

Lexington, Va.

A pleasant place to pass the day

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

LEXINGTON, Va. — Stonewall Jackson didn't eat here in the White Column Inn, and neither did Robert E. Lee, although their names are connected with almost everything else in this historic little picture-postcard town.

The Inn, which has the white-columns-against-red-brick so common to old Virginia architecture, is on a stretch of Main Street restored in recent years by the Historic Lexington Foundation.

When you pass through the columns and note the special of the day on the chalkboard menu, you pass from the 19th century streets to the living heart of the 20th century town.

Students from Washington and Lee University and the Virginia Military Institute rub elbows with lawyers from Court Square in a noisy room full of homemade food and hometown music.

Peter Goss, director of Lexington's Department of Visitor Relations, will probably be there, in shirt and tie or blue jeans. Lexington is full of National Historic Landmarks but Peter isn't one of them.

He is an ex-Floridian who fell in love with this town as a student at Washington and Lee, and he runs a very personal help-the-visitor program from the Visitor Center on nearby Washington Street.

If you follow the signs to the center, his staff will give walking tour information about the newly restored Stonewall Jackson House, the graves of Jackson and Lee, the 24 historic homes in town and the two unusual campuses, with their tourist attractions, on the ridge above town.

If you don't drop in, Goss will probably stop you on the street to see if you need anything. This is a small town, population about 10,000, and you can get your history sweetened by friendly Shenandoah Valley accents if you try.

THERE ARE THREE chains and two independent hotels around town, but the best buy in interesting accommodations is definitely the Alexander-Withrow House, one of the two buildings that survived the fire of 1798.

It has been a school and a pest office in its time, but it is now a beautifully restored country inn where you can rent a two-room suite with bathroom for \$35 a night, double, \$5 extra for

each additional person. There's no dining room but it's on the same block as the White Column Inn, next door to the Country Kitchen bake shop and within easy walk of the Southern Inn (Greek food), Spanky's Delicatessen (big sandwiches and Tiffany lamps), the Palm Parlor (omelettes) and quiche and a French restaurant, Le Cardinal.

The Alexander-Withrow House has only seven suites. We couldn't get in. Reserve in advance if you want these very spacious rooms for this moderate price.

If you looked at this town from the air, you would see it nestled in a hollow near the river, with Washington and Lee University and Virginia Military Institute side-by-side on a ridge above town.

Goss' walking tour takes you through the historic old streets and uphill to the Lee Chapel, built on the lip of a hill in front of the red brick, colonnaded, classrooms of Washington and Lee.

George Washington endowed this university in 1749, and Lee was its president from after the Civil War to his death in 1870. Lee supervised the building of the chapel and had his offices in the basement.

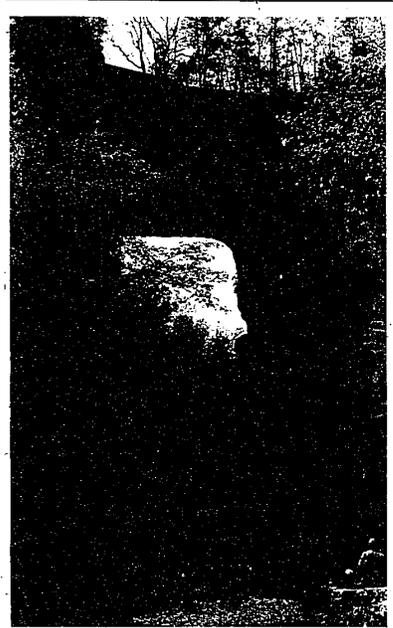
He and his family are buried there, next to a museum collection of his memorabilia, and a full reclining statue of Lee dominates the Lee Memorial Chapel at the back of the main hall. Regimental flags hanging from the four corners of the room are authentic flags of the Confederate army.

Lee's horse, Traveller, was re-interred outside the chapel in 1971, after the building was completely stripped and restored.

Follow a Virginia Military Institute (VMI) cadet across campus to the institute grounds next door and you will find Stonewall Jackson's horse, Little Sorrel, stuffed and still standing in the VMI museum.

This is an entirely different kind of campus from Washington and Lee. Here, a gray stone buildings surround a parade ground dotted with Civil War cannon, and uniformed students change guard every day at 12:30 p.m.

Lee's dress parade is held at 4:15 p.m. Fridays. Women can't go beyond the entrance to the barracks, but from the doorway you can see the young men marching to class or playing with Frisbees on the



Natural Bridge is a natural wonder 12 miles south of Lexington. The letters G.W., carved into the side, are said to be those of George Washington who surveyed the site. So impressed was Thomas Jefferson with the bridge that he asked for and was granted ownership. (Photos by Micky Jones)

outside grounds. Jackson taught here for 10 years before he led his VMI cadets off to the Civil War. George C. Marshall, war hero and author of the Marshall Plan,

graduated here in 1901. The George C. Marshall Library and Museum, on the west side of the parade ground, has interesting exhibits, including a 25-minute electric map presentation of World War II.

All of these attractions in Lexington are free, except for the Stonewall Jackson House, which was renovated and re-opened downtown in 1979.

Adults \$1.25, children 75 cents.) Things to do around Lexington include:

The Cyrus McCormick Wayside, 20 miles north, where you can view the farm and workshop used by McCormick when he invented the mechanical reaper. Natural Bridge, a 215-foot-high limestone arch surveyed by George Washington and owned by Thomas Jefferson, 12 miles south. Both are on Highway 11, which is in itself the historic Valley Pike.

If you are looking for lively nightlife, you should probably bypass Lexington for big cities like Washington D.C., 180 miles away. There is good summer stock theater at the Henry Street Playhouse, in Lexington, right next door to the White Column Inn.

Neither Jackson nor Lee ate at the Inn, but you'll hear their names banded about often enough. Lee rode into Lexington a few months after Appomattox. . . .



travel log

Iris Sanderson Jones

contributing travel editor

Less tax, new thrills and an Ohio opening

Travelers to Canada can get a couple of important tax breaks to offset the inflationary costs of travel. The accommodation tax, formerly charged on all hotel rooms in Ontario, has been removed until March 1981.

Sales tax is also waived if you take your purchases out of Canada.

If your purchases are sent out of Canada by the vendor who sells them to you, you pay no retail tax. If you carry your purchases home, you must pay the tax but you can apply for a rebate later. Keep your receipts.

For more information on this, contact the Canadian Government Office of Tourism in Detroit.

OTHER NEWS FROM Canada includes an update on Canada's Wonderland, a \$108 million theme park being built 20 miles northwest of downtown Toronto at the junction of Highway 400 and Major Mackenzie Drive, in Maple.

The 320-acre park (they call it 130a in Canada, now that they are on the metric system) will be the first theme park in Canada. It is half finished. The Canadians hope to finish it by fall, and have it fully opened in the spring of 1981.

Half the total area will be parking lot; the rest is made up of rides, shops, restaurants, theaters and live entertainment, with five thematic areas set against an artificial mountain. They include International Street, Medieval Fair, World Expo 1890, Frontier Canada and the Happy Land of Hanna-Barbera.

IF YOU CAN'T wait that long for summer fun and games, New Orleans is planning an 11-day summer festival to run July 4-14, celebrating both Independence Day in America and Bastille Day in France.

There will be folk dancing, block parties in the French Quarter, street musicians, Cajun music, jazz concerts fete markets, wine and cheese tastings, a fireworks displays and lots of other happy-making events.

It's called La Fete De La Nouvelle Orleans. For more information, contact Kit More at More and Associates, 8333 Conti, New Orleans, La. 70112.

SEA WORLD in Ohio opens May 24, which Canadians still celebrate as Queen Victoria's birthday. What they will be celebrating in Aurora, Ohio, are four whales and six new shows.

Beluga white whales and Pacific white-sided dolphins will be introduced at the park, along with the recently built Nautilus Showplace, a 2,500-seat theater.

Rates are \$8.25 for big and little kids 13 and older, \$6.25 4 through 12; and kids younger than four, free.

AN INTERNATIONAL golf directory, a specialized directory listing 5,000 places around the world where you can stay and play golf, has just been published by IGD, 444 Burchett St. Glendale, Calif.

I have not seen it. In fact, it is primarily designed for travel agents, but if you are an avid golfer and traveler, it might be worth the \$12.95 charged for it. It includes country clubs, golf courses and resorts worldwide.

MATRIX: MIDLAND, arts and science celebration, will include a writer's conference Saturday, June 14, at the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, 1710 W. St. Andrews St.

Pros and poets and PR and marketing experts will share their knowledge. Speakers include Norman Cousins, Saturday Review editorial board chairman, James Vesely, Detroit News feature editor, Evelyn Gill, International Poetry Review editor, and Julia Grice, Cynthia King, Elyse Rogers, Kirk Polking, Richard Long and Irene Warsaw.

The conference runs 8:30 to 4:30 p.m. and the cost is \$28. For more information, contact Margaret Allen, conference coordinator, at the above address, or call 1-517-835-7157.

CELESTE HOLM, speaking of Matrix: Midland, will appear there at 8:15 p.m. June 16 to share songs, backstage stories and anecdotes in a tribute to "Oklahoma," the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical in which she played Ado Annie in the original 1943 B'way production. The actress will be accompanied by the Northwood Symphonette. For information, call 1-517-631-7557.



What if they gave a war and blinking lights and bits and bytes were the only casualties? In the George C. Marshall Research Library at the Virginia Military Institute visitors can follow World War II events via electronic wizardry.

Laker flying to Miami

You're in Miami, Fla., and suddenly the urge to visit Elizabeth and her brood strikes. What to do? Sir Freddie's Laker Airways is offering an inaugural \$112 one-way (\$224 round-trip) fare to London from May 22 to June 30. After that, prices will vary according to one of three plans available.

All this to kick off the Miami-to-London-and-back-to-Miami connection. The eight-hour trip will be aboard wide-body DC10-30s. For reservations, call 800-221-0374.

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