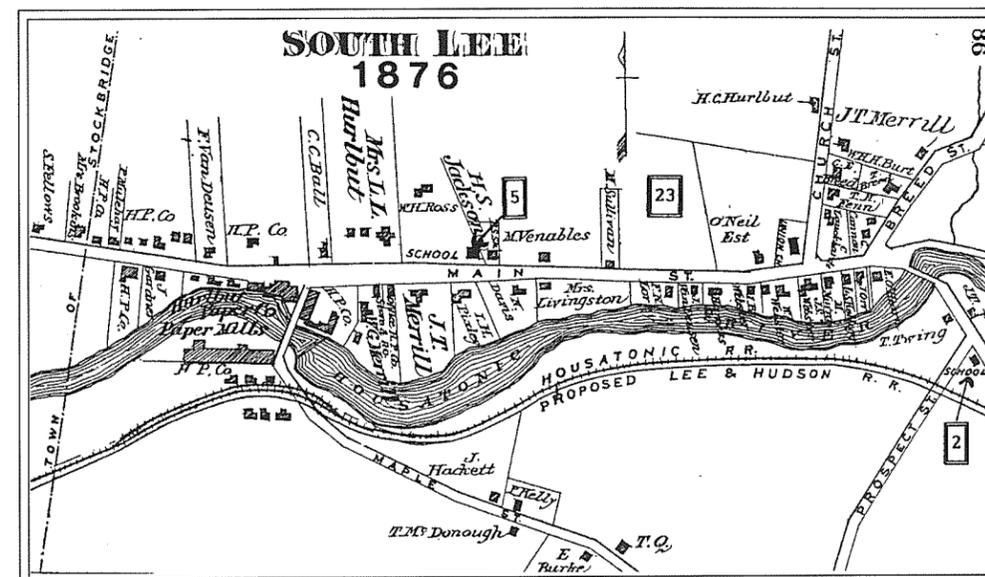


HOPLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL #5

LOCATION - on the north side of Main Street in South Lee, just west of the present site of the Church of the Good Shepherd.



The 1876 map of South Lee shows Hopland District School house #5 (5), in the center of the map. Also shown are the site of Hopland District School house #2 (2) and the future site of "new" South Lee school house (23), built about 1890 to replace Hopland District School houses #2 and #5.

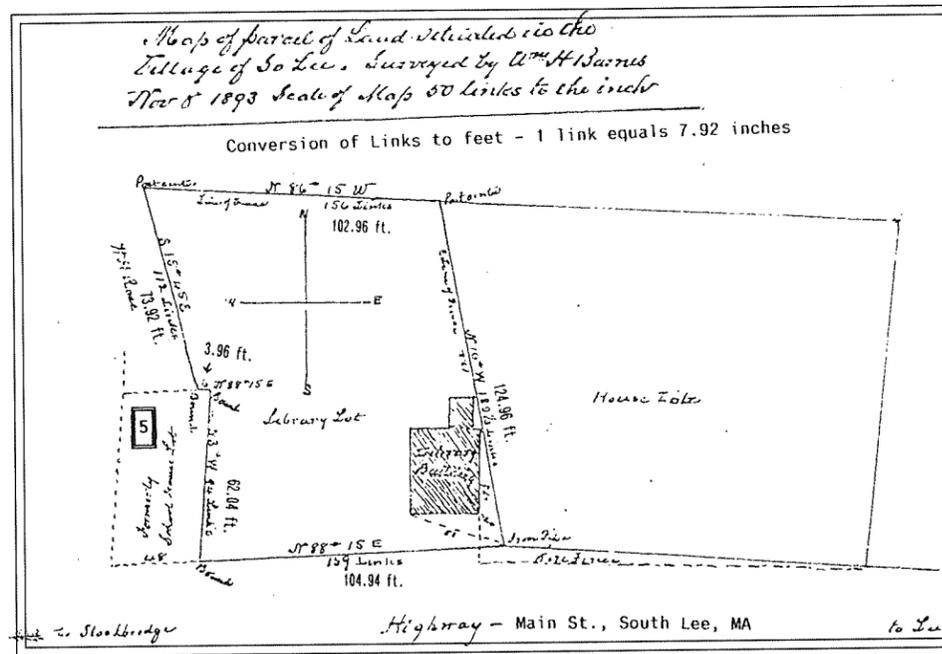
At a meeting of the Hopland School District on March 18, 1833 it was voted to "divide School District No. 2 and constitute a new school district which shall be called No. 5." The school house was probably built about this time.

It is difficult to locate the site of this school house precisely. In 1894 the Hurlbut Paper Company deeded²⁸ land to St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Stockbridge to build a mission church which eventually became today's Church of the Good Shepherd. The deed indicates that the entire western boundary of the property is the land of W. H. Ross and does not list the old school lot as part of the western boundary. On an accompanying plot plan a lot on the western boundary of the property is outlined with a dotted line. Within this dotted outline is written "Formerly School House Lot." The fact that the lot is outlined with a dotted line rather than a solid line, as is the usual practice, and that it is not part of the deeded property seems to indicate that it was no longer an actual lot. On the following copy of that plan, I have marked the school house lot with the number 5 and have converted links to feet, one link being equal to 7.92 inches:

In 1979 William G. Dunn bought²⁹ from Charles Mann part of the property that had been that of Mr. Ross back in 1894 when Hurlbut deeded land to the church.

²⁸ Book 281, page 627, dated 8/22/1893 - Registry of Deeds.

²⁹ Book 1022, page 235, dated 6/22/1979 - Registry of Deeds.



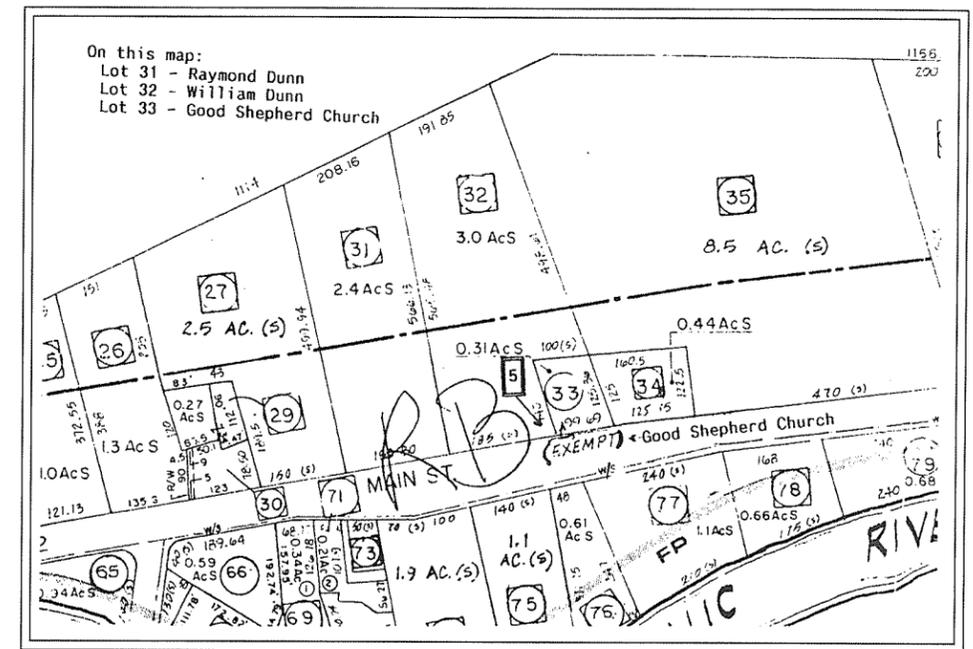
Mr. Dunn's deed to that property says that part of his eastern boundary is the lot formerly known as the school house lot. Before Mr. Ross owned the property there had been several transfers of the property recorded in the Registry of Deeds. The earliest transfer that I can find is a sale by Henry Gardner to Lawson Bidwell in 1856. That deed does not cite the previous deed and I was unable to trace back any further. However, that 1856 deed and all subsequent deeds list the school lot as part of the eastern border of the property now owned by Mr. Dunn.

In reading numerous deeds I have noticed that there was a tendency to copy the bounds given in previous deeds. Although I can't find a deed transferring the former school house lot to Ross, to the church, or to anyone else, I surmise that somehow the school house lot became the property of Ross at some time between 1890 and 1893, or that it had always been part of the property and that the school house was built there with the consent of the property owner. Since the Ross property eventually became the property of Mr. William Dunn, the school house site is almost certainly about where his driveway is today, next to the church property, for today there is no unoccupied lot between the property of the Church of the Good Shepherd and that of Mr. Dunn.

In 1958 when land was taken from the frontage of many properties by the Massachusetts Highway Commission there was an accompanying map³⁰ which I have not copied. That map shows no lot between the church and Mann's property (current Dunn property). Similarly, the current map in the Lee Tax Assessors office shows no separate lot between the church and Mr. Dunn's property. On this current map the church property has almost the same dimensions as the lot transferred to St. Paul's Church by the Hurlbut Paper Company in 1893. Thus it appears certain that the old school lot could not be a part of the church property today.

³⁰ The map is in Drawer 263 at the Registry of Deeds.

There is little doubt, therefore, that the old school house lot, number 5 on the map, is today part of the William Dunn property. This is a copy of the current map in the Lee Tax Assessors office:



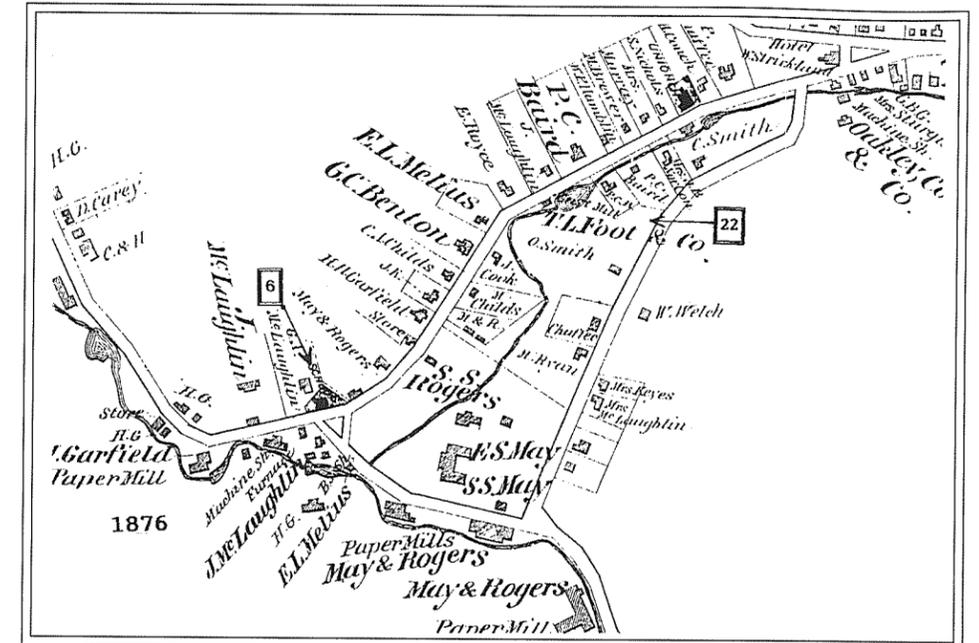
Despite several hours of searching I was unable to find any document recording a sale of "the old school house lot" after the school house was no longer used. It's entirely possible that when the school house was built it was built on privately owned land as discussed earlier in Chapter 1. The more of these old school sites I find with no record of purchase or sale of the land, the more convinced I am in my belief that most of these early schools were built on either borrowed or rented land.

In 1883 the Lee School Committee reported that the school house was too small. It was apparently demolished about 1890, as the Lee School Committee Report of 1900 says that the school house of District #5 in South Lee village was demolished ten years earlier. This appears to be accurate, as the new South Lee school house was built about 1890.

After the loss of Hopland District Schools #2 and #5 in South Lee a new school house was built east of the earlier Hopland #5 school as shown on the 1904 map. A copy of that map can be seen in Chapter 20 where the new South Lee school house is discussed.

HOPLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL #6

LOCATION - on Water Street across from the entrance to the road to Goose Pond known now as Forest Street. It stood on the southeast corner of today's 365 Water Street, the property of Robert Plankey.



The 1876 map of East Lee shows the site of Hopland District School house #6 (6). It is directly across from today's Forest Street. Also marked is the site of the future East Lee School house (22).

In 1900 the Lee School Committee Report tells us that the building, then unoccupied, stood near McLaughlin's shop. McLaughlin's Machine Shop was near the foot of Forest Street. The location of the school house is also mentioned in the 1883 Lee School Committee Report which tells us that the school house was located near May's. May's home and paper mill was also near the beginning of the road to Goose Pond, now known now as Forest Street. Both May's and McLaughlin's establishments can be seen on the above map.

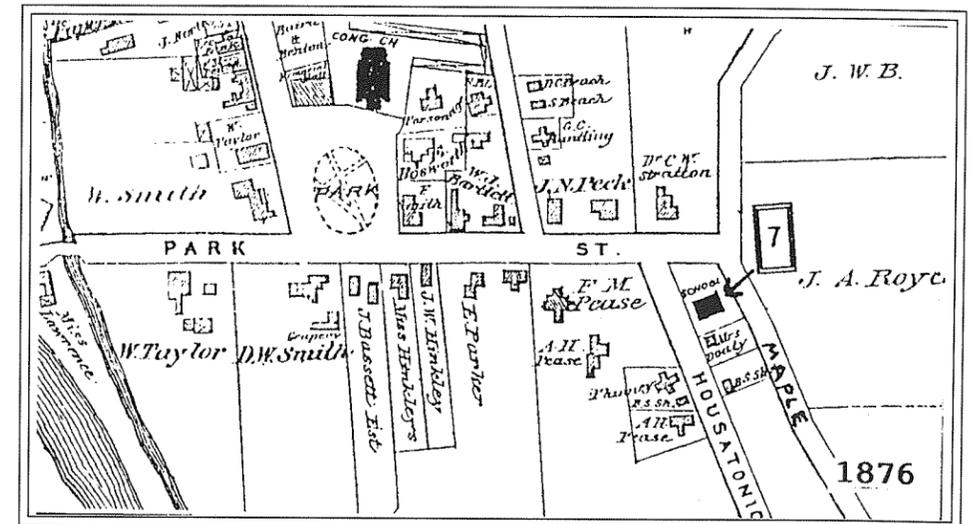
In 1848 the annual Lee School Committee report, in discussing the small school house of Hopland District School #3, said that "the hope is, since this large district has agreed upon a division, that a new school house will be erected in a better location." Apparently, plans were already being made for the new school house, for by deed³¹ of May 2, 1848 land "containing 25 square rods of ground" was purchased for \$75.00.

The following year, the 1849 Lee School Committee report says that "Hopland No. 6 is now reported for the first time; this district was created by an offset from No. 3." In other words, Hopland #6 now accommodated some of the pupils from Hopland #3, thus easing the overcrowded situation there.

³¹ Book 123, page 3, dated 5/2/1848 - Registry of Deeds.

THE CENTER SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE

LOCATION - at the corner of Housatonic, Maple, and Park Streets.

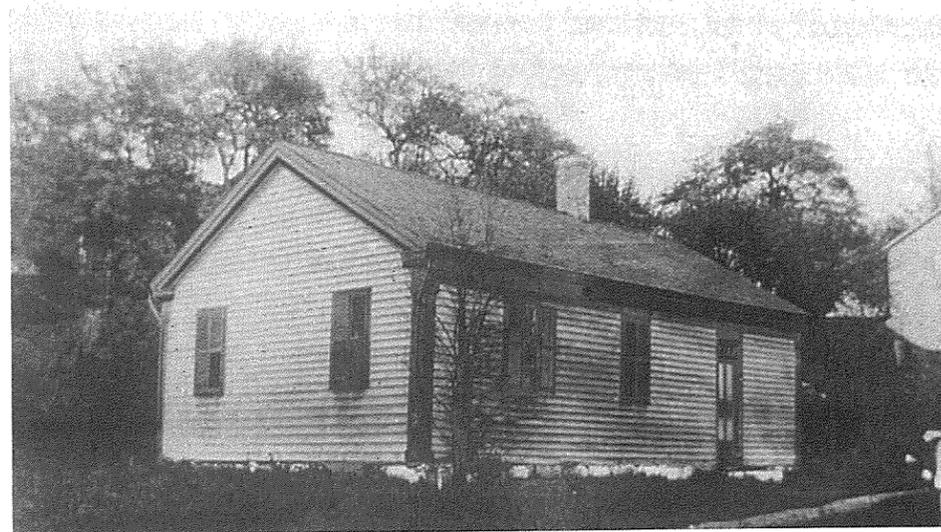


The 1876 map shows the site of the Lee Center District School house (7).

As we saw in Chapter 5, some of the pupils who had attended Hopland School #4 were sent to Hopland School #6 after their school house was destroyed by fire in 1890. This arrangement did not last very long, for in 1894 the town voted to build a new school house in East Lee to accommodate the students living in the East Lee area (see Chapter 20). Now Hopland #6 was no longer needed and was abandoned.

The Hopland #6 school house lot was sold³² in 1895 to Benton Brothers for \$100.00. In 1926 the land was sold³³ to Minnie Childs and the school house lot now became part of her adjoining lot, which after several intervening sales became the property of Robert Plankey³⁴ in 1958. Now, in 1996, it is still his property and his deed says that the property includes the "School House Lot, so-called" at the southeast corner of the property. Mr. Plankey has told me that the cellar hole, filled with weeds and trash and infested with rats, was still present when he bought the property and that he eventually had it filled in to eliminate this unsightly and unsanitary situation.

On a 1904 map, which can be seen on page 82, the site of the old school house is labeled Y.P.S.C.E. (Young People's Society for Christian Endeavor). The Y.P.S.C.E. may have found the old school house a more convenient meeting place than the Ingram Chapel. There is no record that they bought the school house. The owners, Benton Brothers, may have rented or loaned the former school building to the group.



AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE HOPLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL HOUSE #6 IN EAST LEE. THE BUILDING NO LONGER EXISTS. IT STOOD ON WHAT TODAY IS THE EAST SIDE OF THE FRONT LAWN OF 365 WATER STREET. - An old Lee postcard, courtesy of Betty Dennis

³²Book 294, page 345, dated 4/27/1895 - Registry of Deeds. Also, the 1896 Town Treasurer's Report lists the sales of 4 schools in the prior year, among which was: Sale of Hoplands No. 6 school house - \$100.

³³Book 425, page 601, dated 7/30/1926 - Registry of Deeds.

³⁴Book 670, page 140, dated 4/1/1958 - Registry of Deeds.

In 1784 four school districts were formed in Lee. The records I have found do not tell when or where the first school houses were built in these districts except for the one in the First, or Hopland, District. The 1900 Lee School Committee report says that "No records exist to show when the first school houses of the town proper were erected, but the red, or Center school in the Hoplands was built, or at least finished, in 1791." (A reminder - the Center school of the Hoplands was not the Center school of the town, the subject of this chapter.) Hyde's History tells us that the first public school was established in Lee in April, 1784 when the town voted to raise £40 to be laid out in schooling. Even this does not necessarily mean that there was yet a school house.

In the Valley Gleaner of May 29, 1895 is an article on the history of the Center School by E. H. Saunders. He says that the land for the school was sold by Nathan Dillingham to Elisha Foote, Nathaniel Bassett and John Thatcher, agents for the inhabitants of the Center School District in a deed dated Oct. 11, 1809, and recorded in the Registry of Deeds in Book 48, page 161. A check of that record confirms the accuracy of Mr. Saunders' statement. There can be little doubt that the land involved was the land on which the Center District School was later built if it had not already been built there.

In 1855 the school committee reported that the Center School house was a "disgrace to the town and a dishonor to the district" and "inferior to many barns owned by gentlemen of the district."

In the same 1895 Gleaner article quoted above, Mr. Saunders said that the school house and an adjoining inn had burned down in 1856. In the following quote from his article, Mr. Saunders cites the minutes of an April 3, 1856 meeting, but doesn't

identify the meeting. I think he may be referring to a meeting of the Center School District as I find no town meetings on that date. I have not found any minutes of the Center School District, probably because so many old records have been lost or destroyed. The following is a quote from Mr. Saunders article:

The minutes of April 3, 1856 say The Center school house together with the Old Red Lion building was destroyed by fire on the night of last Sabbath, March 30, 1856, having been set on fire by an incendiary unknown.

This fire terminated many perplexities. The school house was in a dilapidated condition and the Old Red Lion bore an unsavory reputation and the district and neighbors had voted it a nuisance, and were contemplating taking the land where the Red Lion stood, or building on another site.

..... The school house and Red Lion property were close together, and it was said the Red Lion building was set on the school house property. However, no one tried to put the fire out.

The Valley Gleaner did not start to publish until 1857, so there is no available news story with which to check this story. The annual school committee report of April 1, 1856, 2 days after the alleged fire, does not mention the fire nor is it mentioned in the report of 1857. It is not mentioned in the records of town meetings of 1856 and 1857, either.

Mr. Saunders reported that in 1838 the upper room of the school house was leased to the Methodists, and was also leased for "caucuses and religious gatherings." He neglected to mention that Alexander Hyde ran a private school in the upper room from 1835 to 1837 before moving his school to his own residence.

A new school house was built in 1856 which replaced the old "disgrace." The Valley Gleaner of April 9, 1857 reported that the new Center District School house cost \$2875.00 to build including the purchase of land.

It is clear that this new school house stood on the same site as the old one and that more land was required for this larger school house than had been needed for the original. When land for the second Center School house was deeded³⁵ to the town by Franklin Sturgis the deed noted that the land bordered the original school house lot.

At the end of this chapter is a photograph of the second school house. A person on the building committee who fails to identify himself other than "I", wrote on the back of the picture, in part:

Photograph of the School House in the Centre District of Lee, Mass built in 1856 and completed in November. It was the first graded school house in this vicinity³⁶ - and occupied in part the site of the old house, where I first attended school, & in the upper room of which the Lee Academy was originally started under the teaching of Dr. Alexander Hyde³⁷, while the Academy Building was being erected³⁸. The back or Eastern end, at the left hand was for the primary dept, and the right hand or western end was for the older pupils.

In their report of April, 1857 the Lee School Committee commented on the construction of two commodious and convenient school houses in town, one in

³⁵ Book 149, page 490, dated 2/14/1857 - Registry of Deeds.

³⁶ What is meant by "the vicinity"? We know that in 1853 the North Center District school house was built for two schools - infant and primary, "the only graded schools in town."

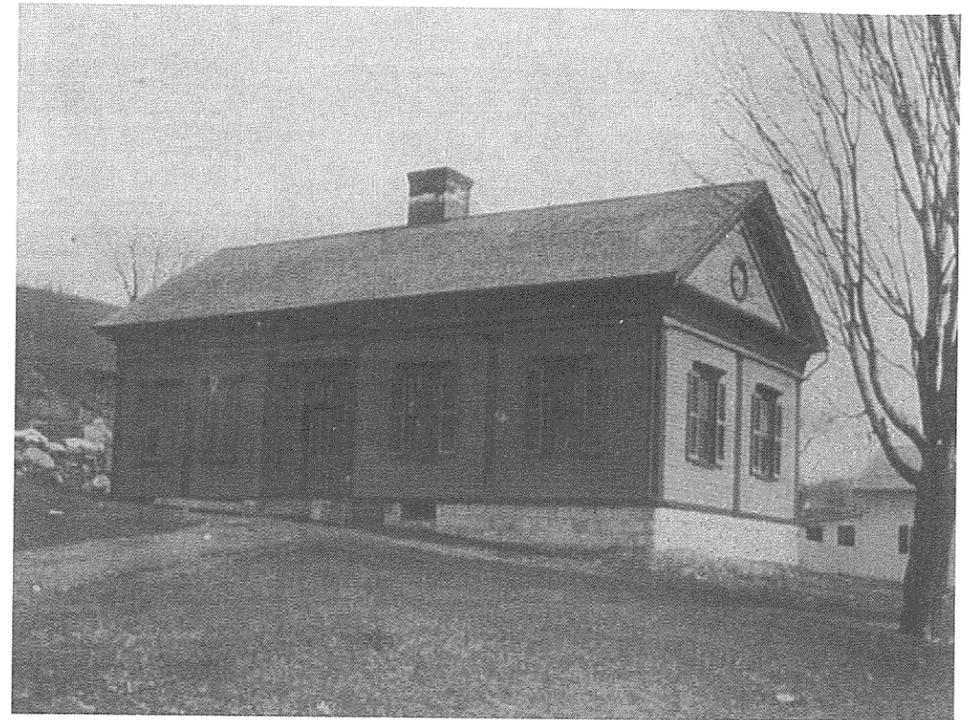
³⁷ Alexander Hyde did not have a doctorate.

³⁸ According to Hyde's History a stock company was formed to build an academy after Mr. Hyde had left the Center school house and that it was built in 1837.

the Center District and one in the West District, and said that the one in the Center District was adapted to a graded school in two departments.

According to the 1895 Lee School Committee report the pupils of the Center School house were transferred to the new High School building that year. The Center School house property was sold³⁹ to Edward Ramsdell in 1896.

I have heard it said that the old school house is included in the present house, but this is apparently a myth. The Lee Historical Commission has researched this and says that Mr. Ramsdell tore down the school house to build his home. Their report says, "At the time, all local builders agreed that the old school could not be converted to either a house or a barn."



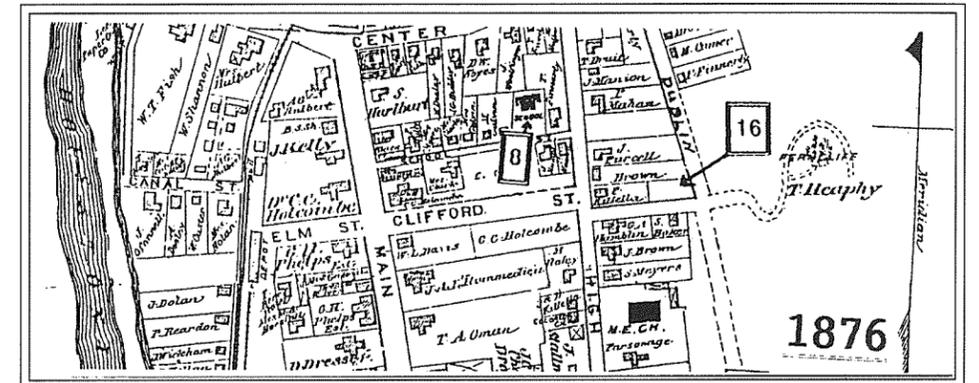
THE SECOND CENTER SCHOOL HOUSE AT THE CORNER OF HOUSATONIC, PARK AND MAPLE STREETS. A HANDWRITTEN CAPTION ON THE MATTING OF THE ORIGINAL PICTURE SAYS "SCHOOL HOUSE IN THE CENTER DISTRICT LEE MASS - 1856."

- From the personal collection of Ms. Gloria Shambroom.

³⁹ The deed is recorded in Book 294, page 433, dated 3/4/1896 at the Registry of Deeds. The 1896 Town Treasurer's Report includes the "Sale of Center District school house - \$850".

THE NORTH CENTER SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE

LOCATION - on the north side of the upper part of School Street.



The 1876 map shows the location of the North Center District School house (8). The site on which the Ferncliff School house (16) will later be built to replace the North Center School house is also noted.

The 1853 Lee School Committee report says that North Center District was formed from parts of the North East and the Center districts and "a school house was built for two schools - primary and intermediate."⁴⁰ The property was bought from Edwin Hulbert⁴¹ for \$333.33. The property encompassed 41.68 sq. rods or a little over a quarter of an acre.

When the school was first proposed about 1852 it was suggested that it be built "of sufficient dimensions to accommodate two departments." The School Committee thought that "it would be one step towards carrying out the principle of gradation - a good opportunity to try the experiment." In the same report the cost to educate a pupil in the common schools in 1851 was said to have been \$1.87 per pupil!

By 1853, when the school house was first in use, it had an enrollment of 181 students. The 1856 report of the Lee School Committee said of the North Center District, "They have the best school house and the only graded schools in town." It is clear from this that before 1853 school grades as we know them today did not exist in the old common schools. Even then there were not grades as we know them. The grading instituted at this time consisted of two departments, infant and primary.

That same 1856 report, when discussing the North Center School house, makes one wonder how schools were equipped and administered in those times. The report points out the problem of overcrowding and equipment deficiencies in this school house, but the problems existed in many more of these early schools.

Last summer the infant department had twenty five more scholars than there were seats. This evil can be remedied in part by persons living out of the district sending their children to their own school and parents retaining their children at home till they are five years old. This school needs a large blackboard and such charts as are usually found in such schools.

Apparently the school house in its later years was not thought of as glowingly as when it was first built and it was eventually replaced by the Ferncliff School house on today's Dublin Street in 1886. When it was voted in 1885 to raise money to

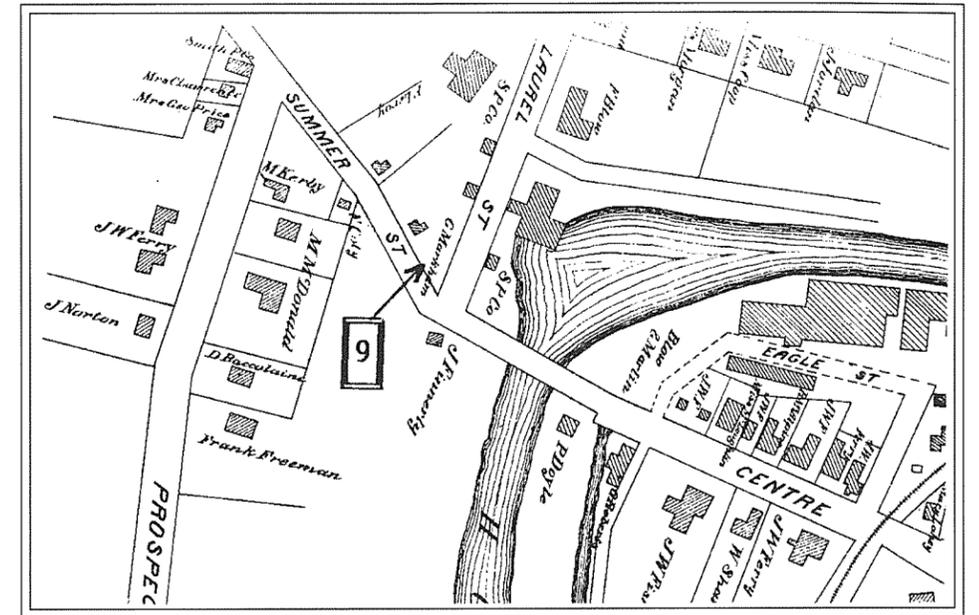
⁴⁰ 1853 Lee school Committee Report

⁴¹ Book 151, page 238, dated 4/2/1853 - Registry of Deeds.

THE NORTH WEST SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE

The first North West District School House

LOCATION - on the north side of Summer Street at the corner of Laurel Street.



The 1895 map shows the property on the corner of Laurel and Summer Streets which had, until 1869, been the site of the first North West District School house (9). As can be seen on this map, the property was owned by George Markham in 1895.

The ownership of the property can be traced back at the Registry of Deeds to the time when George Markham bought⁴⁵ it in 1880 from a Margaret Hanna of Lenox. I have been unable to find a deed showing how she acquired the property, nor can I find a deed showing the sale of the property by the town when it abandoned the school house. This is probably another case of the school house being built on private land with the permission of the land owner. The 1880 deed to George Markham, however, described the property as "The real estate formerly occupied by the Northwest School District in said Lee and where the old Brick School house stood." The deed also described one of the eastern boundaries as "the highway leading from Lee to Lenox" (Laurel Street today) and the southern boundary as "the highway leading past said premises to the place formerly occupied by Edward Moore deceased" (Summer Street today). Several later deeds to this property mention it as "the lot where the 'Old Brick School House' formerly stood."

It is not clear when the first North West District School house was built. It appears that it must have been built about 1829-30 because at a town meeting in 1829 it was voted that there be "a tax on Polls and Estates in the Northwest School District for the purpose of building a School house in said District." But two years

⁴⁵Book 241, page 553, dated 4/21/1880 - Registry of Deeds.

replace the North Center School house, the April 29, 1885 issue of the Valley Gleaner said that it was an urgent and pressing need as it had for years been "an improper and inconvenient building - unhealthy in location and surroundings at length became such an intolerable nuisance and disgrace, that immediate action was compelled." When it was abandoned the next year, the August 25, 1886 Valley Gleaner commented that "The old building in its condition and surroundings is wholly unattractive and unsuitable to such a purpose." When the fire department moved from the former North Center School house to its new marble fire house on Main Street in 1912 much the same comment was made about the old building. Doubt was expressed that a buyer could be found for it.

When the North Center School house was abandoned it was expected that the proceeds of sale of this school property would be used to buy land⁴² from Mr. Heaphy west of Union Rock on Ferncliff to build a new school. However, the school house property was not sold until 1888, at which time the Lee Fire District bought⁴³ it for \$800 on June 9, 1888.

The map of 1895, which can be seen at the beginning of Chapter 17, THE FERNCLIFF SCHOOL, shows the Town H & L (the Town Hook and Ladder, i.e., the fire department) occupying the same site as the former North Center District School house. This was the home of the Water Witch Fire Company. After the new marble fire house on Main Street was built in 1913 the property, with the old school house/fire house still standing, was bought by M. J. Kelly to be used in his furniture business as a workshop and for storage. According to the Berkshire Gleaner of 9/17/1913 Mr. Kelly planned to add another story to the building, but this was never done. Eventually it was not needed by the furniture store and the building remained unused for several years. Finally it became such an eyesore that it was torn down in the early 1960's by Frank Kelly, the then owner of the Kelly Furniture Store. It was subsequently sold⁴⁴ by the Kelly's in 1975 and stood as an empty lot until 1996 when a new building was erected there to house a workshop for the business of Douglas Trombly.



THE FORMER NORTH CENTER SCHOOL HOUSE JUST BEFORE IT WAS TORN DOWN. IT SERVED AS A FIRE STATION AND HOUSED THE WATER WITCH FIRE COMPANY AFTER IT WAS ABANDONED AS A SCHOOL AND LATER WAS USED BY THE M. J. KELLY FURNITURE STORE. - Picture by Frank McCarthy.

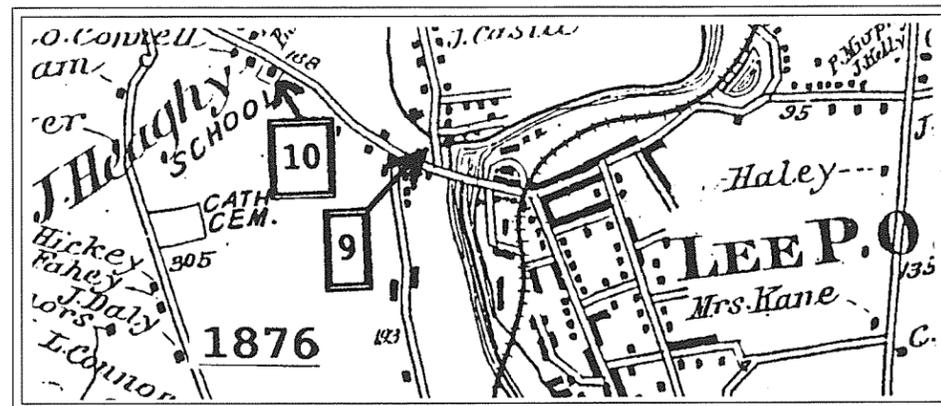
⁴²1886 Lee School Committee Report

⁴³Book 264, page 61, dated 6/9/1888 - Registry of Deeds.

⁴⁴Book 960, page 701, dated 5/19/1975 - Registry of Deeds.

The second North West District School House

LOCATION - on the south side of Summer Street about halfway between Prospect and Spring Streets - now 175 Summer Street.



The 1876 map shows the location of the second North West District school house (10). The site of the first North West District school house (9) is also identified.

By tracing the ownership of the property on which the school house stood it can be determined that the site of the school house is now 175 Summer Street. The present house stands on the site of the old school house, and the present owner, Dr. Judith Peterman, says that she has been told that the house sits on the foundation of the old school. The side yard, on the east side of the house, was an adjoining lot that was combined with the former school house lot in 1902 at the time of one of the several transfers of ownership of the property.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the town voted in 1869 to build a school house in the old North West district and appropriated \$1800.00 for that purpose.

Things progressed more rapidly in those days than they do now, for in the October 14, 1869 issue of the Valley Gleaner was the following news item:

The committee to locate and build a new School house in the obsolete⁴⁸ northwest district of this town have decided to locate on land of Thomas Cormick⁴⁹, near the house of Thomas Heaphy, and have already commenced laying the foundations, and expect to have the house ready for the winter school. Good-bye to Old Brick.

In 1870 the Lee School Committee reported that "During the year a neat school house has been erected in the Northwest District, to take the place of the crazy old brick affair. It seats 70 scholars - more than enough for one teacher - and every seat has been occupied."

The new North West school house was in use for only twenty five years. In 1895 the Lee School Committee reported that the pupils of the North West district were now in the new High School building and that the school house property was sold⁵⁰ in the same year. The Valley Gleaner of April 24, 1895 says that "Two school

⁴⁸ The word "obsolete" was used here because the district system had been abolished by the Legislature in March, 1869, as was reported earlier, in Chapter 1.

⁴⁹ Book 203, page 37, dated 9/18/1869 - Registry of Deeds.

⁵⁰ The 1896 Town Treasurer's Report lists the sale of 4 schools, one of which was: "Sale of N.W. District school house - \$375"

houses were sold Saturday by the selectmen. Hopland No. 6 was secured by Benton Bros. for \$100, and the North West was sold to William Carey for \$375." The deed⁵¹ for the latter transaction is recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

It wasn't long after that sale that the Lee School Committee decided that a mistake had been made in disposing of the property. An excerpt from their 1897 report explains:

For many years, several children living on West street, near the Stockbridge line, have attended the North-East Stockbridge school; and after the discontinuance of our North-West (Heaphy) school, three years ago, the children living in the Highlawn neighborhood were also sent to the same Stockbridge school and tuition was paid for their instruction. Just after the closure of the spring term, we were notified by the Stockbridge committee, that owing to the increase of their school, we must withdraw all the Lee pupils, except the two or three living near their school house. In consequence of this unexpected action, the children at and near Highlawn have been obliged to attend our center schools. Some of these children are small and cannot travel so great a distance when the weather is pleasant and the roads are good; and during a considerable portion of the year, if they attend school at all they must be conveyed. This has been done by the parents of most of them for the past two terms. No provision had been made by the town for this purpose, and we found it impossible to furnish transportation for these pupils at the rate paid for this purpose to such as live in other parts of the town and attend the same building. Undoubtedly a mistake has been made in disposing of the North-West school property, for, as the situation now is, a fair sized school might be maintained there and would be more satisfactory to the pupils of that neighborhood and their parents than the present plan.

These comments concluded with advice against re-establishing the school, however, as the expense of doing so would be greater than the cost of "conveyance," i.e., the cost of transporting the pupils to the schools in the center of town.

⁵¹ Book 294, page 210, dated 4/27/1895 - Registry of Deeds.