

**STAFF REPORT: PROPOSED STREET  
NAME CHANGE – NORTH LEE STREET  
AND SOUTH LEE STREET TO MARTIN  
LUTHER KING, JR. WAY**

## Contents

<b>Request</b> .....	2
<b>Location</b> .....	2
<b>Purpose of Historical Research</b> .....	6
<b>Common Sources of Street Names</b> .....	7
<b>Researching the Origin of Street Names</b> .....	7
<b>Historical Context</b> .....	8
<b>Early Development of Stockbridge</b> .....	8
<b>Early Cartographic References to Stockbridge</b> .....	10
<b>Early Lee Family References in Henry County</b> .....	13
<b>Census Documentation (1880–1950)</b> .....	14
<b>Documented Existence of Lee Street (1918)</b> .....	16
<b>Early Development Along Lee Street</b> .....	18
<b>Mayoral History</b> .....	20
<b>Municipal Records and Mapping</b> .....	21
<b>Later Documentation of Lee Street</b> .....	24
<b>Summary of Findings</b> .....	28
<b>Analysis</b> .....	29
<b>Proposed Action</b> .....	30
<b>Staff Recommendation</b> .....	31
<b>Historical Timeline</b> .....	32
<b>Historical Timeline (cont.)</b> .....	33
<b>Historical Timeline (cont.)</b> .....	34

## **Request**

The City Council is requested to consider adoption of a resolution to rename North Lee Street and South Lee Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.

The proposed name change is intended to recognize and honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose leadership during the Civil Rights Movement had a profound and lasting impact on communities throughout the United States and the State of Georgia. Designation of a roadway in his honor represents a commemorative action consistent with practices adopted by many municipalities to acknowledge individuals of national and historical significance.

The subject corridor is located within the historic downtown area of the City of Stockbridge and serves as an important local street providing connectivity between residential neighborhoods, commercial properties, and key civic destinations. As a continuous north-south route, the corridor functions as part of the City's established street network and contributes to both local access and community identity.

Due to community discussion and varying perspectives regarding the origin and historical significance of the existing street name, the City initiated additional research to better understand the background of Lee Street. This effort was intended to provide an objective, fact-based foundation to inform the City Council's consideration of the proposed renaming.

Accordingly, this report compiles and evaluates available historical documentation, including newspaper archives, property records, census data, and municipal history, to identify the earliest known references to Lee Street and assess its likely origin. The findings are presented to assist the City Council in making an informed policy decision that considers both historical context and community values.

## **Location**

North Lee Street and South Lee Street are located within the historic downtown area of the City of Stockbridge and run generally north-south through the community, forming a continuous local corridor.

As illustrated in the map below, the corridor extends across North Henry Boulevard (U.S. Highway 23), which serves as a major regional transportation route connecting Stockbridge to the broader Atlanta metropolitan area. This intersection represents a key node within the city, linking local circulation routes with a principal arterial roadway.

The Lee Street corridor lies within an area that historically developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, following the expansion of rail transportation and associated commercial activity in Henry County. Development patterns in this area were heavily influenced by proximity to transportation infrastructure, with streets such as Lee Street serving as connectors between residential areas, local businesses, and civic destinations.

As shown in the aerial imagery, Lee Street functions as a key connector across North Henry Boulevard (U.S. Highway 23), which is a major regional arterial linking Stockbridge to the Atlanta metropolitan area. The corridor provides direct access to several important civic and community destinations, including:

- Stockbridge City Hall
- Stockbridge Amphitheater
- First Baptist Church of Stockbridge
- Stockbridge Elementary School
- Patrick Henry educational facilities

This concentration of civic, institutional, and community-serving uses highlights the corridor's role as a central spine within the historic downtown area.

Notably, historical records indicate that the first building associated with First Baptist Church of Stockbridge was dedicated in 1920 and was located across Lee Street, further confirming that the roadway was already established and recognized within the community by the early twentieth century. This provides additional historical context demonstrating that Lee Street functioned as a defined and important corridor during the period of early civic and institutional development in Stockbridge.

South of North Henry Boulevard, the corridor transitions into a mix of residential and quasi-institutional development patterns, including multifamily housing and neighborhood-scale streets. North of the corridor, development reflects earlier residential patterns and smaller-scale land divisions typical of early town growth.

A particularly significant property along the corridor is located at 108 South Lee Street, currently operating as Pinehurst Catering & Events Facility. Based on available tax assessor data, this structure dates to approximately circa 1900, making it one of the earliest documented developed properties along Lee Street.

The presence of this structure is important from both a historical and planning perspective:

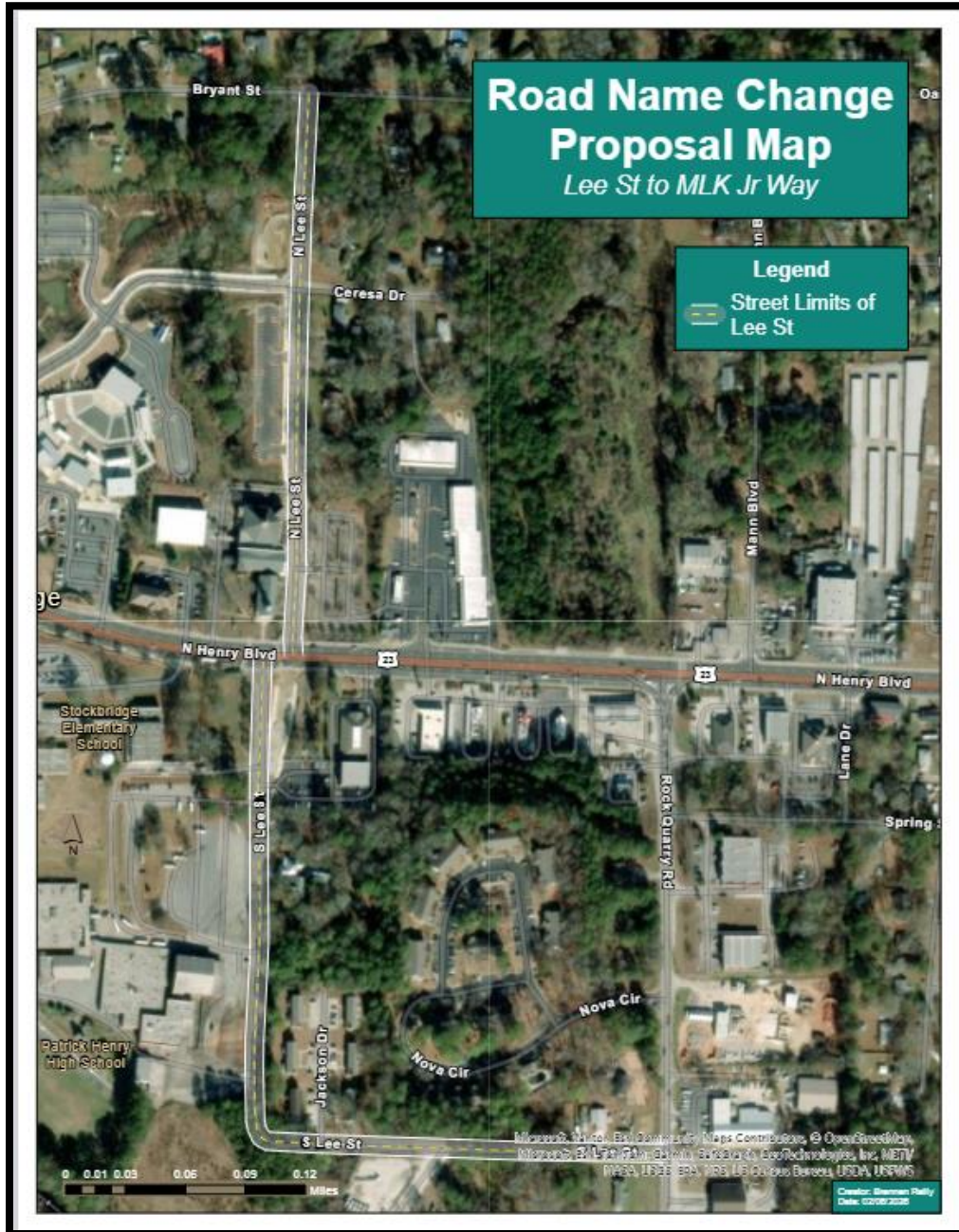
- It demonstrates that development was already occurring along Lee Street by the turn of the twentieth century;
- It reinforces that the roadway was functioning as an established access route prior to modern subdivision and zoning practices; and
- It reflects a traditional development pattern, where structures were constructed along existing roadways that served as primary corridors for movement and access.

The surrounding parcel configuration further supports this pattern, with properties fronting directly onto Lee Street and exhibiting irregular lot shapes consistent with early land division practices rather than later planned subdivisions.

Because of its location within the historic core of the city, Lee Street has long been an integral component of Stockbridge's transportation network and community identity. The corridor reflects

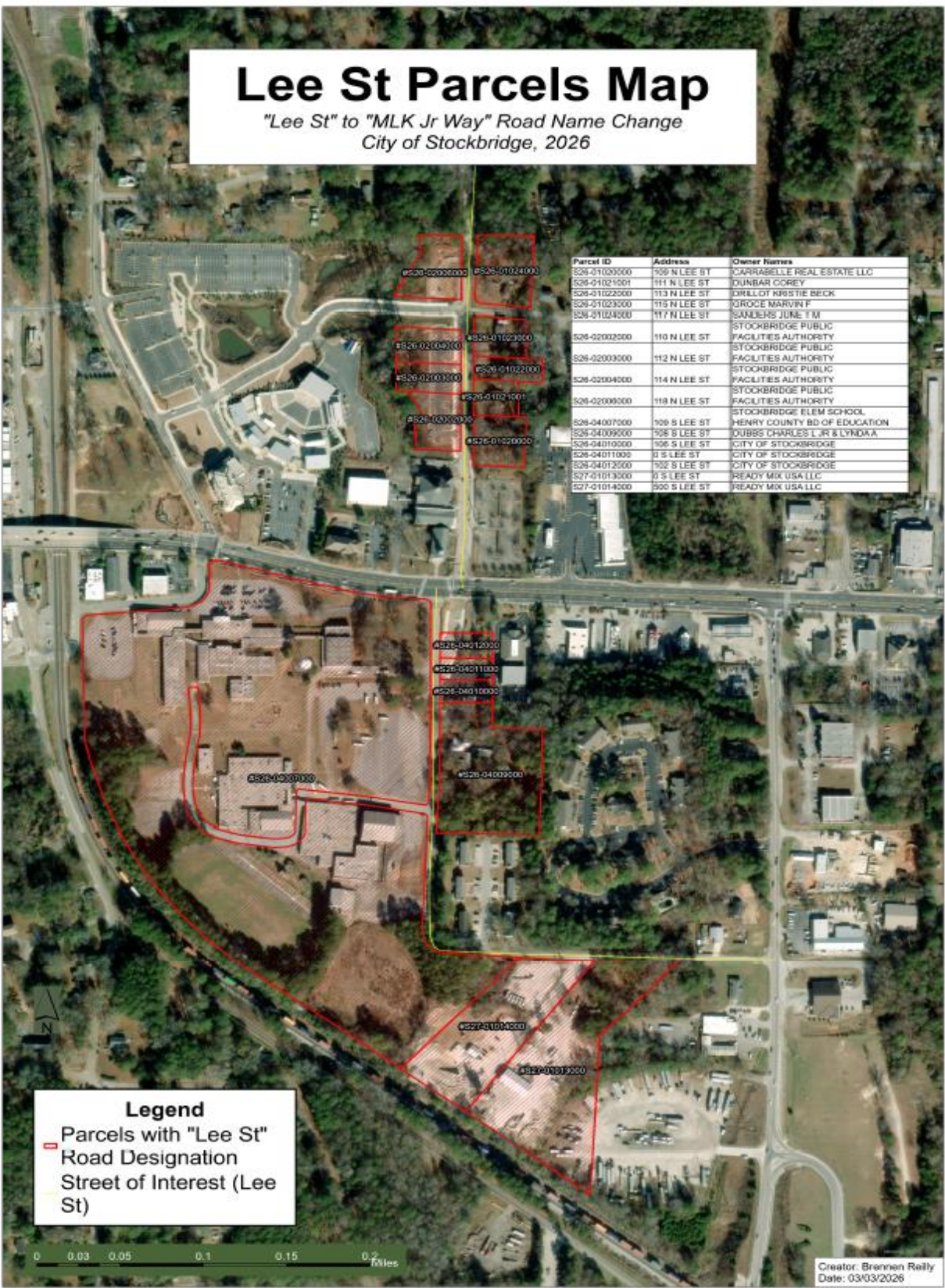
the City's early development pattern, linking historic residential areas, civic institutions, and later commercial growth along North Henry Boulevard.

Taken together, the physical layout, surrounding land uses, and presence of early structures such as 108 South Lee Street, along with documented institutional development such as the 1920 church site, provide strong evidence that Lee Street developed organically as part of the City's initial growth framework and has remained a continuous and significant corridor within the community over time.



# Lee St Parcels Map

"Lee St" to "MLK Jr Way" Road Name Change  
City of Stockbridge, 2026



Parcel ID	Address	Owner Names
526-01020000	109 N LEE ST	CARRABELLE REAL ESTATE LLC
526-01021001	111 N LEE ST	DUNBAR COREY
526-01022000	113 N LEE ST	DRILLDT KRISTIE BECK
526-01023000	115 N LEE ST	PROCE MARVIN F
526-01024000	117 N LEE ST	SARKIS JUNE T M
526-02002000	110 N LEE ST	STOCKBRIDGE PUBLIC FACILITIES AUTHORITY
526-02003000	112 N LEE ST	STOCKBRIDGE PUBLIC FACILITIES AUTHORITY
526-02004000	114 N LEE ST	STOCKBRIDGE PUBLIC FACILITIES AUTHORITY
526-02005000	116 N LEE ST	STOCKBRIDGE PUBLIC FACILITIES AUTHORITY
526-02006000	118 N LEE ST	STOCKBRIDGE PUBLIC FACILITIES AUTHORITY
526-04007000	109 S LEE ST	STOCKBRIDGE ELEM SCHOOL HENRY COUNTY BD OF EDUCATION
526-04009000	108 S LEE ST	DUBBS CHARLES L JR & LYNDAA
526-04010000	106 S LEE ST	CITY OF STOCKBRIDGE
526-04011000	104 S LEE ST	CITY OF STOCKBRIDGE
526-04012000	102 S LEE ST	CITY OF STOCKBRIDGE
527-01013000	10 S LEE ST	READY MIX USA LLC
527-01014000	900 S LEE ST	READY MIX USA LLC

**Legend**  
 Parcels with "Lee St" Road Designation  
 Street of Interest (Lee St)



Creator: Brennan Reilly  
Date: 03/03/2026

## **Purpose of Historical Research**

During discussions regarding the proposed renaming of North Lee Street and South Lee Street, members of the community expressed differing perspectives regarding the origin and historical significance of the name “Lee Street.” These differing viewpoints prompted the need for additional research to ensure that the City Council’s consideration of the proposed name change is informed by accurate and objective historical context.

Two primary interpretations have been suggested:

1. The street may have been named for Robert E. Lee, the Confederate military leader, reflecting a broader historical pattern in which streets and public spaces across the southern United States were named after prominent figures associated with the Civil War era.
2. The street may have been named for R. E. Lee, a local civic leader who served as mayor of the City of Stockbridge during the mid-twentieth century and who is associated with infrastructure improvements and municipal development within the community.

In addition to these interpretations, preliminary findings suggested the possibility that the name could also be associated with local Lee family land ownership, which was common in early town development patterns where streets were informally named after adjacent property owners or prominent local families.

Because of these differing interpretations—and the potential historical, cultural, and community implications associated with each—staff conducted a focused historical investigation to identify the earliest documented reference to Lee Street and to better understand its likely origin.

This research effort included a review of multiple historical sources, including:

- Archived issues of *The Henry County Weekly* and other historical newspapers;
- Property records, tax assessor data, and deed references;
- Census records and draft registration documents identifying local residents;
- Municipal records, including City Council minutes and infrastructure-related documentation; and
- Historical maps and aerial imagery, where available.

The primary objective of this research was to establish a reliable historical timeline for the existence of Lee Street and to determine whether sufficient evidence exists to attribute the street name to a specific individual or historical figure.

This analysis is intended to provide the City Council with a fact-based foundation for decision-making by distinguishing between documented historical evidence and community interpretation. The findings do not advocate for a particular outcome but instead clarify the historical context to support an informed and transparent policy decision regarding the proposed street renaming.

## Genealogy of Street Naming

Street names often function as a form of “genealogy” for a community, reflecting its historical development, land ownership patterns, geography, and cultural influences. In many cases, street names provide insight into the individuals, features, and activities that shaped a town’s early growth and identity.

Historically, particularly in small towns and rural communities, street naming was not always the result of formal governmental action. Instead, names frequently emerged organically based on local usage and recognition. As communities expanded, these informal names were often adopted into official records, maps, and legal descriptions.

## Common Sources of Street Names

Street names are typically derived from several widely recognized sources:

- **Individuals and Community Leaders:** Streets may be named after local landowners, prominent families, civic leaders, or nationally recognized figures (e.g., Washington, Lincoln).
- **Geographical Features:** Names often reflect natural features such as topography, waterways, or landscape characteristics (e.g., Hill Street, River Road, Water Street).
- **Trades and Occupations:** Some street names originate from historical economic activities or trades associated with the area (e.g., Dyer, Vintner, or similar occupational references).
- **Developers and Subdivision Planning:** In more formally planned developments, particularly during the twentieth century, developers often proposed street names during the subdivision and platting process.
- **Vegetation and Natural Elements:** Residential areas frequently include names based on trees, plants, or natural features (e.g., Oak, Elm, Pine).
- **Historical and Cultural References:** Certain street names reflect historic structures, institutions, or cultural landmarks (e.g., Church Street, Mill Road), preserving elements of local heritage.

## Researching the Origin of Street Names

Determining the origin of a street name typically requires a multi-source research approach. Common resources include:

- **Local Historical Archives:** Libraries, historical societies, and newspaper archives provide valuable contextual information.
- **Historic Maps and Atlases:** Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and early municipal or county maps can help establish when a street first appeared.
- **City Directories and Land Records:** These sources can identify early landowners and development patterns associated with a street.
- **Government and Official Records:** Tax assessor data, deed records, and municipal documents often provide evidence of land ownership and street references.

- **Supplemental Records:** Additional sources, such as cemetery records or genealogical data, may provide supporting context regarding individuals associated with a location.

## **Historical Context**

### **Early Development of Stockbridge**

The origins of the community now known as Stockbridge date to the early nineteenth century. In 1826, a small group of settlers established one of the area’s first organized institutions, Concord Methodist Church, which became the nucleus of early settlement in northern Henry County. Among the founding members of the congregation were P. Z. Ward, Thomas A. Ward, James W. Wilkerson, D. L. Coleman, and James Coker. The church was located near the present-day intersection of East Atlanta Road and Stagecoach Road and served as a focal point for community life in the surrounding rural area.

Over time, a small village developed around the church. Early residents constructed modest log cabins and homesteads, including pioneers such as Sam Skelton, Lewis Coleman, Mrs. Harriet Brannan, and John Friddle. Recognizing the potential for growth in the area, J. T. Bond purchased approximately forty acres of nearby land and established several essential services for the developing settlement, including a general store, shoe shop, and post office. As the community expanded, the village also welcomed its first medical practitioners, Dr. Hightower and Dr. Hambrick, who provided much-needed healthcare to residents.

During the Civil War, Henry County and the surrounding region experienced military activity due to its strategic location along key transportation routes. In late October 1864, the Kentucky “Orphan Brigade,” a Confederate unit led by former Vice President John C. Breckinridge, established its headquarters in Stockbridge while scouting roads southeast of Atlanta. At the time, Stockbridge served as an important crossroads along the main road from Atlanta to Macon, now known as U.S. Highway 23, with additional roads connecting the community to nearby settlements such as Buckhead and Decatur.

Following the Civil War, development in the area remained relatively limited until the 1880s. A significant turning point occurred in 1881 when representatives of the Southern Railroad Company explored the possibility of constructing a rail line through the village. Negotiations with local landowners were initially unsuccessful; however, later that year John W. Grant and George W. Adair acquired land located approximately one to two miles south of the original village site and facilitated the construction of the railroad.

The arrival of the railroad dramatically reshaped the community. Because the original village location was no longer practical in relation to the new rail alignment, residents began relocating closer to the new train station. Construction activity accelerated, and by 1882 the first houses within what would become the city center were constructed, including homes built by J. T. Bond and W. W. Ward. The railroad quickly stimulated economic activity and encouraged further development of homes, businesses, and civic institutions.

By the late nineteenth century, Stockbridge had begun to emerge as a small but active commercial center within Henry County. In 1890, the Harmony Masonic Lodge relocated to the growing town, reflecting the increasing importance of the community as a gathering place for civic and social organizations.

The community of Stockbridge continued to develop during the nineteenth century as part of the agricultural and transportation network of Henry County. The expansion of railroad infrastructure and regional commerce contributed to the gradual development of a town center. Stockbridge was officially incorporated as a town in 1895 and later incorporated as a city on August 6, 1920.

During this early period of development, streets were often established as settlement expanded around privately owned land parcels. Street names were commonly derived from local landowners, prominent families, geographic features, or early civic leaders associated with the area. Because many early municipal records and maps were not preserved, it is not uncommon for the precise origin of street names in small communities to remain uncertain.

By the time of its incorporation as a city in 1920, Stockbridge had grown into a modest but thriving community. Contemporary accounts describe a town of approximately 400 residents with five churches, two schools, a bank, a telephone exchange, a steam ginney, several retail stores, an electric light plant, two cotton warehouses, a hotel, a lumber yard, two garages, and a substantial brick school building with an auditorium and multiple classrooms. The town was served by two physicians, a lawyer, and a local police officer, reflecting the emergence of essential civic and professional services.

By the early twentieth century, available census data further illustrates the scale and character of Stockbridge's development. The Town of Stockbridge does not appear as a separately listed municipality in the 1910 U.S. Census, indicating that it had not yet been formally recognized as an incorporated town at that time. However, by 1920, the town is recorded with a population of approximately 386 residents, and by 1930, the population had modestly increased to approximately 392 residents, as documented within Henry County's District 775. This limited population growth over the decade reflects a small but stable community that had transitioned from its rural origins into an incorporated municipality. The relatively modest size of the town suggests a close-knit, locally oriented community, where development patterns and street naming practices were likely influenced by local landowners, civic leaders, and longstanding families rather than formalized planning processes.

Additional historical mapping further illustrates the gradual growth of Stockbridge during the early twentieth century. A 1939 Henry County highway planning map, prepared by the Georgia Division of Highway Planning, identifies Stockbridge with a reported population of approximately 443 residents. This increase from the 1920 and 1930 census figures reflects steady but modest growth during this period. The map also depicts the town's development pattern centered around key transportation routes, reinforcing the importance of roadway and rail infrastructure in shaping the community's layout. The relatively compact footprint shown on the map further supports the characterization of Stockbridge as a small, close-knit town where development occurred incrementally around existing roads and locally owned land.

Together, these developments illustrate how Stockbridge evolved from a small rural settlement centered around a church into a growing municipal community and commercial hub within Henry County.

### **Early Cartographic References to Stockbridge**

Historical maps provide important contextual evidence of the early presence and development of the Stockbridge community within Henry County during the nineteenth century and help illustrate the foundational conditions under which its street network later emerged.

One of the earliest known cartographic references appears in *Johnson's Georgia and Alabama Map (1863)*, created by Alvin Jewett Johnson and published by Johnson and Ward in New York. This map identifies Stockbridge as a recognized settlement within Henry County during the mid-nineteenth century, indicating that the community had already achieved a level of regional significance prior to the Civil War.

Additional cartographic documentation appears in the map titled "*Southern Georgia and Part of South Carolina*" (1865), prepared by Adolph Lindenkohl and published by the United States Government Printing Office. This map also depicts Stockbridge and illustrates its geographic position in relation to early transportation routes connecting nearby communities such as Atlanta, Jonesboro, Fayetteville, and McDonough.

From a planning and historical geography perspective, the inclusion of Stockbridge on these maps is significant. Nineteenth-century maps typically identified locations that functioned as established settlements, crossroads, or nodes of economic and transportation activity. The presence of Stockbridge on both the 1863 and 1865 maps indicates that the community was already functioning as a recognized rural center within the regional network of roads and agricultural landholdings.

These maps also provide insight into early transportation patterns that influenced the development of the town. During this period, roadways were not formally planned or engineered in the modern sense, but instead evolved organically based on travel routes between farms, mills, churches, and neighboring towns. As a result, early roads often followed property lines, natural topography, and existing paths of movement, forming the basis for later street alignments.

This pattern of organic development is particularly relevant when considering the origin of streets such as Lee Street. In small nineteenth-century communities, streets were frequently established along existing travel routes or property boundaries and were often named informally based on nearby landowners, prominent families, or recognizable landmarks. Over time, these informal routes became fixed as part of the town's permanent street network.

The cartographic evidence therefore demonstrates that the spatial framework necessary for street development—including travel corridors, land division, and settlement clustering—was already in place decades before Lee Street appears in documented legal records in 1918. This reinforces the conclusion that Lee Street likely originated during this earlier period of gradual community formation rather than as part of a later, formally documented naming action.

Additionally, the maps highlight Stockbridge's role as a connecting point between larger regional destinations, particularly along routes leading toward Atlanta and Macon. This positioning would have increased the importance of local roads and corridors within the town, further supporting the early establishment of streets that facilitated movement, access, and property development.

Taken together, these cartographic sources provide critical historical context for understanding the early development of Stockbridge and the evolution of its street network. They illustrate that the community's physical and transportation framework was established well before formal incorporation and support the broader conclusion that street naming and alignment, including Lee Street, likely developed organically as part of the town's early growth pattern.

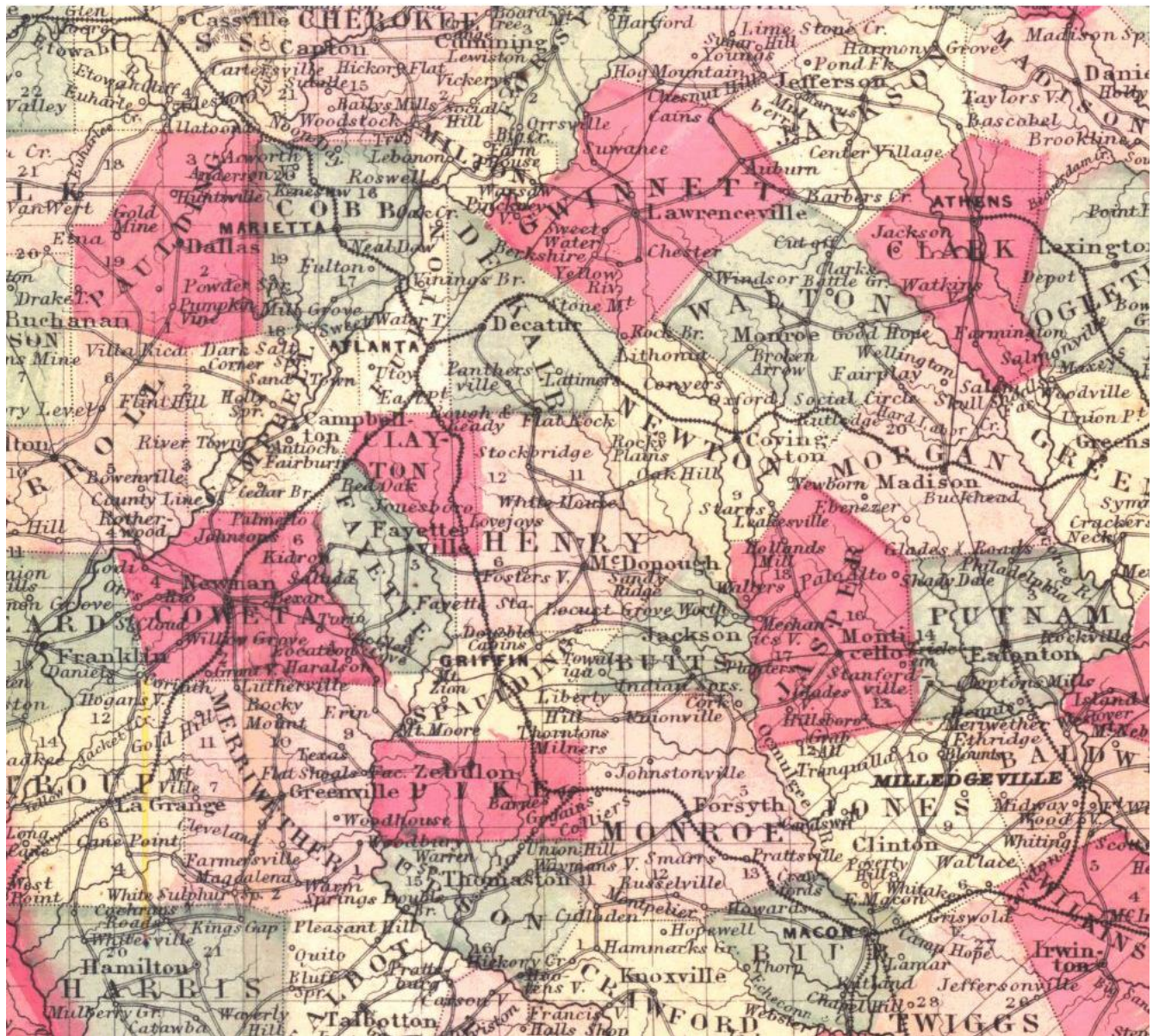


Figure 1: Johnson's Georgia and Alabama Map (1863) showing the location of Stockbridge within Henry County. Map by Alvin J. Johnson, published by Johnson and Ward, New York.

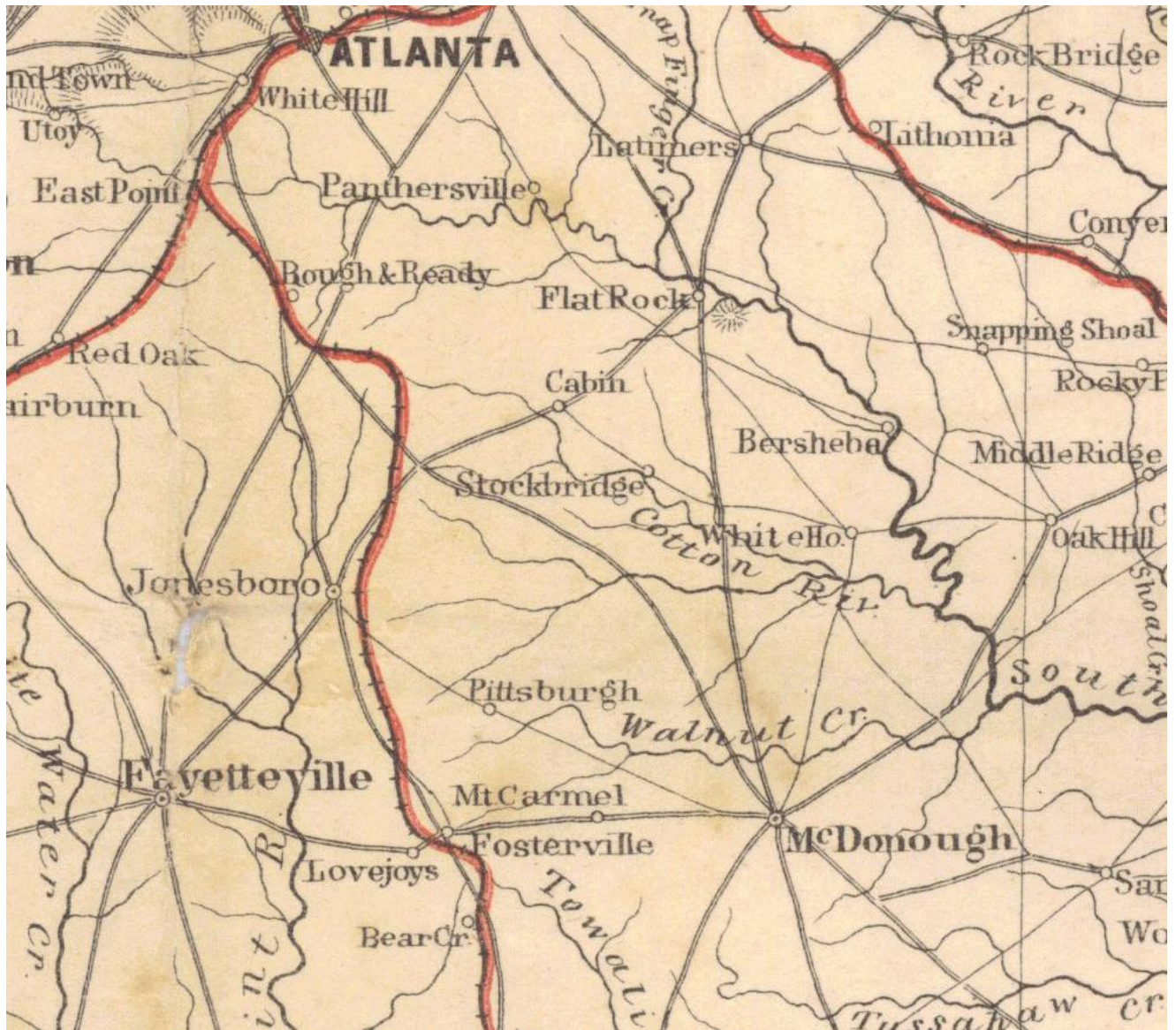


Figure 2: "Southern Georgia and Part of South Carolina," 1865. Map by Adolph Linden Kohl, published by the United States Government Printing Office. The map identifies Stockbridge within Henry County and illustrates early transportation routes connecting the community with Atlanta and surrounding towns

## **Early Lee Family References in Henry County**

One of the earliest documented references to the Lee family in the region appears in *The Henry County Weekly* dated February 21, 1879. A public notice published in the newspaper referenced the proposed sale of property belonging to the estate of Samuel Lee, which included a mill property commonly referred to as Lee's Mill. The property was located within the original 12th Land District of Henry County.

The notice stated in part:

“Application will be made to the Court of Ordinary of Henry County for leave to sell certain mill property... belonging to the estate of Samuel Lee.”

From a historical and economic perspective, this reference is significant. Mill properties during the nineteenth century were typically located along key transportation routes and waterways and served as important centers of local commerce and agricultural processing. Ownership of such a facility suggests that members of the Lee family were not only landowners, but also active participants in the local economy and community structure.

The identification of Lee's Mill within the 12th Land District further indicates that the Lee family held land within the broader geographic area that would later influence the development of nearby settlements, including the Town of Stockbridge. During this period, land districts formed the foundational framework for property ownership, settlement patterns, and the eventual establishment of roads and community infrastructure.

Although this record does not directly reference Lee Street, it establishes the presence of the Lee surname in Henry County several decades prior to the documented existence of Lee Street in 1918. This temporal gap is important, as it demonstrates that the Lee family was already associated with land ownership and economic activity in the region during the formative years of community development.

In early rural communities, it was common for roads, landmarks, and emerging corridors to be informally named after nearby landowners, prominent families, or recognizable local features such as mills, churches, or stores. The presence of a property known as Lee's Mill suggests that the Lee name was already geographically associated with a specific location, which could have influenced later naming conventions as the area developed.

Additionally, the reference to an estate sale indicates that the Lee family's landholdings were of sufficient size or value to require formal probate proceedings, further reinforcing their role as established landowners within the county. Such properties were often subdivided, transferred, or inherited over time, contributing to the gradual formation of roads and parcels that defined early town layouts.

Taken together, this record provides important contextual evidence that the Lee family was present in Henry County well before the early twentieth century and was engaged in land ownership and economic activity. While not conclusive on its own, this early reference supports the broader

pattern observed in later records, suggesting that the name “Lee” was locally established and associated with land and development in the region prior to the formal recognition of Lee Street.

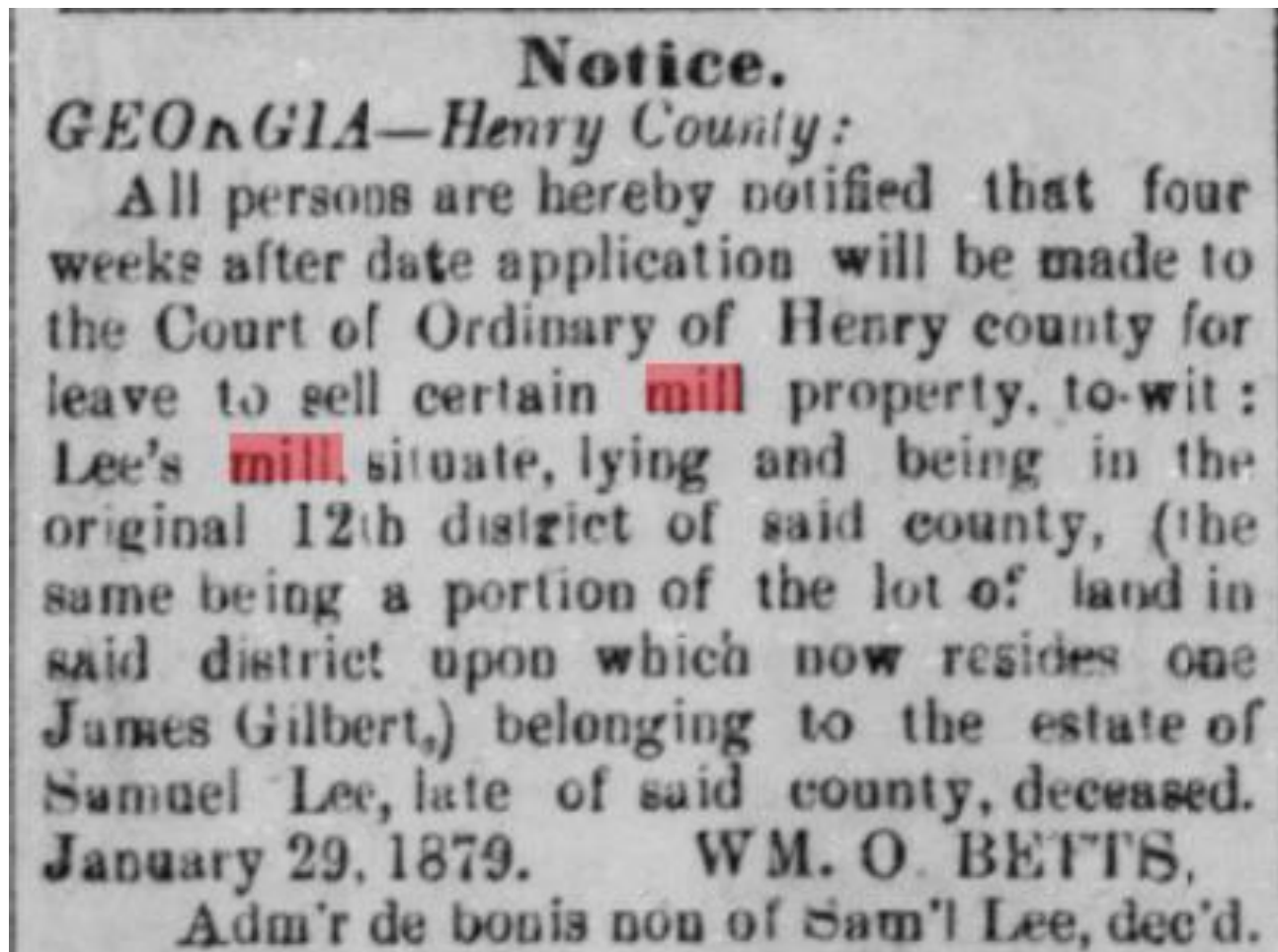


Figure 3: Public notice published in *The Henry County Weekly* on February 21, 1879 referencing the proposed sale of Lee's Mill property belonging to the estate of Samuel Lee in the 12th Land District of Henry County.

### **Census Documentation (1880–1950)**

Federal census records provide critical primary source documentation confirming the long-term and continuous presence of individuals bearing the Lee surname within Henry County and the Stockbridge area from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. These records offer detailed information regarding household composition, occupation, and residency, and are widely regarded as reliable historical sources due to their standardized, government-administered data collection.

The 1880 United States Federal Census provides one of the earliest documented references to the Lee family in the area. The record identifies Samuel Lee as head of household, with Robert E. Lee listed as a child residing within the household. This establishes the presence of the Lee family in Henry County during the late nineteenth century and confirms that Robert E. Lee was raised in the local area.

By the time of the 1910 United States Federal Census, Robert E. Lee is documented as an independent adult resident within Henry County. This transition from a dependent household member to an established adult resident reflects continuity of presence within the community and suggests long-term ties to the area. The 1910 census further confirms that the Lee family remained in the region during a period of early town development and prior to the formal documentation of Lee Street.

The 1920 United States Federal Census, conducted in the same year that Stockbridge was incorporated as a city, again records Robert E. Lee as a resident of the area. This record situates the Lee family within the community at a pivotal moment in its municipal development and reinforces their continued presence during a period of population growth and infrastructure expansion.

The 1930 United States Federal Census continues to document Robert E. Lee as a resident of the Stockbridge area, reflecting a sustained presence into later adulthood. By this time, his long-term residency indicates that he was an established and recognized member of the community during a period of continued development and stabilization within the city.

Further extending this timeline, the 1950 United States Federal Census confirms that Robert E. Lee remained a resident of Stockbridge into the mid-twentieth century. This record represents the culmination of a documented residency spanning approximately seventy years, from childhood through later adulthood.

When viewed collectively, these census records establish a continuous and uninterrupted timeline of residency:

- **1880** – Robert E. Lee resides in the Samuel Lee household (youth)
- **1910** – Robert E. Lee is documented as an adult resident in Henry County
- **1920** – Robert E. Lee remains a resident at the time of city incorporation
- **1930** – Robert E. Lee continues residence in the Stockbridge area
- **1950** – Robert E. Lee remains a resident of the community

This sequence of federal records provides compelling evidence that the Lee family maintained a long-standing and continuous presence within the Stockbridge area across multiple decades. The duration and consistency of this residency demonstrate that the Lee family was deeply rooted in the local community during key periods of land development, infrastructure expansion, and the establishment of the city's street network.

From a historical and planning perspective, this continuity is significant. Long-term residency and generational land association are commonly observed factors in early street naming practices, particularly in small towns where roads were often informally identified by reference to nearby landowners or prominent local families.

Accordingly, the census documentation supports the broader pattern observed in land records and legal notices, reinforcing the conclusion that the Lee surname was firmly established within the local area prior to the documented existence of Lee Street in 1918.

## **Documented Existence of Lee Street (1918)**

The earliest confirmed reference to Lee Street within the Town of Stockbridge appears in a series of legal notices published in 1918. A notice titled “Executors’ Sale” was filed on October 9, 1918 and subsequently published in *The Henry County Weekly* on the following dates:

- October 11, 1918
- October 25, 1918
- November 8, 1918

The notice described the sale of property located within the Town of Stockbridge and provided the following legal description:

“...one house and lot in the town of Stockbridge... bounded north by lot of J. T. Mays, east by Thurman Askew, south by Mrs. Sallie Lee lot, west by Lee Street.”

The notice also referenced additional property described as being bounded in part by land owned by M. P. Lee, indicating that members of the Lee family owned property in the immediate vicinity of the street.

Genealogical and historical records reviewed as part of this study indicate that M. P. Lee refers to Martin Parks Lee (1874–1939), a documented resident of Henry County and a member of the Lee family associated with Samuel James Lee and Sarah Ann Williams Lee. Census records and family documentation confirm that Martin Parks Lee was part of a multi-generational family with established roots in the Stockbridge area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

From a historical and land use perspective, the use of Lee Street as a boundary descriptor in a formal legal notice is significant. During the early twentieth century, legal property descriptions relied on widely recognized and established physical features—such as roads, property lines, and adjacent landowners—to define parcel boundaries. The inclusion of Lee Street in this context indicates that the roadway was not only in existence, but sufficiently established and commonly understood within the community to serve as a reliable point of reference in legal transactions.

Furthermore, the repeated publication of the notice over multiple weeks reinforces the legitimacy and consistency of the description. The absence of clarification or correction in subsequent publications suggests that the referenced street name was well known and unambiguous to both local residents and legal authorities at the time.

The notice also provides important insight into the spatial relationship between Lee Street and surrounding land ownership. The direct reference to adjacent parcels owned by Mrs. Sallie Lee and Martin Parks Lee (M. P. Lee) indicates that members of the Lee family held property immediately adjoining or near the roadway. This proximity is notable, as it reflects a pattern commonly observed in early town development, where streets were often informally named after nearby landowners or families whose property defined the corridor.

The identification of Martin Parks Lee as a neighboring landowner strengthens the documented connection between the Lee family and the physical corridor of Lee Street. Rather than representing a symbolic or commemorative naming, the available evidence demonstrates a direct geographic relationship between the Lee family's landholdings and the roadway itself.

The combination of these factors confirms several key historical findings:

1. Lee Street was an established and recognized roadway within the Town of Stockbridge by October 1918.
2. The street name was sufficiently known to be used as a legal boundary reference in formal property transactions.
3. Members of the Lee family, including Mrs. Sallie Lee and Martin Parks Lee, owned land directly adjacent to or in close proximity to the street during this time period.
4. The street's existence and naming likely predate 1918, as it would have required time to become commonly recognized within the community.

Taken together, this evidence strongly suggests that Lee Street originated during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century as part of the town's early development pattern. This period coincides with the expansion of Stockbridge following the arrival of the railroad and the gradual transition from a rural crossroads settlement to a more defined town center with organized streets and property boundaries.

From a planning and historical context, the documentation supports the conclusion that Lee Street was not the result of a later commemorative naming action, but rather emerged organically as part of the community's growth, likely influenced by adjacent land ownership and early settlement patterns associated with the Lee family.

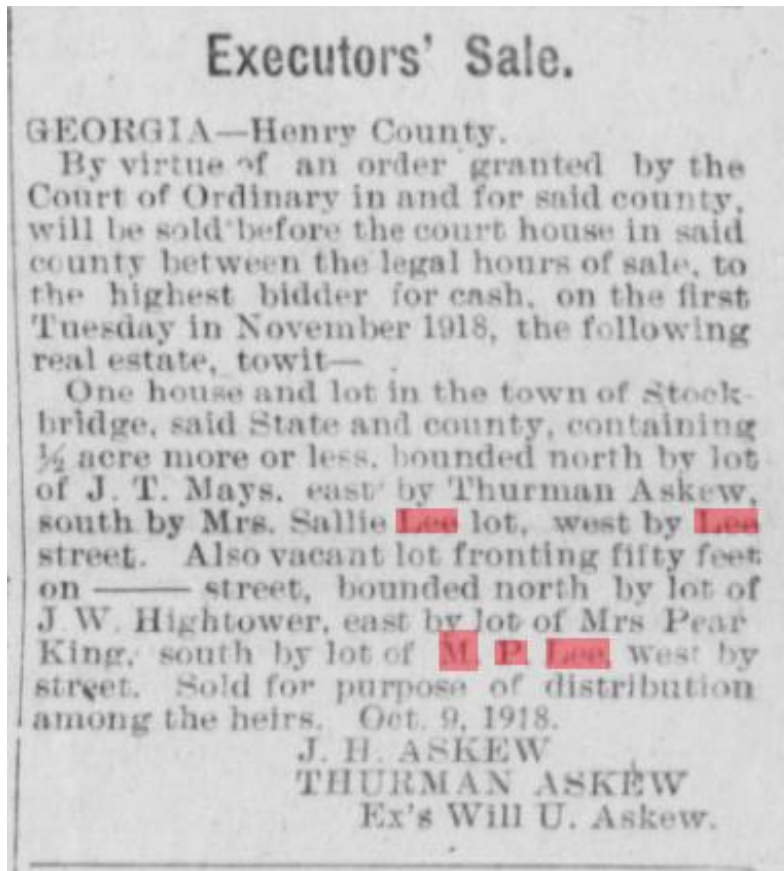


Figure 4: 1918 property notice from *The Henry County Weekly* referencing a property boundary along Lee Street in the Town of Stockbridge. This record confirms the documented existence of Lee Street in the community by October 1918.

### **Early Development Along Lee Street**

Property records provide additional evidence of early development patterns along Lee Street and further contextualize the street's historical origin. According to Henry County tax assessor and parcel data, a structure located at 108 South Lee Street was constructed circa 1900. The property, currently operating as Pinehurst Catering and Events Facility, is situated directly along the Lee Street corridor and occupies approximately 3.03 acres, indicating a relatively substantial landholding for the time period.

The existence of a developed structure at this location by 1900 suggests that Lee Street was already functioning as an established corridor by the turn of the twentieth century. In small, early railroad communities such as Stockbridge, residential and agricultural structures were typically constructed along existing access routes rather than in isolation, indicating that the roadway likely predated or developed concurrently with the structure.

Historical deed and ownership records associated with this property further reinforce the presence of the Lee family in the immediate vicinity. Recorded transactions reference individuals bearing the Lee surname, including William Jackson Lee, as well as estate-related transfers involving Lee family members.

Additional documentation further confirms the presence of William Jackson Lee in the community during the mid-twentieth century. A World War II draft registration record dated October 16, 1940 identifies him as a resident of Stockbridge, Henry County, Georgia, at age 31, with a birth date of April 10, 1909. This record demonstrates that members of the Lee family continued to reside in the area well after the initial establishment of Lee Street, reinforcing a pattern of long-term community presence.

Property records from 1960 further reference ownership associated with “Lee W. J. Mrs.,” which corresponds to the wife of William Jackson Lee. This designation reflects a common historical naming convention in which married women were identified in legal and property records by their husband’s name. The alignment between the draft registration record and property ownership documentation confirms continuity between residency and landholding associated with his household.

Subsequent deed records, including conveyances recorded in 1995 referencing earlier ownership lineage, indicate a continuity of land ownership tied to the Lee family over time. This pattern of sustained ownership is consistent with historical landholding practices in rural and small-town Georgia, where family-owned tracts were often retained, subdivided, or transferred through estates over extended periods.

The spatial relationship of this property to Lee Street is particularly significant. The parcel fronts directly onto South Lee Street and is located within the same general area described in the 1918 legal notices referencing adjacent Lee family land ownership, including properties associated with Sallie Lee and Martin Parks Lee. This geographic alignment strengthens the likelihood that Lee Street derived its name from local landowners rather than from a later municipal naming decision.

When considered alongside the 1918 Executors’ Sale notice, which references Lee Street as an established boundary, the presence of a circa 1900 structure on land associated with the Lee family provides both physical and documentary evidence of early settlement and land use patterns along the corridor.

From a planning and historical development perspective, this pattern is consistent with common street-naming conventions in late nineteenth and early twentieth century communities, where roadways were frequently named after prominent or adjacent landowners whose properties defined the corridor.

Taken together, the existence of early development along Lee Street, the documented presence of Lee family land ownership, and the formal recognition of the street in early twentieth-century legal records collectively support the conclusion that Lee Street originated as part of the town’s early growth pattern and was likely associated with local land ownership rather than a later commemorative naming.

## **Mayoral History**

Historical records indicate that Joseph Mann served as mayor of the City of Stockbridge from 1925 to 1926, during a period of early municipal growth following the city's incorporation in 1920.

Community members have suggested that Lee Street may have been named in honor of R. E. Lee, who served as mayor during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Available historical records, including City Council meeting minutes and newspaper accounts from the period, confirm that R. E. Lee held a leadership role within the municipal government and was an active and respected figure within the local community.

In addition to his service as mayor, R. E. Lee was a long-time resident of Stockbridge and was associated with the Southern Railway System, where he worked for several decades prior to his retirement. His professional career, combined with his civic involvement, positioned him as a well-known and influential member of the community. He was also affiliated with local civic and fraternal organizations, including Masonic and community service groups, which were common centers of leadership and social organization in small towns during the mid-twentieth century.

R. E. Lee's son, William Jackson "Dub" Lee (1909–1965), continued the family's civic involvement and leadership within the City. Historical records indicate that William Jackson Lee was elected to the Stockbridge City Council in 1958 and later served as mayor during the early 1960s. Like his father, he was employed by the Southern Railway System and was actively involved in the First Baptist Church of Stockbridge and the Stockbridge Masonic Lodge.

During this period of leadership spanning two generations, the City undertook several important infrastructure improvements that contributed to the modernization of the community. One of the most notable areas of advancement was the expansion of electric service within the city. Earlier council records from the 1920s and 1930s reflect ongoing challenges related to local electric generation and distribution, including maintenance of the municipal light plant and extension of service to residents. By the mid-twentieth century, efforts to improve and expand electric service helped transition the community toward more reliable and widespread access, supporting both residential growth and emerging commercial activity.

In addition, the City undertook improvements to road paving and transportation infrastructure, which were critical during a time when many small municipalities were transitioning from unpaved or minimally maintained roadways to more durable, all-weather surfaces. These improvements enhanced internal circulation within the city and strengthened connections to regional corridors, including U.S. Highway 23 (North Henry Boulevard), which served as a key route linking Stockbridge to Atlanta and surrounding communities.

Mayor R. E. Lee's tenure, along with the continued leadership of William Jackson "Dub" Lee, is also associated with the development and expansion of the municipal water system, representing a significant milestone in the City's evolution from a rural settlement to a more fully serviced municipality. Council records from the late 1940s reference discussions related to waterworks infrastructure and financing mechanisms, including efforts to secure funding through water revenue certificates. The expansion of the water system improved public health conditions,

enhanced fire protection capabilities, and supported more consistent residential and commercial development.

Collectively, these improvements reflect a broader period of post-World War II municipal investment in essential infrastructure systems. During this time, many small cities across Georgia were focused on modernizing utilities, improving transportation networks, and expanding public services to accommodate population growth and economic stability.

While these contributions represent an important chapter in the development of Stockbridge, the available historical record indicates that Lee Street was already established prior to Mayor R. E. Lee's tenure. Legal notices published in *The Henry County Weekly* in 1918 clearly reference Lee Street as an existing roadway within the Town of Stockbridge.

This documented evidence places the existence of Lee Street at least several decades before the public service of both R. E. Lee and William Jackson "Dub" Lee. As such, from a historical and chronological standpoint, it is unlikely that the street was originally named in recognition of either individual.

Additionally, early municipal records suggest that formal street naming processes were not consistently documented during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result, many street names within the city likely developed organically based on land ownership patterns, local families, or commonly recognized geographic identifiers, rather than through formal legislative action.

Taken together, while R. E. Lee and William Jackson "Dub" Lee played significant roles in advancing infrastructure and modernizing the City of Stockbridge during the mid-twentieth century, the available evidence indicates that Lee Street predates their tenure and was likely established during an earlier phase of the community's development.

### **Municipal Records and Mapping**

City Council minutes dated February 3, 1948 provide additional historical insight into the development of municipal recordkeeping within the City of Stockbridge. During this meeting, the Council discussed the absence of an official municipal map, and the minutes indicate that the City Clerk was instructed to contact the United States Census Bureau to advise that the City did not currently have a map but would provide one once available.

From a planning and administrative perspective, this record is significant. The absence of a municipal map as late as 1948 suggests that the City's early physical layout—including streets, parcels, and development patterns—had not yet been formally documented through standardized mapping practices. In many small municipalities during the early twentieth century, mapping and recordkeeping evolved gradually and were often secondary to immediate infrastructure and service needs.

As a result, early street alignments and names were frequently established through informal or customary use rather than through formally adopted ordinances, plats, or official naming

resolutions. Streets often emerged along property boundaries, access routes, or paths of travel and became known by names associated with adjacent landowners, families, or local landmarks. Over time, these names became widely accepted and were incorporated into legal descriptions, deeds, and community usage without necessarily being recorded through formal municipal action.

The lack of an official map also has implications for the preservation of historical records. Without a centralized mapping system or consistent documentation practices, it is less likely that early decisions regarding street naming were formally recorded or retained. This condition helps explain why a definitive municipal record identifying the origin of Lee Street has not been located.

This context is particularly important when evaluating the historical origin of Lee Street. The absence of formal documentation should not be interpreted as evidence that the street lacked a clear origin, but rather as an indication that its naming likely occurred during a period when recordkeeping practices were limited or decentralized.

Accordingly, the historical analysis relies on a combination of available sources—including newspaper publications, property records, cartographic evidence, and council minutes—to reconstruct the development of the street. This multi-source approach is consistent with standard practices in historical and planning research when primary municipal documentation is incomplete or unavailable.

Taken together, the 1948 council minutes provide critical context for understanding why the specific origin of Lee Street cannot be definitively documented within City records, while also supporting the broader conclusion that the street likely developed organically as part of the community's early growth pattern.

HENRY COUNTY, GEORGIA

FEBRUARY 3, 1948

A regular meeting of the Stockbridge City Council held at the City hall on Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:30 p.m. with the following members present: R. E. Lee, Mayor; Councilmen F. G. Owen, H. R. Turpin, J. T. Mays & G. S. Keen.

The meeting was called to order by the Hon. R. E. Lee.

Minutes of the call meeting of Jan 13<sup>th</sup> read. A motion by F. G. Owen and 2<sup>nd</sup> by H. R. Turpin and carried by a vote of the Council to stand approved as read.

Communications read.

Clerk was instructed to write the Census Bureau in Washington and inform them that we do not have a map of the town.

A motion by H. R. Turpin and 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. T. Mays and carried by a vote of the Council to exempt all the <sup>1</sup>preachers who live in the City of Stockbridge from City Tax on their automobiles for the years of 1947 & 1948 and if any have paid tax for 1947 that they be refunded the amount they paid. Also, that a building permit be issued the Stockbridge Methodist Church and the Stockbridge School without any charge.

A motion by G. S. Keen and 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. G. Owen and carried by a vote of the council authorizing J. T. Mays to get prices on shades & V. Blinds and to buy if he thinks the price is reasonable, these being for the City Hall.

A motion by H. R. Turpin and 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. T. Mays and carried by a vote of the Council to adjourn.

G. S. Keen, Clerk

**CITY OF STOCKBRIDGE**

Figure 5: Minutes from the February 3, 1948 City Council meeting in Stockbridge showing R. E. Lee serving as mayor and documenting that the City Clerk was instructed to inform the U.S. Census Bureau that the town did not have an official municipal map.

## Later Documentation of Lee Street

Lee Street is further documented in a series of mid- to late-twentieth century planning maps, aerial imagery, and property-based reference materials, all of which confirm its continued presence, alignment, and functional role within the City of Stockbridge street network.

One of the earliest such references appears on the 1962 Stockbridge Urban Area Zoning District Map (see *Figure 6*). This official planning document depicts Lee Street as part of the established urban framework of the city. Its inclusion indicates that by the early 1960s, Lee Street was not only physically present but also formally recognized within the City's land use and regulatory structure. Zoning maps serve as foundational planning tools used to guide development patterns, designate land use districts, and regulate property development. The presence of Lee Street on this map demonstrates its integration into the City's planned growth and municipal governance framework.

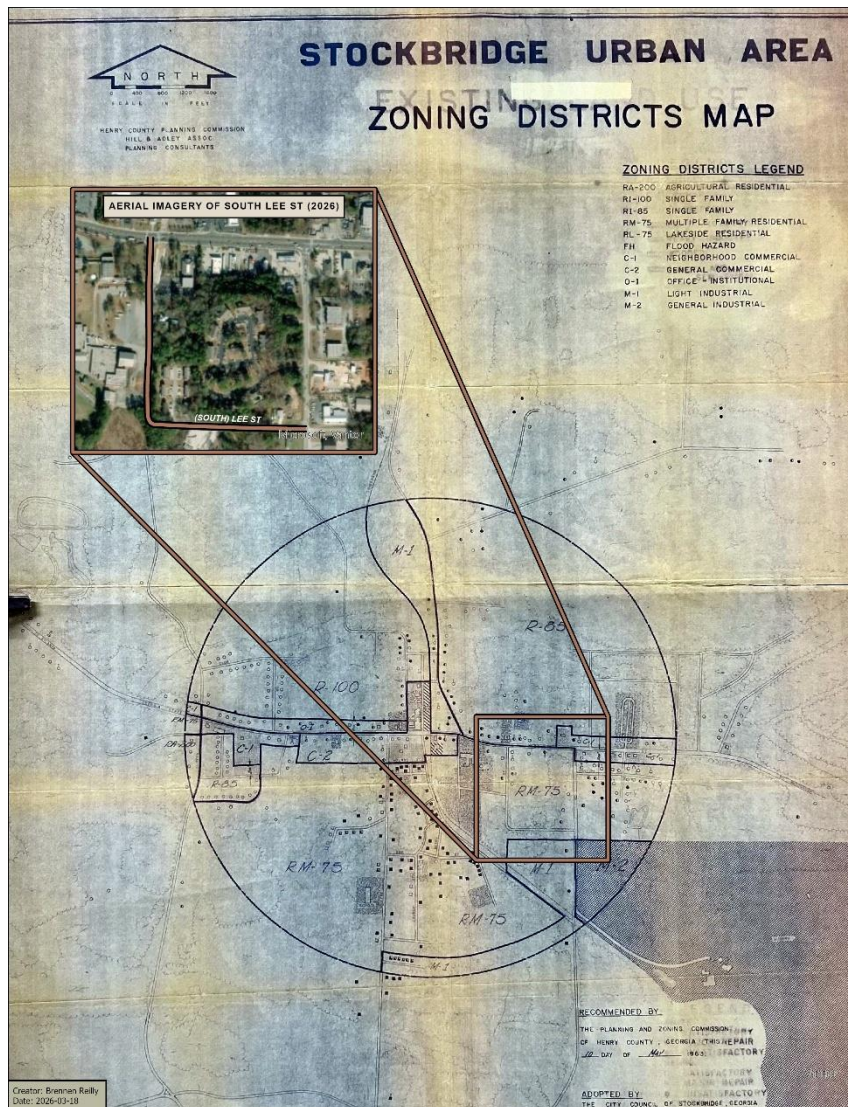


Figure 6: 1962 Stockbridge Urban Area Zoning District Map (Lee Street highlighted)

Additional confirmation is provided through the 1978 Real Estate Atlas of Henry County, which includes both mapped roadway outlines and aerial imagery identifying Lee Street (see *Figures 7 and 8*). Real estate atlases are typically compiled using parcel data, ownership records, and roadway information, and are widely used for property identification, taxation, and land valuation purposes. The consistent depiction of Lee Street within these materials indicates that the roadway was well established and recognized across both public planning documents and private-sector mapping resources by the late twentieth century.

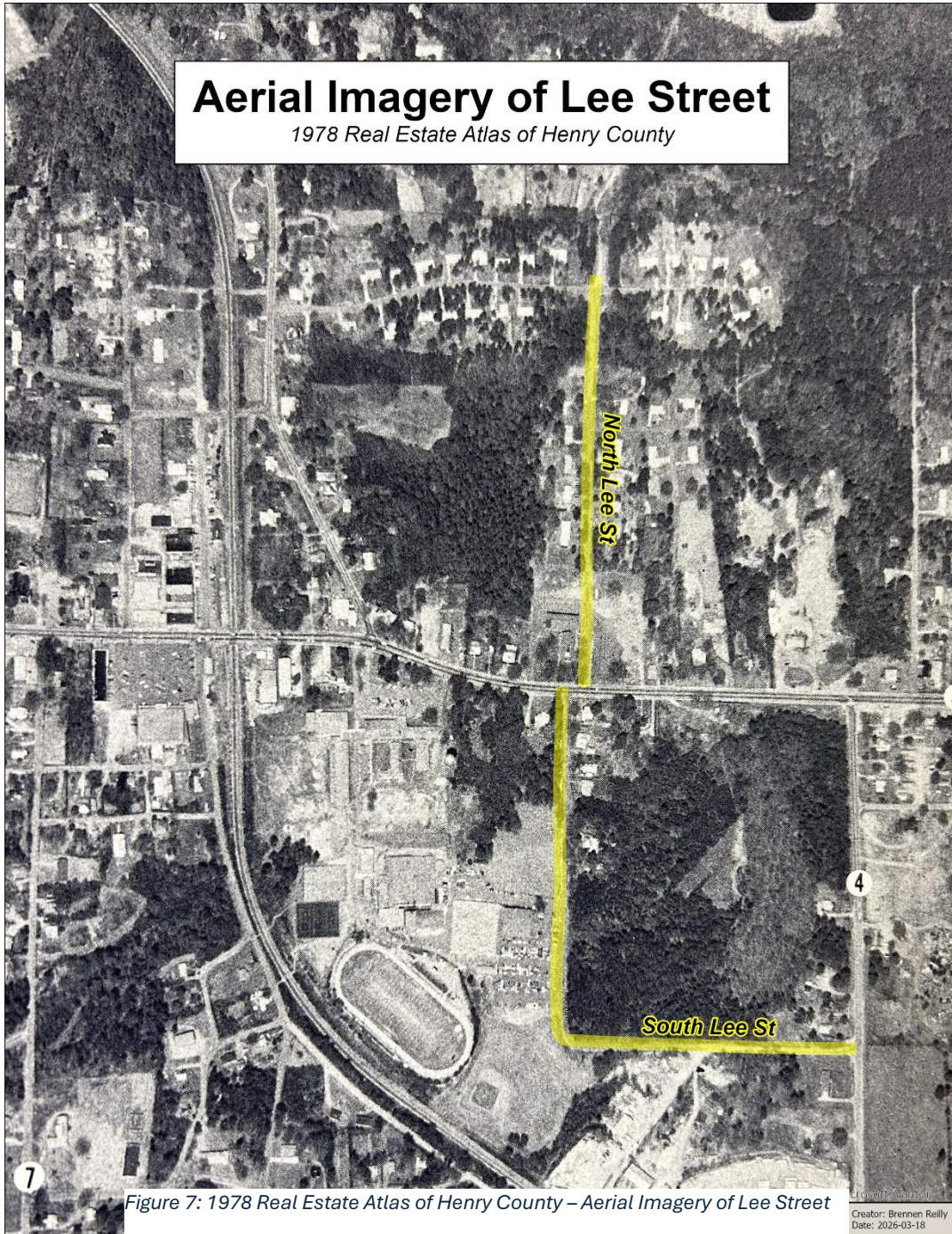


Figure 7: 1978 Real Estate Atlas of Henry County – Aerial Imagery of Lee Street

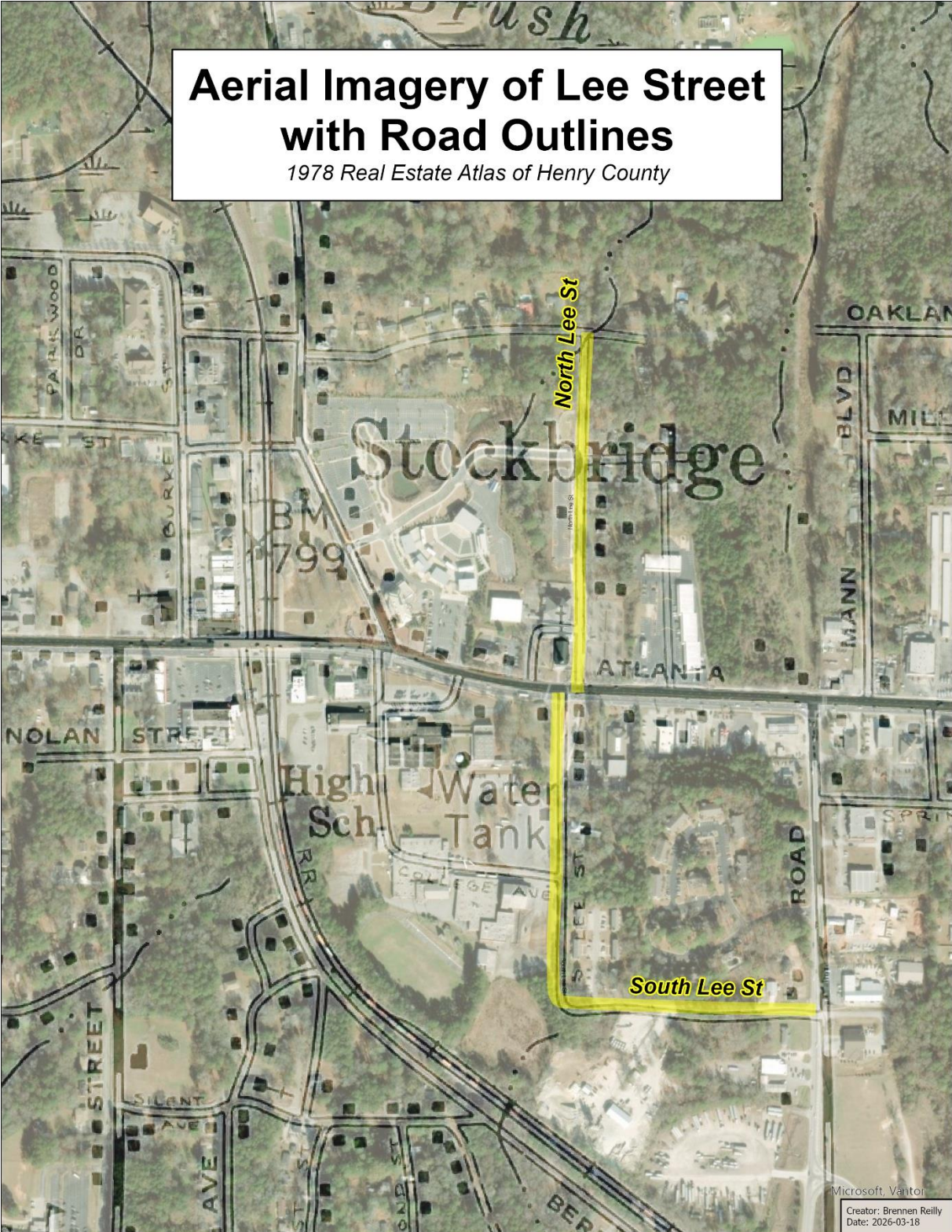
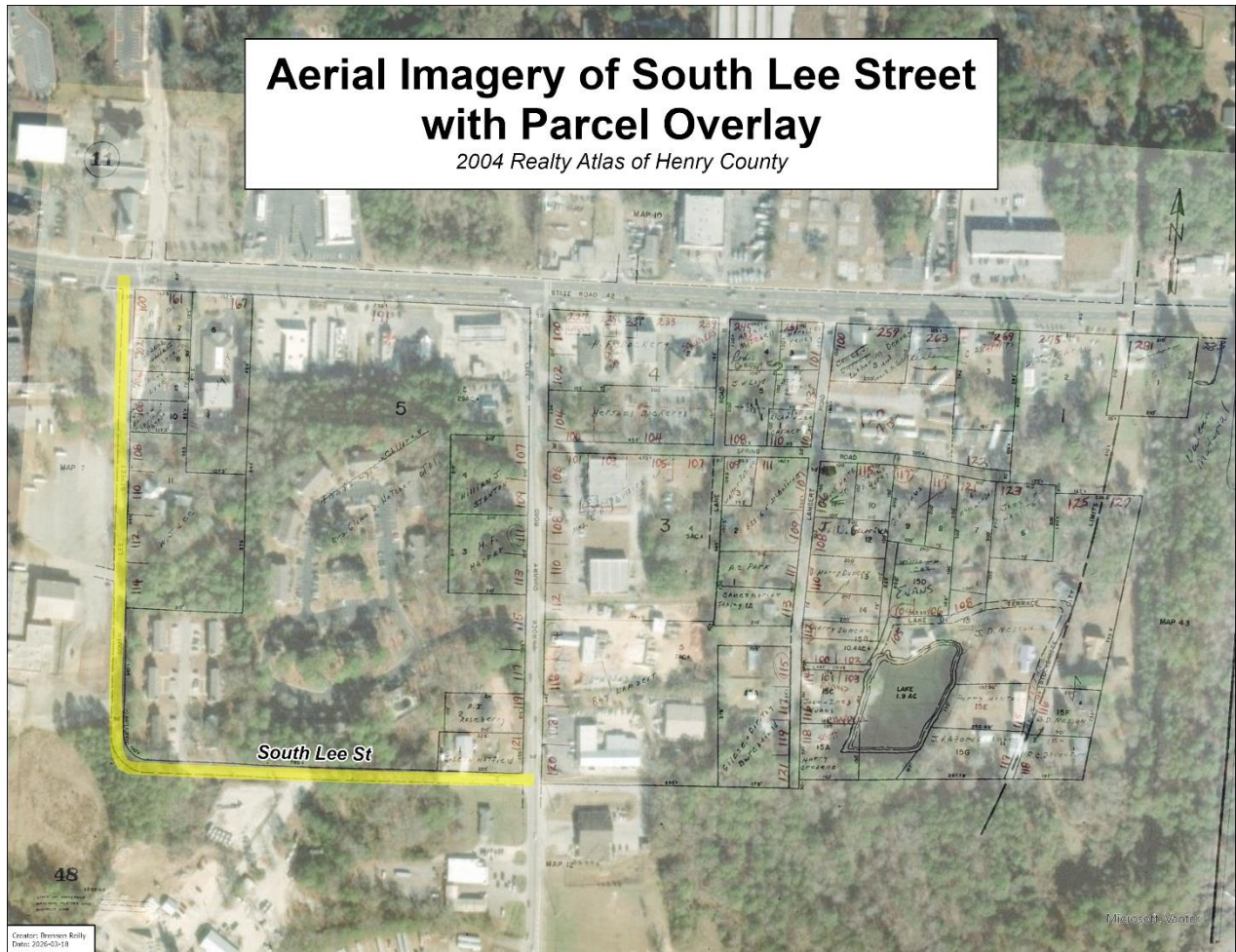


Figure 8: 1978 Real Estate Atlas – Road Outline Map of Lee Street

Further supporting documentation is found in aerial imagery and parcel overlay maps from 2004 (see *Figure 9*), which illustrate the continued development and subdivision of land along Lee Street. These materials show that the roadway not only retained its original alignment but also became increasingly integrated into the surrounding residential and commercial fabric. Parcel overlays provide additional evidence of property ownership patterns and development intensity, reinforcing the role of Lee Street as a stable and functional component of the local street network.



*Figure 9: 2004 Realty Atlas of Henry County – Aerial Imagery with Parcel Overlay (Lee Street)*

From a planning perspective, the appearance of Lee Street across multiple decades of mapping and documentation is significant because it demonstrates both continuity and permanence within the City’s infrastructure system. By the mid- to late-twentieth century, Lee Street had transitioned from an informally established roadway—likely originating from early land use patterns and property boundaries—to a fixed and recognized component of the municipal transportation network.

Importantly, these records also indicate that Lee Street has maintained its name, alignment, and general function over time, with no evidence of renaming or reclassification in the available historical documentation. This level of consistency suggests that the street name became firmly

embedded within the community and was consistently used across planning, mapping, and administrative platforms.

When considered alongside earlier evidence—including 1918 legal notices referencing Lee Street as a boundary and early twentieth-century property records indicating development along the corridor—these later documents confirm that Lee Street has functioned as a longstanding and stable element of the City’s transportation and land use framework.

Taken together, the 1962 zoning map, the 1978 real estate atlas, and the 2004 aerial and parcel mapping provide clear and consistent verification that Lee Street has been an enduring component of the City of Stockbridge for decades. These materials reinforce the conclusion that the street originated during an earlier phase of development and has remained continuously recognized and utilized within the community.

### **Summary of Findings**

Based on a comprehensive review of available historical documentation, including newspaper archives, property records, draft registration records, and municipal history, the following findings are presented:

- Lee Street was established in the Town of Stockbridge by at least 1918, as evidenced by its appearance in contemporaneous legal notices published in *The Henry County Weekly*. These notices reference Lee Street as a defined boundary within property descriptions, indicating that the roadway was already recognized and in use at that time.
- The street name is consistently documented in early legal and property-related records, demonstrating that Lee Street functioned as an established and identifiable corridor within the community during the early twentieth century. The use of the street name in formal legal descriptions further confirms its significance within the town’s spatial framework.
- Members of the Lee family owned property in the immediate vicinity during this same period, including land referenced in early twentieth-century transactions and estate-related notices. This proximity establishes a clear geographic connection between the Lee family and the corridor along which Lee Street is located.
- Additional supporting documentation, including draft registration records and property ownership data, confirms the presence of individuals such as William Jackson Lee in Stockbridge during the early twentieth century, reinforcing the historical presence of the Lee family within the community at or near the time the street was established.
- The existence of Lee Street predates the mayoral service of R. E. Lee (late 1940s–early 1950s) and William Jackson “Dub” Lee (early 1960s), demonstrating that the street name was already in use several decades prior to their tenure in public office. This establishes a clear chronological distinction between the origin of the street name and later civic leadership associated with the Lee family.
- During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was a common and well-documented practice for streets—particularly in small towns and rural communities—to be informally named after adjacent landowners, prominent local families, or commonly recognized geographic features. In many cases, these names emerged organically over time

based on local usage rather than through formal governmental action or recorded ordinances.

- In early communities such as Stockbridge, development patterns typically followed existing access routes, with homes, farms, and small commercial uses established along roadways that connected key destinations such as rail lines, churches, and town centers. As a result, streets often took on the names of the families whose land defined or bordered those corridors.
- Early municipal mapping, recordkeeping, and formal street-naming procedures were limited or inconsistently documented, particularly prior to the mid-twentieth century. As a result, no definitive legislative record has been identified that attributes the naming of Lee Street to a specific individual or official action.
- Taken together, the convergence of early documented use, geographic proximity of Lee family land ownership, and common historical naming practices supports the conclusion that Lee Street most likely derived its name from local land ownership patterns rather than from a later commemorative naming decision.

### **Analysis**

The available historical and documentary evidence indicates that Lee Street most likely originated during the early development of the Town of Stockbridge, emerging as part of the community's organic growth pattern in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The consistent appearance of Lee Street in legal notices by 1918, combined with the documented presence of Lee family land ownership in the immediate vicinity, supports the conclusion that the street name is closely associated with local landholding patterns during this formative period.

From a planning and historical development perspective, early communities such as Stockbridge did not typically follow formalized street naming procedures. Instead, roads and corridors often developed along property lines, travel routes, and connections between key destinations such as rail lines, churches, mills, and town centers. As these routes became more established, they were commonly identified by the names of adjacent landowners, prominent local families, or recognizable landmarks. This informal naming convention was widely observed throughout rural Georgia and similar small-town contexts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The proximity of Lee family landholdings to the Lee Street corridor—documented through property records, census data, and legal notices referencing individuals such as Sallie Lee and Martin Parks Lee—provides a strong geographic and contextual basis for associating the street name with local family ownership. Additionally, the continuity of Lee family presence in the area across multiple decades further reinforces the likelihood that the name was derived from longstanding community recognition rather than a later formal designation.

However, despite this strong circumstantial and contextual evidence, the precise origin of the name cannot be definitively verified. Early municipal records, including official maps, ordinances, and naming resolutions, were either not consistently created or have not been preserved. As a result, there is no surviving documentation that explicitly identifies the individual for whom Lee Street was named.

Accordingly, the historical record does not conclusively establish whether the street name was intended to commemorate a specific individual or simply reflect common local usage. Based on the available evidence, several plausible interpretations remain:

- A local Lee family associated with adjacent land ownership, whose property defined or bordered the corridor that became Lee Street;
- A prominent individual bearing the surname Lee, whose identity may have been locally understood at the time but not formally recorded; or
- Another individual or reference that has not been preserved in existing records, due to gaps in early documentation and recordkeeping practices.

It is also important to note that, although later civic leaders such as R. E. Lee and William Jackson “Dub” Lee played significant roles in the development of Stockbridge during the mid-twentieth century, the documented existence of Lee Street prior to 1918 establishes that the street name predates their public service. Therefore, it is unlikely that the street was originally named in recognition of their tenure.

In summary, while the available evidence strongly supports an origin tied to early land ownership and community development patterns, the absence of definitive documentation prevents a conclusive identification of the specific individual for whom Lee Street was named.

### **Proposed Action**

The City Council is requested to consider adoption of a resolution to rename North Lee Street and South Lee Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.

If approved, the proposed name change would recognize the legacy and historical significance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose leadership in the Civil Rights Movement represents a defining chapter in American history. The renaming would serve as a commemorative action that aligns with broader national and local efforts to honor Dr. King’s contributions to civil rights, equality, and social justice.

From a community and planning perspective, the designation of a major roadway as Martin Luther King, Jr. Way would establish a unified corridor identity that reflects the values, cultural heritage, and historical awareness of the City of Stockbridge. Such designations are commonly used in municipalities across the United States to recognize significant historical figures while also reinforcing civic identity and community pride.

The proposed renaming would also provide an opportunity to enhance wayfinding, placemaking, and community recognition along the corridor. As a continuous north-south route, the consolidation of North and South Lee Street under a single commemorative name would create a more cohesive identity and improve clarity for residents, visitors, and emergency services.

If approved, implementation of the name change would require coordination across multiple departments and agencies, including:

- Updating official City records, maps, and GIS databases to reflect the new street name;
- Coordination with Henry County, the United States Postal Service, and emergency service providers to ensure continuity of addressing and response systems;
- Notification of affected property owners and businesses, including guidance regarding address updates and transition timelines;
- Replacement and installation of street signage, including potential gateway or commemorative signage along the corridor; and
- Public communication and outreach, to ensure a clear and coordinated transition process.

Consideration of this proposed action involves both historical context and community values, as it balances the documented origins of the existing street name with the opportunity to recognize a nationally significant figure whose legacy continues to shape communities today.

### **Staff Recommendation**

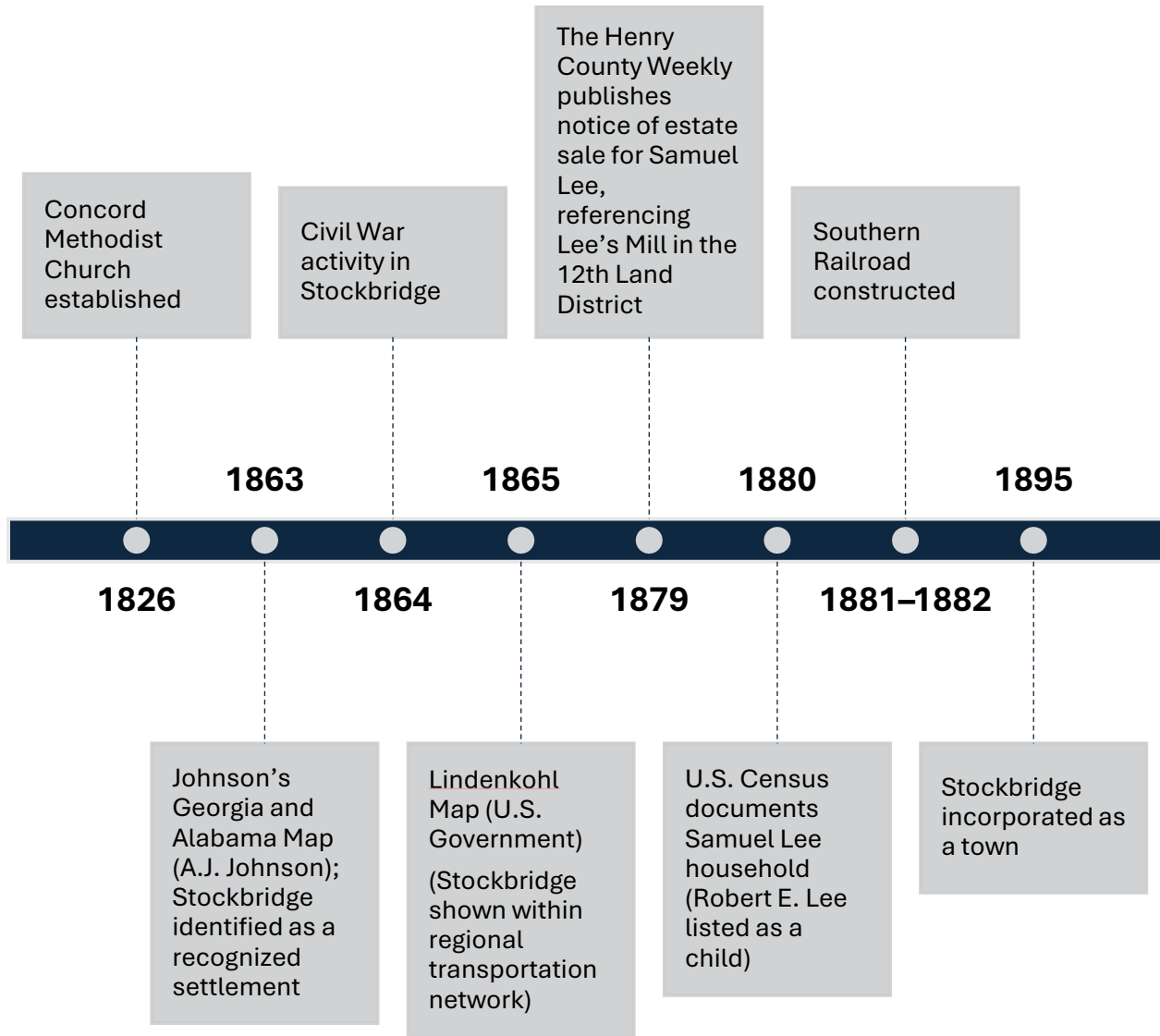
Staff recommends that the City Council review the historical findings and analysis presented in this report and provide policy direction regarding the proposed renaming of North Lee Street and South Lee Street.

The historical research indicates that Lee Street originated during the early development of the Town of Stockbridge and was likely associated with local land ownership patterns rather than a formally documented naming action. While the exact individual for whom the street was named cannot be definitively identified, the evidence demonstrates that the street name predates later civic leaders associated with the Lee family.

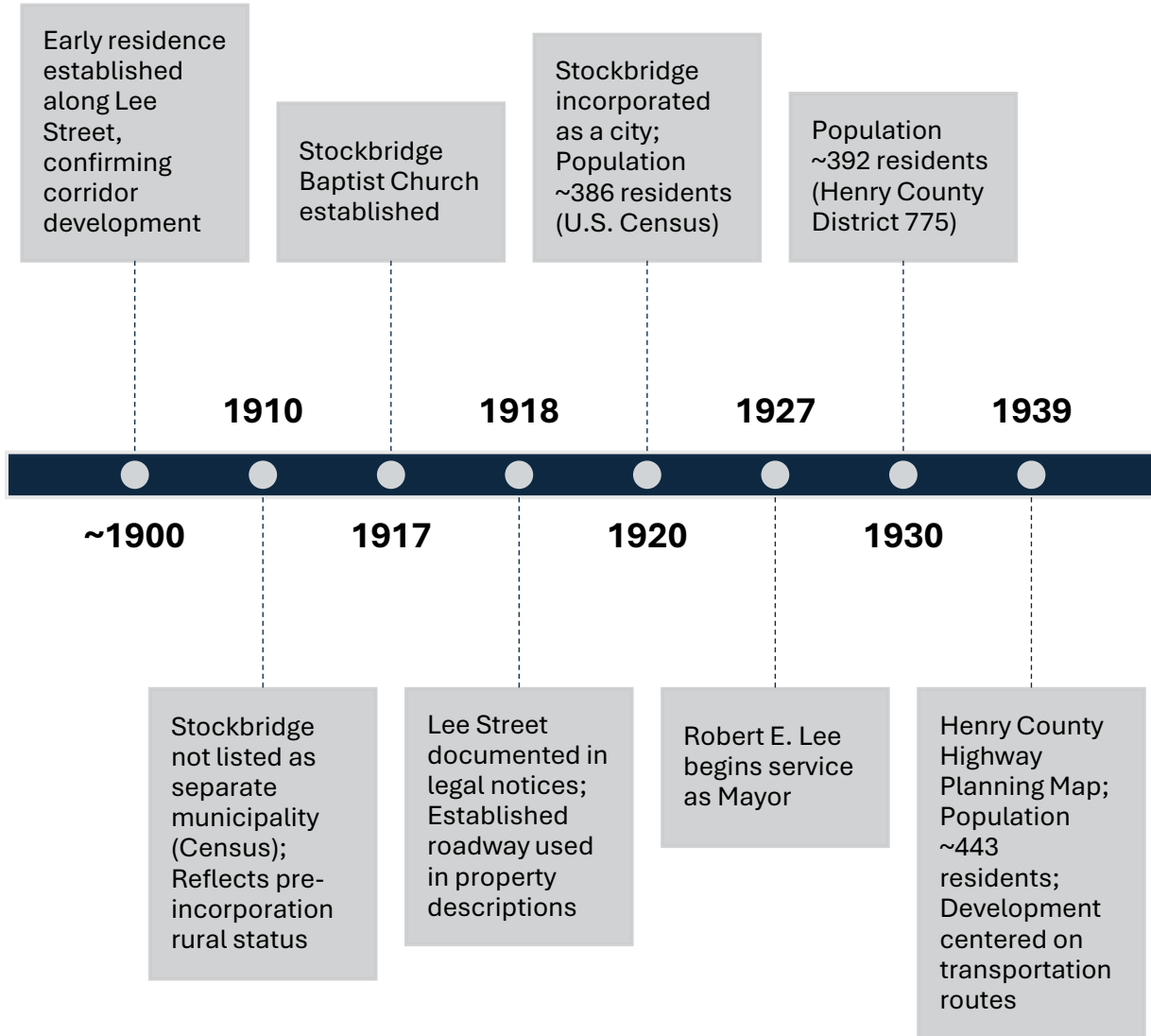
Given this context, the proposed renaming represents a policy decision rather than a correction of the historical record. As such, the City Council may consider whether the proposed name change aligns with the City's goals related to community identity, historical recognition, and cultural significance.

Should the City Council determine that the renaming is appropriate, staff recommends approval of a resolution to rename North Lee Street and South Lee Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, along with direction to proceed with implementation, including coordination with relevant agencies, notification of affected property owners, and updates to official City records and mapping systems.

## Historical Timeline



## Historical Timeline (cont.)



## Historical Timeline (cont.)

