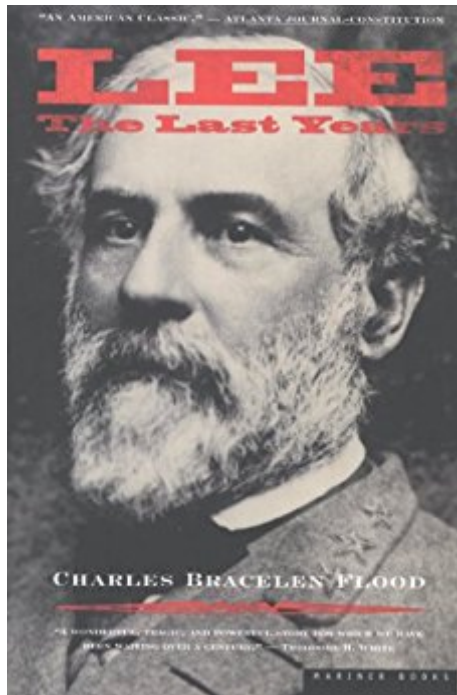


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Lee: The Last Years



Synopsis

A New York Times bestselling author's revealing account of General Robert E. Lee's life after Appomattox: "An American classic" (Atlanta Journal-Constitution). After his surrender at Appomattox in 1865, Robert E. Lee, commanding general for the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War, lived only five more years. It was the great forgotten chapter of his remarkable life, during which Lee did more to bridge the divide between the North and the South than any other American. The South may have lost, but Lee taught them how to triumph in peace, and showed the entire country how to heal the wounds of war. Based on previously unseen documents, letters, family papers and exhaustive research into Lee's complex private life and public crusades, this is a portrait of a true icon of Reconstruction and quiet rebellion. From Lee's urging of Rebel soldiers to restore their citizenship, to his taking communion with a freedman, to his bold dance with a Yankee belle at a Southern ball, to his outspoken regret of his soldierly past, to withstanding charges of treason, Lee embodied his adage: "True patriotism sometimes requires of men to act exactly contrary, at one period, to that which it does at another." • Lee: The Last Years sheds a vital new light on war, politics, hero-worship, human rights, and Robert E. Lee's desire to do right. •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was taught about the Civil War in grade school in fairly simplistic terms. When I was 34, I learned from a business colleague that folks further South traditionally referred to that period as the War of Northern Aggression, the first I had heard that term. It was clear that there was more to the story I had learned. This book was the first I had read about that war since school. It is, quite simply, One of the best books I have read. Ever. I could not put it down. I encourage anyone with curiosity about our nations history or the war to read this book. Fascinating at so many levels and particularly illuminating with respect to General Lee, a giant of a man.

"Lee: The Last Years" presents to the reader Robert E. Lee, great American and humanitarian, as defined by his life following the end of the Civil War. Although Lee's final years were few, Mr. Flood provides well written and documented incidents and relationships during these final years. Lee's behavior as husband, father, president of Washington College, and community leader during his final years are presented in "Lee: The Last Years" with such clarity and completeness that the reader is never left with unanswered questions. After reading "The Last Years", the reader can appreciate why Robert E. Lee was held in high esteem by so many. Mr. Flood's "Lee: The Last Years" is easy to pick up and read with numerous stories that I often share with others. I have enjoyed reading "The Last Years" several times and recommend this book to all readers.

Instead of yet another book about Lee full of military analysis and war, here we have a book about what he did with the rest of his life. The book begins with the surrender at Appomattox and ends with his death. I'm not even sure why I started reading this. I didn't need to read yet another book about Lee, but I'm glad I did. This one was a good read, and showed that Lee thought way beyond war, and was instrumental in helping Southerners mend fences with the North after the war. Even though I've read several other books about Lee and his various family members, I still learned a lot from this book. Highly recommended.

I find most books about that sad time in our nation's history to be heartbreaking. This book is an easy read, even if you're not a history lover, and it provides very interesting insights into the changes Lee was instrumental in making to higher education, particularly in the areas of engineering. It also explains just why Lee was such a compelling leader and why his troops were so

intensely loyal to him. I'm not sure the union would have held if not for the efforts of this one man following the war. For anyone who believes Robert E. Lee was a traitor: hold your judgment until you read this book. Like any other relationship, a nation can be destroyed by a few, but it takes everyone working together to nurture and restore.

This book was well written and contained many sources such as letters Lee had written and second hand information from many who had actually known and were family, friends, and acquaintances. This book related how Lee, a religious and honorable man, was a strong force for good during Reconstruction after the Civil War. Lee emphasized to all his former soldiers that they should do their utmost to become law-abiding American citizens, honor the authority of the United States, and regain their citizenship and voting rights. The book pointed out that Lee opposed secession from the Union, the institution of slavery, and mistreatment of prisoners of war, all things I was not familiar with before reading this book. The book pointed out the reasons that Lee did not accept the offer of command of the Federal Army at the outbreak of the war; he could not oppose his home state, his family and friends, and above all could not lead an invading Army into Virginia. Had politicians on both sides worked towards compromise with real integrity and purpose, Lee thought that war could have been avoided. His organizational and administrative actions as a college president at Washington College were a template for other college presidents that followed him in both the South and the North.

A year or so ago I ran across Charles Bracelen Flood's GRANT - THE LAST YEARS on audio cassette. I was so impressed with it that I got a copy of LEE THE LAST YEAR. It was not until last week that I started reading it. Although I have read a great deal about the Civil War and naturally have come in contact with General Lee, I have to admit that this was my first book devoted exclusively to Lee and it was an excellent choice. Since I am not a "battlefield" scholar of the Civil War, I enjoyed this work because it deals with Lee the man and Lee after the battles were over. It clearly demonstrates how Lee's attitude of healing the wounds between the North and the South did a great deal to do just that - attempt to heal the wounds. If Lee had assumed the same attitude as Jefferson Davis, that is, that he did nothing wrong, the relationship between the North and the South would be different, even today. Flood's writing style is extremely readable. The story flows and holds your interest. I felt after reading this book that I really understood Lee - the man and I now intend to read more about him. I liked Flood's references to Traveler and the discussions about Lee and his family relationship. It's not a long book but full of wonderful information.

For most of my life, I've been a poor student of history, though as I've grown older, my interest has increased, most likely because I've lived much of it. I wish that during my schooling, history could have been presented as it was in this book. I wish it could be so in all history classes now, regardless of the educational level. I read *Gods and Generals*, by Jeff Shaara, and came away with the same feeling. In *Lee: The Last Years*, the story of who this man actually was as a person became clear. He deserves every accolade presented to him. He was a fine man, a fine leader, and a good human being. Today, with so many unfortunate things going on in our country, we need more like him. We need people of his integrity.

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