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Docket Number ~~16~~. 23-0936 Receipt of the Scope of Work for Renaming Confederate Streets
Statement of Danny Smith to the Mayor and City Council on May 23, 2023

Mayor Wilson and Members of the City Council

My name is Danny Smith and I reside at 401 South Lee Street, a centuries old property that has been in the family since 1963. I am past Vice Chair of the city's George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee and immediate past chair of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, but I am speaking on my own behalf tonight.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about a particular street that is included in the Inventory of Confederate Street Names in Alexandria – Lee Street. The inventory clearly states that the street is named for the Lee family of Virginia which consisted of a number of distinguished citizens who contributed immensely to our city, region, and nation.

Who were some of the renowned and accomplished members of the Lee family of Virginia?

Richard Bland Lee who resided at 404 Duke Street was elected the first U.S. Congressman representing Northern Virginia. In that position, he exerted significant influence in locating our new national capital city on the Potomac River and including Alexandria as part of that city. He was also instrumental in promoting the official form of address for our new chief executive – MR. PRESIDENT. He was a close friend of George Washington who gifted Richard and his wife a set of crystal wine glasses upon the birth of their child.

A brother of Richard, Henry Lee III (607 Oronoco Street), was also involved in the promoting the title MR. PRESIDENT. Henry wrote the speech presented by the Mayor of Alexandria in which that form of address was first used in public. Also known as Light Horse Harry, his leadership won him the only gold medal awarded by the Continental Congress to a non-general in the Revolutionary War. Henry also served as the Governor of Virginia and in the U.S. House of Representatives. He wrote in his eulogy about George Washington, "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Henry was the father of Robert E. Lee and was a trusted friend and compatriot in war to George Washington.

Edmund Jennings Lee (428 North Washington Street) was brother to Henry and Richard. His wife was the daughter of Richard Henry Lee who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and was Virginia's first U.S. Senator. Edmund – a renowned attorney -- served as mayor of Alexandria, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Alexandria, President of the Alexandria Canal Company, a founder of the Episcopal Seminary, a warden of Christ Church, and was appointed by George Washington to the Board of Trustees of the Alexandria Academy. Because of his aversion to slavery, he became an early member of an abolition organization – the American Colonization Society.

These Lee brothers had a sister Mary (614 Oronoco Street) who was the wife of Philip Fendall – the first president of the Bank of Alexandria, member of the Alexandria Council, and a director of the Potomac Canal Company which was among the greatest engineering feats of its day.

Yet another brother, Charles Lee (407 North Washington Street), was probably the most accomplished of the Alexandria Lees. Charles was personal attorney to George Washington, was appointed Attorney General of the United States, was Collector of Customs for the port of Alexandria, was elected mayor of Alexandria, was the plaintiff's attorney in the seminal Marbury vs. Madison Supreme Court case, was secretary of the Potomac Canal Company, served as Revolutionary War naval officer of the South Potomac, was a director of the Bank of Alexandria, served as clerk of the Alexandria Common Council, was U.S. Secretary of State pro tem, was a trustee of the Alexandria Academy, and served in the Virginia General Assembly.

Based on the information presented, I respectfully request that Lee Street be removed from the Inventory of Confederate Street Names in Alexandria.

Thank you.