



## Newsletter

*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)  
Facebook: Lee Historical Society Lee MA

*The next meeting of the Society will be Thursday, February 9 at the Meeting Room at the Crossway Tower on High Street, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.*



February is the border between winter and spring  
- Terri Guillemets -

### **FROM THE EDITORS**

Another month, another newsletter! We did enjoy putting together the January newsletter, the first that we have issued as the new editorial team. We realize there are so many avenues of Lee history to explore. How fortunate we are to live in a town that has held such national importance. We hope you will have checked out the amazing exhibits, videoed by CTSB, on our marble and paper industries. For a small town, we have done some very big things!

To reiterate from January's newsletter, as members of the Society, this is YOUR newsletter. We would love to hear from you as we begin to learn the ins and outs of our new position. We welcome your input – are there any items of historical interest pertaining to Lee that you would like to hear more about? Do you have any articles of your own, photos, even the odd poem, that you would like to have us include? Do contact us – [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com) for Tracie and [lindabreader@icloud.com](mailto:lindabreader@icloud.com) for Linda.

## FROM THE COLLECTION:

*We will be presenting items from the Lee Historical Society collection every month. This month it's a few advertising items from Lee businesses.*



Pictured is an ashtray advertising the J.T. Owen's store. We briefly mentioned J.T. Owens in the January newsletter when he became the proprietor and manager in 1904 of the Casey Clothing Company, changing the name to J.T. Owens in 1912 when he moved into the north part of the newly constructed marble Park Block (now the home of Zabian's Fine Jewelry and Zabian's Clothing for Men). The store had initially been housed in the Casey Block where Henry's Electric now does business. His neighbor in his new location, at the south end of the building, was Fillebrown's Department Store.

After James Owen's death in 1954, the store continued under the ownership of his daughters until 1978 when the entire block, including J.T. Owen's store, was purchased by Michael Zabian.



Pictured is an elegant jewelry box containing a gold filled pin from the G.A. Brooks Jewelry Store. George A. Brooks was a graduate of Waltham Watchmaking School, he opened the Tick Tock Shop in 1952 at 72 Main Street where he sold jewelry, clocks, and musical instruments. In 1967, he moved to 52 Main Street, doubled the size of the store and changed the name to G.A. Brooks Jewelry Store.

In 1974, Brooks closed the business because of an inability to find assistants qualified in watch repair. He is quoted in the Berkshire Eagle, saying: "I continually have ten days work in front of me, and there's always someone coming in who wants their watch repaired yesterday. A fella's only got two hands." He moved on to work for the Lee Ford dealership.



For a long time, the store front at number 52 was the location for Lee Power Equipment, and is now Meow & Growl.



It seems Lee was not short of places to purchase jewelry. Here is a picture of a box from the J.T. Howes Jewelry Store. Lindley T. Howe (what a wonderful first name!) opened his store in 1912 after he bought the James Seacord Jewelry Store where he had been working as a clerk.

Originally located in the Humes Block (aka The Baird & Benton Block, next to Memorial Hall), it was relocated in 1944 to the Maloney Block (aka Morey Block, current home to Alpamayo Peruvian Cuisine).

Howe passed away in 1962 and left the store in his will to Florence S. Smith, who had worked as his clerk. (It seems that to work as a clerk in a store back then sometimes could lead to becoming a store owner, as it did for both Lindley and J.T. Owens also.) Florence operated the store until her retirement in 1975.

*Do these items bring up any fond memories of businesses on Main Street, let us know!*

## **REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN**

*The Town of Lee has been the home of many, many veterans who have served their country since the Revolutionary War through to the latest wars in the Gulf. Each month, we will give an account of one of these brave men and women.*

### **COLONEL CHAUNCEY BASSETT (1830 – 1864)**

His life was short, but his accomplishments went long. Chauncey was born in Lee, but ended up studying law in Michigan. When the Civil War broke out, his studies ended abruptly, as did his life when he lost it during the Red River Campaign in Louisiana, so called as an advance into the Trans Mississippi Theatre and the Red River Valley in Alabama cut off the Port of Shreveport, thus splitting Texas and Arkansas from the rest of the South.

The all-Black 6<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry (apart from Chauncey, who was White) was under his command on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1862 as, then a Captain, he and his men fended off an entire Confederate brigade at Magnolia Cemetery long enough to keep the Union Center intact.

Our man died a hero.

## **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 2500 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 reserve service. 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](http://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](mailto:2rockpaper9@gmail.com). You can see the kinds of information we are including by looking on our website above. Please don't let the old vets in your life go unrecognized.

## **THE SOCIETY ON TELEVISION**

If you missed, or would like to revisit, the Society's last four exhibits that were held in the Scolforo Gallery in Lee Library, they can all be found on CTSBTV's website at [www.ctsbtv.org](http://www.ctsbtv.org). Just click on Public Channel 1301 and enter the name of the exhibit in the Search box. Then, at your leisure, in the comfort of your own home, you can watch:

**“The Lee Veterans Website”**

**“Lee Earns a Living”**

**“Rock Stars & Paper Tigers”**

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

## **DO YOU RECOGNIZE...?**

*We have many photos in the Lee Historical Society Collection that we could use more information on. Please help if you can.*



**This Family? This House? This Donkey?**

What a delightful photograph from a collection donated to us several years ago. We can't be positive that this is in Lee, but we think it is. Our guess is it dates from the 1880's or 90's. Do any of you know where it is? Do you notice the marble curbing? Could it be somewhere on Marble Street? Is it still standing? Are these your relatives? What was the donkey's name? If you have any information, please email Tracie at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com).

## **FEEDBACK FROM FOLKS**

In the January edition, we asked if anyone recognized the M.A. Grove House. We did have a couple of thoughts on where it may be or might have been. One was that it could have been on Academy Street, across from the old St. Mary's School. Another was perhaps it was up on Summer Street, a way up from Prospect Street. What do you think?

## **WHAT'S IN OUR STORE?**

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 Answers the Call" at the Scolforo Gallery.

Here's a menu of what we have on offer:



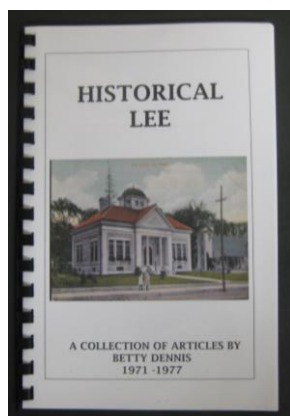
**MUGS** depicting various places of historical interest in Lee. **\$5**



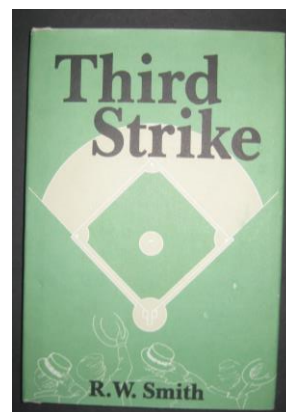
**PICTURE PACKETS** Six beautiful prints with scenes of Lee, perfect for framing. **\$6 per packet**



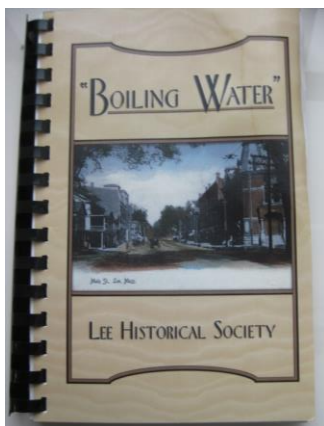
**T-SHIRTS** Show your pride and support of your Town with a Lee T-shirt. Sizes: Small, Large, XLarge, and 2XLarge (Sorry, no Mediums left) **\$15**



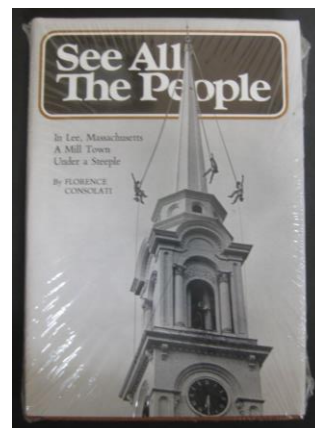
**“HISTORICAL LEE”** A lovely little book of articles collected by Lee’s beloved librarian, Betty Dennis **\$12**



**“THIRD STRIKE”** by R.W. Smith For all you baseball fans and Lee lovers, this is the perfect book! At only **\$5**, it’s a home run!



**“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**

## **WHAT'S IN YOUR ATTIC?**

**STOP!** Before you run to Goodwill or the dumpster with those old photos, pictures, prints, post cards, other alliterative pieces of memorabilia, that old “piece of tat” you inherited from Great Uncle Fred, please pause for a while. If these relate in any way to Lee, they may have significant historical value.

At the Lee Historical Society, we have a very comprehensive collection of what the folks of Lee may have considered as a donation to the landfill, but which we have rescued. Everyday items from the past hold fascination once they've become obsolete, isn't that so? If you'd rather not donate the item, we can scan or copy it, or maybe borrow it for a display.

If you are wondering if something you have could be worth donating, please contact us and we'll be happy to make an assessment. If they're unworthy, we'll even take them to Goodwill or the dumpster for you! Please contact Tracie Etheredge [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com)

## **FROM THE VALLEY GLEANER ...**

*As we mentioned in the January edition of our newsletter, we're reprinting interesting articles from old editions of the Valley Gleaner. The story of “A Great Fire”, the one that devastated a large section of Lee's Main Street, is so extensive in its coverage that it will be recorded in our newsletter in installments.*

### **A GREAT FIRE** **FEBRUARY 5, 1879**

#### *Three Blocks and the Episcopal Church Destroyed*

**A LOSS OF \$50,000.00!**

A few minutes after noon last Monday, an observer on the west side of Main street noticed a thin wreath of smoke curling over Baird's block across the way, and a second look convinced him that the deadly flame was at work. An alarm was at once given, and several parties hurried to T.G. Sabin's store, where the fire seemed to be. Reaching there it was found that fire was raging and spreading rapidly in the partition between Baird's upper and lower blocks, and Mr. Sabin's store being the north one in what was known as the old or lower block. A hole was soon cut through and pails of water dashed upon the fire. A gallant effort was made here by the few who had reached the spot, but the flame was already beyond the appliances they had at hand.

Meanwhile, as soon as the alarm had been given and it was found where the fire was located, another strong effort to check it was made in the Gleaner printing room, directly above. The fire could be heard crackling in the partition, and as soon as openings were made bright tongues of flame could be seen darting hither and thither, but steadily making their way upward. For some time the fight was made by the office force alone, the water tank being kept full by constant pumping from the cistern in the cellar of the block. Pail after pail was cast upon the fire, but the spiteful demon, baffled in one point, retired for the moment only to break out in some new quarter. Thus the unequal fight went on. It was a determined struggle though the flame had got a hold which it was terribly hard to loosen. After a while the few weary workers were reinforced by others from outside, and when a full stream from the Housatonic mill commenced playing upon the fire it began to look as if, after all, it might be stopping at that point. But no.

*And here we leave the action and our readers on the edge of their seats! Stay tuned for next month's installment of The Great Fire of Lee!*

## **ARTICLES BY BETTY DENNIS**

*Elizabeth "Betty" Dennis (February 16, 1917 – May 4, 2007) started work in Lee Library in 1935 after she graduated from Lee High School. In 1942 she became the Head Librarian, a position she held until retirement in 1987.*

*The Lee Rotary Club asked Betty to start writing about different interesting historical events in Lee and these were printed in the Penny Saver between April 1971 – August 1977. She had a way of bringing life to the stories she researched and it's our pleasure to reproduce some of them in our newsletter.*

**JULY 5, 1977**

Seventy four years ago on June 24<sup>th</sup>, William Ingalls who was employed as a mason in the then new Niagara Mill had a harrowing experience. He was shot through a flume and carried a quarter of a miler in less time than it takes to tell it.

He had been standing near the end of the flume which went down to and amid the foundations of the new mill, through whose narrow way the water rushed with unbelievable speed. In some accidental way his foot became tangled with a rope and he fell into the racing water. He was carried along at such a great speed he was left completely helpless. His body went down the raceway, into the flume, passing under two three inch pipes and was dropped into a wheelpit, turned a corner along a stone wall and then into the tail race. From that he was shot some distance into the Housatonic River. Being a very strong swimmer he made it back to land. Once his feet touched the earth his mind went into shock after this terrifying trip and he collapsed!

His co-workers, stunned at what they had just witnessed, were helpless, and felt sure death had claimed their friend. However as they watched in frozen positions, saw him swim and collapse, they were immediately at his side. Since his home was on nearby Bradley Street, they carried him over there. Although almost unbelievable, he had come through the ordeal with no cuts or bruises.

### **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

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

NEW: \_\_\_\_\_ RENEWAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail with membership fee to:  
Lee Historical Society  
PO Box 170  
Lee, MA 01238

**THESE BUSINESSES SUPPORT US.....PLEASE SUPPORT THEM**

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**243-0570**

**Michael Considine & Shawn  
P. Leary, Attys. at Law**  
42 Main Street  
**243-4900**

**Frank Consolati Ins. Agency**  
71 Main Street  
**243-0105**

**Cottage Care Inc.**  
P.O Box 753  
**243-4257**

**Dresser Hull Company**  
60 Railroad Street  
**243-1400**

**Eagle Mill Redevelopment**  
50 West Center Street  
**425-4850**

**Ford's Auto Service**  
1075 Fairview Street  
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**Fraser's Service & Sales**  
138 West Park Street  
**243-0326**

**Greylock Credit Union**  
47 Main Street  
**243-2121**

**Henry Holt Art**  
125 Golden Hill  
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**Henry's Electric**  
252 Main Street  
**243-0690**

**Hunter & Graziano P.C.**  
10 Park Place  
**243-0789**

**Kelly Funeral Home**  
3 Main Street  
**243-0204**

**Robert M. Kelly,  
Paperhanging**  
65 South Prospect Street  
**243-3489**

**Lee Bank**  
75 Park Street  
**243-0117**

**Lee Hardware Store**  
221 Main Street  
**243-0786**

**Locker Room Sports Pub**  
232 Main Street  
**243-2662**

**Mike's Professional Barber  
Shop**  
93 Main Street  
**394-5829**

**NBT Bank of Lee**  
76 Park Street  
**243-1800**

**RW's Inc.**  
35 Run Way  
**243-0946**

**Ta-Ga-Soke Campgrounds**  
7820 Higginsville Road  
Blossvale, NY 13028  
**1-800-831-1744**

**A. F. Viale Ins. Agency**  
75 Main Street  
**243-0347**

**Wilcox Plumbing & Heating**  
P. O. Box 561  
**243-2494**

“History is who we are and why we are the way we are.”  
- David McCullough-