



THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER FOR ALL LEEDS RESIDENTS

LEEDS LETTER

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2023 HAPPY NEW YEAR
LEEDS RESIDENTS

Larger Photos of Skaters at Leeds P.O.

A larger print of the 1904 photo (left) is posted on the Leeds Post Office bulletin board. A color copy of the 2004 reenactment scene taken by Hampshire Daily Gazette photographer, Jerry Roberts is also on view. The color photo lists the Leeds residents who were on the ice posing for the photo.

PHOTO LEFT: Leeds residents ice skating on the Mill River near the Hotel Bridge, circa 1904

PHOTO CIRCLE: Melinda (Tacy) and George Rolland, grandmother and grandfather of Edna Greene of River Road. The couple was courting at the time of the photo was taken.

Leeds Residents Have Questions!

The burning question this fall has been, "What's up with the VA fence?" Sarah Robinson, Spokesperson for the VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System, explained that the fence project is replacing the previous fencing surrounding the campus, and is intended to protect critical infrastructure and to meet the security posture for federal facilities and infrastructure. This is a requirement from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Physical Security & Resiliency Design Manual, which states:

"The perimeter barrier must clearly mark the site perimeter, provide vehicular/pedestrian access control, identify intentional trespassers, and support campus/facility security operations. The barrier must be consistent with campus architectural elements."

Early Morning Mini Walks By Heidi Stevens

Short walks around the neighborhood are an excellent way to start my day. Yeah, the walking part is nice, the sunrises are great, the winter air is crisp. The best part, however, is when I spot interesting wildlife. Remember, I'm not walking in the woods, I'm on paved roads. Two days ago, I watched, at eye level, a large pilated woodpecker whacking his beak into the dead tree stump near the little free library on Upland Road. He just hammered away, wood chips flying all over. It didn't even notice me standing just 10 feet away! Yesterday, it was damp and gray. I did the same short loop and I watched as two adult fox hustled across the road and up my neighbor's driveway. Can't wait to see who's out and about tomorrow!

French Echoes in Leeds By Edna Greene

Just a few years back I sat in a pedicurist's chair delighting in all the warm indulgences this activity brings, when I looked up and around and it occurred to me that my own French Canadian grandmother worked in this old brick building in the early 20th century. My grandmother once was actually present in the very space, not enjoying the comforts I was, but rather working very long days, doing hard work in a sometimes cold room for many years before she married and had 10 children. I am one of her grandchildren.

I have no Irish ancestors, (although Ancestry.com tells me I am built of them as well), but they, too, came to Leeds in high numbers and resided in our village along with the French in the mid 1800s, hoping for employment in factories like the one where I sat for my pedicure. They came hoping for a better life in the U.S.

Years ago, I stood on the Hotel Bridge and looked upstream. I imagined my French grandparents in their ice skates standing as they were in the iconic Hotel Bridge photo, circa 1904. In the center of the group of ice skaters, my grandparents stand tall in their skates, posing with other Leeds villagers. I tried to stand in the very same place when the LCA organized Leeds residents to reenact that same scene in 2004.

I look at the Leeds Village Apartments on Main Street and think about my many French aunts and

uncles who worked in that factory building when in its past life it was the Corticelli Silk Mill.

I could drive by many houses in Leeds and I would be able to tell you about several large French families that lived in those homes for decades.

I see them in my mind, coming and going from the Catholic Church on Main Street after celebrating, baptisms, marriages, or participating in funerals.

I can also visualize the two main groceries in town, one on Main Street (Sarrazins), the other on Water Street (Tetraults) owned and operated by French speaking proprietors for decades. These local grocery stores each had meat and deli sections, a penny candy counter and every other grocery item you could possibly need, and even some clothes. As a child I was fascinated by all the hustle and bustle going on inside these stores at all hours of the day.

Walk through the cemetery that borders Leeds in Haydenville and you will see the names of these same early French villagers who are buried there.

These are the "French Echos" I remember, I feel, I hear.

So, here's to the French, Irish and everyone else in the village of Leeds past. Here's to all those people who lived here long before we did, who probably worked harder than we do, and went on to gift us this legacy of the village of Leeds.



Meet Michelle Wirth – Leeds Resident and Owner of FeelGoodShopLocal.com

By Lora Sandhusen

Michelle, her husband Peter and their four children moved to Leeds in 2018. For the first few years, they concentrated their

efforts on opening a new Mercedes-Benz of Springfield dealership. When the pandemic hit in 2020, Michelle took on a project aimed at helping local businesses survive and thrive – FeelGoodShopLocal.com. Michelle provided the LCA with this interview.

"The idea for FeelGoodShopLocal.com was born in 2020 during the pandemic when I noticed that my favorite local stores were shutting down. Like many others, I was ordering the things I needed through Amazon and other national brand websites. The local business models didn't include online shopping, so they couldn't compete. I wished there were a way to make shopping locally convenient and easy!

"I searched for a platform dedicated to this idea, and when I didn't find one, I decided to create it myself. FeelGoodShopLocal.com is a website to conveniently discover and shop local stores – and feel secure knowing every dollar is directly supporting the vitality of our local community. For example, folks in Longmeadow can easily shop the unique collection of children's books at High Five Books in Florence. Folks in Leeds can shop for artisan alpaca products from Maple Brook Alpaca farm in Westfield...all from the comfort of their couch.

"FeelGoodShopLocal.com has been featured at the Big E, and in BusinessWest, Northampton CityLifestyle, WWLP Mass Appeal, Rock 102 - Bax and Nagle, and iHeart Radio. We have so much unique fashion, jewelry, housewares, services, cosmetics, skincare, artisan pieces and more in the Pioneer Valley. Small businesses can band together into a community and catch up to the big box stores in the online space. Our hope is that every time you visit FeelGoodShopLocal.com, you discover something new in our local community, and feel good supporting them! You can visit FeelGoodShopLocal.com to shop, sign up for our mailing list, or follow us on Instagram and Facebook."

Do You Feel Fortunate to Live in Leeds? By Heidi Stevens

No matter what you do for a living or during retirement, whether you are young, single or have a family, Leeds is a wonderful place to call home! Leeds has several conservation areas that are great for hiking and dog walking, the bike path connects us to villages north and south, Look Park is close by and the Mill River runs through the village. Leeds also has the Leeds Civic Association, the volunteer organization that does good things for Leeds, its residents, our conservation areas and the Mill River.

If you are a long time resident or are new to Leeds, please consider becoming a Leeds Civic Association member. The \$10 annual family membership fee is a bargain! Even if you don't attend LCA events or volunteer, your financial

support will help the LCA continue with projects that benefit the village and its inhabitants. A special thank you to all the terrific volunteers who helped make the list below possible. Your efforts and generosity are truly the heart of the LCA.

Some of LCA's Volunteer Work in 2022:

- Assisted with medical supply drive to support the people of Ukraine
- Produced LCA member newsletters, this membership drive newsletter
- Held Leeds annual spring roadside litter clean-up
- Held Leeds village-wide tag sale
- Planted and maintained flower planters on Mulberry Street
- Hosted annual ice cream social with free home-made Mt. Tom's
- Held summer "Concert on the Green" with food truck and desserts
- Continue to steward Robert's Hill, Beaver Brook Greenway and Mill River Greenway conservation areas
- Replaced rope railing on Robert's Hill orange trail, refreshed blazes
- Updating the Robert's Hill kiosk (in progress)
- Added QR codes on historical signs connecting to map of sign sites
- Conducted weekly Mill River water sampling for E.coli testing
- Continue to partner with Friends of Northampton Trails, Inclusive Group and City to remove summer trash at Mill River Greenway-Leeds
- Prepared annual conservation area reports/boundary surveys
- Held Kids Summer Movie Night
- Helped with invasive Stiltgrass maintenance along bike path
- Did seasonal mulching and weeding of Mulberry Street Garden
- Arranged professional pruning of Crabapple at the Mulberry St. Garden
- Continued advocating for the repair/opening of Hotel Bridge
- Hosted annual "Pumpkin Carving Contest and Kids Pumpkin Roll"
- Strung holiday lights at Mulberry Street Garden
- Hosted Memorial Day commemoration at Leeds Veteran's Park
- Member of the Northampton Veteran's Council
- Awarded two Bradford Memorial Educational Scholarships

All Are Welcome to Attend LCA Monthly Meetings

We are a very casual and friendly group! If you would like to share an event idea or get involved, please join us. Monthly meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, September-June from 7:00-8:00 p.m. We normally meet in the Leeds school cafeteria. Meeting reminders are in the membership newsletters and are posted on the website: LeedsCivic.org. We are currently recruiting new board members!



IT'S TIME TO RENEW OR BECOME A NEW LCA MEMBER FOR 2023!

- Fill out the form below and mail with a check to the address listed below.
- Visit LeedsCivic.org. and click "Become a Member."
- Take a cell photo of the QR code, which will link you to the online LCA membership form.



Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

New Renew

☐☐

\$10 Family Yearly Membership

☐☐

\$25 Business Yearly Membership

(1 year LCA website advertising, please enclose business card)

Additional Donation \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

☐

I would like to receive my bi-annual newsletter electronically

☐

I would like newsletters mailed. (Include additional \$5.00 for postage.)

I am interested in helping the LCA with the following:

☐

Trail maintenance projects

☐

Party and event planning

☐

Design / communications

☐

Garden maintenance

Make checks payable to: LCA

Mail to: P.O. Box 114, Leeds, MA 01053