

Richard Bland Lee

(1761 – 12 Mar 1827)

National Intelligencer, March 13, 1827

At his residence, in this City, yesterday afternoon, about four o'clock, Richard Bland Lee, Esq. aged 65 years. After suffering a severe and painful illness of many weeks duration, he finished his course with the resignation of a philosopher and the hopes and consolations of a sincere Christian. An affectionate family, and a large circle of attached friends, lament his death.

Mr. Lee was a Member of the First Congress of the United States from the State of Virginia, and served in the House of Representatives for several years. He was, in that important public service, a contemporary of Mr. Madison, and enjoyed his friendship and esteem, of which, in later days, he received distinguished marks. He was a man of great public virtue, of honorable principles, and of talents of a high order.

With the early history of this City, to which he removed his residence from Virginia, about twelve years ago, his name is or ought to be intimately connected: for he had a material agency in fixing the Seat of Government where it now stands, on the banks of the Potomac. Ever since his removal to this place, he is known to all of us to have been an active and public-spirited citizen.

As a Judge of the Orphans' Court for this county, which office he has held for several years, he has distinguished himself as an able and faithful Magistrate, the protector of the widow and the orphan, and the equitable administrator of the laws.

Whoever knew Mr. Lee well was his friend: if he had an enemy on earth, it was because that enemy knew him not.

The friends and acquaintance of the deceased are invited to attend the Funeral, without further notice, from his late residence, tomorrow (Wednesday) morning at 10 o'clock.

Born to Henry (Light Horse Harry) and Lucy Grymes Lee. Educated by tutors at Chantilly and at the College of William and Mary graduating in 1781. He sat in Virginia's General Assembly as a delegate from Loudoun County and, in 1789, was the first person elected from the northern Virginia district to the new federal Congress. He was elected to the 1st - 3rd Congresses. He lost his seat in 1800 for supporting Jefferson and Hamilton's proposal that the federal government assume the debts of the states to strengthen the role of the federal government. For their votes in favor of the proposal, Richard Bland Lee and fellow Virginian, Alexander White, received the good news that the new capital would be built at the juncture of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers.

After his initial successes, Richard Bland Lee fell into poverty and disrepute as a result of his brother's (Light Horse Harry Lee) financial misdealings and investment disasters. He was forced to sell the Sully Plantation to Francis Lighthorse Lee (son of Richard Henry Lee) in 1808 and retired first to Alexandria and then Washington. His pleas to President Madison resulted in a position on the commission which settled claims of property damage in the War of 1812. Later he was appointed judge of the District's orphan court.

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from Virginia; born at "Leesylvania," in Prince William County, Va., January 20, 1761; pursued English and classical studies in private schools; attended William and Mary College, Williamsburg, Va.; member of the State house of delegates 1784-1788; elected to the 1st through 3rd Congresses (March 4, 1789 - March 3, 1795); unsuccessful candidate for reelection in 1794 to the 4th Congress; again a member of the State house of delegates 1796 and 1799-1806; moved to Washington,

D.C., about 1815; appointed by President Madison in 1816 commissioner to adjudicate claims arising out of the loss or destruction of property during the War of 1812; appointed by President Monroe in 1819 judge of the Orphans' Court of the District of Columbia and served until his death in Washington, D.C., on March 12, 1827; interment in the Congressional Cemetery.