



Vol. 22, No. 1

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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, January 9th at the Historical Society Office, Crossway Tower, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.



FROM THE EDITORS

For all of us who were dreaming of a White Christmas, our dreams were answered! Who would have thought it as the run up to the 25th didn't look too optimistic. And now we are in a New Year. We can't predict or control what will happen outside of our own small world, but we can let you in on what the Society is planning for 2025. For a start, our Programs Committee have some great speakers lined up to present their knowledge on topics we know you'll find of interest, but we won't give away anything yet, just leave you in anticipation! The newly-formed Cemetery Committee is moving forward with their plans to preserve Fairmount Cemetery in the immediate future, and South Lee further down the road. Our great Phil Smith has already started research for the annual exhibit that is held at Lee Library every summer. A team is planning our participation in Founders Day – it's a long way off, but takes a lot of forward thinking and brain storming well in advance. And the Gateway Gazette will keep you all informed as we enter our third year. Happy New Year, everybody!

ONE NEW YEAR'S EVE ...

As I frequently do, I was thumbing through Florence Consolati's "See All the People" when I stumbled upon this little anecdote which, literally, hits close to home. You see, my home, Florence's once home, and the home the Burtt family once occupied, are neighbors. It did lead me to wonder if the hill young Duane swept down was my very steep one or his family's less steep one? Well, read on! Linda Buttery

"In 1975, a figure shot out of the black and swept downward from a house above Laurel Street. Duane Burtt, age 12, on his new Flexible Flyer, was out to set a record as the first person sliding in 1976. His parents had allowed him to stay up while they watched Guy Lombardo on TV. The Times Square indicator fell downward to the New Year. In New York it was raining. He had never heard of Guinness records.

Down below, cars ran smoothly on roads cleared of snow. In the woods a dog barked. Otherwise New Year's Eve was quiet from the porch lookout on Circular Avenue."

Some of you reading this may have known Duane, but were maybe not aware of his record-breaking bid that dark New Year's Eve, as he careened down whichever hill it was toward Route 20. Maybe not his best idea, but it was probably not that busy at midnight. But there it is, in Florence's book, which has recorded just about every event in Lee from 1877 through 1977.

This is just a short excerpt from "See All the People", but if you would like to read all of it, this terrific book can be yours for just \$26. Contact either myself, Linda, at lindabreader@icloud.com, or Tracie at ethere@gmail.com.

REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN

AILEEN A. DuPONT (1912 - 1998)

It could never be said about Lieutenant Colonel Aileen DuPont that she let the grass grow under her feet. Her eighty-five years were absolutely chockfull of achievements and adventures, and the last part of her life had some drama in it, too. Here's the kind of lady that movies are made about!

To start at the very beginning. Aileen was born on Sunday, June 2nd, 1912, living up to the poem that "Sunday's child is bonny and blithe, and good and gay", to Frank and Anna J. Duffy DuPont. She attended St. Mary's School and graduated Lee High School in 1931. Her education continued at St. Francis School of Nursing in Hartford, CT, graduating in 1934.

Her nursing career began at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, which also happens to be the oldest hospital in the United States. It was once so well known for its treatment of the mentally ill that its name became slang for a psychiatric hospital. Aileen was employed there until 1942 when she enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps and thus began her military career.

During World War II, she served with the Third Station Hospital in England and the 103rd Evacuation Hospital attached to none other than General George Patton's Third Army in Germany and France.

After the war ended, she transferred to the Air Force Nurse Corps and was a flight nurse during the Korean War. For her efforts, she was awarded the American Defense ribbon, the Victory ribbon, the National Defense ribbon, and the Air Force Longevity ribbon with three oak clusters. The latter is awarded after completion of four years of honorable active service in the US Armed Forces. She went on to serve as the Chief of Nursing Service at Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire, finally retiring in 1962.



However, this wasn't the end of Aileen's work life, which continued after she left the Air Force for several more years. She came back to Lee and worked as a registered nurse at the former Fox Hollow School for Girls and also at Valley View Nursing Home. She decided to retire in the early 1970's.

Although it seems she never married, Aileen had a big family, fostering several children at one stage, and acquiring twenty-four nieces and nephews and several grand-nieces and nephews along the way, a gift from her brother and two sisters, no doubt. Before finally bidding goodbye to her amazing life, Aileen served as Grand Marshall in Lee's Memorial Day Parade in 1996.

But, hold on! There's a bit of a twist to Aileen's story before we close the book. On February 22nd, 1995, Aileen was involved in a very unfortunate accident with a police cruiser. It seems she was travelling north on Church Street in her Dodge Colt when, in a moment of lost concentration no doubt, she jumped a Stop sign at the intersection with the Stockbridge Road as Trooper Dean Clement was heading west.

After the impact, Aileen's car continued across the intersection onto West Road and travelled a short distance before going into a culvert where it ended up on its roof. Aileen must have seen some pretty scary things during her life, but this may have been top of the list. Her Dodge was a total loss and Trooper Clements, uninjured, sustained minor front end damage to his vehicle. Aileen was treated and released later from Berkshire Medical Center, so hopefully her injuries were not too serious, surprising after such a catastrophe! The Berkshire Eagle of February 23rd reported that this incident was under investigation, but we have no further information on the outcome.

If this latter part of Aileen's story is familiar to any of our readers, please let us know!
Lindabreader@icloud.com or Tracie at ethere@gmail.com.

MEET THE BOARD **LINDA BUTTERY**

*Well, this is weird – writing about myself **and** in the third person. Seems very pretentious. But we are introducing our Board of Directors, and as I am on said Board, here goes!*



Linda was born and raised in London, England, one of generations of Londoners. Her mother, Mary Ellen Elizabeth Maslin, and her father, Edward "Ted" George Burn, were born not too far from each other in neighboring boroughs. Mary was evacuated from London to the countryside when WWII was declared, returning later to become a Red Cross nurse. She and Ted were introduced to each other by John, Mary's uncle, when he and Ted returned to England having been POW's together in a German Stalag in Poland for five years. They married in 1947 and Robert, Linda's brother, arrived first, shortly followed by Linda.

Not inclined to pursue formal further education, Linda freed herself from the restraints of school at fifteen, only to find herself equally out of place as a civil servant for the naval branch of the Ministry of Defence.

At seventeen, she left England, initially for a short vacation, to live and work on a cattle farm on the Canadian prairies in Saskatchewan. After falling in love with life in Big Sky country, she applied for and successfully obtained the status of Landed Immigrant when she turned eighteen. It was here she discovered her passion for cattle and farming as she and her trusty quarter horse, Tam, frequently worked the herd together on the four hundred acre spread. She also spent time as a trail guide to would-be cowboys and their dates on the thousands of acres that made up Buffalo Pound Provincial Park, its access road cutting

through the farm's property, and as a babysitter for the Park Ranger's two children. Lastly, for a short time, as the lone Christmas Decorations Department salesperson at Zeller's Department Store in Moose Jaw.

Facing homelessness in a Canadian winter due to lack of employment possibilities and subsequent loss of income, she reluctantly returned to England after three years and ended up sharing a London flat with several student nurses, including her best friend and future sister-in-law, with whom she shared many adventures. Meeting her husband of fifty-one years, David, at a BBC Christmas party, she shelved her plans to relocate to the Argentinian pampas and the life of a gaucho and stayed in London.

Surprising herself as one averse to the prospect of marriage, she settled into the life she had always shunned, taking various administrative positions, working for Fiat Motors, Avis Rent-A-Car (*"I loved the flashy red uniform. Living right next to Heathrow Airport, I was often mistaken for a flight attendant and asked where I was flying to today. Oh, the stories!"*), Rockwell International, Honeywell, and then as Assistant to the Director of Marketing for Commodore Business Machines. The latter went on to become Commodore Computers and opened up an exciting time for all involved with the introduction of the desktop computer. Starting up the Commodore PET Owners Club introduced an interesting assortment of characters to her life, including one who arrived by helicopter to become the first owner of a PET computer.

Moving on, along came daughter Sarah, born on Christmas Day, and son Paul, born on the first day of spring, and life as a full-time mother.

In 1985, David, then a design engineer for Ford Motor Company's Heavy Goods Vehicle Unit, was offered a contract with General Motors in Michigan and thus the family crossed the Pond for what was supposed to be a three year stay. Needless to say, they are still in the States. After three years in Michigan, the family relocated to Rhode Island where they remained for nearly thirty years, although the children moved on, one to California, the other to Massachusetts. Linda returned to the work force, gained her Realtors license and became one of Coldwell Banker's top selling and listing agents in Rhode Island. She and David then decided to start their own printing company and ran a very successful business for nearly twenty years before selling up and retiring.

Having discovered the Berkshires in 2012 on a visit to Tanglewood, they deemed they had come home, bought their house in Lee in 2016, moved in permanently the next year, and have been loving Lee ever since.

Linda is on the Board of the Lee Land Trust, Honorary Ex-officio Member of Lee Greener Gateway Committee, and a Corporator for the Lee Library. She has been on the Board of the Lee Historical Society for seven years, is co-editor of the Gateway Gazette, and also a member of the Society's Collections and Cemetery Committees. Her aspirations for the future of the Society are for the membership base to be expanded and for members to become more active participants in all that is required to keep the history of our great little Town from being lost.

LHS BULLETIN BOARD **A NEW COMMITTEE**

One of the passions of our Society has always been the maintenance and preservation of our cemeteries. These are the final resting places of all those who are the history of Lee; without them, there would be no Lee. A stroll around Fairmount Cemetery takes us to the Hyde family, the Royce family, the Smith family – this is just a tiny sample - the list goes on and on. Every single person buried here, be they short-lived or blessed with longevity, all have their stories. Many said goodbye centuries ago, the inscriptions on their headstones obliterated by all those years in the elements, covered by lichen, algae, grime. Some of the

headstones have cracked, fallen, sunk into the ground, some demolished by trees succumbing to storms and crashing onto them.

It is vitally important that we do everything we can to stop the deterioration, bring back the headstones to a condition where those they commemorate will not be forgotten. This is a monumental (excuse the pun) task that we cannot tackle alone. Therefore, we are reaching out to our Society members and non-members for volunteers to work side-by-side with us. Toward that end, we have formed a Cemetery Committee and we will be concentrating on both Fairmount and South Lee Cemeteries. This is going to need a large injection of funds to finance our endeavors and steps have already been taken to obtain quite significant grants to enable us to have the cemeteries professionally surveyed to give a condition assessment of the headstones; steps to be taken for conservation/repair/resetting/cleaning; workshops in basic headstone conservation techniques.

We have already started work on headstone cleaning by holding two sessions this year, sponsored financially by the Christopher “Chris” Long Memorial Fund. Regular readers will recognize the name of Tim Schaefer who has been faithfully locating and cleaning so many headstones that are now legible and pristine once more. He even takes his work many steps further by keeping the area around them free of debris, the grass trimmed, even plants to brighten them. He is constantly showing us what can be achieved.

So, how can you help? There are many ways. We will be holding more cleaning sessions and need help to get the word out and to contact volunteers with times and dates, organize teams, learn the process and help guide others, roll up the sleeves and get spraying that D2 and brushing off the grime, research the lives of those whose headstones have been cleaned. Anyone with graphics skills that can design posters that can be distributed locally to advise of upcoming events would be welcomed! You don’t have to join the Committee, just participate when you can. All assistance is greatly appreciated.

Tracie Etheredge is the Chairperson of the Committee, so please reach out to her for more information and how you can be a vital part of this endeavor. ethere@gmail.com.

NEW TO OUR COLLECTION

The Society is so blessed to have such generous people who donate some truly amazing items to us that are all part of Lee’s rich historical tapestry, allowing us to weave a picture of life as it was “back then”. Without these donations, a great deal of Lee’s history would be lost. As it is, we’ve received such a vast variety of items from family photographs, newspaper clippings, pottery and glassware emblazoned with images of Lee, sports trophies won by Lee’s plethora of athletes – if you can imagine it, we’ve probably got it!

We thought it only right to start to share with you all what it is we receive, and this past month has been bountiful, to say the least. Here’s the list for December:

❖ A bound volume of Lee related ephemera, including Annual Town Meeting Minutes (1877 – 1890), Annual School Reports (1877 – 1890), School Graduation Announcements, news clippings on local events such as Shays Rebellion, the new schoolhouse on Ferncliff, and the relocation of the firehouse.

❖ A Lee/Pittsfield/Great Barrington phone directory from 1952.

❖ Copies of the Ferncliff Echo – both the yearbook and literary magazine, all called “The Ferncliff Echo”. These date from 1934/37/38/39.

❖ Lee High School Commencement programs from 1937 and 1938.

❖ A cash transaction ledger from Lee Bank covering 1863-1864.



These are all so incredibly interesting and we can't wait for the opportunity to browse through them all! It is our hope for the future to be able to have a location where we can display our collection for all to see.

If you are wondering how our system works for receiving donations, and what happens to them afterwards, here's a brief explanation. Any Board Member can be contacted and receive the donation, which will then be left with the Collections Committee members to archive. When the donation is received, a Deed of Gift will be completed by both the Society and the donor. If the donor has no issue with having their name mentioned in our newsletter, or if they would rather remain anonymous, they can select Yes or No on the Deed of Gift form. Once completed, the Society retains the original for their records and gives a copy to the donor for theirs. The new items are accessioned into the collection by getting a unique number (accession number), all relevant information is cataloged and entered into our database. The items are stored in acid-free paper, where applicable, and archive-specific storage boxes to preserve them.

If you have an item you think may be of interest to the Society, please don't hesitate to contact one of our Board members (and you're getting to know who they are from our "Meet the Board" articles), or Tracie (ethere@gmail.com) or Linda (lindabreader@icloud.com), who are both members of the Collections Committee.

IT'S A JANUARY SALE!

What better way to start off the New Year now that all that Holiday gift shopping is over than to revisit our Amazing Merchandise Store for all things on historical Lee? Even after the rush, we still have a great selection! There are still all those birthdays, anniversaries, Thank You gifts, etc. to shop for. Check this out ...



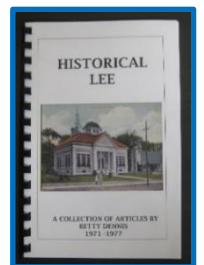
MUGS depicting various places of historical interest in Lee. At just **\$5** each, this would normally be a steal, but on offer at BOGT, how can you not take advantage? What's BOGT? Buy One Get Two!!! This is a limited time offer, so don't procrastinate!

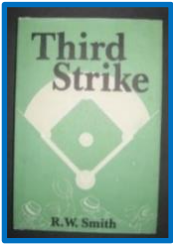
PICTURE PACKETS These beautiful prints depict scenes of Lee from yesteryear, including Main Street before the automobile, and the magnificent Congregational Church. Perfect for framing and only **\$5 per packet or 2 for \$9!** What can we tell you, apart from don't miss this fantastic bargain!



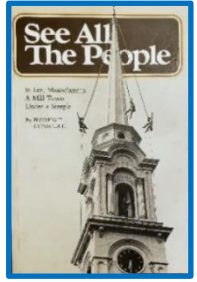
T-SHIRTS Sizes Small, Medium, XLarge, and 2X Large. You can tell we had a run on these, but they're on offer just this one time at **\$13!**

"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 ... NO! \$10!** in our sale, and get it wrapped! Or keep it for yourself...





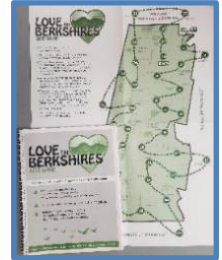
“THIRD STRIKE” by R.W. Smith. This is a wonderful book chock full of stories of the everyday people of Lee. Still an incredible bargain for only **\$5!**



“SEE ALL THE PEOPLE” by Florence Consolati. For any who are intrigued by what happened way back when in our Town, this is a tell-all that really will tell all about it! For just the month of January, we are offering this terrific book for **\$20**

instead of the usual \$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 for all you Berkshire afficionados. Originally selling for \$30, we have decided on only **\$15**, with all proceeds going to the Society. This item is already greatly reduced, and it’s still a fantastic bargain. Such fun for all trivia lovers!



HIKING STAFF MEDALLION Another great addition to our selection! For all you hiking people out there who love to pound the beautiful trails with which the Berkshires are blessed, this is something totally unique. 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. AND, they’re only **\$5** each! But wait! We’ve decided to go **BOGO** on this one, so you can get one for each hiking pole for just \$5! Or one for your pole and one for your hiking companion, Aw!



LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2025 MEMBERSHIP FORM (JANUARY – DECEMBER)

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

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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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