel Snowden were mentioned as the three outstanding men who had come to Alexandria from New Jersey.²⁴ Since Daniel McLean died sixty years before this volume was published, he seems to have made a lasting impression upon the citizens of Alexandria.

A local census was made at Alexandria in 1799, and this census fortunately contains much more information than is found in the Federal census. It reveals that the McLeans lived in Alexandria's second ward, the area of the city south of King Street, from the Potomac river to its western boundary.²⁵

In her Recollections, Josephine Cleary Wimsatt, a granddaughter of the Daniel McLeans, said that the rear of the McLean

lot adjoined the grounds of Christ Episcopal Church, and there was a turn-stile between the McLean yard and the church grounds, so that when the members of the family were ready to attend church services, they would merely step from their garden into the church premises.²⁶

From a financial standpoint, Daniel McLean's decision to move from New Jersey to Virginia paid handsome dividends. He made rapid headway in the commerical world, and by 1799, when he was only twenty-nine, he had become a very successful business man. In the 1799 census, Daniel McLean (here spelled McClean) was listed as a baker, a trade he had probably learned by serving as an apprentice in New Jersey. At that time, the apprentice system was widely used in bakeries, and he ran his bakery in Alexandria largely with the help of apprentices. He employed five apprentices, and one hired servant, and also owned four slaves, two over sixteen years of age and two under sixteen. In 1799 he had a wife and one child, Samuel, since Bethannath had died in 1798. Elizabeth Hodgkinson, his wife's sister, was listed as a boarder in the household, making a total of thirteen persons who looked to Daniel McLean for food and shelter, which was quite a responsibility for a young man not yet thirty years old.

The McLean bakery evidently did not depend solely on the wholesale and retail grocery stores in Alexandria for the sale

of its products. Daniel McLean must have been attracted to Alexandria, in the very beginning, because it was a seaport, where there was a constant demand for ship's biscuits and crackers.

In her history of Alexandria, Mary G. Powell mentions bread, biscuit, and crackers as some of the products that were exported from Alexandria. "The cargoes going out were lumber, cattle, horses and sheep, bread, biscuit, crackers and tallow candles, and other manufactured articles." The bulk of this export trade was carried on with the West Indies.²⁷

In addition to this bakery, Daniel McLean also owned an interest in a mercantile establishment. This information is contained in the Alexandria tax list for 1800, which includes the firm of Smith and McLean among the merchants who were licensed to do business. Alexander Smith was apparently McLean's business partner, because he is listed in the 1800 Alexandria census as a merchant.²⁸

In 1813, Daniel McLean received a letter from Bethannath Hodgkinson which was addressed to "Daniel McClane, Merchant, Alexandria, Virginia."²⁹ This is an indication that McLean's mercantile business was in continuous operation for a number of years. It was evidently a flourishing establishment, because at that time Alexandria was reported to be "one of the leading mercantile centers of Virginia."³⁰

After the War of 1812, he was able to buy a sugar refinery, which he intended to put under the management of his oldest son, Samuel, but this enterprise was not without its difficulties. Anthony McLean said, "Machinery coming into use obliged him to discontinue the old mode of refining."³¹

Daniel McLean was endowed with a Scotsman's traditional business acumen and was an astute trader. It is reported that he was caught with a large quantity of flour on hand during the embargo of 1807, and was threatened with a total loss, but he converted the flour into ship's biscuits and crackers and somehow managed to ship them away.³²

Some of the flour which the British seized at Alexandria in August, 1814, soon after Wilmer was born, doubtless belonged to Daniel McLean, but his loss was not overwhelming, and Alexandria as a whole escaped without severe damage during the War of 1812. In 1813 the city had about 7,500 inhabitants, with 34 taverns and 260 business houses.³³

Daniel McLean's bakery and other business enterprises produced quick and sizable profits, and he also made many friends among the leading business men and socially prominent people in Alexandria. In his will, he mentioned John Hooff, cashier of the Farmers Bank, and Norman Fitzhugh and Jacob Douglas, grocers, as "my trusty and well beloved friends." The Farmers Bank was one of the prominent financial institutions in Alexandria. A petition,

dated December 10, 1819, requested the U. S. Congress to continue the bank's charter for another twenty years, and stressed the splendid record of the bank over the past ten years.³⁴

Some indication of Daniel McLean's worth at the time of his death is provided by the size of the bond which was signed by the executors and trustees of his estate. The bond was \$50,000.00 in "lawful money of the United States".

His financial success enabled him to become one of the chief benefactors of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria, where Wilmer McLean was married and buried, and also must have been baptized and confirmed.³⁵

St. Paul's was established by Daniel McLean and some of the other members of Christ Episcopal Church who had become dissatisfied with the ministrations of the Reverend William Gibson, who "had made himself obnoxious to a majority of his congregation."³⁶

The dissenters bought a small frame meeting house on Fairfax Street, between Duke and Prince Streets, and there on January 23, 1810, a Vestry was organized consisting of Daniel McLean and ten others, McLean's name heading the list of vestrymen. He paid \$3,500.00 in 1813 for the building in which the congregation worshipped and made a deed to the Vestry for it. In recognition of his generosity, the Vestry set apart a pew for Daniel McLean and his descendants, to be held rent free.³⁷

St. Paul's Church on Fairfax Street was dedicated by Bishop John Thomas Claggett of Maryland in 1810. The story is told

that Claggett's voice and physical stature were both so extraordinary that a young lady was completely convulsed at the dedication service and had to be taken from the church.³⁸

The members of St. Paul's occupied the building on Fairfax Street until 1817, when another building was erected on a new location, and Daniel McLean again gave some property for this purpose. The architect for the new St. Paul's was Benjamin Latrobe of Baltimore, who patterned the interior after Saint James Church in London, designed by Sir Christopher Wren. The cornerstone was laid by the Washington Lodge of Masons on June 21, 1817. During the Civil War, St. Paul's was converted into a Federal hospital and the Rector, the Rev. G. H. Norton, became a Chaplain in the Confederate Army.³⁹

As he approached the end of his life, Daniel McLean did not forget St. Paul's. He bequeathed his pew "to my two oldest daughters to be held by them as long as they continue bona fide members of the congregation of said church, and in default thereof, to descend to the next two oldest on the same condition."

At that time, it was not unusual for men to express pious religious sentiments in their wills. Daniel McLean followed this custom and said, "Above all I commend my soul to my Creator and Redeemer, depending on his infinite mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord for the pardon of all my sins and infirmities and for acceptance with him in the day of judgment." He was a devout man, and was devoted to the Church, and the sentiments he expressed were sincere. However, he did not lay aside the thriftiness which had characterized his life, and requested that his

funeral might "be conducted in a plain manner, without parade or unnecessary expense."

Mrs. Lucretia Hodgkinson McLean, the mother of Wilmer, died on September 8, 1821, of yellow fever, which was a widespread scourge in Alexandria during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the single year of 1803, over two hundred Alexandrians died from this malady.⁴⁰

Mrs. McLean was a woman with a strong moral character and a devout religious temperament, who left an indelible impression upon the lives of her children. A modest, unassuming person, she devoted her time chiefly to her large family of children and to St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Mrs. McLean loved flowers. Josephine Cleary Wimsatt said that her grandmother was noted for the beautiful flowers which grew in her garden at Alexandria and surrounded her home.⁴¹

She was buried in the cemetery of her beloved St. Paul's Church, and the inscription on her tombstone reads: "Sacred to the memory of LUCRETIA, Consort of Daniel McClean who departed this life on 8th Sept., 1821 in the 46th year. As a wife, a mother & a friend she was affectionate, sincere & faithful. The virtue which adorned her life sprung from Christian Faith of which she was a meek & a bright example, and of which she now enjoys her reward in Heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Matt. 5:8."

Only nineteen months prior to Mrs. McLean's death, Mr. and Mrs. McLean had buried their youngest child. These deaths were

a severe blow to Daniel McLean, and seemed to rob him of his desire to live, and, a short time after his wife's death, he wrote his will and stated that he wished to be "interred by the side of my dear, departed wife." A year and a half later, on February 18, 1823, at the age of fifty-two, he followed his wife to the grave. The brief inscription on his tombstone in the St. Paul's Cemetery refers to him as "for many years an active and enterprising citizen of Alexandria."

As compiled from various sources,⁴² the following information is available about the children of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel McLean.

Bethannath (November 25, 1795 - August 15, 1798), the first-born child, died in early childhood and was buried in the cemetery of Christ Episcopal Church in Alexandria. Before St. Paul's Church was organized, the McLeans were members of Christ Church, where Daniel McLean is reported to have been a vestryman. When Federal troops occupied Alexandria during the Civil War, they hitched some of their horses in the cemetery of Christ Church, and one of the steeds is said to have kicked off the head of the cherub which adorned the grave of Bethannath.

Samuel (September 12, 1797 - March 19, 1881) was twice married. His first wife was Susan Smoot (August 23, 1803 - September 11, 1852), born in Alexandria and married there to Samuel McLean on June 2, 1820. She died in Galena, Illinois, where General U.S. Grant made his home just before the Civil War. It is quite possible that Grant first became acquainted with the McLean family name at Galena, and that it had a familiar sound to him when he

held his historic conference with Lee at the McLean House in Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

Samuel and Susan Smoot McLean were the parents of Alice Lawrason, Lucretia Hodgkinson, Alexandria Kerr, and Virginia McLean. Alice Lawrason McLean married Frederick Stahl on December 1, 1839, and one of their great-granddaughters is Mrs. J.G. Barthell, Wilmette, Illinois, who provided a large amount of family data for this study.

Samuel McLean's second wife was Maria (Williams) Johnston of Louisiana, and they were the parents of two daughters, Lillie and Eliza, and one son, Archie.

Eliza (July 1, 1800 - ?) married Lawrence G. Alexander of Effingham, Virginia, who was killed at New Orleans by a locomotive. She died without issue.

Lucretia (September 18, 1802-July 17, 1881) married James D. Kerr, a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, on September 25, 1823. They were the parents of a number of children.

Daniel Hodgkinson (May 19, 1805-September 12, 1828) suffered from a physical infirmity which prevented him from engaging in any gainful employment. He never married, and died in Effingham, Virginia.

Catherine (January 19, 1807-July 30, 1859) married Howson Hooe and lived at "Longwood" in Fauquier County. Howson Hooe, a farmer, was the cousin of Mrs. Virginia Hooe Mason, who married Wilmer McLean. Howson and Catherine McLean Hooe were the parents of eight children.

Hannah Agnes (January 24, 1810-February 23, 1886) married William Cleary of Occaquan, Virginia. Cleary was the son of Michael Cleary, who came to America as a young man from Tipperary, Ireland, and settled at Occaquan, Virginia. Hannah had a beautiful voice and used to sing in St. Paul's Church in Alexandria. She was the mother of ten children. One of her great-grandsons is Prof. W. K. Wimsatt of Yale University, who provided a copy of Josephine Cleary Wimsatt's Recollections for use in this study.

Anthony (February 14, 1812-May 20, 1893)⁴³ married Sarah Mackason (July 22, 1814-February 15, 1875), who was the granddaughter of Bethannath Hodgkinson by his second wife. They were the parents of three children.

Wilmer (May 3, 1814-June 5, 1882) married Mrs. Virginia Hooe Mason of Prince William County. Wilmer McLean and Virginia Hooe (Mason) McLean were the parents of one son and three daughters.

Douglas (February 3, 1815-September 16, 1837) never married and died in New Orleans of yellow fever. The inscription on his tombstone in St. Paul's cemetery states that he died "in the 22nd year of his age." This indicates that the statement in various family records that he was born on February 3, 1816, is an error.

Annie (December 22, 1815-April 4, 1853) apparently never married. Although Anthony McLean did not include any information about her in his reminiscences, his only daughter was named Annie.

Mary Jane (October 3, 1818-November 25, 1819) was the youngest child and died soon after her first birthday.

The close relationship that existed between Mr. and Mrs. Daniel McLean and their relatives is illustrated by the names which were given to the McLean children.

Bethannath was named after his maternal grandfather, Bethannath Hodgkinson.

Catherine was named after her maternal grandmother, Catherine Zimmerman Hodgkinson.

Eliza was named after her maternal aunt, Elizabeth Hodgkinson.

Anthony was named after his maternal uncle, Anthony Hodgkinson.

Hannah was named after her paternal aunt, Hannah McLean.

Daniel Hodgkinson was named after his father and mother, Daniel and Lucretia Hodgkinson McLean.

Lucretia was named after her mother, Lucretia Hodgkinson McLean.

Annie was named after her maternal aunt, Anne Hodgkinson, the daughter of Bethannath Hodgkinson and his second wife, Mary (Bunting) Wright Hodgkinson.

Mary Jane was named after her maternal grandfather's second wife, Mary (Bunting) Wright Hodgkinson.

Douglas was named after Jacob Douglas, who married Mary Guthrie, the first cousin of the McLean children.

All except the names of Samuel and Wilmer McLean appear among some of the known relatives and in-laws of the McLean family. Since Mr. and Mrs. Daniel McLean customarily named

their children after some of their kinsfolk, it is likely that the names of Samuel and Wilmer were derived from the same source, perhaps from some of the McLeans in New Jersey.⁴⁴ Most of the names of the McLean children came from the Hodgkinson side of the family, but neither Samuel nor Wilmer seems to have been a popular name among the Hodgkinsons and their descendants.

Most of the McLeans took pride in their family history and liked to recall the names of their relatives who had rendered any special service to their country or who had been associated, even in some minor way, with famous individuals.

Anthony McLean recounted the family tradition that Bethannath Hodgkinson rode in the same carriage with Lafayette at Philadelphia in 1825. He mentioned that Samuel McLean, his older brother, served as an American consul in Cuba, and that one of his cousins married William Brent, Jr., who was Charge d'Affaires at Buenos Aires and resided in Argentina for several years. He recalled that two of his great uncles were sea captains and sailed to the Far East, where they traded with India and China, and one of them was supposed to be "the first man who raised the American flag in those waters." He said that his paternal uncle was Captain John Somers, who was related to Lieutenant Richard Somers of the United States Navy who helped to blow up the Frigate Philadelphia in the harbor at Tripoli. However, he merely mentioned the name of Wilmer McLean and seemed to think that his brother's chief distinction was that he married Mrs. Virginia Hooe Mason, the daughter of Col. John Hooe

of "Locust Grove". Anthony was too close to the Civil War to realize that Wilmer's connection with the surrender at Appomattox Court House would make him the most famous member of the McLean family.

A good many years later, in 1926, a niece of Wilmer McLean wrote her recollections. She took pride in recalling the tradition that Bethannath Hodgkinson crossed the Delaware with George Washington. She was pleased to say that Daniel McLean was once a vestryman at Christ Church in Alexandria, where Washington attended church for many years. Then she went on to say that "the First Battle of Manassas ... was fought on the farm of my Uncle Wilmer McLean, my mother's brother. ... It was in his parlor that General Lee, four years later, surrendered to General Grant at the close of the Civil War." Josephine Cleary Wimsatt was able to see that the name of Wilmer McLean had become immortal because of his association with two famous men.

BOYHOOD LIFE AND EDUCATION

When Wilmer McLean was born on May 3, 1814, Alexandria County was a part of the District of Columbia. Therefore his birthplace was actually in the District of Columbia rather than in Alexandria, Virginia.

Before he was nine years old, Wilmer had the misfortune to lose his father and mother and become an orphan. According to the stipulations in Daniel McLean's will, the younger McLean children could not receive their share of their father's estate until they reached legal age, and the responsibility for their upbringing and education rested on some of their close relatives.

Those who undertook this task included Mr. and Mrs. James D. Kerr, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Douglas, Captain and Mrs. Anthony Hodgkinson, Mrs. John P. Guthrie, and perhaps others.

Both James D. Kerr and Jacob Douglas were mentioned in Daniel McLean's will and both married into the McLean family. Kerr, a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, was the husband of Lucretia McLean, an older sister of Wilmer. Douglas, a native of Northern Ireland, married Mary Guthrie, Wilmer's first cousin.

Captain Anthony Hodgkinson was one of the witnesses to Daniel McLean's will, and was Wilmer's maternal uncle. He was born in New Jersey in 1785 and died at Alexandria on June 19, 1827. He married Phoebe Albertson, a member of a New Jersey Quaker family, and was the father of five children.

Mrs. John P. Guthrie, the former Elizabeth Hodgkinson, was the widow of Captain John P. Guthrie and was Wilmer's maternal aunt. Before her marriage she made her home with the McLeans in Alexandria, and the McLean children must have regarded her as a second mother. At the time of Daniel McLean's death, she was thirty-eight years of age. She was the mother of Mary Guthrie, the wife of Jacob Douglas.

In the Alexandria census of 1799, a man by the name of Archibald McLean was listed as a school teacher.⁴⁵ He had evidently been living in Alexandria for some little time, because he advertised a three-story brick house for sale in the Alexandria Advertiser on April 14, 1797. Although it is not known whether there was any blood relationship between Daniel and Archibald McLean, Wilmer and the other McLean children might have received some of their early instruction under the tutelage of this man, who seems to have been a very capable schoolmaster.

The best-known school in Alexandria during Wilmer's boyhood was the Alexandria Academy, conducted in a one-story brick house on the east side of Washington Street, between Duke and Wolfe streets. It was established in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and after January, 1821, when Wilmer was first starting to school, was made free to all Alexandria boys. An Irishman by the name of William B. Leary was the respected instructor.⁴⁶

Another school was conducted in Alexandria by Benjamin Hallowell, a young Quaker schoolmaster from Pennsylvania, who became

a renowned teacher. Born in 1799, he opened a school for boys in 1824 on the northeast corner of Oronoco and Washington streets, and in 1826 moved it to 220 North Washington Street, into what is now known as the Lloyd House.⁴⁷

One of Hallowell's famous pupils was Robert E. Lee, who attended the Hallowell school for a few months just before he left for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, receiving special instruction in mathematics.⁴⁸

The students in Hallowell's school had to pay for their instruction, while the tuition at the Alexandria Academy was free. When he first opened his school, it is reported that Hallowell had very few pupils, but students eventually came to him from many states in the Union. The 1850 U.S. Census lists the names of students in "Hallowell's Boarding School" from the District of Columbia, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Alabama, Louisiana, and Missouri. Even then, however, his occupation was given as both farmer and teacher.

It is safe to presume that most of Wilmer's formal education was received at the Alexandria Academy rather than at the Hallowell school. Benjamin Hallowell published an autobiography in which he included the names of all of his pupils in 1825, but he did not mention any student named McLean.⁴⁹ Also, while Hallowell first opened the doors of his school in 1824, no pupils actually attended until 1825, and by that time Wilmer was eleven years of age.

The course of study at the Alexandria Academy was quite thorough, with stress being placed upon mathematics and the classics. While Robert E. Lee was a student there, he studied algebra and geometry; Homer and Longinus in Greek; Tacitus and Cicero in Latin.⁵⁰

Lee was only seven years older than Wilmer McLean, and it is more than likely that they both pursued the same course of study. In fact, it appears that they were both enrolled at the Alexandria Academy at the same time. Since Lee was completing his course of study about the time that McLean was beginning his, they would not have been school-mates for more than two or three years and would not have had any close personal relationship.

In addition to his study of mathematics and the Latin and Greek classics, one of the basic elements in Wilmer McLean's education was thorough training in the art of penmanship. At that time, much emphasis was placed upon writing. There is a discussion of several methods of teaching writing in the autobiography of Benjamin Hallowell, and he expresses his admiration for Benjamin Eakins, a writing teacher who taught his pupils to write with speed, ease, and grace.⁵¹

All of McLean's letters show that he was an accomplished penman. His handwriting contains many flourishes, which could not have been made except by a well-practiced hand, and the individual letters are all well-made, uniform, and carefully spaced. His penmanship was beautiful and very impressive.

Although the language in his letters seems somewhat stilted to the modern reader, the letters which have been preserved were written to two generals and to the President of the United States. He would naturally be more formal when addressing such distinguished men, and yet he was able to express himself in a clear and concise manner. The words he employed reveal that he had an excellent vocabulary, while his use of the word "unfeigned" seems to reflect the language of the Book of Common Prayer, with which he was very familiar.

There is a letter in the National Archives which refers to McLean's ability and this presumably includes his education. John S. Mosby wrote to President U. S. Grant on August 19, 1876, urging him to "order our friend Major McLean to be appointed in the Treasury." He stated that McLean was "perfectly competent" to fill the position he was seeking, a job in the Treasury Mailing Room.⁵²

There is a tradition in the McLean family that Wilmer had an excellent education, and this tradition seems to be fully justified. Judging by the positions which they filled, Samuel and Anthony, the other two sons of Daniel McLean who lived a normal life expectancy, were likewise well-educated men.

Samuel McLean served for a number of years as an American consul in Cuba, being in charge of Cienfuegos and Trinidad de Cuba. His letters of recommendation in the National Archives highly praise his education, business ability, and diplomatic skill.

A letter to James Buchanan, then U. S. Secretary of State, from George W. Riggs refers to him as a "gentleman of education."⁵³ Riggs, a prominent banker of Washington, D. C., told H. S. Legare that "Mr. McLean's business talents are such as to make him very competent to fill with credit to himself the office for which he is an applicant." Another letter from Riggs to John M. Clayton mentions McLean's "appointment to the Consulate by Mr. Webster." This was Daniel Webster, with whom Samuel McLean corresponded in regard to the expenses he incurred going to Cuba.

Several American merchants in Trinidad de Cuba urged Samuel McLean to apply for the American consulate at that port on April 21, 1843, and twenty American citizens in Cuba later addressed a petition to President Zachary Taylor requesting that McLean be continued as American consul at Trinidad de Cuba. They spoke of his "high sense of honor" and his "knowledge of the Spanish character." In 1853, thirteen citizens of Baltimore sent a petition to President Franklin Pierce asking that McLean be reappointed as consul at Trinidad de Cuba.

Samuel McLean wrote President Franklin Pierce on June 13, 1853, to apply for the consulate at Trinidad de Cuba. His letter is a beautiful specimen of penmanship and has the same characteristics as the handwriting of Wilmer McLean, except that Wilmer always used a heavier pen.

The material in the National Archives indicates that Samuel McLean was favorably known by James Buchanan, Zachary Taylor,

Franklin Pierce, Daniel Webster, and other high officials of the United States Government, and that he was held in esteem by many prominent merchants and bankers in the United States and Cuba.

One of the nieces of Anthony McLean said, "Uncle Anthony was a highly educated gentleman, very well informed and an interesting talker. He was very proud of his Scotch ancestry, and for many years he had been collecting data bearing on the McLean family, from as far back in history as he could find traces of his clan."⁵⁴

The 1850 U.S. Census listed Anthony's occupation as "Service U. S. Gov." During the Civil War, he worked a short while as a clerk in the Confederate Quartermaster's Office at Manassas and later served as the auditor of the Orange and Alexandria Rail Road.⁵⁵

The specimens of Anthony's handwriting that have been preserved show that he was trained in the same style of penmanship that was employed by Samuel and Wilmer. Anthony was a studious, scholarly, and devout man, who served as a Junior Warden and later as a Trustee of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria.

Since there was very little difference in the ages of Anthony and Wilmer, both were evidently brought up under the same conditions and were offered the same educational advantages. If Anthony deserved to be called "a highly educated gentleman", the same could be said of Wilmer, his younger brother.

Although Wilmer became an orphan at the age of eight, his school experiences in Alexandria appear to have been similar to that of any normal boy. His lessons in mathematics, grammar,

spelling, and penmanship probably impressed him more than his courses in Latin and Greek, and yet he was a diligent student and came out of school imbued with the idea that he should do his best to make a success in life.

Wilmer was ten years old in the fall of 1824, and must have remembered the visit of Lafayette to Alexandria on October 16 of that year. It was a grand occasion, when all the school children had a holiday.⁵⁶

In January, 1827, there occurred what Alexandrians have always called the "great fire". This conflagration destroyed fifty-three houses before it was finally brought under control.⁵⁷

As a whole, Wilmer's school days seem to have moved along peacefully and quietly, without being disturbed by very many unusual or spectacular events.

BUSINESS MAN AND MILITIA OFFICER

After he completed his course of study at the Alexandria Academy, McLean found it relatively easy to choose the occupation he would follow. His father, Daniel McLean, had been one of Alexandria's leading business men, and although Daniel was no longer living, his many friends were ready to encourage one of his sons to follow a mercantile career in Alexandria.

The other alternative seems to have been a job in government service. Before the Civil War, Wilmer's two older brothers, Samuel and Anthony, were both in the employ of the United States Government, and after the war, Wilmer himself was a United States Government employee for six and a half years.

As a young man, he was attracted to the grocery business, which was one of Alexandria's leading enterprises. In addition to the requirements of the people in Alexandria, a large amount of grocery business was created by the ships which regularly called at the port of Alexandria, and made the import and export of food-stuffs a very profitable line.⁵⁸

McLean decided to enter the wholesale and retail grocery field.⁵⁹ While this business required a considerable investment, this problem was virtually solved when he reached the age of twenty-one and became eligible to receive his share of his father's estate, which had been held in trust for him for more than twelve years.

He was associated with the grocery firm of Kerr and McLean. James D. Kerr, who married Lucretia McLean, and who was mentioned in Daniel McLean's will, was apparently the Kerr member of this firm.

Wilmer's excellent training in mathematics and penmanship enabled him to handle the records and correspondence of the Kerr and McLean company in a capable manner.⁶⁰ His friends reported that he was industrious and a man of sober habits.⁶¹

However, it appears that he did not inherit the outstanding business talents of his father, and Alice Barbara Stahl, one of his great nieces, said that he was a well-educated but "impractical" man.⁶² His beautiful penmanship indicates that he had an artistic temperament and was perhaps better suited for intellectual pursuits than for the rugged competition of the business world.

McLean's firm is said to have been quite successful, but most of the business firms in Alexandria in the 1830's and 1840's did not enjoy a spectacular growth. Alexandria had a population of 7,227 in 1810 and 8,795 in 1850, which was an increase of only 1,568 people in a period of forty years.

Alexandria's growth was hindered during this period, according to one historian, by the departure of many of her young men for the new lands which the government was opening up in the west.⁶³

Since McLean apparently imported large quantities of sugar into the Confederacy during the Civil War, he could easily have been a sugar importer while he was a wholesale grocer in Alexandria. A detailed examination of the voluminous records of the port of Alexandria in the National Archives would probably reveal that he had some experience in importing sugar before the war.

While he was a merchant, McLean gained valuable knowledge about the business world, and his contacts with various commission houses, jobbers, and shippers in Alexandria, Washington, Richmond and other points made him widely acquainted with a number of merchants, bankers, and business men.

Along with all the other men in Alexandria, McLean would have been a member of the militia. In those days, every locality of sufficient size had one or more militia companies, because all males between eighteen and forty-five were required to be enrolled in the militia.⁶⁴

Militia duties were by no means burdensome. Members of the Alexandria militia were expected to attend the annual regimental musters and to participate in public functions such as the cornerstone-laying ceremony at the Washington Monument on July 4, 1848, and the inaugural parade of President Taylor on March 5, 1849.⁶⁵

It was considered an honor to be an officer in the militia and McLean presumably held the rank of "Major". In the manuscript version of his Military Memoirs of a Confederate, E. P. Alexander said that McLean "had the title of Major."⁶⁶ John S. Mosby referred to him as "Major McLean" in a letter to President U.S. Grant.⁶⁷ The noted Civil War historian, D. S. Freeman, refers to "Maj. Wilmer McLean",⁶⁸ as does The Oxford Companion to American History.⁶⁹

Some references indicate that McLean was a member of the Confederate Army, but all of his work for the Confederacy was done as a civilian. The Confederate records about him in the National Archives are in the civilian file.

The world might never have heard of him except for the death of John Seddon Mason, M. D., on June 24, 1850. Mason left a wife and three little girls, and two and a half years later McLean married Mrs. Mason. This was destined to bring about a revolutionary change in his life and connect his name with one of the greatest events in American history.



Wilmer McLean
1814 - 1882

MARRIAGE AND LIFE AT "YORKSHIRE"

When Wilmer McLean won the hand of Mrs. Virginia Beverley Hooe Mason, he was joined in wedlock with a member of a very prominent and wealthy Virginia family.

On the Beverley side, Mrs. Mason was a descendant of a famous eighteenth-century sea captain, Captain Harry Beverley.⁷⁰ As previously noted, McLean also had a number of relatives who were sea captains.

Members of the Hooe family were large landowners in Fauquier County as far back as the eighteenth century.⁷¹ Before the Civil War, Howson Hooe, a first cousin of Mrs. Virginia Hooe Mason, was the owner of the "Longwood" plantation in Fauquier County, where he lived with his wife, Catherine, who was the sister of Wilmer McLean.⁷²

One of the oldest mercantile establishments in Alexandria was the firm of Hooe and Harrison, a company which handled an amazing variety of products, as is evident from an advertisement in The Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser on February 5, 1784.

Robert Townshend Hooe became the mayor of Alexandria in 1780, and had seven buildings insured for \$23,500.00, the largest amount of insurance carried by anyone in Alexandria.⁷³

A man named John Hooe, not to be confused with the father of Mrs. Virginia Hooe Mason, built a home in Alexandria in 1793 which has been called "one of Alexandria's finest houses." It is still standing today.⁷⁴

Mrs. Virginia Hooe Mason's great-grandfather was Bernard Hooe, who did business with British mercantile firms prior to the American Revolution. A dispute arose about one of his accounts, and the bill was left unpaid, but the notation was made on the company's ledger that Bernard Hooe was "always able to pay." He was certainly a man of means.⁷⁵

Her grandfather was Bernard Hooe, Jr. In 1800, he purchased 145 acres of land from Colonel Thomas Blackburn, which later became part of the "Yorkshire" estate, where the McLeans lived after their marriage.⁷⁶

Her father was John Hooe, a highly respected citizen of Prince William County. Anthony McLean called special attention in his "Reminiscences" to the fact that the father of Mrs. Wilmer McLean was Colonel John Hooe of "Locust Grove".

Colonel John Hooe was born on January 1, 1795, and was the son of Bernard Hooe, Jr., and Mary Syms (Chichester) Hooe. He married Maria Martha Gaines Beverley (April 28, 1797-September 12, 1834), the daughter of Robert Gaines Beverley and Elizabeth Lightfoot Buckner, their marriage license bearing the date May 15, 1817. John Hooe died at "Yorkshire" on September 17, 1845.⁷⁷

Mrs. Virginia Beverley Hooe Mason was born on May 28, 1818. Her first husband was Dr. John Seddon Mason, a Virginian, who obtained his medical degree at the University of Maryland in 1836.⁷⁸ He was the son of Enoch and Lucy Mason and married Virginia Beverley Hooe on November 12, 1839. He died on June 24, 1850. Dr. and Mrs. Mason made their home in Fairfax County.⁷⁹

Three daughters were born to Dr. and Mrs. Mason. Maria Beverley Mason was born about 1844, and Osceola ("Ocie") Seddonia Mason was born November 5, 1845. Both of these girls lived with the Wilmer McLeans at Manassas and Appomattox Court House. E. P. Alexander, a Confederate officer, saw them at Manassas in 1861 and described them as "two pretty daughters."⁸⁰

A third daughter, Sarah Barber Mason, was born June 3, 1848, and died on February 5, 1857. Because of her early death, she never lived at Appomattox Court House.

Osceola Seddonia Mason married Thomas Tibbs, a close neighbor of the McLeans at Appomattox Court House. His home was in sight of the old Court House building.⁸¹ Tibbs served during the Civil War under John S. Mosby, the famous Confederate partisan leader, and after the war moved to Texas, where he was killed by Indians.⁸²

After the war, Wilmer McLean was the personal friend of John S. Mosby, and their friendship might have been partly based on the fact that McLean's stepdaughter's husband served under Mosby during the Civil War.

At the time of her marriage to Wilmer McLean, Mrs. Mason was a very wealthy widow, with extensive real estate holdings and other property. She owned the "Yorkshire" plantation in Prince William County, estimated to contain twelve hundred acres; a tract of land in Fairfax County with three hundred and thirty acres; and two other tracts of land in Prince William County containing five hundred acres. She also possessed fourteen slaves.⁸³

The "Yorkshire" estate had an interesting history, having been patented in 1729 by Mark Chilton. It consisted of 764 acres which immediately joined "King" Carter's Lower Bull Run Tract. John Chilton conveyed it in 1733 to Richard Blackburn of "Rippon Lodge", who later enlarged the estate. After it was acquired by Richard Blackburn, it came into the possession of his sons-in-law, Bushrod Washington and Henry Smith Turner, who sold it in 1826 to Colonel John Hooe, the father of Mrs. Wilmer McLean.⁸⁴

On January 18, 1853, Mrs. Virginia Hooe Mason placed all her property in trust through Samuel Chilton of Washington, D.C. This action was taken the day before her marriage to Wilmer McLean, which seems to indicate that the marriage might have been postponed until this legal matter could be taken care of. This rather unusual pre-marital arrangement raises many unanswered questions, but the only documentary information about it is contained in the trust agreement itself.

The trust agreement states: "Whereas a Marriage is intended to be had and solemnized between the said Virginia B. Mason and the said Wilmer McLean and it has been agreed between them that notwithstanding the happening of such marriage the said Virginia B. shall thereafter hold, possess and enjoy to her sole and separate use and behoof and subject to her sole disposition all the estate real and personal to which she is entitled in any right whatsoever, ...".⁸⁵



Virginia Beverley Hooe Mason McLean
1818-1893

This trust agreement might have been an effort to silence the people who were saying that McLean was marrying Mrs. Mason for her property. Because of the two people who were involved, the marriage must have caused many comments among the residents of Alexandria and Prince William County.

Wilmer McLean and Mrs. Virginia Beverley Hooe Mason were married in St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria on January 19, 1853.⁸⁶ Since it was Mrs. McLean's second marriage, it was probably a simple and quiet ceremony, with a minimum of display.

Following their marriage, the McLeans set up housekeeping in the "handsome old colonial mansion" at "Yorkshire". A photograph in The Photographic History of the Civil War reveals that it was indeed a very impressive structure.⁸⁷

Two children, a son and a daughter, were born to the McLeans while they were living in Prince William County.

Their first child, Wilmer McLean, Jr., was born on January 1, 1854. Some references list his name as John Wilmer McLean, Jr., but there is no evidence that Wilmer McLean, Sr., ever signed his name in any other way except Wilmer McLean. It is possible that Wilmer McLean, Jr., added John to his name and called himself John Wilmer.⁸⁸ The Parish Records at St. Paul's Church show that he was baptized on October 19, 1856.

Wilmer McLean, Jr., was eleven years old at the time of Lee's surrender to Grant. A good many years after the war, he paid a visit to Appomattox Court House and talked with Mr. J. A. Burke

of Appomattox, who states that Wilmer, Jr., thought that he could remember some of the events on April 9, 1865.⁸⁹ It is not likely, however, that he had a very vivid recollection of that historic day.

The second McLean child born at "Yorkshire" was a girl, Lucretia ("Lula") Virginia, whose birthday was May 5, 1857. She was born exactly three months after the death of her half-sister, Sarah Barber Mason, who died on February 5, 1857. "Lula" was the owner of the rag doll which was carried away from the McLean House at Appomattox at the time of the surrender.

Wilmer McLean has been called a "gentleman farmer" while he lived at "Yorkshire",⁹⁰ but he could not have led a very leisurely life on this large plantation. Planting, cultivating, and harvesting the many acres that were under cultivation required careful planning and supervision. The orchards, farm animals, pasture lands, and fences needed constant attention, and the McLean slaves had to be kept busy at all seasons of the year. McLean also directed the erection of a large new stone barn in 1857, which was later converted into a Confederate military hospital.

E. P. Alexander was at Manassas in the summer of 1861 and described the "Yorkshire" plantation at that time by saying that it had "all the usual farm outbuildings", including a detached kitchen, corn-crib, stables, servants' houses, and quite a lot of shade trees. The kitchen was a large log cabin, close by the house, and there was a peach orchard about one hundred yards in

front of the house. The barn and the stables were located "in one corner of the grove." The house itself occupied a large knoll in the midst of corn fields and pasture lands, stretching on all sides for several hundred yards and down to the creek with its border of high timber.⁹¹

The McLeans welcomed their relatives and friends into their home at "Yorkshire" and entertained them in the manner traditionally associated with plantation life in the ante-bellum South. E. P. Alexander said that he was cordially received and shared a number of meals with the family when he visited the McLean home prior to the First Battle of Manassas. While Mrs. McLean was his wife's aunt through her first marriage, he would doubtless have been extended every courtesy by the McLeans even if he had been a complete stranger.

AT "YORKSHIRE" PRIOR TO THE BATTLE OF FIRST MANASSAS

In the spring of 1861 the people who lived in the Manassas area could easily observe the extensive battle preparations being made by the Confederate Army. As early as May 6, the commander of the Virginia land and naval forces, Maj. Gen. Robert E. Lee, placed troops at Manassas Junction, and from that time on it was a center of Southern attention.

Manassas Junction was a strategic railroad point, because it was there that the principal north-south railroad of Virginia met one which ran west into the Shenandoah Valley.

Brig. Gen. Pierre G. T. Beauregard arrived on June 1 to take command of the Confederate Army. He at once tried to familiarize himself with the surrounding country and sought information about the terrain from the people who lived in the vicinity. He later mentioned in his official report that Wilmer McLean was among those who helped to provide valuable information about the countryside.⁹²

Edward P. Alexander was Beauregard's chief signal officer, and reported that he located an important signal station close to the McLean home. He implied that he received McLean's full cooperation in all of his pre-battle activities.⁹³

Nearly three weeks before the Battle of First Manassas, on June 30, McLean sold a horse to the Confederate Quartermaster for \$100.00. A receipt for this amount is in the National Archives and indicates that McLean was willing to work with the Confederate Quartermaster during the weeks preceding the first battle.

McLean's most valuable contribution to the Confederacy at this time was agreeing to let the Confederate Army take over the buildings at "Yorkshire" for use as a military hospital. Rent receipts in the National Archives show that the barn was a hospital and the dwellings and outbuildings were used as living quarters for surgeons and hospital attendants from July 17, 1861, until February 28, 1862, a period of seven and a half months.

The first rent receipt reads:

For rent of two dwelling houses, as Surgeons quarters, one barn, as Hospital and outbuildings as quarters for Hospital attendants, from 17th July 1861 to Dec. 31st 1861, 5 mos. and 15 days @ \$150.00 per month.
\$825.00

Plans must have been made well in advance to set up a hospital at this point. The Confederates were familiar with the movements of Union troops in the area and were expecting an attack at this locality. E. P. Alexander said that everything was in readiness at the hospital on the morning of July 18.⁹⁴ In addition, Surgeon Thomas H. Williams, medical director of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac, had established his office at Manassas Junction.⁹⁵

McLean evidently gave his full cooperation to the establishment of this hospital, and let it be known that he would move his family out of the buildings at "Yorkshire" and make some disposition of his farm animals, so that the barn could be used as a hospital. Although the Quartermaster's receipts in the National Archives show that McLean sold only one horse, the one sold on

June 30, he could have sold many other animals for which there are no records, as it cannot be assumed that the receipts in the National Archives are a complete record of the transactions of the Confederate Quartermaster Department. There is, of course, the possibility that he might have disposed of his livestock elsewhere, rather than to the Confederate Quartermaster.

The McLeans must have left Manassas several days before the first battle. A rent receipt in the National Archives shows that the "Yorkshire" buildings were taken over on July 17, the day before Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell made his initial thrust at the Confederate lines. E. P. Alexander said that he saw nothing of the McLeans on the morning of July 18.

McLean was concerned about the safety of his family, and wanted to take them to a place of safety, and yet he did not seem to have any personal fear of a battle zone, because he returned to Manassas after the first battle and remained there for at least four months. McLean's desire to leave the battle area at Manassas has been greatly exaggerated, to say the least.

Some, if not all, of the McLean furniture seems to have been left in the dwellings at Manassas while they were occupied by Confederate surgeons. E. P. Alexander said that he carried a chair out of the house on July 18 and placed it in the yard so that he could use it as a rest for his spy glass.⁹⁶

There is every indication that McLean gave his whole-hearted support to the Confederate war effort and was willing to make

great personal sacrifices in the days before the Battle of First Manassas. There is really no evidence to support the idea that he was a man who was chiefly motivated by a desire to run away from the war, or was just a passive onlooker.

Nearly all of McLean's close relatives were ardent Southern sympathizers, and Hannah McLean Cleary, one of his sisters, gave four of her sons to the Confederate Army. Along with two of her daughters, she is said to have made one of the first Confederate flags. At the outbreak of the war, one of her sons was a physician in Washington, and helped to raise a company of Confederate soldiers, becoming their captain. He refused to accept the defeat of the Confederacy at the close of the war, and went to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he practiced medicine for a number of years.⁹⁷

Catherine McLean Hooe, another one of Wilmer's sisters, died in 1859, but two of her sons served in the Confederate Army.

Although Anthony McLean, like Wilmer, was too old for active military duty, he was employed for a while as a clerk in the Confederate Quartermaster's office at Manassas.

The loyalty of these people to the Confederacy cannot be questioned, and yet they all moved away from their homes during the war. The Cleary family left Washington and went to Charlottesville, Virginia, where they remained until the end of the war. Howson Hooe, the husband of the deceased Catherine McLean, left his farm in Fauquier County and took his four daughters to Charlottesville. Anthony McLean moved away from his home in Alexandria and went farther South.

The fact that Wilmer McLean moved his family away from the war zone at Manassas is not an indication that he was not a Southern sympathizer. In those days, war was regarded as the business of soldiers, and no one questioned the loyalty of civilians who left the scene of a battle. Also, it must not be forgotten that McLean did not really leave Manassas in 1861. He turned over the buildings at "Yorkshire" to the Confederate Army, conducted his family to a place of safety, and then returned to Manassas after the first battle to work without compensation, except for his expenses, for the Confederate Quartermaster.

Beauregard praised McLean and the other civilians at Manassas who assisted him before the battle, and said that they "were found ever ready to give me their time without stint or reward."⁹⁸

THE BATTLE OF FIRST MANASSAS

Among the many accounts of the Battle of First Manassas, the best description of the part played by the McLean plantation is contained in an unpublished narrative by E. P. Alexander. It is indeed fortunate that Alexander's material is available, because his account can be regarded as entirely trustworthy.

No less an authority than Douglas S. Freeman, the noted biographer of General R. E. Lee, praised the trustworthiness of Alexander's conclusions. Freeman evaluated his work by saying, "Based on a careful study of the records as well as on personal observation, his conclusions are recognized by all authorities on the Civil War as carrying great weight."⁹⁹

Alexander was a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and on the occasion of the Academy's centennial in 1902, he was asked to make an anniversary address.

In contrast to many Union and Confederate officers who wrote about their experiences in the war, Alexander went to great lengths to verify the accuracy of all his statements. He carried on a voluminous correspondence with many individuals in an effort to discover the truth about every disputed point, and whenever he found that one of his own statements was incorrect, he was always willing to revise it.

In 1907 Alexander published a full-length book on the Civil War entitled Military Memoirs of a Confederate.¹⁰⁰ The manuscript drafts of this volume are now in the Southern Historical Collection

at the University of North Carolina, and constitute volumes 26-53 of the collection known as the "Alexander Papers".

For some portions of the book there are two or more drafts which differ quite a bit from one another. Volume 26, covering Alexander's early life to July 21, 1861, contains a considerable amount of unpublished material. Volume 27 duplicates much of this but also goes beyond it. Virtually all Civil War historians have neglected this unpublished source material, which includes a number of valuable comments about the McLean plantation at Manassas, the McLean family, and the Battle of First Manassas.

Alexander explained that he felt he should write about the McLeans in considerable detail because he thought the story of their move from Manassas to Appomattox was "one of the most remarkable coincidences of the war."

Nevertheless, it took Alexander a number of years to realize the importance of the McLean story. When he published an article on "General Lee at Appomattox" in The Southern Magazine for June, 1873, he did not refer to the McLean House or mention the name of Wilmer McLean. Nearly thirty years later, he saw the surrender in a different light, and devoted considerable space to McLean in an article he published in The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine.¹⁰¹

An interesting coincidence connected with the McLean story is Alexander's own relationship to the McLean family. Although Alexander was a native of Georgia, his wife's uncle was Dr. John Seddon Mason, the first husband of Mrs. McLean. By marriage, therefore,

Mrs. McLean was the aunt of the wife of E. P. Alexander, who was Beauregard's chief signal officer at Manassas and who watched the opening of the Battle of First Manassas from the yard of the McLean house.

Alexander facetiously remarked, "This is near enough relationship in Virginia to warrant recognition and family intimacy - especially if there are two pretty daughters as there were in McLean's family. So in my frequent excursions, studying the topography and roads, and locating signal stations, (one of which indeed and an important one was quite near the house), I frequently called on the family, and took some meals with them and knew them all very well."¹⁰²

Alexander's narrative clears up the confusion which has existed about the number of shells fired at the McLean house and the place which was hit. The building which was actually hit was a log kitchen in the yard, struck by a single shell. Alexander explained that a single shell "came directly through the kitchen, a large log cabin close by the house in which our headquarters servants were just dishing up a dinner they had cooked for us. Fortunately not a soul was touched. But there was a general stampede of all the horses hitched about the yard, & an ambulance or two standing around & of a good many miscellaneous people - among them our darkeys who tumbled out of the kitchen & rolled over each other getting out of the way. Our dinner was ruined by the mud daubing between the logs jarred out as the shell passed through both walls falling into the sliced up meat & dished up vegetables & we went without dinner that day."

The shell which went through the walls of the log kitchen was part of a Union artillery salvo. Alexander could easily see the Federal gunners with the aid of his glass, on a hill about 1,500 yards away. "They loaded three or four guns, taking quite a time at aiming very carefully & then they fired all three simultaneously - & in about five seconds all three arrived shrieking in chorus. One ploughed into the ground close by the house, one smashed into a corn & cob grinding machine standing in the yard, & a third came directly through the kitchen ...".

Alexander believed that "those were the very first cannon shot fired between the two great Virginia Armies - the Federal 'Army of the Potomac' & the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia & they were aimed at McLean's House."

Alexander gave the following version of the Battle of First Manassas as he saw it from the McLean house:

Gen. Tyler commanding the Federal advance, (the father of Ned), was a graduate of West Point of 1819, & had resigned after distinguished service & had been equally distinguished in civil life for intellect energy & character. He seems to me to have been very little infected with the 'fire & fall back' idea & to have great faith in a bold policy, for it was reported at the time that he proposed to take Manassas Junction that evening & that his Division should be the first one there.

At any rate about noon we discovered that his troops were approaching Bull Run in the vicinity of Blackburns Ford.

Gen. Beauregard had expected a battle along the line of Bull Run & had announced in orders that his Headquarters wd be fixed at Maclean's house some half mile in rear of this ford.

Here, accordingly, about noon of the 18th were assembled in the shade of the trees about the premises Gen. Beauregard & all his staff. The Surgeons too had located a hospital in the barn and stables in one corner of the grove, & couriers were coming & going, & all were ready for & in constant expectancy of the opening of a desperate battle - the first that most of us had ever seen.

I had gotten a good point of view & brought a chair from the house to make a good rest for my large spy glass & I was closely studying the rolling hills across the creek when I saw a group of Federal officers ride out on an open hill some 1500 yards off & hold quite a consultation. Evidently our position was the most conspicuous with signs of life of all that they could see, & they decided to wake us up & bring out some demonstration of our position. So pretty soon I saw a battery appear on the hill with the officers & unlimber facing in our direction.

My glass showed me everything as clearly as if I were quite close to them & I watched with great interest while they loaded one gun aimed directly at us & then fired the first hostile shot I ever heard. It howled about 40 feet over our heads & struck in the corn-field beyond us.

Then I watched them load again & aim & fire & the second shot fell short about 100 yards striking in a peach orchard.

Here Alexander described the firing of the three-gun salvo, mentioned above, when one shell struck the log-cabin kitchen of the McLean house:

They did not shoot much more there, but scattered their fire all around without doing any harm or drawing any response from our batteries which were divided around with the different brigades. Then about 2 P.M. there suddenly broke out a roar of musketry along Bull Run near Blackburns Ford. Tyler had sent a

brigade to feel in the woods there & they had come up very close to the creek when they saw and were seen by Longstreets Va brigade & both Brigades opened fire or rather the federals fired one volley & fell back & our fellows fired several, the first at them & the others at the place where they had been seen. Then Longstreet sent a small force across the creek to follow them, which they did for some distance, picking up some hats & small things dropped & I think getting a prisoner or two, & exchanging some more shots with the retreating force. Then somewhere about three or four o'clock the Washington Artillery Battn of New Orleans from a field between Mitchells & Blackburns fords some 10 or 12 guns opened at the Federal Battery which was still practicing around at anything it could see, and the Federals got more guns & answered back & for an hour or more a sharp & very noisy duel raged between them. But I think there was little damage done on either side for neither could see much more than the other fellows smoke & so could not correct their aim or see where their shot went. Our side had some rifle guns shooting a shell, called the Burton & Archer, made in Richmond, but though the Washington Arty made a very favorable report of their performance in this fight it turned out afterwards that they were really utterly every one tumbling, (or whirling over like a stick) & consequently having neither range nor accuracy.

And when this duel gradually died out the fight was over. During the afternoon Gen. Beauregard with his staff had ridden some along the lines & when it was over we came back to Macleans. I remember the whole crowd of us being wrought up by the most terrible shrieking and groaning of some fellow at the hospital near the stable. I remember thinking that if being wounded hurt like all that, war was a sight more awful even than I had imagined.

At last Gen. Beauregard told an aid to go to the hospital & ask the Surgeons if they could do nothing to relieve the agony of that wounded man. The aid came back & reported that the man was not wounded but had cholera morbus, which much restored my courage.

The effect of the fight was decidedly I think to encourage our side & to brace them up. There had really been nothing at all of what a veteran wd call fighting, but our men had seen the enemy come up to our lines & recoil from them, & retreat from our fire. And from newspaper reports the enemys retreat had been hurried & demoralized & I think had a decidedly depressing effect in their ranks.

It seems that Gen Tyler was censured for what he did & I think he was soon after retired from active service. But my own opinion is that McDowell lost his best chance of all in not attacking boldly and persistently.

Alexander's account reveals that the opening part of the battle near the McLean house was chiefly an artillery duel, and that the fire on both sides was ineffective. The only shell that struck a building or did any damage was the one which struck the log kitchen. The Federal infantry took part in a light probing action and fell back as soon as the Confederates returned their fire.

In spite of the lack of heavy fighting on July 18, the strength which the Confederates displayed resulted in a Federal delay for two days, and gave the Confederates time to bring up reinforcements. Alexander was right in saying that McDowell lost his best chance by not attacking boldly and persistently at Blackburn's Ford.

McLean did not see or hear any of the firing on July 18, because he had taken his family away and was not there at that time. Alexander said, "I dont recall seeing his family that morning & I guess he had taken them off." While McLean did not actually "see" the beginning and end of the Civil War, it can still be said that he "was perhaps the only man who ever had the first major

pitched battle of a war fought in his front yard and the surrender signed four years later in his parlor."¹⁰³

Alexander failed to mention that the McLean barn was used both as a hospital and the place of overnight imprisonment of the captured Congressman, Alfred Ely, and a number of Union soldiers.¹⁰⁴

Where Alexander's account does not agree with Beauregard's report, it is believed that Alexander is correct, because he remained at the McLean house throughout the action of July 18, while Beauregard moved to other parts of the field after establishing his headquarters there at 10:00 A.M.¹⁰⁵

AFTER THE BATTLE OF FIRST MANASSAS

Following the Battle of First Manassas, Mrs. McLean and the children did not return to the plantation at "Yorkshire" at any time during the Civil War. They resided in various Virginia localities, along with other war refugees, until they were finally able to settle down at Appomattox Court House in the fall of 1863.

The exact date when McLean returned to Manassas has not been determined, although the records in the National Archives show that he was there on November 1, 1861, when he began to be paid some expense money for his work for the Confederate Quartermaster.¹⁰⁶ E. P. Alexander said, "I saw him frequently all that fall."¹⁰⁷ This indicates that he came back much sooner than November 1. Since the fields around the house at "Yorkshire" were all planted in corn, he probably was there in the early fall to see about the harvesting of this crop.

The war was very much in evidence at Manassas when McLean returned, and the buildings on his plantation were in constant use as a Confederate Military hospital. Large numbers of sick and dying Confederates must have received treatment there, because thousands of Confederate troops were stationed in the area until March, 1862, and widespread sickness was always prevalent, so that hospital facilities were an absolute necessity at all times.

A history of the Sixth North Carolina Regiment, C.S.A., portrays a grim situation at Manassas. "The fact that the various Confederate regiments were camped separate from one another did

not alleviate the problem of sickness. The problem became so serious that Charles E. Johnson, North Carolina Surgeon General, became deeply concerned."¹⁰⁸

Typhoid fever, pneumonia, measles, chronic diarrhea, and other nameless diseases accounted for a number of fatalities. "Died at Camp near Manassas Junction, Va., August 31, 1861 of disease" was the entry after the name of one private in the Sixth North Carolina Regiment.¹⁰⁹ Out of a total of 796 men and officers in this regiment, there were 138 reported sick on December 31, 1861¹¹⁰

Although the records of Virginia Confederate hospitals in the National Archives do not contain any information about the Manassas hospital,¹¹¹ it occupied a strategic location near the office of Surgeon T. H. Williams, medical director of the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia.¹¹²

McLean worked diligently with the Confederate Quartermaster Department when he returned to Manassas, and it is likely that he assisted the hospital surgeons in procuring medical supplies during this period.

Receipts in the National Archives reveal that McLean worked for the Confederate Quartermaster in various capacities from November 1, 1861, until February 28, 1862. These receipts are in the civilian file, showing that he did this work as a civilian and not as a member of the Confederate Army.

He spent many hours in November, 1861, traveling from place to place for the Confederate Quartermaster. In his own hand-

writing he filed a claim for \$63.48 for "Expences while traveling to and from the different Stations & Ports of the Potomac army during the month of November." This was the largest sum he received in any one month while he was working for the Confederate Quartermaster.

His work during November was evidently an attempt to help expedite the flow of food supplies to the troops in camp near Manassas. There was a time when Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's troops (Johnston had assumed command of the Confederate forces in and around Manassas on July 20) had only one day's rations, and McLean must have been able to render an invaluable service.

His experience as a farmer was likewise put to good use for the Confederacy in November. He worked with three men who were engaged in "hay pressing" and other farm activities for the Confederate Quartermaster, and received \$63.00 on November 19, 1861, for the "expences of three men on hay pressing, etc." - \$49.50; "My own expences" - \$13.50.

He assisted in purchasing supplies in the fertile country around Manassas during December, and was paid \$34.65 for "Foraging and other business connected with this department during the month of Decb."

His work for the Confederate Quartermaster was continued during January and February, 1862. He was paid \$19.00 for "Actual expence incurred while on public duty in the employ of the Quartermaster at Manassas for the month of January, 1862." A similar bill for \$18.00 was paid at the end of February.

It should be noted that McLean received only his actual expenses while he was working for the Confederate Quartermaster, and really contributed his services for at least four months.

There is a McLean family tradition that he made large donations of farm commodities to the Confederate Army while he was at Manassas. McLean's granddaughter, Nancy Taylor Quynn, said that he gave "unstintingly of his crops."¹¹³ It is true that there are no receipts in the National Archives showing that McLean sold any farm products to the Confederate Quartermaster, and this might be interpreted to mean that he contributed his crops to the Confederacy. On the other hand, the receipts in the National Archives cannot be regarded as a complete record, and the absence of receipts cannot be accepted as proof that he donated his crops instead of selling them. If he made sacrificial gifts of property, as well as his time, to the Confederacy, it is hoped that some documentary proof of it will come to light.

Judging by the amounts which were paid to McLean from month to month, he contributed fewer and fewer hours of his time as the months went by. He received \$76.98 for November, \$34.65 for December, \$19.00 for January, and \$18.00 for February. By the end of 1861, he seems to have become far less enthusiastic about the Confederate cause than he was at the beginning of the war.

On December 31, 1861, he was paid \$825.00 rent money for the use of his buildings at "Yorkshire". This was at the rate of \$150.00 per month from July 17 to December 31, 1861. Thereafter,

he received the rent at the end of each month, which seems to indicate that he did not make any demand for rent until the end of the year.

Further evidence of his change of heart, near the beginning of 1862, is brought out by his selling various items to the Confederate Quartermaster for very high prices. He sold "1 Ream of Ruled Paper for Abstracts" on January 14, 1862, and received \$30.00 in payment. He sold a box of twenty candles on January 27 for \$13.00, and a box of forty candles on February 14, for \$34.00. This was an advance in price of twenty cents per candle in less than three weeks, although both boxes of candles appear to have been part of the same shipment from Richmond, for which McLean collected twenty-five cents for freight. He apparently purchased paper, candles, and other scarce items in Richmond, had them shipped to Manassas, and then sold them to the Confederate Quartermaster for the highest price he could get. As previously noted, this was in 1862, and not in 1861.

Not everything he sold in 1862 brought an exorbitant price. He sold a stove on February 1 and received only \$25.00 in payment.

What caused McLean to undergo this change in feeling? About the beginning of 1862 he seems to have become as anxious to make money as he had formerly been generous. It is believed that several factors caused him to have a different point of view.

As a merchant, he must have been disgusted by the inefficient manner in which subsistence supplies were procured for the Confederate Army. Colonel Lucius B. Northrup, the Confederate Commissary

General, one time army officer and South Carolina doctor, demonstrated his incompetence early in the struggle. He refused to allow his subordinates to purchase supplies for the army in the country around Manassas, and insisted that supplies be gathered in the rear of the army and sent forward in daily doles.¹¹⁴

He also must have been disillusioned when he learned that Confederate speculators were making tremendous profits out of the war. As early as September, 1861, W. H. Alexander, a commissary sergeant in the Sixth North Carolina Regiment, complained about the "very exorbitant prices" at Manassas.¹¹⁵ Soon after the beginning of the war, speculators started buying up flour in the Shenandoah Valley and in Loudoun County.¹¹⁶ When he saw many Southern merchants and planters refusing to make any sacrifices, McLean began to feel that he was not under any obligation to give up anything for the sake of the Confederacy.

He was completely disenchanted by the misconduct of soldiers and hospital personnel at "Yorkshire". Large quantities of wine and whiskey were available at Confederate hospitals, and it was frequently reported that the attendants consumed more of these stimulants than the patients. Sanitation was woefully lacking, and flies covered the faces of the patients.¹¹⁷ The dwellings McLean had generously provided for a humanitarian purpose were evidently grossly misused while they were occupied by surgeons and hospital attendants, and the \$1,125.00 he received as rent probably did not begin to cover the cost of the repairs which

were needed after the Confederate Army left the Manassas area in March, 1862.

McLean was so angered and disillusioned by the destructiveness of the people he had tried to help that he told E. P. Alexander that he went to Appomattox Court House in the hope that he would never see another soldier.¹¹⁸

Anthony McLean, Wilmer's brother, seems to have reacted to the war in much the same manner that Wilmer did, although it did not take Anthony as long to undergo his change in feeling. Anthony started to work for the Confederacy on October 1, 1861, being employed as a clerk in the Quartermaster's Office at Manassas at a salary of \$83.33 per month. He held this position for only six weeks, and then left to become the auditor of the Orange and Alexandria Rail Road. In December, 1864, the former Quartermaster's clerk sold the Confederate Government some mining fuse for \$1,425.00, which was nearly as much salary as he would have received in eighteen months.¹¹⁹

It must be said that Wilmer was more patient than Anthony. He continued to work with the Confederate Quartermaster Department for three and half months after Anthony's departure.

In addition to E. P. Alexander, McLean formed personal friendships with a number of other Confederate officers at Manassas.

Thomas L. Rosser was in the Battle of First Manassas with the Washington Artillery, which had a position near the McLean house,

and his battalion was encamped close by until the Confederate Army received orders to move in March, 1862. He called McLean an "old friend" when he saw him again at Appomattox Court House.¹²⁰

Another Confederate officer who became his friend was Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, commander of all the Confederate forces in Northern Virginia. In a letter written on March 19, 1863, McLean called Johnston "my friend" and stated that Johnston had been willing to give him a letter of introduction to Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton.¹²¹

P. G. T. Beauregard spoke very highly of McLean and the other citizens at Manassas who assisted him prior to the Battle of First Manassas. His language indicates that he knew McLean personally and was his personal friend.¹²² McLean apparently did not have any contact with Beauregard after he left Manassas.¹²³

E. P. Alexander said that he frequently saw McLean at Manassas until the close of 1861 and during the early months of the following year. He "dropped out of my sight", according to Alexander, sometime in March, 1862, about the time that the Confederate Army received orders to leave the Manassas area.¹²⁴ The entire Confederate Army was ordered to prepare to take leave of their winter quarters on March 6.¹²⁵ McLean did not receive any payments from the Confederate Quartermaster after March 1.

BETWEEN MANASSAS AND APPOMATTOX

After McLean left Manassas in the spring of 1862 he found it possible to be with his wife and children for a brief period. He was definitely with them in the latter part of April, 1862, because it was at that time that Mrs. McLean began to expect the birth of a child who was born on January 25, 1863.

By the end of 1861 McLean had apparently decided that the struggle between the North and South would not have an early termination, and now that he was somewhat removed from the noise and confusion of the war zone, further reflection convinced him that the war could easily last for several years. From his experience as a merchant he knew that a long war would inevitably cause the price of commodities to rise higher and higher, as he had already witnessed before he left Manassas, and he could think of no reason why this trend would be reversed.

When he envisioned the handsome profits that might be realized by speculating in sugar, he soon began to trade heavily in that commodity. In fact, it is possible that he started to speculate in sugar even before he left Manassas.

This was a business which required much traveling, and in the spring of 1863 he found it necessary to make the long journey to Mississippi to see about a cargo of sugar he had at Vicksburg. His presence in Jackson, Mississippi, is mentioned in a letter which he wrote to Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton on March 19, 1863. The

first part of this letter sounds as if he had been in Jackson for some little time.¹²⁶

Jackson Mch 19, 1863

Dear General.

You will pardon my presumption in addressing you, but knowing as I do of your constant and laborious work, I deem it best to make known my wants to you in writing. You undoubtedly recollect on what mission I visited you with a letter of introduction from my friend Gen. Johnston, whom I expected here several days ago, but who after visiting Mobile, returned to the Army of Tennessee. I have no doubt that his influence with you, will grant me my request, as it does not interfere in any way with the interest of the Government.

As Gen. Johnston has left the management of this department entirely to your discretion, of course you are the only person who has the power to assist. Will you have the kindness to inform me when I may expect permission to remove my Sugar from Vicksburg.

Gen. J. C. Pemberton
Jackson

With high respect
I remain
Your Obdt. Servant

Wilmer McLean

This letter reveals that McLean owned a large cargo of sugar, which had been raised in Louisiana, shipped via the Atchafalaya, Red, and Mississippi rivers, and placed in a warehouse at Vicksburg.

Pemberton, the Confederate commander of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana, in which Vicksburg was located, was obviously reluctant to permit McLean to transfer his sugar elsewhere. Before he wrote his letter, McLean had paid the general a personal visit, but Pemberton seems to have postponed making any decision. When McLean did not hear from

him by March 19, he decided to write him a letter. McLean could not move his sugar without Pemberton's permission, and it is doubtful that he ever received the necessary approval.

General J. E. Johnston must have favored McLean's request, and was Pemberton's superior, but Johnston did not like to issue orders to his commanders, and gave McLean nothing more than a letter of introduction to Pemberton. McLean had hoped that Johnston would issue an order for his sugar to be released, and, failing in this, did everything possible to impress Pemberton with the fact that Johnston was his friend and that he was in close touch with him.

An identification stamp on McLean's letter in the National Archives indicates that this letter is a part of the J. C. Pemberton Papers, with a copy in the Wilmer McLean Papers. Why did Pemberton preserve this letter? Did he want it as evidence that Johnston was willing to let valuable supplies be shipped away from Vicksburg only a little more than three months before the city was captured?

Pemberton was certainly aware of the dangerous situation which was developing at Vicksburg at the time he received McLean's letter. In mid-March, 1863, it is reported that he started collecting supplies for the expected siege.¹²⁷ Since he was determined to defend Vicksburg at all costs, he was anxious to keep all available commodities for the use of his troops.

Undoubtedly, the sugar McLean had stored at Vicksburg had been shipped from the Teche Country of Louisiana. There is no evidence that sugar was imported into the Confederacy through New Orleans, and no studies on the subject are available.¹²⁸

McLean's speculations in sugar were mentioned in the late summer of 1863 by Captain Randall Holden, a Confederate Assistant Surgeon.¹²⁹ While the Holden records in the National Archives do not mention his whereabouts prior to 1863, his acquaintance with McLean might have had its inception during the early part of the war when the buildings at "Yorkshire" were used as a Confederate military hospital.

Holden was thirty-four years old when he saw McLean in Richmond, and was stationed at the Post Hospital, Camp Lee, Richmond, where he was in charge of the first ward. Born in New York, and appointed from Virginia by the Surgeon General, he held the rank of captain and served until the end of the war. After Lee's surrender to Grant, he was ordered to report to Surgeon W. S. Love.

In a letter to his sister on August 28, 1863, Holden reported that he had talked with McLean a few days previously, and that McLean had been speculating "pretty largely" in sugar. He also said that he "presumed" McLean had made some money in the sugar market.¹³⁰

In his conversation with Holden, McLean seems to have followed his usual custom of saying very little about his business affairs. Holden could do nothing more than "presume" that McLean had been making money by speculating in sugar. On the other hand, Holden did

not hesitate to say that McLean was a large speculator in sugar, which indicates that his speculative activities were so sizable that they could not be concealed and were more or less common knowledge.

McLean could not have been such a large speculator in sugar without having some business associates. Records in the National Archives reveal that he was involved in some manner with the Montgomery Exporting and Importing Company, a firm which apparently had its headquarters in Alabama.¹³¹ This company is not listed in the Montgomery, Alabama, City Directory for 1859-1860 and 1866,¹³² and seems to have been in existence only during the war years, perhaps being organized for the purpose of importing sugar and other commodities into the Confederacy. He also must have had some working agreements with a number of merchants in Richmond and other localities.

Before the Civil War, Samuel McLean, Wilmer's oldest brother, served as an American consul in Cuba and was thoroughly familiar with the sugar business. One of his letters of recommendation states that "he was for a long time engaged in refining Sugar with which business in all its details he is well acquainted."¹³³ However, the account books of Samuel McLean do not reveal that he ever had any business partnership with Wilmer.¹³⁴

Wilmer McLean appears to have been a successful war-time speculator in the sugar market, and as Captain Randall Holden remarked, it may be presumed that he "made some money." Alice

Barbara Stahl, the granddaughter of Samuel McLean, said that Wilmer McLean had \$40,000.00 in Confederate money on hand at the end of the Civil War.¹³⁵

A new daughter was born to the McLeans on January 25, 1863, and was given the name of Nannie Maury McLean. The name of this child strongly suggests that the McLeans were very closely connected in some way with the Matthew Fontaine Maury family.

It was a long-standing custom among the McLeans to name their children after close relatives and friends. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel McLean, the parents of Wilmer, religiously followed this tradition, and so did Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer McLean. Wilmer McLean, Jr., was named after his father; Lucretia Virginia McLean was named after her paternal grandmother, Mrs. Lucretia Hodgkinson McLean, and her mother, Mrs. Virginia Beverley McLean; Virginia Beverley McLean was named after her mother.

Nannie Maury McLean was the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer McLean who was not named after some close relative or immediate member of the McLean family.

Mrs. Anne Herndon Maury, the wife of M. F. Maury, was always called "Nannie" by her husband. In letter after letter he addressed her in that fashion. Even Commodore Marin H. Jansen, of the Netherlands Navy, referred to her in a letter as "Nannie".¹³⁶

Maury, a commander in the Confederate Navy, was a famous oceanographer and had a world-wide reputation. He was in Richmond from June, 1861, until the fall of 1862, when he was asked

to go to Europe as a representative of the Confederate Government. During late 1861 and the first half of 1862 he headed the Bureau of Coast, Harbor, and River Defense.¹³⁷

Whatever the connection between the McLeans and the Maurys might have been, it can be affirmed that some powerful reason motivated the McLeans to select Nannie Maury as the name for their daughter born on January 25, 1863.

LIFE AT APPOMATTOX BEFORE THE SURRENDER

It was not until the fall of 1863 that the McLeans established their residence at Appomattox Court House. When Captain Randall Holden, a Confederate Assistant Surgeon, saw McLean in Richmond near the last of August, 1863, he learned that McLean was buying furniture preparatory to moving to Appomattox. Holden was astounded when McLean told him that he had paid \$45.00 for an iron pot.¹³⁸

Several factors evidently caused McLean to postpone his decision to move to south-central Virginia. During 1862 and early 1863 his business affairs kept him away from his family for long periods of time. Mrs. McLean was expecting a child the last of January, 1863. No one knew how long the war might last or what the outcome might be.

By the fall of 1863, however, it had become possible to discern a little more clearly the shape of things to come. The capture of Vicksburg and the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg made it plain that the war would soon take a more serious turn in Virginia and that some bloody battles would be fought. Another daughter in the McLean family made it more essential for them to have a home of their own. War-time conditions made it increasingly difficult for him to make long business trips. By late summer, 1863, he realized that the time had finally come when he must set up housekeeping at Appomattox Court House.

McLean's ownership of a house at Appomattox Court House first appeared on the Land Tax books in 1863, which means, according to the laws of Virginia, that he had to purchase the property during the calendar year of 1862. Since his activities can be fairly well accounted for through the spring of 1862, it seems likely that he bought the Raine residence in the summer or fall of that year.

How did the McLeans learn to know that a house was for sale in an obscure village like Appomattox Court House? One source of information could have been Nathaniel H. Ragland, a Richmond merchant, whose wife was a refugee on her brother's farm in the Appomattox area.¹³⁹ Ragland was undoubtedly willing to recommend the Raine house as an ideal home for a man seeking a war-time place of safety for his family. McLean probably knew Ragland through some of their business dealings.

Another possible source of information was some of the friends and relatives of Mrs. McLean or of her first husband, Dr. John Seddon Mason. There were people named Mason who lived at Appomattox Court House, and one of them signed a petition in 1867 for the organization of the Appomattox Court House Presbyterian Church.¹⁴⁰

Everyone who was familiar with the village of Appomattox Court House in the early 1860's knew that the Raine house was for sale, because it had been on the market for several years.

Despite its good appearance and the fact that it was a solid brick structure, it was the sort of property which very few people wished to purchase. Farmers considered it an unattractive place

because of the small amount of land connected with it, and the low salaries of the officials of Appomattox County did not permit one of them to buy it. Prospective buyers were scarce, and no one had been willing to make an acceptable offer prior to the time that Wilmer McLean became interested in it.

The Raine house was originally built by Charles Raine in 1848, and eventually became a part of the estate of Mrs. Eliza D. Raine. An Appomattox County and Circuit Court docket, which was kept by an unidentified law firm in Lynchburg, Virginia, shows that the estate of Mrs. Eliza D. Raine was involved in litigation extending as far back as 1855.¹⁴¹ In December of that year, a suit for \$47.00 was brought against the administrator of the estate by the trustees of James E. Horner. At an unspecified time, but following the 1855 Horner suit, other plaintiffs brought a second suit.

No date is listed for a third suit which was brought by "Ella Raine & Horners infants &c" for "a general settlement of Mrs. E. D. Raine's estate." Under the heading of "Judgment" the single word "Decrees" is noted. Since the judgment in the following unrelated case was handed down in April, 1858, it seems likely that it was in April, 1858, that the court issued decrees for the general settlement of the Raine estate and thereby made possible the sale of the Raine house to Wilmer McLean in 1862.

If the Raine house had been on the market since April, 1858, the persons who brought the suit for the settlement of the Raine

estate were doubtless anxious to sell the property, and McLean must have been able to purchase it at a very attractive figure. When he secured the deed for the house, he considered himself a fortunate man.

The McLean House at Appomattox Court House was a comfortable, two-story brick dwelling with a central hall upstairs and down. The well-known parlor, where the surrender conference took place, was on the left, and a large bedroom was on the right. At the rear of the hall, on the left, there was a stairway going down to the warming kitchen and dining room. Just to the left of the front door, a stairway ascended to a central hall which separated two bedrooms. There was a fire-place in each room. In the front yard, there was a well-house; on the left, an ice-house; in the rear were the kitchen, quarters for slaves, and a garden and barn. This was the house which was destined to become a noted American historical shrine. A writer in The Photographic History of the Civil War called the McLean House "one of the most famous landmarks in American history."¹⁴²

Because McLean lived on a farm at Manassas at the beginning of the Civil War, many writers have mistakenly concluded that he moved to the rural community of Appomattox Court House in order to farm under peaceful conditions.

E. P. Alexander said, "After about a year's experience of trying to farm where a war was in progress, Mr. McLean gave it up, and moved to Appomattox Court House, an obscure little village, where he owned a second farm ..." ¹⁴³

Alexander was rarely mistaken, but he was incorrect in regarding McLean as primarily a farmer. The truth is that McLean spent most of his life in non-farm activities and was mainly a merchant, both by experience and inclination. Trading in various commodities attracted him more than farming.

If McLean was not a farmer at Appomattox Court House, the logical conclusion is that he continued his activities in the sugar market as long as he could.

On April 21, 1864, he was issued certificates for a number of Confederate bonds which he purchased in Richmond. He assigned at least one of the certificates to the Treasurer of the Confederate States to pay an amount which had been incorrectly charged to the Montgomery Exporting and Importing Company. A note attached to a \$500.00 certificate reads: "I assign the within certificate to the Treasurer of the Confederate States in exchange for the same amount refunded to the Montgomery Exporting & Importing Company which had been wrongfully collected of it." This was signed by Wilmer McLean and A. Martin, State Collector. Another bond certificate was assigned to the Treasurer of the Confederate States on September 24, 1864, and was witnessed by a Justice of the Peace in Lynchburg, Virginia.¹⁴⁴ The witnessing of this transaction in Lynchburg seems to indicate that McLean was having difficulty in making a journey to Richmond and found it easier to make the shorter trip to Lynchburg.

Since import duties were paid to the Treasurer of the Confederate States, it appears that McLean assigned the bond certificates to the Confederate treasurer for the payment of import duties. Perhaps he no longer had a connection with the Montgomery Exporting and Importing Company in 1864, and this resulted in import duties being charged to this company which should have been paid by McLean. McLean's activity in the war-time sugar market has only recently come to light, and some of the records in the National Archives are difficult to decipher. A careful examination of the voluminous records of the Custom Houses at Mobile, Alabama, and other ports would probably turn up some interesting information.

McLean's frequent trips away from Appomattox Court House may be the best explanation why there is virtually no evidence that he engaged in any community activities prior to the surrender.

The McLeans did not actively participate in the work of any church group in the Appomattox area. Wilmer grew up in St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria, and never seriously considered severing his ties with the Episcopal Church while he lived at Appomattox Court House, even though there was no Episcopal Church nearby. The Sacraments of the Church were not accepted elsewhere. Virginia Beverley McLean, who was born at Appomattox Court House on September 5, 1865, was not baptized until February 25, 1883, when the Sacrament was administered at St. Paul's Church in Alexandria.¹⁴⁵

There was a Masonic Lodge, called the Monroe Lodge, at Appomattox Court House, and the early records of this fraternal organ-

ization are now in the hands of Jerry A. Burke, of Appomattox, Virginia. He reports that the records of the Monroe Lodge contain no information about Wilmer McLean.¹⁴⁶

While the McLeans were living at Appomattox Court House during the war, they never seem to have suffered from a lack of food. McLean must have had connections with Richmond merchants which enabled him to secure an ample supply of all available commodities, although some items were naturally unobtainable at any price.

The McLeans remained vigorous and enjoyed good health throughout the war. Mrs. McLean conceived two children during the war years, her last child being conceived at Appomattox Court House about the first of December, 1864, when she was forty-six and her husband was fifty.

While they were not natives of the Appomattox area, the McLeans seem to have been well regarded by the residents of the community. They possessed considerable wealth and lived in a comfortable home, and were thought of as being an asset to the village of Appomattox Court House.

THE SURRENDER AT APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE

For several days prior to the surrender, the people in the Appomattox area must have known that the collapse of the Army of Northern Virginia was imminent. It was certainly no secret to them that thousands of men had been walking away from Lee's army.

Every day scores of stragglers could be seen trudging through Appomattox Court House on their homeward way. In nearby Lynchburg, Lt. Col. George A. Martin, a Confederate officer, recorded on April 7 that "straggling soldiers are coming in the City (Lynchburg) from the vicinity of Appomattox Court House, near which the Armies seem to be located, and so report."¹⁴⁷

These disheartened stragglers did not know exactly when the war would finally grind to a halt, but they realized that Lee's men could not carry on the struggle very much longer. George T. Peers, who was living at Appomattox Court House at the time of the surrender, said, "From the soldiers who had been passing for a day or two in retreat from Petersburg we learned that there was little hope of prolonging the struggle."¹⁴⁸

Thousands of Lee's faithful soldiers remained in the ranks until the very end, but many of them were without arms and were totally unprepared for battle by the time they reached Appomattox Court House. In the Sixth North Carolina Regiment, which had fought in the Battle of First Manassas, only 72 men out of 175 had guns at the time of the surrender.¹⁴⁹

Ellen Bryant, who lived near the village, painted a pitiful picture of the Confederate soldiers who passed by her home. "They were almost starved," she said, "and in ragged and tattered clothes with bleeding hands and feet and bare-footed and worn out soldiers."¹⁵⁰

Suffering was not confined to the Confederates. Many Union soldiers were famished and exhausted. "I have often heard of starving, but we have experienced it," a young Pennsylvania corporal wrote to his mother from Appomattox Court House on April 11,¹⁵¹ 1865. "Our rations and trains are stuck in the mud 30 miles away."

After they heard that the Confederate supply trains had been captured at Appomattox Station on the evening of April 8, McLean and all the other residents of the village knew that Lee's starving army could not hold out another day.

Beginning with the night of April 8, the home of Wilmer McLean was visited by many Union and Confederate officers.

Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Rosser, now a division commander, and formerly the leader of the famed 'Laurel' Cavalry Brigade, was the first officer to make his headquarters at the McLean House. He arrived there on the night of April 8 and saw "several tallow candles" burning in the parlor at 2 A.M. on the morning of April 9.¹⁵²

Rosser learned to know McLean at Manassas, and said that after he put his men in the Confederate line at Appomattox, "Then I went to the home of my old friend, Major McLean, and spent the night in talking over our war experiences."¹⁵³

Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon and Maj. Gen. William H. F. Lee came to the McLean House at 2 A.M. on April 9 and conferred with Rosser about the contemplated surrender.¹⁵⁴ Since Rosser's statement indicates that McLean was in the parlor throughout the night, he seems to have heard the three generals expressing their views.

McLean must have spent a sleepless night on April 8, and other sleepless nights must have followed during the time that the McLean House was virtually taken over by the military.

After hostilities ceased on the morning of April 9, and the two armies had taken up their positions on each side of the village, McLean had his historic meeting with Colonel Charles Marshall, Lee's military secretary, who was seeking a site for the surrender conference.

When General R. E. Lee told Marshall to go into the village and select a place where he and Grant might confer, Marshall said that he rode forward in the company of his orderly, and that the first white citizen they encountered was Wilmer McLean. One or more Negroes might have come into view before they caught sight of McLean, and could have been some of the slaves at the nearby Clover Hill Tavern or at the McLean House.

Marshall said that he did not know McLean and "learned afterward that the citizen was Mr. McLean, who had lived on the battlefield of Bull Run, but had removed to Appomattox Court House to get out of the way of the war."¹⁵⁵

The following description was given by Marshall of his meeting with McLean:

I rode up to him and said, "Can you show me a house where General Lee and General Grant can meet together?" He took me into a house that was all dilapidated and that had no furniture in it. I told him it wouldn't do. Then he said, "Maybe my house will do!" He lived in a very comfortable house, and I told him I thought that would suit. ¹⁵⁶

Elsewhere Marshall added the detail that the first house McLean showed him was unoccupied. ¹⁵⁷

In view of his unfortunate experience at Manassas, when he allowed the buildings at "Yorkshire" to be used as a Confederate hospital, it was only natural that McLean should have hesitated about opening his home for a conference between Lee and Grant. Perhaps there was a note of resignation in his voice when he told Marshall, "Maybe my house will do!" It has been well said that it was in "desperation" that McLean offered his house for the surrender conference. ¹⁵⁸

The meeting between Marshall and McLean was solely the result of chance, as there was no way that McLean could have learned that the surrender conference was going to be held in the village of Appomattox Court House. Even the commanding generals did not know where the conference would be held, and no definite meeting place was mentioned in the final letters exchanged by Lee and Grant before their conference took place.

McLean could have been walking about in the village during the cessation of hostilities in the hope that he might see some of his friends among the Confederate officers gathered near the old Court House building. His most likely motive, however, was that he wanted to get some high-ranking Union officer to give him an order forbidding soldiers to trespass on his property. Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan apparently issued such an order. J. L. Smith, a young corporal in the 118th Pennsylvania Volunteers, said that he was visiting in the village on the afternoon of April 9 and that the "mayor" of Appomattox Court House came up to him and showed him an order which Sheridan had signed. Union infantrymen had little respect for Sheridan's cavalry, and Smith said that he told the "mayor" he should "take that to the cavalry."¹⁵⁹ The man he called the mayor was undoubtedly Wilmer McLean.

Sheridan liked to write orders, and it would have been easy for McLean to have contacted him, because Shridan said that he was dismounted and standing only a short distance from the McLean House when Grant arrived for the surrender conference.

After Marshall decided that the surrender conference would be held at the McLean House, he sent his orderly to inform General R. E. Lee and Colonel O. E. Babcock that they should come there.

McLean must have extended his personal greetings to the three officers when they entered his home, and he was in the parlor much of the time while they waited for Grant. His presence was portrayed by Thomas Nast, a well-known American artist, in a rough

sketch which he drew for a picture of Lee waiting for Grant. There are two men standing just behind Lee, who is seated in a chair. The taller of the two, a man wearing glasses, is obviously Marshall, while the somewhat shorter and heavier man, standing between Lee and Marshall, is clearly Wilmer McLean. He appears to be carrying on a conversation with Marshall.¹⁶⁰

For some unknown reason, Nast did not include the figure of McLean in an incomplete painting which he based on this sketch. He might have decided that it would be inappropriate to show a civilian in the room with Lee, Marshall, and Babcock.

Nast's rough sketch, portraying McLean in the surrender room, was a by-product of the research he did for a surrender picture which he completed on April 9, 1895. Nast did some research himself, as is attested by the letter he wrote to Charles F. Gunther on March 7, 1895,¹⁶¹ but he chiefly depended upon the advice of Colonel Charles Marshall, who was the only surviving member of the trio of officers who had waited for Grant. Marshall must have informed Nast that McLean was present in the room with them.

McLean evidently talked with Marshall, and doubtless with Babcock. He had very little to say to Lee, because Nast portrayed Lee seated in a chair, fast asleep. This is regarded as a correct portrayal of what actually happened. While Marshall, Babcock, and McLean engaged in conversation, Lee fell into an exhausted sleep.

Most of those who have described the events at Appomattox Court House have failed to understand the true nature of Lee's physical condition at the time of the surrender. They have pictured

Lee's starving men without realizing that the commander of the Confederate forces was also starving, probably because Lee said nothing to Grant about his own personal needs.

Lee felt that he could talk to Meade better than he could to Grant, and on the morning of April 10 he told Meade that he "was very sick and had not a mouthful to eat." Meade wrote to his wife on that day and said that he thought "General Lee looked old and feeble."¹⁶²

After the war, Frank Buscher, a Swiss artist, painted Lee's portrait and talked with Lee about the surrender. Buscher said that Lee seemed somewhat vague about the details connected with signing the surrender papers, and the best explanation for his vagueness is his poor physical condition while he was at the McLean House. He was a sick, hungry, and exhausted man.¹⁶³

Grant arrived at the McLean House about 1:30 P.M. and immediately began his conference with Lee. McLean was evidently on his porch or in the front yard when Grant came up, and saw him enter the house, but there is no evidence that he had any conversation with Grant at that time.

There is an oft-quoted story that McLean was so excited by the surrender conference that he was somewhat out of his mind. Some Union officers claimed that he was unable to tell them where to find a drink of water. "Mr. McLean was out there, too, but was so excited by his appreciation of passing events that he did

not know where his pump was, or if he had any, and if not could not tell us where there was a spring."¹⁶⁴

Being around soldiers and having military men in his house was not a new experience for McLean. Remembering what had happened at Manassas, when soldiers took over his property, made him anxious about what might occur at Appomattox Court House. Instead of being nervous and excited, it seems that his actual mood was that of indignation. E. P. Alexander said, "McLean was so indignant that I felt bound to apologize for our coming back, and to throw all the blame for it upon the gentlemen on the other side."¹⁶⁵

McLean was indignant and dismayed because soldiers were carrying off his fence rails and abusing his property, and yet he generally managed to be courteous and polite. Lt. Col. Jenyns C. Battersby of the First New York Cavalry reported that McLean was "a courteous gentleman". He also pointed out, however, that he was "not a little annoyed" by the persons who carried away his furniture.¹⁶⁶

Grant and Lee were both anxious to bring the war to an end. Grant later said, "If Lee had continued his flight another day, I should have had to abandon the pursuit, fall back to Danville, build the railroad and feed my army."¹⁶⁷

Both complimented each other for the fine spirit which prevailed at the surrender conference. Grant said that one factor which caused him to be especially generous in his dealings with the Confederates was the spirit which Lee manifested.¹⁶⁸ Lee

said that he never liked Grant so well as at the time of the surrender, and that the whole meeting was kind, cordial, and gentlemanly.¹⁶⁹

At the conclusion of the conference between the two generals, Lee returned to the Confederate lines, while Grant remained at the McLean House for about an hour and a half, during which time his aides prepared military dispatches connected with the surrender. Confederate Maj. Gen. Henry Heth, who had served with Grant in the U. S. Army before the war, stated that he visited with Grant for about half an hour during this interval.¹⁷⁰

McLean could also have conversed with Grant at this time. Any conversation they might have had was in a cordial and friendly vein, because John S. Mosby later told Grant that McLean "has always been a friend of yours."¹⁷¹ Their friendship might have had its inception at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

Grant became so engrossed in other matters that he completely forgot to inform Washington about the surrender until he had left the McLean House and was on his way back to his headquarters. When he was reminded of his oversight, he dismounted and sat by the roadside while he wrote out his matter-of-fact telegram, which was dispatched at 4:30 P.M.¹⁷²

As soon as Grant left the McLean House, a souvenir craze swept over the Federal officers who were present at the surrender. Maj. Gen. P. H. Sheridan is supposed to have paid \$20.00 in gold for the table on which Grant drafted the terms of the surrender.¹⁷³

It is said that a "spirited auction" was held, and that Sheridan, given first choice, paid two ten dollar gold pieces for the table.¹⁷⁴

After the death of General R. E. Lee, a newspaper article appeared which claimed to give "General Lee's own account of what occurred, as he gave it to some friends at his house, in Lexington, but a few days before his last illness." This piece was obviously written to portray Sheridan in an unfavorable light, and could not have been an eye-witness report by Lee, since he was not present when the incident happened. In this story the table has become a chair and the \$20.00 in gold has shrunk to \$2.50.

The writer declared that "Sheridan stalked into the surrender room and said, rudely, "I mean to have this chair," taking up one of the chairs in which the Generals had signed the terms of capitulation, and exhibiting at the same time a \$2.50 gold piece. Major McLean replied, "That chair is not for sale, General. If you choose to take it you have the physical power to do so." "I mean to have it," was the curt rejoinder; and the Great Barn-Burner gave another proof of his skill in petit larceny. The table and other chairs were in like manner carried off by Federal officers as souvenirs."¹⁷⁵

Maj. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord is supposed to have paid \$40.00 for the table with the marble top. It has recently been claimed that McLean presented the table to Ord as a gift, because, several months before, Ord had sent McLean's homesick son safely home through the Federal lines. This story is said to be based

on an anecdote which Ord related to his family. Whatever its source, it is regarded as completely untrustworthy and without factual foundation.¹⁷⁶

Other officers either appropriated or purchased virtually all of the furnishings in the McLean parlor. Even little "Lula" McLean's rag doll was carried away by Sheridan's aide-de-camp, Lt. Col. Thomas W. C. Moore,¹⁷⁷ although it is said that a Union soldier tried to console her with a French china doll.¹⁷⁸

By the time that Mathew Brady and his assistant arrived from Petersburg there was little in the surrender room to photograph but emptiness. Souvenir hunters had carried away practically everything.¹⁷⁹

Members of the McLean family have denied indignantly that any kind of sale took place and have said that the Union officers simply plundered McLean's home and stole what they wanted. They have resented the statement of Mrs. George A. Custer that McLean was glad to sell his furniture, and have considered the conduct of the Federal officers especially reprehensible after McLean graciously permitted the conference to be held in his home.¹⁸⁰

McLean must have feared that his property would be abused, and hesitated to open his home for the surrender conference when Marshall approached him. As it turned out, his fears were justified, and he became the helpless victim of souvenir hunters.

After the war, bricks from the dismantled McLean House were picked up for many years, and are now treasured as souvenirs throughout the country. Judge Walter B. Jones of Montgomery, Alabama, whose father was at Appomattox, wrote on August 22, 1961: "Recently, a friend of mine, living in Kentucky, presented me an original brick from the old McLean home at Appomattox. This friend's grandfather was an officer in General Lee's office and the brick was given to him as a souvenir at the last Confederate Reunion at Richmond, Virginia in 1933."¹⁸¹

Grant held a second conference with Lee on the morning of April 10. They conferred with each other while seated on horseback, not far from the old Court House building, and Grant afterwards rode to the McLean House and conversed in a friendly fashion with a number of Union and Confederate officers who wanted to visit with him. He left that afternoon for Washington and did not stay to witness the final surrender parade. Nothing has come to light indicating that McLean talked with Grant on his second visit to the McLean House.

Also on the morning of April 10, the commissioners appointed by Grant and Lee began to work out the final details of the surrender. Union Maj. Gens. John Gibbon and Charles Griffin, and Brig. Gen. Wesley Merritt conferred with Confederate officers Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon, and Brig. Gen. William N. Pendleton. They first assembled at the Clover Hill Tavern, which Gibbon said was "a bare and cheerless place", and he suggested that they transfer their meeting place to the McLean

House, where they signed the final papers at 8:30 P.M.¹⁸² McLean might have witnessed the signing.

Gibbon made his headquarters at the McLean House, and E. P. Alexander said that he rode into the village on April 11 to confer with Gibbon about turning over the surrendered artillery. He saw the yard of the McLean House full of tents, and McLean was also there. "He was a short stout little fellow & with a face easily remembered" Alexander declared.

"I said, 'Helloa! Maclean, why what are you doing here?'

"He replied, 'Alexander, what the hell are you fellows doing here?' "¹⁸³

Alexander considered McLean's connection with Manassas and Appomattox one of the most remarkable coincidences of the war. "The very first and last collisions of these two great armies in a four years war took place in the house & on the premises of the same individual."¹⁸⁴

Gibbon maintained his headquarters at the McLean House for some little time. He reported that W. H. F. Lee at first refused to accept a parole, and went to Farmville and reported to Meade, but was advised to return to Appomattox Court House. He came to the McLean House, and spent the night, lying on the floor and sleeping "as soundly as a child, after, as he said, having had no sleep for a week."¹⁸⁵

The surrender parade was held on April 12, with Brig. Gen. Joshua L. Chamberlain in charge. Chamberlain was extremely courteous in his treatment of the defeated Confederates, as Grant

desired, and was equally polite in his dealings with the citizens of Appomattox Court House. Although he did not mention McLean in any of his descriptions of the surrender, it is certain that any contact he had with McLean was pleasant and cordial.¹⁸⁶

Grant directed Gibbon to leave surplus wagons at Appomattox Court House for the country people to pick up. G. W. Munford wrote to his wife on April 21 and said that he saw "great numbers of wagons and gear, spades, picks, shovels, iron of every description suitable for farm purposes, trace chains and a great many other useful things, besides many broken down horses and mules."¹⁸⁷ McLean must have been able to secure his share of this abandoned material, and it probably made life a little easier during the difficult days that lay ahead.

LIFE AT APPOMATTOX AFTER THE SURRENDER

After the surrender, the McLeans did not suffer many severe hardships until the close of 1865.

One factor which contributed to their welfare was that Confederate money continued to have some value for a number of months. A dispatch printed in a Lynchburg newspaper on May 6, 1865, quoted General R. E. Lee as saying that he did not believe his surrender at Appomattox Court House meant the end of the Confederacy. "As to the effect of his surrender, he was free to say that it was a severe blow to the South, but not a crushing blow. It was of military, not political significance."¹⁸⁸

Some Virginians continued to have such high hopes for the Confederacy after the surrender that they were at first reluctant to accept United States currency at its face value. An article in a Lynchburg newspaper on May 24, 1865, reported that "some of the hucksters (at the Lynchburg Market House) receive U. S. currency at a small discount, some at one-half, while others take it at par."¹⁸⁹

Confederate money steadily went down in value, however, and by the summer of 1865 was generally regarded as worthless.

A second factor which assisted the McLeans and other residents of Appomattox Court House was the presence of Federal troops in Appomattox and adjoining counties. Appomattox County was in the

Lynchburg military sub-district, and officers of the 21st Pennsylvania Cavalry acted as Assistant Provost Marshal and Acting Assistant Quartermaster and Commissary.¹⁹⁰

Union soldiers brought sound money into the area and provided a large market for the agricultural products which local farmers wished to sell.

An advertisement in a Lynchburg newspaper informed the public that the Union Quartermaster Department was ready to buy cattle on the hoof, pork, bacon, hams, flour, corn meal, potatoes, and onions. Another notice in the same paper offered to purchase 5,000 bushels of corn, 2,000 bushels of oats, 100 tons of hay, and 300 cords of wood. The editor of the newspaper commented that "an opportunity for those who need money is thus afforded."¹⁹¹

His long experience as a merchant, and his previous connection with the Confederate Quartermaster Department, must have enabled McLean to transact a considerable amount of business with the Union Commissary. He probably purchased agricultural products in the surrounding area and resold them to the Federal Quartermaster. All of the Union troops were not withdrawn from Appomattox Court House until the last of 1865, and until that time he seems to have been able to keep his finances in fairly good condition.

The fourth and last child to be added to the McLean household was born on September 5, 1865. She was named Virginia Beverley, after her mother, and was usually called "Jennie".



McLean House and Family, Summer 1865

At the beginning of 1866, McLean's prospects were dismal indeed. The Union troops were gone; he had no money to finance any business activities; he was not prepared to engage in farming; all sources of revenue had disappeared. In order to provide his family with the necessities of life, he was forced to borrow money wherever he could. In an effort to extricate himself from this desperate financial situation, he decided to have some pictures made of the McLean House and to ask General R. E. Lee to sit for a portrait.

Exactly one week before the first anniversary of the surrender, McLean addressed a letter to Lee requesting him to grant two or three sittings for a portrait by a New York artist. After declaring that he was asking for this personal favor with unfeigned reluctance, he explained that he was also planning to have some pictures made of the McLean House as it was on the "unfortunate day" of April 9, 1865.

Appomattox C. H. Apl. 2, 1866

Gen. R. E. Lee
My Dear Sir

With unfeigned reluctance, I compell (sic) myself to call upon you for a personal favour. I have been prevailed upon by a number of my Friends, and other persons, to have the picture of my house taken, (Exterior and interior) as it was on the unfortunate day 9th Apl. 1865. (Necessity compells (sic) me to do, what I would not have done before.) It is now in progress, and will be gotten up in the finest style, by the first Artists in New York. I will

be under obligations to you, Mr Dear Sir,
if you will grant me, two, or three sittings,
for one of the first Artists of N. Y. to get
a life like likeness of yourself. I hope
you will excuse the liberty I have taken,
and believe me ever ready to reciprocate.

With profound respect, I remain your most
humble servant

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Wilmer McLean

Like most Southerners, McLean had a high opinion of Lee,
and the tone of his letter was respectful throughout.

McLean did not think it was necessary to introduce himself,
and simply took it for granted that Lee would know who he was.
How well did Lee know McLean? He certainly remembered that it
was in McLean's house, only a year before, that he had held his
historic meeting with Grant. Lee must have seen McLean while
he was waiting for Grant to arrive on the afternoon of April 9.
It is likely that Lee was familiar with the McLean family in
Alexandria and probably knew Wilmer when they were both going
to school at the Alexandria Academy. McLean's statement that
he was asking a personal favor of Lee gives the definite im-
pression that he knew the general personally.

There are two brief notations in the handwriting of Lee
on the back of McLean's letter. One reads: "2 Apl '66 Wilmer
McLean asks for sittings to a N. Y. Artist." The other says:
"Ans - Declined 6 Apl."

McLean's letter was the outcome of some very serious thought during the early months of 1866 and perhaps even before that time. By the beginning of April, 1866, he had started having some pictures made of his house and had talked the matter over with his friends and other persons. After several months of planning, he finally dispatched his carefully-worded message asking Lee to grant two or three sittings for a portrait.

McLean presented a true version of his financial condition when he said that necessity compelled him to try to capitalize on the surrender by having some pictures made, and his apology to Lee for presuming to ask him to sit for a portrait was quite sincere.

It was not definitely expressed in McLean's letter, and yet it was certainly his implied hope that he would be able to realize a modest income by selling some pictures of his house and publishing or exhibiting a portrait of General Lee.

As recorded in the Lee Manuscript Letter Book, III, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., Lee sent the following reply:

Lexington, Va., 6 April 1866

Mr. Wilmer McClean [McLean]
Appomatox C. H., Va.

My Dear Sir:

I rec'd by the last mail your letter of the 2^d inst, requesting me to sit to an artist for my picture for you.

I regret that I shall be unable to comply with yrur request, and must beg that you will excuse me.

Very respectfully, yr. obnt. svt.

(sgd.) R. E. Lee 193

Both McLean and Appomattox are misspelled in this copy of Lee's letter. This was the fault of the copyist, because Lee's notation on the back of McLean's letter reveals that the general was well aware of the proper way to spell McLean, and there can be no doubt that he was more than familiar with the correct way to spell Appomattox.

Lee did not turn down McLean's proposal merely because it revived painful memories connected with the surrender. After the war, he seldom mentioned the surrender, and never expressed any bitterness or resentment about it. On the contrary, he thought that the wisest course was to try to forget the antagonistic feelings produced by the war. In 1869, when he declined an invitation to attend a meeting of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association, he said, "I think it wise moreover not to keep open the sores of war, but to follow the examples of those nations who endeavoured to obliterate the marks of Civil strife and to commit to oblivion the feelings it engendered."¹⁹⁴

While Lee expressed his regret to McLean because he could not comply with his request, he gave no reason for his refusal, as he did in a letter to another correspondent on April 6. In this letter, in the Lee Manuscript Letter Book, III, he turned down a request for the numbers of the Confederate army in the battles around Richmond in 1862 by saying, "I have not access to the returns of the army at that time, or I would comply with your request." In his letter to McLean, he gave an unqualified

refusal, which meant that he was unwilling to sit for a portrait for McLean under any and all circumstances, and McLean must have understood it in that fashion.

Later on, in 1869, Lee consented to have his portrait painted by Frank Buscher, a Swiss artist, and Buscher claimed that he talked with Lee about the surrender while he was doing the portrait. "The subject seemed to be painful to him, but as he went on, it wore off."¹⁹⁵

Lee sent McLean an immediate reply, saying that he received his letter "by the last mail". In other words, he sent a negative answer without taking time to give McLean's proposal any serious consideration. As soon as he read McLean's letter, he knew what his answer would be.

Lee's language was quite formal, and he closed his letter with the words, "Very respectfully, yr. obnt. svt." A perusal of a number of Lee's letters reveals that he customarily used these words in closing his more formal letters. In the Lee Manuscript Letter Book, III, the letter immediately preceding the one to McLean closes with the words, "With my kindest regards to Mrs. Smith and your family, I am most truly". It seems that he used some expression like "I am most truly" when he wanted to express himself in a warm and intimate fashion. When he wrote to McLean, he did not think that it was an occasion for a cordial conclusion.

Lee addressed McLean as "Mr. Wilmer McLean", and did not use the title of "Major". Lee was always very careful about the use of military titles in his post-war letters, and it seems significant that he omitted any reference to a military title in his letter to McLean.

To say the least, Lee's letter to McLean was cold rather than cordial, and his politeness was a very formal sort of politeness.

Did Lee have some feeling against McLean? Did he know that McLean had speculated in sugar during the war? Did he think that McLean had no right to capitalize on the surrender conference? It is really impossible to answer these questions, and yet at the same time Lee was turning down McLean's proposal, he graciously honored a rather trivial request from Major Giles B. Cooke in Petersburg. On April 11, 1866, he wrote to Major Cooke, the superintendent of St. Paul's Sunday School, saying that he was returning "the photographs with my signature, as requested in your letter of the 6th inst." Cooke had asked Lee to autograph some photographs so that they could be distributed as gifts to the children of St. Paul's Sunday School. Lee said, "Should they give any gratification to the scholars of St. Paul's Sunday School, I shall be more than compensated for the short time consumed in signing them."¹⁹⁶

In another letter to Cooke, also written near the beginning of April, 1866, Lee wrote, "I will, with pleasure, send the auto-

graphs you desire." He furthermore expressed his great admiration for the conduct of the citizens of Petersburg during the war. "My interest in the citizens of Petersburg," he said, "is as great now as when I was a daily witness of the dangers to which they were subjected from the siege of their beloved city and my admiration of the fortitude and courage they displayed has not in the least abated."¹⁹⁷

His rather effusive language in this letter is in marked contrast to the words he used in his letter to McLean, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that his very brief letter to McLean left a great deal unsaid. There is no record of any other correspondence between the two men, and it is not likely that McLean ever asked Lee for another favor.¹⁹⁸

Despite Lee's refusal to sit for a portrait, McLean persisted with his plan to publish a surrender picture. His letter to Lee implied that his initial idea was to have some pictures made of the interior and exterior of his house, but he eventually decided to bring out an engraving of the surrender room while it was occupied by Lee and Grant, a number of Union officers, and Colonel Charles Marshall, Lee's military secretary.

McLean's picture was not the first attempt to portray this momentous event in American history. In 1866, two Philadelphia lithographers "issued each his own wholly fanciful conception of the surrender."¹⁹⁹ These pictures made no attempt to portray

the McLean House or the signing of the surrender documents, and were merely products of the imagination of the artists who painted them.

Other early pictures did make an effort to show Lee and Grant in the parlor of the McLean House. There is an undated small picture of the surrender, published by the New York firm of Major and Knapp, in the Prints Division of the New York Public Library. The pictorial surface is 4 13/16 by 7 3/4 inches, and, judging by its poor quality, was brought out soon after the surrender. The artist hardly did more than portray the figures of Lee and Grant, seated at a table draped with a cloth which reaches almost to the floor. On the left, a Union officer, apparently Sheridan, is standing beside Lee, and on the right, a Confederate, evidently Marshall, is standing behind Grant. There is a section of a fireplace on the right and part of a window drapery on the left. Lee is the central and most prominent figure, and the picture is entitled "Surrender of General Lee".

Another early picture, also in the Prints Division of the New York Public Library, is somewhat different from the picture described above. There is a table draped with a cloth, but Lee and Grant are standing, with Lee on the right and Grant on the left, both holding their hats. A Confederate officer standing to the right of Lee appears to be Colonel Charles Marshall, while a Union officer standing to the left of Grant seems to be Sheridan.

The walls of the room are bare and the window is undraped. A door appears on the right. An inaccurate detail in this picture, which often appeared in surrender scenes for many years, was the portrayal of a window with only twelve panes of glass. A window of this size was probably suggested to artists by a sketch of the McLean House published in Harper's Weekly on November 4, 1865, which showed the house with twelve-paned windows. This sketch was generally regarded as authentic because it was supposed to have been drawn by Colonel Battersby of the First New York Cavalry at the very time when Lee and Grant were holding their surrender conference.

A third small surrender picture in the same library, entitled "Surrender of General Lee", has the notation that it is from "the original painting by Chappel in the possession of the publishers." The publishers were Johnson, Fry and Company of New York, and the picture was "entered according to act of Congress A. D. by Johnson, Fry & Co., in the clerks office of the district court of the southern district of N.Y." "Chappel" was evidently Alonzo Chappell, who painted another picture of the surrender in 1884. The 1884 picture has a twelve-paned window and a door that is located in the wrong position.
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Chappell's earlier picture shows Grant and Lee standing at an undraped table, Grant on the left and Lee on the right, with Lee in the act of signing a paper. Two Union officers are standing

behind Grant, and one of them is holding a sword. Lee and the officer to his right are both wearing swords. A picture and another decoration are shown on one wall, with a small bookshelf on the other wall, but there is no window.²⁰¹

In all of these early pictures, the artists exercised an unusual amount of freedom, and it is obvious that they did not attempt to portray the surrender room in a realistic manner. Twenty years after the surrender, according to one commentator, they "were still drawing on their imaginations."²⁰²

McLean's contribution was that his picture of the surrender depicted the room in a more accurate manner. The title printed beneath the picture emphasizes the appearance of the parlor. "The Room in the McLean House, at Appomattox C. H., in which Gen. Lee surrendered to Gen. Grant." It is said that most of the details in regard to the room were supplied by McLean himself.

McLean's picture bears the name of "Major & Knapp Engraving & Lith. Co. 71 Bdway." There is no information about this company in the Prints Division or the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library, which arouses the suspicion that it was a firm that used a rented Broadway address merely to impress the public.

In order to finance the publication of the surrender picture, McLean borrowed money from Harrison, Goddin, and Apperson, a banking house in Richmond. He was able to sell the copyright to the picture on January 8, 1866, for \$12,000.00, but it is doubtful that he ever received very much of this amount, because he bought



McLean Lithograph

the copyright back on June 28, 1866, for \$100.00.²⁰³ The publication of this picture was not a lucrative venture, and merely added to McLean's financial difficulties. He never regained his original investment.

One of the few copies of the McLean picture now in existence is owned by the Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. The original is in the Library of Congress.

In the post-war period at Appomattox Court House, McLean was willing to participate in the life of the community and make whatever contribution he could. When the Confederate cemetery was established in 1866, and graves had to be dug for the one Union and eighteen Confederate soldiers buried there, McLean helped to dig the graves.²⁰⁴

Worship services were held in the Union Academy building, near the McLean House, in 1866 and 1867, prior to the organization of the Appomattox Court House Presbyterian Church.²⁰⁵ While the McLeans were Episcopalians, they might have attended some of these Presbyterian worship services.

DEPARTURE FROM APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE

McLean's decision to leave Appomattox Court House must have been closely linked with his unfortunate financial situation. Plagued by steadily mounting debts, which he found impossible to pay, it is unthinkable that he could have remained there more than a year and a half after he communicated with General R. E. Lee. This would date his departure in the fall of 1867.

Mrs. N. H. Ragland, whose husband purchased the McLean House, stated that the Raglands bought the property in 1868. "In 1868, my husband bought the house at Appomattox Court House in which General Lee and General Grant met and drew up and signed the articles of capitulation at the time of the surrender. At the time it was owned by Major McLean."²⁰⁶

The time when N. H. Ragland is supposed to have purchased the McLean House does not necessarily establish the date when the McLeans left Appomattox Court House. They could have moved away in the fall of 1867, and settlement for the property could have been made later. N. G. Featherston was evidently repeating a Ragland family tradition when he said that the "McLean property was purchased about two years after the surrender by N. H. Ragland."²⁰⁷ This indicates 1867 as the time when the McLeans moved away.

Some conclusive evidence for their departure in the fall of 1867 is contained in the records of the West Hanover Presbytery describing the formation of the Appomattox Court House Presbyterian Church.

A meeting of the West Hanover Presbytery was held at Appomattox Court House on November 29, 1867, and the following paper was presented to the Presbytery:

"Appomattox C. H. Va. Nov. 29th 1867.
"To the Presbytery of West Hanover,
"Brethren,

The undersigned, believing that the interests of the Church of Christ would be promoted, under God's blessing, by organizing a Church under your care, at Appomattox C. H., respectfully ask that such Church be thus organized,

(Signed)

M.W. Ragland,	B.M. Layburn,	Mary Winston Johns,
S.M. Ragland,	T.T. Ragland	Elizabeth D. Johns,
Alice R. Johns,	L.D. Isbell,	R.A. Patterson,
M.F. Bocock,	R.B. Poore,	M.Mason,
E.W. Leyburn,	Thos. W. Johns,	
A.H. Bocock	Mary E. Johns,	
E.J. Leyburn,		208

The Ragland names appearing on this petition are M.W. Ragland, who was Mrs. Martha Walker Ragland (1827-1907); S.M. Ragland, who was Sallie Massie Ragland (1852-1932); and T.T. Ragland, who was Thomas Trent Ragland (1850-1893).²⁰⁹ These persons were the wife and two of the children of Nathaniel Harden Ragland (1818-1888), who purchased the McLean House from Wilmer McLean.

The three members of the Ragland family would not have signed this petition if they had not been bona fide residents of the village of Appomattox Court House on November 29, 1867. Since a meeting of the West Hanover Presbytery had to be called, and the petition from the people at Appomattox Court House had to be prepared some little time in advance of November 29, it appears that the

Raglands had been living in the McLean House a month or six weeks prior to that date.

The members of the McLean family must have left Appomattox Court House before the Raglands moved into their home. After considering all the available evidence, it is logical to conclude that the McLeans moved away from Appomattox Court House in October, 1867. They had lived in the village for about four years.

THE LAST YEARS

The McLeans were forced to lead an impoverished life after they left Appomattox Court House and went back to the Manassas-Alexandria area, and like thousands of others throughout the territory of the former Confederacy, endured many hardships and privations.

They still possessed many acres of farm land in Prince William County, but farm land at that time was virtually worthless. Soon after the surrender, it was reported that Virginia farm land which had once sold for \$150.00 per acre was then bringing \$2.00 or \$2.50 per acre.²¹⁰ Formerly wealthy planters were ruined financially.

Unfortunately, McLean's debts were not cancelled when he left Appomattox Court House, and in the spring of 1869 some of his creditors instituted a legal action against him. A legal notice was published in the Lynchburg News, May 14, 1869.

Appomattox Court House, April 29, 1869.
Whereas the Circuit Court of Appomattox did, at its April term, 1869, in the Chancery suit of David Garth, Assignee against Wilmer McLean and John L. Pascoe, adjudge, order, and decree among other things that one of the Commissioners of said Court take the following accounts:

- 1 An Account of all real estate belonging to said McLean within the jurisdiction of said Court, other than embraced in a certain deed, in the proceedings in said suit mentioned, and the annual rents and profits thereof.
- 2 An account of the annual rents and profits of the real estate conveyed by the deed above referred to.

3. An account of all liens upon the real estate of the defendant McLean, and other priorities thereof, and

4. An account of the amount now due on the several judgments in the proceedings mentioned, and make report thereof to the Court ... creditors. All having liens by judgment or otherwise on McLean's real estate must file their claims by June 11, 1869.

Order signed by Chas. H. Sackett, Com'r. in Chancery of the Circuit Court in Appomattox.

This legal notice reveals that McLean was hopelessly in debt when he left Appomattox Court House, and that a number of people held claims against his property.

The legal action was not a bankruptcy proceeding, as some have believed, but was a creditor's suit to establish priorities among his creditors.²¹¹ It was brought by David Garth, assignee, on behalf of the Richmond banking house of Harrison, Goddin, and Apperson. The property still in McLean's possession at Appomattox Court House was eventually sold at public auction on November 25, 1869.²¹²

McLean was fifty-three years old at the time he left Appomattox Court House and was hardly able to do heavy manual labor. Jobs were scarce, and whatever employment he was able to obtain produced a very meager income.

During this trying period, his morale was bolstered by his friendship with a young attorney named John Singleton Mosby, who was an officer in the Confederate cavalry and partisans during the Civil War. He became famous for his exploits as the leader of Mosby's Rangers. Mosby was a great admirer of

Grant and joined the Republican party after the war. Because of this he was subjected to severe criticism by Southerners, but he was willing to endure the censure heaped upon him, and was appointed consul to Hong Kong in 1878. He later became a land agent in Colorado and worked as an Assistant Attorney in the Department of Justice.²¹³

McLean was familiar with Mosby's Civil War record because one of his stepdaughters, "Ocie" Mason, married Thomas Tibbs, one of Mosby's cavalrymen. McLean evidently formed a personal friendship with Mosby when the latter began the post-war practice of law in Warrenton, Virginia, and McLean decided that he would follow Mosby's example and support Grant in the election of 1872.

His switch to the Republican party resulted in his appointment, in June, 1873, as an Internal Revenue Gauger for the seventh collection district of Virginia. The appointment was made by the U. S. Treasury Department, and his commission was signed by William A. Richardson, Secretary of the Treasury, and J. M. Douglas, Commissioner of Internal Revenue. The commission was dated June 4, 1873, and declared that McLean was to receive "all the fees and emoluments" of the Office to which he was appointed.

McLean's appointment to this position has apparently been overlooked in the past because the commission carries the name William McLean rather than Wilmer. However, the index of the volume which contains the commission reads McLean, Wilmer, p.499.

It appears that the copyist made an error when he made out the
form.²¹⁴

There can be no doubt that McLean was employed by the U. S. Treasury Department. The United States Treasury Register, of July 1, 1873, shows that Wilmer McLean was employed in Manassas, Virginia, as Gauger for the Internal Revenue Service.²¹⁵

His position as Gauger for the Internal Revenue Service was not a lucrative job, and he was anxious to obtain a better appointment. In the summer of 1876, he applied for a place in the Mailing Room of the Treasury Department, and hoped to receive a position held by E. W. Massey, who was apparently not a supporter of Grant's administration.

His application for this position was endorsed by President U. S. Grant on August 18, 1876. Grant wrote:

I endorse this application understanding that the present occupant is not entitled to recognition under this administration. U.S. Grant²¹⁶

On the following day, August 19, 1876, John S. Mosby wrote to Grant urging him to order the Treasury Department to give McLean an appointment.

John S. Mosby
Attorney At Law
Corner of Fifth and D Sts.

Washington, D.C. Aug. 19th, 1876

To the President

I would be greatly obliged if you would order our friend Major McLean to be appointed in the Treasury. He has always been a faithful friend of yours & is very destitute. There are a number in the Treasury appointed by influences hostile to you & who are personally unfit to hold their places.

Major McLean is perfectly competent to fill one of them.

Very truly 217
Jno. S. Mosby

Mosby's letter produced quick results, for on the same day, August 19, 1876, Grant endorsed McLean's application for the second time. He wrote:

I endorse this application understanding that Mr. Massey has no claims to consideration under this administration.

Sgd. U. S. Grant 218

Despite two endorsements by the President of the United States, McLean still did not receive an appointment to a position in the Treasury Department. E. W. Massey must have had some friends in the Treasury Department who were determined not to allow his position to be taken by an office-seeker named Wilmer McLean.

McLean then decided that he would withdraw his application to the Treasury Department and send it directly to the President. He sent the following letter:

To the President
Sir.

I understood your endorsement of my application for a position in the Treasury Mail- ing Room, made the day before you left Washington, as peremptory upon the Department. They however do not so construe it, and I am still without the place, my application having been placed on file, and no disposition being shown to advance it, I have therefore withdrawn it, that I might send it to you, for you to make it peremptory, if such was your intention, as I clearly understood it to be.

You know my position, and how I have sustained your administration.

Very Respectfully
Your Obt Servant
Wilmer McLean 219

This letter of explanation was accompanied by the following letter of application:

To the President of the
United States:

Sir:

I respectfully request the appointment
to the position in the Mailing Room of the Treasury Department now held by E. W. Massey.

Very respectfully
Your Obdt. Servant
Wilmer McLean 220

McLean's two letters to Grant are undated, but were evidently written about the beginning of September. His friendship with Grant must have been on a very personal basis, since he did not hesitate to write to Grant directly, even though he was applying for a minor position, that of mail-clerk in the Treasury Department. He obviously expected to receive personal attention and consideration from the President of the United States. Grant's loyalty to his friends is revealed by the repeated endorsements he gave to McLean's application for a position.

McLean's letters to Grant are beautiful specimens of handwriting and were written with the greatest of care. In order to appreciate McLean's handwriting, it is only necessary to contrast it with the careless scrawl of John S. Mosby in his letter to Grant on McLean's behalf. Grant likewise was careless about his handwriting when he wrote his endorsements of McLean's application.

McLean's statement, "You know my position, and how I have sustained your administration", indicates that Grant was well-acquainted with McLean.

McLean's direct approach to the President caused Grant to write a message to the Postmaster General:

Will the Postmaster Gen. please examine
the charges that Massey is not a supporter
or friend of republican administration, and
if true appoint Mr. McLean to his place.

Sept. 7th, 76 U. S. Grant 221

Even three endorsements by Grant were not sufficient, and the position in the Treasury Mailing Room never materialized.

McLean finally received an appointment as Inspector with the Bureau of Customs at Alexandria, Virginia, on October 4, 1876. There is a letter of this same date from the Collector at Alexandria recommending McLean for the job as Inspector. It is addressed to Lot M. Morrill, the Secretary of the Treasury, and evidently produced immediate results.

I respectfully recommend the appointment
of Wilmer McLean for Inspector of Customs for
this port, at a Salary of three dollars per
diem.

Name, Wilmer McLean, age 56, late U. S.
Gauger, Character for sobriety, industry, and
business habits, good; a resident Alexandria,
and a native of the State of Virginia.

Very respectfully
Your Obt Servt
D Turner
Collector 222

McLean was actually 62 years old on October 4, 1876, instead of 56. It is not known whether this was a deliberate misstatement or merely an error.

The register of Employees of the Bureau of Customs shows that McLean was "removed" as of January 20, 1880, and replaced by W. H. Cave.

McLean lived in Alexandria the rest of his life and died there on June 5, 1882. He was buried in the cemetery at St. Paul's Church in Alexandria, and the brief inscription on his tombstone reads:

Wilmer McLean
Son of
Daniel & Lucretia McLean
Died June 5, 1882
In the 68th year of
his age

Mrs. McLean lived until 1893, and she was likewise buried in the cemetery at St. Paul's. The inscription on her tombstone reads:

Virginia Beverley
Wife of
Wilmer McLean
Born May 28, 1818
Died Aug. 26, 1893

Two of McLean's daughters, Nannie Maury and Lucretia (the name on the tombstone is "Lula") Virginia, as well as many other relatives, are buried in the same cemetery.

A very brief notice of McLeans's death appeared in the Alexandria Gazette for June 7, 1882. It was published under the heading "Alexandria Annals" and merely stated that he died at his residence at the corner of Pitt and Wolfe streets at the age of 68. Nothing was said about his family or his connection with the surrender at Appomattox Court House.

The editor of the Southern Historical Society Papers in Richmond had a better historical perspective. In the June, 1882, issue

he published the following announcement in the "Notes and Queries" section:

"The Man who saw the Beginning and the End.

"Major Wilmer McLean, who died in Alexandria recently, was the man who literally saw the beginning and end of the late war. It was on his farm that the battle of Bull Run was fought, and General Lee surrendered in his house at Appomattox, to which he had moved with his family to avoid the annoyances of the war." 223

A recent writer describes McLean as one who was "personally obscure in the world's history" and yet, at the same time, a man whose unique connection with the beginning and end of the Civil War "has guaranteed his name peculiar immortality."²²⁴

CONCLUSIONS

There is only a small amount of information about Wilmer McLean in any sort of printed work. This makes it necessary to search for manuscript material and unpublished items in private hands and even in the most unlikely places.

Despite the lack of data in well-known libraries and manuscript depositories, research carried on for this study has succeeded in discovering sufficient material to justify the writing of this pioneer biography. There are still gaps that need to be filled in, and it is hoped that this study will help lay the foundation for a definitive biography at some future date.

Genealogical records carefully compiled over a number of years by Mrs. J. Gary Barthell, of Wilmette, Illinois, and made available by her for this study, contain valuable information about McLean's family background, as does Anthony McLean's unpublished "Reminiscences", likewise furnished by Mrs. Barthell.

A small volume of Recollections, published in 1926 by Josephine Cleary Wimsatt, includes some family history not generally known. A copy of this book was supplied by Dr. W. K. Wimsatt, a member of the faculty at Yale University.

This family background material reveals that Wilmer McLean had a distinguished American ancestry. His forebears settled in New Jersey and Pennsylvania before the Revolution. His maternal great-grandfather, Peter Ayers Hodgkinson, was a clergyman of the Church of England, and his maternal grandfather, Bethannath Hodgkinson, served in a Pennsylvania regiment during the War for

Independence. Relatives on both sides of his family were prominent in the shipping business and several were sea captains.

The 1799 Alexandria Local Census proves that Wilmer's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel McLean, were living in Alexandria at that time. Daniel McLean was an outstanding merchant, baker, sugar refiner, and business man in Alexandria. He was one of the founders and the chief financial benefactor of St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Records in the National Archives at Washington, D. C., contain information about Samuel and Anthony McLean, brothers of Wilmer, which indicates that they were men with outstanding ability. Samuel served for many years as an American consul in Cuba, and Anthony was an auditor for the Orange and Alexandria Rail Road.

Since there is nothing to show that Wilmer attended the Benjamin Hallowell School in Alexandria, it is considered certain that he was enrolled at the Alexandria Academy, where he studied mathematics, penmanship, and the Latin and Greek classics, and was a school-mate of General R. E. Lee for several years. The specimens of McLean's handwriting that have been preserved demonstrate that he had few peers in the art of penmanship.

The Parish Records of St. Paul's Church in Alexandria establish January 19, 1853, as the date of McLean's marriage to Mrs. Virginia Beverley Hooe Mason.

The Beverley Family of Virginia, published in 1956, contains genealogical information about Mrs. Wilmer McLean and her first

husband, Dr. John Seddon Mason, who obtained his medical degree from the University of Maryland. This book reveals that Dr. and Mrs. Mason were the parents of three daughters, instead of the two usually mentioned, and all three were living at the time McLean and Mrs. Mason were married.

The unpublished material in the Edward Porter Alexander Papers at the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, contains much valuable information about the McLean family, the McLean plantation in Prince William County, and the military activities on July 18, 1861. Alexander sets the record straight with his report that a single Union artillery shell went through the walls of the log cabin which was used by the McLeans as a kitchen. The McLeans left Manassas before the battle, and did not actually witness any of the hostilities.

Confederate Quartermaster's receipts, among the records of the Confederate Government in the National Archives, demonstrate that McLean was an ardent Southern supporter and contributed generously to the Confederate war effort in 1861 and 1862. He permitted the Confederate Army to use all of the buildings at "Yorkshire" as a military hospital for seven and a half months, the length of time the Confederate Army was stationed in the Manassas area. Unfortunately, there are no records of this hospital in the National Archives, but it was apparently an important medical facility.

After he removed his family from the battle area, McLean worked with the Confederate Quartermaster Department at Manassas for at least four months and did not receive any compensation except his expenses. There is a family tradition that he also made large donations of farm commodities to the Confederacy during this period. The mere absence of Confederate Quartermaster's receipts for the sale of farm products cannot be accepted as proof that he made such contributions, and yet it seems likely that there is considerable truth in this tradition.

The fact that McLean moved his family away from Manassas should not be regarded as an indication that he was not a strong Southern sympathizer or that he wanted to run away from the war. A number of his close relatives, who were all extremely loyal to the Confederacy, moved their families out of the battle area around Washington. There is actually nothing to indicate that McLean had any personal fear, and his desire to leave the battle area has certainly been unduly exaggerated. His friendship with high-ranking Confederate officers indicates that they did not question his motives or loyalty.

It is believed that the misconduct of soldiers and hospital personnel, while the buildings at "Yorkshire" were being used as a hospital, rather than soldiers marching across his fields, was the chief thing which caused him to lose interest in the war effort and discontinue his contributions to the Confederacy. He evidently had a change of heart near the end of 1861, and there-

after sold some items to the Confederate Quartermaster for very high prices. He also received his first rent payment at that time.

E. P. Alexander said that McLean left Manassas about the time that the Confederate Army began to move out of the area. The army received orders to vacate its winter quarters on March 6, and McLean did not receive any more payments from the Confederate quartermaster after March 1.

In 1862 and 1863 he became a large and successful speculator in the sugar market. A letter which he wrote to Lt. Gen. J. C. Pemberton on March 19, 1863, indicates that he had a large cargo of sugar in a warehouse at Vicksburg. He traveled extensively during this period, and made at least one trip to Jackson, Mississippi, in the spring of 1863.

An unpublished Appomattox court docket in the Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia, contains some information about the litigation in which the estate of Mrs. Eliza D. Raine was involved, beginning in 1855. McLean purchased the McLean House at Appomattox from the estate of Mrs. Eliza D. Raine, and the court docket indicates that it had been on the market for several years prior to the time when McLean bought it.

An unpublished letter by Captain Randall Holden, a Confederate Assistant Surgeon, on August 28, 1863, established the fall of 1863

as the time when the McLeans set up housekeeping at Appomattox Court House. A copy of this letter was provided by Dr. Harry J. Warthen of Richmond, Virginia.

It appears that McLean was not a farmer at Appomattox Court House, and continued his activities in the sugar market as long as he could. This is based on the bond certificates which he assigned to the Treasurer of the Confederate States in 1864, apparently to take care of import duties, since import duties were paid to the Treasurer of the Confederate States.

An unpublished letter in the J. L. Smith Letter Book, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, indicates that on the day of the surrender McLean obtained an order from General P. H. Sheridan forbidding soldiers to molest his property.

McLean hesitated to open his home for the surrender conference because of his unfortunate experience at Manassas, when he permitted the buildings at "Yorkshire" to be used as a Confederate military hospital. E. P. Alexander states that McLean was indignant at Appomattox Court House because his property was abused, and it is concluded that he was more indignant than he was nervous or excited, as reported by many writers.

A rough sketch for a drawing by Thomas Nast, a well-known American artist, depicts McLean in the surrender room while Lee, Marshall, and Babcock were waiting for Grant to appear. This is regarded as authentic, since Nast drew this sketch with the advice of Colonel Marshall. Nast portrays General R. E. Lee as fast asleep

in the surrender room while he waited for Grant. This is also accepted as authentic, because an unpublished letter from General G. G. Meade to his wife on April 10, 1865, describes Lee as a sick and hungry man. Lee's true physical condition at Appomattox Court House has not been recognized by most of those who have written about the surrender.

It is concluded that McLean did a considerable amount of business with the Union Quartermaster Department until the last of the Union troops left Appomattox at the end of 1865. Near the beginning of 1866, he began to experience serious financial difficulty, as he explained in a letter to General R. E. Lee on April 2, 1866, in which he asked Lee to grant two or three sittings for a portrait by a New York artist.

Although Lee politely refused McLean's request, his letter to McLean was rather cold and impersonal and very brief. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that his letter left a great deal unsaid which he might have liked to say. McLean was undoubtedly very much disappointed because Lee turned down his request, which he had asked as a personal favor.

McLean's venture into the publishing field, when he brought out a picture of the surrender, was a financial failure, but his picture helped to create a trend toward a more realistic portrayal of the room in which the surrender conference was held. A review of three early surrender pictures in the Prints Division of the New York Public Library reveals that the artists who painted these

pictures made virtually no attempt to give an accurate presentation of the surrender room.

The McLeans entered into the life of the community at Appomattox Court House during the post-war period, and McLean helped to dig the graves for the soldiers buried in the Confederate cemetery. One of his stepdaughters, "Ocie" Mason, married Thomas Tibbs, a resident of Appomattox Court House.

The unpublished Minutes of the West Hanover Presbytery, describing the organization of the Appomattox Court House Presbyterian Church, furnish documentary evidence that the McLeans left Appomattox Court House in the fall of 1867. Three members of the N. H. Ragland family signed the petition for the organization of this church, the petition being presented to the West Hanover Presbytery on November 29, 1867. N. H. Ragland purchased the McLean House from Wilmer McLean, and the members of his family must have been living there in the fall of 1867.

After he left Appomattox Court House, McLean was impoverished, but it must be said that he bore his misfortunes in a dignified manner and asked for favors only when necessity compelled him to do so.

He became a member of the Republican party and supported Grant in the election of 1872. He worked as an Internal Revenue Gauger for the U. S. Treasury Department from 1873 until 1876, and then served as an Inspector at the Custom House in Alexandria until 1880.

McLean corresponded with President U. S. Grant about an appointment in the Mailing Room of the Treasury Department, and Grant demonstrated his friendship for McLean by personally endorsing his application on three occasions.

In addition to the President of the United States, he was the friend of Generals J. E. Johnston, P. G. T. Beauregard, T. L. Rosser, and Colonel John S. Mosby. To have had such friends he must have deserved their respect.

The hand of fate seemed to play a large part in McLean's life, and McLean himself felt that this was true, because on April 11, 1865, when he looked at the soldiers around the McLean House, he asked E. P. Alexander what he thought of that for "luck". He apparently believed that his luck was entirely bad, but in the years that were to follow the hand of fate would make his name immortal.

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burg, Virginia; New York Public Library, New York, New York; Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois; North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina; State of Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; State of Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi; Passaic County Historical Society, Paterson, New Jersey; New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; Schenectady County Historical Society, Schenectady, New York; University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois.

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II. PHYSICAL REMAINS

Inscriptions on the tombstones of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel McLean, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer McLean, Lucretia (Lula) Virginia McLean, Nannie Maury McLean, Anthony McLean, and Douglas McLean in the St. Paul's Episcopal Church Cemetery, Alexandria, Virginia.

Inscription on the tombstone of Mr. and Mrs. Bethannath Hodgkinson in the St. Mary's Episcopal Church Cemetery, Burlington, New Jersey.

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