



LEEDS LETTER

SEPTEMBER 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2014

Mill River Greenway Leeds History Walk

Saturday, September 6th, 10:00am
See article for more details

LCA September Meeting

Tuesday, **Sept 9**, 7:00 -8:00 pm
Leeds School teacher's lounge

- Hotel Bridge restoration
- Block Party planning
- Mill River Greenway Walk update
- Set date for Traffic mitigation project community meeting.
- Set date for Stantec's Hotel Bridge community meeting

Block Party

Saturday, September 13
Rain Date: Sunday, September 14
400pm -7:00pm
Main Street Village Green
See back page for more info

Community Meeting - Funding Available for Leeds Traffic Calming

Date to be determined

Community Meeting - Hotel Bridge Update with Stantec Engineering Co.

Date to be determined

To Leeds students and teachers,
Have a happy, productive and
successful school year!

Leeds Civic Association
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leedscivassoc@gmail.com
www.leedscivic.org

The Historic Hotel Bridge by Heidi Stevens

The Leeds Hotel Bridge is a rare 1880 Pratt iron truss built by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company of Canton Ohio, one of the largest and most innovative bridge building firms of the era. The Leeds Hotel Bridge is the oldest bridge in Northampton and from Department of Transportation records appears to be the 6th oldest iron bridge in Massachusetts.

The "Old Sheperd's Road Bridge", as it was once called, was erected in 1881. A new channel had been cut into the Mill River by the freshet of 1878 which completely isolated a dozen or so tenement houses at the lower end of Main Street from any roadway. A petition by taxpayers of Leeds and Florence for a new roadway and bridge to cross the mill pond was approved. Soon after the erection of the bridge, the Leeds Hotel was built on the Water Street side and the bridge became locally known as the Hotel Bridge. For 133 years, the Hotel Bridge was a picturesque passage across the Mill River for travelers going by stage coach and horseback, people traveling by car or truck, and more recently folks bicycling or walking.

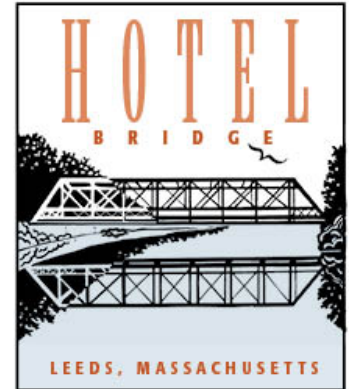
The DPW closed the Hotel Bridge in 2004 to all traffic and placed jersey barriers at both entrances. Many people continued to enjoy crossing the bridge by bike or on foot, fishing from its' sides, and holiday lights continued to be strung across the span.

An engineering report released this summer by Stantec Consulting raised concerns about the structural integrity of some portions and the deteriorating road surface. In response the DPW has put up a secure black chain link fence at the Main and Water street entrances. Thankfully, the DPW has agreed to remove the ugly, damaged jersey barriers and the LCA will replace them with large flower planters.

There has been robust interest in the community to restore the bridge to a wood-decked walking bridge. The LCA and others are researching ways to bring the restoration cost down, filing applications for preservation funding, and planning future events to raise community awareness to the value this historic bridge holds for Leeds, Northampton, and Massachusetts. Susannah Howe's senior engineering students at Smith will complete plans for a trail from the existing Rail Trail to the Hotel Bridge to provide access to Musante Beach and Roberts Meadow. The LCA has reached out to an iron bridge enthusiast in Great Barrington and to a UMass civil engineering professor, who is extremely knowledgeable about iron bridges, with the intent of hosting a Community Iron Bridge History and Information Evening for late 2014 or early 2015. Stay tuned!

Stantec Consulting will also be presenting their findings on the Hotel Bridge to Leeds residents this Fall. A date has not yet been determined, but please watch the bulletin board at the P.O., telephone poles for posters, and check the LCA website now and then at www.leedscivic.org.

The campaign to restore the bridge will require thoughtful effort, creative funding ideas, and support from a community that appreciates this historic gem in Leeds.



Leeds Mill River Greenway Walk - September 6

The first Leeds Mill River Greenway Walk is fully booked. People have registered for all 20 available slots. Planning for the walk was underway all summer. The tour will make 8 stops at historical locations including the site of the old Mulberry Street Woolen Mill, the Ivory Button Factory, Nonotuck Silk Mill, Dimock Mansion, Cook's Dam, the Hotel Bridge and Flood Memorial. Historical photos and facts, and detailed Flood stories will be shared at each site. To reserve a space on a future walk email to: info@millrivergreenway.org. To find out more about the Mill River Greenway, please visit their website at www.MillRiverGreenway.org, or contact Jason Johnson at cookjohnson@comcast.net.

Traffic Calming Funds Available for Leeds

The city has approximately \$190,000 in traffic mitigation funds to spend in Leeds. Wayne Feiden, director of Planning has a few ideas for projects based on past input from the Leeds community and informal discussion with people at the Bike Ped Committee, but would like to hear more updated input from the Leeds community. Laura Hanson of DPW began this effort a couple of years ago and since then the city has received more traffic mitigation funds from Zoe Life Care. The LCA will be scheduling a date for a community meeting in the near future

Green Tip By Amy Stamm

If you need a new car, now is a great time to purchase or lease a plug-in hybrid or electric vehicle because Massachusetts will give you a rebate of up to \$2,500 on it. Massachusetts is devoting \$2 million to the electric car rebate program. Rebates will be awarded on a first come first served basis. In addition, if you own a business and would like to install an electric car charging station, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection will provide half of the funding you need for charging station hardware costs, up to \$25,000. Grants are also available for schools and government programs that want to purchase electric vehicles. To apply for an electric car rebate, go to the website <https://mor-ev.org/>.

Searching for a Sense of Community?

There is no better example of it than in the little backyard of Trine and David Rondina of Upland Road. Most of today's world population would probably give anything to live such an experience. . . Night air, the moon rising, snuggling up, sleeping bags, lawn chairs, cool drinks, popcorn popping, and kid's movies on an outdoor screen. All this at no cost at all offered to the neighborhood by the welcoming spirit of the Rondina family. The setting is perfect, the charm almost...no definitely - Norman Rockwell-like...wide eyed kids, heads tilted toward the action on the screen, popcorn kernels moving toward their mouths at regular intervals. On a recent movie night about 55 people (kids and parents) showed up including a whole bunch of newbies from the Leeds Village apartments, Chestnut Extension, and around the hood. It was a beautiful night and the gang went through 12 batches of popcorn!

Whether you are a parent, grandparent, or empty-nester, it'd do your soul good to take a peek at this little gem of ours in Leeds. Don't just take a peek...Why not come early and chat?... relax and watch the whole show, stay to chat some more and maybe help clean up?! Look for the great posters on the telephone poles or check the Leeds Civic Association website, www.LeedsCivic.org (another community volunteer effort) for the upcoming movie date, time and poster!

Saratoga Race Track Trip is a Big Winner for Leeds

Not so pure in morality, the annual trip to Saratoga Race Track and Casino sold out in no time and departed promptly from Leeds Elementary School a few weeks ago.

The day was typical for August. The bus ride out was chatty with conversation, raffles, and predictions of how the horse races would turn out. Of course, everyone was certain of winning. Whether a gambler or not, most would agree, the group bus ride up was fun, the race track's park-like setting always enjoyable and the price...pretty cheap. Check this annual trip out sometime if you get the chance. Its more than gambling, its a summertime chance to be with friends . Oh, and by the way...there was a \$5,000 winner and several people scoring multiple hundred dollar wins!

Block party
2014
on the Leeds Main Street Green

BRING! **SATURDAY FREE**
Sept 13
4:00-7:00pm
Rain Date
Sunday, Sept 14

HAMBURGERS
DRINKS
Music
Games

a side dish or dessert to share.

sponsored by
LEEDS
CIVIC ASSOCIATION