

## Historic Incident at Appomattox Described Vividly in War Book

One of the most interesting of recent Confederate War books, "An End to Valor," by Philip Van Doren Stern gives a dramatic picture of the last moments of the war at Appomattox and the historic role played by a Columbia officer, Captain Robert M. Sims.

According to the book which was published last year by Houghton Mifflin Company, the rarest thing in the Confederate Army at that time was a clean white piece of cloth. Thus it was that at the end, it was necessary to employ a white towel as a flag of truce and it was carried by Captain Sims, then on Longstreet's staff.

According to the book he had to ride past a field where Gary's South Carolina cavalymen were waiting, but they did not know what he was about to do, because he did not display the flag

until he got close to the Union lines. Then he held it up and rode forward at a gallop. He was received by a Lieutenant Colonel Whitaker, who took him to Custer. Sims told Custer that he had come to ask him "for a suspension of hostilities until General Lee can be heard from," and that Lee was already on his way to meet Grant. Custer let Sims return to the Confederate lines with Whitaker and an unnamed major accompanying him. On the way, Whitaker is quoted as, asking for the towel as a souvenir of the war, and Sims turned on him angrily, saying: "I'll see you in hell first; it is humiliating enough to have had to carry it and exhibit it, but I'm not going to let you preserve it as a monument of our defeat."

This same towel was used again when another officer was sent out to stop the firing in a different part of the field. It eventually wound up as a Union war souvenir anyway, and came into the possession of Mrs. Custer.

The flag which was a new re-bordered towel had been obtained by Captain Sims in Richmond a few days before at the inflated price of \$20. It is now in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

Colonel Sims was the uncle of Mrs. George Davis and Mrs. Alfred Gaillard, and kinsmen in this area include Mrs. Lucia Murchison, and Mrs. Sarah Welch Pitts of Whitmire and Columbia and her son, James Sims Welch Pitts, now of Connecticut.

Another Sims' kinsman is Henry Upson Sims of Birmingham, a former president of the American Bar Association, and Miss Mary Wilson Gee of Spartanburg.

The State:

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### UDC chapter dedicates marker

*Evening Herald: Apr. 3, 1971*

A marker at the site of Capt. Robert Moorman Sims on East White St. was erected recently by the Beulah Meredith Chapter, UDC. Mrs. G. W. Mendenhall

(wearing scarf) read the dedication prayer at the noon gathering Thursday. To her right is Mrs. M. D. King, director of the Cherokee District, who participated on the

dedication program along with Mrs. J. C. Sims, president of the chapter. (Photo by Lewis Murray)