

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Benjamin Gartrell/ E. Brooke Lee Farm

and/or common Silver Spring Farm

2. Location

street & number 10000 Sweepstakes Road

NA not for publication

city, town Damascus

vicinity of

congressional district 8

state Maryland

county Montgomery

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Harold and Cynthia Reznick c/o R. L. Smith

street & number 332 Hungerford Drive

telephone no.: 301-424-7711

city, town Rockville

state and zip code MD 20850

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery Co. Courthouse

liber 7174

street & number 51 Monroe Street

folio 201

city, town Rockville

state MD

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County

date 1976

federal state county local

pository for survey records M-NCPPG

city, town Silver Spring

state MD

7. Description

Survey No. M. 11/14

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move <u>1956</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			Smokehouse

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Main House

The Gartrell/Lee House is a heavily remodeled two story, center cross gable I-house located on an approximately 12.5 acre site off Sweepstakes Road near Damascus. The house was a traditional side-gabled center hall I-house with clapboard walls and moderate pitched standing seam metal roof. However, the building has been extensively remodeled and expanded and no longer reflects its original folk Gothic Revival architectural form. The building today has a rambling outline and irregular plan composed of a frame rectangular historic core built about 1900 with a series of one and two-story brick and frame wing extensions or additions constructed between 1940 and 1980.

In the early 20th century the principle elevation of the house faced north toward Sweepstakes Road and had a three-bay facade with two symmetrical ranks of windows. In the 1940s the house underwent a Colonial Revival renovation that reoriented the main entry to the south side of the building with the construction of a two story frame addition. To develop stylistic uniformity between the old and new sections, the remodeled house was painted white, Neo-classical decorative dentil molding was applied to the overall building's cornice, and all of the windows were decorated with green batten shutters with tree cut outs. This new wing included the addition of the present one-story shed-roofed screened porch on the west side of the house that became the building's main facade.

The central entry and first floor wall and windows of the original northern facade were removed in the twentieth century to make way for a 1956 one-story brick kitchen extension by E. Brooke Lee. Several years later he had a shed roofed two-story corner extension built on the southeast side of the house to expand the living room and add a second floor bedroom. The first of a series of additions by E. Brooke Lee on the north side of the building was the construction of the kitchen wing. This extension was tied into two subsequent brick additions added in the 1960s and 1970s that create an L shaped wing on the north side of the house. These brick additions almost totally obscure the first floor of the building's original principal facade. However, this facade's prominent center gable is visible and has fish scale shingles and a simple pointed window that recall the original Gothic Revival style detailing of the farm house.

8. Significance

Survey No. ^M11/14

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1900; 1956-1984 Builder/Architect Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Summary

The Benjamin Gartrell/ E. Brooke Lee farmstead comprises a heavily remodeled nineteenth century farmhouse and outbuildings adapted in the mid-twentieth century for use as a cattle farm. The buildings no longer convey their original late nineteenth century architectural character and the building's subsequent modern renovation after 1940 does not represent a distinctive type, period, or method of construction or design. The house was the residence of E. Brooke Lee, a major figure in the modern history of Silver Spring and Montgomery County. However, he resided at this property between 1956 and 1984, after his most productive years as county political boss, real estate developer, and planning official. Since properties exist from the period of Lee's most historically important years and his later activities as a gentleman farmer and cattleman after 1954 would not be considered of exceptional importance, the remaining buildings and 12.5 acres of the Gartrell/Lee farm would not meet the criteria described in Sec. 24A of the Montgomery County Code; Preservation of Historic Resources.

Benjamin Gartrell

The Gartrell/Lee House was probably built at the turn of the 20th century and represents a rural vernacular center gable I-house form commonly built in northern Montgomery County before World War I. The property on which the house was built was owned by the Gartrell family for most of the nineteenth century. The Gartrells were a prominent family in the Damascus area and Brookeville in the nineteenth. Both Martinet and Bond's (1865) and Hopkin's (1879) well known survey maps of Montgomery County indicate that Benjamin Gartrell and his heirs owned land along both sides of what is now Woodfield Road.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. ^M 11/14

See continuation sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 12.5

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Bushong, Historic Preservation Planner

organization M-NCPPC date February 1995

street & number 8787 Georgia Avenue telephone 301-495-4570

city or town Silver Spring state MD

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
 Shaw House
 21 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401
 (301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
 DHCP/DHCD
 100 COMMUNITY PLACE
 CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023
 514-7600

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Section 7: Description
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The rambling building has multiple elevations with a variety of window types-- including four-over-four, six-over-six, or eight-over-eight lights-- reflecting its frequent remodelings since 1940. The rear facade on the southeast includes a large tripartite picture window. A modern Neoclassical door surround ornaments the entrance on this corner leading out on to rounded brick stoop and steps. The house's interior has a similar variety of finishes including stock early 20th century bull's eye moldings and plaster walls on the second floor of the house's original core and knotty pine paneling and oak floors on the interior of the house's first floor. Lee used paneling and flooring materials from the old "Blair farm" Silver Spring in his remodeling and extension of the Sweepstakes Road farm house when that landmark was demolished in the 1950s.

Outbuildings

Smokehouse

The smokehouse is a one-story, gable front log building just south of the main house. It was moved from the "Blair farm" in Silver Spring and rebuilt on the site in 1953 and used as a shed. Lee's caretaker, Ellis Donovan, built a frame shed addition to the old smokehouse in the 1960s.

Barn

To the south of the house is a large two-story bank barn with two tile silos that probably dates to the late nineteenth century. The structure had a fieldstone foundation, board and batten siding, and large cupola roof vents on the ridge. The barn's foundation and substructure has been rebuilt, the siding has been largely replaced, and the distinctive cupolas indicating a Gothic Revival styling to match the original house have been removed. All that remains intact are the hewn beams of the original structural framework on the upper floor of the bank barn.

Shed/Garage Complex

Just southwest of the house is a one-story U-shaped courtyard enclosure comprising a series of nineteenth century frame animal, wagon, and tool sheds and a heavily remodeled three-part garage addition for farm equipment and automobiles.

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Bath House

A one-story rectangular formstone concrete bath house was built by E. Brooke Lee after 1953 to provide cattlemen and their workers a facility to shower and clean up after cattle shows were held at his Silver Spring farm.

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Benjamin Gartrell was born in 1800 and land records indicate he first purchased property in the Damascus area in 1823. His will, probated in 1854, suggests that he had a large family and specifically names his wife Mary, daughters Henrietta, Mary, and Julia Leeke and sons William Caleb and Nicholas Gartrell as heirs. Older siblings apparently had already received property as the will mentioned an earlier disposition of property to Julia Leeke and Nicholas Gartrell. A large "frame tobacco house" located on the west side of the farm went to William Caleb and its prominent place in the will suggests that the Gartrell family's living in this period, as was the case for many Damascus farmers from colonial times to about 1900, was dependent on tobacco farming. Gartrell's heirs held the farm on Sweepstakes Road until the late nineteenth century.¹

According to local tradition the Burdett family acquired the Gartrell farmstead and built the present house on the property at the turn of the century. Architecturally, the building is similar to many other farm houses built at this time in the region around Damascus and can be compared to Locational Atlas properties in the potential historic districts of Browningsville (10/13), Purdum and Lewisdale and individual sites such as the Watkins/Mullican Farm (10/33), Biggs Farm (11/15) and McDougall Farm (11/21).

E. Brooke Lee

Born at the Blair-Lee House in Washington, D. C. in 1892, E. Brooke Lee, was a prominent member of a famous Blair-Lee family dynasty that included a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Maryland and Virginia governors, diplomats, a postmaster general, and members of Congress. World War I hero, real estate magnate and county political boss, E. Brooke Lee owned a great deal of land in the Silver Spring area and developed a series of family estates into new suburbs such as Northgate, Colonial Village, Sligo and Sligo Park Hills between 1920 and 1940. The "Colonel," was a close associate of Governor Albert C. Ritchie and worked as his legislative agent during his successive terms between 1920 and 1935. Lee served as secretary of State of Maryland in 1923 and 1924 and, soon after his election to the House of Delegates in 1926, he became House Speaker for the legislative sessions of 1928, 1929, 1930, and 1931.²

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Lee's political influence in Annapolis made him a formidable power in county politics and land development. He was a strong advocate of planned suburban growth in the county facilitated by zoning. Lee was instrumental to the establishment of both the Washington Sanitary Suburban Commission in 1916 and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1927. These agencies would control the development of regional water, sewer and road systems that were essential to the county's growth. Lee remained a force in Montgomery County civic affairs and politics for more than four decades and helped shape the development of the region before his retirement from politics in the 1950s.³

Comparative Properties Associated with the Career of E. Brooke Lee.

There are other properties that are more directly associated with significant phases of E. Brooke Lee's storied four decade long political and business career in the county, including the Silver Spring Armory (Master Plan site 33/14), Llewellyn Fields (#28/17), and the Piney Branch Apartments (8400 Piney Branch Road). Between 1953 and 1959 E. Brooke Lee purchased several farms in the Damascus area and moved to a house on Hawkins-Creamery Road in 1955 with his third wife Nina Lee. Soon thereafter, he decided to enlarge and move into the old Gartrell farmhouse on Sweepstakes Road.

The 1927 Silver Spring Armory is closely associated with Lee's career as he greatly valued his military service and held deep pride in the establishment and growth of Company K of the Maryland National Guard. Lee had joined F Company, First Maryland Infantry at Hyattsville in 1912 and risen through the ranks to become a first lieutenant. Lee would command Montgomery County's newly organized Company K of the Maryland National Guard headquartered in Silver Spring and, with his friend and business associate Frank L. Hewitt, was instrumental to the construction of the Armory as a developmental catalyst for a modern downtown business core in Silver Spring.⁴

E. Brooke Lee was raised, and resided after his first marriage, at the "Blair farm" on Georgia Avenue which was demolished in the 1950s. After the dissolution of his first marriage, Lee remarried and purchased Llewellyn Fields off Norwood Road in 1936 and lived there with his second wife and family until 1946. His father Senator Blair Lee died at this house and his grandchildren today consider this historic residence to be the most

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important property associated with Lee family history after Blair House in Washington and "Blair farm" in Silver Spring. Lee was divorced again in the late 1940s and moved to the Piney Branch apartments on Piney Branch Road. He had lived there briefly in the 1930s after his first divorce and returned to the address where he maintained his residence between 1949 and 1954.⁵

After his third marriage, Lee moved to 8311 Hawkins-Creamery Road near Damascus in 1955. His grandson, E. Brooke Lee III, now owns this house. E. Brooke Lee eventually purchased seven farms in the Damascus district and established a major Polled Hereford Cattle breeding business. With typical energy and ambition, Lee became one the largest Polled Hereford cattle breeders in the country and at its height he owned or leased another nine farms for his cattle in Frederick and three others in Howard County. His last residence was "Silver Spring" farm off Sweepstakes Road, which was sold at auction after his death in 1986. At that time his wife Nina expressed to a reporter the opinion: "I never really considered it a family home and I don't have that many memories of it. On the other hand, your sad to see any era end. He meant more to me than the house."⁶

Continuation Sheet
M: 11-14 - Gartrell / E. Brooke Lee Farm

NOTES

1. Gartrell Family File, Montgomery County Historical Society Library, Rockville, MD; Benjamin Gartrell Will W. T. of R. 2/150, Montgomery County Courthouse, Rockville, MD.

2. For Lee's influential career in Montgomery County's politics and land development, see Ray Eldon Hiebert and Richard K. MacMaster. **A Grateful Remembrance: the Story of Montgomery County, Maryland.** (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery County Government and the Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976), 262-265; and George H. Calcott, **Maryland and America, 1940 to 1980.** (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), 22-24. For Lee's war record see, E. Brooke Lee, Biographical Vertical File, Montgomery County Public Library, Rockville, Maryland.

3. Hiebert and MacMaster. **A Grateful Remembrance: the Story of Montgomery County, Maryland,** 262-265.

4. "E. Brooke Lee." Biographical Vertical File, Montgomery County Public Library, Rockville, MD.

5. Telephone interview with E. Brooke Lee III, February 10, 1995.

6. Montgomery County Historic Society, Historic Building Vertical Files, "Silver Spring" Farm.

Continuation Sheet
M: 11-14 - Gartrell / E. Brooke Lee Farm

Preservation Planning Data:

- a) Geographic Organization: Piedmont
- b) Chronological/Development Periods: Agricultural-Industrial Transition - A. D. 1815-1870, Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-1930, 1930-Present.
- c) Historic Period Themes: Architecture, Agriculture
- d) Resource Type: Farmhouse

Continuation Sheet

M: 11-14 - Gartrell / E. Brooke Lee Farm

Sween, Jane. **Montgomery County: Two Centuries of Change.**
Woodland Hills, Cal: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1984.

Walsh, Richard and Fox, William Lloyd, eds. **Maryland: A History, 1632-1974.** Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society, 1977.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

M: #11-14

1600895504

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Gartrell/E. Brooke Lee Farm

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

10000 Sweepstakes Road

CITY, TOWN

Damascus

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Montgomery

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Col. E. Brooke Lee

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

10000 Sweepstakes Road

CITY, TOWN

Damascus

STATE, zip code

Maryland

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION**CONDITION**

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The house is built in two main parts that now form an L-shaped structure. The earlier part appears to be a three-bay, two-story section that extends to the south and faces west. Here the roof is steeply-pitched, and there is no center gable, but there is a large, fireplace-type chimney on the south end wall. A screened-in porch covers the front of the first story.

Attached to this on the NW corner is another three-bay house, that appears to date from the later 19th Century. This has the customary center gable, with an arched window and returned cornice. Windows have shutters (including the small pairs of gable-end windows), and the sash is 6/6. Both sections have metal roofs. There are several modern additions on this (north) end, including a one-story brick office.

There are several notable outbuildings nearby. These consist of a large, frame bank barn with cupola-type vents on the ridge, and silos attached; a log smokehouse; and an outhouse, used by no less than six U.S. Presidents, that formerly stood on the grounds of the now-demolished "Silver Spring" Mansion on Eastern Ave. near the D.C. line. (Col. Lee wanted to place a marker on this latter building, but he wasn't sure of the appropriate wording!)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

M: 11-14

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

It is very possible that the house on the south end may date from the early/mid 19th Century. It was owned by the Gartrell family at that time. The Burdettes owned the farm during the early 1900's, and Col. Lee bought the place during the 1950's. His family has been a leading force in Maryland and Montgomery County political, military, and business activities for many generations. The Col. himself was the undisputed Democratic leader of Montgomery County during the first half of the 20th Century. His present farming operation here has one of the finest herds of Polled Hereford cattle in the nation. (For additional information on the Lee family, see ANNALS OF SILVER SPRING, and various county histories.)

M: 11-14

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

with Wilson

with Wilson

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Michael F. Dwyer, Senior Park Historian

ORGANIZATION

M-NCPPC

DATE

1/22/74

STREET & NUMBER

8787 Georgia Ave.

TELEPHONE

589-1480

CITY OR TOWN

Silver Spring

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

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RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

political spect

They're going to salute Col. E. Brooke Lee on Nov. 17 at Indian Spring Country Club on his 80th birthday. About 1,000 persons are expected to attend. More than 600 tickets at \$15 each have already been sold.

It should be quite an occasion. Charles Peter and Jack Hewitt are co-chairmen of the event with Gov. Mandel being honorary chairman. Among the more than two dozen names listed as being on the "Col. E. Brooke Lee Testimonial Dinner Committee" are a few Republicans, Judge Thomas B. Anderson and Avis Birely, but they're mostly Democratic, of course.

Read down the list of them and they all evoke memories of the commanding figure who ruled Montgomery County politics with an iron hand for more than two decades.

Here are some: Sallie Glassford, Alger Barbee, "Newty" Brewer, Charlie Buscher, Edna Cook, Sam Eig, Alex Hancock, Jimmy Hewitt, Lawson King, Eddy Northrop, Byron Sedgwick, Ben Shaw, Johnny Sterling, especially Johnny, Bill Wheeler, etc. So many others have died but the colonel--it figures--is still going strong.

Brooke must have been a dashing figure when he came back from France after World War I with his medals and his glory. He had become a close friend of Millard Tydings and Albert C. Ritchie who later were to become famous senator and longtime governor, respectively.

The colonel headed the State Roads Commission, was secretary of state, Speaker of the House of Delegates. But he never won high elective office. He ran for congress once. Some say he enjoyed pulling the strings and being indisputed "boss" and that he didn't really want to hold office. Who needs it? Without being elected to anything he had all of the control. But others

said his heart ached for high office which always eluded him.

The colonel himself was a Princeton graduate, the son of a United States senator, descendant of the Lees, famous in U.S. history for political and military leadership and indisputably one of America's greatest political dynasties.

We first met him right after that other World War that came a little more than 20 years after the first big one.

By then he was already a legend. He was tall, eloquent, incisive, and both charming and ruthless, as the occasion demanded and the best interests of Lee and his organization would be served.

There were some who loved him and there were some who hated him but he was the unchallenged boss for so long. He's no longer ramrod straight, walking now with a slight stoop, but the eyes under bushy brows are still piercing. The voice while not so full and resonant, the kind of voice that was made for barking orders, is still strong.

During all of his stormy career he always found time to maintain his interests in the land, rich and valuable Montgomery County land that brought him a fortune, just as it always did for his ancestors right back to the 17th century when the first Lee came over from England with a political appointment in his pocket and died as the richest man in Virginia, and one of the most powerful. For more than a century the Lees and the Blairs have been big in politics and real estate. While others have been bigger on the national scene, the colonel was the biggest on the state and local scene--in politics and land.

Now, the colonel's son, Blair Lee III, is also big in politics, as the lieutenant governor of Maryland. The colonel never rose quite that high but he had as much power, perhaps more. If he didn't possess it himself he knew who to call.

They'll now pay tribute to him on Nov. 17 and it should be a nice event. We were not on the list of the colonel's disciples, although we always admired him. You can disagree and still admire.

When the colonel appears next month in front of those 1,000 people of all stripes and persuasion there'll be a lot of fancy words spoken and we hope they don't pour it on too thick.

He did some good things for Montgomery County and he did some bad things for Montgomery County and he knows that both statements are true.

If anybody thinks he graciously relinquished power to the people, where it belongs, they're wrong. They shouldn't say that. It had to be seized from him and it was a long, hard and at times dirty, bitter fight. But his foes who wanted a modern, representative local government instead of an old-time political boss finally won.

Nonetheless, there wasn't anybody who fought him who didn't respect him. He was strong, a formidable foe. And for everyone who thought he was a bad man, you could find four who would tell you he was good.

He was all by himself an era, actually, in Montgomery County government and politics. And the idea of honoring him--for his strength and the good that he did is great. The colonel will be writing some more county history on the night of Nov. 17.



M: #11-14

NAME GARTRELL / COL. E BROOKE LEE FARM
LOCATION SWEEPSTAKES RD DAMASCUS, MD
FACADE LOOKING SOUTH
PHOTO TAKEN 1/22/74 MOWYER



NAME GARTRELL/ COL. E. BROOKE LEE FARM

M: #11-14

LOCATION SWEEPSTAKES RD., DAMASCUS, MD.

FACADE N.E.

PHOTO TAKEN 1/22/74

M. OUYER