



Vol. 22, No. 8

August 2025

The Gateway Gazette

The Newsletter of the Lee Historical Society

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

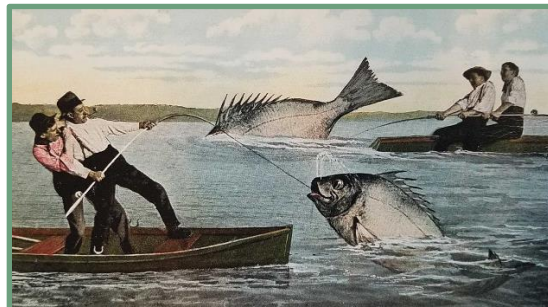
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The Monthly Meeting of the Society will be Thursday, August 14th at the Historical Society Office, Crossway Tower, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.



FROM THE EDITORS

We're still in the thick of the hustle of summer activities but soon the summer will be winding down and we'll be in the midst of the frenzy of autumn activities that fill the calendar in the Berkshires. September hosts local events every week including the Lenox Apple Squeeze, the Hancock Village Country Fair, the Festival Latino, the Housatonic Valley Heritage Walks, and most important to us, Lee's Founders Days. New Englanders feel forced to take advantage of every day before the weather again turns too harsh for outdoor activities. Remember to slow down from time to time so you can enjoy the fun and beauty of our region without feeling forced to fit EVERYTHING in before the snow flies. But absolutely make an effort to be in Lee for all the activities during Founders Weekend (see below for details).

THE C.S.A. PAPER SCANDAL

In the summer of 1863, a curious and somewhat dramatic episode unfolded in Lee, shaking the community and drawing attention from beyond the borders of the town. It all started with a seemingly innocuous piece of paper. But this wasn't just any paper - it was allegedly made for the Confederate States of America (C.S.A.), and its discovery sent ripples through both local and national circles.



The story first broke when rumors circulated about a firm in Lee manufacturing banknote paper, which had the letters "C.S.A." woven into it as a watermark. The whispers suggested that the paper was meant for the Confederate government's currency. Before long, a report in the *Valley Gleaner* on August 6, 1863, confirmed the story, adding fuel to the fire. According to the

report, a "Provost Marshal" had allegedly seized the paper, but the details were far from clear. The *Gleaner* quickly dismissed the accusations against a local paper company, G.W. Linn & Co., insisting that no such paper had been sent to the Confederacy.

Still, the story didn't end there. On August 27, 1863, the *Valley Gleaner* reported that officials had made their way to Lee to investigate further. The U.S. Marshal and his deputy from Boston arrived with official orders to question local residents, including George W. Linn, Prentiss C. Baird, and William Brown, all of whom were tied to the alleged paper-making operation. The investigation revealed some startling details.

According to the testimony of Deputy U.S. Marshal A.H. Bicknell, Linn had confessed that he was producing the paper under an order from a New York firm, Manahan & Miller. Linn claimed that they told him the paper was to be used for counterfeiting Confederate currency. He had even received assurances from Washington authorities that there would be no objections to the project. However, suspicions began to grow after a letter from the New York firm requested that Linn keep the details of the transaction a secret and avoid using any names. This raised red flags for Linn, and he decided to halt production of the paper.

Despite his intentions to cease manufacturing, the investigation revealed that approximately 9,000 sheets of the controversial paper had been produced after Bicknell's visit. The sheets bore the C.S.A. watermark, and Linn's suspicions seemed well-founded. Witnesses testified that they saw Linn transporting the paper to the local depot, and investigations revealed that the packages were addressed to a firm in New York—Charles J. Spalding & Co. However, when authorities looked into the address, they found no such business existed.



The back of a Confederate bill showing the CSA watermark.

The case went to court, and Linn, along with Brown, was held on charges of giving aid and comfort to the rebels. Producing items for an enemy government in the middle of a war is treason. The authorities were particularly concerned about the paper's potential use by the Confederate government, even if Linn had been unaware of its ultimate purpose. As the investigation progressed, questions arose about the role of Manahan & Miller, who had apparently provided the molds for the paper. The New York firm claimed that their goal was to flood the South with counterfeit Confederate currency in an effort to destabilize the Confederacy's economy. While this justification may have sounded patriotic to some, others were less convinced.

Prentiss Baird testified to having been approached by Manahan & Miller about manufacturing bank-note paper, and of recommending Linn for the task. He testified to the character of Linn saying he was a good, loyal, upright citizen and a member of the church, and therefore not likely to be a traitor to the Union.

By the end of the investigation, Linn was cleared of intentional wrongdoing. He explained that he had simply received an order from a firm in New York and was unaware of any nefarious plans involving the Confederate currency. Nevertheless, the case left a mark on Lee's history, and the curious tale of the C.S.A. paper continues to be a part of the town's lore.



The First Baird Paper Mill
(location unknown). Source: Lee
Library Assoc.

The Linn & Co. Mill (also known as the Linn & Dean Mill and the National Mill) was originally built in 1855 on Lake May (now known as Goose Pond). It was described as a "small one engine one vat hand mill for making banking note paper." Elizur Smith bought a share of the mill in the 1870's and in 1883 it was purchased by Prentiss Baird for the making of paper collars. It is indicative of the small community of Lee paper mill owners that Baird testified about Linn and his mill twenty years before he purchased the very mill in question.

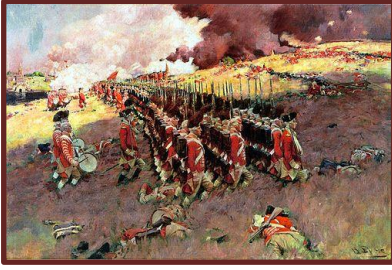
Though Linn was ultimately acquitted of aiding the Confederate cause, the whole affair raises interesting questions about the many possible uses of for the various types of paper manufactured in Lee.

REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN **FENNER FOOTE (1754-1847)**

Telling the story of Revolutionary War veterans is difficult because of the scarceness of details about their day to day lives. Therefore this month's veteran's story is a little "bare bones" pieced together from official records. The Foote name should be familiar to anyone who knows Lee history, they were a large family that came to Lee in the earliest days and the many Foote sons and grandsons continued to have an impact on the town. Note: our team cleaning some of the old headstones in Fairmount Cemetery have found that the spelling of the family name is shown as "Foote" and "Foot" interchangeably. Not only headstones, but official veterans documents and histories of the area also use the two spellings without regard to those of us trying to keep the family members and their connections straight. The good thing about this particular veteran is that he has an unusual first name, which helps to keep his details straight.

Fenner Foote was born in 1754 Colchester, CT. He came to Lee with his parents Jonathan and Sarah, and eight siblings in 1770. They lived in the Glassworks settlement, which is now the central part of town. The Foote family were among some of the earliest settlers and were therefore prominent in its early days. From Hyde's History of Lee: "The first religious meeting was held in Deacon Oliver West's barn which stood where a barn now stands upon the old Westfield Place, near the burying ground. The hay mow constituted the orchestra. That old barn echoed in the sweetest melody, with the divine songs sung by that choir in which the children of Jonathan Foote composed the most important part. In regards to this Nathan Dillingham wrote:

David and Ase sing bass,
Jonathan and Fenner sing tenor;
Vice and Sol beat them all."



The Battle of Bunker Hill by Howard Pyle

Fenner served with the first regiment enlisted in the Berkshires which formed almost as soon as news of military action in the eastern part of the state made it west. He was a private in Capt. William Goodrich's company of Minute Men in Col. John Patterson's regiment which marched April 22, 1775, in response to the alarm of April 19, 1775 after the battles of Lexington and Concord. From Stockbridge and Glassworks and other towns throughout the Berkshires men rallied and marched east to Cambridge to join the fray. This company contained a mixture of settlers of European descent and Stockbridge Mohicans. Paterson's regiment, later known as the

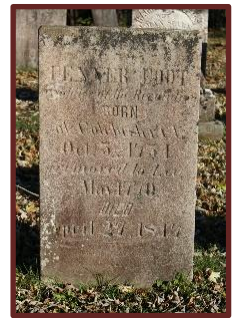
26th Continental Regiment, was absorbed into the newly-formed Continental Army, and was present at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775.

Fenner eventually joined the Simonds' Regiment of Militia, also known as the 2nd Berkshire County Regiment. The Regiment was at Fort Ticonderoga during the winter of 1776 - 1777, so although Fenner served a few short stints in the army he seems to have been in the thick of the action and witnessed historic battles.

Like most early settlers in the Lee area Fenner was listed as a farmer, and like most of the other men recruited from the Berkshires, he served short terms in the army in between the duties required for maintaining a farm.

After the war, because the population of Lee was small and everyone had to pull their weight, he was involved in the town government and is mentioned in the minutes of the town meetings from the very beginning. He did his part by serving as the first town grave digger. Fenner married Sarah Wilcox in 1779, and they had nine children who survived to adulthood and continued the influence of the Foote family in Lee for many years.

Fenner died in 1847 at the age of 93 from "old age and a fall." He is buried in Fairmount Cemetery.



LHS BULLETIN BOARD

LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT FOUNDERS WEEKEND

SEPTEMBER 19 & 20, 2025

When the Founders Weekend Hometown Parade steps off on Saturday, September 20 you will quickly notice our Lee Historical Society unit. It will feature the Adamsville Ancients trilling their flutes and rattling their drums as they come down Main Street. And what could be more appropriate than this fine marching unit from Delmar, New York, in their Revolutionary War naval uniforms as Lee celebrates its 248th birthday and the nation observes its 249th. Leading the procession will be board members Karen Norton and Dave Walker carrying the LHS banner. More members of our board will be riding with former LHS president Mal Eckert and greeting parade watchers following the band.



The Adamsville Ancients won't be finished when they reach Housatonic Street. They will re-assemble in the Park as the parade ends with the last police car. The Ancients will be offering a short concert, playing some of their favorite fife and drum numbers. Maybe they will play "The World Turned Upside Down," the song famously heard when British Lord Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown, cementing the independence of a new nation. Lee's proud history is closely entwined with America's.

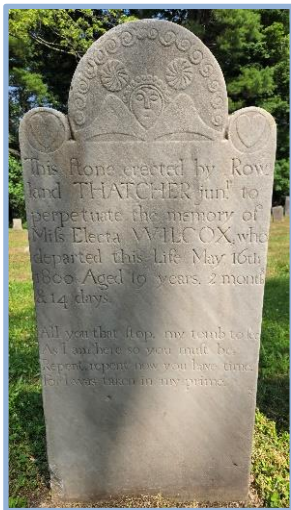
And there is more good news: the popular and informative Cemetery Tours are back, led by our ace researcher and tour leader Tracie Etheredge. Our St. Mary's Cemetery Tour will be Thursday, September 18 and we will be at Fairmount on Friday, September 19. Both tours start at 10 a.m. and pre-registration is not required. Just wear sensible shoes and come and join us.

The society will be hosting its usual booth in front of Memorial Hall throughout the Taste of Lee, the Hometown Parade and beyond. Please stop by and see our collection of Lee historical items for sale. And yes, tickets will be available for the popular Calendar Raffle conducted by President Gary Allen. Come celebrate with us!



FAIRMOUNT CEMETERY

In the process of our cleaning headstones in Fairmount we've been finding beautiful treasures that have been hidden by the dirt and grime of the ages. The cleaning of this stone not only shows the intricate decoration, but is also uncovers a mystery: why did Rowland Thatcher pay for this stone, and not her father, Peter Wilcox (yes, that Peter Wilcox)? The stone reads:



This stone erected by Rowland
THATCHER jun^r. to perpetuate
the memory of Miss Electa
WILCOX, who departed this life
May 16th 1800. Aged 19 years, 2
months & 14 days.

Cleaning these older stones also reveals their poignant epitaphs:

All you that stop, my tomb to see
As I am here so you must be.
Repent, repent no you have time
For I was taken in my prime.



LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPEAKER SERIES: **DANIEL SHAYS'S HONORABLE REBELLION**

Author Daniel Bullen will give an illustrated talk from his book, *Daniel Shays's Honorable Rebellion*, on Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 6:30pm at the Lee Senior Center, 21 Crossway Street, Lee. In 1786 thousands of Massachusetts farmers, including hundreds from Berkshire County, angry about the flagrantly unjust taxation policies that were forcing them off their land, rose in protest across the Commonwealth.



Bullen will tell the story of the protests from the people's perspective, including those certain events which took place in Lee and surroundings. Today historians largely agree that Shays's Rebellion was one of the events that precipitated the Constitutional Convention and the writing of the Constitution. Bullen will have copies of his book available for sale at the conclusion of the presentation.

This presentation is free and open to the public and is part of the Lee Historical Society Speaker Series. Look for the lanterns near the entrance. Parking is available along the North entrance to Crossway Village as well as on Academy Street. Refreshments will be served.

WHAT'S AT OUR BOOTH

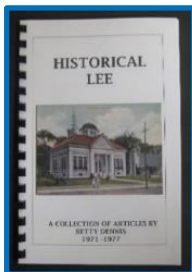
As a prelude to Founders Weekend, here are the items we have for sale, be sure to stop by our booth (on the corner in front of Memorial Hall) to pick up a bargain on Lee memorabilia!



MUGS depicting various places of historical interest in Lee, including the covered bridge, Memorial Hall and the Kilbon Fountain. At just **\$5** each, this would normally be a steal, but on offer at BOGO, how can you not take advantage? Rumor has it that the morning coffee tastes extra delicious in one of these exquisite beverage containers!

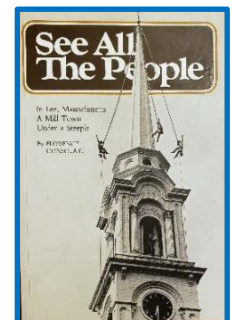
PICTURE PACKETS These beautiful prints depict scenes of Lee from

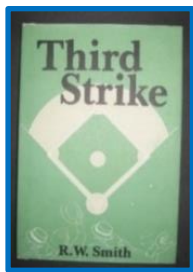
yesteryear, including Main Street before the automobile, and the magnificent Congregational Church. Perfect for framing and only **\$6 per packet or 2 for \$10**. The dingiest of walls will look even more Berkshirish once embellished with these!



"HISTORICAL LEE" If you've read any of beloved Lee Librarian Betty Dennis' articles reprinted in our newsletter from time to time, you know what a great gift this will be for anyone interested in our Town's diverse and fascinating history, so pick one up for just **\$12** and get it wrapped!

"THIRD STRIKE" by R.W. Smith. This is a wonderful book chock full of stories of the everyday people of Lee. An incredible bargain for only **\$5!**





“SEE ALL THE PEOPLE” by Florence Consolati. For any who are intrigued by what happened way back when in our Town, this is THE social history of Lee, filled with important pictures of the people and places that make Lee what it is. **\$26**

‘LOVE THE BERKSHIRES QUIZ GAME’ A new offering to our selection of merchandise, this is a trivia game designed and produced by our own Phil Smith. First brought to the market in 2010, it sold like hot cakes and of the original one thousand, only a handful are left. A fun and educational game to play after the turkey has been consumed and it’s time to settle down and relax. Originally selling for \$30, we have decided on only **\$15**, with all proceeds going to the Society.



HIKING STAFF MEDALLION Another great addition to our selection! For all your hiking people out there who love to pound the beautiful trails with which the Berkshires are blessed, this is something totally unique. (Okay, we do get that this may not be for Aunt Matilda...) Our metal medallions depict two of our landmarks – the Congregational Church and Memorial Hall. Their use is very versatile, initially designed to adorn a favorite hiking pole, they can also be flattened out and attached to, say, the camper, sewn on to a favorite cap or hiking jacket.



LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2025 MEMBERSHIP FORM (JANUARY – DECEMBER)

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

NAME: _____

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NEW: _____ RENEWAL: _____

Mail with Membership Fee to: Lee Historical Society, PO Box 170, Lee, MA 01238

The Society is always in search of volunteers for our various events – the more, the merrier! If you would like to assist, please check any or all of the following:

Program Set-up: ___ Provide Refreshments at Events: ___ Address Mailings: ___
Founders Day: March in the parade ___ Assist at our booth: ___ Gravestone Cleaning: ___

We always have room for more volunteers to assist us in so many different ways. Kathy Smith is our Membership Committee Chairperson and knows of all the different areas. If you have any questions, thoughts, suggestions, feel free to email her at kf23Smith@yahoo.com.

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