

# The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.  
Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Sixty-Five

## Robert E. Lee

### LESSON IDEA

To show that General Robert E. Lee was more than the commander of the Confederate Army. He was a man of greatness who had deep personal convictions and a firm belief in the sovereignty of the individual states.

### PREPARATION

Review the two previous lessons for an understanding of the background of the War Between the States.

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**A**N ADMIRER of Robert E. Lee once said of him: "He was a Caesar without his ambition; a Frederick without his tyranny; a Napoleon without his selfishness and a Washington without his reward." What was there about this man that inspired such dynamic and heroic comparisons? What was there about him that both friend and foe respected?

Perhaps it was Lee's honesty that drew men and women to him; perhaps it was his stern discipline and military brilliance balanced by humbleness and compassion.

No man is perfect, of course, and Lee was no exception, but occasionally we meet a man whose life is so extraordinary that we feel compelled to try to imitate it. The men and women who knew Robert E. Lee felt him to be such a man. Have you ever met a person you admired so much you wished to be like him? What did you admire about this individual? [*Encourage discussion.*]

When Lee was eleven, his father died, leaving a sickly wife and five children to fend for themselves. Lee's brothers were away from home, his

older sister was too frail to be of much help with chores, and his other sister too young.

So, at the age of eleven, when other companions were enjoying the carefree days of boyhood, Robert E. Lee was forced to accept the responsibilities of an adult — the head of a large household.

Although he must have had to give up many things, he never gave up his dream of becoming a professional soldier like his father, "Light Horse" Harry Lee, who had fought side by side with Washington in the Revolutionary War. Robert E. Lee's goal was to attend West Point, and to achieve it, he knew he had to study diligently. Somehow, amid the pressing duties of home and family, the determined young man also found time for long hours of study. Benjamin Hallowell, his instructor at school, was amazed at Lee's self-discipline and his maturity. "He was never behind time at his studies," said Hallowell; "never failed in a single recitation; was perfectly observant of the rules and regulations of the institution; was gentlemanly, unobtrusive and respectful in all his deportment to teachers and his fellow students."

The long hours of study paid off. Lee was admitted to West Point Military Academy in 1825, and graduated four years later with the second highest marks in his class. His popularity as a cadet was as well remembered as his seriousness as a student. Years later a schoolmate was to recall fondly: "There was always about him a dignity which repelled improper familiarity, and yet a genial courtesy and joyous humor, often passing into and creating delightful merriment, that rendered him a charming companion. . . . The posses-

