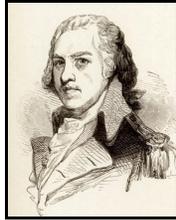


"Light Horse Harry" Henry Lee and Washington County

In the history of Southwestern Pennsylvania there have been many noteworthy personalities, but who are they and what did they do to catch our attention? One of them is Henry Lee III, who was born in Virginia on January 29, 1756 to Maj. Gen. Henry Lee II, and Lucy Grymes. Lee's family tree includes links to America's founding fathers and European royalty. He graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton) and when the Revolutionary War began, he was a Captain in a Virginia dragoon detachment. He was next given the rank of Major and the command of a corps of cavalry and infantry called "Lee's Legion." For his horsemanship he was known as "Light Horse Harry." He was made Lt. Colonel and he served in three major southern battles, ending at the British surrender at Yorktown.



Lee's first marriage was to Matilda Ludwell and they had three children. She died in 1790. In 1793 he married Anne Hill Carter and she bore six children, the fifth child being Robert Edward Lee (1807-1878), who became a Confederate general in the Civil War.

Lee served in the Continental Congress, where he favored the adoption of the United States Constitution. From 1791 to 1794 he was Governor of Virginia.

In July, 1794, only 5 years after the United States Constitution was ratified, President Washington was truly called upon "to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." Distraught farmers in Washington County, Pennsylvania organized themselves as rebels to repeal the federal law that they register their stills and pay an excise tax on whiskey. Washington tried to negotiate a peaceful solution, but when the radicals persisted, he would not let their treason, politics or bloodshed splinter the Constitutional unity of the United States. The President proclaimed on September 20 that military action was needed to remove the rebellious leaders. Some 13,000 men from four states quickly responded to his call to arms.

By the end of September, the federal army's march reached Carlisle, and on October 4 Washington joined them there. On October 11, the President went to Cumberland to review the troops coming from Maryland and Virginia. On the nineteenth, all met at Bedford. Here Washington turned the command of the troops over to General "Light Horse Harry" Henry Lee.

Lee, still the Governor of Virginia, was given executive orders "to suppress opposition to the law, by military force and judicial process." The President then returned to Philadelphia, and the troops marched in two columns toward Parkinson's Ferry, (Monongahela, in

Washington County) which was the epicenter of the farmer's rebellion. Lee led the southern column and by November 1, they arrived in Uniontown. Gen. John Neville and Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton were in this group. Col. Presley Neville was in the northern column.

On November 8 Lee issued a proclamation that the troops were there because the people of the United States were determined to uphold the new government they had just constituted. Lee identified to Gen. William Irvine the leaders of the rebellion who were to be arrested, and on November 12, in what has been called "The Terrible Night" several score citizens were arrested. The march of eighteen insurgents to Philadelphia for trial soon followed.



Violence was minimal so on November 17, John Neville and others began to reopen their tax offices. Lee ordered most of the troops to return to their own homes. To maintain peace in and around Pittsburgh, Gen. Daniel Morgan was placed in charge of small detachments of troops. On Christmas Day the 20 captured rebels arrived in Philadelphia for their court trial.

Lee pardoned many local insurgents on November 29, except David Bradford from Washington County, who had earlier fled to New Orleans. President Washington pardoned those who had been tried in Philadelphia. The Whiskey Rebellion was now over. The excise law was rescinded in 1802 by President Jefferson.

After the Whiskey Rebellion, Lee became a member of the United States House of Representatives where he wrote the phrase "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen" in his oration on Washington at the President's death. In the financial panic of 1796, Lee was reduced to poverty and he was temporarily placed in debtor's prison.

In 1812 Lee was beaten while helping to defend the editor of a Baltimore newspaper from a mob because the paper opposed the War of 1812. Lee suffered internal and head injuries. He went to the West Indies in an attempt to heal the wounds. He died on March 25, 1818 and he is buried in the Lee crypt in the Lee Chapel, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.

References:

The Whiskey Rebellion: Southwestern Pennsylvania's Frontier People Test the American Constitution, Jerry A. Clouse, PHMC, 1994

Historical Magazine of Monongahela, 1909

Art sketch: J. Howard Iams "The Terrible Night"