



# **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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Website: [leehistoricsociety.homestead.com](http://leehistoricsociety.homestead.com)  
Facebook: Lee Historical Society Lee MA  
Mail: PO Box 170, Lee, MA 01238

*The Annual Meeting of the Society will be Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at the Lee Senior Center at 21 Crossway Street, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.*



### **FROM THE EDITOR**

As New Englanders we have earned the right to complain about the weather, whatever it may be, but this year's late summer/early autumn has been nothing to gripe about (unless you want to worry about the dry conditions due to the shortage of rain). Remember to take advantage of these beautiful fall days and get out to explore this picturesque region – there is a reason we've been seeing license plates from all over the country in our little town this year, we live in a part of the country worth seeing. If you want a peaceful and beautiful spot to enjoy a short walk maybe take a saunter through the Fairmount Cemetery. The older section has a growing cluster of shining white stones that have been recently cleaned. While enjoying the natural beauty of the area (and perhaps catching a glimpse of the wildlife that lives in the neighboring woods) you can bask in the stories and history each stone relates.

## **FAREWELL AND BON VOYAGE**

Our president, Gary Allen is leaving the Lee Historical Society to seek greener pastures. He has been an active member of the Lee Historical Society since its founding more than 22 years ago, serving as its first vice president and going on to twice assume the role of President and as chairperson of the Finance Committee. Ever reliable and eager to use his skills to fulfill the Society's mission, Gary took a leading role in the development of the Lee veterans' database project, building and maintaining our website, reviving the Founders' Day calendar raffle, and representing the Society's interests in the pursuit of appropriate space for our collection



Of course, we will remember Gary fondly as he marched in the Lee Founders' Day parade as a colonial gentleman. So fitting! We wish you well in your next stage of life in Pennsylvania. Let us know if you need a reference to join the local historical society!

*The following is a farewell message from Gary as he moves on from Lee to new adventures.*

### **A HISTORY LESSON**

Seems appropriate for a President of the Lee Historical Society (LHS) to write a history. On the occasion of my moving on from Lee, here's a bit of a history lesson.

On August 21, 2003 ( 22 years ago now) the Society was formed (read more about that at [LeeHistoricalSociety.Homestead.com](http://LeeHistoricalSociety.Homestead.com) – our web site). I was the Vice President. I have been the President twice since then.

I hope many of you had a chance to work with Barbara Allen, my wife. She's the reason I started and she is one of the many people who have helped me and contributed to the Society. Mary Morrissey is another whose contribution as a LHS member and as a teacher built the Society's record of Lee history. I encourage you all to attend a meeting – the current members are part of the success of LHS and they would be happy to engage you in our projects. There are too many contributing members to mention here and I'd hate to miss one.

Among the things we have done are to convince the Housing Authority to provide an office and (limited) storage space for our records and collection at their facility on Crossway Street. We hope to participate in the re-use of the Fire Hall where we can expand and enhance our service to the public.

We created Lee's version of the Vietnam Memorial and have an extensive record of Lee's veterans on a second web site ([LeeMassVeteransHomesteadCloud.com](http://LeeMassVeteransHomesteadCloud.com)). Our favorite display creator, Phil Smith, has done annual exhibitions at the Lee Library over the years and we have them in our collection. We have a collection of our monthly newsletters, which are full of news and stories. We published a collection of Betty Denis' articles for the Gleaner and a cookbook. And, there are a large number of photographs (and glass plate negatives) that would fill up an afternoon if you wanted to see them.

I'm proud of the small contribution I've made as an officer and a member. Over my time with the Society, I've learned that it takes a lot of individual contributions of time, talent, and money to build our version of Lee's history. I hope you'll have an opportunity to spend time with the Society.

Gary Allen    September 12, 2025

## **REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN**

Earl George Leach was born in Springfield, MA in 1898, the son of the late George and Adeline Clark Leach. He graduated from Lee High School in 1917, after which he joined the U.S. Navy. Along with a classmate, Donald Boyd, he was sent to training at the Commonwealth Pier in Boston in preparation to joining the US forces fighting in World War I.

He was assigned to the USS Leonides, serving as a quartermaster, part of the team that oversaw the navigation and operation of ship. The Leonides was a patrol ship that traveled to Europe to join the "Grand Fleet," a squadron of ships established by Great Britain to patrol between Great Britain and the European Mainland to protect Allied shipping. As the war



*"Arrival of the American Fleet off Scapa Flow, December 1917" by Bernard F. Gribble.*

expanded ships from allied nations including Canada, Australia and eventually the United States joined the fleet. By the spring of 1918 the fleet was assigned to patrolling the Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas searching for German U-boats that were threatening the Allied Navies. The Leonides was stationed at Corfu, Greece, where she acted as a base ship for a large force of submarine chasers. Earl spent some time on the Leonides and then unusually was assigned to serve on the HMS Aurora, a British ship.

Although we don't know a lot about Earl's life after his time in the Navy, we know a surprising amount about what he was doing in the war thanks to letters he wrote home that were published in the local paper. The letters were censored by the military to remove everything that could count as military intelligence, so most identifying locations had been blacked out but they are full of fascinating details about his life in the Navy. This excerpt was published in the Berkshire Gleaner in June 1918:

"Miss Edith Leach of Lee has received a letter from her brother which would be extremely interesting had not the censor torn out names and sentences all through the six pages. Mr. Leach is in active service on a British ship although in the United States service; is the only American on the ship, and for four months has not heard by letter or paper from America. Sentences here and there are the following:

We left England in April and started from the Downs, a big anchorage the other side of Dover, with a convoy for ---. But we had bad luck, for we lost two of our ships by collision and torpedoes, but towed both back into.---. We started out a second time and only met one submarine which we believe we sank. At --- I saw several American ships and it did seem good. You've no idea how English I've grown, for I can't really help it, living with them as I do."

Before you get this, graduation will be over. I wish I could be there, but it's hardly possible, seeing that it is a 7,000 mile trip. Now please don't forget to write some good, long gossipy letters for you know I haven't anyone to chat with, and I expect some interesting things may been going on. I dare say I would find some newspapers interesting since I left London and the English papers we get are a month old and are very stingy with American news. We study French and Italian, and the commander has been teaching me navigation, and a "jolly" fine thing to know, you ought to see me shoot the sun.

If anyone wants to know what I'm doing, tell them I am chasing submarines with the English, French and Italians. I dare say I have been as near the enemy coast as any Yankee sailor, and we are at sea three out of four weeks."

A further letter was published in October the same year:

"I wish you could see the air raid that is going on now. Some of the Italian towns are catching it. We can hear the anti-aircraft guns and an occasional bomb quite plainly and see the bursts of shrapnel like fireflies. There is also a big fire. Of course if they come out our way we are ready for them.

I tried my machine gun on some big sharks the other day and yesterday we saw a couple of whales 30 or 40 feet long, and took them for subs at first. We tried to ram them just for practice, but only grazed them. One spouted and the other flipped his great tail skyward as he dived. We have been some six weeks from our base and the grub, in consequence, is still worse. The last time I was on shore I picked oranges, walnuts, lemons and ripe figs. This was on a well-known island. I would like some hard candy. It's unknown here, as the natives live on fruit and a bread that is made from wheat pounded between stones."

The "Grand Fleet" was disbanded and Earl returned home at the end of the war in November 1918. He married Bernice Crandall of Woodstock, VT in 1924. They had three sons and a daughter, two of their sons went on to serve in the Navy in World War II.

Immediately after the war, Earl worked as a baggage master for the railroad in Lee, and eventually joined the US Postal Service. During World War II, in his position with the Federal Postal Service, he worked at a postal center on an air base on the Aleutian Islands. By the 1950s, he went on to work as a nightwatchman at the Austin Riggs Center in Stockbridge.

He was busy in the civic life in Lee, joining the Masons Evening Star Lodge in 1923, and serving as the first caretaker and Red Cross trained life-saver at Sandy Beach on Laurel Lake.

Still physically active into his 70s he died in 1969 after falling from the roof of his barn while doing maintenance work. He was pronounced dead of a cerebral hemorrhage by Dr. George Breit of Becket, medical examiner for the 3rd Berkshire District. He was survived by this three children and eleven grandchildren.





## **FOUNDERS DAY SUCCESS**



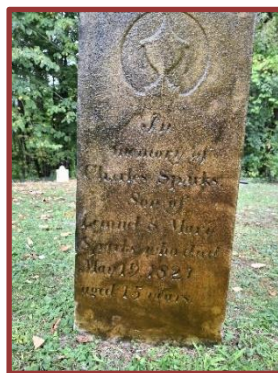
Founders Day has come and gone and it seemed to be bigger than ever this year, likely thanks in part to the marvelous weather. The parade was longer than usual with new faces joining the festivities. The Adams Ancients were a hit as usual marching in the parade led by Karen Norton and Dave Walker carrying our banner along the route dressed in historic garb. The band continued the musical merriment by playing at concert at the park to the delight of the audience.

Our volunteers manned our booth at our usual spot at the corner near Memorial Hall spreading the word about the Lee Historical Society. Calendar Raffle sales started at the booth are continuing and tickets can still be purchased until the end of October. Prizes are awarded for every day in November. Tickets are for sale for \$10, if you are interested contact Tracie: [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com).

Although the cemetery tours had to be cancelled due to Tracie's ongoing knee issues our cemetery cleaning volunteers gave a talk at Fairmount Cemetery updating all those interested on the restoration work being done at the cemetery. We had good turnout of those wanting to know more about our Cemetery Committee's work.



Tom Barenski demonstrated to the group how the stones are cleaned. Our team is constantly being asked for pointers from those who want to help us maintain the cemetery and those who want to know the best methods for caring for the headstones and memorials of their own families. Through trial and error and a lot of elbow grease our cemetery cleaning crew are becoming experts in headstone restoration.



## **LHS BULLETIN BOARD**

### **NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, OCTOBER 9, 2025**

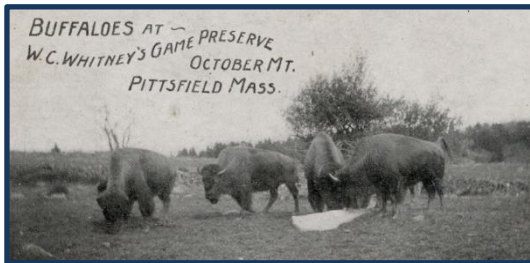
The Lee Historical Society's Annual Meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 9 at the Lee Senior Center at 21 Crossway Street. (Look for lanterns at the Crossway Street entrance. Refreshments will be served.) The Society is doing the important work of

preserving the history of our town and your attendance and participation is welcomed. This will be the only notice regarding this meeting.

All members in good standing are eligible to attend, to make motions from the floor and to vote on any matters that come before the meeting. Election and re-election of members of the Board of Directors will take place at this time. Reports will be given. Under current By-laws, a quorum will consist of those present following this required notice.

Anyone interested in joining us in this preservation work is invited to attend any board meeting to learn about our work. Our next board meeting will be on Thursday, September 11 at 6:30 p.m. at our Crossway Tower office, 130 High Street. Please note that this building has security precautions and it is necessary to come to the rear door and knock loudly to be let in. A call or email to any board member in advance is advised.

### **LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPEAKER SERIES:** **WHITNEY'S OCTOBER MOUNTAIN**



October Mountain Man Tom Hoffman will give an illustrated talk, Whitney's October Mountain, Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 6:30pm at the Lee Senior Center, 21 Crossway Street, Lee. Have you heard about William C. Whitney, President Grover Cleveland's Secretary of State, and his 11,000 acre estate in Washington, MA? Or the 800 acre fenced-in

game preserve on the property? Now is your chance to learn about this interesting man and his life on October Mountain!

Hoffman, a member of the Lee Historical Society, Washington Historic Commission and a director of Western Mass Hilltown Hikers, is a historical hiker who enjoys exploring for historical sites using old maps. He has made amazing discoveries, including the foundations of this home and barn on October Mountain. His talk will cover Whitney's connections with Lee – including the story about the Lee family who wouldn't sell out to Whitney.

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.

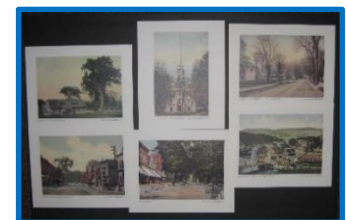
### **WHAT'S ON SALE**

*Although our booth is only conducting sales during Founders we are open for business all year, contact Tracie (ethere@gmail.com) if you are interested in any of our merchandise.*

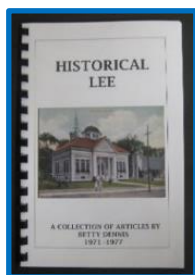


**MUGS** depicting various places of historical interest in Lee, including the covered bridge, Memorial Hall and the Kilbon Fountain. At just **\$5** each, this would normally be a steal, but on offer at BOGO, how can you not take advantage? Rumor has it that the morning coffee tastes extra delicious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

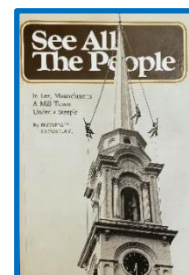
**PICTURE PACKETS** These beautiful prints depict scenes of Lee from yesteryear, including Main Street before the automobile, and the magnificent Congregational Church.



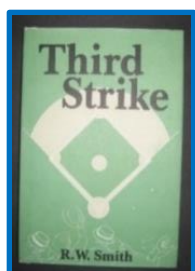
Perfect for framing and only **\$6 per packet or 2 for \$10**. The dingiest of walls will look even more Berkshirish once embellished with these!



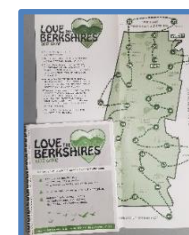
**“HISTORICAL LEE”** If you’ve read any of beloved Lee Librarian Betty Dennis’ articles reprinted in our newsletter from time to time, you know what a great gift this will be for anyone interested in our Town’s diverse and fascinating history, so pick one up for just **\$12** and get it wrapped!



**“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.

## 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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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](mailto:kf23Smith@yahoo.com).



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