



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, August 10 at the Meeting Room at the Crossway Tower on High Street, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.



"Keep your face to the sun and you will never see the shadows."
– Helen Keller –

FROM THE EDITORS

Just as we were about to send our August newsletter to our wonderful printing company, it was a case of "Stop the Presses!" as an historical Lee event occurred! After many, many years of hard work, set-backs (think COVID), rethinking, hair-pulling, innovation, finally, FINALLY the reinvention of the historic Eagle Mill has commenced. July 24th, 2023 goes down as a day in Lee's history when the very first of the houses on West Center Street was demolished in full view of all those Lee residents who turned up to witness this event after years of anticipation. Due to a very tight deadline, the story of the history of the Mill, from its opening in 1808 to present day, will appear in the September edition of the newsletter.

If any other events deemed historically significant occurred for any of our readers during August, we'd love to hear about it – Tracie at ethere@gmail.com and Linda at lindabreader@icloud.com.

LEE THEN AND NOW

65 West Center Street



June 2023

Source: Scott Stafford, Berkshire Eagle.



July 24th 10:30 a.m.



July 24th 11:30 a.m.

DRIVEN TO DRINK OR INTO THE DRINK

We all know the song about 99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall, but have any of you heard the one about 10,000 bottles of whiskey in the Housatonic? You would have if you were in Lee in the October of 1951 and old enough then to remember such an event now. For those of you who don't recall, here's the story.

Rex White, a 31 year old man from Chicago was with his 20 year old wife Betty Allen and driving a 10-ton trailer-truck loaded with 800 cases of whiskey, bound from Peoria, Illinois to Worcester. As the truck made its way down the hill on Route 20 toward the Center Street Bridge around about seven that evening, Rex lost control and it spun out, hurtling over the guard rail and into the river after smashing the Town's power and telephone lines on the way. Thus the drink literally ended up in the drink. We must hasten to add that Rex was miraculously uninjured, but poor Betty suffered multiple cuts. She was treated at the scene by Dr. Fred Vohr and transported to Pittsfield General. It's not noted in the news report whether this was the finest scotch or some so-so scotch, but the insurance valuers deemed it to be \$28,000 worth.



This image is from a truck crash in 1956 at Tyringham Road and Rte. 102. Source: Lee Library Historical Association

So what happened to Rex? How did he lose control of his vehicle? Had he been sampling some of the cargo? We know that he was held on a charge of operating to endanger and was fined \$50 for his efforts. Whether he lost his position of whisky delivery man or his license is not disclosed.

So, now we have a damaged truck, an injured passenger, downed telephone and power lines, and the Housatonic awash with whiskey. What happened next?

It took five hours, approximately, until the utilities were at least partially restored and the road to the rest of Lee navigable again. A guard of local and State police were put in place to prevent anything further untoward happening to the load of whiskey now enhancing the waters. The bottles bobbing up and down were not to be removed until the arrival of the insurance adjusters. However, maybe their message wasn't necessarily received by all residents who may – or may have not – looked upon this as a windfall not to be overlooked. We shall say no more ...

And then the cavalry arrived in the form of three former navy salvage divers from the Western Massachusetts Diving & Salvage Company of Springfield. It took them four days, working in the polluted water that was cold and “as dark at noon as at midnight”, toiling away after dark with powerful lights that did apparently little to help, to salvage the 10,000 bottles.

But wait, there’s more! How’s this for a coincidence!

Three weeks later, another trailer-truck was heading down the hill toward the Center Street Bridge, this time driven by Jeremiah J. Sullivan, 44, of Worcester. He was also headed for Worcester, just like Rex. His vehicle skidded and overturned on the embankment in almost exactly the same spot as the whiskey truck. Dr. Vohr (again quick on the spot) treated Jeremiah at the scene for minor cuts on his hands and face, another lucky escape. Jeremiah told Officer James Holian that his brakes had failed as he came down the hill and he had forced the truck to the left to attempt to rub the wheels against the curbing, hoping this would stop it, which it did, of course, although not maybe in the way Jeremiah had in mind. On the way to tipping over, the truck took out a telephone and utility pole, again plunging area residents into the dark for several hours.

We understand from the news report that Jeremiah was charged with operating to endanger, but we don’t know what the result of that charge was. If any of our readers are familiar with this story and what happened to Jeremiah, we’d love to hear from you!

THE LHS BULLETIN BOARD **UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPEAKER SERIES



*Caroline and
Murrey*

Another in our program is scheduled for September 28th, and one not to be missed! Caroline Meyer Young, the Society’s Treasurer and longtime resident of East Lee, will be giving an illustrated talk on the history of East Lee’s industries and also on the catastrophic floods which impacted so many of them.

Once a thriving commercial village as well as the most populated section of Lee, here were once paper mills, a grist mill, tannery, foundry, carpentry and machine shops. Many historic occurrences changed East Lee’s landscape and these will be shared with us by Caroline.

This free-of-charge presentation is open to the public and will start at 6:30 p.m. at the Lee Senior Center, 21 Crossway Street, Lee. For parking, enter the Crossway Village north driveway on High Street where visitor parking is available on the left. Walk across the front of Crossway Village to the Senior Center entrance on Crossway Street. Parking is also available along nearby Academy Street. Refreshments will be served, so why not come on over and spend a delightful, educational, and entertaining evening with us!

LEE COMES OF AGE: 1850 – 1900

If you missed July’s exhibit at Lee Library, fear not! It can be viewed with commentary from the man who spear-headed it, our Phil Smith, on CTSB (Community Television of the Southern Berkshires – ctsbtv.org). Click on the PUBLIC Channel 1301, in Search insert Lee Comes of Age: 1850 – 1900, and you’ll be able to view nearly an hour of Phil guiding us through what the exhibit has to offer. It covers so many different aspects of life in this period of Lee’s history. Even if you made it to the exhibit, it’s worth watching!

HISTORICAL LEE WALKS AND CEMETERY TOURS

Once again, Tracie will be taking Lee history lovers on a tour of Lee's historic Main Street. Two dates are scheduled in September, the 9th at 9:30 and the 24th at 11:00. She will meet participants at the gazebo next to the post office. Tracie is a seasoned historical Tour Guide with a wealth of knowledge to share, so make sure you put at least one of these dates on your calendar. Email her at ethere@gmail.com for more information and to register.

Tracie and Linda will be hosting TWO cemetery tours this September; the traditional annual Cemetery Tour at Fairmount will be on September 15, and this may involve a bit of "off-roading" as all who are familiar with the cemetery will understand. Fairmount has a few ups and downs which may prove difficult for the not so sure-footed. However, a first this year is a tour of St. Mary's Cemetery on Spring Street the day before on September 14. This is much flatter for those who may prefer an easier walk. We will meet up at 10 a.m. at the cemeteries for both tours and then set off to share the stories of some of Lee's eminent, interesting, famous, and infamous deceased citizens. More details to follow in September's newsletter.

FROM THE VALLEY GLEANER

We all know what paper is, don't we, especially coming from Lee. But, do we? Hmm! Here's an enlightening piece from the Gleaner of August 9th, 1918, that sheds light on how many unusual things are actually made from paper, but then lets itself down a bit in the last paragraph. Read on and you'll see what we mean ...

ODD THINGS MADE OF PAPER

Lee has the honor, unquestionably, of having made more freak paper than any other town in America and possibly any other place in the world. In this the town beats Holyoke, for many papers were made in Lee of this class before a paper mill wheel turned in the Paper City. Oddities were made, had their day, and passed and experiments were tried and perfected before Holyoke had made a sheet of paper.

It may be interesting to make a partial list at the beginning as a start, introducing others as we progress and they include all classes of commercial papers, the first paper made of wood pulp in America, paper bonnets, collars, hand-made banknotes, paper for celluloid, zylonite*, wash tubs, powder, aeroplanes, boxes, in fact everything that is made of paper and many things which the public does not recognize as that commodity.

It may not be generally known, but the name "foolscap" originated in Lee and the story is worth telling. A half-witted youth sat on a rock in East Lee in which there was a shallow depression containing some water. Into the puddle the boy dropped his cap and, with a stone, foolishly and idly pounded his linen turban into a pulp. The sun dried the stuff or "fibre" which had spread itself through the water upon the bottom of the puddle and was lifted out a sheet of paper – foolscap in fact.

**Zylonite is a brand name for a type celluloid plastic manufactured in North Adams in the 1880's.*

The truth of the matter is foolscap is much older than the Town of Lee. Foolscaps were associated with paper from the 15th century when the image of a jester with a belled cap was often used as a watermark for paper. According to the Oxford English dictionary (and it should know) the first use of “foolscap” to describe a size of paper is from around 1700 and was used to describe folio sheets of about 8 x 13 inches, which was the standard size in Europe until it was replaced by the current A4 standards. (The A4 paper size in Europe is 210 x 297mm; the American standard of 8 ½ x 11 inches is 6 mm and 18mm shorter than A4). And here we wind up our latest lesson that newspapers should probably be read with a hint of skepticism at times.

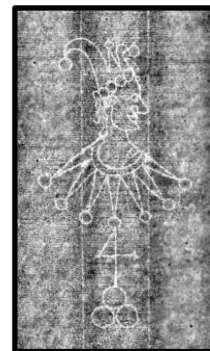


Image: From the Collection J. Pierpont Morgan: Drawings by the Old Masters, 1672.

REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN

CAPTAIN A.V SHANNON (1830 – 1900)

In our June 2023 edition, we highlighted the life of Eugene L. Ingersoll and noted that he had served under Captain Shannon in Company H of the 49th Massachusetts Regiment. Captain Shannon was also a Lee man, and we're proud to relate here some of his life.



Augustus Vaughan Shannon was born in Northampton, Massachusetts on November 28th, 1830 to William and Juliette Shannon. The family arrived in Lee when Augustus was just a young boy and the town became his home. From an early age, he demonstrated a definite musical ability and his education was guided in that direction and he ultimately took up music as a profession.

When the Civil War broke out, he was employed as a music teacher in Galveston, Texas. It seems that didn't work that well for him, so, as a way to make his way back north he became a clerk on board a blockade runner that sped through the Union blockage of southern ports. The vessel was captured by northern units and, Augustus, along with the ship's crew, was brought as a prisoner to the Brooklyn Naval Yard in New York. Being a man of Lee, his home may have been in the South, but his sympathies were for the North. He established his loyalty to the North and was freed. From there he made his way home to Lee where he set about organizing a company of volunteers and joined the 49th Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia under General Bartlett. Augustus was Captain of Co. H, a unit made up primarily of men from Lee, Sandisfield and surrounding towns. He was at the Siege of Port Hudson, LA, where Eugene Ingersoll was killed in the spring of 1863.

Once the war was over, he returned to Lee, but that wasn't the end of his adventures. He traveled to the Northern Rockies in the Montana Territory with an ox team to look for gold. It seems he did quite well, although obviously not well enough to be independently wealthy as, upon his return home, he ventured into the paper industry. He became superintendent of Smith Paper Company's Eagle Mill. Becoming an expert at paper making, he moved on to the Housatonic Mill, and then even further afield to a paper bag manufacturing facility in Malone, NY.

His personal life was enriched on July 1st, 1867 when he married Sarah C. Hyde, daughter of Alexander Hyde, founder of the Lee Academy, which became Lee High School. They had two children, a son who passed suddenly at the young age of 19, and their daughter Mary, a teacher, who married Walter Coristine, a businessman from Montreal.

Augustus never gave up his love of music and became the director of the Lee Cornet Band, a mainstay of the town. The Band performed at every festive event from parades to horse

racers to agricultural fairs. Not one to let the grass grow under his well-travelled feet, Augustus also became fire chief of the Lee Fire Department, and held several important offices in Lee government.



The Lee Cornet Band at a Masonic Clambake on Laurel Lake, August 1889. Source: Lee Library Association. (*Our guess is that Augustus is the gentleman at the right with the big drum, eds.*)

His passing was sudden and unexpected as there was no indication that he was in ill health. On Friday, December 18th 1900, he complained of chest pains. Dr. Hassett found him to be suffering from heart failure and the Captain passed at 3pm the next day. A popular, well-loved and respected member of the community, his funeral was held at the Congregational Church on December 21st and he was buried in Fairmount Cemetery. Members of the Scott Bradley Post and the entire Lee Fire Department headed the funeral procession.

WHAT'S IN OUR STORE

We have an amazing selection of merch, but it's selling fast! Our BOGO on our mugs last month really hit the spot! We still have some left so don't miss out. Contact Linda or Tracie and we'll meet and greet you and show you what we have to offer.



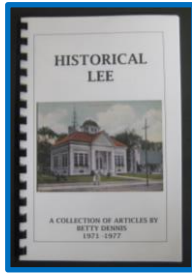
T-SHIRTS Show your pride and support of your Town with a Lee T-shirt. Sizes: Small, Medium, Large, XLarge, and 2XLarge. **\$15**



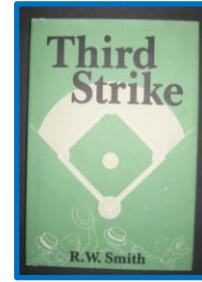
MUGS depicting various places of historical interest in Lee. **\$5**



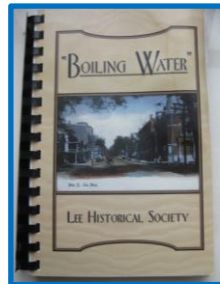
PICTURE PACKETS Six beautiful prints with scenes of Lee, perfect for framing. **\$6 per packet**



“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**

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.

LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023 MEMBERSHIP FEES

Individual: \$10.00 Family: \$25.00 *Business:\$35.00
Supporting Membership: \$50.00 or more Sponsor Membership: \$100.00 or more

NAME: _____

BUSINESS NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/TOWN: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

NEW: _____ RENEWAL: _____

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. **Please note that fees paid after October 1st will be carried over to 2024.**

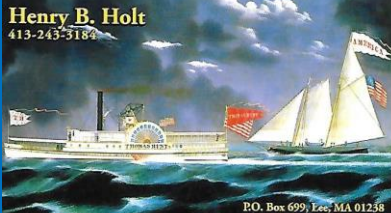
THESE BUSINESSES SUPPORT US.....PLEASE SUPPORT THEM

Clark's Nursery
 A family owned business in the Berkshires for over 30 years
 1210 Pleasant St., Lee, MA 01238
 (413) 243-0660
 ClarksNursery@gmail.com
 Annuals, perennials, vegetables, and landscape design services

Henry's Electric Inc.
 EST. 1946
 WE LIGHT THE WAY
John LePrevost
 Home Appliances - Electrical Contracting
 252 MAIN STREET LEE, MA 01238 TEL. (413) 243-0690 FAX. (413) 243-4609
 Email: john@henryselectricinc.com

R.W.'s TOWING & REPAIRS
 24 Hour Recovery
 35 Run Way • P.O. Box 295 • Lee, MA 01238
 Ph: (413) 243-0946 Fax: (413) 243-0948
 rwtowing.com
 rwtowing@verizon.net
BILL & BECKY BRUNELL

LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL J. CONSIDINE
Michael J. Considine
 Attorney at Law
 49 Main Street, P.O. Box 378 Lee, Massachusetts 01238 Email: michaeljconsidine@49mainlaw.com Tel: 413-243-4900 Fax: 413-243-4775

Henry B. Holt
 413-243-3184

 P.O. Box 699, Lee, MA 01238

vinyl lps - stereos - art - crystals - jewelry
UPTOWN
 antiques - collectibles - and a whole lot more
 266 Main Street, Lee, MA 01238
Marc Manoli
 413-358-0107 Marc@theuptownstore.org
 SHOP OUR EBAY: www.stores.ebay.com/arcnoli

71 Main Street, Lee, MA 01238
 consolati@verizon.net 413-243-0109 f. 413-243-4622
CONSOLATI Insurance Inc.
 Customizing Policies Since 1945
 Home Auto Business Umbrella

MJ KELLY
 Funeral Home
 Established in 1808 Family owned since 1872
 3 Main Street • Lee, MA 01238
 413-243-0204

A.F. VIALE INSURANCE AGENCY
 SINCE 1912
 AUTO • HOME • RENTERS
 BUSINESS AUTO • CONTRACTOR'S LIABILITY
Paul A. Viale, Owner
 www.vialeinsurance.com
 75 MAIN ST. ~ LEE, MA. 01238
 413-243-0347

DRESSER HULL
 LUMBER & BUILDING SUPPLY COMPANY
 60 RAILROAD STREET LEE, MASSACHUSETTS 01238
 (413) 243-1400 (413) 243-4156 - FAX
 www.dresserhull.com
Keith Kelly
 Sales
 keith.kelly@dresserhull.com

LePrevost
 Plumbing, Heating & Cooling
 THANK YOU FOR YOUR BUSINESS
 18 Run Way, Lee MA 01238
 413-243-1777
 info@leprevostplumbingandheating.com

Your **Color Connection**
 Ann M. LaBier
 Owner
 Full Service Printing
 Graphic Design
 Laser Engraving
 Graphic Design & Printing Company
 36 Pittsfield Road, Lenox, MA 01240
 ycc01240@aol.com 413-637-0500
 yourcolorconnection.com

Our printer of choice

Good People. Smart Service.

FORD'S
 Auto Service Inc.
 1075 Fairview St., Lee, MA (413) 243-1107


Kitchen open 7 days a week 11am-9pm
 Daily and Weekly Specials
 13 TV's to watch your favorite sports event
 The Berkshire Eagle's 2022 Winner for "The Best Sports Bar"
 Call us to reserve your party or event
The Original Sports Pub of the Berkshires
 232 Main St. Lee, MA 413-243-2662

19 Main Street, Lee (413) 243-0136

Zabian's Clothing

Pete Sorrentino
 Owner
 P (413) 243-0326
 F (413) 243-8109

Fraser Auto Services Inc.
 139 West Park St. P.O. Box 905 Lee, MA 01238
 E-mail: fraserautoservice@msn.com
 We accept ALL major Credit Cards.

Mike's Professional Barber Shop
 93 Main Street Lee, MA
Mike Eckert
 413-441-1245
 Open Tuesday - Friday 8:00 - 2:00 and Saturday 8:00 - 2:00


Bartini Roofing Company
 290 Pleasant Street
243-0570

Lee Bank
 75 Park Street
243-0117

Lee Chamber of Commerce
 3 Park Place
243-170