



# 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](mailto:Lee.Historical@hotmail.com)  
Website: [leehistoricsociety.homestead.com](http://leehistoricsociety.homestead.com)  
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*The Annual Meeting of the Society will be Thursday, October 12 at the Senior Center Cafeteria at the Crossway Tower on High Street, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.*



### **FROM THE EDITORS**

We must all have noted by now the changing of the foliage, the lowering temperatures and, maybe a little later in the month, the arrival of the Leaf Peepers! What a great month is October in the Beautiful Berkshires, and what a privilege for those of us who reside here to be surrounded daily by such beauty!

As you read through this edition of the Gateway Gazette, you'll also see another privilege we enjoy, which is that of living in such an historically significant area, signified by the celebration of Lee's 246th birthday celebration, known to all as Founders Day! Of course, it's more like several days as so much was organized by various societies, including our Historical Society! Here we reflect on the hugely successful Cemetery Tours, our participation in the Founders Day celebrations of September 16th, our program on the history of East Lee, presented by Board Member Caroline Young. So much to be grateful for that it seems we should be celebrating Thanksgiving early!

## AN ARTICLE BY A LHS MEMBER

*Every now and again, we are thrilled to receive a contribution to the Gateway Gazette from a Society member. This month, we are pleased to print this from member Linda Cantoni who lives in the house that the Rev. J.D. Pope built when he came to Lee in 1881. This was transcribed from the Valley Gleaner of May 27, 1885.*

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE BY REV. J.D. POPE  
FOR MEMORIAL DAY, 1885



### EXERCISES AT THE BAPTIST CHURCH

The members of Scott Bradley Post of the G.A.R. attended the Baptist church in a body last Sunday evening, in accordance with a custom which prevails throughout the state, and listened to a Memorial Day discourse by Rev. J.D. Pope. The house was well filled with Methodists giving up their service to attend. A very pretty floral display surrounded the altar and music was appropriate to the occasion and unusually good. The speaker took as the text of his discourse the words of the Shunamite woman in II. Kings, "I dwell among mine own people," the central thought being the goodly national heritage which we enjoy and the influence of national prosperity on domestic happiness. He spoke first of the history of the country, so grand although so brief; of the Pilgrim Fathers as specially selected by the providence of God for the foundation of the new republic and of the many beneficent influences and institutions which still bear the impress of those grand and noble characters.

He alluded briefly to the days of '61 and the beneficent results of the terrible struggle that followed. We enjoy manifold blessings as citizens of this grand republic, commercial, social, educational, religious and political. The rights of property are sacredly guarded; instead of aristocratic divisions personal wealth is the standard by which men are measured; our common school system, even in the newer states and territories of the west, is unsurpassed and the utmost freedom of religious opinion is enjoyed. To be sure there are some serious national evils but a hopeful patriotic eye will discern many encouraging signs in the times. Slavery is a thing of the past; secession has received its death blow; Mormonism is beginning to feel the iron hand of law; intemperance is already under the ban and cannot long stand before an awakened public conscience.

Political corruption is still rife but we have the remedy in our own hands and the experience of the past teaches us that popular suffrage is the great purifier. It will give zest to our observance of Memorial Day and tend to increase our affectionate remembrance for the gallant heroes of the rebellion to recount the manifold blessings that were preserved to us by their sacrifices. We shall value them the more highly if we remember what they have cost, and the observance of Memorial Day will thus tend to inspire in future generations that patriotism which shall lead to increased fidelity to the national honor and to even higher and nobler achievements than those in the past.

## **THE LHS BULLETIN BOARD**

### **A CALL TO ACTION FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE**

Every community should know its own history and Lee is a town with one that is rich and intriguing, and definitely worth learning and saving. The mission of the Program Committee is to plan programs and activities that bring that history to life in an interesting and informative way for the residents of Lee and any others who have an interest in our storied and colorful past.

At present, the Committee provides annual exhibits at the Lee Library that have been incredibly popular\*, plus arranging Speaker Events and various activities that have attracted large audiences and been well received.

Future activities are only limited by the imagination of those who might serve on this Committee and by the resources available. We need activists, people who believe in our mission and who are willing to join us and invest time in it. The personal rewards are priceless as all we who volunteer have learned, so why not join us?

Please contact a Committee Member if you would like to learn more:

Gary Allen: [garywallen@earthlink.net](mailto:garywallen@earthlink.net)

Bill Mathews: [williamdmathews54@gmail.com](mailto:williamdmathews54@gmail.com)

Phil Smith: [skulhaus@aol.com](mailto:skulhaus@aol.com)

Ellen Whittaker: [ellenwhit@aol.com](mailto:ellenwhit@aol.com)

\*If you're not familiar with our previous exhibits, you can see them by going to [www.ctsbvtv.org](http://www.ctsbvtv.org). Just click on Public Channel 1301 and enter the name of the exhibit in the Search Box. To date, they are:

“The Lee Veterans Website”

“Lee Earns a Living”

“Rock Stars & Paper Tigers”

“Lee Answers the Call: Honoring the Veterans of Lee”

### **THE FERNCLIFF ECHO**



Many of you will be familiar with the storefront of the A.F. Viale Insurance Company, tucked away at 75 Main Street between Karen Keenan Gifts & Home and the Twisted Orchard T-Shirt Company. What is amazing is to contemplate, as one does, how many Lee people have walked past Paul Viale's establishment over the last one hundred and eleven years! Yes, folks, the Viale family have been handling many of the insurance needs of our Town for that long!

Paul is a third generation family member to run the insurance agency, started by his Italian grandfather in 1912, then his father, and now Paul who has spent over 45 years in the business.

Dropping off the September newsletter, we were delighted to receive a gift for the Society from Paul, something that had been tucked away in an office drawer since 1934. It's a copy of the Ferncliff Echo from December of that year, the school paper for Lee High, full of advertisements for, mostly long-gone, Lee businesses – A.W. St. John's 5-10-25 Cent Store.

Sheldon Filling Station, L.T. Howes – Jeweler; stories by then students Ann Deely, Irene Bowker, Charles Stratton, to name a few.

Reading through this gem revealed even more – poems by our beloved librarian Betty Dennis, “Defeat” by James Burt (yes, THAT James Burt, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor!), “Dreams” penned by Doris Ann Dupont. The “School News” section tells of the marriage of teacher Miss Lucene Little who left to become Mrs. Harold Bates – we don’t know where she left for, but perhaps some of you might?

Intriguingly, “La Fenetre Francaise” even has several pieces all in French! And no Google Translate to, well, translate! Elizabeth Diamond, James M. Burt, Norman Packard, Mary Pike, George Benjamin, Irene Bowker – all were fluent in la langue francaise! C’est formidable!

As chance would have it, there’s a piece in the Ferncliff Echo about Ferncliff, written by Ann Deely, Class of 1937. We thought it would be very appropriate to reproduce it here, so here goes!

*“Of all the improvements made recently in the town of Lee, the one that stands out most prominently is that of Ferncliff. It was Mr. Alexander Hyde who presented it to the town and who has been responsible for the work carried on to make the ledge more attractive and accessible.*

*One sunny day in October I decided to revisit this sunny spot. It was a pleasant surprise to find an improved path to the top and to Peter’s Cave which is always interesting because of the conditions connected with it. On leaving the cave I followed the path around the northern side of the ledge which brought me out by Union Rock commanding a splendid view – the hills in the distance and in the foreground the cove and the winding road.*

*Continuing the path to the west I came to a small bench in a clearing which affords a beautiful view of the town. I was able to look over the graceful, old, white steeple right into the heart of the mountains. A typical New England village with its church and the houses clustered around it. I certainly had chosen the right time of the year to come up, for the trees blazed their red and copper tints in true Berkshire style. I think that it is one of the most beautiful spots anywhere around particularly in autumn.*

*Thus I fell to thinking about this lovely park and its associations with the town. From this spot I could see the roofs of our schools, and I pondered on the many sights this ledge had witnessed and the many secrets it would never tell. Perhaps some of these secrets have been revealed to our school paper, which has been very properly called the Ferncliff Echo.*

*When I roused myself from my reveries it was time to leave. The sun was setting and the light reflecting the leaves made it look as if there were thousands of fairies dancing upon them. Then suddenly the sky was suffused with bright colors, which slowly faded and melted into the twilight.”*

This invaluable piece of Lee history will be placed in the Society’s archives along with so many other donations from the people of Lee who are vital in our quest to preserve the history of our Town. Tracie Etheredge is the Chairperson of our Collections Committee and, with her many years of experience as an Archivist, is working diligently to catalogue and safely keep the many donations we’ve received over the years. Should you have some piece of memorabilia you think may have significance historically for Lee, please think of your Society and contact Tracie at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com).



## **FOUNDERS WEEKEND ACTIVITIES**

### **ST. MARY'S CEMETERY TOUR**

The Society's first tour of this beautiful cemetery was a resounding success. The many attendees on a sunny Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, including St. Mary's Fr. Brian, were introduced to the histories of some of Lee's Catholic residents and what interesting stories they had. There was recounting of the many Irish and Italian immigrant families who came to the United States to set up new homes, new families, new lives in a new country. We heard about the Carlino family members from Sicily and the Scolfaros; the McGinties from Ireland; the Irish Kelly family, now well known for their funeral home; the Reardon/Salice families and the Dupont family, who appeared to be determined to keep the United States Armed Forces viable; the Bossidy family's famous Judge.



We did allude on the tour to a particularly intriguing story concerning Dennis McGinty. We promised to share this in this October edition of the Gateway Gazette, so here it is, ad verbatim, from the Valley Gleaner of July 10, 1901.

*“Those who anticipated a quiet Fourth at Lee were disappointed. To be sure the signs were right. A picnic on Fern Cliff was the only thing scheduled for the village, and bell ringing was supposed to be out of fashion, after the experience of last year, and it was thought that some of the individuals so much exercised by last years noise would go into the Congregational belfry, pull up the ropes, cover over the man hole and sit on it. The small firecrackers snapped occasionally Wednesday evening, and by order of the selectmen Officer Perry had all the small boys frightened into silence before 10 o’ clock.*

*There was an older element, however, prompted by a spirit of “sheer cussedness” rather than patriotism who did not retire with the good citizens. Twelve o’clock came and for full five minutes everything was silent as the wilderness, then trouble broke loose.*

*The Water Witch tinkled a faint dismal signal and then three cannons at the lower end of town started up with a roar that threatened to collapse the residences in that part of the village, and they were kept going until after 3 o’clock in the morning. The bells of the churches clanged a chorus, and cannons (ed. note: a type of large firecracker), crackers, revolvers and shouting filled in the intermittent spaces between the broadsides.*

*Some of the gang went to the Eagle Mill intent on blowing the whistle, but Dennis McGinty, the fireman, interfered and was roughly handled. He was thrown or knocked down and his arm and shoulder so badly injured that he was unable to work. He called for help and his assailant ran away without having attained his object. McGinty is a faithful employee of the company and a very quiet fellow and this assault was unquestionably going beyond all license even on Fourth of July morning.”*

We hope to repeat our tour of St. Mary's Cemetery next year and are very open to hearing any suggestions for people from the past who rest there whose stories we can bring into the present. Please contact Tracie at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com) with any suggestions.

## FAIRMOUNT CEMETERY TOUR



Our second Cemetery Tour was on Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup> and was joined by several familiar faces from the St. Mary's Cemetery Tour of the previous day. Again, we had a terrific turnout and the weather cooperated for us. This tour took us over slightly more challenging terrain, but the smell of wild thyme as we tramped across it was such a treat!

Tracie, our researcher and more experienced tour guide led us all around the cemetery, stopping to educate all on a fascinating selection of “residents”, including the well-known Smith and Hyde families, and also on some lesser known, but just as interesting people.

Let us consider the life of the only Native American person who shares his forever home with the Hyde family. He was of the Kiowa Tribe from the Great Plains. Listed by the US Government as a “warrior”, he was captured in Oklahoma in 1875 and transported to Fort Marion, Florida as part of the US Government strategy to get rid of “trouble makers”. His name was Tsadletah and he left his wife and children home in Oklahoma, never to be reunited.

Here we go to the rather dark side of US history when it comes to the native peoples. Lt. Richard Pratt instituted a program to “Americanize” them to make them less prone to causing problems. Part of this program involved dressing them in European clothes and teaching them “useful” trades such as farming, mill work, etc. Lt. Pratt came up with the repugnant slogan of “Kill the Indian, Save the Man”. Most of the Indians were transferred to Indian Schools for further “Americanization”. One of these was the Hampton School in Virginia and in 1879, it instituted the first work-study program in the United States with regard to the education of Native peoples. Instead of being able to return to their homes, many of the Native students participated in a program called an “outing”, which placed Native American boys and girls in homes with Euro-American families in the Northeast, primarily here in Western Massachusetts. The males were to learn farming and the females housekeeping from a Euro-American perspective. They were also introduced to their morals and manners.

Due to its reputation for being the capital of philanthropy, and also to the large number of associates Hampton's founder, Samuel Armstrong, had acquired through his attendance at Williams College, Western Mass was selected as the site for the outing program. This was coordinated by two Berkshire farmers, Alexander Hyde and, later, Marshall Bidwell. Tsadletah was placed with a lady called Sarah Goodspeed to work on her dairy farm. Her daughters, Helen and Jesse, were daughters at the Hampton School.

In 1879, at the age of 33, Tsadletah died of either a pre-existing condition due to a horse riding incident, or from tuberculosis. The cause of his death isn't clear. He was buried with the Hyde family as Alexander, head of the Berkshire summer program, took responsibility for him.



*Editor's Note: Tracie has cleaned Tsadletah's headstone so visitors to Fairmount can see where he now lies amongst the rest of the Hyde family.*

## THE SOCIETY'S PARTICIPATION IN FOUNDERS DAY



*Phil Smith and Gary Allen carry the banner for the Lee Historical Society at the Founders Day Parade*

As Lee celebrated its 246<sup>th</sup> birthday, so the Society joined in with their usual enthusiasm. Here's a pictorial view for those of you who may have missed it. Board members Gary Allan and Phil Smith looked magnificent in their historical garb as they proudly marched with the Society's banner, joined by a group of fife and drum players from Wallingford, Connecticut. Other Board members, Mary Morrissey and Kathy Smith are depicted as they, along with several others, manned the Society's table next to Memorial Hall and enthusiastically sold a vast amount of raffle tickets and Society merchandise.



*Mary Morrissey and Kathy Smith at the Lee Historical Society Booth Founders Weekend*

## ANNUAL MEETING

The Society's Annual Meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 12 at the Senior Center Cafeteria in the Crossway Tower on High Street. This is the occasion when we need all of our members to attend in order that we can have a quorum to nominate Board members. Ballots will be sent out so please ensure these are returned before the meeting. Long-time members Ed Forfa and Linda Buttery have 3-year terms coming up for renewal. We would welcome any member who would be interested in joining the Board, so feel free to attend one of our monthly meetings to give it a test.

Please remember that this is YOUR Society and your attendance is not only very welcome, but also quite essential. As usual, delectable refreshments will be served, along with tea and coffee. If you have a favorite delicacy that is the pride of your kitchen, we wouldn't turn it away if you brought it for us! We, the Board, are only twelve members, so if only we show up, what are we to do with all that food?! We look forward to meeting and greeting you!

## IF YOU LOVE LOCAL HISTORY ...

You may note that our Membership Form that is usually included in the newsletter is absent this month. In anticipation for our 2024 membership drive starting in October our Membership Committee is reworking the form. Keep your eyes peeled for the new form and the new Membership Drive.

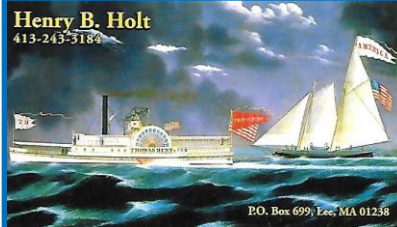
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