



Text Version of Audio Story: Civil War

It's been called *The War Between the States*, *The Great Rebellion*, *The War to Preserve the Union*. Today, we pretty much have settled on calling it *The Civil War*.

It was an incredibly difficult time in both the North and the South. At the Battle of Gettysburg, the citizens of that little town cleaned up the aftermath. In the heat of the summer, they dug mass graves to bury thousands and thousands of rotting corpses. It is said that the streams and creeks ran pure red with blood. Families came from all over to dig up those graves in search of loved ones to take back home. It was near impossible to find the body that they were looking for, and most, if not all, just ended up settling to take the body of a stranger home to ... to represent their son, or brother or father in the local cemetery. Most of the bodies of the fallen soldiers still remain committed to the earth in the battlefields where they fell.

Historians now look back and view that dark part of American history with fascination. That period of time is responsible for so many stories and folklore.

For instance, General Robert E. Lee. Did you know that the general, in spite of the fact that he was the commander of the Confederate forces, was vehemently opposed to slavery? He accepted his post as general because, as he put it, "*I had a higher calling to Virginia.*" He very much believed in a state's right to govern itself.

Robert E. Lee was an animal lover and took a pet chicken with him everywhere. One day, when the Confederate camp was preparing to pull up stakes and march, everything suddenly ground to a halt. General Lee's chicken was missing. The order went out to cease all operations and look for the critter. It was soon found, and the men returned to the work of packing up the camp.

Bobby Lee, as he was affectionately called by his men, remains the most loved general in American history. Northerners and southerners both agree that the general was a man of integrity and high moral value. He spoke with kindness and respect to all people, regardless of their station in life.

But by far, the most interesting Civil War story that I've come across took place in 1862 at Harrison's Landing, Virginia. It had been another day of bloody fighting between the North and the South. Engagement had halted for the day, as

darkness was falling. There was a stretch of land dividing the Yank and Rebel camps. In the Union camp, the men were being kept awake by the moaning and cries of a Confederate boy who lay wounded in the fields separating the two encampments.

Finally, unable to take it anymore, a Northern captain crawled out to the poor soldier and dragged him back to the camp for medical attention. Unfortunately, the boy died in the process. A lantern was lit to examine the enemy soldier, and to the captain's tremendous horror and dismay, he found the body to be that of his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. He enlisted in the Southern cause because all his friends were in, and he didn't want to be left behind.

The father arranged a field service to bury his son. The bugler was instructed to play a series of musical notes that the boy had scratched out on a piece of paper and tucked away in his pocket. Those notes, written by that young man and played at his gravesite that day in 1862, have become the haunting bugle cry we know today as *Taps*.

I'm the American Storyteller.