

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS ...

# SLAVE-OWNING AND -TRADING FOUNDER OF THE PREEMINENT “FIRST FAMILY OF VIRGINIA”

**Richard Lee I  
(1618 – 1664) &  
Anne Constable  
(1622 – 1706)**

— *Bradley Rymph*

VISITS TO KILMARNOCK, VIRGINIA,  
VICINITY:

March 8, 2014

July 12, 2014 (with José Baquiran)

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More than a decade before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in New England in 1620, English colonists landed for the first time in what became the colony of Virginia. On May 24, 1607, along the banks of the James River, the Virginia Company of London established the first “permanent” English settlement in the Americas — Jamestowne Settlement. In the decades that followed, ship after ship brought English men and women across the Atlantic to Jamestowne to establish new (hopefully prosperous) lives.

The most successful of these settlers established family lines that have descended through four centuries of Virginia’s history, dominating the state’s financial, political, and cultural life. Collectively, these families have become known as the “First Families of Virginia.”

Among these families, perhaps no family has so significantly impacted the history of not only Virginia but of the whole United States as has the Lee family, which descended from the immigrants **Richard Lee I** and his wife **Anne Constable**. Their descendants have included two signers of the Declaration of Independence (Richard Henry Lee and Francis Lightfoot Lee; see separate genealogical profile), a Revolutionary War General (“Light Horse Harry” Lee), a President of the



*Richard Lee I and  
Anne (Constable) Lee*

United States (Zachary Taylor, see separate genealogical profile), a Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (Edward Douglas White), a Governor of Maryland (Thomas Sim Lee), and multiple Confederate and Union Civil War officers (most famously, Confederate general Robert E. Lee; see separate genealogical profile of “Civil War Cousins”).

Richard Lee’s family origins in England have been the subject of questioning and research for generations. He and the initial generations of his descendants used the crest of the Lees of Coton Hall in Shropshire in England. Because the use of crests was strictly regulated in England in the 1600s, it is likely that Richard Lee did have some relationship to this Hall. However,



*View of original Jamestown Settlement, with old church tower in center of photo. Richard and Anne (Constable) Lee are believed to have been married in this old church in 1641 or 1642.*

## HOW WE'RE RELATED

*Richard and Anne (Constable) Lee were my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents through my father, Albert James Rymph.*

**Richard Lee**  
(1618 – 3/1/1664)

**Anne Constable**  
(1622 – 10/6/1706)

**Charles Lee**  
(5/21/1656 – 12/17/1701)

**Elizabeth Metstand**  
(1660 – 7/13/1700)

**Thomas Beauford**  
(bef. 5/21/1682 – 7/1761)

**Elizabeth Metstand Lee**  
(8/11/1688 – ?)

**Jeremiah Early**  
(bef. 12/9/1705 – 1795)

**Elizabeth Beauford**  
(1709 – 9/17/1787)

**Jeremiah Early**  
(6/3/1730 – bef. 9/27/1779)

**Sarah Anderson**  
(1732 – c. 1770)

**Charles Callaway**  
(6/7/1752 – 6/3/1827)

**Judith Early**  
(1752 – 1814)

**William Anthony Shands**  
(9/2/1783 – 1/18/1814)

**Judith E. Callaway**  
(7/28/1783 – 5/29/1848)

**William Anthony Shands**  
(1/6/1812 – 8/23/1882)

**Martha Woodson Bingham**  
(c. 1816 – bef. 1849)

**Thomas West Cage**  
(1831 – 1895)

**Martha Julia Shands**  
(1838 – 1917)

**Walter Ritchie Hershey**  
(1862 – 1935)

**Fannie Emma Cage**  
(1862 – 1914)

**Levi Budd Rymph**  
(6/10/1901 – 12/8/1987)

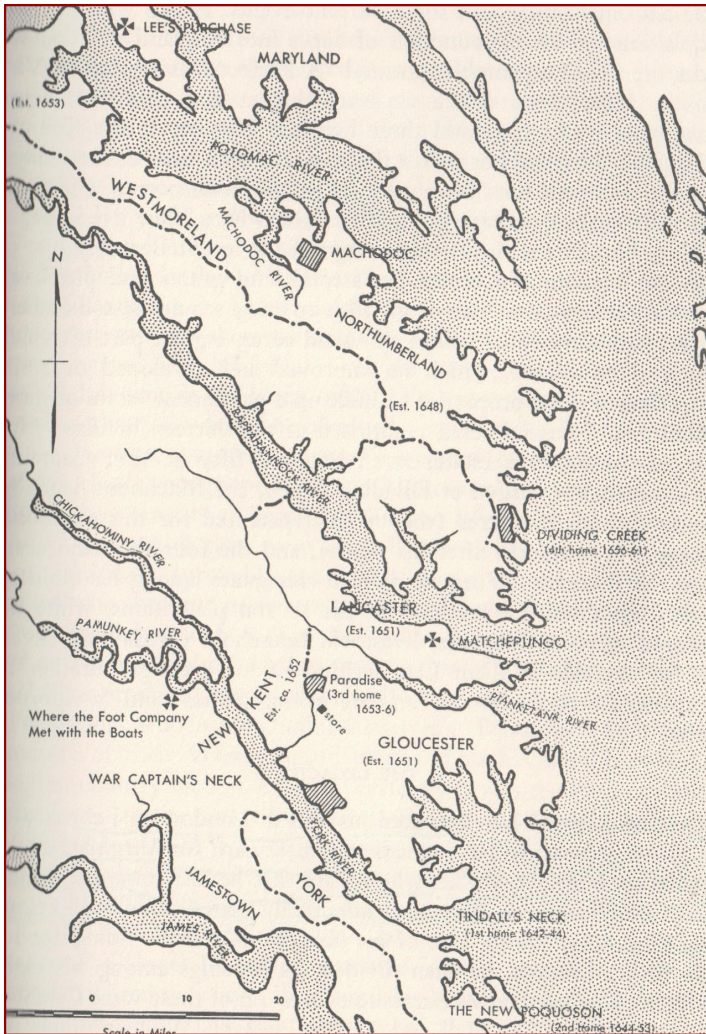
**Jessie Mae Hershey**  
(3/26/1903 – 11/15/1991)

**Albert James Rymph**  
(11/9/1925 – 2/16/2019)

**Edna Mae Heath**  
(11/5/1928 – 9/10/2022)

**Bradley Budd Rymph**  
(living)

**José Verzosa Baquiran III**  
(living)

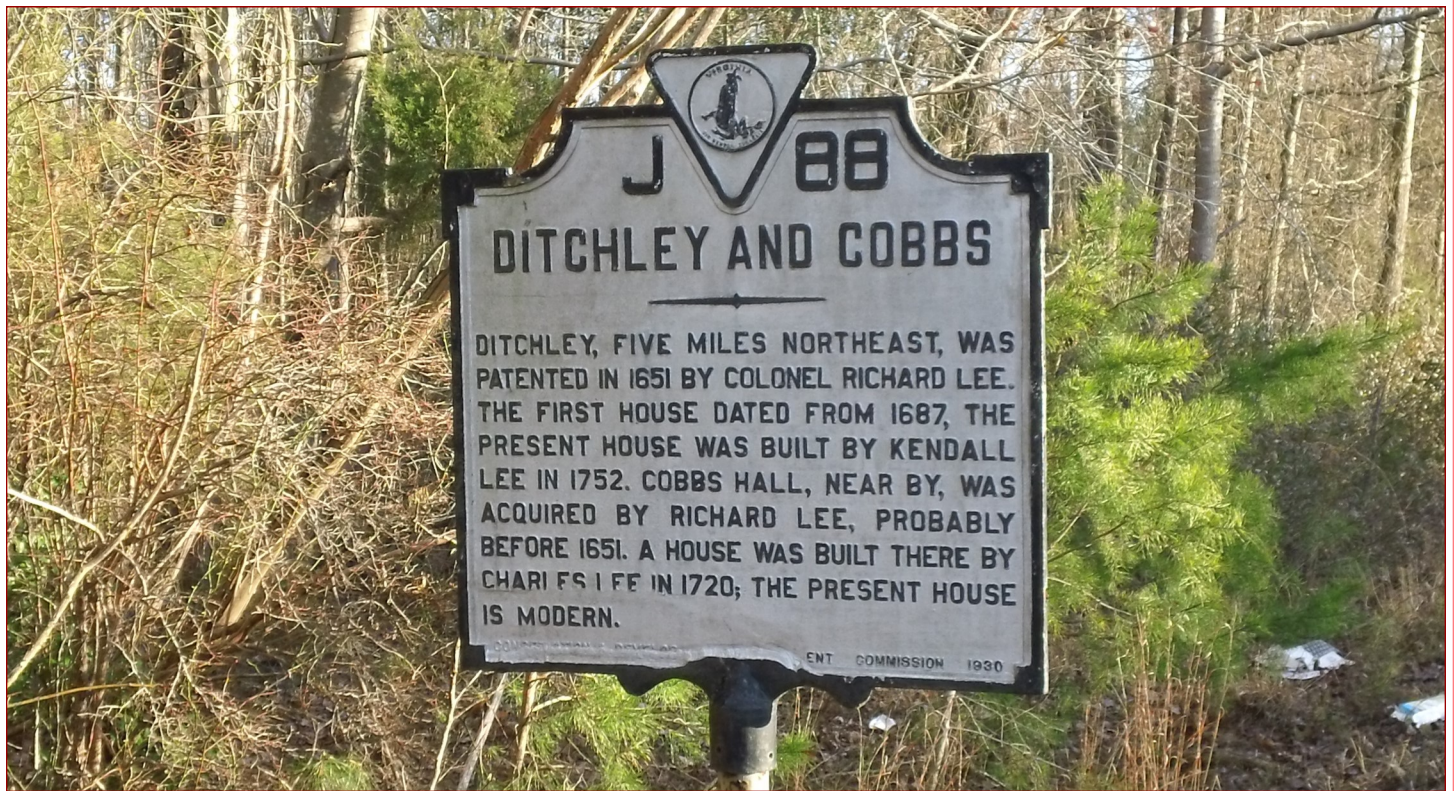


*Richard Lee's Virginia landholdings (excluding his Upper Potomac grants).*

research in recent decades has determined that Richard Lee was actually the son of a Worcester, England, clothier named John Lee.

Richard Lee is believed to have arrived in Jamestown in 1639 or 1640 at the age of 22, with virtually no possessions to his name. What he did have, however, was the patronage of a particularly important man — Sir Francis Wyatt, the first colonial Governor of Virginia. With his





connections to Governor Wyatt, Lee advanced quickly in his own positions in the new colony. He was appointed in 1643 to serve as the colony's Attorney General, served from 1647 to 1651 as Burgess for York County, and became colonial Secretary of State in 1649. He was, however, a confirmed royalist, and when Charles I was beheaded that same year and Cromwell assumed power in England, Lee lost that position. By 1651, however, he had regained influence and was named to the King's Council for Virginia, on which he served until his death.

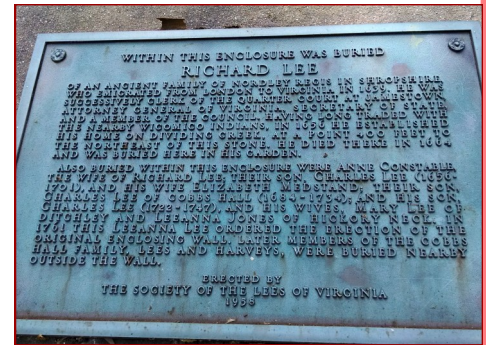
When Lee first accompanied Governor Wyatt to Jamestowne, the governor's household also included a young woman named Anne Constable, who was the daughter of a London

bookstore owner, Francis Constable. Parish records indicate that she was baptized in London in 1622.

Family legend has held that Richard Lee and Anne Constable were married in 1641 or 1642 in the new brick church which had been built in Jamestowne. Governor Wyatt is believed to have given the bride away. (A portion of that church still stands at the early colonial site.)

On August 10, 1642, Richard Lee obtained his first title of land ownership in the Virginia land colony — "land on the north side of the York River at the head of Poropotank Creek, in what was then York, later Gloucester County," as described in Cazenove Gardner Lee, Jr.'s, historical profiles published as *Lee*





*Lee Family Cemetery at Dividing Creek, north of Kilmarnock, “] Virginia — presumed burial site of Richard and Anne (Constable) Lee, their son Charles Constable Lee, and his wife, Elizabeth (Metstand) Lee.*

### *Chronicle.*

Richard Lee’s first home in Virginia was on land he leased, also on the north side of the York River at the head of Tindall’s Creek. In 1644, he and Anne fled this land with their infant son John when an Indian massacre and war caused the English settlers to abandon the north side of the river. On December 2, 1644, Lee patented 91 acres on the safer south side of the York. The Lees called this site their home until 1653. (In 1646, however, Richard purchased 100 acres of land at the Tindall’s Creek location that he had previously leased and fled.)

As Lee’s political career advanced, so did his land holdings along Virginia’s coast and rivers. In August 1646, he obtained a patent for 1,250 acres on the Pamunkey River in what is now New

Kent County. In 1648, he exchanged these lands (which he did not develop) for the same amount of land along the north side of the York River. After peace was reached between the Indians and the English, colonial settlement north of the York resumed in 1649, and Richard Lee increased his focus on obtaining land in that direction — making multiple purchases (and some sales) of land in the years that followed.

By 1656, Lee’s focus on land purchased had increased to the colony’s northern coast and rivers — to the area now known as Virginia’s “Northern Neck,” the lands between the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers. He moved his family to “Dividing Creek,” a 1,900-acre tract acquired from the Wicomico Indians (and immediately north of the present town of Kilmarnock). In 1657, he acquired another 2,600 acres in the

## SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF RICHARD AND ANNE (CONSTABLE) LEE

Richard and Anne (Constable) Lee had eight children who survived to adulthood:

- ♦ John (1642–1673) / *did not marry*
- ♦ Richard (1647–1715) / *married Laetitia Corbin (1657–1706)*
- ♦ Francis (1648–1714) / *married Tamar (last name unknown)*
- ♦ William (1651–1696) / *married Alice Fenton (c.1644–1703)*
- ♦ Hancock (1653–1709) / *married (1) Mary Kendall (1651–1694), (2) Sarah Allerton (1671–1731)*
- ♦ Elizabeth (1654–1693) / *married (1) Leonard Howson (c.1652–?), (2) John Turberville (1650–1728)*
- ♦ Anne (1654–1701) / *married Thomas Youell (c. 1650–?)*
- ♦ Charles (1656–1701) / *married Elizabeth Metstand (1660–1700)*

area along Machodoc Creek. He then acquired 4,000 acres further up the Potomac, near where Washington, DC, would eventually be established. Included in the latter acquisition were the lands that eventually became known as Mount Vernon, the home of President Washington.

As his land ownership grew, Lee also became more heavily invested in slavery — as both an owner and trader of enslaved people. As explained in the Wikipedia biography of Lee:

Lee would come to characterize himself as a merchant, but early in his career he became a real estate investor, and after Cromwell came to power, became a tobacco planter. He became a part owner of a trading ship, whose cargoes brought indentured servants with headrights that Lee used to enlarge his Virginia property. Lee also became involved in the slave trade as his landholdings grew, and he needed labor to operate plantations. He both employed and imported both English indentured servants (i.e. employees who paid for their passage to America with seven years of labor) and at least 90 African slaves (for which he claimed 4000 acres of headrights in 1660).

After acquiring all his landholdings, Lee then disposed of some of his smaller properties and focused on developing four primary plantations — two in the York River vicinity (“War Captain’s Neck” and “Paradise”) and two in the Northern Neck (“Dividing Creek” and “Machodoc”). He also ventured across the Potomac into the colony of Maryland, acquiring a plantation that became known as “Lee’s Paradise.”

Then, in 1658, Richard Lee expanded his landholdings back to the other side of the Atlantic, from which he had emigrated almost two decades earlier.

He bought a residence in England at Stratford Langthorne, outside London, and in 1661 moved his family there. He is believed to have done this, possibly at the urging of his wife, to ensure that his younger children could have a proper education in England.

(Educational opportunity was still severely limited in Virginia, especially in the sparsely settled Northern Neck.) At the time of this move, Richard and Anne's oldest son, John, was already a student at Oxford University in England.

Richard could not, however, abandon responsibility for his lands and political positions in Virginia. Leaving his wife and most of his family in England, Richard (with son John) sailed back to America by 1662. Biographer Paul C. Nagel has written that Richard Lee, at the time, was "perhaps the leading private citizen of Virginia." Through 1663, he kept busy as a leading member of the colony's Council of State, in developing his Northern Neck lands, and in acquiring additional acreage in Maryland.

Richard never saw his wife and children (other than John) again. He died at Dividing Creek on March 1, 1664. Nagel believes that he probably had been ill for some time before that, because official records show, in Nagel's words, "an erratic participation in county management."

On February 6, 1664 (i.e., less than a month before his death), Richard prepared a new will. He had apparently changed his mind about wishing for his family to remain in England. In his will, Richard directed that Anne was to return to Virginia with all their children (except for the third son, Francis, if he chose to stay in England, possibly for continued management of the family's affairs there). Richard declared that the land in England was to be sold to pay for the education of Richard and Anne's two oldest sons, John and Richard II, with any remaining funds from the sale to be provided to Richard and Anne's twin daughters, Elizabeth and Anne. The will divided his Virginia landholdings among his sons other than Francis. Richard's wife Anne was bequeathed the Dividing Creek estate, with instructions that it was to be divided between the two youngest sons, Hancock and Charles, upon her death. Wife Anne was also bequeathed five slaves (but only for "during her widowhood and no longer") and ten indentured servants.

In addition to the enslaved persons and indentured servants that Lee bequeathed to his widow, he left 10 enslaved persons and 10 indentured servants to his son John, all indentured servants on his "Paradise" plantation to his son



Richard, and five enslaved persons and 10 indentured servants to his son Francis. Francis also received Lee's share in two trading ships.

Sometime before September 1666, Richard's widow Anne remarried (to a man named Edmund Lister), and in compliance with Richard's will, she kept ownership of her land and home but gave up claim to all the slaves.

Anne's death date is not known. Upon her death, the Dividing Creek estate split between Hancock and Charles. Charles' land eventually became known as the Cobbs Hall estate, and his descendants (including my ancestors) became known as the Cobbs Hall line of Lees. Richard and Anne Lee, as well as Charles and his wife Elizabeth Metstand Lee, are believed to be buried in an old family graveyard on the Cobbs Hall lands (*see photos, page 5*).

## TO LEARN MORE

- Lee, Cazenove Gardner, Jr., *Lee Chronicle: Studies of the Early Generations of the Lees of Virginia* (New York: Vantage Press, 1957).
- Lee, Edmund Jennings, *Lee of Virginia, 1642-1892: Biographical and Genealogical Sketches of the Descendants of Colonel Richard Lee* (Philadelphia: 1895).
- Nagel, Paul C., *The Lees of Virginia: Seven Generations of an American Family* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1990, 2007).
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- Wikipedia. "Richard Lee I." (en. [wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Lee\\_I](https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Lee_I))