



LEEDS LETTER

FEBRUARY 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS 2015

FEBRUARY 10

LCA Meeting

Tuesday, 7:00 - 8:00 pm

Leeds School teacher's lounge

- Pizza Party Planning
- Workin' Bridges Hotel Bridge site visit planning

MARCH 10

LCA Meeting

Tuesday, 7:00 - 8:00 pm

Leeds School teacher's lounge

- Pizza Party
- Mulberry Park tree trimming
- Litter clean up

MARCH 14

Beat the Winter Blues Pizza & Raffle Party

Saturday, 4:00 - 7:00pm

Northampton Country Club

DATE TBD

Hotel Bridge community meeting with Workin' Bridges representatives

Leeds Civic Association

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Phenomenon in Leeds - The Neighbor

So many things have happened in the natural world of Leeds that one can get breathless - bird and animal sightings to the transformation of the Mill River from 7 inches of skateable ice to ice-free in less than 12 hours (Sunday 1/19). But maybe the most interesting occurrence happened back on an early January eve when several neighbors gathered around from 5:45-6:45 to view something called "light pillars." These optical phenomena are made in very cold temperatures when falling ice crystals are present in the atmosphere - needing some unusual weather circumstances to occur (too scientific to explain). Anyway, the setting sun and moon can generate these pillars in the sky and artificial lighting can create even greater, taller pillars. This is what the neighbors witnessed on that early January eve. Chartpak's yellowish parking lot lights shot way, way into the sky as if they were giant stationary spotlights which changed in texture so slowly. Over near the Overlook Nursing Home (now called Highview of Northampton) the columns were white, emanating from the street lights. To look at them it felt like you could have been beamed up to a UFO. In fact, these pillars often generate UFO calls. Niagara Falls is one place in particular where they are regularly seen. While our Mill River dams and falls are no Niagara, it's sure nice to know that here in Leeds you don't have to be honeymooners or vacationers to see special things. All you have to do is take advantage of what we have and step out of your door into your very own neighborhood. A photo of the "light pillars" in Leeds can be seen at www.leedscivic.org.

Mill River Ice Jams - Jason Johnson

I don't know if anyone has been walking around the river, with the conditions so treacherous over the last two days (Jan 18-19). Sunday night I went out into my back yard on Main Street and found the entire river flowing across the rear portion of my property. This is the third time this has happened in the 14 years that I've lived here, once during Hurricane Irene, and another spring flood, but never in winter.

In the morning I walked up to the bridge to find a huge conglomerate of ice stuck on the Western bank around the Hotel Bridge, and a living room sized ice berg in the middle of the channel effectively directing the majority of flow under the Main Street bridge causing the flooding, the entire channel extending around the three parcels is completely blocked with ice. Again in my time here this is a first. We are hoping for a gentle warming and spring breakup, with no large rain events, otherwise we may be in trouble. At www.leedscivic.org you can see pictures from January 19th showing the arctic landscape and volume of ice, (pretty) and pretty cool.

Two Winter Blue Events to Make You Smile - Heidi Stevens

1. Brilliant blue feathered friends have been coloring the neighborhood in large numbers over the past few weeks, sighted in several yards and feeders, and flitting over the bike path toward Look Park. If you haven't been lucky in spotting a bluebird in your yard you might want to take a look at the featured photo on the LCA website homepage (leedscivic.org). It shows a group of Eastern Bluebirds snacking on meal worms in Sue Carbin's window box. A bright blue male and a more muted toned female are perched on the box's end and appear to be flirting with each other!

2. The "Beat the Winter Blues Pizza Party & Yankee Raffle" will be held on Saturday, March 14 at the Northampton Country Club from 4-8 in the evening. There will be a cash bar, prizes, plenty of pizza, desserts, music and fun. Jim Mias will be the Master of Ceremonies and Dana Collins will be the D.J. Almost as fun as the party is the planning of the party. If

you have an idea, suggestion, or want to help in any way, please come to the LCA Feb 10th meeting at 7:00 in the Leeds School teachers' lounge.

As far as the raffle prizes go, we generally collect a range of things from unusual to useful to uncommonly delicious like coveted gift certificates for tasty treats. You may have holiday gifts to *re-gift* as a party raffle prize and these are always welcome. If so, your *re-gifts* can be dropped off at Heidi's side door at 8 Upland Road or call 585-9923 for your donated raffle item to be picked up.

The party is a celebration of our village and those who live here. It warms us up in the winter and is a good time to catch up with your neighbors, meet folks if you are new to Leeds, and an event to look forward to in the winter.

1950 Winters in Leeds Through the Eyes of a Young Boy

- Richard (Red) Greene

I always enjoyed the winter in Leeds back in the 1950s because there were so many fun things to do. We had our three favorite skating spots; the pond in front of the VA Hospital, the Mill River in front of St. Catherine's church, and above the Orange Dam on the bike path. In the fifties the dams were still functional so there was always plenty of good ice. Sometimes we would go down to Florence and skate where the Florence Civic Association building now sits or go to Arcanum Field where the city would make a nice ice rink.

There weren't many snow days then, but when we would have one our group of friends would meet with snow shovels and head out to Villone Drive, Florence Street, and Warner Row to shovel driveways and sidewalks for anyone who would pay us. We would get \$1.00-1.25 per driveway and 25-35 cents per walkway, depending on the size. There were usually 5 or 6 of us to do the work so we could move a lot of snow. Sometimes we could split \$10 to 12 dollars for a whole day of hard work. To us \$2.00 plus each was like hitting the lottery. I would save the money and later spend it on candy at Sarazin's Store on Main St.

Another fun thing was on Thursday nights when we would play City Recreation basketball in the Leeds school gym. No fancy T-shirts back then, it was shirts and skins teams only. On Tuesday nights if our mothers let us, we would go up to the Leeds school and watch the Daily Hampshire Gazette's women's basketball team play teams from around the region. The Gazette women's team was led by Gush Valenta. Players like Vi Goodnow, a Hall of Famer would bring her Orange, MA team to Leeds to play. These teams could beat most woman's college teams today.

Sledding in the 1950s was the best, mostly because we had a big hill in front of our house on Florence St. We would slide from sun up to after sundown, only taking time to change our wet clothes, drink a cup of tomato soup and eat a half a grilled cheese sandwich at lunch. Since we didn't have any fancy boots or mittens back then it gave us a chance to throw our wet wool clothes on the radiator and try to dry them out somewhat before we went out again. The best and most dangerous sliding was after an ice storm, we would go up to the Burke sister's house (across from Leeds School) on the top of Florence Street and slide down the side walk all the way to the bottom of school house hill to the arch. I still get goose bumps thinking how crazy that was. We

would always know when it was time to come in for the night, as our mothers would call us, almost musically by name," Russell," "Jimmy," "Franny," "Bobby" (we had 2), "Richie," and "Rickie" (that was my cue). You would go to bed with bumps and bruises and couldn't wait for tomorrow to come.

Hotel Bridge Update - Heidi Stevens

Workin' Bridges Site Visit

The Leeds Civic Association has been in discussion with the DPW to bring Workin' Bridges, the organization that specializes in helping communities bring their bridges back into use.

The original 2011 CPA funds used to hire Stantec Associates to assess the bridge has a balance remaining of \$5,292. Rather than use the funds for a public meeting by Stantec about their findings (which are available for free on the Northampton website), the LCA has suggested to the DPW and the Planning Dept that the money be used to hire Workin' Bridges to do a site visit and an assessment on the Hotel Bridge. Their 2-3 day visit will also include a community town hall style information meeting about the bridge restoration, a meeting with DPW engineers and the LCA. Workin' Bridges will also provide, within two weeks of their site visit, a Scope of Work proposal which will break down the repair work step by step and give a cost estimate for each repair. Having this information will be helpful when applying for restoration grants and holding fund raisers for specific restoration goals. The available CPA funds almost meets Workin' Bridges' fee. The balance will come from the LCA-Hotel bridge fund. Scheduling details for the site visit are in the works.

National Registry of Historic Places

The application to have the Hotel Bridge placed on the National Registry List of Historical Places is in the final editing phase. Three LCA volunteers, Penny Geis, Jason Johnson, and Jim Montgomery have been doggedly collecting information and preparing the complicated application...not an easy feat!

Green Tip - Amy Stamm

Winter is filled with long nights and short days, and we tend to turn on our indoor lights for longer periods than in other seasons. Choosing the right kind of light bulbs can save a huge amount of the energy your home consumes. The newest kind of energy-efficient light bulbs are LED bulbs. They use 75% less energy than incandescent lighting, and the quality of their light is much better than fluorescent bulbs. LED bulbs also last 35 to 50 times longer than incandescent bulbs and 2 to 5 times longer than fluorescent bulbs. In addition, they produce very little heat and do not need a special disposal system, like fluorescent bulbs do. Their price has also dropped like crazy since they were first introduced, and you can regularly find them on sale in local hardware stores. If you want to purchase them online, go to <http://ecobuildingbargains.org/categories/greenshop/>, where they are always inexpensive. This is our local Center for EcoTechnology's EcoBuilding Bargains website.

Call for submissions

If you have something interesting or entertaining about Leeds to share, please write it up for the next newsletter. Any Cub reporters out there? Contact Heidi: 585-9923, heidi@heidistevens.com.