

Lee, Arthur Carl ^[1]

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by C. Sylvester Green ^[2], 1991; Revised December 2021

3 Sept. 1886–17 July 1974



"Arthur Carl Lee," portrait, oil on canvas, by Douglas Chandor, 1931. From the Duke University Archives Art and Artifacts Collection. Presented on DukeSpace. Used under Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-ND.

^[3]Arthur Carl Lee, engineer and construction company executive, was born in Anderson, S.C., the son of W.S. and Jennie Lind Williamson Lee. He completed his preparatory schooling at Anderson High School in 1904 and entered Clemson College in the fall. Following his graduation he enrolled in Cornell University, from which he received the degree of bachelor of civil engineering in 1910.

Lee began his professional career as an engineer with the Anderson Water, Light, and Power Company, where he worked for seventeen years on a wide range of construction and engineering projects for that and other subsidiaries of the Duke Power Company ^[4]. In 1921 he became a registered engineer in North Carolina. The Piedmont and Northern Railway, an electrified line in the two Carolinas, and numerous hydroelectric and steam plants were built under his direction. Additionally, William States Lee, Jr., one of the founders of the Duke Power Company, was the brother of Arthur Carl Lee.

When James B. Duke ^[5] and his family and associates were ready to build Duke University, they asked Lee to become the executive builder, responsible for all layout, planning, and construction of the vast educational and medical complex. He continued in that position through 1960.

In 1933 Lee created two private corporations: the Lee Engineering Corporation and the Lee Construction Company, both with headquarters in Charlotte ^[6]. After retiring from the Duke University job, at age seventy-four, he devoted his remaining years to these two companies of which he was president and treasurer.

Lee was a member of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers and the American Society of Civil Engineers ^[7]. By gubernatorial appointment, he was a member of the Board of Registration for Engineers and Land Surveyors from 1938 until 1956 and chairman for the last twelve years. For a number of years he also was a deacon in the Myers Park Presbyterian Church, Charlotte.

In 1913 Lee married Nellie Watkins of Anderson, S.C., and they were the parents of three children: Arthur C., Jr., Elizabeth (Mrs. E. Fred McPhail), and William Franke. He died in Charlotte and was buried there.

References:

Charlotte Observer, 18 July 1974.

Duke University, *Alumni Bulletin*, December 1974.

William S. Powell, ed., *North Carolina Lives* (1962).

Additional Resources:

Arthur Carl Lee Collection. J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections, UNC Charlotte.
<http://specialcollections.uncc.edu/manuscript/ms0096> ^[8] (accessed June 24, 2014).

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Chandor, Douglas. "Arthur Carl Lee." Oil on canvas. 1931. Art and Artifacts Collection, Duke University Archives. DukeSpace. <http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/1463> ^[3] (accessed June 24, 2014).

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#),^[18]

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