

The Berkshire Gleaner of September 31, 1910 reported on the second reunion of the Bradley Street School Association. An interesting paragraph in that story was the following:

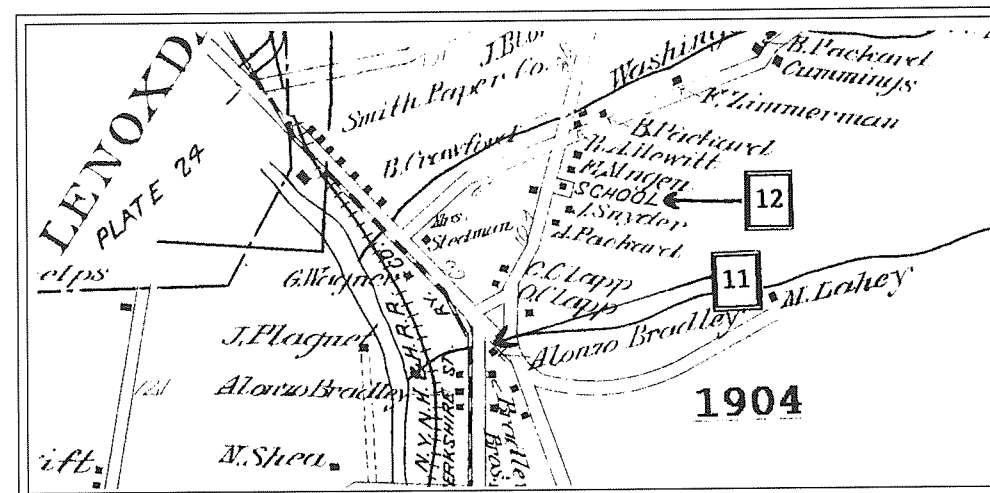
Dr. D. M. Wilcox stated that there were no records of the school prior to 1866, that it had in the earlier days upward of 100 pupils, and that its reputation for roughness and fighting was similar to that of other schools of the day - possibly a training that saved the country in time of need.

The first school house was sold⁵² in 1895 when the second school house was built further north on Bradley Street, but I have not found any record of sale of the land. The site of the first Bradley School house is privately owned today and this is probably another case of a school house being built on privately owned land with the permission of the owner. On the site today there is a monument honoring war veterans that attended both of the Bradley schools.

The Valley Gleaner of September 23, 1896 reported that "the old Bradley street school house has been moved some distance north toward Lenox Dale and will be converted into a tenement. F. J. Martin has the contract." (I believe that the word tenement, in that era, was used to mean a building to be rented to tenants.)

The second North East District (Bradley) School House

LOCATION - on the east side of Bradley Street about 300 yards north of the site of the first North East District School house. Today the site is a playground.



On the 1904 map can be seen the location of the second Bradley School house (12), probably now better known as the Bradley Street School. Also marked is the site of the first Bradley school house (11).

In 1888 the Lee School Committee reported that "The school buildings in the town proper are in good repair with the exception of the North East. The school house there should be thoroughly repaired or a new building erected in its place."

⁵²In the 1895 Town Treasurer's report:

Sale of Bradley street school house \$40.00

(This was the first school house. The land was not sold, so there is no deed available to determine the name of the buyer.)

The Valley Gleaner of June 7, 1893 reported that "A special town meeting was held last Wednesday afternoon and \$1500 was appropriated for the erection of a new school in Bradley street."

In 1894 the Lee School Committee Report listed, among important "repairs" to various school houses, the erection and relocation of a new school building at Bradley Street. The only transfer of land to the "Inhabitants of the Town of Lee" in this period of time and in this area of town is of a lot on Bradley Street, which the town bought⁵³ in 1894 from Edward Mougins of Stockbridge. I believe this plot of land must be the school house site, not only because of the location and the date of purchase, but also because of the size of the lot. It was 132 feet long on its west and east boundaries, 165 feet long on its north boundary, and 198 feet long on its south boundary. The size of the lot was 90 square rods or 0.56 acres.

A new wing was added to the Central School in 1977 to replace the one built in 1917. When this was done the Bradley Street School house (as well as the South Lee and the East Lee School houses) was no longer needed and its use was discontinued. In its later years it was used to teach only very early primary pupils.

Later the school house was moved to Eaton Street in downtown Lee with the intention of using it as a historical museum. This project was never completed and eventually the old school house was moved to Cape Street in East Lee, and converted to a private residence. Today it stands just beyond the junction of Maple Street and Cape Street, at 650 Cape Street. The site on which the second Bradley Street School house originally stood is a playground today.

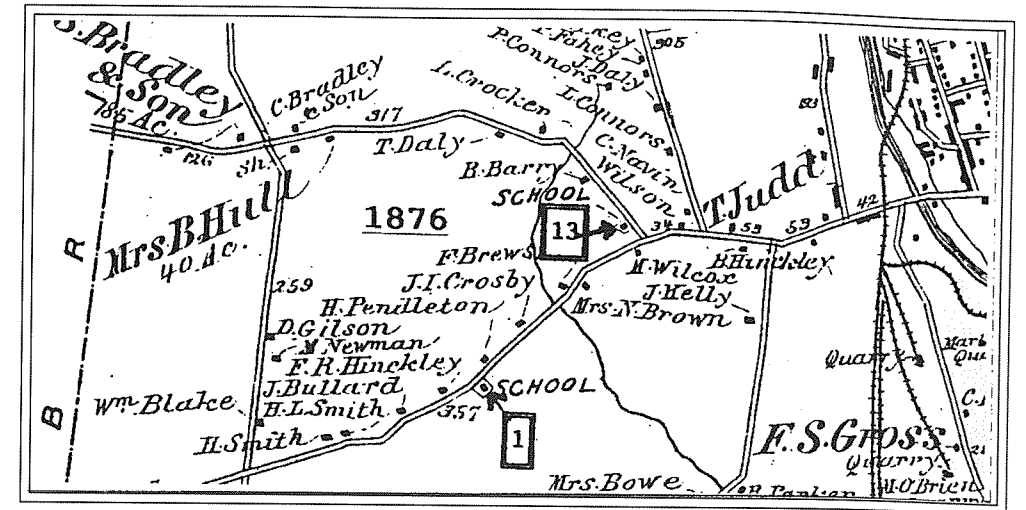


A 1996 picture of the converted school house as it appears today on Cape Street in East Lee. - Current picture by author.

There is also a picture of the abandoned school house, before it was moved and converted to a house, on page 267 of SEE ALL THE PEOPLE, Florence Consolati's history of Lee.

THE WEST SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE

LOCATION - on the west side of Devon Road at the corner of Stockbridge Road.



The 1876 map shows the location of the West District School house (13). It also shows how near it was to Hopland District School house #1 (1). In fact, they were only a half mile apart.

The 1900 Lee School Committee Report tells us that the West District was established in 1825 for inhabitants west of the river. The school house, however, was not built until 1856, at which time it was erected at the corner of Stockbridge Road and Devon Road. In that 1900 school committee report we read that before 1856 "the West District proper, having no school house, was united with a Stockbridge district."

In the 1855 report of the Lee School Committee we read:

The "little Benjamin" among our tribes sent their four scholars, summer and winter, to an excellent school in Stockbridge. It cost the town \$13.80 per scholar to instruct those children the past year. This District has no school house and Hopland No. 1 is nearly as badly off. If these two districts would unite and then that portion of the Centre district west of the railroad would unite with them in the formation of a new district and erect a neat house at a central point, the people in that part of town might have a good working district and be able to maintain a school for forty scholars for ten months in the year. This in our opinion ought to be done.

A school house was finally built in 1856, but the Hopland District School house #1 was not closed until about 1887. The practical plan outlined in 1855 was never put into practice.

An informative source for many details about the building and further history of the West District School house is a book, *THE STORY OF BROOKSIDE FARM*, written by George Fitch Perkins and his daughter-in-law, Dorothy Bennett Perkins, and privately published about 1985. George Perkins completed his history of the original farm about five months before his death in 1940. His daughter-in-law wrote further history and her recollections of the fifty years up to 1985. The book is available in the Lee Library.

In the book, the West District School house and the school house lot get considerable coverage as the land had been part of the farm that had been in the family since Elisha Crocker came to Lee in 1774 or 1775, even before there was a town of Lee or a United States. Elisha Crocker was the great grandfather of George Fitch Perkins.

In his account, Mr. Perkins says that in August of 1856 Elisha's son, Lucius Crocker sold to the Town of Lee, for \$50.00, the lot on which the school house was built. The report of the Lee School Committee in 1857, however, says that the new West District School house was erected on land donated by Lucius Crocker. Mr. Perkins was correct, for there is a deed⁵⁴ showing that Crocker did sell the land on which the school was to be built. The deed states that Lucius Crocker of Lee sold the land to the "Inhabitants of the West School District, so called, in said Town of Lee" for \$50.00. After describing the bounds of this 36½ square rod lot there is the following sentence, "This conveyance is made for the purpose of erecting a School House & its appendages thereon and for no other purpose."

Lucius Crocker helped build the school and the lumber was sawed at his saw-mill. His daughter, Charlotte (Crocker) Perkins, was the mother of George Fitch Perkins, one of the authors of THE STORY OF BROOKSIDE FARM. In his book he relates about Charlotte, that "After her high school education she taught for a year at the old schoolhouse on Devon Road in the West School district - the very schoolhouse which is now our living-room at Brookside Farm Cottage." Not long after her year of teaching, Charlotte Crocker married George F. Perkins, Sr. in 1862.

Three years after the school house was built the 1859 Lee School Committee Report said that the West District School house and the nearby school house of Hopland District #1 together had barely enough scholars⁵⁵ to make up one good school. It pointed out that the West District school was built within the limits of the Hoplands "and convenient of access to the scholars of both districts, past which indeed some of the scholars in Hopland No. 1 must go to get to their own school house."

In spite of this 1859 criticism neither school was closed at that time. It was not until 1886 that the Lee School Committee, in their annual report, recommended that the West District school house be closed. The Lee School Committee, in March of 1887, reported that the school had been closed at the end of the spring term, which would have been about June of 1886.

Mr. Perkins tells us in his book that "when the schoolhouse was abandoned by the town, Mr Charles Quackenbush, who owned this Lloyd property, bought the schoolhouse and moved it across the road to his place, fitting it up as part barn for hay and part living quarters." The Lloyd property that he mentions was at one time owned by Quackenbush, later by George Westinghouse, Jr., and eventually by John Bross Lloyd. It is now an inn called Devonfield, but in my youth it was the Lloyd estate and it was at this estate that Queen Wilhelmina of Holland spent one summer of her exile during the second World War.

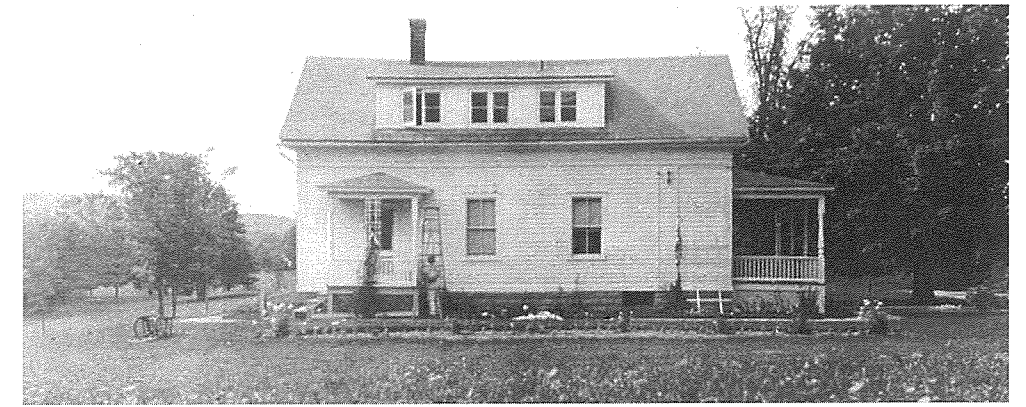
There is no deed recorded for the aforementioned purchase by Mr. Quackenbush as only the school building was sold and not the land on which it stood. The sale is reported⁵⁶ in the Town Report of 1896.

⁵⁴ Book 162, page 112, dated 8/30/1856 - Registry of Deeds.

⁵⁵ According to that 1859 report, the West District school had 24 registered scholars, but the average daily attendance was 16. The Hopland No. 1 school had 31 registered scholars with an average daily attendance of 13.

⁵⁶ The 1896 Treasurer's Report lists the sales of four schools, one of which was: Sale of West District school house - \$55. The sale was only of the school house, not the land, and therefore there is no deed recorded at this time for this school house. The sales of the other three schools included the land as well as the school house and these sales are recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

Later, according to Mr. Perkins, "Westinghouse moved the schoolhouse back across the road and set it up upon concrete foundations on his newly acquired corner property." The corner property was larger than the original school house lot but included the former school house lot. Apparently the former school house was set up on a new foundation on Devon Road, several yards north of its original site, and converted to a residence.



THE WEST DISTRICT SCHOOL HOUSE AFTER IT HAD BEEN CONVERTED TO A RESIDENCE ON DEVON ROAD SEVERAL YARDS WEST OF ITS ORIGINAL LOCATION.

- picture borrowed from the Fraser family.



THE OLD WEST DISTRICT SCHOOL HOUSE AS IT WAS BEING ATTACHED TO BROOKSIDE FARM COTTAGE, NOW THE RESIDENCE OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN FRASER, 95 DEVON ROAD.

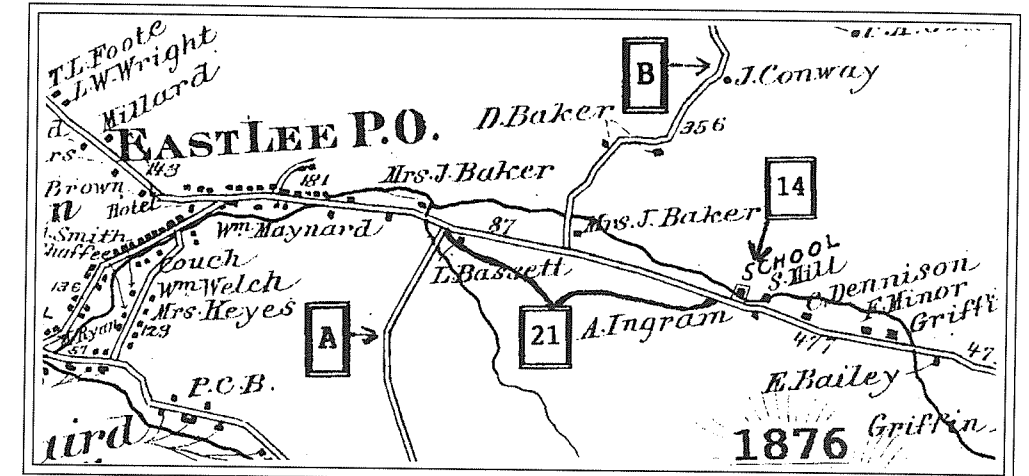
- picture borrowed from the Fraser family.

As he explains in his book, Mr. Perkins was trying to retrieve the parts of the original Brookside Farm which had been sold off over the years. In 1927 he bought the corner lot on which the former school house stood from J. Warren Archer. Mr. Archer had earlier bought the property from Westinghouse.

For several years Mr. Perkins rented out the converted school house. However, he also owned a house known then as Brookside Farm Cottage a little further north on Devon Road. In 1933 he decided to move the converted school house across the field and to add it to the Brookside Farm Cottage. With the help of a talented architect this was accomplished. Now, in 1996, the former school house is a two story ell on the northern side of the John Fraser house at 95 Devon Road. The ell includes the living room of the house on the ground floor and two bedrooms and a bath on the upper floor.

THE EAST SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE

LOCATION - on Cape Street about 1¼ miles east of the intersection of Maple Street and Route 20 in East Lee and about ½ mile west of the Route 20 bridge over the Mass Turnpike. Today (1996) the garage of the house at 1295 Cape Street stands on the approximate site of the school house.



The 1876 map shows the location of the East District School house (14), east of the center of East Lee, as well as the probable area (21) in which an earlier East District School house had stood.

A - Chanter Road - the approximate eastern border of the Hoplands passes through the beginning of this road.

B - Chestnut Street.

This was the farthest east of the three school houses in East Lee, and was often referred to as the Ingram District school. It was the only school in the East Lee area that was outside of the Hopland District.

An earlier East District School house?

It appears from the news item quoted directly below that there was an earlier school house near here. The Lee School Committee reports of 1842 and 1848, quoted later in this chapter, refer to the school. However, it could have been built as early as 1794 when the first school districts were laid out. It appears that it was an active school, at least as early as 1800, based on a vote taken by the Hopland School District at that time, and other votes in 1802 and in 1810 as cited on page 6 in Chapter 2.

A news article in the Berkshire Gleaner of April 26, 1892 at the time of the laying of the cornerstone of the Ingram Chapel tells us that before the Ingram Chapel was built residents of the area used to attend services in the school houses. There are two pertinent quotes in that Chapel story of 1892:

- Meetings were held in the old school house which stood on the opposite side of the road from the present one and some distance this way and Dr. Hyde held service there regularly once a month. (Underlining added)

- The present school house was built 44 years ago and probably more religious services had been held in it than in any room in town, the churches excepted.

If the "present school house" was built 44 years before 1892 it must have been built about 1848. While I don't know the location of the pre-1848 East District

School house, I assume that, since it was a school house of the town proper, it was built outside the Hopland School District. On Cape Street, the entrance to Chanter Road is very close to the eastern edge of the Hoplands and is about three quarters of a mile west of the Ingram Chapel. Resorting to the 1892 news report cited above it seems most likely that the older school had been located on the south side of Cape Street ("... stood on the opposite side of the road from the present one"), and probably to the west and closer to town ("some distance this way"). It was probably somewhere within the 3/4 mile stretch east of Chanter Road, but there is no reason that it could not have been built within the boundaries of the Hoplands and still have been a Lee school, as we have seen in the case of the West District School. A thorough and tedious search of all the deeds along the south side of Cape Street might or might not mention the old school house location, but my guess is that it would be a fruitless search.

There is no doubt that the East District had a school house before 1848, however, for it is mentioned in the 1842 Lee School Committee report, at which time the committee said:

This school has suffered severely for several years by dissention (sic -WC) among the members of the district, but now that those dissentions are allayed they reap the full benefits of harmony and concert of action.

The second East District School house

At a town meeting in 1847 it was voted to build a school house in the East School District and that this sum be assessed "on the polls and estates of the Inhabitants of said District."

Assuming that the newspaper article of April 26, 1892, quoted on the previous page, is correct and that the second school was built about 1848, the Lee School Committee report in 1848 is interesting. Apparently the era of harmony cited in their report of 1842 had not lasted very long, for in their 1848 review of the schools we find the following comment about the East District school:

But owing to the divided state of that district about building a new school house there has been no winter school kept. They voted to build a house, but refused to raise money to do it with; they resorted to the alternative in applying to the town for a tax in such cases, made and provided, which was granted and assessed; but still they refuse or neglect to build.

and further on in the same 1848 report:

It is hoped that this District will, upon reflection, appreciate their privileges, which they are thus abusing, come to some amicable position, build a comfortable house and again enjoy the benefits of a good school.

As is all too common in reading these old reports, there is no further comment on this subject in the next several years. This further lack of comment makes it reasonable to assume that the school house was built about then, just as the news report of 1892 said. I have been unable to find any record of land being bought for this school house, but there is a record of the sale of the land, as we shall see below.

On Dec 15, 1891 Moses Ingram deeded land⁵⁷ to Augustus Smith acting as trustee for the Christian Endeavor Chapel Association. This, and subsequent transactions involving this parcel of land, makes it clear that this land for the future chapel lay

⁵⁷ Book 281, page 342, dated 12/15/1891 - Registry of Deeds.

along the eastern border of the school house lot of the (second) East District School.

In 1896 the Lee School Committee reported that "the East school house, though old, answers its purpose very well. A big new stove....can bid defiance even to the wintry blasts of Cape Street." But in 1898 the Lee School Committee Report said that the East District School was closed after the spring term (of 1897 -WC) because there were too few pupils and that the pupils "are now conveyed to East Lee School."

The school building was sold⁵⁸ in 1899 for \$10.00. On Nov. 12, 1900 the town sold⁵⁹, to the Christian Endeavor Chapel Association, the land on which the Ingram District School house "so called" had formerly stood.

In 1929 the Christian Endeavor Chapel Association sold their two adjoining lots to George D. and Clara Stevens. It is clear, on reading the deed, that the more westerly of the lots was the lot that had once been occupied by the school house⁶⁰.

The former Ingram Chapel, also known at one time as the Y.P.S.C.E. Chapel, is now the house at 1295 Cape Street. The former chapel is still easily recognized by its steeply slanted roof. The school house stood near where the garage stands today.

See pictures below and on next page.



AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE EAST DISTRICT SCHOOL HOUSE AND STUDENTS.

- I have forgotten the source of this picture.

⁵⁸ 1899 Town Treasurer's Report:

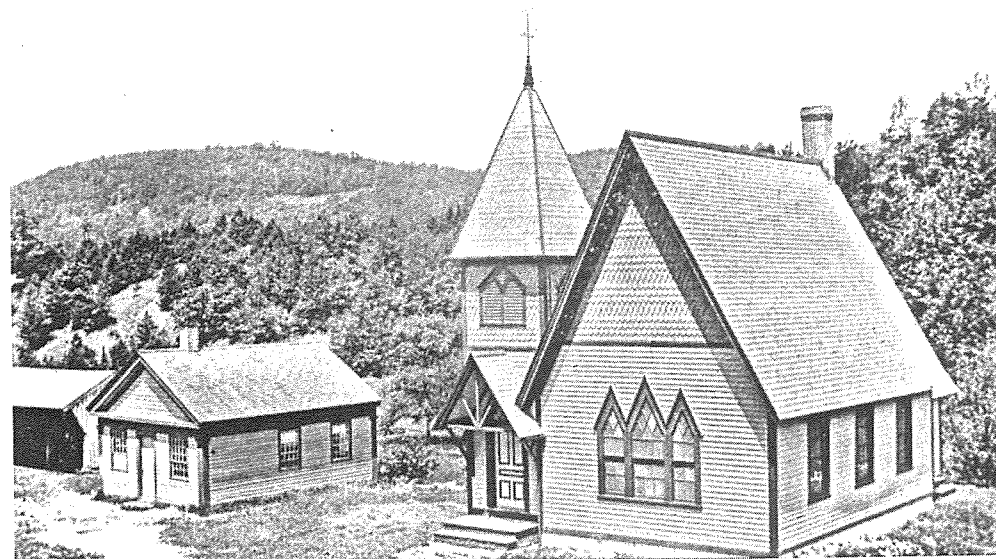
Sale Ingram school building \$10.00

⁵⁹ Book 313, page 17, dated 11/12/1900 - Registry of Deeds.

⁶⁰ Book 439, page 254, dated 9/6/1929 - Registry of Deeds.

THE VALLEY SCHOOL OF LEE

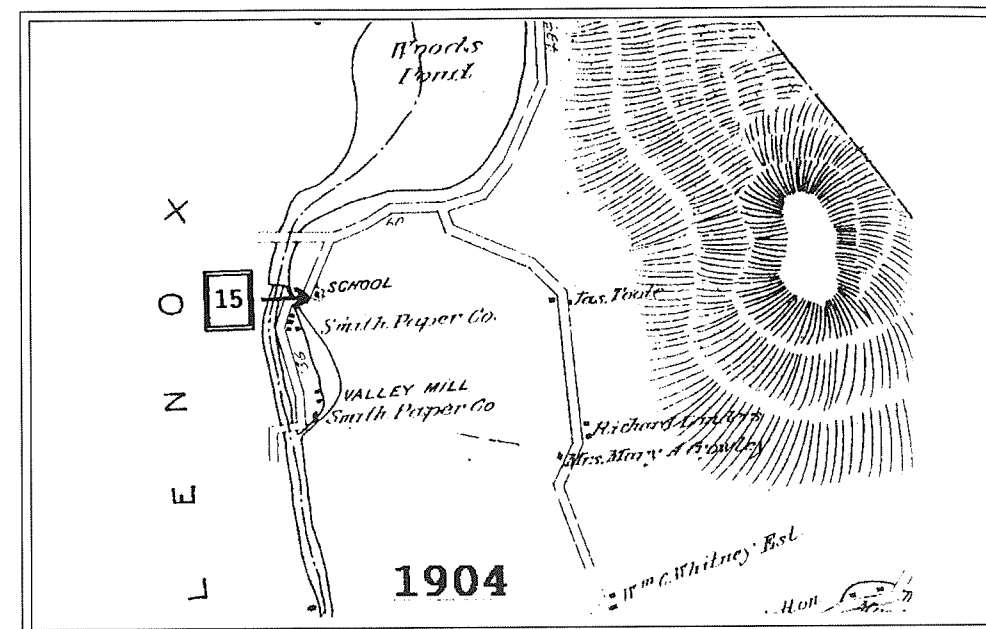
LOCATION - on Valley Street just north of the Valley Mill.



THE EAST DISTRICT SCHOOL HOUSE AND THE NEARBY INGRAM CHAPEL.
- Views of Lee, East Lee and South Lee, Massachusetts - 1895



A RECENT PHOTOGRAPH OF THE FORMER INGRAM CHAPEL, NOW CONVERTED TO A PRIVATE RESIDENCE. THE SCHOOL BUILDING IS NO LONGER THERE. - Recent photograph by author.



On the 1904 map the Valley School (15) is seen to be just north of the Valley Mill. It also appears on the 1876 map, not reproduced here, as the 1904 map is much clearer. Note its proximity to Lenox, just across the river.

This school was not a district school because the district system was abolished by the Legislature in 1869 (Hyde's History). It was apparently built about 1871, as the 1896 Lee School Committee report says that this school was erected about 25 years ago.

In 1872 the Smith Paper Co. sold⁶¹ to the Inhabitants of the town of Lee land north of the Valley Mill together with the "buildings thereon standing." Its size was 4 rods by 8 rods (about one fifth of an acre) and one of the borders of the property was 14 links from the "foundation of school on said premises." Was the school house started before the land was bought? Had it been already finished? I can't find the answer to either of these questions, but obviously at least the foundation was there by the time the land was purchased.

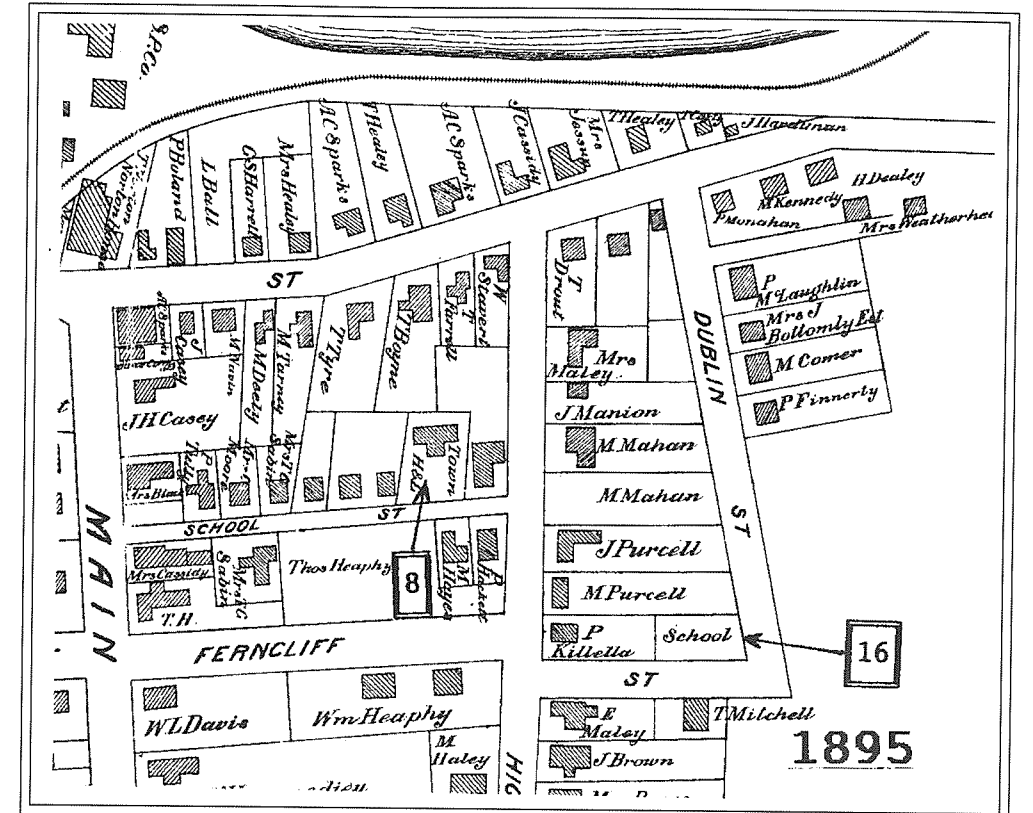
Its closing was suggested by the Lee School Committee in its report of 1881 because of too few students, some of whom were from Lenox. It was suggested that the Lee and Lenox students in that area be sent to the Furnace school in Lenox. An 1876 map, not reproduced here, reminds us that Lenox Dale was once known as Lenox Furnace.

However, no such action was taken at that time and the school was not closed until after the spring term of 1897 as reported in the 1898 Lee School Committee Report. Again the reason was the small enrollment. The same report tells us that the pupils were then conveyed to the Bradley Street school.

⁶¹ Book 209, page 261, dated 2/23/1872 - Registry of Deeds.

THE FERNCLIFF SCHOOL OF LEE

LOCATION - on Dublin Street west of Ferncliff's Union Rock.



The 1895 map shows the location of the Ferncliff School house (16) at about the time it was abandoned. This map also shows that the old North Center site (8) is now occupied by the Town H & L (Hook and Ladder). Compare this with the 1876 map at the head of Chapter 11.

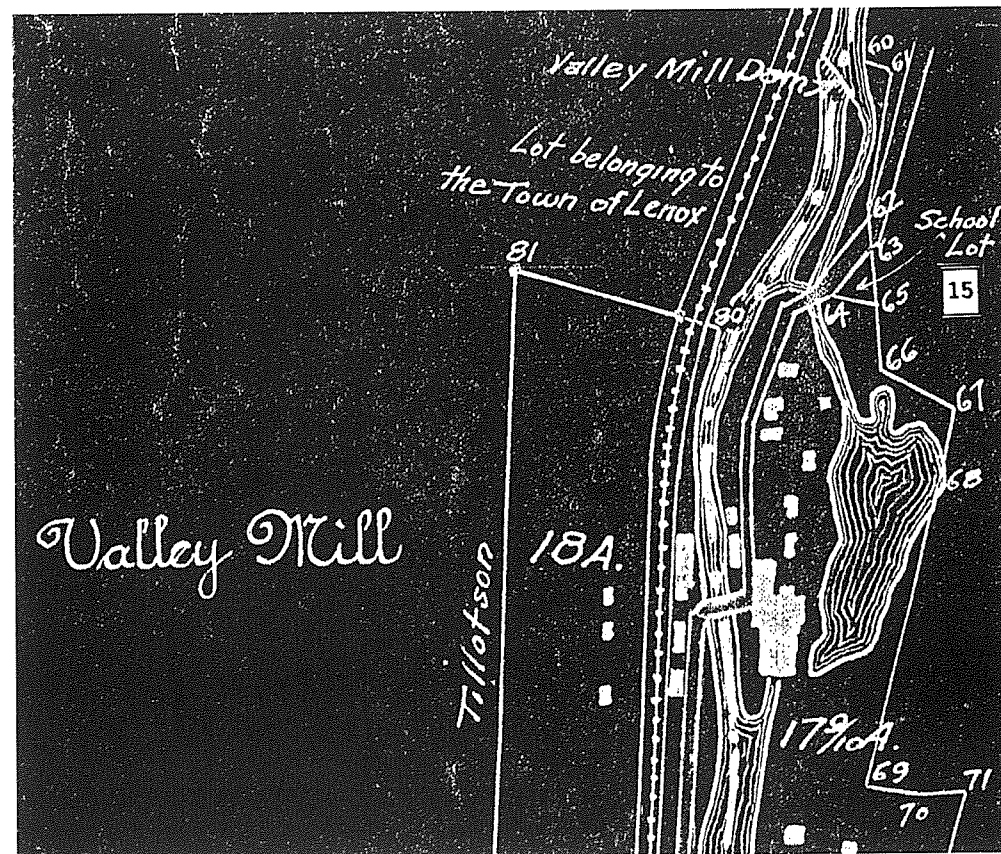
For the next three years the school remained closed, but in the Lee School Report for the year ending March 2, 1901 we find that the school was reopened during that year. The report explains:

Since the beginning of the autumn term 1897, the few pupils at the Valley were transported to the Bradley street school; but there having been sufficient increase to warrant the reopening of the Valley school, one was organized and Miss Elizabeth Bossidy, who had previously taught the East Lee primary, was employed to instruct it. The school numbers 18, of whom five reside on the Lenox side of the river.

The Valley school appears as an active school in the school committee reports through 1912, then is not mentioned until the report of 1914 when income of \$10 was received for rent of the Valley school. In 1915 rent of \$30 was received, and then there is no further mention of the school. The probability is that the school closed in 1912 or 1913 and was then rented out for a few years. I have been unable to find a record of the sale of this school property. There is no longer a building on the site.

Two long time local residents in the area, Tom Bosworth and Jim Toole, have told me that lumber from the old school was used to build what is now the garage at 111 Crystal Street in Lenox Dale.

The map below is an excerpt of a "Plan of the Property of Smith Paper Co., Lee and Lenox," filed at the Registry of Deeds on August 3, 1917. It more clearly shows the relationship of the school lot to the nearby road and to a small bridge over a former canal. The entire plan can be found in Drawer 41 at the Registry of Deeds.



This school house was built near Ferncliff, west of Union Rock. According to the Lee School Committee for the fiscal year ending in March, 1886 the building had been erected in that fiscal year at a cost of \$3400. Other expenses, including architect's plans, grading, desks, furniture and stoves brought the total to \$5400. Like the North Center School house that it replaced, this school house was built for two schools, primary and intermediate.

The school committee reported that the school house contained 2 school rooms, each 50 x 50 feet with ceilings 13½ feet high. The size of the school rooms was described as being 30 x 30 feet in the newspaper article quoted below, and this may be more reasonable.

The land was purchased⁶² in 1885 from Thomas Heaphy. The purchase included more land than was needed to build the school house. In the words of the Lee School Committee in their 1886 report:

⁶² Book 261, page 211, dated 5/16/85 - Registry of Deeds.

The ground west of Union Rock was selected for a site, and as the whole Fern Cliff property of 3 1/4 acres, owned by Mr. Heaphy could be purchased for \$1,500, it was thought advisable to buy it all instead of paying \$1200, the price demanded for the selected plot alone.

Although the school house had already been built by March of 1886, there is no direct mention in the subsequent reports of when the school was occupied. For that information we have to read the Valley Gleaner of August 25, 1886. There, among the local news items, is the following long paragraph telling of the move to the new school and describing the school house in some detail:

The schools in town will begin on Monday next. (An) important change will be the removal of the primary and intermediate schools of the North Centre district to the new Fern Cliff school house, a change which will be welcomed with delight by both teachers and scholars. The old building in its condition and surroundings is wholly unattractive and unsuitable for such a purpose, while the new one is convenient and pleasant and charmingly located and in marked contrast in every respect. The interior is well arranged. The main part is equally divided into two large rooms, each over 30 feet square and very high to afford an abundance of good air. The furniture of course is new and first class and provision is made for 42 scholars in each room, with extra seats for recitation. Blackboards extend all around the rooms and the large and pleasant windows have inside shutters. The pipes of the Berkshire Water Co. enter the building with a faucet in each room and on the outside near the playground. Small projections in the front and rear afford room for entries and closets which are separate with an entrance for each school. The building is equally attractive on the exterior and is a model of its kind. The work was done by Couch and Oakley of East Lee and the cost was \$3400, the interior furnishings, of course being extra. The location is charming. The slight elevation ensures fresh air and affords splendid views. The building is surrounded by a spacious play ground, with the famous Fern Cliff directly to the rear. It is but a few feet from High street and at an elevation of only 30 feet above the old school house. During a few days of winter it may be rather windy but special pains have been taken in the building to make it as warm as possible and this would be a slight objection compared with its charms during the remainder of the year. In short, the school house is one of which the town may be proud and will be a welcome change for the people of that district, who have long protested against their unsuitable accommodations.

If one compares the 1895 and 1904 maps at the end of this chapter, it appears that it was built close to where Dublin Street now turns west to High Street. It appears, from reviewing these two maps that the road must have been altered after the school house was torn down and that the present roadway, just before it turns west, occupies part of the old school house lot. Part of a present day wooded area just east of this section of Dublin Street must also occupy part of the site and probably the school house stood partly in that currently wooded area. My uncle, Frank Kelly, now 90 years old, tells me that he remembers seeing the remnants of an old cellar hole there when he was a boy.

In 1895 the Lee School Committee reported that the Ferncliff pupils were now in the new High School. The new High School was the one built after the fire that destroyed the first High School in 1894, and for several years was occupied by the pupils from several primary schools as well as by the high school students. That marble high school building still stands and is now the Hyde wing of the Lee Central School, at the head of Academy Street.

With the students now in the new High School building, the old Ferncliff School house was no longer needed. The May 31, 1899 issue of the Valley Gleaner reports that Michael Navin had purchased the building and would use the stone from its foundation in the construction of his new house on Nye Hill (Laurel Street). According to the 1899 Town Treasurer's Report the Ferncliff school building had been sold for \$100 during the prior fiscal year. There is no deed showing sale of the school lot itself and I assume that the town kept the land to either construct, or reconstruct, that section of Dublin Street.



THE FERNCLIFF SCHOOL HOUSE AND STUDENTS. - Picturesque Berkshire.

Below I have put the 1895 and 1904 maps of Dublin Street side by side to show the change made to the street after the school house was demolished.

