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## LEESYLVANIA, AND THOSE WHO LIVED THERE

On March 30th, Governor Dalton of Virginia signed a Bill which created LEESYLVANIA STATE PARK. Television, newspapers from coast to coast, and TIME magazine reported the event; but the accent was that it brought out of semi-seclusion, the world's wealthiest man, Daniel K. Ludwig. He flew from New York to Richmond on commercial jet, tourist class, to witness the transfer of this magnificent 485 acre tract from the ownership of his Ludwig-controlled American-Hawaiian Steamship Company to the Commonwealth of Virginia. I quote from the April 10th issue of TIME MAGAZINE:-

Reporter: "I hear you don't give interviews." Subject: "I don't. You have an exception." End of interview. America's last known billionaire, the reclusive Daniel K. Ludwig, 80, who scraped together \$25 at the age of nine to buy a sunken boat and now operates one of the world's largest shipping fleets, made a rare public appearance last week in Richmond... Said Ludwig at the ceremony, "I think the people of Virginia are entitled to one of the nicest possible parks in the United States..."

In a gracious letter which I received from him, he wrote:

"I have always admired the contributions of the Lees to the heritage of Virginia and to our nation. It is good to know that an area so significantly involved with the history of this illustrious family will be preserved always as one of the Commonwealth's great parks."

LEESYLVANIA has remained relatively unknown to the general public, because the Lee home had been destroyed

by fire about 1790. Now, all that remains marking the site are traces of the foundation at the crest of the ridge overlooking the Potomac, surrounded by garden shrubs and plants, gone wild for over two centuries. The graves of the grandparents of Robert E. Lee rest on a moss-covered knoll at the end of the former garden; the tombstones were stolen for house foundations over a century ago.

Fronting on the Potomac River about thirty miles below Washington, the tract is surrounded by water on three sides, between Neabsco and Powell Creeks, just up-river from Quantico Marine Base and the historic old port of Dumfries . A hundred-foot cliff juts over the river at Freestone Point, where the earthworks of a Confederate Battery are fairly well preserved. The rugged hills are covered with diversified forests which include an exceptionally fine grove of native Virginia holly. The recreation potentials of LEESYLVANIA are unlimited.

The original plantation of two thousand acres was patented in 1658 by Gervais Dodson, who shortly conveyed it to Councilor Henry Corbin of Pecatone Plantation in Westmoreland County. He willed it to his daughter, Laetitia, in 1675, the year following her marriage to Richard Lee II, <sup>he was a</sup> son of the emigrant who arrived in Virginia in 1636 and became Clerk of the Quarter Court, Attorney General of Virginia, High Sheriff of York County, Burgess, Secretary of State and member of the Council. The son, Richard II, to complete his education, was sent to England where he graduated from Oxford. When not yet thirty, he became a member of the Council. He was also appointed Naval Officer and Receiver of Customs of the Potomac. When Laetitia died in 1706, the distant plantation was inherited by her son, Henry Lee I, who was then fifteen. When about thirty-two, he married Mary Bland of Williamsburg, and they also remained in Westmoreland County. It was not until after their son, Henry Lee II, inherited the property in 1747 that a member of the Lee family resided on the LEESYLVANIA PLANTATION which had belonged to the family for four generations spanning nearly ninety years. In 1753, young Henry married Lucy Grymes, the "Lowland Beauty" who had been unsuccessfully courted by George Washington. They immediately

reproduced in the book, LEE OF VIRGINIA, 1895, recently republished by the Genealogical Publishing Company of Baltimore.

The second son of Leesylvania was Charles Lee, born in 1758. Unfortunately, he has been confused by some, with his contemporary, General Charles Lee who was court-marshalled for defying Washington's orders at the Battle of Monmouth, which nearly caused American defeat. That man of identical name was a native of England and in no way related to the Virginia family. The Charles Lee of Leesylvania entered Princeton at the age of twelve, receiving his B. A. when seventeen, his M. A. at twenty, and the next year studied law in Philadelphia under Jared Ingersoll, a signer of the Constitution. He was then appointed Naval Officer of the South Potomac (Collector of Customs), a position which he held for ten years, until it was abolished in 1789. On the 2nd of August, 1789, President Washington wrote to Richard Henry Lee, "Mr. Charles Lee will certainly be brought forward as Collector of the Port of Alexandria." That proved to be an accurate forecast. He was also Washington's personal attorney.

Charles Lee leased the Duvall House in Alexandria at 305 Cameron Street (now Frankie Welch's exclusive shop), to which he brought his nineteen year old bride, Anne, daughter of Richard Henry Lee of Stratford, while construction of his own house went forward at the northeast corner of Washington and Princess Streets. (The original house survives, but the Washington Street side is hidden within a three-and-a-half story Victorian shell.)

President Washington appointed Charles Lee as Attorney-General in 1795.

Washington was an unusually good judge of men, and President Adams later confirmed his choice, not only by continuing Mr. Lee as Att'y Gen'l through his administration, but on the 18th Feb'y, 1801, sent his name as one of the 16 new Circuit Judges... \*

The Senate confirmed those appointments just before midnight on Adam's last day of office, which caused them to be known as the "Midnight Judges". Incoming President Jefferson was furious, as he had anticipated making his own appointments. It is said that Adams had offered Charles Lee the appointment as Chief Justice

\*LEE OF VIRGINIA, page 362

twenty years old, through 1781; was a member of the Continental Congress 1786 through 1788; Governor of Virginia 1781 through 1794; and a member of the United States Congress 1799 through 1801. The officials of Alexandria, because of their high regard for him, his gifted pen, coupled with the fact that he was George Washington's closest personal friend, chose him to draft their farewell to him when he left for New York in 1789 to assume the duties of the Presidency. Lee's obituary tribute to Washington in 1799 is familiar to all, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Because Harry Lee resided for some years at Stratford Hall, the birthplace of his son, Robert Edward Lee, many people erroneously assumed that he was of the Stratford branch of the family. The confusion results from the fact that he married his second cousin, Matilda, the granddaughter of Thomas Lee, the builder of Stratford. The young couple resided in her inherited home, and following her death, Harry married her friend, Ann Hill Carter of Shirley Plantation. She came to Stratford as a bride to care for her two step-children, and there to bear her own <sup>children</sup> including Robert. Matilda's son was heir to Stratford, and upon his coming of age, his father turned the estate over to him, and took his second family to Alexandria when young Robert was but three and a half years old.

In 1812, Harry Lee received injuries from a hoodlum mob (in his defense of THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS) which finally led to his death five and a half years later. In a futile attempt to restore his health, his physician sent him to the milder climate of the West Indies. (Recently a suedo-historian wrote that he finally deserted his wife and children and moved to the West Indies). When Lee realized that death was near, he tried to return to his family, but died enroute to Virginia on the 25th of March, 1818, at the Georgia plantation of his former comrade-in-arms, General Greene. In recent years, his remains were brought back to Virginia to rest next to his wife and illustrious son, Robert E. Lee, in the Lee Memorial Chapel in Lexington. The beauty and nobility of the spirit of Harry Lee have been preserved for posterity in the series of inspiring letters which he wrote from the islands to his eldest son, Carter. They are

moved to the plantation in Prince William County, where he served as Presiding Justice, County Lieutenant (head of the County militia), and as a member of the House of Burgesses. He also represented the county in the Virginia Revolutionary Conventions. He died in 1787, followed five years later by his wife. They were buried at the far end of the garden where her daffodils still bloom in the springtime.

As the birthplace of men of prominence in both state and national history, LEESYLVANIA ranks next to STRATFORD. The first son born there (1756) was Henry Lee III, better known as Light-Horse Harry, father of the Confederate General. He has been the victim of some careless historians who did not take the trouble to examine the facts regarding his financial problems which led to two years in Debtor's Prison at Montross. They have erroneously and maliciously branded him as an irresponsible spendthrift, which is very far from the truth. This patriot had never asked for any reimbursement from the government for the thousands of dollars of his patrimony which he spent in 1776 to equip his first cavalry troops with arms, ammunition, uniforms, horses and provisions. They were the "Light Dragoons", equipped with light-weight arms for quick mobility, versus the cavalry units which hauled cannon and heavy equipment; hence his nickname of "Light-Horse Harry". His letters written while imprisoned show no bitterness. He spent those two years in writing his MEMOIRS OF THE WAR IN THE SOUTHERN DEPARTMENT OF THE UNITED STATES. His financial downfall was due to his patriotic contributions plus his great faith in the future expansion of our nation which prompted him to over-invest in lands toward the western frontier, including MATILDAVILLE, the town at the site of his friend George Washington's POTOWMACK CANAL at Great Falls. The ties of affection were very strong in the Lee family, and two of Harry's brothers, Richard Bland and Charles, signed notes for him which they were obliged to meet. Harry made desperate attempts to compensate them for their losses in his behalf by deeding to them various holdings and personal possessions.

Harry Lee's military achievements were so outstanding that in 1779 he was awarded the only Congressional Gold Medal for Valor. He served as a Cavalry Commander from 1776 when but

which he declined. He retired from political life to his Alexandria home to practice law in the courts of Virginia and Washington, and to enjoy the company of his many kinsmen who lived in the neighborhood. Across Washington Street lived his brother, Edmund J. Lee, and next door, with their gardens connecting, was his sister Mary, wife of Philip Richard Fendall. Lee was engaged in many important cases in the Supreme Court of the United States. His arguments as preserved in the Reports of the Supreme Court evince very high legal ability and attainments. He was one of the lawyers who successfully defended Aaron Burr in his famous trial for treason.

Charles Lee's wife presented him with six children before her untimely death on September 9th, 1804, at the age of thirty-three, "after a tedious illness of the consumptive kind." She was buried in the family graveyard of her brother Ludwell Lee's home at Shuter's Hill which he had sold to Benjamin Dulaney five years earlier upon the completion of "Belmont" near Leesburg, where he entertained Lafayette in 1825. The Lee-Dulaney mansion at Shuter's Hill and the graveyard were demolished by Federal Troops during the Civil War, to construct Fort Ellsworth on the eminence. It is now the site of the National Masonic Memorial.

About 1802, Charles Lee built a summer home, "Leeton Forest", in Fauquier County near Warrenton, on part of the 4,200 acre patent granted to his wife's grandfather, Thomas Lee of Stratford. in 1718 (The upper frame portion of the house burned about 1906, and the existing house was built about 1920 on the original stone foundations with the four stone chimneys). On July 19th, 1809, five years after the death of his first wife, Charles Lee married twenty-six year old Margaret Christian Scott, widow of Yelverton Peyton. She was the daughter of the Reverend John and Elizabeth (Gordon) Scott. The wedding took place at the bride's ancestral home, GORDONSDALE, near The Plains in Fauquier County. This handsome residence stands on what was originally a 2,023 acre grant which had been issued in 1726 to Margaret's grandfather, Parson Alexander Scott. In 1814, the Charles Lee's moved permanently from Alexandria to LEETON FOREST, and the Alexandria

home became the rectory for Christ Church. Charles, who died the following year, was buried nearby in the lot of Colonel Martin Fickett at Old Turkey Run Church. His tombstone was later moved to the Warrenton Cemetery. His widow outlived him by twenty-eight years. His portrait was presented about two decades ago by his descendants to the National Portrait Gallery. I rescued the portrait of their daughter\* at a country auction in 1969, had it cleaned and restored, and she now graces my living-room wall. Not "pretty", but with a tranquil beauty which reveals a character of compassion and understanding; I have become very fond of her.

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Richard Bland Lee, the third son of the Leesylvania family, was born in 1761. While attending the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, he was one of the "Fifty Founders" of Phi Beta Kappa. Upon graduation, his father gave him a deed to 250 acres of land in southwestern Loudoun County on which he settled in order to qualify as a resident landowner. In 1784 at the age of twenty-three, he was elected to represent that district in the Virginia Assembly. He was the first member of the family to reside on part of the 3,111 acre grant acquired in 1725 by his grandfather, Henry Lee I of Westmoreland County. For two generations, the Lees maintained a "quarter", consisting of a small force of slave laborers who carried on primitive agriculture and stock raising. Upon the death of Richard's father in 1787, he and his brother, Theodoric, inherited the entire grant, Richard taking the northern half where his house, which he had named SULLY, already stood. (The county line was later adjusted, transferring it into Fairfax County).

When he was twenty-eight, his constituents, including George Washington, elected him to the First Congress. He achieved a status of national importance as the person most instrumental in the choice of the site for the national capital on the banks of the Potomac. While attending Congress in Philadelphia, he met and in 1794 married Elizabeth Collins, the vivacious daughter of a prominent importer. Elizabeth's closest friend, the young widow Dolley Payne Todd, at whose first wedding she had been bridesmaid, was soon wed to Lee's friend, James Madison. The two couples maintained a

\* painted 1879 by Richard Norris Brooke (1847-1920), former Director of Corcoran Gallery of Art.

life-time intimacy.

Lee brought his bride to SULLY where they settled temporarily in his comfortable log house until the new house was completed. Three years later, a young Philadelphia cousin, Thomas Lee Shippen, wrote:-

I would fain give you some idea of the elegance in which this kinsman has settled himself... The house is furnished... with every article of silver, mahogany, Wilton carpeting and glassware that can be conceived of that you will find in the very best furnished houses in Philadelphia... completely equipped with every luxury as well as convenience.

In Richard's attempts to assist his brother, Harry, with his financial difficulties, he found it necessary to sell SULLY in 1811 to his cousin, Francis Lightfoot Lee, namesake nephew of the Signer of the Declaration of Independence. They did not establish another permanent residence until 1815 when Lee had acquired a townhouse in Washington at the northwest corner of 6th and N. Streets. South West, formerly the home of Martha Washington's granddaughter Elizabeth Parke Custis, and her husband, Thomas Law. Lee had been appointed as one of the three commissioners to superintend the restoration of the public buildings, including the Capitol and the White House, which had been burned by the British on August 12th, 1814. He was also appointed Commissioner to Adjudicate Claims arising from the loss or destruction of private property during the War of 1812. In 1819, President Monroe appointed him Judge of the Orphans Court of the District of Columbia, on which he served until his death, March 12th, 1827. He was buried in Congressional Cemetery. His widow was at the bedside of Dolley Madison when she died in 1849, and whom she outlived by a decade. The Lee's Washington home is handsomely restored, and the SULLY PLANTATION HOUSE is beautifully maintained by the Fairfax County Park Authority as a museum, open to the public.

The fourth son of the Leesylvania family, Theodorick, was born in 1766. He pursued an agricultural career, farming the southern half of the estate shared by his father's will with his brother. During Richard Eland Lee's absence in Philadelphia while attending Congress, Theodorick had full charge of both

plantations, in the growing and marketing of crops besides supervising the construction of his brother's new home. He must have been a man of unusual charm, having won the hand of the attractive and wealthy Catherine Hite of Winchester, whose family home was BELLE GROVE, now a property of the National Trust For Historic Preservation.

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The fifth son, Edmund Jennings Lee, born at Leesylvania in 1772, was educated at Princeton. When about twenty-four, he married Sarah, the youngest daughter of Richard Henry Lee, the "Signer". About 1800, Edmund built a handsome home in Alexandria on the southwest corner of Washington and Cronoco streets, which is well-preserved and privately owned. He became a prominent attorney, and held a number of high offices in the Episcopal Church. He served Alexandria for many years as its Mayor. He defeated a plan to cut Cameron Street westward through the burial grounds of Christ Church. His most outstanding legal achievement saved for the benefit of the church the 516 acre Glebe lands of Fairfax Parish (which included Christ Church and The Falls Church of the village of that name) from confiscation by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1802. The Glebe, for the benefit of the clergyman, lay half way between the two churches of the parish, in what was then, Alexandria County (renamed Arlington County in 1920), which formed the Virginia portion of the original ten-mile square of the District of Columbia. His winning argument was that since 1801 Virginia had no jurisdiction over property in the District of Columbia. (later retroceded to Virginia in 1846.) Meanwhile, the sale of the Glebe lands by Fairfax Parish defrayed the expense of erecting a steeple on Christ Church, provided for a fine fence for the churchyard, and contributed toward the purchase of the Charles Lee house in 1815 as a rectory.

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The Leesylvania couple also had two daughter, each marry-  
ing men of prominence. Mary, born in 1775, when only sixteen, became the third wife of Philip Richard Pendall, a rather distant cousin of the Maryland branch of the Lee family. His first wife, Lettice Lee, was a Maryland cousin; his second was Elizabeth Steptoe Lee, widow of Philip Iudwell Lee of Stratford and mother

of Harry Lee's first wife, Matilda. In 1785, Philip Fendall bought a lot from Harry Lee, at the southeast corner of Washington and Cronoco Streets, where he built a house which became known as the "Keystone of Lee Corner", as it was the first of the many Lee homes built in the immediate vicinity. Both George Washington and Harry Lee were frequent visitors. It was here that Harry Lee wrote the farewell address to Washington for the citizens of Alexandria in 1789. Philip Fendall was an organizer, stockholder, and the first President of the Bank of Alexandria, elected January 22nd, 1793. He also owned a merchant-mill located just below the Little Falls of the Potomac, which provided substitute banking facilities for farmers of the upper Potomac area:- in exchange for grain, script was issued which could be used as legal tender. Various members of the Lee family have lived in the Lee-Fendall House continuously from 1785 through 1903. Across Cronoco Street is the "Boyhood Home of Robert E. Lee", in which Harry Lee's family resided from 1811 through 1816, and again from 1820 through 1825. Both houses are now open to the public.

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The other daughter, Anne, born at Leesylvania in 1776, married William Byrd Page when she was only seventeen years old. She eventually became the mistress of one of the most beautiful homes in Virginia, "Fairfield" near Ferryville in the Shenandoah Valley. Purchased in 1809 by her husband from Fairfax Washington, this house, built by his father, Warner Washington, who married Hannah Fairfax in 1764, hosted George and Martha Washington in 1769. As the mansion had eighteen rooms, Anne Lee Page and her husband were not overly crowded when she presented him with nine children before his untimely death in 1812 at the age of thirty-nine.

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By this time, the reader has noticed that the Lees followed a habit of marrying "kin" although in no case did first-cousins wed. These marriages resulted from a combination of family affection, congeniality and propinquity. They enjoyed each other's company! They visited back and forth and knew each other from childhood. Friendships eventually ripened into romance. Each spring and autumn, the city cousins visited the plantations, while the rural cousins became Alexandria house-guests during the winter social season of balls and the