

Mary Hayes Morrissey

Date: Sept. 26, 2017

Ref: Drinking Fountain owned by the town which is in the park owned by the First Congregational Church of Lee, MA

I researched the Drinking Fountain around the time of the town's bicentennial in 1977 as I was on Florence Consolati's research committee for her book "See All the People." My job was to seek out the monuments in the town and find out what I could about them. I believe this research goes back to that time period. I used the microfilm reels from the **Valley Gleaner** at Lee Library and, at that time, the reels had to be turned by hand. This project took a great deal of time as I had to read each **Gleaner** to find articles written about the Drinking Fountain. There was no index then. I have no record of any photo copies of the articles and think I must have copied the information by hand. Below is what I found, basically word for word, in the **Gleaner**. The original papers I typed had become quite yellow. I retyped them for you. The bold print is mine. I hope what is written here is of some help to you.

Valley Gleaner Wed., Aug. 25, 1897

Drinking Fountain

A quarterly meeting of the W.C.T.U. will be held next Sunday evening in Memorial Hall. The public drinking fountain project will be presented and a collection for that object will be taken.

This project originated a number of years ago with Miss Amelia J. Kilbon who was then in charge of the Loyal Legion, a children's temperance society. The children had raised about \$36 when Miss Kilbon's failing health compelled her to give up the work. Recently it was again taken up by the W.C.T.U. and it was thought appropriate that the fountain should be a memorial to Miss Kilbon. Some very liberal contributions have been received and the fund has grown to \$200 and it is desired to make it at least \$300. Hence a liberal collection is asked for.

Such a fountain would be a decided ornament to the town, and in affording the only public place where a drink of water can be obtained it would have practical value from a temperance standpoint. Some of the ladies have been corresponding with ladies of Westfield, where a handsome fountain of native marble has recently been erected. This is quite an elaborate memorial and is protected by an iron fence, and although the town laid the fountain and made the connections, it was a somewhat more expensive than is contemplated here.

At the meeting Sunday evening there will be special music, addresses, and other attractive features.

Valley Gleaner Wed. September 1, 1897

The quarterly union meeting of the W.C.T.U. was held in Memorial Hall Sunday evening and there was a fair attendance. Miss Jennie Harding presented the public drinking fountain project which was described in last Wednesday's paper.

Valley Gleaner Oct. 27, 1897

Daniel Chester French, the famous N.Y. sculptor who now has a summer home in Glendale, has

been in Lee twice recently looking at possible sites for the proposed drinking fountain and making suggestions to the committee who have the matter in charge.

Valley Gleaner Wed. June 29, 1898

**The New Fountain Mr. French's Beautiful Model Selected
It will be of Lee Marble and Located on Main St.**

The committee having in charge the selection and location of the new fountain have voted unanimously to adopt a model made by the famous sculptor, Daniel Chester French of New York, to have it made of Lee marble and to locate it on Main Street at the south end of Railroad Street.

The committee have endeavored carefully to consider all the interests which center in the fountain. In the first place it was designed to be a temperance measure and a thing of practical utility and public convenience. Hence the committee felt that its location should be as central as possible. From an artistic standpoint the park would be an appropriate spot for a drinking fountain, but it was felt that the park was not sufficiently central, as a very small proportion of the people who come into the village pass through it. People from the towns and villages to the east and south come almost entirely by team or train, while people who come from the north to do their trading would have no occasion to go below the post office.

The spot selected is certainly as central as could be secured and at the time is a conspicuous and attractive place for a fountain which will be an ornament to the village and which is certain to attract attention and admiration. According to the present plan the fountain will stand at the junction of Main and Railroad Streets on the east side of the Main St. sidewalk, and in the fork of the traveled ways as they diverge, one to the south and one to the north. A horse basin will project towards Main Street and on the back side will be a drinking fountain where it can easily be reached from the sidewalk. This will do away with the iron horse tub at the north end of Northrup's block. By combining the fountain for man and beast teamsters and others who stop to water their horses can slake their own thirst.

At first thought it may seem to many that the space selected is not large enough, but standing on the spot one receives a very different impression. Two teams could easily pass on either side of the fountain and it is believed by the committee and by the good judges whom they have consulted that the space is sufficient. Places like this are quite commonly used for this purpose in the Old World. At the base of the monument are two little basins to catch water so dogs may drink from this fountain too.

The committee have felt from the start that with so suitable a material as Lee marble right at hand nothing else ought to be considered and we are happy to add that the committee has been met in the most generous spirit. W. H. Gross promised to donate the marble which will weigh seven or eight tons and Messrs. Gray and Sons to do the cutting at cost.

The model, as might be expected, is a great artistic merit and much admired, and was designed with special reference to this location, which Mr. French studied when in Berkshire last summer.

Valley Gleaner Nov. 15 1899

Fountain Dedication Address by Congressman Lawrence

The dedication of the new fountain is to be held next Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock in Memorial Hall. The exercises will be of much interest and a large attendance is anticipated including a number from other towns and cities. All are invited.

The committee has been fortunate in securing as the principal speaker of the occasion Hon. George F. Lawrence of North Adams, member of Congress from this district. There will also be brief addresses by a number of prominent citizens, reading of letters of regret from distinguished people, a brief history of the project, presentation of the fountain to the town of Lee and acceptance by the

selectmen, unveiling of the fountain and turing on the water, and singing by the Loyal Temperance Legion. The young people who were members of this organization under Miss Kilbon will also participate.

The fountain was successfully put in place last week. It is a magnificent piece of work and Lee can now boast of having the finest public fountain in western Mass., designed by a famous sculptor Daniel C. French and made as it is fitting it should be from Lee marble which is known the country over. The carving reflects credit on the skillful workmanship of Dante Baccolini, a Lee native.

There is no ideal location, but the one selected is admittedly the most central and convenient for the drinking fountain which can be reached from the sidewalk, and the committee believe the space is large enough as there will be 23 feet on each side. If it is found inconvenient or objectionable as some think it may be, although of course the design was made with special reference to the present location.

The dedication of the Kilbon memorial fountain on Friday afternoon was a successful and notable occasion and fittingly crowned the successful completion of an enterprise which will take a prominent place in the annals of the community. The new fountain is certainly the most artistic public fountain in Western Massachusetts and constitutes a public improvement in which the town may take pride.

The history of the project is mainly told in the addresses that follow. Its inception was due to Miss Amelia Jeanette Kilbon, whose purpose was to provide a drinking fountain for people, with suitable dog basins. After her death, which greatly saddened the community, the project was completed as a tribute to her memory and of course on a much more elaborate scale than had originally been intended. The face which is toward Main Street had a horse basin. On the reverse side which faces the sidewalk separating railroad Street and Main Street is a drinking fountain, with dog basins in each corner. This can be reached from the sidewalk. It bears this inscription:

This fountain was begun by the loyal temperance legion under the leadership of Amelia Jeannette Kilbon and was completed by other friends as a tribute to her memory.

1870

1897

The dedication exercises formed a rather unique event in the history of the community. They were held in Memorial hall which was well filled, quite a number from adjoining towns being present.

Total cash outlay has been about \$375.

Daniel Chester French, the designer of the fountain wrote that he was exceedingly sorry not to be able to join in a draught from the fountain when the water was turned on.

Address by Rev. Dr. Rowland at the dedication

We congratulate the committee and we congratulate ourselves that this public need is at last met. From this day we are redeemed from the reproach that liquor is more easily attainable than water.

Address by Hoh. George P. Lawrence

Mr. F. S. Gross contributed the marble, weighing seven or eight tons from which the fountain was carved.

This memorial becomes today the property of the town of Lee. No one can doubt that it will ever be guarded and maintained as one of the town's most valued possessions. An occasion like this is a landmark in your history. It is a fitting time for a pledge by your citizens of loyal service. Ours is a government of the people and our towns can be prosperous only as they have the support of the individual citizens. It has been well said that "as no man can be essentially injured except by his own acts, so no town can be permanently harmed save by its own citizen." On this auspicious occasion, let the people of the town of Lee, proud of its past and present prosperity, highly resolve that in the years which are to come, they will work still more earnestly and unselfishly for the public good.

The monument was presented by Mr. Edward Rogers. His address:

If this monument shall have any significance to future generations, we trust it will speak to them not alone of the growing love of the beautiful and of the humanitarian spirit which characterize the age in which we live, but equally may it symbolize a devotion to the common welfare which makes for civic integrity and righteousness and in coming generations as in ourselves may it awaken a new and intenser loyalty to the highest interests of the honored town in which our lot was cast.

Acceptance by Selectman Dowd

In accepting this gift for the town, I am sure I voice the feelings of all our citizens when I say that we deeply appreciate the spirit in which the project was undertaken, the faithful labors of those who have carried it to successful consummation and the kind interest and generosity of all who have in any way contributed to it.

In behalf of the town, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and all whom you represent.

My added notes

Around the end of the 1940's the fountain was moved from an area near Memorial Hall to the Congregational Church Park making this its third move. At a special town meeting, about the year 1949, the sum of \$475 was voted by the Lee people to remove the fountain to the park. The move to the park was to give the area around Memorial Hall more parking spaces. Officer Walter Bossidy recommended the move along with the police department. A crane was used for the move. The fountain was usually not working and during the town bicentennial period, new pipes were laid and the fountain was reactivated on August 27, 1977 by the Lee Savings Bank who gave the money for the project.

The Indian face carved into the monument is that of Chief Konkapot. In 1722, a land committee purchased from the Stockbridge Indians what is the southern half of Berkshire County from Chief Konkapot and twenty other Indians. This land included part of the Hoplands which is now the Town of Lee.