

= Thomas Lee (Virginia colonist) =

Thomas Lee (c . 1690 ? November 14 , 1750) was a leading political figure of colonial Virginia . He was a member of the Lee family , a political dynasty which included many figures from the pre @-@ American Revolutionary War era until the late 20th century . Lee became involved in politics in 1710 and he became the resident manager of the Northern Neck Proprietary for Lady Catherine Fairfax . After his father died , he inherited land in Northumberland and Charles County . Lee later acquired vast holdings in what are now Arlington , Fairfax , Fauquier , Prince William , and Loudoun Counties . These properties were developed as tobacco plantations .

When Lee married Hannah Harrison Ludwell in 1722 , he benefited by the connections of the already established Harrison family . A year later he would become a member of the House of Burgesses . After Lee 's home was burnt down by criminals , he lost almost all of his possessions and a fair sum of money . With donations received from Caroline of Ansbach and English Commissioners , he built his new home on the Potomac River , naming it Stratford Hall . Four years later in 1733 , he was appointed to the Governor 's Council , upper house of the General Assembly . In 1747 , he founded the Ohio Company of Virginia with fellow Virginian colonists who wished to expand Virginia 's territory into the Ohio River Valley . For a period of less than a year , in 1749 , he became the de facto Governor of Virginia in place of the absent William Gooch . Lee was favored for an appointment as governor by George II but the colonist died in 1750 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Thomas Lee was born around 1690 at Mount Pleasant , on the Machodoc River in Westmoreland County , Virginia . His parents were Richard Lee II , " the scholar " , and Laetitia Corbin . His ancestors had immigrated from Coton , Shropshire , England to Virginia in 1642 . As the fourth son of the couple , Lee would not receive as large an inheritance as his older brothers . This did not prevent him from becoming successful in politics .

Lee attended college at The College of William and Mary around 1700 . Lee 's education was referred to as a " common Virginia education " . He soon became interested in the working of the tobacco industry . He left home to work with his uncle Thomas Corbin in the tobacco business .

= = Political career = =

Lee 's political career began in 1710 when he was appointed as Naval Officer of the Potomac River . The position was previously held by his father and upon his resignation , Lee was appointed as the new Naval Officer . In 1711 , Lee 's uncle Thomas Corbin helped him gain the position of Virginia agent for the Northern Neck Proprietary . As a result , he was appointed by Catherine (Culpeper) Fairfax , Lady Fairfax who was living in England , as her agent and resident manager for the Northern Neck Proprietary , which she had inherited from her father , Governor Thomas Colepeper , 2nd Baron Colepeper . Catherine was the wife of Thomas Fairfax , 5th Baron Fairfax . This property , which consisted of approximately six million acres (24 @,@ 000 km ²) , included all the land between the Potomac and Rappahnnock rivers .

At one time Edmund Jenings , another Lee uncle , headed this Proprietary . While Jenings was in England , the offices of the agency were located at the plantation at Machodoc and under Lee 's supervision . Due to Jening 's poor management , the agency was given to Governor Robert " King " Carter in 1720 . This event led to animosity between the competitive Lee and Carter families . The members of the families refused to marry each other until Henry " Light Horse Harry " Lee married Anne Hill Carter . Their most notable child was Robert E. Lee .

Thomas held this position until 1722 . In 1713 , Thomas succeeded his father as Naval Officer in charge of collecting customs for the south side of the Potomac .

In 1714 , upon his father 's death , Lee inherited lands in Northumberland County near Dividing Creek , as well as land in Maryland adjoining his brother Philip Lee , Sr. of " Blenheim " . Thomas leased the estate " Machodoc " from his brother Richard Lee III who was in London . That same year Thomas visited England , remaining for about a year .

Lee thought that marriage was not only important between two individuals but for their families . A nephew of his later said , " Our Late Hon [orable] & worthy Uncle President Lee said that the first fall & ruin of families and estates was mostly Occasioned by Imprudent Matches to Imbeggar families and estates & to beget a race of beggars . " He was engaged to Jenny Wilson in 1716 . That year he returned to England to formalize the lease to the plantation before he married . Before his return , Jenny Wilson had found another husband , James Roscoe . Lee learned this from William Byrd .

Lee and his brother Henry negotiated a lease for 99 years on the plantation . During his stay in England , Lee had decided to buy some property on the Potomac River called the " Cliffs Plantation " in Westmoreland County . At the time , the property was owned by Nathaniel Pope , Jr . , a mariner , of London . Lee believed that when Virginia gained its independence , the capital would be located on the Potomac River . He later renamed it as Stratford . Thomas purchased his father 's old estate " Machodoc " , from his sister @-@ in @-@ law , Martha Silk , the former wife of his older brother , Richard Lee III . " Machodoc " was later known as " Mount Pleasant " .

= = = Marriage and family = = =

In May 1722 , Thomas Lee married Hannah Harrison Ludwell (December 5 , 1701 ? January 25 , 1750) , a member of the prominent Harrison family , at " Greenspring " , James City County , Virginia . The marriage lasted his life and brought him increased wealth and status . Hannah was the daughter of Philip Ludwell II of " Greenspring " , and Hannah Harrison . The couple had eleven children ; eight survived to adulthood :

Richard Lee (b . 1723)

Philip Ludwell Lee (February 24 , 1726 ? February 21 , 1775)

John Lee (b. and d . January 1728)

Hannah Ludwell Lee (February 1729 ? 1782)

Thomas Ludwell Lee (December 13 , 1730 ? April 13 , 1778) ; a member of the Virginia Delegates and editor of the Virginia Declaration of Rights .

Richard Henry Lee (January 20 , 1732 ? January 19 , 1794) ; signer of the United States Declaration of Independence

Francis Lightfoot Lee (October 14 , 1734 ? January 11 , 1797) ; signer of the United States Declaration of Independence

Alice Lee (June 4 , 1736 ? March 25 , 1817)

William Lee (August 31 , 1737 ? June 27 , 1795)

James Lee (b. and d . 1739)

Arthur Lee (December 21 , 1740 ? December 12 , 1792)

1728 was a tragic year for Lee and his family . On January 29 , thieves broke into the house stealing the Lee family plate , jewelry , and other articles of value , and upon leaving , set fire to the plantation house at Machodoc . The fire destroyed the entire plantation , including Thomas ' office , the barns , and outhouses . Almost all of the Lees ' possessions were destroyed , as well as up to 10 @, @ 000 pounds in cash (equal to £ 1 @, @ 219 @, @ 726 today) . The house quickly burned and Hannah Lee , being pregnant with her fourth child , had to be thrown from her chamber window on the second floor . This resulted in Hannah 's miscarriage of a son (they named him John) . also injured in the fire was a slave girl , who died . Virginia Governor William Gooch blamed transported convicts for the crime . It is said that Col. Lee 's loss was not less than 50 @, @ 000 pounds (equal to £ 6 @, @ 098 @, @ 629 today) . English Commissioners later gave Lee 300 pounds (equal to £ 36 @, @ 592 today) as compensation and Queen Caroline also gave him money from her private purse to help with rebuilding . The convicts and an accomplice were later found guilty . Their punishment is unknown because the trial records were destroyed . When construction began on the

new Lee mansion , the family stayed with Thomas 's brother Henry at Lee Hall . Lee sold the " Machodoc " estate to Richard Lee III 's son , George Lee , who built " Mount Pleasant " .

Lee 's political career required trips to Williamsburg , causing him to be away from his family for extended periods of time . Lee managed to make the 80 @-@ mile (130 @-@ km) journey to his family and to be with his wife at the births of each of their children . Several of the sons became high @-@ ranking political figures and were active in the American Revolutionary War and post @-@ Revolution politics . Richard Henry was a senator from Virginia to the United States Senate and Francis Lightfoot was in the Virginia Senate . Lee 's youngest sons William Lee and Arthur Lee served as diplomats to various European countries . William , along with Jan de Neufville , drafted an unofficial treaty between the United States and the Netherlands which Great Britain used as a reason for the Fourth Anglo @-@ Dutch War .

Lee later became a vestryman for Copole Parish and Justice of the Peace in Westmoreland County . In 1723 , Lee became a member of the House of Burgesses . He held this office until he was appointed to the Governor 's Council in the Virginia General Assembly in 1733 . This position was a lifetime appointment . The Council was made up of twelve appointees who were selected by the Governor of Virginia and was the upper half of the Virginia General Assembly . The lower half was made up of the House of Burgesses . This position also gave Lee the rank of Colonel , a military rank that was second only to the governor . Members of the Council were advisers to the governor and judges in the General Court of the colony . Their work led them to spend about a third of the year in the capital Williamsburg .

When Governor William Gooch was recalled to England in 1749 , Lee was named President of the King 's Council of Virginia and Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the colony . Nominated for appointment as Governor of Virginia by King George II , he died before it took place .

= = = Ohio Company = = =

Lee was appointed commissioner , along with William Beverley , to negotiate with the Six Nations of the Iroquois at the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744 . At the treaty , an agreement was made with the Six Nations for 400 pounds (equal to £ 61 @,@ 424 today) in return for the right for Virginians to travel through and settle in the Shenandoah Valley .

In 1747 , Lee co @-@ founded the Ohio Company of Virginia along with Lawrence Washington , Augustine Washington , Jr . , the Duke of Bedford , and John Hanbury . The Ohio Company was a land speculation venture which helped colonize the Ohio Country . Lee 's influence as a member of the Governor 's Council helped lead to the success of the Ohio Company and within seven years the company had 100 families living in Ohio . He was also the first president of the Company and after Lee died , was succeeded by Lawrence Washington .

= = = Stratford Hall = = =

With Lee 's higher rank in society and wealth , he decided he needed to build a mansion to secure his position as one of the Virginia gentry. he chose the " Cliffs , " which he had owned since the mid @-@ 1710s . Lee decided on this site because it was located in Westmoreland County , where he was born , and because it was located on the Potomac River . The land was sufficient for having many construction laborers live there . Hannah had an influential say in the design and planning of the interior of the house . Philip , the couple 's eldest son , had said , " See what it is to be ruled by a woman . I should have been now living in a house like this ... had not my father been persuaded by his wife to put up this very inferior dwelling , now over my head . " The exact construction date of the house is unknown but it is estimated that construction began around 1725 @-@ 30 , as all of Lee 's sons were born at Stratford . Workers on the plantation were from all the working class : free people and indentured servants mostly from the British Isles , and African slaves .

Between 1719 and 1746 , Lee acquired vast holdings in what are now Arlington , Fairfax , Fauquier , Prince William , and Loudoun counties . The town of Leesburg , was named in his honor as recommended by his two sons , who were the founders and trustees .

Hannah Harrison died at " Stratford " on January 25 , 1749 , having borne eleven children . She was buried in the old family burying ground , called the " Burnt House Fields " , at " Mount Pleasant " . Her tombstone was later removed to " Stratford Hall " , probably by Henry Lee , who built the new vault at that place . On November 14 , 1750 , Thomas Lee died at age sixty and was buried in the old " Burnt House Fields " at Mount Pleasant . According to his will , he wished to be buried in between his wife and his mother . He bequeathed Stratford Hall to his eldest son , Philip Ludwell Lee , and the Machodoc plantation to his nephew , George Lee .