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Remembering the Leesylv

By ANN HOLIDAY

Leesylvania matches Stratford in historical importance, some 40 Prince William officials and people interested in the county's history were told Monday by a descendant of Henry (Light Horse Harry) Lee.

At the dedication of a monument near Lee's birthplace at Leesylvania, Eleanor Lee Templeman, author and historian of the Lee Society, said two sons of Stratford signed the Declaration of Independence but a son of Leesylvania played a very important part in achieving that independence.

The obelisk-shaped monument on the grounds of the Garfield County Administration Building, part of the 3,000-acre plantation first patented in 1658, lists Lee's achievements as a cavalry commander, member of the Continental Congress, governor of Virginia, United States Congressman and father of Gen. Robert E. Lee of the Confederate state army.

Because Harry Lee lived at Stratford and Robert E. Lee was born there, historians and even National Geographic Magazine have assumed that he was of the Stratford branch of the Lee family, Mrs. Templeman said.

Harry Lee married his second cousin, Matilda, granddaughter of the builder of Stratford, and lived there both with Matilda and, after her death, with his second wife, Ann Hill Carter.

Matilda's son inherited Stratford Plantation, and when he came of age his father turned the estate over to him and took his second family to Alexandria. Young Robert was 3½ then, Mrs. Templeman said.

As cars whizzed by on U.S. 1, which cuts through the land which was once Leesylvania, Mrs. Templeman added comments on the personality and character of Light Horse Harry Lee.

His short term in debtor's prison has caused him to be branded an irresponsible spendthrift, Mrs. Templeman said, when actually his financial downfall was due to his "great faith in the future expansion of our nation and its westward commerce, which prompted him to overinvest in lands toward the frontier."

Harry Lee was chosen by the officials of Alexandria to draft

MEMORIAL DEDICATION — Eleanor Lee Templeman tells the personal side of Henry (Light Horse Harry) Lee at a dedication of a monument to Lee at the Garfield Administration Building, Monday. (Staff photo by Kevin Manning)

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their farewell to Gen. George Washington when he left to assume the duties of the presidency. Mrs. Templeman said this was because of their high respect for Lee and the fact that he was the new president's closest friend.

In attempting to protect the home of a friend who was a newspaper publisher, Mrs. Templeman said, Lee and a Revolutionary veteran, a Gen. Lingan, were attacked by a mob. Lingan was killed and Lee left for dead.

He never recovered from his injuries. His physician sent him to the West Indies, but when he realized death was near Lee tried to return home to his wife and children, Mrs. Templeman said. He died in Georgia on the way home.

In dedicating the monument, Dumfries Supervisor Andrew Donnelly called on Prince William residents to find in Lee's life a spirit of endeavor, "that we may apply a measure of that spirit in our life in Prince William County."

The dedication, held under a

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Marker dedicated

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cool, cloudy Memorial Day sky, had been postponed from Jan. 29, which, according to master of ceremonies Don Curtis, was the coldest day in the history of the country.

State Sen. Charles J. Colgan read a letter to the Prince William Historic Commission from Gov. Mills E. Godwin, announcing that the Commission of Outdoor Recreation and Division of Parks should complete their study of Leesylvania as a possible state park by the end of the year.

Helen Tobey led the crowd in singing "America," and Boy Scout Troop 1392 of Godwin School posted the colors.

Curtis thanked Tommye Burton, chairman of the Historical Commission, for her work toward the dedication. Mrs. Burton was unable to attend. He also mentioned Sandra Kinsey, county Bicentennial coordinator; John Lee, county purchasing agent, who attracted a "fantastic low bid" on the monument; and Ethellyn Dawson, who took charge of refreshments.

A social hour followed inside the building, with punch and cookies served from a table centered with a huge vase of flowers grown by Mrs. Dawson, Nellie Curtis and Hannah Thompson and and arranged by Mrs. Curtis.

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