

LEEMONT CEMETERY

– Established 1878 –

When the Town of North Danville was organized in 1877, little thought was given to the need for a cemetery. The new mayor and town council were busy drafting and approving ordinances that would provide a safe, comfortable life for the citizens of Virginia's newest town. A place for burials would come later.



It was not until October 1878 that a cemetery committee was appointed. Before the close of the first meeting, the committee announced the purchase of a lot from W. A. Baugh to be used as the town cemetery. The committee was composed of William A. Baugh, Thomas J. Lee, George Corbin, and Thomas B. Fitzgerald. It also announced the purchase of land, then being used as a cemetery, from Mrs. A. M. Keen. It is believed that this property lay adjacent to the lot purchased from Baugh.

The cemetery committee was authorized to “lay-off, grade, fence, and otherwise improve” the new cemetery. Chairman Baugh exhibited a letter to council in February 1879 from John Liversedge. Liversedge agreed to plant trees of “various kinds” throughout the cemetery for the sum of ten dollars. A thrifty council consented to have him plant only half of his trees so that the cost would be reduced to five dollars.

In April 1879, Baugh reported that half of the cemetery, now called North Danville Cemetery, “had been laid-off in squares, streets and walks constructed, the land seeded, and the fences whitewashed.”

June brought a report to council that Liversedge had prepared a framed map, covered with glass of North Danville Cemetery. The cost of eleven dollars was approved.



North Danville's new mayor, John T. Keen, was appointed July 13, 1880. Under his guidance, work on the cemetery continued. A charge of one dollar was initiated for residents of the county buried in the cemetery. After a request by a citizens' committee, the town council referred to the street committee their request for the building of a plank walk on Cemetery Street. This street led to the cemetery from Main Street. It is speculated that there was

considerable pedestrian traffic by those visiting the cemetery, especially on weekends. Cemetery Street joined Main Street between the properties on Lee and Linden.

Lee was an early spokesman for the establishment of the Town of North Danville. After the town was formed, he served as a councilman, as a member of numerous committees, and as mayor. His early death on October 8, 1887, was a result of blood-poisoning. He left an estate valued at \$150,000. Lee was laid to rest in North Danville Cemetery. A beautiful granite vault was erected by John A. Rowe, a marble and granite dealer of Danville, at a cost of \$2,900. The simple inscription reads, "Lee."

After Lee's death, Mrs. Lee donated additional land to the town for use of the ever-expanding cemetery. It was given in return for perpetual care of the Lee plot and vault.

The cemetery, referred to as North Danville Cemetery, later as Neapolis Cemetery, is known today as Leemont Cemetery in memory of Thomas Jefferson Lee. The various parcels of land that made up the cemetery are enclosed by a low hedge row. It lies on the eastern side of Claiborne Street, bounded by Clement Avenue on the north and First Street on the south. Thomas J. Lee, had he lived, would have witnessed much change from the vantage point of his vault. He would have seen the cemetery surrounded by houses and the town develop to an unimaginable size. Recently he would have seen genealogists recording the inscriptions from the stones, seeking a permanent record that otherwise might be lost. Lee would be proud of these people. He would be proud too, of his town, North Danville.