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R. E. Lee: A Biography
by Douglas Southall Freeman

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At 3 o'clock he drew rein in the yard of Pampatike,²⁹ home of his cousin, the gallant
artillerist, p199 -->.



PAMPATIKE, RESIDENCE OF COLONEL THOMAS H. CARTER, KING
WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA, THE FIRST HOME VISITED BY
GENERAL LEE, BEYOND THE CONFINES OF RICHMOND, AFTER
HIS RETURN FROM APPOMATTOX

It probably was at Pampatike that Lee decided to apply for the return of civil
rights

under the first amnesty proclamation.

After a photograph reproduced by courtesy of Spencer L. Carter of Richmond.

The General was recognized and welcomed on the instant and soon was in the circle of admiring relations. He was pleased when they told him Mrs. Carter had wept when her husband came back safe from Appomattox, because she grieved of think he could no longer fight for his country. Lee applauded her, but he did not talk much about the war. Instead, he chatted about Mexico and much about the farm he wished to purchase, and often of the kin of the Carters and of the Lees. Colonel Carter, in the matter of a farm, recommended Clarke County if the General desired a grass country, and Gloucester if he preferred salt-water. Lee declared for the grass. In his turn, he advised his cousin not to

depend for labor on the Negroes, ninety and more in number, who still lived at Pampatike. The government would provide for them, said Lee. In their place, Carter should employ white help. Carter argued politely that this was the counsel of perfection: he had to use what he could get. The General held on. "I have always observed," said he, "that wherever you find the Negro, everything is going down around him, and wherever you find the white man, you see everything around him improving."³⁰

He played for hours with two small daughters of the house, aged three and five, who, at his special request, were sent up to his room in the early morning to visit him before he arose. He delighted, too, in watching Traveller, after the horse had been turned out on the lush lawn to graze and to wallow. "I am sure the days passed here," said the son who must have shared some of them with him, "were the happiest he had spent for many years."³¹

As news spread that the General was at Pampatike, invitations began to pour in. One was to dinner with Mrs. Corbin Braxton of Chericoke, widow of a grandson of Carter Braxton, a signer of the Declaration.³² Along with General and the Carters, she p200 invited young Rooney and young Robert Lee and one of their cousins, all of whom by this time were hard at work raising a crop of corn at the White House.

A great and sumptuous dinner Mrs. Braxton set for her guests in the old, over-bountiful Virginia style. The younger men ate with much heartiness and with no reflections on the waste. "We had been for so many years in the habit of being hungry, Bob Lee explained years after, "that it was not strange we continued to be so awhile yet." But General Lee noticed Mrs. Braxton's lavishness and though of course he did not refer to it while he was her guest, his mind dwelt on it as he drove back to Pampatike with Colonel Carter. "Thomas," said he, "there was enough dinner today for twenty people. All this now will have to be changed; you cannot afford it; we shall have to practise economy."³³

The next day saw the end of his stay at Pampatike. When Traveller was brought around, he was not quite satisfied with the way the blanket was folded, so he had the servant take off the saddle, and kneeling on the ground he arranged the cloth as he thought it best fitted the animal's back. He kept a close eye on the girthing, also, and only when he was satisfied that his mount was comfortable did he say good-bye to his kinsfolk and start back to Richmond. On the way he stopped for a call at Ingleside, another Braxton home. "After this visit away from the city," wrote his son, ". . . he began looking about more than ever to find a country home."³⁴

Lee's sojourn at Pampatike meant much more than rest. It marked the second great decision he reached after the war, a decision almost as important in its consequences as that to which he had come instinctively when he sat down at Arlington and wrote his resignation from the United States army. For it was at Pampatike that he saw for the first time President Johnson's proclamation of May 29. In this document, to all except fourteen designated classes of Confederates, amnesty and pardon were offered those who would take a specified oath to support the constitution and laws of the United States.³⁵ Full property rights, other than in slaves, were to be restored every man who took the oath.

Those like Lee, in the excepted classes of the prominent, were privileged p201 to make special application for individual pardon, with the assurance that "clemency will be liberally extended as may be consistent with the facts of the case and the peace and dignity of the United States."



[29](#) The name is pronounced with the accent on the "ti," and with the "i" of the "tike" given the same value as the name "Ike."



[30](#) *R. E. Lee, Jr.*, p168.



[31](#) *R. E. Lee, Jr.*, p166.



[32](#) Honorable Henry T. Wickham has given the descent and the relationship as follows: Carter Braxton the signer married as his second wife, Elizabeth Corbin. Their son George married Mary Carter, daughter of Charles Carter of Shirley by his first marriage to Mary W. Carter of Cleve. The son of George and Mary Carter Braxton was Corbin Braxton. His wife, General Lee's hostess, was Mary Tomlin. Corbin Braxton was thus Lee's half-first cousin.



[33](#) *R. E. Lee, Jr.*, p168.



[34](#) *R. E. Lee, Jr.*, 269.



[35](#) Text in *II O. R.*, 8, 578-80.



[36](#) *R. E. Lee to G. T. Beauregard, Oct. 3, 1865; Jones, L. and L.*, 390.



37 R. E. Lee to J. Tatnall, Sept. 7, 1865; *Jones*, 208. *Cf. Jones*, 218-19.

