Historic Sites in Lee

The territory of Lee, New Hampshire, was originally a part of the Colony of Dover, founded in 1623. Dover is the seventh oldest continuously settled area in the United States. The portion of the original colonial grant that is now Lee had European residents as early as 1666 (Wadley Falls).

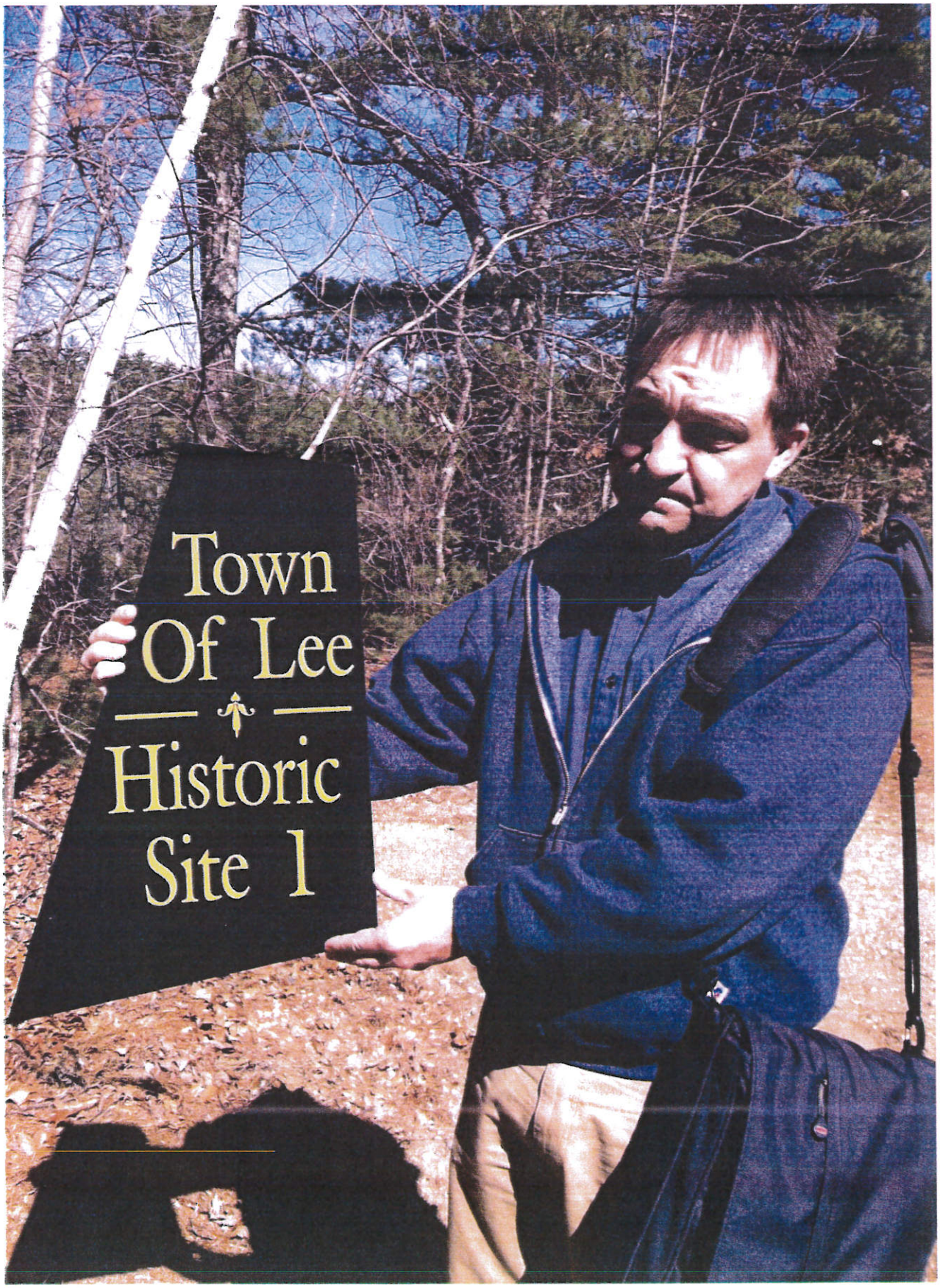
Unlike other towns that were eventually formed from the grant-land of Dover, Lee's town history and culture are deeply rooted in farming and forest management. While many surrounding towns were profoundly affected by the Industrial Revolution and still have the dams, mill buildings and other durable structures to remind them of their heritage, Lee was only marginally affected by such development and has no significant reminders of the period.

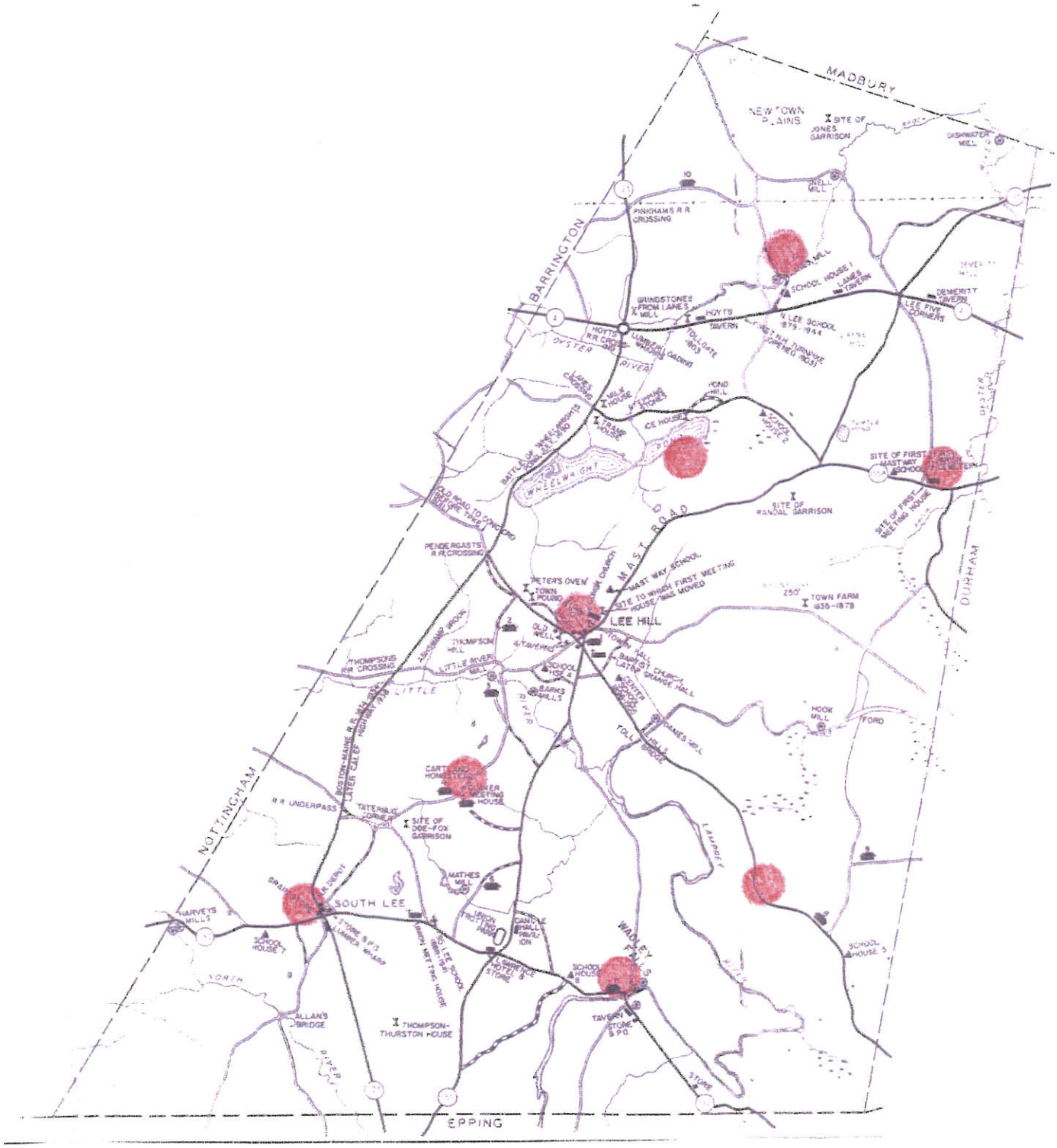
At the height of the regional industrial era of the early twentieth century, Lee remained almost entirely agrarian. There were approximately eighty working farms in Lee. Many of these were established in the first half of the 1700's through grants declared by the Town of Durham, years before Lee was to become a town on its own. Just as Dover, Somersworth, Rollinsford and Newmarket desire to preserve and redevelop their historical resources, so does the Town of Lee. Our resources are not dams and mills, however. They are farmhouses and barns.

When compared to the stone and brick reminders of yesteryear left in the surrounding industrial centers, the evidence of our Lee Town heritage is fragile and all-too likely to be lost to bad weather, fires, and the indiscriminate acts of man. Considerable effort has been expended in recent years to preserve the rural landscape in Lee, and the effort has resulted in nearly 25 percent of the Town either being placed under permanent conservation easements or owned by the Town; yet the possible loss of fragile historic landmarks remains a constant threat to our heritage. Two such cases include the Glidden-Towle-Edgerly House in Wadley Falls Village, which was almost lost to arson in 2010, and the Burleigh-Demeritt Farmhouse on Lee Hook Road, which the University of New Hampshire has considered for demolition.

The Lee Heritage Commission has marked eight Town of Lee Historic Sites with appropriate signs and prepared the narratives included herein. At some of these sites, like Wadley Falls Village and Lee Town Center, the reader will witness considerable reminders of our heritage. But at other sites, such as New Town Plains and Wheelwright Pond, one is left to contemplate the loss of the land's first residents, as well as the depletion of our natural resources. In presenting our history in such a light, we hope to convince our readers to join us in our endeavors to preserve what remains, so that those that come after us can continue to enjoy our independent and rural character.

The picture on the next page shows the typical site marker, and the map on the page following shows the location of our eight historic sites.


Town
Of Lee
Historic
Site 1


MADBURY
NEW TOWN PLAINS
SITE OF JONES GARRISON
DISHWATER MILL
NELL MILL
PINKHAMS R R CROSSING
BARRINGTON
GRINDSTONES FROM LANES MILL
HOYTS TAVERN
SCHOOL HOUSE 1
LANES TAVERN
DEMERITT TAVERN
LEE FIVE CORNERS
N LEE SCHOOL 1879-1944
HOYTS R.R. CROSSING
LUMBER LOADING
TOLLGATE 1803
OYSTER RIVER
LANES CROSSING
MILK HOUSE
STEPPING STONES
POND HILL
ICE HOUSE
SCHOOL HOUSE 2
TRAMP HOUSE
BATTLE OF WHEELWRIGHTS POND
WHEELWRIGHT
SITE OF FIRST MASTWAY SCHOOL
SITE OF RANDAL GARRISON
SITE OF FIRST MEETING HOUSE
OLD ROAD TO CONCORD BEFORE TPKE
MAST ROAD
PENDERGASTS R.R. CROSSING
PETER'S OVEN
TOWN POUND
MAST WAY SCHOOL
SITE TO WHICH FIRST MEETING HOUSE WAS MOVED
LEE HILL
TOWN FARM 1835-1878
DURHAM
OLD WELL
THOMPSON HILL
THOMPSONS R.R. CROSSING
LITTLE RIVER MILL
SCHOOL HSE 4
BARKS MILLS
TOWN HALL
BAPTIST CHURCH
LATER GRANGE HALL
CENTER SCHOOL
LITTLE RIVER
HOOK MILL
FORD
DAMES MILL
TOLL BRIDGE
BOSTON-MAINE R.R. 1874
LATER CALEF HIGHWAY 1938
CARTLAND HOMESTEAD
LUMBER MEETING HOUSE
R.R. UNDERPASS
TATERHILL CORNER
SITE OF DOE-FOX GARRISON
NOTTINGHAM
LAMPREY
MATHES MILL
SOUTH LEE
HARVEYS MILLS
SCHOOL HOUSE 7
STORE S.P.O.
LUMBER WHARF
UNION MEETING HOUSE
SO LEE SCHOOL 1881-1941
UNION TROTTING PARK
CANDLE HALL PAVILION
LAMPREY RIVER
WADLEY FALLS
SCHOOL HOUSE 6
SCHOOL HOUSE 5
NORTH RIVER
ALLAN'S BRIDGE
THOMPSON-THURSTON HOUSE
TAVERN
STORE S.P.O.
STORE
EPPING

Heritage Site #1 - Wadley Falls Village

As much as 8000 years before European settlers came to this area, Native Americans from as far away as Fryeburg, Maine visited here each summer to fish and camp on the five small islands that gave the area its first English name - Island Falls.

When the Europeans arrived, this location was coveted for its potential as a mill site, and as such, became the first permanently settled area within the bounds of the current Town of Lee. Not far from this sign, in the year 1657, there stood a tree "marked with two SS". The "two SS" were the initials of Samuel Symonds, a leading citizen and judge from Ipswich, Massachusetts. The "Honnored Generall Court" of Massachusetts granted Mr. Symonds 640 acres that extended one mile downriver from "a little Island in the River by the Falls" and one-half mile inland on each side. The center support of the present NH Route 152 Bridge rests on that "little Island".

Mr. Symonds took possession of his grant of 640 acres on June 3, 1657 *"in the presence & with the Consent of Mohermite Sagamore of these parts"*. The great Sagamore American Indian leader made his home on a hill behind what is now the Madbury Town Hall, and from there he could oversee much of the territory that he controlled. Others present on that day were the surveyors, John Gage and Daniell Epps, who had marked the tree, and Edward Hilton and his son, who were the original colonists at the 1623 settlement of Hilton's Point (now Dover).

Walter Barefoot, a controversial character in colonial New Hampshire, acquired 320 acres from the Symonds family in 1664 and on December 16, 1664, John Woocot of Newbury agreed to build a sawmill for Barefoot and Robert Wadley that was *"sixty and four foote in length, and twenty eight foote in breadth with floome & water whele"*. The agreed cost of the mill was 80 pounds.

This mill, whose construction was to begin *"on or before the 10 day of March"* in 1665, eventually became the sole property of Robert Wadley. Its construction began a period of 266 years of continuous commercial activity powered by the falls you see before you. This path of development was to be followed by sites all over New Hampshire. Sawmills were built at sites of available water power in order to harvest the great trees that covered the countryside. As the forests were cleared, cut into boards, and shipped all over the world, the cleared fields began to produce crops, so grist mills were built to share the water power. The villages and towns matured and the falling water from the improved dams was used to power the more complex industries needed by a growing and more sophisticated population. At this site grew the village of Wadley Falls that, in addition to the sawmill, contained at various times a grist mill, a planning mill, Deacon Guy Glidden's tannery, Gideon Towle's wooden pail factory, Dr. Edgerly's herbal drug factory (Dr. Edgerly was one of the founders of the NH Pharmaceutical Society), and the Norton Leatherboard Factory.

Before the Piscataqua River Bridge was built between Newington and Dover in 1794, travelers between Portsmouth and the inland towns of Nottingham, Northwood, Concord and beyond came south of Great Bay and made their way along what is now NH Route 152, passing over a bridge in this general vicinity. The combination of mill industry and travel

commerce resulted in a small village being established here. At its peak at the turn of the 19th century, Wadley Falls Village was the largest settlement in Lee. The mills here employed some 40 individuals, and there were two stores, a post office, and a hotel. A four-horse stagecoach ran daily between Nottingham and Newmarket with a stop here at Wadley Falls.

The last surviving mill, the Norton Leatherboard Factory, burned in 1921, and ended the mill era in Lee. The dam was purchased by the Newmarket Electric Company; however, a spring flood breached the dam, further sealing the fate of industrial uses at this location.

The three-story home located across Route 152 from this sign is the Glidden-Towle-Edgerly House. Built circa 1749 (the current back ell) with a large, stately addition (now the main house) in 1828, this building's legacy includes ownership by three families who were all connected with the mill industries at Wadley Falls. It was nearly destroyed by an arsonist in April of 2010. New owners have since stabilized the structure, and it was placed on the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places in November of 2010. Its new owners will hopefully return it to its former stature as the preeminent structure of a revitalized and forward-looking Wadley Falls Village. Fires and floods have been a threat to the fortunes of Wadley Falls Village for over three hundred years. Let's hope that the future has more sunny days and gentle spring rains to help in preserving its significant historical value!

Additional Reading:

1. The Mills of Lee, Randy Stevens, pending publishing 2013

Websites of interest:

1. The Lamprey River Watershed Association http://www.lrwa-nh.org

Heritage Site #2 – South Lee Depot

These three hydrangeas are all that remain to remind us of the South Lee Railroad Station, which stood just a few yards to the south during the years that the Nashua and Rochester Railroad ran along the corridor that is now New Hampshire Route 125.

South Lee Depot was the commercial center of Lee during that time. In addition to the passenger station, other structures existed in this area, including a freight shed (now home of the Lee Historical Society Museum at the Town Hall Complex), a milk house, a tool shed, a water cistern, pump house, and water tower.

Major items of freight shipped from this location included lumber, milk, and a few masts. Mail was also routed via the railroad during that time. Over the years, excursion trains ran to various locations to the north and east to accommodate special events. Among them were the very popular Rochester Fair runs, an annual Old Orchard Beach (Maine) run, and the daily Bar Harbor Express that ran from New York City to Bar Harbor, Maine during the summer months. As many as 70 trains per day may have passed through this area during the heyday of the railroad.

The railroad operated from November 24, 1874 until September 24, 1935. After decommissioning, the railroad and many of its structures were removed and the corridor sat idle for about a year. At that time, State Senator Austin Calef, who ran a chicken business in Barrington, sponsored a proposal to convert the line in this area to a highway. The road was later named the Calef Highway in his honor.

George Washington Plumer (1828-1901) was an active player in the economy and the politics of Lee during this era. He ran a general store from the building just across Demeritt Avenue from this sign, and lived in the 1877 Federal-style house just up the hill from here. Beginning before the era of the railroad, he ran a peddling business from here, and covered routes in Northwood, Nottingham, Newmarket, Exeter, Rye, Long Sands, and other seacoast communities. His peddler's wagon is now preserved at the Carriage Museum of Skyline Farm in North Yarmouth, Maine. As Mr. Plumer went about his business, which sometimes kept him on the road for six days a week, he kept diaries that included information on where he dined and stayed each evening, as well as weather observations and information regarding his business. Copies of these diaries are on file with the Lee Historical Society and make for many hours of interesting reading.

When the railroad became operational in 1874, Mr. Plumer's general store became a central attraction in the area. He often used the railroad to travel to Boston to purchase goods and return them to his store. He also ran a shuttle to get local residents to and from the station when they needed that convenience. His store was an oasis for stagecoach riders making their way between the seacoast towns and Concord and other interior locations. In later years, George's son, William Plumer, joined his father as storekeeper and he continued to run the business after

his father's death. The store sat vacant for many years, except for a short time when Stanley Plumer, George's grandson, ran a restaurant here. In 2011 the building was restored by Lee resident Fred Schultz and it now serves as a professional office for his business.

The continuing story of South Lee Depot serves to remind us of the value of adaptive re-use of historic resources. The superior roadbed alignment of the Nashua and Rochester Railroad served to make a first-class regional highway through the southeastern portion of the State at a very reasonable cost to taxpayers. The little freight shed that once stood at the crossing was used as a commercial building in Epping for a number of years before being returned to Lee to be used as the Historical Society's Museum. Plumer's Store lives on as a very comfortable office. Now...if someone had only thought to save that station building for a brighter day...!

Additional Reading:

1. The Railroad that Passed through Lee, NH – 1874-1934, Randy Stevens, available at the Lee Town Offices for $20.

Websites of Interest:

1. Worcester, Nashua and Rochester Railroad - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York_and_Cumberland_Railroad_(Maine)

Heritage Site # 3 – Cartland Road

It is hard to find a road in these parts that exemplifies the earliest days of colonial New England better than Cartland Road in Lee, New Hampshire. Cartland Road begins on a sharp curve on Lee Hill Road, and continues southerly for almost a mile to its terminus at Fox Garrison Road. This road was designated a Scenic Road at the 1972 Lee Town Meeting. Records are unclear as to when the road was laid out, but it certainly pre-dates the Cartland Farm, which was established in 1737. Some evidence suggests the road was first laid out in the late 1600's, shortly after the establishment of the mast way between Durham and this location.

The earliest resident of Cartland Road was Robert Thompson, who built a saw mill on the Little River just above the Cartland Road Bridge sometime before 1733. Remains of the mill can still be seen there and the 6.6 acre site, located on the northern shore of the river, which is now owned by the Town of Lee. Public access is allowed; however, please respect abutting private properties, and please take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints!

Mr. Thompson also built his house near the mill, but later had it moved to its present location at the top of the hill. In the days of the sawmill, the impounded waters behind his dam backed up as far as the current Route 125, and the current Thompson Mill Road was known as Mill Pond Road. Mr. Thompson was an influential person in commercial and political circles in town, and he served as the Chairman of the first Board of Selectmen when Lee was separated from Durham in 1766. In the era of the saw mill there were numerous other homes and two other mills in the area. Moses Dame tended Lee's first tavern out of one of the homes, beginning in 1775, and it is said that much of the Town's business was accomplished here before the development of the Town Center on Lee Hill.

Current-day travelers might be impressed by the pastoral, unhurried feeling that one experiences relative to the traffic of other Town roads, but in the earlier days of our Town, this was the main north/south corridor through the area. Imagine a cart-full of lumber being fetched over Pelatiah's Hill (the now-paved portion of Cartland Road at the north end) being pulled by a team of oxen! The hill's name comes from a son of Robert Thompson's, who lived in the house at the top of the hill during the period of 1765-1843.

Joseph Cartland obtained the first twenty-five acres of his farm further south by working for another farmer in the area for six months in 1737. He built the first portion of the current farmhouse in 1745, and promptly brought his new bride to the farm. This was the beginning of the Cartland legacy in Lee that has continued for over 250 years, with the exception of one 12-year gap.

Over the many generations, all of the Cartlands were deeply involved in religious, social and political activities of one sort or another. During the time of Joseph's grandson, Jonathan, the house was frequented by many distinguished visitors, including Frederick Douglas, the famous former slave, and John

Greenleaf Whittier, the famous poet from Haverhill, Massachusetts. The Cartlands took an anti-slavery position and offered their home as a stop on the Underground Railroad, which was responsible for helping many slaves by affording them safe passage to free states and northward to Canada. In 2007, the National Park Service evaluated the evidence regarding the history of the Cartland House and determined that it made a significant contribution to the understanding of the Underground Railroad in American History and it met the requirements for inclusion in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. The Park Service designated it a "quiet site" as it is not open to the public.

The Cartlands were Quakers and were influential in establishing a local meetinghouse, first on Wadley Falls Road, which was later moved to its present location on Cartland Road, across from the family home. During that time there were many other Lee residents who were members of the Friends Society, and the existence of the local meetinghouse eliminated regular trips to the larger congregation in Dover.

By the mid-eighteen hundreds the number of Quakers was dropping off, and meetings ceased. In 1847, Moses Cartland organized the Walnut Grove School in the old Meeting House and this school was soon rated as one of the best academies in the state. The school was in existence for about fifteen years, and drew students from as far away as Ohio.

Here are some questions concerning little-known facts about Cartland Road, which if answered correctly will identify you as a long-time resident of the Town of Lee. Answers are given below, for those of you who wish to begin your journey to full residency at this time!

Question: Where is Malfunction Junction?
Answer: Malfunction Junction is at the beginning of Cartland Road, where it meets up with Lee Hill Road and Thompson Mill Road.

Question: Where was the last cougar shot in New Hampshire, and who killed it?
Answer: A bounty was once offered for killing Eastern Cougars in New Hampshire, because of their interference with farming and livestock. The last cougar killed in New Hampshire was taken in 1853, on the Cartland Farm, by a hunter from nearby Newmarket.

Question: Where is Taterbug Corner, and how did it get its name?
Answer: Taterbug Corner is at the southerly end of Cartland road, where it meets up with Fox Garrison Road. It got its name in the days when the intersection was surrounded by potato fields.

Websites of Interest:

1. Woodman Institute Museum, Dover, NH, where a display of stuffed wild animals includes the cougar shot on the Cartland Farm - http://woodmaninstitutemuseum.org

Heritage Site #4 – The Lee Hook

Lee Hook refers to the peculiar course of the Lamprey River, beginning below Wadley Falls, and continuing on a large horseshoe-shaped course through the southeastern portion of Lee for nearly five miles before exiting into Durham above Wiswall Falls. There are approximately 1600 acres of land within the Hook that are within the borders of the Town of Lee. The original farms in this area were established in the first half of the 1700's through grants declared by the Town of Durham, years before Lee was to become a town on its own. In his 1916 recount of the history of Lee, noted historian John Scales proclaimed that the Lee Hook contained *"some of the finest farms in Strafford County"*. He also had high praise for the men who ran these farms, and proclaimed of one particular farmer, that he had improved the land "*to such an extent that he raises two spears of grass in his fields where formerly grew only one!"*

To this day, agriculture continues to be the principal industry in Lee, and the quest for excellence continues on the farms of Lee Hook. Most visible on a drive along Lee Hook Road are the Chesuncook Farm (about three quarters of a mile south of this marker), which is a dairy farm, and the Hollister Family Farm (within sight of this marker), which produces vegetables, along with hay, cut flowers, eggs, and honey. Also of particular interest is the University of New Hampshire's Organic Research Farm at the Burley-Demeritt and Bartlett-Dudley properties (within sight of this marker). This facility, the first of its kind in the United States to be operated by a land-grant college, was opened in 2006.

Today, there are over eighty farms in Lee. Additional information on some of them can be found on the following websites:

http://www.colsa.unh.edu/aes/odrf/

http://www.nhcommaze.com/

http://www .flaghill.com/ about/

http://www. velvetpastures.com/home.html

http://www. dermeritthillfarm.com/

http://www.newhampshirefarms.net/farm-profiles/strafford-county/tuckaway-farm-lee-nh.html

http://www .wildmillergardens.com/

http://www.bluebellgreenhouse.com/

http://www.mistymeadows.org/

http://hicorynutfarm.com/Cheese.html

http://finegarden.com/

http://www.facebook.com/pinewoodsyankeefarm

https://www.facebook.com/thehollisterfamilyfarm

http://www.walnutgrovefences.com/

For information on farms not listed here contact the Lee Agricultural Commission at http://www.leenh.org/Pages/LeeNH_BComm/Agricultural/index

Through its Master Plan process, the Town of Lee has determined that there is a strong desire among residents to maintain Lee's significant farming heritage. Accordingly, many steps are being taken to encourage preservation of farmland, and the farmscapes such as those found in this area of Lee Hook. This is being done through promotion of partnerships for bringing farm products to local markets, encouragement and assistance with obtaining conservation easements on large parcels of farmland, and offering property tax relief to encourage the preservation of historic barns Since 1980, the Town of Lee has been instrumental in acquiring over forty conservation easements, with additional easements being added each year. For more information on the process of preparing a conservation easement, please contact the Lee Conservation Commission.

ADDITIONAL READING:

1. The History of the Jeremiah Smith Grange, 2011, Donna F. Eisenhard, available at the Lee Town Offices for $20.

Websites of Interest:

1. Map of Lee Town Lands
http://www.leenh.org/Pages/LeeNH_LP Admin/Maps/MagicMap_8. 5x 11. pdf

2. Lee Farmer's Market
http://www.leenh.org/Pages/LeeNH_BComm/Agricultureal/farmersmarket

Heritage Site #5 – Lee Town Center

Looking around the vicinity of this sign, it is hard to believe that this area was once a thriving commercial center, as well as the seat of town government and social activities. In simpler days there were, at one time or another, several taverns, a blacksmith shop, stables, a stagecoach stop, a feed store, a general, store, and a doctor's office.

When the town was set apart from Durham in 1766, there was virtually nothing to the Town Center except the five-way intersection that now forms our Town Common. The First Parish Meeting House, located at the intersection of Mast Road and Garrity Road, served both as a house of worship and a place for town meetings. Sometime before 1804, it was moved to the current Town Center to better serve the growing needs of the western portions of town. It was taken down when the present Town Hall was built as a school in 1846. As the Town grew and various new government services were introduced, additional structures were added to the Town Center. The Town Shed, located behind the Town Hall, was constructed in the late 1800's, and served as a shelter for hobos during the years that the railroad occupied the current right-of-way of New Hampshire Route 125. The library began life as the Center School in 1897, and was moved to its current location in 1962. The Town Hall Annex began life as a firehouse in 1950. Six years after Lee entered the Oyster River Cooperative School District, the new Mast Way School was completed in 1960. The current Public Safety Complex was added in 2005.

The present Lee Church was built as a chapel in 1861, and became the home of an organized Congregational Church in 1867. The building has been added to several times over the years, and the Parsonage was added in the 1870's. A Baptist church flourished on Lee Hook Road for about twenty years, before being renovated into the home of the Jeremiah Smith Grange in 1891.

While commercial activity has moved with changing modes of transportation and is now focused around the Lee Traffic Circle, the functions of government and community remain steadfastly in place in the Lee Town Center.

ADDITIONAL READING:

1. Lee in Four Centuries, Ursula Baier, Editor, 1966, available at the Lee Town Offices for $20.

2. The History of the Jeremiah Smith Grange, 2011, Donna F. Eisenhard, available at the Lee Town Offices for $20.

Websites of Interest:

1. Town of Lee website www.leenh.org

Heritage Site #6 – Wheelwright Pond

Prior to the European settlement in New Hampshire, there were many small bands of nomadic American Indians living here who spoke the language of the Abenaki American Indians to the north and east. The bands generally spent their winters in permanent villages in the interior regions but ventured to the coastline for summer fishing and hunting expeditions. In Lee, Wadley Falls was the site of one seasonal camp. Other nearby camps were at Dover Point and *"Lamperell First Falls"* (now Newmarket Village). The local tribes, although quite independent from one-another, had formed a mutual protection confederation with other tribes throughout southern New Hampshire, eastern Massachusetts and extreme southern Maine. Collectively, these tribes were known as the Pennacook Federation.

Settlers began to arrive and establish permanent colonies in Eastern Massachusetts and coastal New Hampshire, including Portsmouth, Dover and Exeter. In 1634, the Pennacook Chief, Passaconaway (The Great Bear), urged members of his federation to enter into a treaty with the new inhabitants, with whom they had been fighting, and by 1638, a veritable flood of incoming settlers overwhelmed the Penacook territory. A New England Confederation was organized by the Puritan settlers in 1643, between the colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven. Its main purpose was the coordination of defense and the settlement of boundary disputes. The Piscataqua colonies, Maine and New Hampshire, were left out of the New England Confederation as they were built on a town-meeting form of organization, which had more of an allegiance with the population than with England. In October 1652, Massachusetts officially set up a claim to everything as far north as the latitude of Lake Winnipesaukee—including all the New Hampshire and Maine settlements—and then proceeded to reorganize there and demand the allegiance of the inhabitants.

Around 1666, the Pennacook Chief, Passaconaway died and Metacom (known as King Philip to the English) became head of the Penacook Federation. Unlike his predecessor, who kept peace between the tribes and the Plymouth Colony settlers, Metacom was more rebellious. He protested at the way the settlers were claiming increasing areas of land and forcing the tribes out of their own country. There were petty offences committed on both sides, and after the Plymouth colony had made demands for total disarmament of the Wampanoags, a member of the Penacook Federation famed for their attendance at the First Thanksgiving at Plymouth Colony, the Federation Council decided that only the Wampanoag nation would war on Plymouth; but, if the rest of the New England Confederation should join in the war, the Penacook Federation would do likewise. The day after war was declared, the Wampanoag army started out towards Taunton, MA and at the same time the New England Confederation decided to aid Plymouth, and a troop of militia set out from Boston in June 1675. When the news reached the Penacook, the Federation decided to aid the Wampanoags, and all were at war. There was much destruction and massacre and in July 1676, Metacom was killed by a traitor, and the Penacook Federation surrendered that August. The war, which was extremely costly to the colonists in life and property, resulted in the virtual extermination of tribal Indian life in southern New England. Hundreds of Natives who fought with Philip were sold into slavery abroad. Others who might be rehabilitated, especially women and children, were forced to become servants locally.

War between France and England resulted in additional challenges for the settlers, as French

settlers in Quebec became allies of the American Indians, and supplied them with arms and advice on a regular basis. The relationship between the English and the American Indians continued to be unsettled.

On the night of June 27, 1689, Pennacook American Indians attacked the settlement of Cocheco (now downtown Dover), destroying eight houses and garrisons, killing 23 settlers and carrying away another 29. Its founder, Major Richard Walderne, was brutally tortured and murdered, as were other members of his family. Responding to this, the authorities in Boston assigned additional soldiers to protect the settlement, but the American Indians were quickly moving on to other targets. In August of that same year, American Indians raided the Oyster River Plantation (now Durham) and killed or took away eighteen persons.

On July 4, 1690, American Indians raided a settlement that is now the Village of Newmarket, killing seven and taking a young boy prisoner. Two days later, when the news of this reached Dover, one hundred men, under the command of Captain Noah Wiswall and Captain John Floyd, were dispatched to scout for the perpetrators. Captains Wiswall and Floyd came across fresh evidence of the American Indians in the vicinity of Turtle Pond, within sight of this marker. History is uncertain about what exactly ensued thereafter, but evidence suggests that there was a two-hour running battle through the forest along a path roughly approximating the course of Steppingstone Road, toward Wheelwright Pond, ending with the total exhaustion of both forces somewhere along the southeast shore of the pond. By the time the two sides disengaged, Captain Wiswall and fifteen others were killed. There is no account of the number of American Indians killed.

Despite this carnage, there was little respite from the animosities between the two parties, and raids continued with regularity. The Oyster River Massacre of 1694 was particularly disturbing, as approximately 250 Abenaki American Indians were lead from Norridgewock, Maine by a French soldier, Claude-Sebastien de Villieu. Fourteen houses were burned, and 94 persons were killed or captured.

By 1725, some of the Pennacook bands went west, to join with their former Mohawk enemies; however, a majority went to Saint Francis, Quebec.

To understand the totality of this historical purging of the Pennacooks from the New England frontier, one has only to review the latest U.S. Census for the Town of Lee. It determined that only 0.22 percent of the Lee population (about ten persons out of nearly 4500) identified themselves as Native Americans. We don't know which, if any, of these ten might be descendants of the Pennacook American Indians who once summered in Lee for so many generations!

ADDITIONAL READING:

The Story of Peter Little Bear, a Lamprey River Adventure, David Allan and Leslie Hamilton, available at the Lee Town Offices for $20.

Websites of Interest:

1. Account of the Battle of Wheelwright Pond -

http://www.archive.org/stream/historyoftownofd00stac#page/88/mode/2up

2. History of the Cocheco Massacre - http://www.dover.lib.nh.us/DoverHistory/cocheco.htm

3. History of the Oyster River Massacre - http://mikenh.wordpress.com/2009/12/01/marker-50-oyster-river-massacre/

Heritage Site #7 – First Meeting House

Prior to 1766, the territory of Lee was a part of Durham; but as the population of this western region grew, there was great hardship for the new residents to travel, sometimes as far as eight miles, to the Durham meeting house at Oyster River First Falls, for worship, education and governance.

Thus, in the early years of the eighteenth century, a meeting house was built here, on the northeastern corner of the Old Mast Way and Garrity Road. In those early years, it is likely that worship services were presided over by visiting ministers, or local laypersons. Not long after the establishment of the meeting house, the land beside it was set aside as the first Town Cemetery.

On the evening of May 24, 1724 George Chesley was accompanying his fiancée, Elizabeth Burnham, home from a worship service at the meeting house, when they were attacked by American Indians. George was immediately killed, but Elizabeth was able to retrace her route toward the meetinghouse at least part of the way before collapsing over a large rock, where she bled considerably. Someone found her and attended to her, however she died four days later of her wounds. Thereafter, residents of the area noticed that her bloodstains kept returning to the rock on which she had lain, despite the ravages of storms and many seasons. It is said that she was the first person to be buried in the new cemetery; unfortunately her burial site was not marked. Eventually, the locally prominent Thompson Family, whose family plot was directly adjacent to the Meeting House, honored her memory by bringing the "bloody rock" into their plot, and erecting a fitting memorial for her there. Both the memorial stone and the "bloody rock" can be seen by climbing the stairs located next to this sign.

By the time Lee acquired its first full-time minister in 1762, a new meeting house had been built on Lee Hill, in the area we now call "Lee Town Center". Rev. Samuel Hutchins saw Lee through some very changing times, including the establishment of Lee as an incorporated town, and the American Declaration of Independence from Britain. He served here until 1797.

In early times, ministers were among the few with higher education, and as such, they were often called upon to double as teachers. This was the case in Durham at about the time of the incorporation of Lee, and at that time, one teacher served in one schoolhouse for the entire township. Can anyone wonder how many school-days were missed by youth living on farms or at mill-sites in the further reaches of Lee?

We have not uncovered any records of early schools in Lee directly after the incorporation in 1766; however Durham established a Mast Way School District in 1797. It may have been that the schoolhouse shown on an 1804/1805 map of Lee, being located on Mast Road, somewhat to the west of here, might actually have been a cooperative effort between the two towns. If this was the case, it would certainly have been the earliest attempt at establishing an Oyster River Cooperative School District between the two towns! In any case, the school was disassembled in 1835 and moved to Stepping Stones Road, and later yet it was moved to Lee Town Center to become a Christian Endeavor Hall, the Community Church Vestry and presently serves the Lee Church Congregational as its Library.

Heritage Site #8 – New Town Plains

The first permanent European settlers came to this area, landing at Dover Point, in 1623. They gained authority for their settlement through a grant by the Council of Plymouth (Massachusetts), which laid claim to all of New England under the authority of the King of England. The settlement became known as Dover, and the grant gave them control of all of the land that is now Dover, Durham, Lee, Madbury, Somersworth, Rollinsford, and portions of Newmarket and Newington.

As the Dover settlement prospered, colonists began to explore the inland area of the land granted them, in search of natural resources to utilize for their livelihood. In the general area surrounding this marker, they found vast numbers of high-quality white pines, some taller than 100 feet, that were ideal for making ships' masts. As was the custom in those times, these resources remained the property of the government, with the best of the mast trees reserved for the sole use of the British Navy. Others were cut under license for the use in the growing coastal shipbuilding trade on Dover Point.

To get these huge pines from this area to the waterfront, Lee's first mast road was cleared in 1663. The road began at this approximate location, and took the approximate course of Old Mill Road, New Town Plains Road and Cherry Lane in Lee, Cherry Lane, Town Hall Road, and Knox Marsh Road in Madbury, and Pudding Hill Road and Mast Road in Dover, eventually ending at a landing on the Bellamy River, below the first falls. This road pre-dated Lee's second mast road, which still bears its historic name, laid out in 1694.

The abundance of natural resources in this area was so significant that others soon followed the mast harvesters in search of lumber for building homes and barns, and a sawmill was established on the Oyster River, a few hundred feet below the Old Mill Road Bridge, to the south of here. The remains of Patrick Jemison's mill are barely discernible today, but one can still see the mill foundation, and several of the spillway stones are still in place. Other large granite stones have been scattered downstream by the many floods that have followed over the succeeding two hundred-plus years since the mill was active.

As the land was cleared of trees, and Dover Point became a bustling commercial center, it was only natural for new settlers to move into this area to build farms. Over time, the area became distinguished from older portions of Dover when it earned the popular name "New Town", thus the name of the road just to the north of here. By 1766, when Lee was incorporated as a separate town, this area was completely developed as farmland, and it remained so through the mid-twentieth century.

Following World War II, the automobile was making a significant impact on America. Farms in this region had new competition from farms further west, where soils were richer and more productive, and their products could be trucked "back east" at surprisingly low costs. The development of the Interstate Highway System only served to hasten the demise of farming on the New Town Plains. But the very threat presented by this era of long-distance transportation was what lead to the renewed interest in the natural resources of New Town Plains.

Responding to traffic congestion and safety concerns at the University of New Hampshire and Downtown Durham, the Route 4 Bypass was constructed in the 1960's, and much of the sand and gravel for the project was mined from pits in this area. In the years following the completion of the bypass, many new residential subdivisions were built in the surrounding towns, and materials from these pits were used extensively for site development, local streets, septic systems and the like.

Eventually, however, the natural resources in the two pits you see at the site of this marker were completely exhausted, and further excavation would have threatened water quality in the Oyster River, which is located just a few hundred feet beyond the tree line on the far side of the pits. The Oyster River is a source of drinking water for the Town of Durham and the University of New Hampshire.

Recognizing the need to preserve the remaining resources, the voters of the Town of Lee approved warrant articles in 2006 and 2007 to purchase a total of ninety acres in the two pits lying between Old Mill Road and the Oyster River, and to work with the Natural Resource Conservation Service Wetland Reserve Program and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to reclaim the land for future generations. The reclamation project, now completed, included construction of vernal pools and erosion prevention sluices, placement of boulder perches, and general replanting of aquatic and upland plants that will attract wildlife of many different types over time.

Whether it be the towering pines that our ancestors first saw when they arrived on the New Town Plains, or the sand and gravel that allowed a more recent generation to build modern communities and transportation infrastructure we all enjoy today, or the clean drinking water we need to ensure the health of our next generation, New Town Plains has been a great source of natural resources for the area, and just as it was in 1623, there are once again white pines growing here for the common good of the people!

ADDITIONAL READING:

1. The Early Roads and Settlers of Lee, New Hampshire, Melvin E. Jenkins, available at the Lee Town Offices for $20.
2. Colonial Era History of Dover, New Hampshire, John Scales, available from www.heritagebooks.com .