

Volume 19

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**A House Divided: (102) The Collapse
of the Confederacy – IV**

Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Robert E. Lee had known it would come to this. He told Jubal Early that a siege was disastrous and would doom his army to defeat. His lines were paper-thin around Petersburg and every day Yankee

strength proved increasingly irresistible. Yet in the weeks of early spring 1865, he dreamed of a breakout, of joining Joseph Johnston in North Carolina and of a last campaign, first against Sherman, and then against Grant, whom he hoped he could give the slip.

Attacks on Fort Stedman on March 25th and fighting at Five Forks on April 1st served only to shear his army of 20% of its fighting capacity. He had to get out and on Sunday, April 2nd he sent word to President Davis that he could no longer hold the line and Richmond should be evacuated. Davis and the government quickly fled the city. Absent any recognized authority, the capitol of the Confederacy

descended into chaos. Looting and flames soon consumed its streets.

The next day witnessed one of the most remarkable scenes in the years of war. While Richmond's whites hid behind their curtains, the tall rangy figure of Abraham Lincoln walked the streets of the seat of rebellion. He sat in President Davis' chair and toured the capitol. All around him freed slaves celebrated their liberation. "Bless the Lord. The Messiah! I knowed him as soon as I seed him. He's in my heart four long years. Come to free his children from bondage, glory hallelujah." "You are free," he said, "free as air." "I know I am free," one answered, "for I am seen

**Father Abraham and felt him.” Next
time: Appomattox.**

**At the University of Richmond’s
School of Professional and Continuing
Studies, I’m Dan Roberts.**

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