

Vol. 20, No. 4



April 2023

# **The Gateway Gazette**

## *The Newsletter of the Lee Historical Society*

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

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*The next meeting of the Society will be Thursday, April 13 at the Meeting Room at the Crossway Tower on High Street, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.*



No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.  
April is a promise that May is bound to keep, and we know it.  
– Hal Borland –

### **FROM THE EDITORS**

Can you believe that it's already April? Well, as it usually follows March, you probably can. But, flippancy aside, don't the months roll on by? It seems just yesterday that we took on the role of co-editors in December, preparing the January edition of the newsletter. As we prepare the April edition, it's obviously still March with snow on the ground and a wicked chill wind gusting around. By April 1st when you'll be receiving this newsletter, will the birds be singing, the grass greening, and the snow a fond memory? Fingers crossed!

Don't forget to let us know what you think about the Gateway Gazette. Praise is always welcome, but we won't ignore the occasional grouch. Mostly, let us know what else you might want to read about. So, contact us – [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com) for Tracie and [lindabreader@icloud.com](mailto:lindabreader@icloud.com) for Linda, and give us your thoughts.

**THE LHS BULLETIN BOARD**  
**AN EXHIBIT OF THE LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**LEE COMES OF AGE: 1850 – 1900**

Please mark your calendars for July 1 – 31 and visit our latest exhibit in the Scolforo Gallery in Lee Library. On July 25, 1850 an event took place that touched off a half century of growth and modernization in Lee. So big that in Stockbridge 5,000 people turned out with more celebrations taking place in Lee and Lenox Dale. Can you guess what happened in that cold winter day in 1850?

Prior to that day, Lee still had the look of a struggling frontier town, but it would be transformed into a prosperous industrial village over the next 50 years. Watch this space in our May, June, and July issues for more details about the exhibit and for an answer to the events of July 25, 1850.

**THE LHS ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP**

To help offset the rising costs of a college education, we are happy to announce that we will continue to offer two scholarships for \$250 each to two Lee High School seniors. These scholarships are in memory of Stephen Cozzaglio, Dolores Eckert and Marion Leach. Please contact the High School Guidance Office where applications are available. Good luck!

**STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN LEE!**

It was April 25th , 1875 when Selectmen Adelbert Flintlock, Josiah Wetherspoon, and Willaby Fairshanks sat down at the ornately-carved oak table in the Meeting Room of the newly constructed Memorial Hall. A little further down, far enough to be inconspicuous, but within listening distance, sat Alma Fairshanks, Willaby's wife. She was to be the scribe at this unusually secretive meeting.

The end of the Civil War was just short of a decade gone and the townsfolk had become somewhat agitated about the choice of name for their town. Most of them were not great admirers of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee and felt that outsiders may, mistakenly, think the Town of Lee had been named for him instead of General Charles Lee, who had been, of course, on their side. Even this General Lee had some strikes against him, being British for one thing; no one had yet forgotten the Revolutionary War 100 years previously, plus it seems the great George Washington wasn't a fan. He supposedly spent some time swearing obscenities at Lee during the famed Battle of Monmouth.

Thus it was that the three elected Selectmen met to discuss a matter of great import – whether or not to rename Lee and, if it be thus decided, what other name would be more fitting. The three ummed and aahed for some time before they started throwing out suggestions that Alma wrote down in her best cursive onto a sheet of vellum, as befit the occasion. After many minutes of indecisiveness, and frantic scribbling by Alma, a decision was made to shortlist the longlist.

After shortening the shortlist, three names were selected, one suggestion from each of the Selectmen. Adelbert thought "Little Boston" appropriate, even though Lee bore no resemblance to Big Boston. Josiah, being a somewhat bumptious, immodest fellow, deemed it should be "Wetherspoons", as his family had been one of the founders. Finally, Willaby had come up with "Notthatlee", which eventually all three, and Alma secretly, thought perfect.

However, fate played a part in that a great commotion outside brought the meeting to an abrupt halt. It seemed that the townspeople had caught wind of the secret meeting and were incensed. A contingent of pitchfork waving locals hurriedly cleared the room, the Selectmen were stripped of their position, and a new team voted in, and Lee remained as Lee and not Notthatlee.

*Editor's Note: Of course, this is all nonsense, but we can't let April Fool's Day pass without one good leg pull!*

## A UNIQUE FRIENDSHIP

**EMERSON McKEGG**  
**AUGUST 23, 1878 – DECEMBER 22, 1905**

*This is a story of two Lee men who became friends over 100 years after one of them had passed. Only in the Berkshires, you may think! It's a compelling tale, so do read on.*

Tim Schaefer enjoyed nothing more than riding his bicycle through serene Fairmount Cemetery on his way to work or during his spare time, which was, indeed, very spare, as he worked multiple jobs. As he passed the tall white pole reading "Fountain Sq.", he felt compelled to stop and study the weathered, lichen-laden headstone before him, its inscription illegible after the passing of some hundred-odd years. Wiping away some of the grime, he could just make out the name "Emerson McKegg".



*Emerson's headstone before cleaning  
(Photo courtesy of Tim Schaefer)*



*Emerson's headstone after Tim cleaned it  
(Photo by Linda Buttery)*



*Emerson, Hattie with Edward, and Hattie's grandmother\* outside their home on Washington Mountain Road  
(Photo courtesy of Deb Carty Cote and Bette Flood)*

*\*Hattie's grandmother was Sarah Ann Packard, wife of Bradford Packard, Jr. Hattie was a direct descendant of Governor William Bradford.*

And so began a most unusual and touching relationship between the two as Tim proceeded to care for, not only Emerson's plot, but the other four that neighbored his, two of them being Emerson's in-laws, the Crawfords. Emerson's story of his short and somewhat tragic life is memorialized now as Tim shares the results of his research into this young man who started as a stranger and became a friend. Emerson was born in Colchester, New York. He moved as a young boy with his family to the Berkshires where they set up home on Church Street in Lenox Dale.

Emerson married Hattie Crawford on September 11, 1900 in Lenox, both of them so young, he just turned twenty two and Hattie eighteen. They made their family home in a two-story home on Washington Mountain Road in Lee. On September 4, 1901, almost exactly a year after their marriage, their son Edward was born, followed on February 8, 1904 by daughter Ethel, and another daughter Lucy in the September of 1905.

Obviously a loving and responsible husband and father, Emerson worked at several different jobs, one being a farm laborer, but eventually becoming a well-respected painter for the households of Lee and beyond. What is so commendable is that during this time, Emerson battled some very serious health issues. According to his obituary, "Some six or seven years ago, he had a very serious attack of pneumonia with pleural trouble and an incision was made and two tubes placed in such a way as to drain the pus from the pleural cavity." This sickness resulted in him having part of a lung removed.

Sometime later, having recovered from this, it seems his health took another downward turn resulting in him having two ribs removed. It was finally pulmonary tuberculosis that took him at such a young age, only twenty seven. What is so amazing is how he soldiered on, riding his bicycle to work and back in all weathers and working many hours to keep his young family fed and sheltered. It was deemed that this is what eventually caused his demise. Poor Hattie was now widowed and less than a month later lost their little Lucy, also to consumption, as tuberculosis was then called.

Yes, this is a sad story, but what is so uplifting is how Emerson's and Tim's lives came together in such a way as to bring a good and kind Lee man's story to light over a century after his death. Tim can't explain what made him get off his bike that day and feel the need to clean up that dirty old headstone. Some things are inexplicable. But the cleaning has brought back to life those five headstones, Emerson's, the Crawford's, Robert F. Hewitt, a veteran of the Civil War who passed on August 10, 1910 at the age of 75, and little Alton Benedict who passed away on September 19, 1892 at 5 years and 6 months old. With his rake and push mower, Tim has made that little piece of Fairmount into a showpiece, keeping it pristine, adding pine cones, greens, and Christmas ornaments in December, a little miniature bicycle for Emerson during the summer.

One day, a car stopped and a lady who introduced herself as Bette Flood asked Tim about his work at the site. It seems she was a member of Hattie's family, an in-law by marriage, and they had been wondering who had turned those five headstones sparkling white and kept the grass mown and the area free of leaves, old pine cones and needles. She later introduced Deb Carty Cote, a family member who had put together a whole book full of family information, including some of the photographs you see here, and this she shared with Tim.

And so Tim learned more of the history. Emerson's father was a Stable Master at the Eldorado Inn in Lenox Dale. Emerson was one of four boys, the youngest. It's said that at one time, he and Hattie lived at the train station in Lenox Dale. Hattie was able to find happiness again after losing her beloved Emerson, when she married Martin Carty a couple of years later and went on to have several more children. She and her husband are buried at St. Mary's Cemetery on Spring Street.

Of Emerson's son Edward it's known that he went on to marry and had one son, a grandson for Emerson and Hattie, also called Edward. He was in the military and also worked as a chauffeur at Elm Court in Lenox. He passed on November 18, 1950, just 49 years old. Happily, their second daughter Ethel lived to the ripe old age of 85.



*Edward C. McKegg  
(Photo courtesy of Deb Carty Cote and Bette Flood)*

It would be remiss to conclude this story without mentioning the remarkable coincidences between Emerson and Tim. The day that Tim cleaned Emerson's headstone, he found a paint brush lying in the road on his way home. Unremarkable perhaps, but then Emerson's trade was as a painter. The day Tim set to work restoring Emerson's headstone turned out to be just a couple of days before Emerson's birthday. Emerson's mother's maiden name was Shaver; Tim's last name is Schaefer, somewhat similar. Both men rode their bicycles

everywhere and worked several jobs. Emerson was the youngest of four brothers, as is Tim. Those skeptics amongst us may shrug this off as so much fantasizing, but it has to be at least a little intriguing. Whatever the reason, Emerson's family are very happy that the connection was made, and perhaps Emerson is, too!

*Editor's Note: A word of caution with regard to cleaning headstones. Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia uses a product called D2. Any product with corrosive properties should obviously be avoided. Only soft bristle brushes should be used. Plastic scrapers should be used, if necessary, nothing metallic. Before proceeding on any headstone cleaning, refer to the National Parks Service website (nps.gov) and search "Gravestone Cleaning". Open the first article "Abrasive Cleaning of Grave Markers" and click on "Best Practice Recommendations for Cleaning Government Issued Headstones". If it's good enough for those, it's good enough for Lee!*

## **REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN**

*As we have been doing each month, we are proud to record a very short history of yet another Lee veteran, this one from the Civil War. What an interesting story of this young soldier we have to tell!*

### **CHARLES H. GREATTREX 1836 – 1862**

Charles' story ends with one of great intrigue. When the Civil War broke out, he found himself far from home out west in Missouri. At the young age of 26, he lost his life way too early in August of 1862 at the Battle of Lone Jack near the Missouri River.

Here's where the intrigue comes in – this battle was the result of a recruiting raid by Confederate Bushwhackers into Missouri. This infamous group included William Quantrill's Raiders and Cole and Thomas Younger, they who later became part of the Jesse James Younger gang. So the legend goes, Charles was mortally wounded and one of the gang took him to a hospital in Jefferson where the brave soldier sadly died.

## **HONORING ALL LEE VETERANS**

The Lee Veterans Wall, recognizing all men and women who have served honorably in the armed services of the United States and its allies, made its debut last July with about 2,500 names found mostly in public sources. The wall is incomplete and there are plans to add missing names on new banners this year. Our goal is to find every qualified veteran and if you know of any veteran who was missed earlier, please let us know.

Any person who served honorably for any period of time in the armed services is qualified to be on our wall if that person ever lived in Lee, is buried in Lee or went to school in Lee. This includes honorable National Guard or Reserves. Any person who ever put on the uniform and swore to defend the nation qualifies.

Partial listings of veterans now on the wall can be found on our website, [leemassveterans.homesteadcloud.com](http://leemassveterans.homesteadcloud.com). The lists are incomplete, so if you are in doubt please send us information about veterans we may have missed at [2rockpaper9@gmail.com](mailto:2rockpaper9@gmail.com). You can see the kinds of information we are including by looking on our website above. Please don't let the vets in your life go unrecognized.



## **FROM THE VALLEY GLEANER ...**

*And so we continue with our story of "A Great Fire", the one that devastated a large section of Lee's Main Street. Read on now to discover the fate of the Episcopal Church on Franklin Street.*

### **A GREAT FIRE - FEBRUARY 5, 1879 PART THREE**

While the fire was raging at its fiercest, the great heat thrown upon the slated roof of the Episcopal church, standing on Franklin street a few feet east of Baird's upper block, ignited the rafters underneath the slate, and it was seen that the church must go. Hastily the carpets were taken up and removed, and everything possible taken out. The organ was partially removed and the bell fell, appearing very little damaged.

By 5 o'clock the danger was substantially over, and the engines were withdrawn, though a steady stream from the Housatonic mill was kept playing upon the ruins for some time later, to prevent any chance of further mischief. In addition to the regular police force, six specials were appointed by the selectmen to keep watch during the night.

When the park tank ran empty, the Water Witch was taken to the tank near Edward Bosworth's. The Forest, also, took a second position, at the tank near the Episcopal church.

At the hour this is written (Monday midnight) it is difficult to state the loss exactly. The buildings burned are P. C. Baird's upper and lower blocks, Morey's block and the Episcopal church. The loss on Baird's two buildings may be put at \$20,000 insured for \$14,000; on Morey's block \$12,000, insured for \$9,000; on the Episcopal church \$10,000, insured for \$5,000 in the Springfield Fire and Marine. Oman's block was thoroughly drenched, and will need thorough renovation. The loss here may be put at \$1,000 covered by insurance. Baird's upper block, on the corner of Main and Franklin streets, was occupied by Frank W. Brewster, boots and shoes, all of whose stock was saved in fair shape; Miss F.L. Mansir, dress-maker and fancy goods, whose stock was saved, but not in first rate condition; Perry, Hull & Co., feed, meal, grain and coal, whose stock was somewhat damaged in removal; and J.C. Chaffee, readymade clothing, whose goods were saved. All of these losses are covered by insurance. Baird's lower block was occupied on the first floor by T.G. Sabin, hardware, who loses \$10,000, insured for \$6,000. His stock on the ground floor was saved in a decidedly mixed condition, though a large amount in the cellar could not be removed and will probably prove a total loss. Next below Mr. Sabin was D. E. Hill, harness, saddlery and trunks, whose stock was saved. E. Wright and Co., readymade clothing, occupying the south store in the block, had an insurance of \$5,000 on their \$10,000 stock which was saved. The second floor was occupied by Brannings law office, Alfred Morin's Barber shop, J. P. Woods shoe shop and the Gleaner office. Little was saved from the latter beyond the books, subscription list and files of the paper. Messrs. Branning, Morin and Wood were able to save substantially everything, and their loss is small. Rockwell and Hill, printers and publishers of the Gleaner, have an insurance of \$2500. The north store in Morey's block was occupied by Burton H. Taintor, books, stationery and variety goods, and by George T. Bostwick, watches, jewelry, and silver ware. Both these stocks were saved and the losses are fully covered by insurance. The middle store was occupied by A. P. Hollenbeck, boots, shoes, etc. His stock was all removed and his loss will not be heavy. His stock was worth \$3000; insurance \$1,500.

*At this point, due to the space constraints of our newsletter, we must stop and continue the inventory of those businesses affected by this dreadful fire in our next and final installment. So many, so much heartache! How was the Gleaner affected and how did it manage to put out a written report of this disaster? Find out in Part Four!*

## **ARTICLES BY BETTY DENNIS**

*And so we return with another article by Lee's beloved librarian, Elizabeth "Betty" Dennis (February 16, 1917 – May 4, 2007). For those not familiar with Betty, she started work in Lee Library in 1935 after she graduated from Lee High School. In 1942 she became the Head Librarian, a position she held until retirement in 1987.*

*The Lee Rotary Club asked Betty to start writing about different interesting historical events in Lee and these were printed in the Penny Saver between April 1971 – August 1977. She had a way of bringing life to the stories she researched and it's our pleasure to reproduce some of them in our newsletter.*

**APRIL 22, 1971**

Only about 150 years had elapsed after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth in 1620 when Lee began to be settled. Sixteen other towns in Berkshire County were already settled before Lee, so some of our early settlers came to us from these other towns, while others came from Connecticut and Cape Cod.

The Indian Claimants (sic) to the entire region were of the Mohegan race, which means "the people of the waters that ebb and flow", also designated "Stockbridge Tribe" and "Housatonic Tribe"

When Lee was settled, there were few Indians left, and those who remained had given up their war paint and feathers in favor of the dress of the Pale Face. However every Spring some of the tribe would return to this area, building wigwams in which to live for a few weeks while gathering Maple syrup for sugaring. History pictures for us a "Maple Orchard" south of today's Water Pollution Plant.

Lee was not incorporated until 1777, but the first people began coming as early as 1760. Our town, six miles long and five miles wide, tucked between the Taconic and Green Mountain ranges, is our inheritance from those staunch people, and much history has been made.

The Rev. C. M. Hyde and Alexander Hyde prepared "Centennial History of Lee, 1777 – 1877" giving us the story of our first hundred years. Now it is our responsibility to leave future generations an account of the last hundred years.

A Bicentennial History Study Committee is established and we'd like your help. If you are interested, just leave your name at the Lee Library and a postal will inform you of the next meeting of this group.

*Editor's Note: As I type up this article for inclusion in the newsletter, I can't help but mull over the changes that have come about in our thinking toward the indigenous peoples of this country from fifty-odd years ago when Betty Dennis wrote this article. The reference to "war paint and feathers" seems now so offensive, as if the Mohegan people were savages which, of course, they were far from being. The statement that the "first people began coming as early as 1760" seems to overlook the fact that many people lived here long before the "Pale Face". Ms. Dennis is not to be judged by this in any way as this was the vernacular of her day. It would be interesting to hear our readers' thoughts. With regard to the Bicentennial History Study Committee, did this bring to fruition a publication similar to the one published by the Hydes?*

## **REMEMBERING A MEMBER**

We are sad to report the loss of one of our members; Sandra Waddock, although relocated to Florida, remained a member of the Lee Historical Society. She passed in January of this year. Her cousin, Patricia Tyne, made a kind donation to LHS in memory of Sandra, and for this we are very thankful. Condolences to the Waddock family and friends.

## THESE BUSINESSES SUPPORT US.....PLEASE SUPPORT THEM

Our Membership Committee is in the middle of their Annual Membership Drive. Starting this year, Business Sponsors can have their business card posted in The Gateway Gazette, like this:

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10 Park Place  
243-0789

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243-0204

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65 South Prospect Street  
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