

## **Episode 237: Aftermath of the Civil War**

### **Week of April 19-April 25, 1865**

At 2 pm on April 19, 1865 a long and somber procession left the White House and moved slowly down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. As bells tolled and drums beat, the body of Abraham Lincoln was pulled by six grey horses and was carried to the rotunda of the Capitol. Only six weeks earlier Lincoln had given his second inaugural address in the same room. He had lived long enough to see the Civil War's final act, but had been struck down by an assassin's bullet.

On the following day, Lincoln's body was placed on a train that would pass through a large part of a grateful and mourning nation. Passing through Baltimore, the train would travel through Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio and Indiana before arriving in Springfield, Illinois where Lincoln was buried on May 4, 1865.

As Lincoln's funeral train moved across the country, his assassin continued to be on the loose. John Wilkes Booth hid in the Maryland woods until April 23 when he was able to cross into Virginia. Reading newspapers, Booth was dismayed to find that the nation condemned him for his act. Union soldiers pursued Booth into Caroline County where he was killed by a bullet in the neck on April 26. Four of his alleged conspirators were rounded up and executed at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C. on July 7, 1865.

As the nation continued to deal with the reality of Lincoln's death and the war coming to an end, significant events continued to play out as loose ends were wrapped up. On April 26, Joseph Johnston officially surrendered his Confederate forces to William Tecumseh Sherman in North Carolina, effectively ending the war in the Eastern theatre. Jefferson Davis was captured in Georgia on May 10 and imprisoned for two years. Edmund Ruffin, the rabid Southerner who had helped ignite the war, took his own life on June 18. Confederate General Kirby Smith signed surrender terms for his Army of the Trans-Mississippi on June 2 in Galveston, officially ending the land war. The last Confederate surrender occurred in November of 1865 when the *C.S.S. Shenandoah* surrendered in Liverpool, England. A tragic event occurred on April 27, the day after Johnston's surrender in North Carolina and Booth's death in Virginia. The *S.S. Sultana*, a Mississippi River steamboat, exploded, killing almost 2,000 recently released Union prisoners.

To the extent possible, life began to return to normal. On April 29, 1865, most Confederate ports were reopened to commerce and the nation worked on the difficult task of becoming one again. In some ways the crucible of the war strengthened the country and by fifty years after the war the United States was the most powerful nation on the planet. Still, some of the issues that led to war remain unresolved today as witnessed by events in Ferguson, Missouri and elsewhere.

This episode brings to a close my part of the podcast series "That a Nation Might Live". During the almost five years we have been recording these shows we have certainly felt the rhythms of

the war and at times the weariness of the soldiers. We certainly hope that you have enjoyed the series and that the series might live as a resource for those in the future who want to explore the war's timeline on a weekly basis. On behalf of my co-hosts David Coles and Jim Jordan, thank you for being part of the series with us.