

Statue of Robert E. Lee by Rudolph Evans, 1931, State Artwork Collection, Library of Virginia



"PROFOUNDLY IMPRESSED WITH THE SOLEMNITY OF THE OCCASION, FOR WHICH I MUST SAY I WAS NOT PREPARED, I ACCEPT THE POSITION ASSIGNED ME BY YOUR PARLIAMENT. I WOULD HAVE MUCH PREFERRED HAD YOUR CHOICE FALLEN ON AN ABLER MAN. TRUSTING IN ALMIGHTY GOD, AN APPROVING CONSCIENCE, AND THE AID OF MY FELLOW-CITIZENS, I DEVOTE MYSELF TO THE SERVICE OF MY NATIVE STATE, IN WHOSE BEHALF ALONE WILL I EVER AGAIN DRAW MY SWORD."