

Vol. 21, No. 5



May 2024

## The Gateway Gazette

*The Newsletter of the Lee Historical Society*

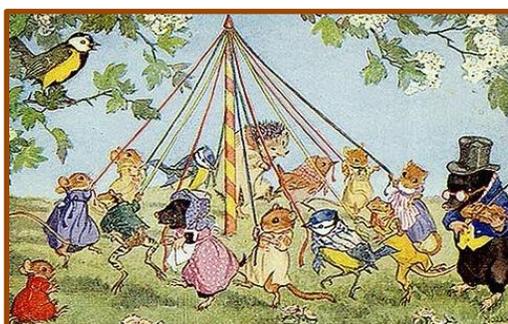
***Our unique history and blend of people defines the foundation of our Town.***

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Website: [leehistoricsociety.homestead.com](http://leehistoricsociety.homestead.com)

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*The Monthly Meeting of the Society will be Thursday, May 9 at the Historical Society Office, Crossway Tower, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.*



### **FROM THE EDITORS**

Who would have thought when April started that it would be so action-packed? For all of those reading this 100 years from now and still enjoying Lee's history, we experienced an earthquake on April 5<sup>th</sup>. No damage or injuries reported, but it certainly shook us all up and gave us something to talk about! And then, on April 8<sup>th</sup>, parts of the US had a total solar eclipse, which related to a partial in our neck of the woods. Nevertheless, the people of Lee donned solar eclipse glasses and stared up at the sun in great anticipation. Truth to be known, it didn't get that dark, more like "It looks like it might rain" kind of duskieness. The question is, will May 2024 be able to match or surpass the excitement we were exposed to in April? Some of us may be hoping so, others not, but we shall just have to wait and see!

If you have any exciting, history-making news to share, do contact us – Linda at [lindabreader@icloud.com](mailto:lindabreader@icloud.com) and Tracie at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com).

## **CLANG! CLANG! ALL ABOARD THE BERKSHIRE TROLLEY!**

Despite a thoroughly wet evening, the turnout for the first of our 2024 Speaker Series event on March 28<sup>th</sup> was amazing! Scores of eager folk shook the raindrops off their wet weather gear and took their seats – and vintage trolley tickets! – for a trip down Memory Lane on the Berkshire Street Railway.



Presenter Gary Leveille, armed with impressive notes and an equally impressive slide show, took the podium and enthralled all present with an historical backwards look at the trolley system that was once one of the biggest and longest in the United States. It started off down the tracks in Canaan, CT and continued on through the Berkshires with stops and starts along the route in Sheffield, Great Barrington, Stockbridge, Lee, and beyond. The trolley line ran north to Williamstown and on into Bennington, VT and Hoosick Falls, NY. There were branches off to South Egremont, Dalton to Hinsdale, Lenox Dale to Lenox, and Lee to Huntington.

Starting off as horse-drawn trolleys around 1886, by 1902 the electrified trolley arrived in South Berkshire County. Electricity was generated by coal-fired plants in Pittsfield. The majority of the muscle power that was needed to carve out a path for building the tracks, sometimes from solid bedrock, was mainly provided by Italian and Irish immigrants, sturdy men with pickaxes, shovels, and determination! After all their hard work, it's unfortunate that the trolley service was actually discontinued by 1930 for several reasons.



Source: Gary Leveille, from his collection.



Source: Gary Leveille, from his collection.

One reason was due to a dispute over the New Haven Railroad and a monopoly situation. Then there were issues with strikes. Scheduling could be a problem because often the trolley timetable didn't coincide with when people actually had to get to work. In the winter, deep snowdrifts would bring the trolley to a halt. Finally, a coal shortage for generating power added to the woes. With all these issues, some forward-thinking people had invented the motor car, allowing people to travel by their own timetables, and

without having to worry about whether or not the trolley was stuck in a snowdrift or tied up by red tape. And so the Berkshires said goodbye to the Berkshire Street Railway.

*There is, of course, so much more to this story than can be covered in such a small space. However, we are so fortunate to have the Community Television for the Southern Berkshires in Lee. Thanks to them, Gary's entire presentation is available on their website, [ctsbtv.org](http://ctsbtv.org). Go to Public 1301 and search Trolley. Gary provided a wealth of absolutely fascinating photos and gave much more detailed information than we have space for here.*

*Gary himself is one of the county's leading authorities on the history of the Berkshires. In his spare time, Gary has written several books, drawing us into the intrigue of Berkshire history. He also manages to make time to produce the very interesting "Then and Now" column for the Berkshire Edge, is a member of the Great Barrington Historical Commission, and on the Board of Directors for both the Great Barrington Historical Society and the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area. And still he found the time to turn up on a wet evening in Lee to tell us all about the Berkshire Street Railway!*

## THE CHRIS LONG MEMORIAL FUND

### FAIRMOUNT CEMETERY



*Photo courtesy of Lauren Bolte Long*

The Society was greatly touched by a very generous donation in memory of Christopher (Chris) Joseph Long of Lee, specifically to be used for the cleaning of headstones at Fairmount Cemetery where Chris was laid to rest in 2022. Chris was a Lenox firefighter, and so much more during his life, sadly shortened by Lyme Disease. The story of Chris' life would fill a book, let alone the limited few paragraphs we may have in the Gateway Gazette. Born in Georgia, educated in Pittsfield, graduating from Middlebury College in Vermont, Chris never seemed to



*Photo courtesy of Lauren Bolte Long*

have stopped. A lifetime of adventures took this generous, creative young man to South Dakota, Texas, California, the Dominican Republic, and finally to Lenox as Ambulance Director for the Fire Department. We are honored to name this fund in his name and to strive to continue his good works in this capacity. For those of us who often wander around the hallowed grounds of Lee's first cemetery, it doesn't go unnoticed that many of the headstones of Lee's dearly departed are showing the ravages of time. Many are quite illegible, their inscriptions concealed under many years of grime, lichen, moss, leaning at angles, sometimes fallen to the ground.



*The transformation of John Porter' stone.  
All cemetery photos courtesy of Tim Schaeffer*



*Matthey Hendy's stone, before.*

We also cannot help but notice there are some that are shining brightly, as white as the day they were first erected to commemorate those who lie beneath them. This hasn't happened by some chance of fate or divine intervention, but predominantly by the devoted toil of a gentleman whose exploits have featured before in the Gateway Gazette. Tim Schaefer has dedicated innumerable hours to lovingly restoring these old



*Matthey Hendy's stone, after.*



Charles Tanner's stone, before.

headstones to the pristine condition they now glory in. We are attaching a few photos of some of Tim's latest achievements. Little John Porter's headstone was sinking beneath the ground until Tim resurrected it and applied his magic to produce this incredible transformation. Likewise, also beautifully restored are the headstones of Charles Tanner, and Matthey Hendy, the first person to be buried in Fairmount.

To the point of our article, we are seeking volunteers to join us and Tim in taking care of the headstones of Fairmount Cemetery in Chris Long's name. This work is a labor of love, incredibly rewarding, and so important. All of these headstones represent real people who once were just like us, the people of Lee, working at the mills, on their farms, in the stores, raising their families, laughing,

complaining, celebrating, crying. To bring their headstones back to life is to ensure they are not forgotten. Tim has kindly agreed to share his expert knowledge of the method for cleaning the stones. The Historical Society will be using the donated funds to supply all the materials needed.

We plan to start once the warmer weather arrives and hope to have several dates, yet to be decided, of course, when we can all repair to the cemetery to – repair the cemetery! Please contact us via email – Linda at [lindabreader@icloud.com](mailto:lindabreader@icloud.com) or Tracie at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com) so we can discuss this worthwhile project. Maybe you have relatives or other persons of interest whose headstones need help and we can show you how to make them look like new. We can't wait to get started!



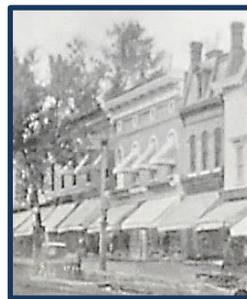
Charles Tanner's stone, after.

## **REMEMBERING A LEE VETERAN**

### **CAPTAIN BENJAMIN A. MOREY (1818 – 1867)**

It was on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1867 that the citizens of Lee were advised of the sad news of the passing of Captain Morey. He had passed away on Sunday, September 29<sup>th</sup> from injuries received after being thrown from his carriage the previous Friday afternoon. He left behind his wife and their three sons and two daughters.

Benjamin had been a very well respected apothecary, or pharmacist, in Lee and had been one of the business owners who lost their property in the great fire on Main Street in February of 1857. His business had been in the Taintor Block and in 1858 he commenced putting up a new two-story building on the ruins of the Smith & Webber's Block in which to house his business.



Morey Block (center).  
Source: "Views of Lee,  
1895."



Morey Block, today.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted in the 31<sup>st</sup> Mass. Regiment and was commissioned as a lieutenant. His regiment, led by General Butler, was part of the force involved in the capture of New Orleans in May of 1862 which precipitated the capture of the great Mississippi.



*The Battle of New Orleans,  
April/May 1862 (Currier & Ives  
lithograph).*

Unfortunately, Benjamin’s health began to fail and he had to return home to Lee, but not for too long. As soon as he recovered he enlisted again, this time as Captain of Company F, 49<sup>th</sup> Regiment, eventually being honorably discharged and mustered out.

When he left to go to war the first time, he had left his business in charge of his sons, who made a great success of continuing in their father’s footsteps. Upon his return to the Berkshires, he set up business in Stockbridge, leaving his sons to minister to the ailments of the folks in Lee.

A prominent member of the Masons, they conducted his funeral and helped lay to rest a much admired and respected veteran.



### **THE LHS BULLETIN BOARD**



### **WOMEN OF '76**

This is a reminder that this month we will be presenting the second of our Speaker Series for 2024, where we welcome actress Rita Parisi presenting “Women of ‘76”, the story of five women who witnessed and changed the course of the American Revolution. We will meet Baroness von Riedesal, wife of a Hessian General and chronicler of life in the military camps, and Prudence Wright, a Massachusetts housewife who led an all-female militia in search of British spies. These and other patriots will be introduced to us in this entertaining and educational theatrical experience.

Rita founded her production company Waterfall Productions in 2005 to create original theatrical presentations that entertain and inspire. Her unique shows highlight her passion for storytelling, theatre, history, costuming and literature.

Please mark your calendars for May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 pm. This event will be held at the Lee Senior Center, 21 Crossway Street in Lee. It is free and open to the public and has been partially funded by the Lee Cultural Council through grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Parking is available along the North entrance to Crossway Village as well as on nearby Academy Street. As always, the Society will be providing refreshments so please come on over and have a wonderful evening with us.

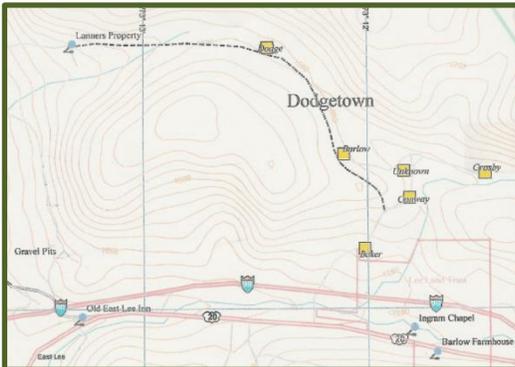
## ARTICLES BY BETTY DENNIS

*It's been a while since we added one of Betty's articles to our newsletter, but we found these two which are on one of Lee's most fascinating topics – Dodgetown. Here Betty gives us an insight into its short history.*

### **MAY 3<sup>RD</sup>, 1972**

Dodgetown was one of the earliest settlements of Central Berkshires, apparently on an old stage road, and yet it seems to be unknown to maps and almost to records.

According to the History of Lee by the Rev. Amory Gale, 1854, this was part of the “Watson Grant, purchased originally from Kon-ke-we-hau-naunt, Pop-kne-hou-au-wah, and Numg-hau-wot, Chiefs of the Stockbridge tribe of Indians. Mr. Watson then sold it to Connecticut men who divided it into 62 parcels. It then became known as “Sixty Two”, (also Watsonville, Greenock, and Hartwood). As it was divided, Hartwood became the first town we know as Washington, and “Sixty Two” became “Dodgetown”, so named because there were many Dodge families living there.



One description tells of four crossroads in the center of the village, the North one, heavily walled on both sides was very narrow. The East on[e] took the traveler through a “Big gate”. One could reach this hill settlement by going through the farm we know as Leahey's on Reservoir Road, or up Lander's Road or from Chestnut Street (off Cape). In those days apparently that road crossed today's Route 20 and continued up the old Chanter Road to Goose Pond, then down to Tyringham.

The application for Lee's Charter included signatures of Ashel and Elisha Dodge, indicating that by 1777 Dodgetown was beginning to be forsaken. One James Standley, who had a tannery up there, is buried in Fairmount, and is recorded to have been one of the last to leave Dodgetown.

At the time of Lee's incorporation that section was already established as a business center. Descendants of the Barlows and Bakers who lived in or on the fringe of Dodgetown currently live in East Lee.

### **MAY 31<sup>ST</sup>, 1972**

In one story about Dodgetown, it was suggested that at one time there were twenty to thirty houses or log cabins up there. Early settlers erected their cabins quickly with no cellars...just vegetable “shacks” or dug outs for storage of their crops. When in the early 1900's local men found cellar holes, these were thought to be left from homes built toward the time of this hamlet's abandonment. The immediate center of this settlement was probably begun in the 1720's, and by the end of the century was probably a haven for woodchippers. From it could be seen Greylock, thirty miles to the North, and Mt. Everett and Mt. Washington to the South. Several lakes were visible and the silvery threading Housatonic added to its beauty. The elevation was thought to be about 1,700 ft. (Lee is 888 ft.)

In 1780, John Crosby came on from Barnstable to make this his home. He bought fifty acres. In one afternoon he



framed his house, and the next morning returned to work. When he approached he discovered a bear had taken possession.

Another recorded story is that north from the Crosby place was the Barlow property, and next beyond that of the Bassett family. A Mr. Dodge lived just beyond. The Bakers just below. One day Mr. Barlow and Mr. Baker discovered that Mr. Dodge's home was on fire. They hurried to help, and found Mr. Dodge sitting in his front yard on a wash bench, just watching the destruction of his home. He had been unable to save anything except one pan of milk. They urged him to come home with them, but he refused. However, he allowed that they could bring him some food. His disappearance shortly after left his neighbors wondering.

**LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2024 MEMBERSHIP FORM (JANUARY – DECEMBER)**

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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, and thank you for your support:

Program Set-up: \_\_\_\_\_ Provide Refreshments at Events: \_\_\_\_\_ Address Mailings: \_\_\_\_\_  
Founders Day (march in the parade/assist at our booth): \_\_\_\_\_

We always have room for more volunteers to assist us in so many different ways. Kathy Smith is our Membership Committee Chairperson and knows of all the different areas. If you have any questions, thoughts, suggestions, feel free to email her at [kf23smith@yahoo.com](mailto:kf23smith@yahoo.com).

The Membership Committee extends their thanks to all those who have renewed their membership for 2024. We are grateful for your continued support. For those of you who are yet to rejoin our great Society, please feel free to use this form. Our Business Members will by now have received their renewal notices and we look forward to hearing from them as well. If you are a current Business Member and wish to update the business card which appears on Page 8 of our newsletter, please contact Tracie Etheredge, co-editor at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com).

Thanks to all for supporting the Lee Historical Society!



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