

# THE SOCIETY OF THE LEES OF VIRGINIA

*Descendants of Richard Lee, the Emigrant*

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Dec. 12, 1972

Mr. Edward A. Chappell  
Assistant Archeologist  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Comm.  
Ninth St. State Office Bldg.  
Richmond, Va.

Dear Mr. Chappell:

It was very good to hear from you, and to know of your interest in Leesylvania. For over two years, I have been in communication with Mr. R. O. Bridges, Chairman of the Prince William County Historical Commission (Box 439, Manassas 22110) and Mr. Ray M. Vaden, Director of the County's Park and Recreation Authority (Co. Adm. Bldg., Manassas). They have been to my home to see my extensive file on Leesylvania, and I have furnished them with a marked copy of the U.S. Geological Survey map.

The xerox of a portion of that map, which you enclosed, is very erroneously marked, in regard to the historical sites. I am returning it herewith; the correct sites marked thereon. The site which you show as the Fairfax home, where the power line crosses, is not historical. There was a barn there, with perhaps some smaller farm buildings, but of a later period possibly. There may have been slave quarters nearby.

The Leesylvania home, built by Henry Lee II about 1753, at the time of his marriage to Lucy Grymes when they came to reside there, stood on the crest of a high ridge from which there must have been a fine view of the river before the present forest grew up. It was very probably similar in architecture to Rippon Lodge; typical of the Virginia colonial farm residence. It burned circa 1790. I have found the depression of the cellar site, and an old iron lock of the proper vintage. Nearly is a rose bush on the south side. In the winter before the weeds and foliage obscure them, one can find to the northwest slope from the house, Spanish bayonette and the old-fashioned double daffodils of Lucy's garden. They lead downhill to another slight ridge about 200 yards north-northwest to the Lee cemetery. In the 1850's, the Fairfax burials were there although the Lee stones had been stolen for construction of steps in a house, since demolished, at Cherry Hill across U. S. 1. About three years ago, an old gentleman who claims kinship to the Fairfax family had the stones removed to Union Cemetery in Leesburg. About 1959 I took the photograph of the stones, which you will see in ARLINGTON HERITAGE.

Our Society is very anxious to mark the burial ground, in a similar fashion to that of our emigrant ancestor near Kilmarnock; see picture on page 39. The constant litigation and confusion as to the future of the Leesylvania estate has prevented us being able to do so.

What you marked as the Leesylvania site, there is nothing. I believe that you intended it for the site where foundations and a chimney remain, but they are on the down-hill, east side of a dirt road which shows on my map, but not on yours (maybe a later edition?), so I have marked the road and the site. Just to the south of the house site is a foundation of a bank-barn. The Fairfax House burned in 1920, and I have a photograph of the foundations taken just after the fire by Cazenove G. Lee.

To go back up the hill; a road which was cut through the ridge about 18 years ago has destroyed foundations of what was probably the Leesylvania detached kitchen with brick chimney. I have taken a few iron artifacts and bricks from the site, exposed by the cut.

Our hope is that the whole area east of the railroad will become a historic and recreational park for Prince William County. Because of the nebulous state of politics in that county, nothing of a definite nature yet. The County can't afford to buy the land, but the hope is that it will follow Loudoun County in joining the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, in which case the latter may be able to finance the deal; but it naturally can't unless Pr. Wm. Co. joins. It is fortunate that all the historical sites are in that one area. As you know, big realtors (Cafritz?) are interested in developing the property, which would ruin it; but the present owners of the entire tract may be more willing to split the acreage if they get a good price for the property west of the railroad, and then place the beautiful wooded hilly portion within the financing as above described.

As you know, the winter is the time for you to check these sites, which are heavily wooded and almost impossible to find when the leaves come out. I would be glad to meet you there sometime if you wish. Keep your fingers crossed that they will be saved! Of course the Lee descendant (I'm one) technically and legally own the cemetery site; but we don't want it squashed between condominium apartments! Nor the home sites lost!

Most sincerely,

*Eleanor Lee Templar*