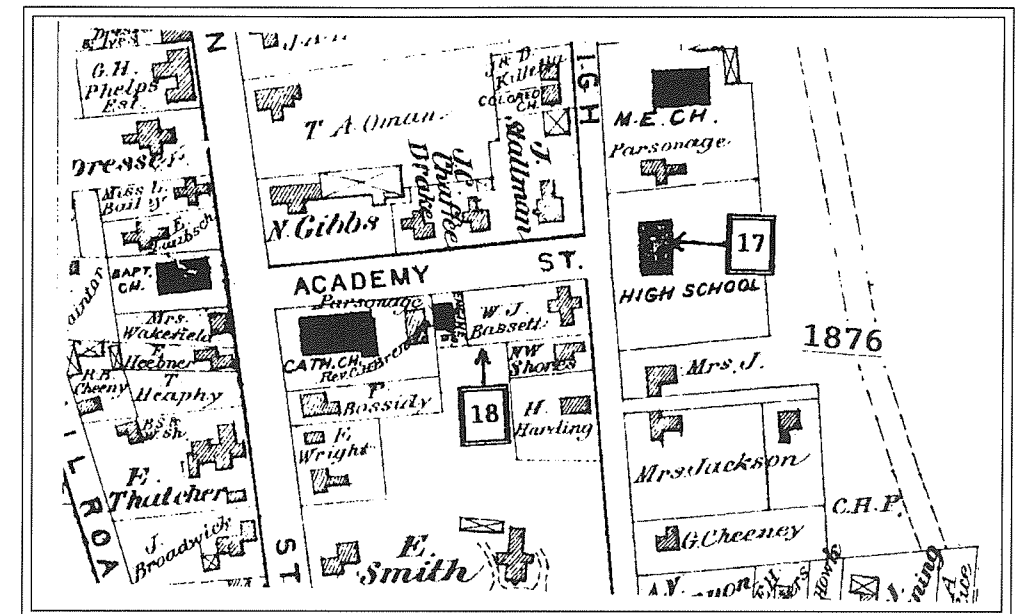


THE LEE ACADEMY AND FIRST LEE HIGH SCHOOL

LOCATION: on High Street at the head of Academy Street, the same location as today's Hyde wing of the Lee Central School.



The 1876 map shows that the location of the first High School building (17) is the same as that of the today's (1996) Hyde wing of the elementary school. The school was originally the Lee Academy before becoming a public high and grammar school. Also identified is the future site of St. Mary's parochial school (18) at the western end of the W.J. Bassett property.

Much of the information in the next several paragraphs, except where noted otherwise, is summarized from Hyde's History.

Lee Academy

In 1835 Alexander Hyde, a recent graduate of Williams College, opened a "select school" in the upper room of the Center school house. He ran this school for two years, attracting some pupils from other places. He then left that site to open a boarding-school in his own residence. The town now felt the need for a public school of "high grade." A stock company was formed in 1837 and the Lee Academy was built on the site where the Hyde wing of the grammar school now stands on High Street at the head of Academy Street. Obviously this is where Academy Street got its name. The school was completed in the summer of 1837 and was dedicated on October 10. Pupils were charged tuition to attend the Lee Academy, as it was a private school.

The first High School

By 1851 state law had for some time required towns of more than 500 families to establish a High School. The inhabitants of the Hoplands contended that they were a distinct corporation from the town and were not obliged to support a High School. After some years of argument over this, the question was finally submitted to two prominent jurists, a Mr. Dewey of Williamstown and a Mr. Sumner of Great

Barrington. They decided that the town had to establish a High School or face a stiff fine, and that the Hoplands had to support this school.

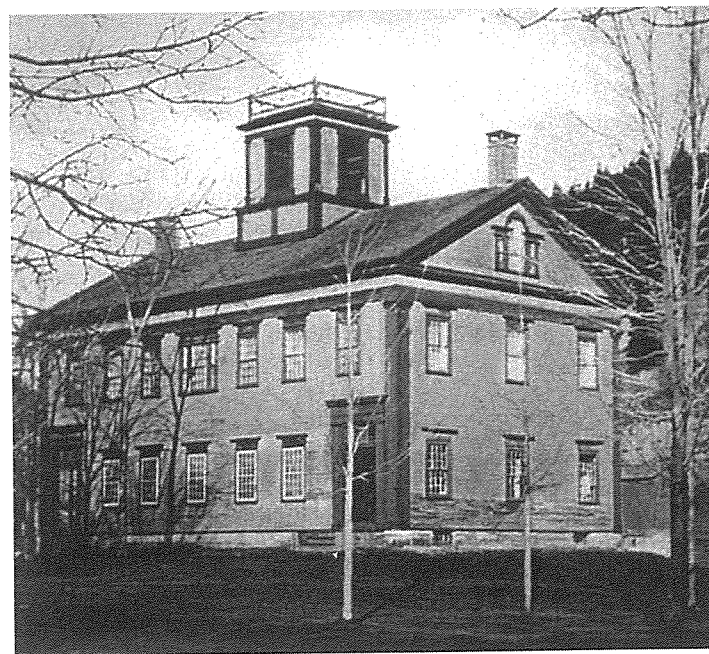
As a result of this ruling, the town leased the Academy building in April, 1851 and converted it to a free public High School. The Academy Association collected rent from the town and maintained the building until 1864, at which time most of the stockholders transferred their stock to the town on condition that the town continue to operate a free High School. With a majority of the stock, the town now controlled the building.

It is hard to imagine what high school was like over a hundred years ago. The 1859 report of the Lee School Committee sheds some light on this. With an average attendance of 95 students the appropriation for the year was \$1750.00, or about \$18.50 per pupil. Here is an excerpt of the comments by the school committee from that 1859 report:

The course of study is so systematized that two teachers instruct nearly one hundred pupils more easily and thoroughly than one can instruct twenty under a less perfect system. Complaint is sometimes made that this school costs the town too much, but we cannot expect good services without paying for them, and in no way can we educate our children more cheaply.

Professor Barlow, in his speech at the 1877 High School reunion, commented that the average annual appropriation for the High School for the 20 years prior to 1877 was \$1750. He commented that the purchasing power of the dollar was twice as great 20 years earlier.

This school building was destroyed by fire on Feb. 21, 1894 and according to the 1894 Lee School Committee Report it housed the High School and the Grammar School when it burned down. They reported that temporary classrooms were immediately set up in Memorial Hall for the Grammar School and in the Bassett Block for the High School.



THE FIRST LEE HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING. IT STOOD ON THE SITE OF THE PRESENT HYDE WING OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. - *old Lee postcard.*



A VIEW OF ACADEMY STREET TAKEN BEFORE THE FIRST HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING BURNED DOWN IN 1894. - *Streets, Public Buildings and General Views of Lee - 1886.*

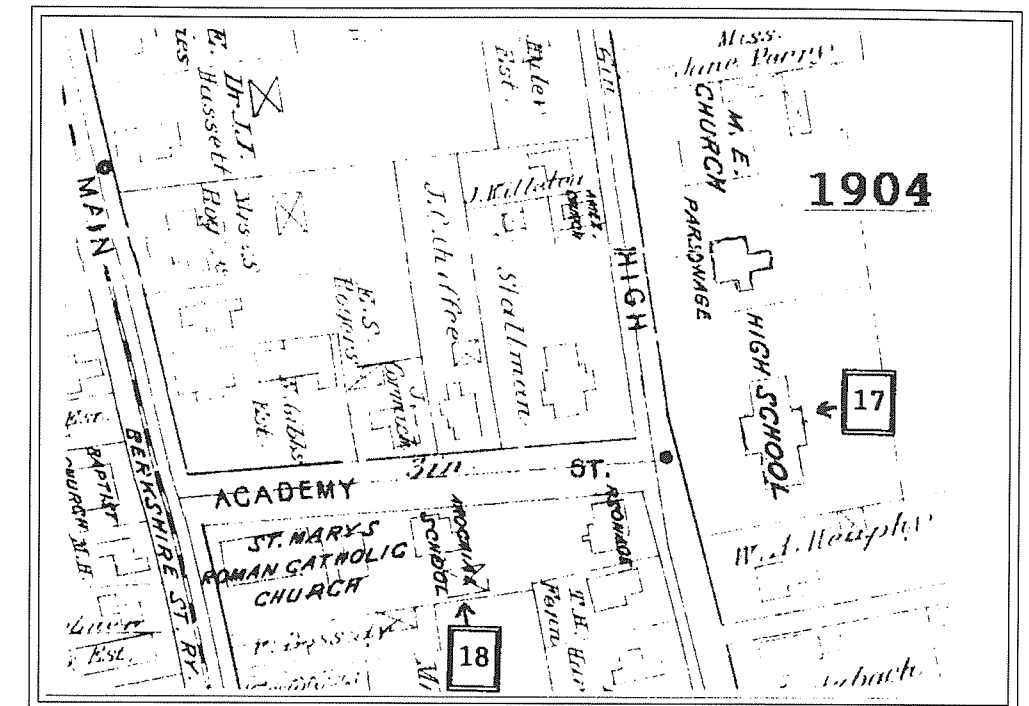
Branch High School in South Lee

Hyde's History tells us that at the time the High School was established in 1851 the citizens of South Lee objected to being taxed for its support. They felt that they lived too remotely from the High School to derive much benefit from it. The town agreed with this argument and voted to support a branch High School in a hired room in South Lee for four months in the winter. When Hyde wrote his history the school was considered to be successful, but in later years there were repeated comments in the Lee School Committee reports that the school was inferior. In 1887 the Lee School Committee reported that "*The Branch High school of South Lee is not in any sense a High school. Its standard of scholarship, never of a high order, is lower than ever before.*"

I can't find where this hired room was located, nor do I know when it was discontinued. However, from 1880 to 1885 the Lee School Committee reported that they paid \$25.00 to H. Garfield each of those years to rent the South Lee High School room. In 1888 and 1889 they paid the same amount to C. C. Benton. I found no further reference to payment of rent after 1889.

THE SECOND HIGH SCHOOL AND GRAMMAR SCHOOL

LOCATION - on High Street at the head of Academy Street on the site of the first High School which burned down in February, 1894.



The 1904 map shows the site of the second High School (17). It is on the same site as that of the first one. The same building now, in 1996, is the Hyde wing of the elementary school, known as the Lee Central School. The site of St. Mary's parochial school (18) can also be seen on this map.

The second High School building

The 1895 Town Report tells us that \$28,000 was appropriated for a new High School after the 1894 fire destroyed the original High School building. The Valley Gleaner of Dec. 19, 1894 reported that the new building cost about \$30,000.00 and was built of Lee Marble. The 1895 Lee School Committee Report says that the new building was dedicated on Jan. 1, 1895, and that it now included the High, Grammar, Center, Northwest and Ferncliff schools. They felt that because the lower Water Street school building (the old Hopland District School house #3) was unfit for school purposes, it could be abandoned if pupils could be conveyed (transported) to the new High School. As it turned out, soon after that 1895 report was made, the lower Water Street school was closed at the conclusion of the spring session in 1895.

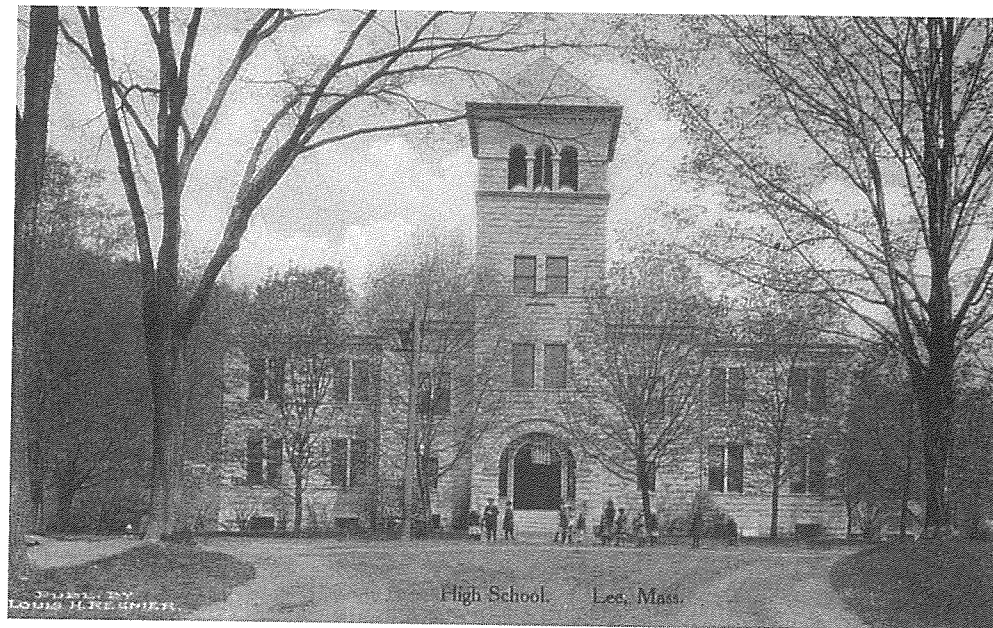
By the time the Lee School Committee issued its 1900 report the new High School building was said to accommodate six of the twelve public schools in town.

My parents attended school in this High School building and graduated from it in June, 1913. I never heard them mention an interesting fact that I read in the March 1, 1913 report of the Lee School Committee. In that report the committee

called "the attention of the voters to the necessity of installing electric lights in the Marble Building. It is noticed during the shorter days of the year and during cloudy days, that pupils suffer from eyestrain; and the work of the schools is more or less interfered with at those times." The committee had gotten estimates and were told that it would not cost over \$250. The next year it was recorded that the installation of electric lights in the building had been completed and that the cost had been \$249. I presume this was done after the end of the school year and that the class of 1913 and preceding classes had attended school and studied there without the benefit of electric lights. It is possible that the building was lit by gas light before the installation of electric lights.

Until 1917 the building, which still stands at the head of Academy Street, was used as a high school and grammar school. In 1917 a separate high school building was erected⁶³ just south of it. Apparently the need for further space was recognized as early as 1905, for in that year the town bought⁶⁴ land south of the marble building from William Heaphy. It was on this land the high school was built in 1917. On the southernmost part of the lot the Crossway was built.

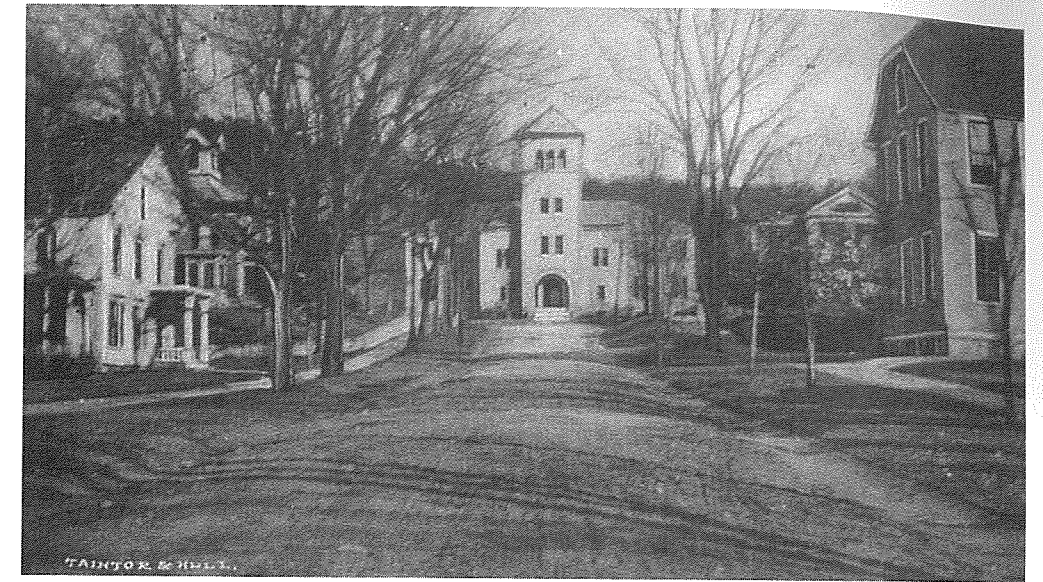
This 1894 High School building is still in use as the Hyde wing of the elementary school. The adjoining school buildings became a part of the elementary school when a newer High School building was erected on Greylock Street in 1962.



A VIEW OF THE MARBLE HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING WHICH IS NOW THE HYDE WING OF THE LEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. - An old Lee postcard.

⁶³ SEE ALL THE PEOPLE, by Florence Consolati - page 271.

⁶⁴ Book 330, page 239, dated 5/31/1905 - Registry of Deeds.



A VIEW OF ACADEMY STREET TAKEN AFTER THE PRESENT MARBLE BUILDING WAS ERECTED. THE OLD ST. MARY'S SCHOOL CAN BE SEEN ON THE RIGHT. - An old Lee postcard.

The Grammar School

This was established in 1876 in the upper room of the High School. The idea had been fought for years, but was finally approved in 1876. This apparently offered a somewhat better education than the crowded common district schools, for Hyde's History says that the school committee had urged the necessity of a grammar school "in consideration of the numbers that never attained to the High School, but who ought to have better advantages for education than the common schools furnished." One has to wonder what sort of education the so-called common schools were offering. It must have been pretty rudimentary, especially when we find out how much was spent on education. In 1844 the Hopland School District spent \$2.07 annually per pupil. A similar amount was spent in the schools in the town proper. By 1890 the cost had risen to almost \$10.50 per pupil.

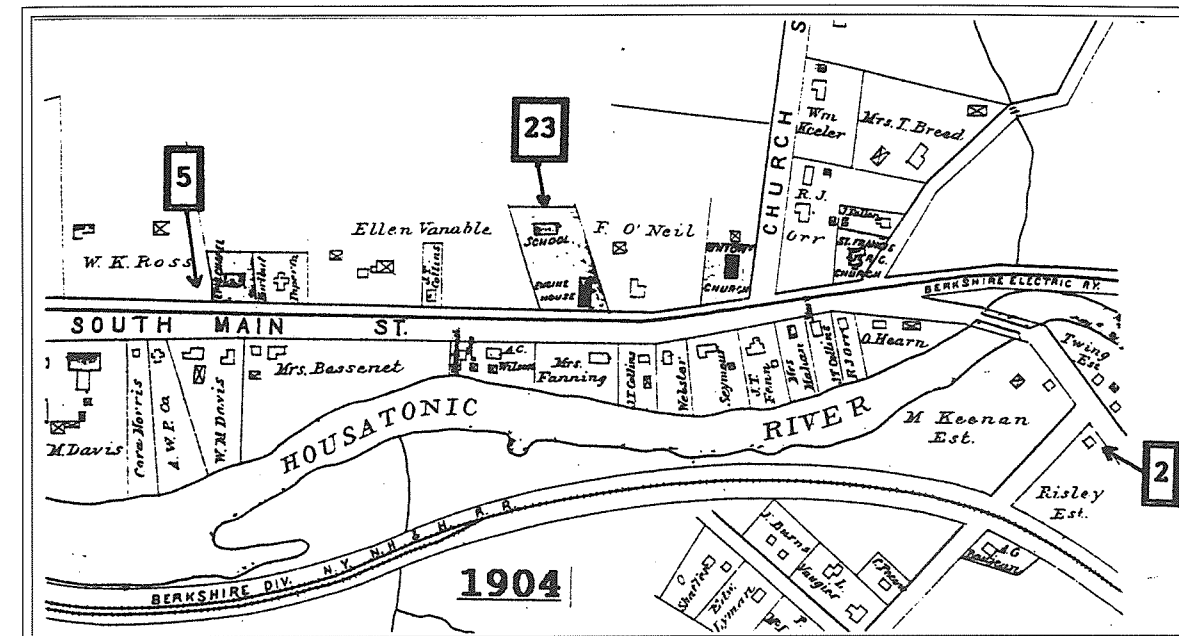
From reading the curriculum of the grammar school in the 1890's it appears that it was a course of three years study following the education received in the primary and intermediate common schools. It is probably most comparable to what is termed Junior High School in many school systems today.

The grammar school now occupies the original marble building, and the other buildings that later housed both the grammar school and the high school until the new High School was built on Greylock Street. The cost per pupil is no longer \$10.50 per year!

NEWER SCHOOLS IN SOUTH LEE AND EAST LEE

The South Lee School House

LOCATION - on the north side of Main Street, South Lee, about 300 yards east of the site of the Hopland District School house #5.



The 1904 map of South Lee shows the site of the South Lee School house (23) that was built to replace the two Hopland District school houses. Here can also be seen the site of the former Hopland District School house #2 (2), now part of the Risley estate, and that of the former Hopland District School house #5 (5), now appearing to be part of the W. K. Ross property.

Land was bought⁶⁵ from Ellen Venables for \$500 in 1890 and the new South Lee school house had been built by the time the Lee School Committee report was published in April of 1891. They reported that it had been built and furnished for \$3870.63, including the cost of the land. The builder was Nelson Martin and the actual building cost \$2500.

By then there was no longer a Hopland School District, as noted earlier. This school house, therefore, was built by the town of Lee with Lee taxpayers' money. The 1895 Lee Directory says that it "contains accommodations for 2 schools," but incorrectly states that it had been built about 3 years earlier. The school house was in use until 1977, at which time it served only early primary grade pupils.

It still stands, damaged by fire a few years ago, and is now abandoned and boarded up. It is no longer the property of the town.

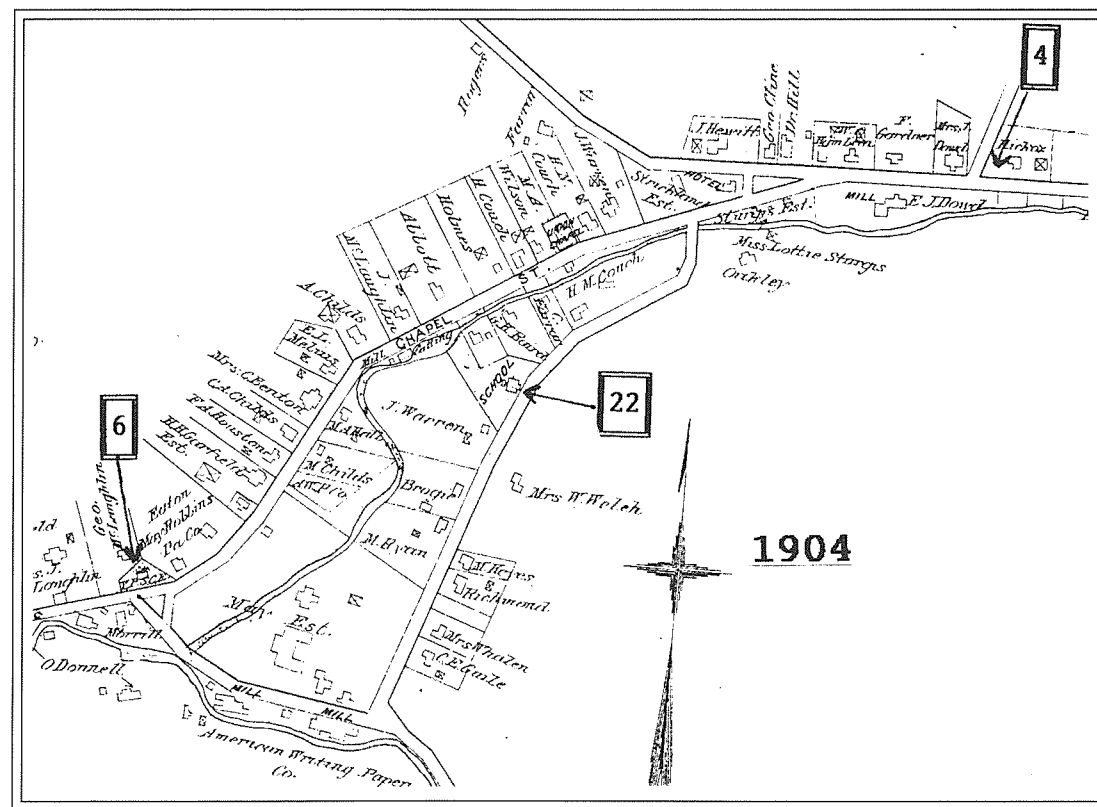
Many people to whom I have talked consider this "new" school house to be the "old" South Lee school house and are surprised to find that it was preceded by two older school houses.

⁶⁵Book 277, page 52, dated 7/7/1890 - Registry of Deeds.



THE SOUTH LEE SCHOOL HOUSE, BUILT ABOUT 1892 TO REPLACE HOPLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL HOUSES NUMBERS 2 AND 5. - *Picturesque Berkshire*.

The East Lee School House
LOCATION - at 90 Silver Street in East Lee.

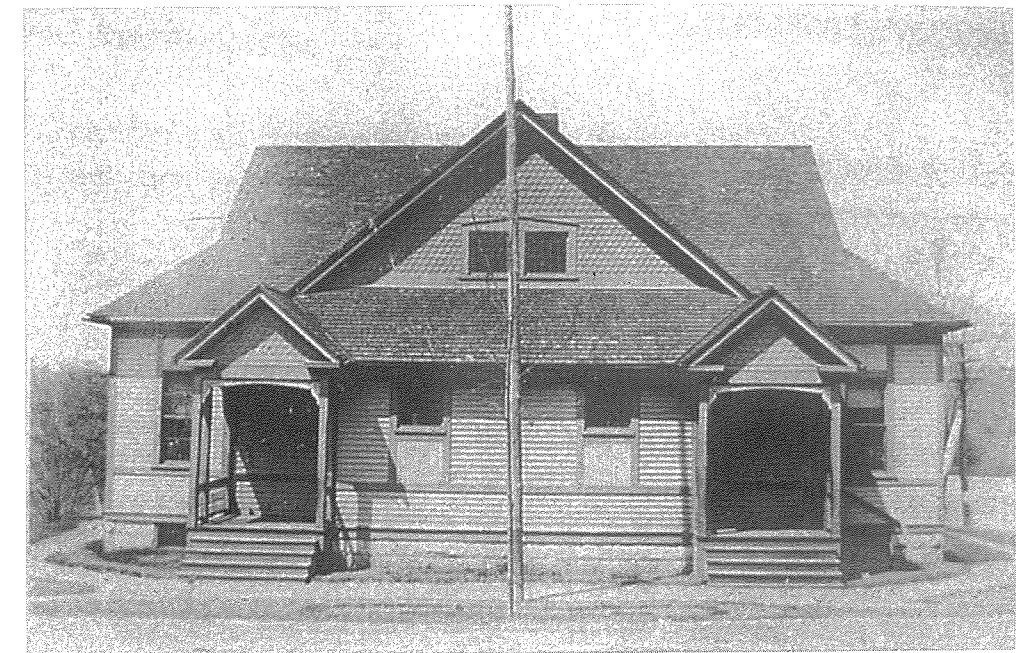


The 1904 map shows the site of the East Lee School house (22). Also shown is the site of the former Hopland District School house #4 (4) and of the former Hopland District School house # 6 (6).

In 1894 the town voted to build a new school house in East Lee to take the place of Hopland District School houses #4 and #6. The town bought⁶⁶ the land on which the school house was built from Theron Foote in the same year. The Lee School Committee report of 1895 tells us that the new East Lee school house is a commodious, well ventilated building. The East Lee Building Committee in the same year details expenses of \$3509.10, which was \$9.10 over the budgeted amount, so it is clear that the school house was built some time in the fiscal year 1894-1895. This building still stands as a residence on Silver Street.

When the Lee School Committee reported the new East Lee school to be "commodious" they expressed the hope that the town would consider discontinuing the school in the Ingram District (properly known as the East District school). As we noted in Chapter 15, the East District School was closed in 1897 because it had too few pupils and that the pupils were then "conveyed to East Lee School."

The East Lee School was closed in 1977, at which time only early primary grade pupils were being taught there. The former school house is now a residence at 90 Silver Street.



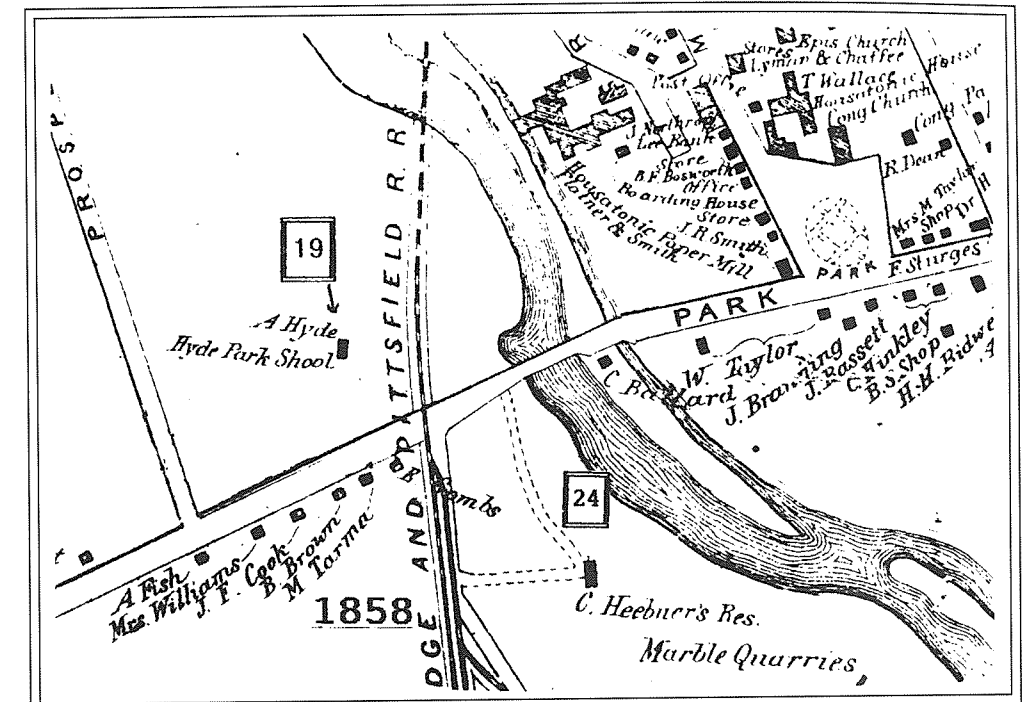
AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE EAST LEE SCHOOL HOUSE ON SILVER STREET WHEN IT WAS NEW. THE BUILDING STILL STANDS ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE AND HAS BEEN CONVERTED TO A PRIVATE RESIDENCE AT 90 SILVER STREET. - *An old Lee postcard, courtesy of Betty Dennis.*

⁶⁶Book 292, page 188, dated 6/8/1894 - Registry of Deeds.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Alexander Hyde's private school

LOCATION - in the former Hyde family residence, still standing at 144 West Park Street. It is the first building west of the railroad, on the north side of the street.



The 1858 map shows the location of the Hyde Park School (19). The house is still standing today. Also seen on this map is the site of Lydia Barlow's private school for young ladies (24) which will be discussed briefly later in this chapter.

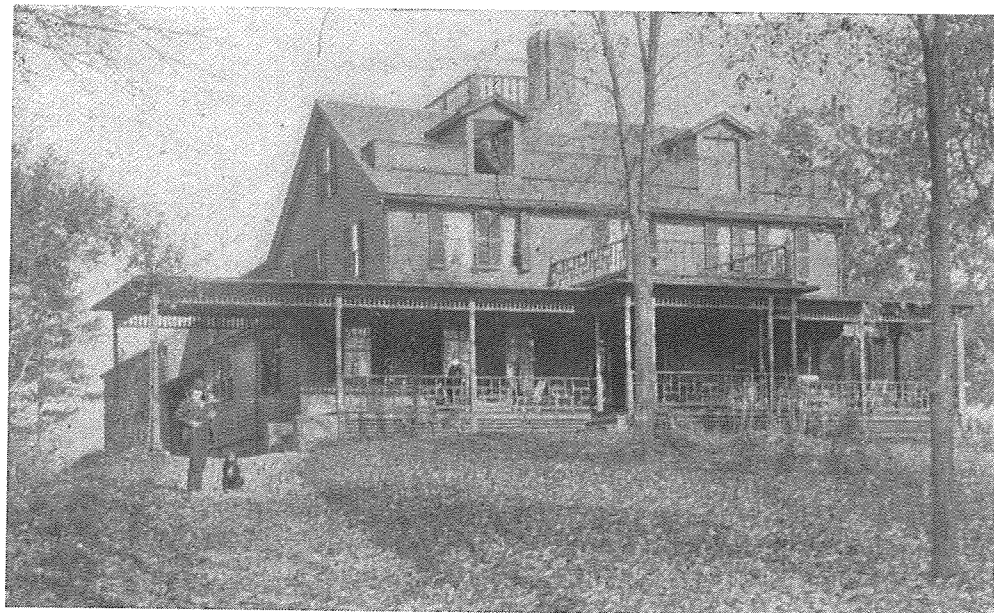
After running a "select school" (a private school) in an upper room of the Center District School House at the corner of Housatonic and Maple Streets for two years, Alexander Hyde opened a private boarding school in the Hyde residence on West Park Street in 1837. It appears on the 1858 map of Lee as the Hyde Park School. Hyde operated this school for about thirty years. One of his students was James Roosevelt, the father of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1848 the Lee School Committee commented on several of the schools, including the private school of Mr. Alexander Hyde. The report says that he keeps High School for 5-8 boys and that 10 months tuition, board, etc. cost \$1200.00 to \$1500.00 per year. This was a very high fee in 1848. Dr. John M. Hyde, a professor at Williams College and a descendant of Alexander Hyde, sent me a copy of an 1863 advertisement for the school, called there the "Hyde Park Family Boarding School for Boys." The advertisement said that the enrollment was limited to fifteen boys, "who are furnished with board and tuition for \$125 per session, payable quar

terly in advance. The sessions commence the first Wednesday in November and May, with the months of October and April for vacations." If I read this correctly, either the fee was much less in 1863 than in 1848 or the school committee report of 1848 was incorrect.

Dr. John Hyde says that an addition was added at the rear of the original house, with a school room on the first floor and rooms for the student boarders on the second floor. When I lived in the neighborhood the school room housed a ping-pong table. We neighborhood children often played there with the Hyde children without being aware of the history of the room.

This home was still used by the Hyde family, primarily as a summer residence, until 1964. They sold⁶⁷ it to the Pittsfield YMCA in 1967. In the deed is the stipulation that it had to be used for at least 25 years in furtherance of the purposes, aims and interests of the YMCA. It was used as a YMCA for a few years, but in 1977 the Hyde family waived⁶⁸ all restrictions. Within a month the property was sold⁶⁹ to a Fred Mercer Jr. There have been subsequent transfers of the property and for several years now it has housed an antique business, Aardenburg Antiques.



THE HYDE HOUSE AS IT APPEARED IN 1893. THE LARGE VERANDA AND THE WIDOW'S WALK HAVE SINCE BEEN REMOVED BUT THE HOUSE IS OTHERWISE LITTLE CHANGED IN OUTWARD APPEARANCE.
- Picturesque Berkshire

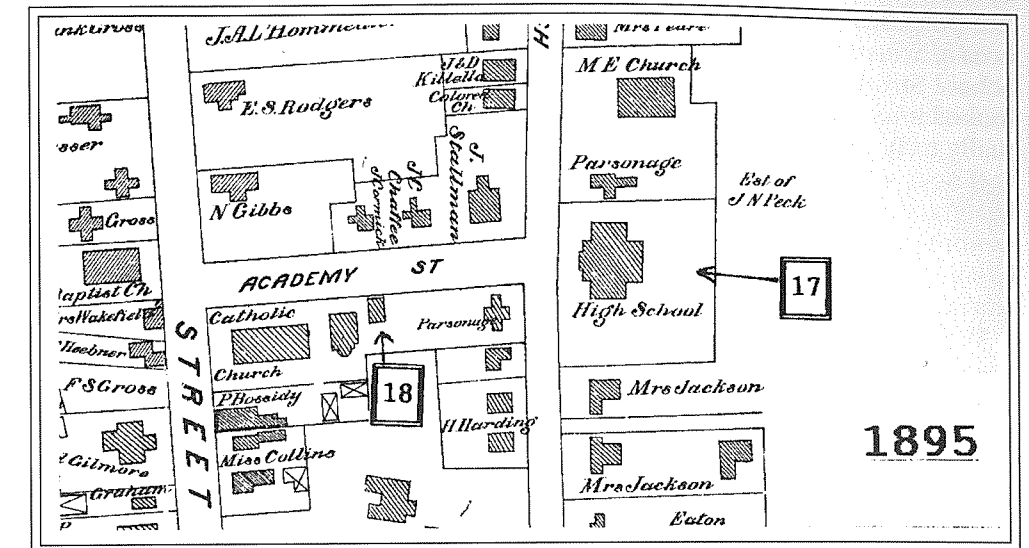
⁶⁷ Book 850, page 121, dated 12/28/1967 - Registry of Deeds.

⁶⁸ Book 998, page 1038, dated 11/23/1977 - Registry of Deeds.

⁶⁹ Book 998, page 1037, dated 12/21/1977 - Registry of Deeds.

St. Mary's Parochial School

LOCATION - on the south side of Academy Street just west of the rectory. Today the site is a parking lot for St. Mary's Church.



The 1895 map shows the site of St. Mary's parochial school (18). Also seen is the location of the High School (17).

"The location of the present rectory was bought in 1884, this being formerly land of James W. Bassett. This Bassett property was of sufficient area to include the site of the original St. Mary's Parochial School and construction of the school was started in November of the same year." and "St. Mary's School was completed in 1885."⁷⁰

"In January 1886 St. Mary's School opened with 150 students and two teachers, Sister Mary and Sister Josephine."⁷¹

A search at the Registry of Deeds shows that in 1884 the lot at the corner of Academy and High Streets was sold⁷² by James W. Bassett to a P. H. Casey of Springfield. The Springfield Diocese is not mentioned, but I can only presume that Casey was acting for the diocese. That deed gave the west boundary of the lot as the land of the Lee Fire District. An 1876 map at the beginning of Chapter 18 shows that relationship.

In 1888 the Lee Fire District sold⁷³ to the Reverend Terence M. Smith, trustee of St. Mary's Society, its lot on Academy Street. The eastern boundary of that lot was described as the school house lot of Bishop P. T. Reilly and the western boundary as the church lot of P. T. Reilly. Father Smith was the pastor of St. Mary's Church at the time of this sale. This fire house lot became the site of the convent which was completed in 1890⁷¹.

The Berkshire Gleaner of July 17, 1912, in an article about the new fire house on Main Street, says that the town built the first fire house in 1856 where the paro

⁷⁰ The history of St. Mary's Parish, WE GATHER TOGETHER, published on the 125th anniversary of the parish in 1982.

⁷¹ A history of St. Mary's School, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF GOD'S WORK, written in 1985 by Mary Owens Turner and Frances Faxon Carty.

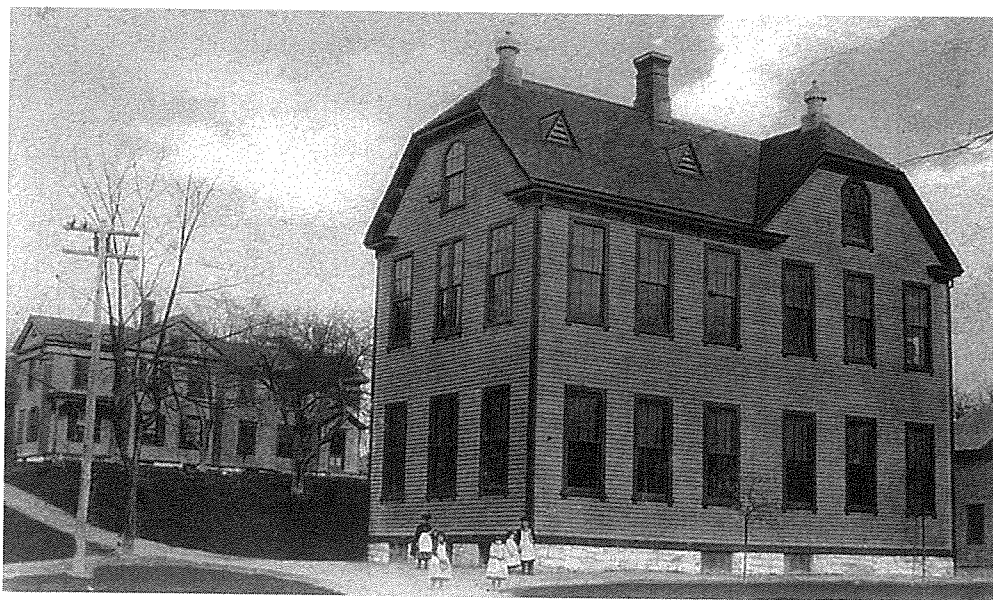
⁷² Book 257, page 355, dated 8/8/1884 - Registry of Deeds.

⁷³ Book 264, page 60, dated 5/7/1888 - Registry of Deeds.

chial school now stands. This is obviously incorrect in view of the fact that the school opened in 1886, two years before the sale of the fire house lot. Clearly, when the fire house lot was bought by the church the school house already existed, as is clearly shown in the 1888 deed. However, one item of interest in that 1912 article is the statement that the old fire house was given up 26 years ago for fire purposes and moved to High Street, "being the double tenement opposite the head of School Street." The building that stands on High Street, opposite the head of School Street today, does not look to me to be an old fire house, but I have not looked into the history of that house. Possibly the converted fire house was eventually torn down and another house built on the site.

A review of the dates and details of the deeds shows that the history of St. Mary's is correct and the 1912 Gleaner article is incorrect on this point. There can be no doubt that the school house was built on the western end of the lot bought from Bassett, that the rest of the Bassett lot was the site of the rectory, and that the convent was built on the site of the old fire house.

When it opened in 1886 with 150 students the school had nine grades⁷⁰, but at some point it became a school with eight grades, like the public grammar school. The Lee School Committee Report of 1886 said that "with the commencement of the winter term the recently established convent school was started and nearly one-quarter of our school population was withdrawn from the public schools to attend it." In 1888 the Lee School Committee reported that the withdrawal of 150 pupils from the public schools two years previously was beneficial to cut overcrowding in the public schools.



THE FIRST ST. MARY'S SCHOOL BUILDING, WHICH STOOD ON ACADEMY STREET.

- An old Lee postcard

A new school was built on Orchard Street and opened⁷⁴ in 1957. The old school house on Academy Street was used for various parish functions for several years and eventually plans were made to raze it. However, the building was bought by a local insurance broker, Joseph M. Toole, and in 1989 Mr. Toole moved it to the

⁷⁴A history of St. Mary's School, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF GOD'S WORK, written in 1985 by Mary Owens Turner



THE FORMER ST. MARY'S SCHOOL IS NOW THE CHAMBERY INN AT THE CORNER OF MAIN AND ELM STREETS - Current picture by author

corner of Main and Elm Streets and converted it to a small inn which he named the Chambery Inn. The name is derived from Chambery, France which was the town of origin of the Sisters of St. Joseph who have operated the school since its beginning.

Obscure Private Schools

The following private schools are added here only for general interest. They were small schools and probably didn't last long. However, I know little or nothing about them. I suspect that the last two mentioned schools were run in a room in the teacher's house, and may have been almost like some of today's day care centers. They do not appear to have been of great importance in the over-all educational system.

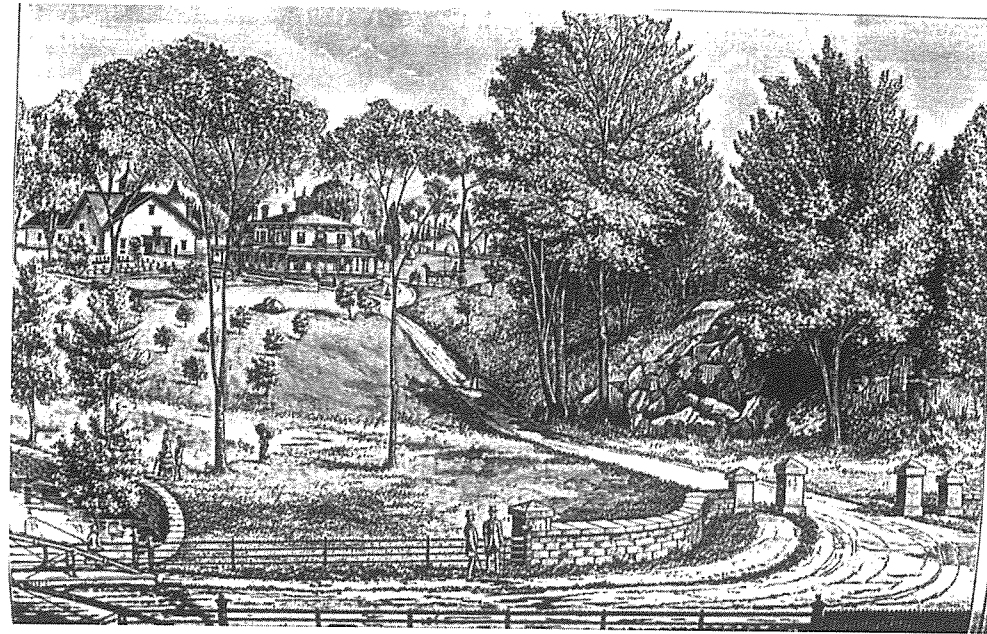
Lydia Barlow's school for young ladies

LOCATION - at the corner of Marble and West Park Streets, just west of the Housatonic River.

I don't know the actual name of this apparently short-lived private boarding school for young ladies. The Rev. Mr. L. S. Rowland, then minister of the Lee Congregational Church, wrote a history of Lee which appeared in the HISTORY OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY, published in 1885 by J. B. Beers of New York City. The Reverend Mr. Rowland says that "A boarding school for young ladies was established and successfully maintained for a number of years by Miss Lydia Barlow, afterward Mrs. S. S. Rogers, in the house now occupied by Mr. Frank S. Gross, which was built for the purpose."

On Friday, Nov. 11, 1924 the Berkshire Gleaner reported the death of William H. Gross in a fire which destroyed his home. In that report is the following information: "The house was built sometime in the neighborhood of 1850 by Miss Lydia Barlow, who conducted a seminary there. When in 1854, Miss Barlow married Samuel Rogers, the house was sold to Charles Heebner, owner of the Lee Quarry, and an uncle of Mr. Gross." This suggests that the school operated for only three or four years.

You may have read in Hyde's History that Sarah M. Bradley became Mrs. S. S. Rogers. However, the obituary of Mr. Rogers tells us that Lydia Barlow was his first wife, and that he married Sarah Bradley some time after the death of Lydia.



THE GROSS PROPERTY AS IT APPEARED IN 1885. THE MARBLE POSTS AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE LONG DRIVEWAY, AND PARTS OF THE MARBLE WALL AROUND THE PROPERTY CAN STILL BE SEEN.
- from Beers' History of Berkshire County.

Miss Moat's School

LOCATION - unknown, probably near Highlawn Farm.

In 1896 the Lee School Committee reported that 10 or more children who were 5 or more years old on May 1st attended Miss Moat's school. In another source I ran across a statement that Miss Moat ran a private primary school in 1896 and had young pupils living near Highlawn and beyond, in Stockbridge. I failed to record the source and have been unable to locate it since.

When a Thomas Moat died in 1903 his obituary said that he had been boss farmer at Elizur Smith's Highlawn Farm for a long time, and later opened a butcher shop in Lenox Dale, and later in Lee. Among his eight children was Bertha Moat.

I have a vague memory of someone once claiming that there was a school on Summer Street near the north end of Spring Street, but I have found no record of a public school there. Could this have been the Highlawn residence of Thomas Moat

and therefore the site of Miss Moat's school. Possibly a careful reading of the newspapers of that era might be helpful, but a quick scan of the 1895 Valley Gleaner was fruitless.

In the school committee report of 1897 Bertha A. Moat appears as a teacher in the 2nd primary school in the fall and winter sessions at the Center school. (The Center School by then was at the Marble High School building on High Street.) Apparently Bertha Moat ran a private school for a short time, probably in her father's house at Highlawn, until she was accepted as a teacher at the public school.

She is listed as a teacher in the primary school for the next two years, but in the 1900 school committee report her name no longer appears. An item in the March 1, 1899 issue of the Valley Gleaner explains this disappearance:

Miss Bertha Moat, a successful teacher at the marble building, has resigned her position and will go to New York to become a nurse.

Miss Phelps's School

LOCATION - unknown.

In the Lee School Committee report of 1853 was the following sentence:
In the North Village a private school for small scholars (some 20) has been taught by Miss Nancy E. Phelps, of Lee, with fidelity, and to the approbation of those who sent.

I did not find any other reference to this school in earlier or later school committee reports, and know nothing more about the school. I do not know its location, nor do I know for how long it was active. The Valley Gleaner did not begin to publish until 1857, so that source is not available.