



The Gateway Gazette

The Newsletter of the Lee Historical Society

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

Email: Lee.Historical@hotmail.com

Website: leehistoricsociety.homestead.com

Facebook: Lee Historical Society Lee MA

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



"If I had my way, I'd remove January from the calendar altogether and have an extra July instead."

- Roald Dahl -

FROM THE EDITORS

Saturday, July 1st will see a hive of activity in the Scolforo Gallery at Lee Library as a merry band of volunteers will be assembling the "Lee Comes of Age: 1850 – 1900" exhibit. This has been a labor of love for many months for Phil Smith and his trusty – and very patient – sidekick Kathy Smith. The Board Members were given a preview and we cannot say enough about how impressive this exhibit is. We hope you will all find the time to visit during July and add your names to our Visitors' Book. It's well worth making the effort.

We wish you all a Happy Fourth of July and wish sunshine and no rain on all the barbecues and family get-togethers and whatever else you are planning.

Don't forget, we love to hear from you – Tracie at ethere@gmail.com and Linda at lindabreader@icloud.com.

THE HISTORY OF GOLDEN HILL TOWN FOREST

Many of you will be familiar with Golden Hill Town Forest, popular with hikers, dog walkers, nature lovers, and those who need a peaceful respite away from the clamor of a busy day. Even though not far from busy Route 20, the only sounds to hear as you walk its trail among the towering pines, the old hemlock stands, black cherry and beech trees are birdsong and the occasional rustle as some creature goes about its business in the undergrowth. But how many of you are familiar with the history of this arboreal Heaven on Earth? Read on!



Originally part of George Westinghouse's Erskine Park estate that extended from Lenox into Lee, its 65 acres were anonymously donated to the Town of Lee in 1939. It was J.T. Owens (the owner of the eponymous store on Main Street) and his business partner Charles N. Durant who facilitated the negotiations between the Town and the donor. At the time, it was suggested that "the property might be used as a park, a town forest or other recreational and appropriate public use". The anonymous donor was later revealed as George Westinghouse, Jr.

Those newer arrivals to the delights of Golden Hill Town Forest amongst us may not be aware of what a hive of activity this area once was. Where there is now a meadow once stood a huge pavilion, 28' wide by 80' long. It was built mostly of hemlock cut from the forest. Six picnic tables were built by a volunteer labor force under the direction of Henry Soucie, a member of the Conservation Committee, from white pines, cut from the Town forest on the former Clark property behind the High School, from trees affected by White Pine Blister Rust disease. (An aside here, for a moment. A picnic table was mysteriously discovered at the top of the Pinnacle. Assuming the teddy bears didn't take it up there for a picnic, we have to be in awe of whoever had the ingenuity and strength to get it up there!)

For what now seems an incredibly cheap cost of \$465 (approximately \$10,000 today). Kenneth Shepardson laid an 800 foot gravel road from the Golden Hill Road entrance to the picnic grounds, plus a 100 foot by 100 foot parking area built up on eight inches of gravel. From a report in the Berkshire Eagle, it seems Mr. Shepardson made a deal with the Town to provide the gravel in return for the tops of trees left behind following a selective cutting program. He would use these for firewood. Later, a massive fireplace and fieldstone chimney were added with a \$300 donation from the Lee Rotary Club, with barbecue pits on either side measuring three by four feet. Metal hoods directed smoke from the pits into the chimney's flues. For no cost to the Town, the Western Mass Electric Company installed four poles and a power line. The remains of some of the poles can still be seen on the trail. Sadly, the pavilion fell into disrepair and was eventually vandalized and burned. There are no visible signs now that it ever existed, but to many of Lee's residents who enjoyed it all those decades ago, it will forever remain in their memories.



In the late 1980's, Lee's Boy Scout Troop 45 and a young Eagle Scout by the name of David Mottarella became very involved in taking care of some of the upkeep of this popular spot, the pavilion by then long gone. For David, it was part of an Eagle Scout project. They blazed three new trails through some densely wooded areas, cleared undergrowth, provided some new picnic tables, and installed an entrance gate to block motor vehicles at the Golden Hill Road entrance. One of the trails goes up to the Pinnacle; at over 1,200 feet, the highest point in Lee it had views over Laurel Lake, High Lawn Farm and October Mountain, now obscured by tree growth. However, the old view is memorialized in the Lee Land Trust logo,

made from a sketch by Dorothy (Deedee) Fraser, one of the Trust's founding members. The Troop also pledged to maintain the area for three years.

If you visit Golden Hill Town Forest for the first time having read of its history, or are returning after many previous visits, make sure to look around as you walk the trail. Notice its ancient boulders and ridges, decorated with moss, lichen, and ferns. Golden Hill Town Forest has the most prolific selection of wildflowers than most others in the area. Keep your eyes out for wild ginger, Jack in the Pulpit, baneberry, trout lily, Canada mayflower, and so many more. Most importantly, remember you are in the home of our wildlife so here you are their guest. Please be respectful. Bring home photos and memories, and leave nothing but your footprints.

WHAT'S IN OUR STORE

SUMMER SPECIALS!

It's July, Folks! Summer is definitely here and we're continuing our specials! Take a look at what we have in our store and – drum roll – should you decide to purchase any of our fabulous wares, we will give you one of our magnificent mugs as a thank you! Of course, if you decide to buy a mug for your morning coffee, or afternoon tea, it'll be BOGO time – Buy One, Get One!

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 Comes of Age" at the Scolforo Gallery. Here's a menu of what we have on offer.



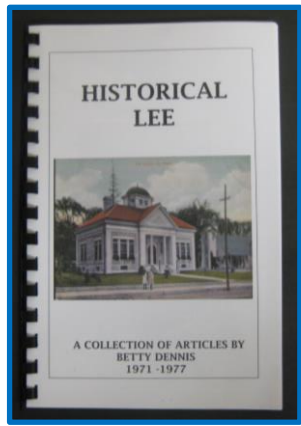
T-SHIRTS Show your pride and support of your Town with a Lee T-shirt. Sizes: Small, Large, XLarge, and 2XLarge (Sorry, no Mediums left). **\$15**



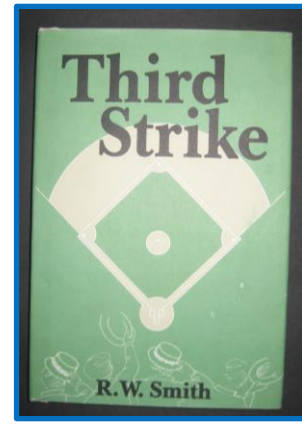
MUGS depicting various places of historical interest in Lee. **\$5**



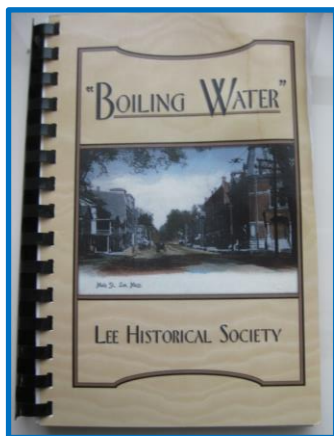
PICTURE PACKETS Six beautiful prints with scenes of Lee, perfect for framing. **\$6 per packet**



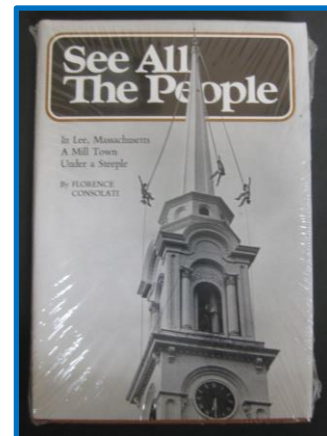
“HISTORICAL LEE” A lovely little book of articles collected by Lee’s beloved librarian, Betty Dennis. **\$12**



“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!** *



“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**

** Editor’s Note: Linda here. I have to do a mea culpa on this book. Having seen the baseball diamond on the cover, and going by the title, I had assumed this book was about baseball. Just goes to show assumptions should never be made. It isn’t about baseball, but a collection of short stories on life in Lee. It’s actually a great read and I have just bought a copy. And got my free mug!*

REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN

We do have a plethora of brave young men and women from Lee who served in the forces. We've given outlines of the lives of those who have served as far back as the Revolutionary War. This month we've selected a gentleman whose more recent life story may not have been that long, but which was one filled with adventure.

SGT/CMO SEAN PATRICK McDONALD (1964 – 2016)

Born in New York, Sean came to Lee with his family in 1972, graduating a decade later in 1982 from Lee High School. After enlisting in the Army, he served for six years as a Combat Flight Medic in Germany and Korea. Then, in 1991, he joined the US Coast Guard where his duties included search and rescue operations at Cape Disappointment in Washington State, which is a headland of the Pacific Northwest. Its claim to fame is that, with 106 days of fog a year, it's one of the foggiest places in the US. Sean also was involved in drug interdiction in the Caribbean and Central America.

In 2005, he "retired" with the rank of Chief Boatswain's Mate. He didn't retire from life, though, as after leaving the Forces, he became a ferry boat captain for the City of Savannah, Georgia. As stated, not a long life, but what a lot he packed into it!

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. The lists are incomplete, so if you are in doubt please send us information about veterans we may have missed at 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.



HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW LEE?

Here's a short quiz to keep the old brain cells ticking over for you Leeites who know everything about Lee. Or do you?

1. What used to be known as "The Flats"?
2. What was "Bucky" Jones real first name?
3. Who built Lee's first home, a log house, around 1760?
4. Who established the first paper mill in Lee in 1806?

5. Who was Lee's Congressional Medal of Honor recipient?
6. Which Lee farmer was the proud owner of Pieterje 2d, the holder of a world milk-producing record?
7. Which settler is Dodgetown named after?
8. How many Grants made up what is now the Town of Lee?
9. Which Lee landmarks were used by early aviators?
10. Who is the Morgan House named after?

Before you turn to Page 7 for the answers, see if you can answer the above. No prizes for those who can answer some of these correctly, just a pat on the back.

THE LHS BULLETIN BOARD **UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

VOLUNTEER NEEDED FOR CTSB!

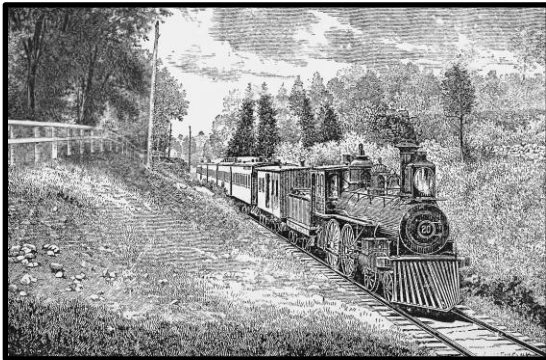
As most of you may know, CTSB airs videos of events in Lee, including those of the Lee Historical Society. This is a really wonderful service for the Society and very much appreciated. CTSB do not have a volunteer camera person on staff. The details are below.

We are looking for a member of our Society who loves to be behind a movie camera and is willing to get involved. This volunteer, using CTSB equipment, would record the four speaker talks planned each year for airing on CTSB. There are likely to be other events as well. Training in the use of this CTSB equipment takes about 1½ hours. This member would become our recorder of events. For more information, please contact: Ellen Whittaker at: 413-394-5868.

LEE COMES OF AGE: 1850 – 1900 ALL THIS MONTH AT LEE LIBRARY

It's time to open the doors to the Scolforo Gallery at Lee Library for our amazing exhibit. It will run all through July, so no excuses for not stopping by!

Our annual exhibit is presented in five parts, all major developments of this half-century period:



- The Rail Road Era*
- Marble as a Second Industry
- The Civil War Spurs the Economy
- Downtown Goes Modern
- The Gilded Age

Learn about hazards, crime, and entertainment in Lee in the last half of the 19th Century. These accounts are mostly taken from the pages of our own newspaper, *The Gleaner*, and from various other publications including Pittsfield newspapers.

The exhibit is free and open to the public during regular library hours. Inquire at the desk for viewing times.

So many hours have been dedicated to this exhibit to bring to you all the history of one of the most important periods in the evolution of our town. Your comments in our Visitors' Book will be much appreciated.

ANSWERS TO OUR QUIZ

If you've read any of the books on Lee's history, such as "See All the People", or read up on some of Lee's historians from yesteryear, such as Amory Gale or John Weingar, you may well have been able to answer quite a few of the questions. We can think of several present day local historians who would probably have aced this. However, for us regular folk, especially those whose memories don't always cooperate, we think you can give yourself a pat on the back if you answered just some of them correctly.

1. Housatonic Street
2. Marcellus
3. Peter Wilcox
4. Samuel Church
5. James M. Burt
6. Alonzo Bradley
7. Asahel Dodge
8. Five. Hoplands, Watson's, William's, Laraby's, Glassworks.
9. Lee Congregational Church, specifically, its 191' spire. A 114' x 46' sign reading LEE painted in white on the roof of the Columbia Mill storehouse.
10. Edwin Morgan, who purchased what was a private residence from William Porter in 1853 and turned it into an inn.

Do drop us a line and let us know how you did, if you enjoyed the quiz, and if you'd like to see more.

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

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

* Please include your business card if joining as a Business Member. For more information, please contact Kathy Smith at kf23smith@yahoo.com.

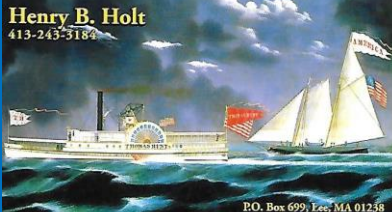
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