



VIRGINIANA FILE

PWC - Historic Sites
(Leesylvania)

VIRGINIA

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

SURVEY FORM

LISTED IR 1700 (PACIFIC, etc)

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

Weems-Botts Museum
Collection

File no. 76-45 5178
Negative no(s). 4351, 4905
See Fairfax House site
76-74, described on
separate survey form.

Historic name Leesylvania Site Common name AKA Freestone Point; Lee's Neck
 County/Town/City Prince William County
 Street address or route number c .5 mi S. of interex. of S.R. 610 with RF&P RR.
 USGS Quad Quantico Date or period c1750
 Original owner Henry Lee, II Architect/builder/craftsmen
 Original use Residence Co. & Daniel K. Ludwig
 Present owner American-Hawaiian Steamship ~ Source of name Lee family
 Present owner address/o George Hartzog, Atty. Source of date Published accounts, court records.
 900 17th St., N.W., Wash., D.C. Stories --
 Present use State park (in process of sale & Foundation and wall const'n --
 Acreage c500 acres eventual development) Roof type --

State condition of structure and environs House, which burned in c1790, is a pile of rubble; surrounding area completely overgrown.
 State potential threats to structure Vandals, pot-hunters.
 Note any archaeological interest Several artifacts have been found in debris around house site.
 Remains of foundations of outbuildings said to exist. Brick-lined well at Fairfax house partially "excavated."
 Should be investigated for possible register potential? yes X no ___

Architectural description (Note significant features of plan, structural system and interior and exterior decoration, taking care to point out aspects not visible or clear from photographs. Explain nature and period of all alterations and additions. List any outbuildings and their approximate ages, cemeteries, etc.)

Leesylvania is the remaining 510-acre portion of a formerly large, 2,000-acre tract of land located on Freestone Point between the Neabsco Creek and Powell's Creek. During this century, the tract has been allowed to revert back to woodlands, though it is known to have been under tobacco cultivation before the end of the 17th century. Much of the land that comprises the Leesylvania tract today was being farmed in the early 1900s, and the trees on the property have been harvested at least twice.

This tract, once known as the "forward 500 acres" of the Leesylvania Plantation, contains the ruins of the Lee house, built c1750; the brick chimneys and foundation of the Fairfax house, built c1825; burial grounds for both families; the cuts made on the cliff overlooking the Potomac for installation of guns used in the Confederate Blockade of the river; the old roadbed of the RF&P RR, which came through the estate after the Civil War; some late 19th century frame structures associated with the use of the tract as a private hunting and fishing resort; and the vandalized ruins of the dock, swimming pools, and other recreational facilities installed in the 1950s when there was a floating gambling concession at Freestone Point.

The Leesylvania house stood on the crest of a high hill overlooking the Potomac. The house, which is thought to have been stylistically similar to Rippon Lodge nearby, burned in about 1790. On the hill where the house was located can be seen, under thick overgrowth, the outline of the house's foundation, collapsed chimneys, and walls. In 1972 on the south side, a rose bush could be found. A few large, old trees grow around the house site, and on the northwest slope from the house grow masses of spring-blooming flowers, including
 Interior inspected? (continued)

Historical significance (Chain of title: individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)

The property where Leesylvania is was the second patent granted in the present Prince William and the fifth patent in "Old" Prince William. In 1658 Gervais Dodson patented 2,000 acres on the Potomac between the Neabsco Creek on the north and Powell's Creek on the south. The land was in tobacco cultivation before the end of the 17th century, according to records relating to a law suit or suits c1690-91 involving a dispute between the plantation owner and a shipmaster over the alleged contamination of tobacco hogsheads. According to Fairfax Harrison, Dodson transferred the tract to Henry Corbin, of Pocatone, Westmoreland County, Virginia. Laetitia Corbin Lee, Corbin's daughter, received the land on Freestone Point from her father and passed it to her son Richard Lee. It then passed to Richard's brother, Henry

Leesylvania
(Continuation Sheet)

Historical significance (continued)

widow the Leesylvania manor parcel, consisting of the "forward 500 acres to the river." The remaining property was sold and during the early 1800s was developed into a number of large farms. The manor house burned in about 1790, soon after the death of Lucy Grimes Lee. Leesylvania was inherited by Charles Lee (1758-1815), whose son Alfred sold it in 1825 to Henry Fairfax. The Fairfaxes built a house on the property which burned in 1910. Col. John W. Fairfax, Adjutant to General Longstreet during the Civil War, inherited part of "Lee Neck," at his parents' deaths in 1847.

Leesylvania figured prominently in the Confederate blockade of the Potomac from September 1861 to March 1862. Batteries installed on the end of the point looking over the Potomac were the most northern gun positions along the line, from the Chopawamsic to the Occoquan. Four coastal heavy artillery taken from the Navy Yard at Norfolk were installed here. The several coastal batteries were protected by 12,500 infantry troops, under Brigade Commander Major Gen. W. H. C. Whiting. But the guns were not capable of reaching the channel, and the positions were eventually abandoned. The guns at Freestone allegedly were spiked and the gun tubes may still be located under the water off the shore of the Potomac.

It was not until after the Civil War that the railroad, the Richmond Frederick & Potomac, which runs through Freestone Point, crossing the Neabsco Creek at its mouth, was completed, thus connecting Washington with Richmond. The line, chartered in 1834, opened the line from Fredericksburg to Aquia in 1842, where it terminated, and, prior to the completion of the line, steamboats plying the Potomac connected service with Washington.

After the Civil War, Leesylvania was leased to Quakers, who allegedly cut down all of the trees. A lawsuit ensued, and the property returned to the Fairfaxes.

From the late 1890s and into the 20th century the tract, then consisting of about 513 acres, was used as a hunting and fishing retreat. Private railroad cars accommodated VIPs who arrived here from Washington. A caretaker's cottage on the property may date from this period.

In the late 1950s, although gambling and liquor by the drink were illegal in Virginia, Freestone Point became the home of the S. S. Freestone, a "floating gambling parlor" which when docked was theoretically in the State of Maryland where such activities were legal. The Point's recreational facilities were later enhanced by the addition of several swimming pools, a bathhouse, concession stands, and a miniature train. When slot machines became illegal in Maryland in the 1960s, and under pressure from the State of Virginia, gambling activities here ceased, and without that attraction the resort foundered. The decaying remains of the wharf, swimming facilities, and parking lot are the only signs of this short-lived phenomenon.

In recent years, Freestone Point has been the subject of plans to create there a state park, pending the part sale-part donation of the tract by its owner Daniel K. Ludwig and American-Hawaiian Steamship Co.

ilities installed in the 1880s when there was a floating gambling concession at Freestone Point.

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Known as Freestone Point because of the gray sandstone found abundantly on this peninsula, the estate took its most lasting name from Henry Lee II, who built the house in about 1750 and named it Leesylvania. Henry Lee II and his wife Lucy Grimes had eight children, among them four sons who became prominent in Virginia affairs: Henry Lee III ("Lighthouse Harry"), Charles Lee, Richard Bland Lee, and Edmund Jennings Lee. Upon his death, Henry Lee II left to his

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Leesylvania Site
(Continuation Sheet)

Architectural Description (continued)

old-fashioned double daffodils. A road cut north of the house in the 1950s destroyed the foundations of a suspected accessory building. About 200 yards north northwest, on a slightly lower elevation than the house, is the Lee Cemetery. In the 1850s, the Fairfax burials were also there, and the present fenced plot containing no stones belonged to that family. The Lee stones had been stolen for use in the steps of a house, since demolished, at Cherry Hill across U.S. Rt. 1. In about 1969, the Fairfax stones were removed to the Union Cemetery in Leesburg.

The Fairfax house was located about 500 yards east of the Lee house. It burned in 1910, and all that remains are the stone foundation and parts of two brick end chimneys. Just south of the house site are supposedly the foundations of a bank barn. A brick-lined well south of the house site (see photograph) has been vandalized by thieves, or "pot hunters."

Freestone Point figured prominently in the Confederate blockade of the Potomac, from September 1861 to March 1862. Earth cuts made for the positioning of six guns on Freestone Point overlooking the Potomac are still visible, and it is hoped that some of the coastal heavy artillery guns positioned there to prevent Union supply ships from traveling up the Potomac may be submerged off the point.

After the Civil War the RF&P Railroad which had been earlier constructed to points north and south of Freestone Point, was completed. The old railroad cut which runs parallel to the present track through this property, is visible in places.

A frame hunting lodge and a caretaker's cottage on the property may date to the 1880s or 1890s when the tract was used as a private hunting and fishing retreat. Visitors at that time probably arrived by and were lodged in a private railroad train consisting of a dining room, parlor, and sleeping car.

The remains of the floating gambling parlor and resort that was established on Freestone Point during the late 1950s consist of a deteriorating pier to which the S.S. Freestone, the floating gambling parlor, would be moored, and other structures relating to this short-lived enterprise, including swimming facilities (in ruins) and parking lots.

Published Sources (continued)

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