

# Virginia's best son called Leesylvania ho

Little history has been written, until recent years, about Eastern Prince William's most historic plantation, Leesylvania, located at Woodbridge between Neabsco and Powell creeks.

Doing much to bring Leesylvania—the ancestral plantation of Robert E. Lee's branch of the Lee family—its long overdue recognition is a woman who can call Leesylvania her ancestral home, too.

She is Eleanor Lee Templeman of Arlington, great-great-granddaughter of Richard Bland Lee, first Congressman representing Northern Virginia.

Leesylvania Plantation is featured prominently in her book, *Arlington Heritage*, which has enjoyed six printings since it first came out in 1959.

Mrs. Templeman's ancestor, Richard Lee, was born at Leesylvania in 1761 and was to become the first Congressman representing Northern Virginia in 1789. He was one of eight children born there, many of whom also became Virginia's most illustrious sons.

The others were Light Horse Harry (Henry III) Lee, father of Robert E. Lee and a cavalry colonel in the Revolution and Governor of Virginia in 1791; Charles Lee, George Washington's per-

sonal attorney and Attorney General of the United States in 1795; and Edmund Jennings Lee, Mayor of Alexandria in 1814.

Mrs. Templeman, reached at her Arlington home, said that few know of the history of Leesylvania since it burned in the 1790's.

"I think it must have looked much like Rippon Lodge does," said Mrs. Templeman. "It was typical of the colonial country homes of the plantations."

Mrs. Templeman dismissed the generally said notion that bricks were brought over from England to ballast the ships.

"We had better clay here in Virginia than they did in England," said Mrs. Templeman. "Besides they needed other things more at the time than to take up the space with bricks," she added. "Every Virginia home had their own means for making bricks" right on the plantation.

She said she had been to the Leesylvania site a number of times and has pieces of China, handwrought nails and a big lock which had come from the mansion.

All that remains at the site are traces of the foundations at the crest of the ridge overlooking the Potomac. Leesylvania is surrounded by water on three sides and Mrs. Templeman hopes it will one

day become a park so the historic site can be preserved. She thought that this was to be a reality when the peninsula was purchased in 1957 by the Freestone Holding Co., but they since sold the property and about all that remains are the crumbling swimming pools that were once part of what was to have been a playland.

On the moss-covered knoll at the end of the one-time garden overlooking Neabsco Bay, are the graves of General Lee's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lee II. Henry Lee brought his bride, Lucy Grymes, to Leesylvania after they were married on Dec. 29 at Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg. Lucy Grymes was the auburn-haired "Lowland Beauty" who George Washington had unsuccessfully wooed.

Leesylvania had been in the Lee family for four generations but it wasn't until 90 years later that a Lee member was to live there when Henry Lee II inherited Leesylvania upon his father's death in 1747.

Henry Lee was presiding Justice of Prince William County, Lieutenant of the Prince William militia and member of the House of Burgesses and also represented the county in the Virginia Revolutionary

Conventions. He died in 1787, followed five years later by Lucy Lee.

Daffodils still bloom over their graves, but their headstones were stolen over a century ago. The headstones later turned up at a house across Route 1 (no longer standing) where they served as stepping stones, said Mrs. Templeman.

What prompted Mrs. Templeman into her historical research were family pieces which are still in her possession and came from Leesylvania. They are a spinning wheel and sewing box which had been used by Lucy Grymes Lee at Leesylvania; and a spirit lamp from Sully, which was the home of Lucy Lee's son, Richard Bland Lee.

Mrs. Templeman is a member of the Society of the Lees of Virginia (there are 500 members) and is a member of the National Society of Colonial Dames.

She said the Lees were disturbed two years ago when the Fairfax tombstones were illegally removed from the graveyard established by the Lee family. She said even the ground also had been disturbed.

"The stones should have never been removed without our permission but the elderly man who did it, did it in complete innocence," she

said. remove site in

Mrs. that t about

"It c said.

The c family half-w toward

stands remind

Also, founda

The F down in

dates mansio

pleman

Not the ex where the Po which operat

War.

PWC - Historic Sites  
(Leesylvania)

Weem-Botts Museum  
Collection

POTOMAC NEWS, Friday, January 18, 1974, B-1

# ons home



Eleanor Templeman with spinning wheel from Leesylvania

said. The stones were removed to the Fairfax burial site in Leesburg.

Mrs. Templeton stressed that there are strong laws about removing tombstones.

"It carries a stiff fine," she said.

The chimney of the Fairfax family mansion, which was half-way down the slope toward Freestone Point, still stands today — a stark reminder of the days gone by. Also, seen today are the foundations of the bank-barn. The Fairfax home burned down in 1910 and possibly predates the Leesylvania mansion, said Mrs. Templeman.

Another historic site is at the extreme point of land, where Neabsco Creek enters the Potomac. It is a cliff upon which a Confederate fort operated during the Civil War.



Lee Graveyard — no tombstones now

Y  
r  
a  
D  
l  
i  
n  
s  
a



p  
m  
d  
d  
LL  
fo  
Al  
re  
sta  
to  
ha  
far  
sa  
ab  
th  
l  
sit  
re  
sa

o  
o

Chimney stands alone at Fairfax home