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The Gateway Gazette

The Newsletter of the Lee Historical Society

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

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The Monthly Meeting of the Society will be Thursday, May 21st at the Historical Society Office, Crossway Tower, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.



FROM THE EDITOR

If you noticed the date of our next meeting above, you'll see that it doesn't match our normal meeting date of the second Thursday in the month. As it usually happens, this May our regular meeting coincides with the May Town Hall Meeting, so we moved ours so that more people can make it.

By the way, everyone is welcome to come to our board meetings. If you're interested in what we do, or if you have something you'd like the Board to know about, please attend!

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me, Tracie at ethere@gmail.com.

NOT REALLY GONE, AND DEFINITELY NOT FORGOTTEN: **THE BRADLEY STREET SCHOOL**

There are remnants and memories of the old school buildings in Lee, but sometimes their specific history is difficult to uncover. The first North East School house, also known as the Bradley School house, was located where East Street and Bradley Street meet, just north of the foot of Reservoir Road. It is not known exactly but William Clarke, in his book Early Lee School Houses (1997), conjectures that it was built as early as 1794. A 1915 article in the Berkshire Gleaner mentions early account books from a blacksmith shop in the area that had a transaction for supplies to make extensive repairs to the school in 1810.



The Bradley Street School, c. 1970 from the Berkshire Eagle.

We have some idea what the interior of the school was like through another article from the Gleaner in 1909. The article outlines an outing of the Bradley Street School Association which included a speech from Alonzo Bradley (brother to John S. Bradley profiled in the veteran article in this edition), who attended the school in the 1830's/1840's. Bradley's speech describes the layout of the early school:

“the old school room has a continued desk around the wall on three sides and one continued seat to correspond. The scholars during school hours sat facing the wall and were not permitted to look around. The seats for the little ones also circled the room immediately in front of those described.”

The school house was sold in 1895 and moved from its original location. William Clarke could not find a record of the sale of the land where it stood, which lead him to conclude the school was on private land with the permission of the owner.

The original location was marked in 1911 when a monument made of Lee marble was erected by the Bradley Street School Association on the original site. Inscribed in the stone were the names of twenty-five men who had attended the Bradley Street School and served in the Union Army during the Civil War. On Memorial Day in 1929, a bronze plaque with the names of 34 Bradley Street School students who served during the First World War was unveiled on the opposite side of the stone.

The school continued in operation as a school in its new location a short distance north on Bradley Street, until 1977, when because of the expansion of the Hyde School, it was no longer needed. Originally slated for demolition, a group of 10 “historically minded” Lee residents known as the “Bradley Bunch” purchased the building from the town for one dollar and paid \$4,500 to have it moved to Eaton Street (now Frank Consolati Way). They put out a call for help and a large cross section of the town, including Boy Scouts, high school students, local business people and residents pooled their efforts to save the building.



The Bradley Street School monument today.

The “Bradley Bunch” coalesced into the Fern Cliff Association a nascent historical society that lead the plans for reuse of the building and it was hoped to make it into a historical



*Moving the school from Eaton Street, 1986.
Courtesy of the Lee Library Assoc.*

museum for Lee. Much of the wood work repair was accomplished by high school students in Arnold Scaramuzzi’s building program, gaining them practical experience in the building trade.

Sadly, the support and enthusiasm for the use of the school as a museum or conference facility lost steam and never came to fruition. Within a few years the school then stood in the way of the town’s plans for renovating the area, including reorganizing the parking lot that served the Airoidi Building. In 1986, the Fern Cliff Association sold the building again for a dollar to David Hubregsen, with the understanding it would be moved from Eaton

Street. Hubregsen and his business partner, Douglas Howes, had the building moved to Cape Street in East Lee where they converted into a residential home.

The well-traveled, often renovated, but still loved Bradley Street School lives on today as a quiet reminder of Lee’s past. The monument installed in the early 1900’s also still stands as a marker of where things began for the school and a memorial to some of the students who attended the school and served their nation.

A LEE COURT CASES REDIRECTS TED SHAWN’S DANCE CAREER



Barton Mumaw with Ted Shawn’s car at Jacob’s Pillow, ca. 1931. Public domain. Photos courtesy of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library.

The history of Jacob’s Pillow is entwined with the history of Lee, not only because of its close proximity. Here’s another article from Josh D. Bloom detailing this connection.

By the 1920s, Ted Shawn was already a towering figure in American culture. In 1915, he and his wife, Ruth St. Denis, founded Denishawn, widely regarded as America’s first modern dance company. Shawn’s mission to elevate dance, especially for men, continued even as the Great Depression strained arts organizations nationwide and his marriage dissolved. Yet a car accident on a Berkshire roadway in late 1931, followed by a lawsuit in Lee, may have altered the trajectory of his career in unexpected ways.

Shawn did not drive. In 1931, a young dancer named Barton Mumaw became his chauffeur and dresser in exchange for tuition, room, and board at the Denishawn School. Mumaw soon followed Shawn to the Berkshires, where he became both Shawn’s leading dancer and his romantic partner.

On December 5, 1931, Mumaw was driving Shawn's Ford Coupe along the Lee-Lenox Road on Route 20, just north of Laurel Lake, when it collided with a Cadillac driven by Nellie M. McCracken. The Berkshire Eagle reported that the vehicles were "traveling in a southerly direction when the second of two cars traveling northerly pulled out to pass the first northbound car and to avoid being struck Miss McCracken pulled her car to the right and stopped. The car was struck by the Shawn machine." The crash

resulted in significant property damage and personal injury.

In September 1932, Lee District Court Judge Bart Bossidy ordered Shawn to pay McCracken \$1,900 in damages and \$100 for her injuries. In the depths of the Depression, this was a substantial financial burden.

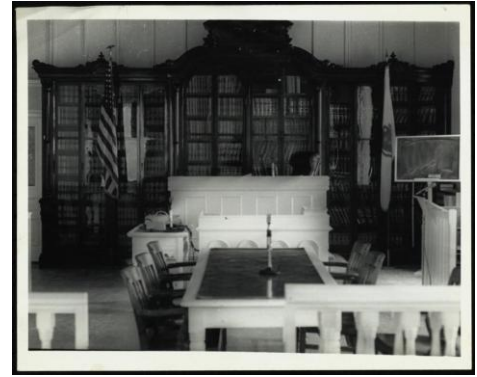
Judge Bart Bossidy, ca. 1940. Source: Newspaper articles, Lee, Mass. Vol 1925-1943. Rights status not evaluated. Used with permission from the Lee Library.

Although Judge Bossidy was reputed to have decisions that were rarely appealed, Shawn chose to challenge the ruling. No surviving news accounts or accessible court records indicate how the appellate court resolved the matter, leaving the final outcome unclear.

The Lee case unfolded alongside another serious legal battle in New York. There, manager Jack J. Vincent sued Shawn for allegedly breaching a performance contract. During those proceedings, a New York court granted Vincent's request for an injunction that led to the seizure of Shawn's professional supplies and materials. The action effectively prevented him from touring. At a time when touring was essential for income and visibility, the injunction compounded the financial pressure already created by the Lee judgment.

Taken together, the two civil trials pulled Shawn off the road at a pivotal moment. Unable to tour freely, he shifted course. He accepted a faculty position at Springfield College, where he recruited many of the young men who would form his groundbreaking Men Dancers troupe at Jacob's Pillow. What began as legal and financial setbacks may have redirected Shawn's energy toward the creation of an all-male company that transformed American dance and anchored his legacy in the Berkshires.

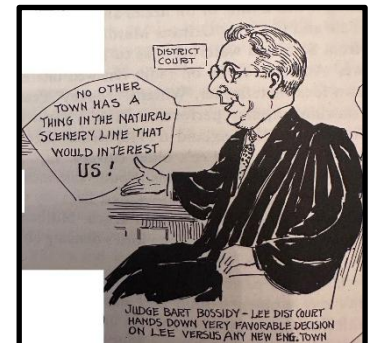
The Lee Historical Society invites its members and the public to view Joshua's forthcoming exhibit, "Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Mass.," that will be on display at the Lee Library for the month of June 2026. For additional details, visit linktr.ee/jacobspillowinleemass.



Lee District Court Room, Memorial Hall, ca. 1945-1970, Courtesy of Lee Library Historical Photograph Collection. Rights status not evaluated. Donor: Rico Smachetti. Used with permission from the Lee Library



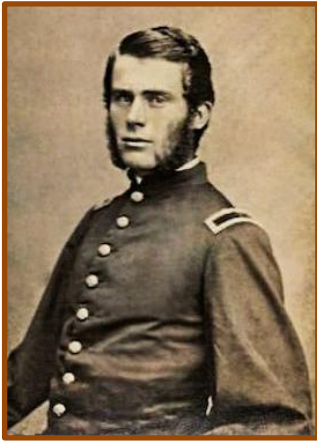
Judge Bart Bossidy, ca. 1940. Source: Newspaper articles, Lee, Mass. Vol 1925-1943. Rights status not evaluated. Used with permission from the Lee Library.



Mid-1920s Boston Post illustration of Judge Bart Bossidy. Public domain.

REMEMBERING LEE VETERANS

John Stone Bradley (1842-1926)



John Stone Bradley, c. 1864.

John Stone Bradley was born September 1, 1842 in Lee, Massachusetts, the son of Eli and Amanda B. Bradley, and great-grandson of Capt. Jesse Bradley the revolutionary war hero and Lee founder. He attended public schools in Lee (including the Bradley Street School) and then Union College in Schenectady, New York. In 1862, however, Bradley dropped out of college and enlisted in the Union Army and joined the Civil War hostilities.

Bradley served three years, distinguishing himself at the battles of Petersburg and Little Sailor's Creek. His advancement in the army was rapid until in 1865, when he was mustered out as a brevet captain, serving as adjutant to the unit commander. He was awarded his brevetcy (an honorary increase in rank) because of a wound he received in his thigh (presumably, a bullet wound) at Little Sailor's creek when he advanced to accept the surrender of a group of

Confederate soldiers which had flown a white flag.

Returning to Lee, he took up paper manufacturing, and in 1866 he married Lucy Sturges of Lee at the Congregational Church. Shortly after their marriage, the couple traveled west to make their fortune. First, they moved to Bay City, Michigan where John became involved in the lumber business, which remained his career for the rest of his life. In 1878, they moved to Newark, Ohio. The couple had three children before Lucy's death in 1883. She died in Ohio from "apoplexy," a common diagnosis when someone died after a sudden collapse. Her collapse was attributed to her searching for a lost son in the August heat without wearing a hat.

Two years later John married Louise Bradley, his brother Thomas's widow (Thomas had died in 1863 from "fever" while in the Army stationed in Suffolk, Virginia). In 1889, the family moved on to Portland, Oregon where John continued his rise up in the lumber industry, starting as the president of the Bridal Veil Lumber Co.

In 1907, he became a stockholder and president of Bradley Logging Company and worked actively as a prominent member of the lumber industry, contributing to the development of the lumber trade in the Northwest until his death. The extensive lumbering properties he had at the time of his death were purchased by the Crown Willamette Paper company which honored its veteran predecessor by naming the Crown operations "Bradley Camp."

A prominent figure in Portland business and community Bradley was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Civil War Military Order of Loyal Legion, the Auld Lang Syne society and the University club. He was a Mason, Knight Templar and G.A.R. member in the Lincoln-Garfield post. He was a ruling elder in the Presbyterian church for more than 50 years. holding membership in the First Presbyterian church in Portland.



Bradley's 1906 Portland House today.

John Bradley's 1906 house on Vista Avenue in Portland is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for being a distinctive example of Craftsman Style architecture in the Pacific Northwest.

His obituary from The Oregon Daily Journal, January 26, 1926 read in part:

“John Stone Bradley, who died in his 84th year Sunday, was as strong, as simple and as American as his name. Descended from the Bradleys of Massachusetts, he typified the best of New England. He was courageous in battle. He was upright in business. He was sincere in religion. He was kindly and generous in every contact with others. Oregon is fortunate in having had so fine a man as one of her adopted sons.”

LHS BULLETIN BOARD

LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPEAKER SERIES: The Stones Cry Out: Early Epitaphs from Lee



Tyringham resident John Hanson will give an illustrated talk, “The Stones Cry Out: Early Epitaphs from Lee,” on Thursday, May 28, 2026 at 6:30pm at the Lee Senior Center, 21 Crossway Street, Lee. Hanson has been collecting and studying early New England epitaph verse for years. He will share some outstanding verses on old stones in Lee, explaining their sources from Scripture and poetry. What do these engravings tell us about these early New Englanders’ attitudes about life, death and eternity?

John Hanson is a Williamstown native who lives in Boston and Tyringham. A member of the American Antiquarian Association, he is the author of *Reading the Gravestones of Old New England* and has published and spoken extensively on the topic. He will have copies of his book available for purchase at the end of his 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 Senior Center entrance. Parking is available along the North entrance to Crossway Village as well as on Academy Street. Refreshments will be served.



LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPEAKER SERIES:
Lee's 1928 Deadly Strep Epidemic



If you missed it, our March program was Dr. Bob Wespiser's illustrated talk, "Lee's 1928 Deadly Strep Epidemic." He outlined the local tragedy with special insights from a medical perspective. If you didn't have a chance to see it live, this, and all of our other presentations are available to watch thanks to Community Television for the Southern Berkshires (CTSB). You can access the videos of our programs and many others at the CTSB YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@ctsbtv>. To find all our videos quickly, enter: "Lee Historical Society" at the magnifying glass under the CTSB logo.

LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2026 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.

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