

Robert E. Lee-An American Hero

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Is our nation's history taught in public schools?

Do young people still hear stories about George Washington, Booker T. Washington and Robert E. Lee? There was a time when schools and businesses closed in respect for the birthday of one of the South's favorite sons---Robert E. Lee.

Today, sadly, Lee's birthday is not included on many calendars.

Robert E. Lee, a man whose military tactics have been studied world wide, was an American soldier, educator, Christian gentlemen, husband and father. Many include Lee as among the top 10 of the greatest American's who ever lived.

Lee loved his country and supported the United States Constitution.

General Robert E. Lee said, "All the South has ever desired was that the Union, as established by our forefathers, should be preserved, and that the government, as originally organized, should be administered in purity and truth."

It was once said that "A land without memories is a people without liberty."

A birthday tribute to General Lee will be held in Atlanta, Georgia on Thursday, January, 19, 2006. This the 199th birthday of Robert E. Lee will begin with a parade at 11:00AM to the Georgia state capitol in Atlanta. At 11:30AM a memorial will be held inside the state capitol building. This is the 18th year the Georgia Division Sons of Confederate Veterans has sponsored a memorial to Lee in Atlanta, Georgia. Everyone is invited to attend.

Let America not forget that General Robert E. Lee was born in Stratford, Westmoreland County, Virginia, on January 19, 1807. The winter was cold and fire places were little help for Lee's Mother, Ann Hill (Carter) Lee who suffered from a severe cold.

Ann Lee named her son "Robert Edward" after her two brothers.

Robert E. Lee's love of country undoubtedly came from his close

association with those who had lived during the American Revolution. His Father, "Light Horse" Harry Lee, was a Revolutionary War Hero, Governor of Virginia and member of the United States House of Representatives. Members of his family also signed the Declaration of Independence.

Lee was educated in the schools of Alexandria, Virginia. In 1825, he received an appointment to West Point Military Academy in New York. He graduated in 1829, second in his class and without a single demerit, a record that stands today. Lee was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant of the United States Engineer Corps. He served on engineering projects in Georgia, Virginia and New York.

Robert E. Lee wed Mary Anna Randolph Custis in June 1831. Robert and Mary had grown up together. Mary was the daughter of George Washington Parke Custis, the grandson of Martha Washington and adopted son of George Washington.

Mary was an only child; therefore, she inherited Arlington House, located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., where she and Robert E. Lee raised seven children.

In 1836, Lee was appointed to first Lieutenant. In 1838, with the rank of Captain, Lee fought in the Mexican War. His service in this war began under General Wool but he was reassigned to the staff of General Winfield Scott. General Scott would write that Lee was "the best soldier I ever saw in the field."

In 1852, Lee was appointed Superintendent of West Point.

President-to-be Abraham Lincoln offered command of the Union Army to Lee in 1861, but he refused. In A letter to his sister on April 20, 1861, Robert E. Lee said, "With all my devotion to the Union and the feeling of loyalty and duty as an American citizen, I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home. I therefore have resigned my commission in the army and save in defense of my native state, with the sincere hope that my poor services may never be needed.

General Lee and his family left "Arlington House" at the beginning of the War Between the States. Lee served as advisor to President Jefferson Davis, then commanded the legendary Army of Northern Virginia.

After four terrible years of death and destruction, General Robert E. Lee met General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia on April 9, 1865, that ended their battles.

Lee was called Marse Robert, Uncle Robert and Marble Man. He was loved by the people of the South and adopted by folks from the North.

Lee was a man of honor, proud of his name and heritage. After the War Between the States, he was offered \$50,000 for the use of his name. His reply was: "Sirs, my name is the heritage of my parents. It is all I have and it is not for sale." His refusal to this offer came at a time when he had nothing.

In the fall of 1865, Lee was offered and accepted the president of troubled Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. The school later was renamed Washington and Lee College in his honor.

General Robert E. Lee died of a heart attack at his home at Washington College at 9:30 on the morning of October 12, 1870. His last words were "Strike the Tent."

Robert E. Lee is buried at his college's Lee Chapel near his family and favorite horse "Traveller." A memorial service is planned there on Saturday, January 14, 2006, at noon and is open and free to the public.

A prolific writer, Lee wrote his most famous quote to his son Custis in 1852: "Duty is the sublimest word in our language."

Lest We Forget our American Heritage!