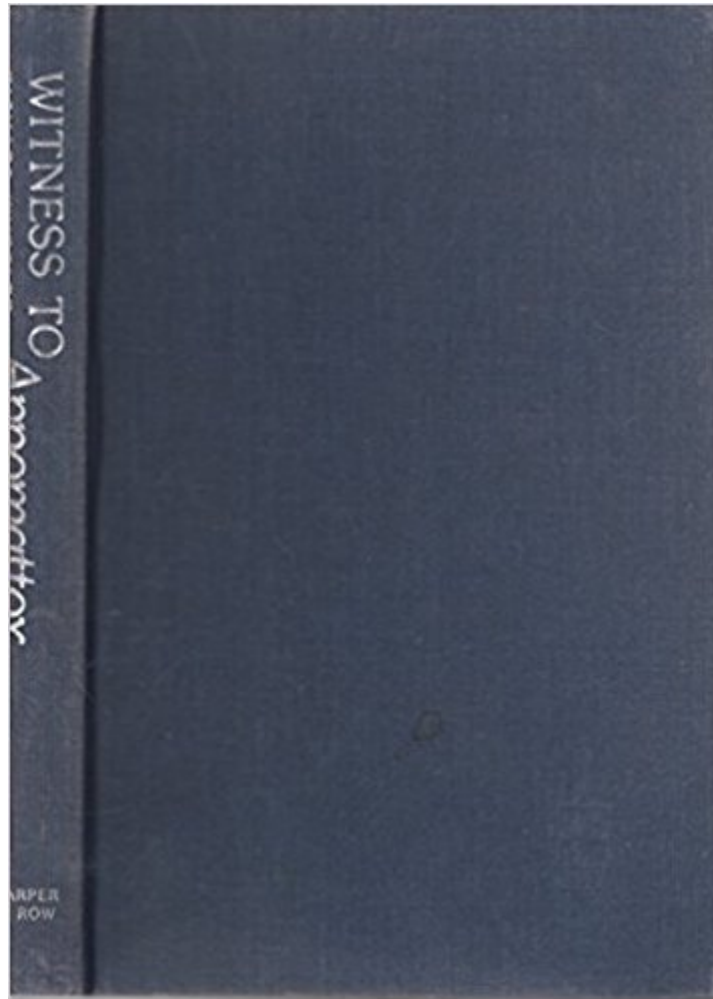




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# Witness To Appomattox



## Synopsis

[This is the Audiobook CD Library Edition in vinyl case.] [Read by Joe Barrett] Noted Civil War historian Richard Wheeler brings this narrative to life with haunting images of the final days of the Civil War: President Lincoln walking through the streets of Richmond, drawing an admiring crowd of blacks; Confederate and Union troops gathering in the fields around Appomattox Court House, mingling with former foes, experiencing disbelief, bitterness, relief. Drawing from numerous eyewitness descriptions, Wheeler effectively recreates a moment of the Civil War that is perhaps unequalled in sheer emotion. This account is as much a tribute to Confederate courage as it is a record of the final triumph of the Union cause. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As he did so successfully in *Witness to Gettysburg* (1987), Wheeler links together the words of participants and eyewitnesses in a moving chronological narrative, this time covering the final three months of the Civil War. The accounts of fighting at Five Forks, the breakthrough at Petersburg, the evacuation of Richmond and the final skirmish at Saylor's Creek all point with solemn inexorability to the haunting surrender ceremony at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. Wheeler does not confine himself to military operations, but provides a rich continuum of anecdotes conveying the growing sense of victory or defeat on the part of soldiers and civilians, along with homely details of daily life as the war winds down: a Confederate officer arguing with a woman who insists that her husband should desert the Stonewall Brigade; General Grant, trying to open negotiations with

General Lee while at the same time trying to rid himself of a sick-headache; President Lincoln, walking the streets of the captured Confederate capital, delivers "a mortal blow to caste," by returning the bow of an elderly black man. Illustrations. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.

In this sequel to his *Witness to Gettysburg* (1987), Wheeler stitches numerous contemporary accounts into a patchwork quilt of events and emotions on the last days of the Civil War. From the trenches near Petersburg, the ballrooms of Richmond, and the desk of Lincoln, Wheeler shows the tangle of contradictions and confusion that included such scenes as ragged soldiers defending a capital where civilian officials wasted energy in intrigues and dancing, and Lincoln stroking three orphan kittens while visiting the Union army about to smash the Confederacy. Wheeler does not impose his own views enough to give order to the many different voices, relying instead on chronology to carry the narrative, but his slice-of-life approach provides ample material for public and college libraries. -- Randall M. Miller. St. Joseph's Univ., Philadelphia Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is one of the best renditions of the fall of Richmond and the subsequent surrender of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia to Grant's Army of the Potomac I have ever read. The author delivers a comprehensive view of operations with significant attention to detail. A must for Civil War buffs.

The last days of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia is a fascinating contrast between the defeated Rebels and the exultant Yankees. This book is the best account that I have read of this final campaign from the standpoint of the participants, both military and civilian. Through the voices of the soldiers we feel the hatred, but also the respect that the two armies had for each other. The Army of Northern Virginia has gone down in history as one of the best armies in military history while the Union Army of the Potomac had a so-so reputation. The retreat to Appomattox saw the proud Army of Northern Virginia fall apart with defeat after defeat. Nothing seemed to work out in supplying the army or in slowing the yankee's pursuit. The yankee pursuit was a grand effort. Through their own voices we see the sheer joy of the yankee soldiers as they sense a chance to get the final blow on their Rebel opponents. You can feel their elation as they pick off Confederate units like a pack of wolves coming in for the kill. Years of frustration at the hands of Robert E. Lee's army end as they push the Confederates and pick up trophies by the dozens.

Yankee General Sheridan parades by the cheering union infantry on the march with 30 some captured Confederate banners flying. Many of the Confederates surrendered on the march or faded away, but when the armies clash the fighting was still brutal and the hatred and loathing between the opponents comes out. The Rebels seemed to fight with a fatalism that seemed to point to a fight to the death. Surrounded at Appomattox, you fear a bloodbath will occur, then we see some remarkable leadership emerge from both Robert E. Lee and U.S. Grant that went far in reuniting the country.

Witness to Appomattox is an important Civil War book, told in an unusual style, relying almost exclusively on first hand accounts. The author provides some context, sets the time and place, then lets the eye-witnesses tell their tales. In a few places the accounts are edited if facts can not be independently verified. All in all good fun, listening to the eloquent, descriptive, and verbose language of that era. The stories involving Lincoln are priceless, as he deals with the immense political and military issues incumbent on the last days of the Civil War. Lincoln and a few others show up in Richmond after the fall, with no real guard, and are treated like royalty by the conquered. Important to keep all the dates in context since Lincoln only lived one more week after Richmond fell. Lee and Davis head for the Shenandoah Valley but Federals seem to get there first, resulting in the end that was expected since the loss at Gettysburg three long years earlier. The hardships of the siege of Richmond are relived with good accounts. Many today have forgotten that it was the Confederates who started the fires in Richmond to slow the Federals and avoid their stores being transferred. Davis' family evacuates Richmond after Lee indicates the city will fall that night.

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