

Richard Lee I

Col. Richard Lee I (1617–1664), later nicknamed "The Immigrant" was the first member of the Lee family to live in America; he emigrated from Shropshire, England to Virginia in 1639. Lee was a lawyer, planter, soldier, politician, and Member of the Virginia House of Bugesses.

By the time of his death, Lee was the largest landholder in Virginia, with 13,000 acres and perhaps the richest man in Virginia.

He was the great-great-great grandfather of Confederate general Robert E. Lee and the great-grandfather of President Zachary Taylor.

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Biography



Coat of Arms of Richard Lee

I

Lee was the son of John Lee I (c. 1588-1630), the grandson of Richard Lee of Coton Hall (1563-1621), and the great-grandson of Sir John Lee of Coton Hall (1530-1605). Lee arrived in Jamestown at the age of 22 with very little to his name other than the patronage of an influential man, Sir Francis Wyatt, the first Governor of Virginia. Once there he became Attorney General of the Colony of Virginia, Colonial Secretary of State, and member of the King's Council.

In 1643 the new governor, Sir William Berkeley (1606–1677), on the recommendation of Sir Francis Wyatt, appointed Lee as Attorney Genera of the Colony.^[1]

Richard Lee I



Col. Richard Lee (1618–1664), the "Immigrant"

Born	1617
Died	1664
Occupation	Lawyer, Planter, Soldier, Politician
Title	Colonel
Spouse(s)	Anne Constable
Children	10 (including Richard Lee II and Hancock Lee)
Parent(s)	John Lee I Jane Hancock
Relatives	Richard Lee of Coton Hall (grandfather) Sir John Lee of Coton Hall (great-grandfather) Robert E. Lee (great-great-great-grandson) Zachary Taylor (great-grandson)

Lee became Clerk of the Quarter Court at Jamestown, within the Secretary of State's office. He was a loyal supporter of King Charles I of England, and his public offices ceased when Oliver Cromwell seized power in England in 1649. In addition, he served as High Sheriff and was a Colonel in the Militia.

He also became a tobacco planter, trader, an owner and trader of slaves, and an employer and importer of English indentured servants (i.e. employees who paid for their passage to America with seven years of labor).

Lee was in the fur trading business with the Indians. Because of this, Lee took his bride away from the capital city, and went to live among the Indians beyond the frontier of settlement. His first patent was for land on the north side of the York River at the head of Poropotank Creek in what was then York, later Gloucester County. He had received the title to this 1,000 acre (4 km²) tract on 10 August 1642 through the headrights of thirty-eight immigrants unable to pay their own passage, who were brought over by Col. Lee in his own ship on his return from Breda in 1650. However, Lee did not take title to this land until 1646, when there is record of his purchasing 100 acres (0.4 km²) at this location. Lee's first home was on leased land on the same side of the river, at the head of Tindall's Creek near the Indian community of Capahosic Wicomico. However, on 18 April 1644, hordes of Powhatan Indians massacred the newcomers to the area, led by Chief Opchanacanough. They killed 300, but were driven back by a successful counterattack. As a result, the English abandoned the north side of the river

He and his family escaped and settled at New Poquoson on the lower peninsula between the York River and the James River, where it was safer from attack. He was said to have been the first white man to have settled in the northern neck of Virginia. They resided upon this land for the next nine years, which consisted of 90 acres (360,000 m²) and was a comfortable ride from Jamestown.

On 20 August 1646 he took out a patent for 1,250 acres (5 km²) on the Pamunkey River in York, later New Kent County, at the spot "*where the foot Company met with the Boats when they went Pamunkey March under ye command of Capt. William Claiborne*" during the counteroffensive against the Indians after the massacre of 1644. He did not develop these lands, but exchanged them in 1648 for a tract of the same land along the north side of the York near the present Capahosic, retaining the 400 acres (1.6 km²) he called "War Captain's Neck" and selling the other 850 acres (3.4 km²).

Colonial politics

Lee became a Burgess of York County from 1647–1651, and in 1649 he was appointed a member of the King's Council, and a Justice and also became Colonial Secretary of State. With the title of Secretary of State, he was next in authority to the Governor, Sir William Berkeley (1606–1677). That same year, Charles I, King of England (1600–1649), was beheaded and Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) began his control. Since the people in the distant colonies could not believe the incredible news from England, they remained loyal to the Crown and to Charles II (1630–1685), heir to the throne. In 1650, Lee made a voyage to the Netherlands to report Virginia's loyal adherence to Charles II. It turns out that two years later, he negotiated the capitulation of Virginia to the Commonwealth of England, and was satisfied with the terms that were laid out. At this time, he retired from public office, but continued to represent the interests of Virginia in London.

Land holdings

Lee began to acquire many land grants on the peninsula between the York and the Rappahannock River. After peace with the Indians had been concluded and the lands north of the York reopened for settlement in 1649, Lee was issued a patent of 500 acres (2 km²) on 24 May 1651, on land adjacent to "War Captain's Neck". That same year he also acquired an additional 500 acres (2 km²) on Poropotank Creek. He sold 150 acres (0.6 km²) of his original grant, the tract on Poropotank Creek. This left 850 acres (3.4 km²) at the original site, to which he later gave the name "Paradise", and resided from 1653–1656 in the newly created Gloucester County. He became a part owner of a trading ship, whose cargoes brought indentured servants with headrights that Lee used to enlarge his Virginia property. He spent nearly as much of his time from 1652 to his death in 1664, in London as he did in Virginia. In about 1656 Lee moved the family to Virginia's Northern Neck, the peninsula formed by the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. Leaving the "Paradise" tract to overseers, they resettled on a spot acquired from the Wicomico Indians, which consisted of 1,900 acres (8 km²). This new land was termed "Dividing Creek", near what is today the town of Kilmarnock. This tract in later generations became known as that of "Cobbs Hall".

He later purchased another 2,600 acres (11 km²) in Northumberland County at Machodoc Creek, which empties into the Potomac River. This tract was patented on 18 October 1657, and repatented the following year on 5 June 1658 as 2,000 acres (8 km²). Upon this tract became what was known in later generations as the estates "Mount Pleasant" and "Lee Hall". He then acquired 4,000 acres (16 km²) farther up the Potomac, near where the city of Washington, D.C., would rise, in what was then Westmoreland, now Fairfax County. One of these would eventually become the site of Mount Vernon.

Disposing of several lesser properties he had obtained, Lee was able to consolidate and develop four major plantations. He had two in Gloucester County: "War Captain's Neck" and "Paradise", and two in Northumberland County: "Dividing Creek" and "Machodoc". He also acquired a plantation called "Lee's Purchase", located across the Potomac in Maryland.

In 1658 Lee acquired a residence at Stratford Langthorne in the County of Essex, then a pleasant suburb of London, and in 1661 he moved his family there. Essex borders London on the east, and the village of Stratford Langthorne was a resort for persons of means who found London unhealthy. It is located about a mile from Stratford-at-Bow on the north side of the Thames in West Ham Parish, until recently the site of great wharves, docks, and the congestion of east London. He did that so that his younger children would have a proper education, seeing as his oldest two sons, John and Richard Lee II, were already students at Oxford. Nevertheless, he eventually wanted his children to reside in Virginia. Though now a resident of England, he continued in his role as a Virginia planter and merchant.

Death

During 1663, Richard Lee, with his wife and children, journeyed to England, where he had his will executed in London on 6 February 1663–4 just before returning alone to Virginia to oversee his interests in the Colony. The exact date of his death is unknown, but had to be before 20 April 1664 when his son John made an application for land due to his father, deceased. (John had probably returned to Virginia with his father.) It is also not known where he died, but it may have been at his home at "Dividing Creeks", Northumberland Co., Virginia.^{[2][3]}

Lee's will directed that his wife and children, "all except Francis if he be pleased", were to return to Virginia. His property at Stratford in England was to be sold, and the proceeds be used to discharge his debts, to pay for the education of his two eldest sons, John and Richard, and to provide dowries for his daughters, Elizabeth and Anne. Lee left land to all his sons and to his widow Anne for her lifetime. In Virginia, he left the "Dividing Creeks" and "Mocke Nock" plantations to his widow for her lifetime, and afterwards to be divided among his three youngest sons, the "Machodoc" plantation and three islands in the bay of Chesapeake to his son John, the "Paradise" plantation to Richard II, and "Paper-makers Neck" and "War Captain's Neck" to Francis, to William "all the land on the Maryland side, and the remaining plantations and land to William and his two youngest sons, Hancock and Charles. Lee had also been actively involved in the slave trade^[1] and he left his widow 5 "negro" slaves for "during her widowhood and no longer" and 10 English (indentured) servants. He gave John 10 "negro" slaves as well as 10 English (indentured) servants. He left to Richard II the indentures (contracts) of English servants (i.e. employees) on the "Paradise" plantation, and Francis received five "negro" slaves and the indentures of 10 English servants. Other property that was divided among his 8 surviving children included livestock and furniture. His share in 2 trading ships he left to Francis.^[3]

His widow Anna (or Anne) married again to Edmund Lister before 24 September 1666.^[3] The date of her death is unknown, although legend has it that she was buried beside Lee near the house at "Dividing Creeks".

Richard Lee's marriage

It is claimed in many genealogies that Richard's wife was Anne^[4] Constable, the daughter of Francis Constable, the London publisher.^[5]

Children

Richard I Lee and his wife Ann had 10 children

1. John Lee (1643–1673) of "Mount Pleasant", who never married

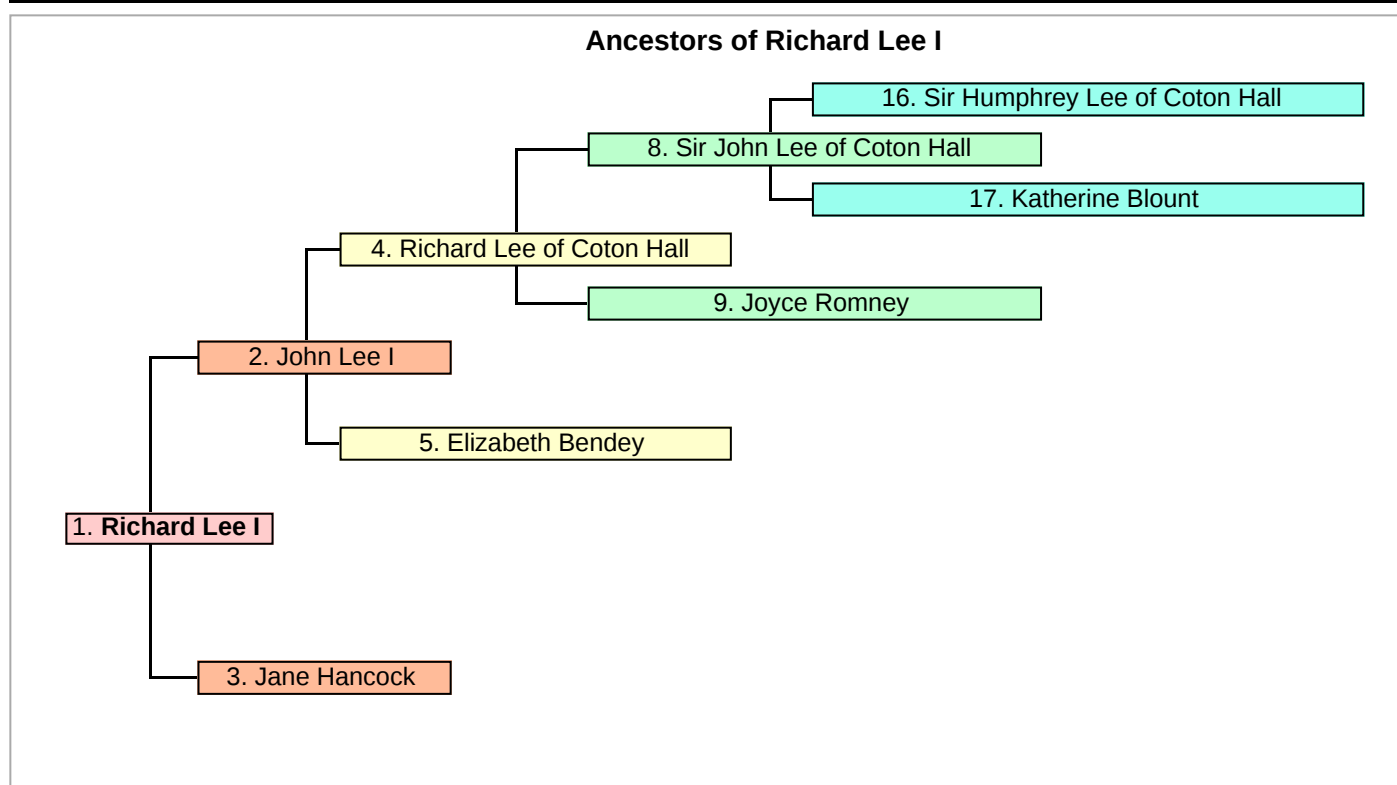
2. Col. Richard Lee II of "Paradise", "the Scholar" (1647–1715), who married Laetitia Corbin (c.1657–1706), daughter of Hon. Henry Corbin, Sr (1629–1676) and Alice (Eltonhead) Burnham (c.1627–1684). **Great-Great-grandfather of General Robert E. Lee**
3. Francis Lee (1648–1714) a merchant in England, who married āmar
4. Henry Lee (1650–1696) The Society of the Lees of Virginia do not recognize this son^[6]
5. Capt. William Lee (1651–1696), who married Alice Felton in 1675 and fathered four children
6. Capt. Hancock Lee, Hon. (1653–1709) of "Ditchley", who married 1) Mary Kendall (1661–1694); 2) Sarah Elizabeth Allerton (1671–1731), daughter of Col. Isaac Allerton, Jr (1630–1702) (son of Isaac Allerton of the *Mayflower*) and (grandson of William Brewster of the *Mayflower*) and his second wife, Elizabeth (Willoughby) **Grandfather of President Zachary Taylor**
7. Elizabeth (Betsey) Lee (1654–1714), who married 1) Leonard Howson Sr (1648–1704); 2) John Turberville (1650–1728), son of George Turberville IV (1638-c.1659) and Bridget
8. Anne Lee (1654–1701), who married Maj. Thomas Youell Jr (1644–1695), son of Thomas Youell (1615–1655) and Anne Sturman (d. 1672)
9. Capt. Charles Lee Sr (1655–1701) of "Cobbs Hall", who married Elizabeth Medstand daughter of Thomas Medstand (-1675). Ancestor of the Manning family of Eli Manning and Peyton Manning
10. Anne Lee (1655), who died young

Family legacy

Today the different branches of the Lee family are known as: "Cobb's Hall", "Mount Pleasant", "Ditchley", "Lee Hall", "Blenheim", "Leesylvania", "Dividing Creek", and "Stratford". These were the estate names of the descendants of Richard Lee I that are still referred to today when talking of Lee descendancy. An interesting note is that Lee had patented somewhere in the neighbourhood of 15,000 acres (61 km²) on both sides of the Potomac, in Maryland and in Virginia. Part of this land later became George Washington's Mount Vernon. When he divided his estate among his children, he also left them the products of the several plantations including white indentured servants, Negro slaves, livestock, household furnishings, silver and many other luxuries.

Notable descendants of Richard Lee I include signers of the Declaration of Independence Francis Lightfoot Lee and Richard Henry Lee, Revolutionary War general Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, Confederate Civil War generals Robert E. Lee, Richard Taylor, William Henry Fitzhugh Lee, Stephen D. Lee, and George Washington Custis Lee, Richard L. T. Beale, Richard Lucian Page; President of the United States Zachary Taylor, Chief Justice of the United States, Edward Douglass White, Governor of Maryland Thomas Sim Lee, US Senator Wilkinson Call and Hollywood singer and actress Kathryn Grayson

Ancestry



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