

Grant's chair



Affidavit showing the authenticity of the chair on the previous page

Copy of affidavit sent with "Chair," the original of which is now in W. W. Blackmar's safe.

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA, July 25, 1893.

This affidavit is made to accompany and make certain the identity of the "Grant Chair," which I have this day presented to Gen'l W. W. Blackmar.

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA, August 10, 1893.

Then personally appeared before me, a Clerk of Court, duly qualified, Henry Capehart, and being duly sworn deposes and says:—

That he was at the end of the War of the Rebellion, a Brevet Major-General in command of the Third Brigade of Gen'l G. A. Custer's division of Gen'l Phil Sheridan's Cavalry Corps. That his brigade took an active part in all the battles immediately preceding, leading up to, and including the surrender of Gen'l Lee at Appomattox Court House, including the battles of Dinwiddie Court House, Five Forks, Sailors' Run, and the all-night fight for the possession of the highway to Lynchburg, the gaining and holding of which cut off Lee's further retreat and resulted in his surrender the next day, April 9, 1865.

That he was present with other officers near the house of Wilmer McLean when Gen'l U. S. Grant dictated, and, with Gen'l R. E. Lee, signed, the articles of Capitulation, resulting in the surrender of the Confederate forces, thus ending the War of the Rebellion. That when Grant and Lee left the house, some one suggested that the furniture in the "Surrender Room" would be very valuable as relics, and Gen'l Sheridan immediately gave McLean twenty dollars (\$20) in gold for the center-table on which the articles of surrender were signed, and presented it to Gen'l Custer. That he, Gen'l Capehart, gave McLean ten dollars (\$10) for the old office armchair in which Gen'l Grant sat; Gen'l Whitaker, twenty dollars (\$20) for the better cane chair in which Gen'l Lee sat; the staff of Gen'l Ord paid one hundred dollars (\$100) for the marble-top table on which the stipulations were written out, and presented it to Gen'l Ord; Gen'l Sheridan had the pen, and his then Ass't Adj.-Gen'l the ink-stand used on this occasion.

That he, Capehart, then handed the "Grant Chair" to one of his staff officers, Capt. Wilmon W. Blackmar, then Provost Marshal of his brigade, who was well mounted and a fine horseman, and he took it before him on his horse to our lines, and placed it in our headquarter wagon. That this "Grant Chair" has been in his, Capehart's, possession ever since the said ninth day of April, 1865, until the 25th day of July, 1893, when it was presented by deponent to his dear old friend and gallant comrade, Gen'l Wilmon W. Blackmar, of Boston, as a token of their many years of intimate and loving friendship born, nourished, and cemented amid the trying and thrilling scenes incident to the battles, marches, and bivouacs of Phil Sheridan's cavalry, when they rode side by side, and shared, each with the other, food and blanket.

H. CAPEHART.

STATE OF DAKOTA, } FARGO, August 10, 1893. Subscribed to
County of Cass. } and sworn before me,

WALTER W. SMITH,

Clerk of District Court, Cass Co., No. Dakota.

Replica of Grant's chair in the McLean parlor



“Generals Grant and Lee were scarcely gone from the house when the craze for mementoes of the occasion seemed to spread among officers and privates. Large sums were offered Major Wilmer S. McLean for the chairs in which the generals sat during the meeting- for the tables on which the writing was done- for substantially every article of furniture. There were two tables in the room. On one of these the minutes of the meeting were first made out. This table Gen. Custer obtained for twenty five dollars, and his widow still has it in her possession. The other table was the one at which Grant and Lee sat when they affixed their signatures to the final notes which completed the surrender. This table Gen. Ord purchased for fifty dollars; and it is still in possession of Mrs. Ord. There has been much sharp contention between the families of these distinguished officers, as to which of them owned the celebrated table used on the day of the surrender.

Numerous offers were made for the chairs in which Grant and Lee sat, but Major McLean steadily refused to part with them. It seems that a couple of cavalry officers, finding they could not obtain the chairs by any other means, seized them by force and carried them away. They tried to induce McLean to accept pay for them; but he flung the ‘greenbacks’ on the floor indignantly. Sometime after the chairs were carried off a cavalryman rode up, thrust a ten dollar ‘greenback’ into McLean’s hands, and exclaimed as he rode away: “This is for the Major’s chair.” Search was made for the chairs, and the officers who confiscated them, but neither could be found.”

An excerpt from *Three Years with Grant as Recalled by war*
Correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader edited by Benjamin P. Thomas
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“Mr. McLean had been charging about in a manner which indicated that the excitement was shaking his nervous system to its center; but his real trials did not begin until the departure of the chief actors in the surrender. Then relic-hunters charged down upon the manor-house, and began to bargain for the numerous pieces of furniture. Sheridan paid the proprietor twenty dollars in gold for the table on which General Grant wrote the terms of surrender, for the purpose of presenting it to Mrs. Custer, and handed it over to her dashing husband, who galloped off to camp bearing it upon his shoulder. Ord paid forty dollars for the table at which Lee sat, and afterward presented it to Mrs. Grant, who modestly declined it, and insisted that Mrs. Ord should become its possessor. General Sharpe paid ten dollars for the pair of brass candlesticks; Colonel Sheridan, the general’s brother, secured the stone inkstand; and General Capehart the chair in which Grant sat, which he gave not long before his death to Captain Wilmon W. Blackmar of Boston. Captain O’Farrell of Hartford became the possessor of the chair in which Lee sat. A child’s doll was found in the room, which the younger officers tossed from one to the other, and called the “silent witness.” This toy was taken possession of by Colonel Moore of Sheridan’s staff, and is now owned by his son. Bargains were at once struck for nearly

all the articles in the room; and it is even said that some mementos were carried off for which no coin of the republic was ever exchanged."

An excerpt from Campaigning With Grant by
Horace Porter

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"As soon as Grant left the McLean House, a souvenir craze swept over the Federal Officers who were present at the surrender. Maj. Gen. P.H. Sheridan is supposed to have paid \$20.00 in gold for the table on which Grant drafted the terms of surrender. It is said that a "spirited auction" was held, and that Sheridan, given first choice, paid two ten dollar gold pieces for the table. . .

. . . Maj. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord is supposed to have paid \$40.00 for the table with the marble top. . .

. . . Other officers either appropriated or purchased virtually all of the furnishing in the McLean parlor. Even little "Lula" McLean's rag doll, was carried away by Sheridan's aide-de-camp, Lt. Col. Thomas W.C. Moore, although it is said that a Union soldier tried to console her with a French china doll.

By the time that Matthew Brady and his assistant arrived from Petersburg there was little in the surrender room to photograph but emptiness. Souvenir hunters had carried away practically everything.

Members of the McLean family have denied indignantly that any kind of sale took place and have said that the Union officers simply plundered McLean's home and stole what they wanted. They have resented the statement of Mrs. George A. Custer that McLean was glad to sell his furniture, and have considered the conduct of the Federal officers especially reprehensive after McLean graciously permitted the conference to be held in his home."

An excerpt from Biography of Wilmer McLean by
Frank P. Cauble
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