Custis-Lee Mansion
THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL

In this mansion, in April 1861, Robert E. Lee wrote his resignation from the United States Army in order to join the cause of Virginia and the South.

The Custis-Lee Mansion is distinctive through its long associations with the families of Custis, Washington, and Lee. By act of Congress in 1955, it was made a permanent memorial to Robert E. Lee.

This home of George Washington Parke Custis, the foster son of the First President, was for years the treasury of both the Washington heirlooms and the Washington tradition. Here Robert E. Lee, a young lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and Mary Custis, the great-granddaughter of Martha Washington, were married and reared a family. Here, also, Col. Robert E. Lee, torn between devotion to his country and to his native State, made his fateful decision, the substance of which he had written to his son a few months before: "It is the principle I contend for... But I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than a dissolution of the Union... Still, a Union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets... has no charm for me. I shall mourn for my country and for the welfare and progress of mankind. If the Union is dissolved... I shall return to my native State... and save in defence will draw my sword on none." Today Arlington House, as it was formerly known, furnished with appointments of its early period, preserves for posterity the atmosphere of gracious living, typical of a romantic age of American history.

Early History

George Washington Parke Custis, builder of Arlington House, was the grandson of Martha Washington and the foster son of George Washington. When Martha Dandridge Custis became the wife of Col. George Washington, she was a widow with two children, Martha Parke Custis and John Parke Custis. Martha Parke Custis died in her teens without having been married, but John Parke Custis married Eleanor Calvert of Maryland in 1774, and upon his death at the close of the Revolutionary War left four children. The death of John Parke Custis was a shock, not only to his mother, Mrs. Washington, but to General Washington as well, as he is reported to have remarked to the grieving mother at the deathbed, "I adopt the two youngest children as my own." Their names, period, the traditions of Arlington were maintained. Situated on the traveled road from the South, Arlington was a favorite stopping place for friends and friends. Its hospitable door always open to such guests.

The Lees Leave Arlington

Following the news of the secession of Virginia, news which he had hoped to hear, Colonel Lee, on April 20, resigned his commission in the U.S. Monday morning, April 22, at the request of the Governor of Virginia, he departed for Richmond. Mrs. Lee remained at the home engaged in the work of dismantling the home and sending family possessions to the place of safety. Soon after she left, Federal troops occupied Arlington. The remaining family possessions were taken from Arlington to the old Patent Office in Washington, but not before man including some of the Mount Vernon looms, had been carried away.
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History

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In 1802, the year his grandmother, Mrs. Washington, died, George Washington Parke Custis began building Arlington House on the estate of nearly 1,100 acres which his father had purchased from the Alexander family in 1778. He named the estate "Arlington" and the home "Arlington House" in honor of the ancestral homestead of the Custis family on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The house was to receive the legacy of his grandmother—furniture and pictures, plate and china from Mount Vernon, and more precious still, personal effects of Washington. Two years later, at the age of 23, he was married to Mary Lee Fitzhugh of Alexandria and "Chatham."

Plans for the building were drawn by George Hadfield, a young English architect. The north wing was built first and the south wing was completed in 1804. The foundation stone and timber came from the estate. The bricks with which the house was built were burned from native clay. The portico and large center section were not finished until 1817.

Arlington

The extent of the front of the mansion, with its two wings, is 140 feet. The wings are identical, except that in the north wing the space corresponding to the state dining room in the south wing was divided into small rooms for the temporary accommodation of Mr. and Mrs. Custis while the house was being built and was never changed. The central portion is divided by a wide central hall. A large formal drawing room with two fine marble fireplaces lies south of this hall. To the north of it can be seen the family dining room and family parlor separated by a north and south partition broken by three graceful arches. The second story is also divided by a central hall on either side of which there are two bedrooms and accompanying dressing rooms. A small room used as a linen closet is at the end of this hall. The third floor was used only for storage purposes and remained an unfinished attic. The grand portico facing the Potomac.

The dining room as viewed from...
The Robert E. Lee Memorial

In this mansion in April 1861, Robert E. Lee wrote his resignation from the United States

The Custis-Lee Memorial

At 1999, the Lee mansion was restored and opened to the public. The mansion now serves as a museum and a reminder of the history of the Custis-Lee family and their connection to Robert E. Lee. The mansion is located on the grounds of Lee Park in Arlington, Virginia. Today, it is a popular destination for visitors and history enthusiasts alike.
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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The National Park Service is responsible for protecting and preserving the natural and cultural resources of the United States. This includes managing national parks, forests, and recreation areas, as well as protecting wildlife, historic sites, and other cultural resources.

The National Park Service works closely with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private organizations to ensure that the nation's public lands and resources are used in a responsible and sustainable manner.

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The Voice of the Nation
from the Castle - LeMoyne

The castle is open to the public daily from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The grounds are open year-round from dawn to dusk.

For more information, contact the National Park Service at 703-454-5100.