

Vol. 20, No. 1



January 2023

## Newsletter

*Our unique history and blend of people defines the foundation of our Town.*

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Website: [leehistoricsociety.homestead.com](http://leehistoricsociety.homestead.com)  
Facebook: Lee Historical Society Lee MA

*The next meeting of the Society will be Thursday, January 12 at the Meeting Room at the Crossway Tower on High Street, Lee. 6:30 pm– 8:00 pm.*



### **FROM THE EDITORS**

We are Tracie Etheredge and Linda Buttery, members of the Lee Historical Society Board of Directors and the new editorial team of the Society's newsletter. We have very big shoes to fill, taking over this duty from Gary Allen who took it over from Mal Eckert. Both these gentlemen did a praiseworthy job in religiously putting out the newsletter every month, on time, never missing an edition, and filling it with interesting and informative content. We will endeavor to at least get close to their standard.

As members of the Society, this is YOUR newsletter. We would love to hear from you as we begin to learn the ins and outs of our new position. We welcome your input – are there any items of historical interest pertaining to Lee that you would like to hear more about? Do you have any articles of your own, photos, even the odd poem, that you would like to have us include? Do contact us – [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com) for Tracie and [lindabreader@icloud.com](mailto:lindabreader@icloud.com) for Linda.

## **FROM THE COLLECTION:**

*We will be presenting items from the Lee Historical Society collection every month. This month it's a stoneware crock donated last year.*



### **THE HISTORY OF JOHN H. CASEY**

If you look closely at this photo of an old stoneware crock, you'll see the name John H. Casey inscribed upon it. The following is John's story, as told to the Society by Frank J. Kelly. It's assumed that the crock in the photo was made and sold sometime between June 1880 and January 1888.

John was born in Middlefield, Massachusetts to Patrick & Elizabeth Casey. In 1855, the family was living in Becket, but decided to relocate to nearby Lee.

The Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors & Marines in Civil War, Volume 1V, 831, Co. C, 57<sup>th</sup> Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry cites John as an 18 year old resident of Lee. He was working then as a laborer when he enlisted on February 10, 1864 at the age of 18. He was mustered February 18, 1864, but unfortunately was soon taken out of action as he was wounded and taken prisoner on May 6, 1864 at Wilderness, Virginia. He was paroled on September 1 of that same year and discharged for disability on February 7, 1865.

Once back in civilian life and returned to Lee, John worked as a clerk in the General Store of William T. Fish. It seems he was ideally suited to this kind of occupation and eventually, with A.C. Sparks, bought the business. It was located at the corner of Main and Center Streets. An article dated August 21, 1873 in the Valley Gleaner mentions that the duo planned to build a new store on the site, which they did, moving into it on July 14, 1874, according to the Valley Gleaner.

When Sparks retired, the store came under the name of J.H. Casey. John sold his business on January 10, 1888 to John P. Quigley & Company. Not wishing to be idle, it seems, John bought the clothing business of Wilson D. Clark. In 1896, he built his home on Main Street, which is now the Normandy Apartments, and a new store in 1897, now occupied by Henry's Electric. He sold the clothing business in 1900 to Pierce & Co. of Boston, but they retained the Casey name.

J.T. Owens became the proprietor and manager of the Casey Clothing Co in 1904. In 1912, he built the Park Building on Main Street and changed the name from Casey Clothing Co. to J.T. Owens. That business is now, of course, Zabians.

*Footnote: James T. Owen's sister, Margaret Owens Kelly, was Frank Kelly's mother. On November 2, 1986, Frank compiled the above information, so many thanks to Frank!*

## **REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN**

*The Town of Lee has been the home of many, many veterans who have served their country since the Revolutionary War through to the latest wars in the Gulf. Each month, we will give an account of one of these brave men and women.*

### **CAPTAIN JESSE BRADLEY (1736 – 1812)**

Here's a Revolutionary War soldier's story with a twist!

A true patriot, he seems to have had a stellar military career, having led troops from Lee during the war. He was a Captain of the 20<sup>th</sup> Company 2<sup>nd</sup> Berkshire County Regiment and served from 1776 – 1778.

The twist in this story is that his brother William was a turncoat, a British sympathizer who lived in Lanesborough. With a dash of sibling spite, Jesse stopped at his brother's house with his entire company on their way to Bennington, VT where William was forced to feed them all. One assumes he had a large and well-filled pantry!

### **DO YOU RECOGNIZE...?**

*We have many photos in the Lee Historical Society Collection that we could use more information on. Please help if you can.*



**...This House?**

This photo is from a collection of glass slides we have that are from around the 1890's in and around Lee. It's labeled the "**M.A Grove House.**" Do you know where it is? Is it still standing? If you have information email Tracie: [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com).

## **WHAT'S IN OUR STORE?**

We have some truly wonderful items relating to Lee that we would love to bring out of our store room and into your hands. Our prices are also truly wonderful and the funds we gather from your purchases go toward, as one example, our ability to put together such fascinating exhibits as our most recent "Lee Answers the Call" at the Scolforo Gallery. Here's a menu of what we have on offer:



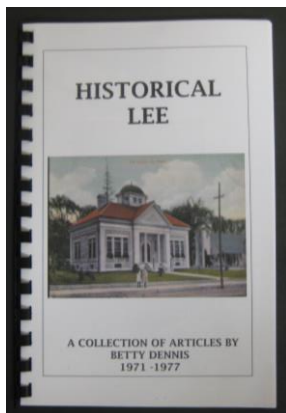
**MUGS** depicting various places of historical interest in Lee. **\$5**



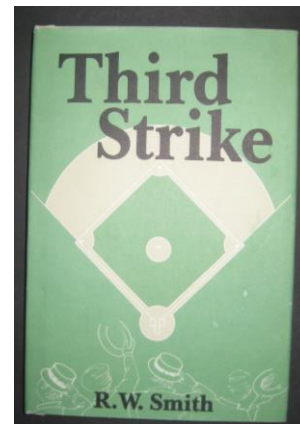
**PICTURE PACKETS** Six beautiful prints with scenes of Lee, perfect for framing. **\$6 per packet**



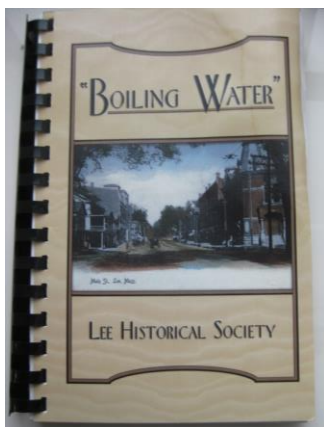
**T-SHIRTS** Show your pride and support of your Town with a Lee T-shirt. Sizes: Small, Large, XLarge, and 2XLarge (Sorry, no Mediums left) **\$15**



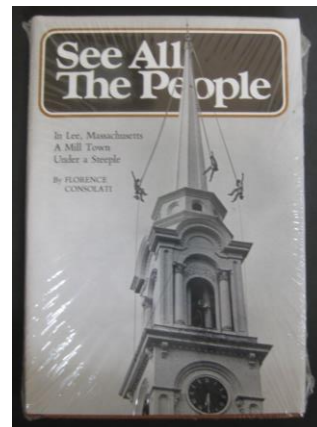
**"HISTORICAL LEE"** A lovely little book of articles collected by Lee's beloved librarian, Betty Dennis **\$12**



**"THIRD STRIKE"** by R.W. Smith For all you baseball fans and Lee lovers, this is the perfect book! At only **\$5**, it's a home run!



**“BOILING WATER”** This delightful book was compiled by the Society’s Cookbook Committee back in 2005 and is full of the most mouth-watering recipes, such as Molasses Spice Cookies. It includes some pages by Florence Consolati on various places of historical interest in Lee. **\$8**



**“SEE ALL THE PEOPLE”** by Florence Consolati If you want the intimate details of every aspect of the history of Lee, and don’t already own at least one copy, this is a must-have purchase! **\$26**

### **WHAT’S IN YOUR ATTIC?**

**STOP!** Before you run to Goodwill or the dumpster with those old photos, pictures, prints, post cards, other alliterative pieces of memorabilia, that old “piece of tat” you inherited from Great Uncle Fred, please pause for a while. If these relate in any way to Lee, they may have significant historical value.

At the Lee Historical Society, we have a very comprehensive collection of what the folks of Lee may have considered as a donation to the landfill, but which we have rescued. Everyday items from the past hold fascination once they’ve become obsolete, isn’t that so? If you’d rather not donate the item, we can scan or copy it, or maybe borrow it for a display.

If you are wondering if something you have could be worth donating, please contact us and we’ll be happy to make an assessment. If they’re unworthy, we’ll even take them to Goodwill or the dumpster for you! Please contact Tracie Etheredge [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com)

**FROM THE VALLEY GLEANER ...**

*This is a new item we're adding. We are taking interesting articles from old editions of the Valley Gleaner.*

**POWDER MILL EXPLOSION - MAY 5, 1859**

On Thursday evening last, about 10 o' clock, the cylinder powder mill in South Lee, containing twenty kegs of powder (one "charge") was blown up with a tremendous report, which was heard for miles around. The mill was completely destroyed, including the water-wheel, but no person was injured, as the mill was run nights without an attendant. Fragments of the building were scattered a large distance around, and considerable glass was broken in South Lee village. The mill belonged to Mr. Aaron Barnes of West Stockbridge, and is the same that was formerly owned by Mr. Langdon Kellogg. The supposed cause of the explosion was a defect in a new set of copper balls which had been put into the cylinders a few days previous. The mill will be rebuilt immediately.

**THE SOCIETY ON TELEVISION**

If you missed, or would like to revisit, the Society's last four exhibits that were held in the Scolforo Gallery in Lee Library, they can all be found on CTSBTV's website at [www.ctsbtv.org](http://www.ctsbtv.org). Just click on Public Channel 1301 and enter the name of the exhibit in the Search box. Then, at your leisure, in the comfort of your own home, you can watch:

- "The Lee Veterans Website"**
- "Lee Earns a Living"**
- "Rock Stars and Paper Tigers"**
- "Lee Answers the Call: Honoring the Veterans of Lee"**

**IF YOU LOVE LOCAL HISTORY ...**

*... how about joining us and becoming a member of the Lee Historical Society? You can also give a Gift Membership to a friend or relative and not only help support our Society, but also join fellow lovers of this wonderful little town in learning about and helping to preserve its history.*

**MEMBERSHIP FEES:**

Individual: \$10.00 Family: \$25.00 Business: \$35.00  
Supporting Membership: \$50.00 or more Sponsor Membership: \$100.00 or more

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

NEW: \_\_\_\_\_ RENEWAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**THESE BUSINESSES SUPPORT US.....PLEASE SUPPORT THEM**

**Bartini Roofing Company**  
290 Pleasant Street  
**243-0570**

**Michael Considine & Shawn  
P. Leary, Attys. at Law**  
42 Main Street  
**243-4900**

**Frank Consolati Ins. Agency**  
71 Main Street  
**243-0105**

**Cottage Care Inc.**  
P.O Box 753  
**243-4257**

**Dresser Hull Company**  
60 Railroad Street  
**243-1400**

**Eagle Mill Redevelopment**  
50 West Center Street  
**425-4850**

**Ford's Auto Service**  
1075 Fairview Street  
**243-1107**

**Fraser's Service & Sales**  
138 West Park Street  
**243-0326**

**Greylock Credit Union**  
47 Main Street  
**243-2121**

**Henry Holt Art**  
125 Golden Hill  
**243-9918**

**Henry's Electric**  
252 Main Street  
**243-0690**

**Hunter & Graziano P.C.**  
10 Park Place  
**243-0789**

**Kelly Funeral Home**  
3 Main Street  
**243-0204**

**Robert M. Kelly,  
Paperhanging**  
65 South Prospect Street  
**243-3489**

**Lee Bank**  
75 Park Street  
**243-0117**

**Lee Hardware Store**  
221 Main Street  
**243-0786**

**Locker Room Sports Bar**  
232 Main Street  
**243-2662**

**Mike's Professional Barber  
Shop**  
93 Main Street  
**394-5829**

**NBT Bank of Lee**  
76 Park Street  
**243-1800**

**RW's Inc.**  
35 Run Way  
**243-0946**

**Ta-Ga-Soke Campgrounds**  
7820 Higginsville Road  
Blossvale, NY 13028  
**1-800-831-1744**

**A. F. Viale Ins. Agency**  
75 Main Street  
**243-0347**

**Wilcox Plumbing & Heating**  
P. O. Box 561  
**243-2494**

*"If you want to understand today you have to search yesterday."  
- Pearl S. Buck -*