

## Marguerite La Motte Lee

(21 Dec 1862 – 31 Oct 1936)

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**Lee. Marguerite La Motte du Pont.** On Saturday October 31, 1936, in Washington, D.C., Marguerite La Motte Du Pont, daughter of the late Eleuthere Irene du Pont of Delaware and Charlotte Shepherd Henderson, born December 21, 1862.



MARGUERITE DU PONT LEE

*The Evening Star, November 3, 1936, p. A13*

### **Mrs. Marguerite Lee Buried in Capital**

#### **Member of Du Pont Family Died Saturday After Brief Illness**

Mrs. Marguerite La Motte du Pont Lee, 73, member of the prominent Du Pont family of Delaware, who died Saturday in Homeopathic Hospital, was buried yesterday in Congressional Cemetery. Funeral services were held at the home of her son, Cazanove G. Lee, Jr., 3542 Newark street.

Mrs. Lee was the daughter of the late Eleuthere Irene du Pont and the late Charlotte Shepard Henderson du Pont. Her parents died when she was a child. For many years Mrs. Lee had lived at the Powhatan Hotel. Her death followed a week's illness.

Besides her son here, she leaves another son, Maurice du Pont Lee of Greenwich, Conn., and a brother, Maurice du Pont of New York City.

*The Evening Star, July 18, 1903, p. 16*

### **Women as Sanitary Inspectors**

#### **To the Editor of The Evening Star:**

In Tuesday's Star I notice Mrs. Charlotte Smith recommends that women be appointed sanitary inspectors. Health Officer Woodward states that the work requires a knowledge of physics, chemistry, bacteriology, physiology and hygiene. My knowledge of Georgetown dwellings and backyards is such that I am of the opinion that any sanitary inspector, either man or woman, endowed with a fair amount of common sense and a real desire to right present conditions, can render very valuable service without any of the education Officer Woodward deems necessary. I am not aware who inspects our Georgetown dwellings, but I am aware of the fact that the attention of the proper authorities has been again and again called to the fact that the owner of certain houses--for instance, on South and 31st streets--was not putting in water and plumbing, as the law requires. No attention has been given the matter by those who should enforce the law.

Marguerite Du Pont Lee

*The Washington Post, July 27, 1903, p. 9*

### **Babies and Impure Milk**

#### **Health Officer Woodward's Statistics of Infant Mortality Criticised**

Editor Post: In Friday's Post Health Officer Woodward has a weekly report of infant mortality. Certain statistics are given concerning the number of deaths among children fed on the breast, and on condensed, or cow's milk. He accuses the mothers of the poor of murdering their children owing to an

unwillingness to nurse the babies. In justice to the women he brands as murderers, where are his statistics showing what percentage of these mothers are able to do the nursing he advocates, and for how many weeks or months they are able to do it?

It is a well-known fact to doctors attending the leisure class that even with the aid of nourishing food few of the women can nurse their children beyond a few months, and the majority not at all. Such being the case, why should we suppose that bacon and baker's bread should do for the poor what the best of fare cannot do for the rich?

Dr. Woodward's statistics are misleading. Infant mortality among the poor is not due to the injurious effects of condensed or cow's milk, but to the fact that from the cradle even children are given coffee to drink and partake of the wretched fare upon which the mothers subsist. You are told that a nursing child will not have colic if it has a taste of what the mother eats. If the doctors will take the trouble to inquire closely into the diet of the dying babies they will be surprised at the amount of solid food upon which children under one year old are fed.

Marguerite Dupont Lee

Lee, Marguerite DuPont, *Virginia Ghosts*, Berryville, Va., Virginia Book Company, 1966, Preface  
Marguerite duPont Lee was extraordinary. Exceptionally warm hearted and sympathetic, she had also a keenly inquiring mind and a strong will. She was a rebel against the complacent acceptance of conventional ideas, and she was, incidentally, a serious student of psychic phenomena.

She was born in 1862, the daughter of Eleuthere Irenee duPont and Charles Henderson. Her father was the resident manager of the DuPont powder mill on the Brandywine near Wilmington, Delaware. Her mother, a Virginian in all her family connections, was the daughter of Archibald Henderson, the long-time commandant of the Marine Corps.

Marguerite duPont was born into the Establishment, but the DuPont Company of her youth was not a vast impersonal corporation. As manager of the powder mill, her father worked among the employees and knew them all by their first names. He lived near the plant, and the children's playmates were the children of the mill-hands who lived just across the road. Thus, Marguerite grew up in familiar contact, not only with the elite but also with the industrial working class.

Eleuthere duPont and Charlotte Henderson both died in 1877, leaving five orphans in their big house, which was actually the property of the DuPont Company. After the second funeral, Alfred duPont, their uncle, came to tell the children that the family council had decided to parcel them out one by one among their relatives. He found them armed to defend their home and fireside: Anna (17) held an axe; Marguerite (15), a rolling pin; Alfred (13), a shotgun; Maurice (11), a pistol; Louis (9), a bow and arrow. Uncle Alfred was impressed, and the youngsters kept their castle.

But there were some constraints which even Marguerite's strong will could not overcome. She was unquestionably the best skater on Brandywine Creek, but the boys would not let her take part in their hockey games. Too rough for girls, they said. They probably knew that she would be as fierce a competitor as any of them but they never allowed her to prove it.

For all her tomboyishness, Marguerite was a girl, and a beautiful one at that. Soon there were beaux calling on her, and at the age of eighteen, she chose to marry a thirty year old Virginia cousin, Cazenove Gardner Lee. She became an ornament to the society of Washington, where her husband was a lawyer.

She spent her summers at “Menokin,” a Lee family summer home on the outskirts of Alexandria, near the Virginia Theological Seminary. There, over the years, she entertained a long succession of Seminarians, and thus gained an extensive acquaintance among the Episcopal clergy.

In the later years of her marriage, Mrs. Lee became an aggressive campaigner for women’s rights, as did many another Washington society matron.. She marched in the great Washington parade for Woman’s Suffrage.

Casenove Lee died in 1912. At fifty, his widow found social life empty and unsatisfying. Her sons, Cazenove Gardner Lee, Jr., and Maurice duPont Lee, were already graduated from Cornell, and were well launched on careers in the DuPont Company. Mrs. Lee sold her fashionable residence on New Hampshire Avenue, and built a settlement house in the slums of old Georgetown. There she conducted a kindergarten, a boys’ club, and various classes for the mothers of the neighborhood. At the same time, she devoted herself to less evident private benefactions, and to an endless correspondence with editors, clergymen and public authorities.

When Mrs. Lee freed herself from the demands of the social round in order to give her time to social service work in Georgetown, she also freed herself from the tyranny of fashion.. A simple shirtwaist and skirt became her uniform. When she could no longer find what she wanted in the stores, she made her own clothes on her own sewing machine, and always in the same unchanging style. She depended on an old cobbler in Alexandria for a continuing supply of high button shoes, but when he died, she had to yield on that point.

After ten years in Georgetown, Mrs. Lee turned over her settlement house to the Salvation Army, and retired to a suite in the Powhatan Hotel. From there, she continued her private charities and her correspondence, but she also found time to indulge her interest in psychic phenomena, and to collect the stories that make up this book. She was Virginian enough to know that the stories were largely legendary, but at the same time, she was prepared to believe that underlying them, there was some genuine, inexplicable psychic manifestation.

Mrs. Lee died in 1936. Her spirit remains a strong presence among those who knew her.  
Ludwell Lee Montague.

Lee, Edward Jennings, MD, Lee of Virginia, 1642-1892, The Descendants of Col. Richard Lee, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1974., pp. 515-516

Cazenove Gardner Lee, the third son of Cassius Francis Lee and Anne Eliza Garner, his second wife, was born at Alexandria, the 30th of May, 1850; was married on September 1881 to Marguerite L., the youngest daughter of Eleuthee Irene Dupont, of Wilmington, Delaware, and Charlotte Shepard Henderson, his wife; they have two sons; Casenove Gardner, born the 6th of October 1882, and Maurice Dupont, born the 10th of January, 1885.

Mr. Lee attended private schools at Alexandria, then the Episcopal High School, and lastly the University of Virginia. He is a lawyer by profession, residing at Washington City.