



NOTES ON THE HISTORY & NATURAL HISTORY OF LEVERETT HOUSE
Excerpts from Rabbit Read, the Leverett House Weekly Newsletter 2020- 2022
Brian D. Farrell, Faculty Dean

April 20th, 2020

Lev Lore

THE CRIMSON April 20 2007. REGGAETON STARS LUNY TUNES COME HOME TO HARVARD. While most Harvard students see an undergraduate degree as their road to prestige, Francisco Saldana and Victor Cabrera started elsewhere at the University: working in the Leverett House dining hall. They left Harvard in 2001 for Puerto Rico and have since become the production kings of reggaeton. As Luny Tunes, they have produced a string of hits, including Daddy Yankee's "Gasolina," Don Omar's "Dale Don Dale," and several remixes of Paris Hilton's "Stars are Blind."

Lev Naturalist

Last week we saw a cormorant floating on the Charles near Eliot Bridge bravely wrestling with a 3-foot eel in an attempt to swallow it whole. The fates of bird and fish are unknown. The pink magnolias and cherry trees are in full bloom around Lev, and robins are singing every day beginning around 4 a.m. The herring are on their way upriver. It snowed this weekend!



April 27th 2020

Lev Lore

Who was Leverett House named for? John Leverett was named the President of Harvard in 1708 and founded the liberal tradition of education at Harvard and designed Mass Hall. His appointment by the Overseers as President of Harvard so angered Cotton Mather (of the Salem Witch Trials) that Mather left Harvard with a group of donors and founded his own university at New Haven, CT. Guess you know which one.

Why are there three Hares on the Lev shield? Because our shield is the Leverett family shield from medieval England which has three hares. The symbol of 3 hares is an ancient mystical sign from China and across Europe, especially in England, where the Leverett family is from. No one seems to know why the family was awarded that particular shield by the king, but it was a long, long time ago!

Lev Naturalist

Our local geese, robins and sparrows are on their nests around the river. In the sandy shallows, there are sunfish and bass defending their hollowed-out nests too! No sign of herring here yet, but they are on their way and most of the little creeks in MA are full of them now! For more natural history around Lev, check out the Leverett Naturalist Instagram! @leverettnaturalist

May 4, 2020

Lev Lore

Which famous poet was a frequent visitor to Leverett?

Robert Frost, 4 times from the 30's to the 50's. "The best way out is always through."
RF.

Which Leverett Dean was torpedoed and survived in WWII? Leigh Hoadley.

Which one lost his hand lobbing an enemy grenade away from his soldiers? John
Conway

Lev Naturalist

What's the difference between rabbits and hares? Rabbit babies are called bunnies and are born naked and blind in burrows underground. Hare babies are called leverets and can see and run right after they are born hidden in tall grasses like deer. Hares are smarter and faster than rabbits too! They are in the same family but are as different as a cow and a buffalo. Those long-eared furry animals you see hopping around Leverett are not rabbits or hares--they are Cottontails, another kind of animal in the same family!

May 11, 2020

Lev Lore

Which Leverett Master left Harvard for a job singing for the Metropolitan Opera?
Richard Gill.

Who was the first Master at Leverett House? Ken Murdock

Leverett Naturalist

Brilliant flashes of orange, accompanied by gorgeous flute-like songs, are all along the river these days. Baltimore Orioles are back in force!

Check out the Leverettnaturalist on Instagram to see more pix around the House and river.

Look who is visiting us, American Goldfinches love to eat thistle seeds!

May 18, 2020

Lev Lore

Which famous singer performed in the Lev Dining Hall?

Billie Holiday in 1938.

Which famous musician was a tutor at Lev?

Yo Yo Ma.

Which Leverett Building won a national architecture prize?

The Library in 1964.

Which 2020 Presidential Candidate is a Lev alum?

Pete Buttigieg '93.

Which famous chef is a Lev alum?

Joanne Chang '94.

Lev Naturalist

The Chimney Swifts are back, wheeling through the skies over Lev and Harvard Square. They among the fastest birds in the world and alternate the strokes of their wings like a

swimmer. Amazingly enough, they actually copulate in mid-air while falling towards the earth, and then build their nests inside chimneys around the city. They also eat lots and lots of mosquitoes! Swifts are all over the USA and the rest of the world. Just look up!

May 25, 2020

Lev Lore

Leverett House was famous in the 1930's for Swing Dances in the Dining Hall. The House broke the budget in 1938 and hired Artie Shaw and his Orchestra to play a spring dance. Shaw had just hired a new singer a few days before, 22-year old Billie Holiday!

Lev Naturalist

Golden brown spikes of sporangia are rising up in the McKinlock Courtyard now. They are the sexual phase of the Cinnamon Ferns that surround them. The Pink Dogwoods are blushing...!

June 8th, 2020

Lev Naturalist

We now have the start of a Leverett Competitive Birding Team assembled and we will be sharing our sightings soon. For the moment, I'm in North Ferrisburgh, Vermont and saw 35 different species of birds yesterday. The most wonderful were an American Bittern, a Cooper's Hawk and a Common Nighthawk. The Nighthawk is the rarest now, but they used to commonly nest on top of the many flat, gravel roofs around Cambridge. They're related to Whip-poor-wills, and catch insects at night by flying around with their very large mouths ready to catch moths and mosquitoes!

June 23, 2020

Lev Lore

The Leverett House Archie Epps Series of Lectures and Conversations (inaugurated in 2019) honors the memory of Archie Epps III.

Archie Epps (1937-2003) was the Dean of Students at Harvard College 1971-1999, and among the first Black administrators at Harvard. Archie Epps was Music Tutor at Leverett House, where he was Head of the Leverett House Opera Society. Archie Epps also served as Assistant Director of the Harvard Glee Club. Epps was instrumental in bringing Malcolm X to speak at Leverett House in 1964 and he published the very important book, *Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard* (1967). Epps also helped bring James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison to speak at Harvard. While Dean of Students, Archie Epps wrote the first handbook of race relations at Harvard (1992). He also served as Peace Corps Representative. The portrait of Archie Epps III is displayed in the Faculty Meeting Room at University Hall.

Lev Naturalist

Leverett Competitive Birding Team
Cecil Williams II (scribe), London Vallery,
Lucy Liu, Caleb Stickney, Wesley Shin

The LCBT held its first two day bird blitz early last week with a resounding total of 66 species! We're deployed in each corner of the country so everyone contributed interesting species, many of which were shared among two or more birders. We decided to focus on yard birds, species you see or hear from your yard. We're now each accumulating species from our neighborhoods to build up the Lev summer totals. Some of us find that e-Bird is a very handy app to use for birding because provides a custom checklist for your particular geographic location and saves the data to a national research database hosted by Cornell. We've also been sharing photos and phone recordings of singing birds to help with identifications. Please let any of us know if you want to join us as we learn how to work together and then we'll take on the other Houses! (bfarrell@fas.harvard.edu)

Here's our list from last week, compiled by Cecil Williams '20:

American Crow, American Goldfinch, American Redstart, American Robin, Baltimore Oriole, Barn Swallow, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Black-capped Chickadee, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Blue Jay, Brown-headed Cowbird, Canada Goose, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Caspian Tern, Chuck-will's-widow, Common Grackle, Common Merganser, Cooper's Hawk, Double-crested Cormorant, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Eastern Wood-Pewee, European Starling, Gray Catbird, Great Blue Heron, Great Crested Flycatcher, Great Egret, House Finch, House Sparrow, House Wren, Indigo Bunting, Mallard, Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, Northern Mockingbird, Orchard Oriole, Osprey, Ovenbird, Pileated Woodpecker, Prothonotary Warbler, Purple Martin Red-bellied Woodpecker Red-eyed Vireo Red-tailed Hawk Red-winged Blackbird, Ring-billed Gull, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Song Sparrow, Summer Tanager, Tree Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, Turkey Vulture, Warbling Vireo, Western Bluebird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wild Turkey, Wood Thrush, Great-tailed/Mexican Grackle, Loggerhead Shrike, White-winged Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

June 29th, 2020

Lev Lore

Pete Seeger '42 was a Leverett House student. Peter Seeger founded the folk music group, the Weavers, and helped found the folk music revival of the 1960s. He wrote many classic songs of the protests of the day, including "This Land Is Your Land," "If I Had A Hammer," and "Turn, Turn, Turn."

One Seeger standard, "We Shall Overcome," became an anthem of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Another, "Where Have All The Flowers Gone?," was sung by Vietnam War protesters.

When Pete Seeger passed away at the age of 94 in 2014, President Obama said that Seeger was "America's tuning fork" and believed in "the power of song" to help bring social change."

But more importantly, he believed in the power of community -- to stand up for what's right, speak out against what's wrong, and move this country closer to the America he

knew we could be.” "Over the years, Pete used his voice and his hammer to strike blows for workers' rights and civil rights; world peace and environmental conservation, and he always invited us to sing along. For reminding us where we come from and showing us where we need to go, we will always be grateful to Pete Seeger.”

If you don't know Pete Seeger's music, check out "Singalong Sanders Theater, 1980" on YouTube.

Lev Naturalist

This week the birding competition is reaching out to the other Houses. Please let us know if you would like to join us! We're also branching out to plants, not competitively, but with an eye to sharing and identifying plants near where we live. Please let us know if you would like to be a botanist for a day! My cool plant of the week is Indigo bush, which grows along Lake Champlain and which I just discovered is pollinated by— Mosquitoes!

If you want to join the Leverett Competitive Birding Team, email FD Brian at bfarrell@fas.harvard.edu!

Follow @leverettnaturalist on Instagram!

July 7th, 2020

Lev Lore

Jean Paul Carlhian was the architect of the Leverett Towers and Library, which were completed in 1961. He was also the architect of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art and the Gallery of Asian Art. The Lev Library won a national architecture prize in 1964.

Lev Naturalist

Some of our Lev birders have noticed the bright yellow American Goldfinches being active in their backyards and around the neighborhoods. They are all over the United States, coast-to-coast. While most birds began nesting back in April, these birds are very late breeders because they feed their young thistle seeds instead of insects like other songbirds do. So they wait for the thistles to be ready, and then start singing and flying around in their typical roller-coaster-like, rolling up-and-down flight. You can tell that they're in breeding mode too by the bright pink color of their beaks, which serve as signals of their health to possible mates. They're basically a kind of canary, so enjoy them if you have them nearby or check them out on youtube!

If you want to join the Lev birding team, email FD Brian at bfarrell@fas.harvard.edu. Follow @leverettnaturalist on Instagram!

July 14, 2020

Lev Lore

McKinlock Hall was named for a Harvard student, Alex McKinlock '16, who was an infantryman killed by sniper fire in France on 21 July 1918. Alex was a football star and a

much loved student. His story is told in two different history books about WWI, including the recent “Five Lieutenants” by James Carl Nelson.

Lev Naturalist

OEB professor and SCR member Gonzalo Giribet photographed a beautiful large shorebird (see below) called a Short-Billed Dowitcher on Cape Cod earlier this week. These birds breed in far northern Canada around James Bay, and so this bird is here feeding while migrating it’s way south again for the winter. As a rule, Dowitchers you see here before July 4th are on their way north, and those you see after that date, like this one, are on their way to Brazil....!

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July 21, 2020

Lev Lore

Leverett House has a sister House at Yale: Timothy Dwight College. We host their students for the Harvard-Yale football game when it’s at Harvard and they reciprocate when the game is played at Yale. While our mascot is a green, yellow or black hare, their mascot is a red lion. The history of our sisterhood is shrouded in mystery, but has endured for decades and so is a time-honored tradition at Lev.

Lev Naturalist

Building on the Timothy Dwight connection, here’s a film that also connects some MCZ history with Cuba through Timothy Dwight alumna Anna Lindemann. Anna combines biology, theater and film in extraordinary ways! We will feature her works on beetles and ants and theater in the fall programming so stay tuned!

<https://annalindemann.com/#/beetle-bluffs/> <https://www.thecolony.show/>

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July 28th, 2020

Lev Lore

Leverett House has managed challenges in the past. On the radio, Moonlight Cocktail by Glenn Miller Orchestra was the #1 single while the Houses prepared for a blackout. According to the Crimson of February 27, 1942, “All Houses and auxiliary police are preparing for the 30 minute test air raid and blackout which is scheduled for next Thursday evening. Leverett has already announced a trial blackout to be held Wednesday, and the other Houses are laying plans for similar trials, according to Leigh Hoadley, Master of Leverett House and chief warden of the House precinct. In order that they may be sure of their way when the College is blacked out, the auxiliary police had a dress rehearsal yesterday afternoon in which they were assigned to the posts that they will occupy during next week's test.

They will be issued special flashlights with dark red lenses that are suitable for use in a blackout. Billies, modeled after the ones used by the Navy, also will be distributed, and an attempt is being made to secure crash-proof helmets.”

It isn't clear who the crash-proof helmets were for...

Lev Naturalist

Yesterday I saw a large, but evidently young, bird in a cedar by the window begging to be fed by a much smaller adult bird. The youngster was a cowbird and the smaller adult was a red Lexington, MA 02420 Lexington, MA 02420-eyed vireo. Here's some background. About the only birds singing this late in July and throughout the midday heat are Red-Eyed Vireos. These ubiquitous woodland songbirds occur in every patch of trees in the eastern two-thirds of North America, and their very similar cousins are on the west coast and throughout Latin America. Vireos are known for incessant singing, from dawn to dusk, and spring to fall, up to 10 songs per minute. All of this singing is by males courting females, and warning other males to stay away from their territories and especially the caterpillars they glean from the treetops to feed their young. However diligent, vireo family planning may sometimes be taken advantage of. Cowbirds are an invasive species here in the east, and are much larger than vireos. Their strategy is to seek to lay their eggs in a vireo or other bird's nest while the male is off singing, with the result that the vireos often end up raising the much larger cowbird young instead of their own. Fortunately, the vireos often recognize the cowbird eggs and eject them or cover them over, but not always, as I witnessed yesterday here. Fortunately, this year there are more than enough caterpillars to go around.

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August 4th 2020

Lev Lore

Robert Frost was an extended guest of Leverett House when he taught poetry as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry in 1935-1936, and he returned during the academic years 1939-1940 and 1941-1942, before he finally bought a house in Cambridge at 35 Brewster Street in 1943. In the last years of the previous century, Frost had entered and dropped out of Dartmouth after a few months of non-study, and he was a Harvard undergrad for all of a year and a half. Frost had also tried repeatedly to convince his girlfriend Elinor White to drop out of St. Lawrence University but she would have none of it. In response, he marched himself ten miles into the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia, where he was rescued by duck hunters. Frost and White did eventually marry. During his long life, Frost was a failed student, a failed high school teacher, a failed farmer and in fact he claimed to have failed at everything except being a vagrant, and of course, remembering to convey the poetry of his myriad, intimate experiences with the world into words.

When he was named a distinguished visiting professor at Harvard, Frost came to know Ken Murdock, the first Master of Leverett House, and later made the acquaintance of number two, Leigh Hoadley. Details of his frequent stays at Leverett House will remain to be told another time. If you would like a fresh glimpse of Frost's often surprisingly dark mind, consider the irony in the meaning behind his best-known poem, *The Road Not Taken*. The last lines are not about what many suppose, the gratification that comes after the success of following one's heart onto a less likely path, but rather are about our common rationalization that we knew what we were doing all along. Frost knew from experience that perseverance counts more than prescience.

Lev Naturalist

Wherever you are in the world, the seasons are definitely taking a turn in August. If you are above the equator, flocks of fledgling birds are now out foraging, and in their untried innocence are often fearless and easily approached. Around here, we are seeing bands of chickadees, flights of barn swallows, and a pair of young goldeneyes keeping company with a solo young merganser. We've also happened on a trio of Cooper's Hawks. While most young birds are out finding insects or fish on their own, the young hawks fly from one tree to another in these woods, calling all the while to their parents to bring them some freshly killed songbird they've surprised in their tireless search for unwary prey. Disney might call this the circle of life, but that surely is the perspective of a predator. Of course, we could ask the insects and fish what they think about young birds, but then again, what are the insects and fish eating?

If it's a circle of life, then the return is through the truly magical green plants that use sunshine to turn the carbon dioxide that we breathe out and a bit of soil (where we all end up) into the sugar and spice that is the stuff of life.

August 10, 2020

Lev Lore

The author of "Economics and the Private Interest: An Introduction to Microeconomics," "Economic Development: Past and Present," and "Great Debates in Economics," Richard T. Gill, was the fourth Master of Leverett House, serving from 1963 to 1971. He left Harvard for the Metropolitan Opera after 22 years, serving as Assistant Dean (at the age of 21), Lecturer in Economics and finally as Master of Leverett House.

As observed by Margalit Fox in the 2010 New York Times obituary, Richard T. Gill was likely the only Harvard Economist to sing 86 performances with the Metropolitan Opera. Gill never undertook formal vocal training but rather picked up singing as part of regimen to stop smoking. At the time, he had not been very inclined to opera or classical music. As Fox put it, "But after just a few years of study a world-class voice emerged, and Mr. Gill soon forsook chalk and tweed for flowing robes and very large headgear. "

Gill was a basso profundo and sang alongside such luminaries as Kiri Te Kanawa, Placido Domingo, Beverly Sills and Shirley Verrett.

Gill had started at Harvard in 1943 when he was 16 years old, then left to join the war effort before returning to finish his degree in economics in 1948. Richard Gill studied at Oxford and finished his Ph.D. at Harvard, and he enjoyed a long and varied career here before leaving for the lights of New York City!

If you search for Richard T. Gill on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), you can get a glimpse of him and his voice on economics...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fjb3znTevgc>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITJxAmM9tnI>

Lev Naturalist

With recent rains, fungi are popping out of the ground everywhere we look. Inky Caps, Chanterelles and the first Amanitas are ringing trees in the woods and fields. Some, like inky caps, are decomposers and speed the breakdown of dead roots buried in the soil. The mushrooms you see are like fruits of an apple tree, meant to spread their hopes for a new generation far and wide. Like a tree, the main body of Inky Caps and other fungi is huge and usually entirely underground (if not inside a tree!), forming an enormous mycelial network that digests everything organic around, like a giant inside-out stomach absorbing nutrients from the world outside. The Amanitas, on the other hand, are symbionts of pines and other trees. Their mycelial network is wrapped around living tree roots, helping them absorb the nutrients trees need while getting a little sugary carbon in trade. These networks connect every part of a forest, allowing trees to communicate with each other over large distances and exchange nutrients and information about their environment. Through their fungal network underground, trees know when you walk through a forest. If you saw the movie Avatar, it is based on this fungal reality, and was advised by fungus expert Paul Stamets (also advisor to the new Star Trek series, Discovery, that envisions a universal mycelial network connecting every galaxy!). Fungi are cool! Oh, and Chanterelles? They are delicious and abundant in Harvard Forest....just saying.

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August 17, 2020

Lev Lore meets Lev Naturalist

“PIERCE DEMONSTRATES NEW SYSTEM OF SIGNALS.” So read the headline of a November 14 1932 news clipping reporting that the members of Leverett House heard our Resident Tutor, Professor G. W. Pierce (yes, many tutors then were professors!), discuss his recent experiments leading to new inventions in sound transmission and telephony in the process of being patented. Pierce had set up his equipment for a demonstration in the Lev Junior Common Room, and he showed how his new inventions for high-frequency sound transmission could revolutionize underwater messaging, particularly between submarines.

What Pierce could not have known at the time was that his system would soon enable his collaboration with undergraduate Donald Griffin '38 who was a young naturalist from Cape Cod. Don Griffin kept bats, and he knew that they could grab bits of bacon he would toss up in the air in a blackened room with no light whatsoever. Griffin suspected that his bats had some hitherto unknown ability to see in the dark, and he approached Pierce as the Harvard expert in communications. Sure enough, Griffin and Pierce discovered the until-then unknown ability of bats to echo-locate, using ultrasonic calls at pitches too high for human hearing. They found that bats can pinpoint airborne prey by detecting the timing of the reflections of the bat's calls from the tiny bodies of flying moths (or bacon). In tropical America, bats also use these calls to find katydids and frogs perched on leaves in the rainforest and even to find fish breaking the surface of rivers and ponds.

Pierce's work would continue to develop as WWII began, contributing to sonar use by submarines and radar (based on electromagnetic signals) used in the air. Griffin would go on to pioneer the fields of animal echolocation and animal cognition. He was one who saw early on that we may not be smart enough to know how smart animals are. I had the pleasure of knowing Don Griffin after his retirement in the early 1990's from Rockefeller University, when he returned to the Entomology Department of the Museum of Comparative Zoology as an esteemed, emeritus researcher advising our students of animal behavior on their own remarkable discoveries.

August 24th, 2020

Lev Lore

“Mixing up Beatles and classics is not an original idea any more, but the Leverett House Opera Society manages to bring it off as though they invented it. Andy Lee's “Bach and the Beatles” is a world premiere, of sorts—its pieces have been performed, but never

before stages. “ Staging” Bach cantatas and Beatles hits is not as easy as it sounds. It means keeping two dozen bodies onstage through the plotless wanderings of the Peasant Cantata looking as if they belong there, and it means dramatizing John Lennon’s wonderful language without distorting it beyond recognition. And- considering that that he snuck this ambitious premiere into a House dining room- director Ken McBain has managed something of a coup.”

Lev Naturalist

Does anyone know of Rocket J. Squirrel? Last week we had the surprising visit of his real-life inspiration, a flying squirrel! These small squirrels are actually quite common across the USA, but they are very difficult to see because they are utterly nocturnal. Nevertheless, these little squirrels love to get into attics, and if they visit yours you will know it! Here’s a video of our little visitor...

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August 29th, 2020

Lev Lore

The original Leverett mascot was a sewed cloth hare named Hudson who was present in all House events. One day in 1931, Hudson went missing and the story was captured well by the Leverett House master, Ken Murdock. “One Friday morning, Leverett awoke on the brink of despair. “No Hope for the House as the Rabbit Which is Leverett Vanishes on Thursday—Murdock Mourns Missing Mascot.” So said the “Crimson” in blazing headlines(18 December 1931). The rabbit had been swiped. Lanning Roper’33, A G-man in disguise, located the culprit in a Dunster hang-out and by proper sleuthing, according to Hollywood, eased his way in through the door one dark and dreary night. He lit a match. The room shone in an eery glow. The windows creaked, and the wind whistled around the corners. A step on the stair. Perspiration on Roper’s brow. He dove into a closet. The thief and kidnapper slithered into the room, remained a while, and left. Then the Leverett House Committeeman came of hiding, snatched Hudson from his secret niche in a closet, replaced him with a pile of rocks, and raced back to his native heath. The story of the reticent rabbit or “a bunny twice snatched” has been immortalized for all time by the following poem, penned by Perry Miller.

"A neighboring House (not up but down the river) Sent forth a fiend (perdition take his liver)... Who..., when, it seems, no one upon him looked... Seized with irreverent hand, and hooked

Our Hudson, who had stood with knowing leer O’er all House dinners, high upon his rear...

I hesitate to think the deep designs

That rose and fell in Lev’rett’s vengeful minds:--

Suffice to say some even threatened Noise And almost lost their academic poise.

But hail! The quick avenger, yclept Roper As slick a lad as any House could hope for! By hiding long within a closet muggy

(Had you beheld him you’d have said, “He’s buggy”) Among the unwashed socks and B. V. D.’s

He lurked, full brave, though hardly at his ease.
At last, alone, he 'cried the ravaged prize
And breathless crossed DeWolfe with blazing eyes. Now Hudson, happy, takes his well-
earned rest, Within the Murdock safe builds now his nest.
While to his thief his crime has resolution
In great, I might say awful retribution:
A long and pained inquiry from the Dean! The worry of it made the culprit lean.
We hope this think will not become tradition, Have angry Houses' war for its fruition;
We will, O Goddess, treat it as a prank,
A temporary madness, and we thank The Lord no long tale in feeble rhyme Remains to
tell of that unhappy time.

Lanning Roper '33 would go on to be a distinguished landscape architect, a prolific writer of books on landscape architecture, and a designer of gardens in England, Switzerland and France as well as the USA. He served in the US Navy, and led Division 67 in WWII. Roper was commissioned by Prince Charles to design the grounds of his home in the Cotswolds and was on the staff of the Royal Horticultural Society. Leverett House Resident Tutor Perry Miller went on to become a prominent, highly original and influential American intellectual historian. He co-founded the field of American Studies. Miller joined the Army during WWII and served in Great Britain in the Office for Strategic Services in the Psychological Warfare Branch. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, and of a Guggenheim Fellowship which took him to the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, Perry Miller taught at Harvard for many years.

September 8, 2020

Lev Lore

This week we'll focus on Archie Epps and what he meant to Leverett House and to the College, in recognition of the inauguration of the Archie Epps Undergraduate Fellows at Leverett House. Archie Epps was the Music Tutor in Leverett House through the 1960s and Professor Orlando Patterson was Senior Tutor (a position now renamed Resident Dean) while basso profundo Richard Gill was Master (a position renamed Faculty Dean). Assistant Director of the Harvard Glee Club, and director of the Leverett House Opera Society, Archie Epps fostered music at Lev (including the Bach and Beatles Cantata reported in Lev Lore last month). Archie Epps transformed Harvard College when he was named Dean of the College. He wrote the first Harvard Manual on Race Relations, got the Undergraduate Council going and did more than anyone else, before or since, to increase student participation in College life.

Most memorably, Archie Epps headed the Leverett Seminar on the Negro Revolution. The Crimson coverage of the event on March 16, 1964 notes that Epps was bringing Malcolm X to speak at Leverett in a panel with Professors Martin Kilson and James Q. Wilson. The Dining Hall was the only room large enough to house even a portion of the audience. People lined all the way up DeWolfe Street to get in the door for the event. Malcolm X spoke three times at Harvard in the early '60s-- in 1961, and twice in 1964, and Archie Epps captured the evolving views expressed in these important speeches in the volume, *Malcolm X at Harvard*, making a seminal, lasting and highly influential contribution to the literature in American Studies and Race Relations.

In the spring of 2019, Leverett House was honored to have Professor Patterson give the inaugural lecture of the Archie Epps Series of Lectures and Conversations in the Library Theater. A few months later, Leverett alumnus Cornel West participated in the inaugural Epps Conversation with his biographer Lamine Sagna Mahamadou in the Junior Common Room, under the portrait of Professor Patterson.

Lev Naturalist

Fungi are once again the topic of the day because mushrooms are popping up all over. Mushrooms are like apples. They are the fruiting bodies of a much larger organism that typically lives in the ground or inside wood (though there are fungi that are aquatic and some even live in skin, as anyone with athlete's foot knows). The season of plenty is closing, and with a cold, dry winter ahead, many fungi are spreading their spores from large structures built as if by engineers. Their gills or tubes are aimed exactly at the center of the earth to take advantage of gravity's tug to launch spores into the air currents. Also, depending on the species, they can be deadly poisonous, or extremely bitter, tough and woody, or quite tasty and good to eat. It mostly depends on the species.

With coursework and years of experience behind me, I've come to recognize some of the common fungi around at O2138, especially around Leverett House as well as around Lev North at O5473, where we are found from time to time. Remember that wherever you are is also Leverett House, because Lev is about people, not places. I just found a trove of brilliant orange mushrooms which we identified as the European species *Lactarius deliciosus*, called *níscalo* or *rovellón* in Spain, and popular across Europe. These are very tasty and desirable species, and hunting for them is a sport in Spain. The first time we saw them was in a mushroom market in Barcelona, so I were very surprised to see them here. No one knows how they got here to New England, where they are called milky caps for their orange latex, but they are symbionts of pines and apparently hemlocks which is where they were when I found them. If you see a cool fungus at your zip code, please send a pic for the Lev Instagram, and we'll try to name it, but please don't eat anything you find.

Remember the old saying: There are old mushroom pickers and there are bold mushroom pickers but there are no old, bold mushroom pickers...!

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September 14, 2020

Lev Lore

A half million bricks. That's about what it took to build McKinlock Hall in 1926. The freshman dorm that was meant to be an alternative to the private rooms rented along the Gold Coast of Mt. Auburn Street and points north would, only five years hence, be transformed into the star of the Charles River Houses.

It is not clear who approached whom first, Harvard President Lowell or Standard Oil heir Edward Harkness, but what is clear is that the 10 million dollar Harkness gift to Harvard that funded the creation of Leverett along with seven other Houses in 1931 was a result of a lack of interest on the part of Yale (realizing its mistake, Yale re-approached Harkness and received a similar gift for a similar purpose). While we're on the subject of Yale (and you will remember that our sister House there is Timothy Dwight College), Yale itself was firmly established by a gift by none other than the infamous Cotton Mather (of the Salem witch trials) who fled Harvard 300 years ago with a flock of donors to New Haven hoping to have a College named for himself (that part didn't work out). Mather was highly dissatisfied, to say the least, with the Harvard Corporation's lack of interest in hiring him as president and instead, in 1707, to appoint as Harvard's next President--not the son of the previous president, Increase Mather-- but a prominent, and secular, attorney, John Leverett.

John Leverett would go on to transform Harvard from a religion-based school to a liberal arts curriculum, and eventually lent his name to the very most distinguished of Harvard Houses, your own! Incidentally, John Leverett was also the designer of the oldest of Harvard's 660 buildings, Massachusetts Hall (completed exactly 300 years ago, in 1720), home of the President's Office and onetime barracks during the American Revolution.

Lev Naturalist

We were walking along a gravelly road recently and Irina spied a large grayish animal streak by in the brush beside us. We decided it had to be a Gray Fox, one of the hardest animals to see, Gray Foxes are active at night. They are the only members of the dog family, Canidae, in the whole world that have retractable claws like cats, and so are the only ones that can climb up the trunk of a tree (or cactus, if you're in the desert!). The day after our glimpse, our trail camera caught a video of what was probably the same animal, crossing the yard in the dark of night and again at dawn. A gorgeous creature! Check out the video

here...https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DNw_mgJyh51l3dD8gB9Udk7iWfT99o7O?usp=sharing

This week the Charles River bank is exploding with the fireworks of fall flowers! From the waves of gorgeous goldenrod to the lurid fuschia of deadly poisonous *Phytolacca*, the mix of native and introduced species form a display that is a highlight before the long dark night of winter that looms ahead. Please check out the Lev Naturalist on Instagram for many more!

September 20, 2020

Lev Lore

The following is from HUTCH HISTORY from 1931-1941. Kenneth Murdock (1941).

Rabbit Hops

"Just as long as Leverett House has been in existence, the Rabbits have been putting on white tie and tails and giving parties loosely classified as "dances." The first of these

affairs ever held in Leverett's wedge-shaped Bullfinch Dining Room was given on the night of March 31, 1932. The House had been open only a little over six months, and because of the doubtfulness of success, the dance was held in conjunction with Adams House, a dinner in the latter preceding the "piece de resistance" in the form of Joe Smith's Copley Plaza Orchestra.

Highly satisfied with this first attempt, Leverett ventured a dance all on its own which was held after the Army game in the fall of the same year. This was an utter failure, very few wanting to drink fruit punch in the Common Room at a dollar a head when they could drink something else in their rooms for less.

The first really big dance the Bunnies ever gave came in the following Spring on March 24. Although the proceeds were largely on the cuff, owing to F. D. R.'s extended bank holiday, the dance was a financial success. Ruby Newman played- he was not a big name then—and the affair was such a success that the committee staged a repeat six weeks later.

The second dance was informal, almost Dartmouth style; and when two -o'clock rolled around, the dancers were having such a good time that they took up a collection to retain the orchestra for another hour. This unprecedented move gave Leverett a reputation for gaiety which still persists, rivaled only by Adams A entry.

Prior to the spring of '38, Leverett had never paid more than \$300 for an orchestra, but the clamor for a big name band induced the committee to sign up Artie Shaw's orchestra at a cost of \$475. Big names and financial loss—over sixty dollars in the case of Leverett—were common to all the Houses that spring.

Editors note: \$475 in 1938 is equal to \$8,600 in 2020. This was during the 1938 period that 22-year old Billie Holiday was touring with Shaw.

Let's plan on celebrating the 90th anniversary of Leverett House next fall with a Swing Dance in the Dining Hall!

Lev Naturalist

40 million birds. That is how many were in the skies over New England on September 19th, a peak day of the fall 2020 migration. The number comes from counting portions of radar images supplied by airport towers and were only 5% of those in the air over North America that day. We've had a great turnout in Cambridge in the mornings, which receive around 12,000 birds/km each night, because most of the migrating species only fly at night and feed and rest during the day. Many come out of the skies over Mt. Auburn Cemetery, the most famous bird watching spot in New England (check out the Feminist Bird Club on FB!). Cemeteries are generally good for birds-- lots of green vegetation, water, and the residents are very quiet...

You can witness the nocturnal avian flights-- and their fall-out-- yourself. Just point binoculars at the moon any night this month and you'll likely see a few birds flit across the face of the bright lunar sphere. And if you listen, you can hear their soft twitterings,

chips and sseeetttts that birds make to stay in touch with each other on their dark flights. At daybreak, you can even see tiny birds plummet out of the sky into the trees and shrubs around you where they rest and search for insects and fruits to re-fuel their journeys south.

Birds are not the only migrants this month, next week we'll look at local migrations by creatures with fewer or more legs than birds!

September 27, 2020

Lev Lore

Leigh Hoadley was the second master of Leverett House, following Ken Murdock in 1941. He stepped down in 1957, just as the Lev Towers were in the planning stage. Hoadley was a developmental biologist, knowing everything there was to know about embryos. He was from Northampton MA, and was attending U. Michigan when he enlisted for service in WWI. As a 23-year old member of the Ambulance Corps in 1917, he was aboard ship in the English Channel approaching Liverpool when a torpedo was spotted heading straight for the vessel. The underwater missile just nicked the bow without exploding, fortunately for all aboard the ship which was carrying 85,000 gallons of fuel. Hoadley was later given the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in France. He graduated from U Mich. in 1921 after the war, and attended graduate school at U. Chicago. Hoadley arrived as a professor at Harvard in 1927, where he would be for nearly 50 years.

Just before Hoadley joined Leverett House, he transferred to the Sorbonne as an exchange professor in the heat of WWII. According to *The Crimson* (21 May, 1954), "He displayed this easy adaptability when he was an exchange professor at the Sorbonne in 1939--hardly a peaceful year even for zoology lectures. Uncertain of having a class to listen to him, he recalls that "one day there would be 45 students, the next six, and then 45 again, as the soldiers were shipped out and back." Hoadley's lectures must have been good, because his last one lured over 60 people away from hearing Hitler broadcast his famous reply to President Roosevelt." Hoadley enlisted for service in WWII in 1942.

A later *Crimson* interview with Hoadley posed the question of what Leverett House is called. "Leverett is well populated with athletes, but it is not called "the Athletic House." It consistently places high in intramural sports, but it is not called "the Straus House." Despite its sometime orchestra and glee club, it is not called "the Music House." It has been forced to share with almost every House the title of "the Friendly House." But Leverett can claim its position as "the House of Origins" free and clear. This name is apt, however, only if one realizes the spirit that lies beneath it."

Leverett House alumni commissioned a portrait of Leigh Hoadley in 1963 that hangs today in the JCR of our very own House of Origins...

Lev Naturalist

We've been watching the Monarch Butterflies that are on the goldenrod and asters along the Charles River to try and spot one with a tag applied by citizen scientists north of us. No luck yet. Every schoolchild knows that the butterflies are headed south to Mexico, where they overwinter in the pine groves in high mountain valleys. Many New England birds overwinter in Mexico too, but more fly further to South America. Unlike birds, however, the Monarch butterflies we see these days along the Charles will not themselves return to where they were hatched in New England and Canada. Instead they will stop and lay eggs on their slow way north and it is their grandchildren that will finally complete the journey next year. Being members of a worldwide group of tropical butterflies, Monarch Butterflies are really a tropical species that just happens to summer in the north. Along with the Monarchs, large dragonflies are also heading south en masse, and likewise being "cold-blooded" are largely day-fliers, capturing insects as they go (mostly mosquitoes!).

There are migrants deep below the surface of the Charles River too: vast, silvery shoals of tiny herring, the babies born of parents that hurtled themselves last spring over the Watertown dam to shed their eggs in the sandy stretches above. The spring herring run in MA is famous, and there are even underwater cameras at the dams that are online (last May the count was 700,000 fish). However, while very few humans notice the quiet exodus of millions of diminutive young that drift downstream to the ocean in October, half a year later, their predators (striped bass and cormorants) do notice...

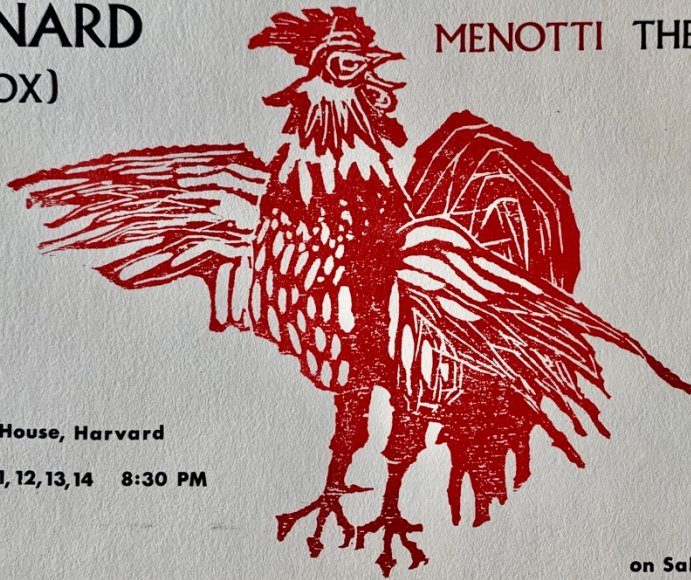
Next time: Why do leaves change into so many different colors in the fall? Hint: This occurs in New England and in China...

October 6, 2020

Lev Lore

The Leverett House Opera Society

STRAVINSKY
LE RENARD
(THE FOX)



MENOTTI THE UNICORN
THE GORGON
AND THE
MANTICORE

at Leverett House, Harvard

November 11, 12, 13, 14 8:30 PM

Tickets \$2.50, 1.50

on Sale at the Harvard Coop

for Reservations Call 868-3325 3-8 PM M-F

In honor of LatinX month, we celebrate John Lithgow '67, whose father Arthur Lithgow was a

Dominican-American Actor and playwright born in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. John Lithgow is the Emmy and Tony Award-winning actor and director, co-creator and MC of Arts First-- and he got his start as Director of the Leverett House Opera Society! We can hardly do better than to reproduce two reviews of his Leverett Operas from the Crimson.

Operas at Leverett.

In the Leverett Dining Room through Sunday

By [Beth Edelmann](#)

November 12, 1965

Last night the Leverett House Opera Society opened its production of "Le Renard" and "The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore." I cannot isolate an impression of the music, the dancing, or the drama. I was left only with a memory of the unity of these elements, and that is the highest praise I can give an opera.

Director John Lithgow wisely did not sacrifice characterization to symbolism. The characters, except for the poet, wear masks which conventionalize them, but the masks

are not identical. Lithgow's poet, played by Paul Magloff, was subtle and almost underplayed. He moves as in a trance. His face displays no feeling. His movements are constrained and simple, yet in his duets with the beasts he displays great tenderness. While the poet conveys feeling with only the slightest gestures, the townspeople express motion in exaggerated contortions.

The Marriage of Figaro

At Leverett House this weekend and next

By [Stephen Hart](#)

April 29, 1967

“Producing a major Mozart opera is at the very least a grandiose gesture. The production at Leverett House is more: it is lively, intelligent, and remarkably polished.

John Lithgow's staging was restrained (for Lithgow) and stylized. His blocking moved well, and the choreography had moments of brilliance without upstaging the music. The panic preceding Cherubino's leap from the window, the third act choral dance, and the intricate comings and goings of the last scene were the best.

The translation used for the Leverett production contains many brilliant strokes and the usual quota of ridiculous lines. The singers took great pains to make the words clear, but many were inevitably lost in the ferocious pace. Given their care, it was worthwhile to do the opera in English; many as of the scenes, and above all the finale of the fourth act, were excruciatingly funny. Dramatically as well as musically, this is a memorable Marriage of Figaro.

[Editors' note: Author Norman Mailer and violinist James Oliver Buswell IV '69, were the guests of the Tenth Annual Leverett House Festival of the Arts that week.”

Lev Naturalist

There are two places in the world where the maples paint the hills with brilliant oranges and reds in fall—New England and northern China. The areas close to Beijing, around the Great Wall near Badaling or Mutianyu, are famous for their fall displays. The colors are produced by the pigment anthocyanin, which is itself triggered by cold weather. Anthocyanins shield leaves from excessively bright light, and are also anti-oxidants and anti-freezes. They help trees continue to move valuable sugars out of leaves in the fall and into the trees blood vessels, called phloem, for storage in their roots over the winter (or at least until maple sugaring season arrives...!). In other words, the colors buy time. If you wrap and chill one branch of a maple, and not the others, it will turn bright red much faster than the rest of the tree.

Why maples enflame the hills of China and New England is a very old story. These trees and a handful of other trees and wildflowers once occurred across North America and Eurasia from around the time that the dinosaurs went extinct until fairly recently. When the first Ice Ages began a million years ago, these widespread species were gradually frozen out of their northern ranges and disappeared, except for those parts of Asia and North America which had southern extensions (today's southeast Asia and the southern USA and Mexico). The trees could retreat to a warmer climate in the south until later, when warm temperatures returned again to the north and the glaciers melted. Maples, magnolias, tulip trees and many wildflowers all were able to return north to the regions

today known as New England and China but went extinct in Europe.

This pattern of plant affinities on opposite sides of the world was discovered and described by botanists in 1879 who coined a curious but descriptive moniker for it--the Arcto-Tertiary Geoflora (the northern plants of Tertiary origin that followed the earth's climate change). Enjoy the colors while they are still dressing up the trees, but they will also stay bright in your room through the winter if you collect and press the leaves in newspaper under some books for a week or two of drying. Try it!

October 12, 2020

Lev Lore

This week will highlight two extraordinary alumni of Leverett House, in music and the culinary arts. Both remain close to Harvard. As we've seen, there is no better source about Harvard students than the Crimson itself, and so here are some abridged notices of Harvard presentations by Leverett alumnus Yo-Yo Ma '76 in music, and Leverett alumna Joanne Chang '91 in the culinary arts.

MUSIC

By Judy Kogan

February 19, 1976

“With three major high-quality musical productions and several recitals on the calendar, it looks like this might be the stellar week of the year for classical music at Harvard.

This week may be an endurance test for cellist Yo-Yo Ma '76 who will make three public appearances here in four days.

Mstislav Rostropovich, the great Soviet cellist-conductor who yesterday dropped his suit- and cello cases in the Leverett House suite where he will live for the remainder of the week, has promised to share some of his riches with Harvard audiences. On Saturday afternoon he will conduct a master class in Sanders with four undergraduate cellists.

A program of Beethoven warhorses will feature the familiar/familial Harvard trio of Richard Kogan '77, piano; Lynn Chang, 75, violin; and Yo-Yo Ma '76, cello, on Friday night in Sanders. This weekend may be an endurance test for Ma who will perform three times in four days. Not that he sours with fatigue, but chances are that you will catch him at his freshest on Friday evening.

Harvard Grad Throws Down in Kitchen

Chang '91 emerges victorious on Food Network by Margot E. Edelman and Laurence H. M. Holland, May 1, 2007.

A group of undergraduates escaped the sticky prices and sticky wages of Ec 10 lectures yesterday for their counterpart in the food world—sticky buns.

The Food Network yesterday taped an episode of its hit television show “Throwdown with Bobby Flay” in Joanne B. Chang '91's Boston bakery, holding a cook-off between Chang and celebrity chef Flay that was judged in part by Harvard University Dining Services (HUDS)'s top chef.

The taping, which the Food Network invited 95 undergraduates to watch, was part of a gimmick in which Flay surprises a chef in an area in which he or she is an expert—in Chang's case, sticky buns—and challenges the chef at his or her own game.

The undergraduates cheered on their alumna during the bake-off, invoking sacred Harvard rivalries to encourage their home competitor. At one point, when Flay began to assemble his buns in a way that Chang diplomatically called “different,” one student in the audience yelled “That’s how they do it at Yale.”

The hometown advantage held up: Chang was judged the champion of the episode. Unexpected twists are nothing new for Chang. An Applied Math and Economics concentrator while at Harvard—she baked cookies for the Leverett Grill while an undergrad in the house—Chang abandoned her post-college job as a management consultant and switched to her real passion: baking.”

Lev Naturalist

We saw the first Dark-Eyed Juncos this morning, a sure sign of the winter ahead. Juncos have gray heads and backs with white underparts, and they can seem to disappear among the patches of snow where they dig for seeds. For Juncos that breed across far northern Canada to Alaska, wintering in MA is as good as heading to FL. Milder temps, lots of food, and maybe not as many hungry weasels. Nevertheless, we do have weasels in MA, and they are also changing into their wintry coats this month. By November, our brown weasels will have turned almost entirely snow white, all but the black tip of the tail. In this white winter coat, weasels are called ermine. Their white coat helps them hunt juncos, mice and anything else they can find, even animals bigger than they are! Weasels make up in feistiness what they lack in size.

There is another coat-changing mammal in MA, one close to our Leverett hearts, the Snowshoe Hare. Snowshoes are the only hares native to New England, and while we don’t have them in Cambridge, they can be found in the woods of western MA and up through VT, NH and ME where they consume twigs and herbs and hide from the owls, foxes and bobcats that are also looking for food in winter.

All coat-changing animals are facing new challenges as the changing climate means snow comes later in the fall and also leaves earlier in the spring in these northern places where ermine and snowshoe hares abide. So now their white coats often stand out against brown backgrounds, making both predators and prey more visible to those by whom they would rather not be seen. However, some western populations of Snowshoe Hares have gained brown coat genes by hybridizing with brown jackrabbits, so they continue to change to a winter coat every fall, but now it is brown to brown. Let’s see what happens with our Snowshoe Hares (and ermine!).

October 20, 2020

Lev Lore

"Lead-Belly" to Perform

March 13, 1935

““Lead-Belly,” 12-string guitar artist, will perform before Leverett diners tonight in the Dining Room. Mr. Huddio Ledbetter, more familiarly "Lead-Belly," was discovered by John A. Lomax in his search for folk songs. All available places at this dinner have been reserved by House members for themselves and their guests.”

So wrote the Crimson 85 years ago.

Huddie William Ledbetter, who would soon become world-renowned as “Lead Belly,” performed to an SRO crowd in Lev Dining Hall on March 12, 1935. His visit was enabled by Prof. John Lomax (U. Texas) and his son Alan Lomax who started as his assistant (and attended Harvard for a year). Lead Belly wrote and performed the songs that would spark broad awareness of the power of American blues music and that would, in turn, inspire music development from folk to jazz and rock. You may know “Goodnight, Irene,” and “Midnight Special.” The recordings that allowed his great music to spread from Shreveport, Louisiana across the country and beyond were made by Alan Lomax and his father John with grant funding and equipment loaned from the Library of Congress. Among the other artists Alan Lomax brought to a wider audience were blues guitarist [Robert Johnson](#), as well as protest singer Woody Guthrie and folk artist (and Leverett alumnus!) [Pete Seeger](#) who became collaborators and friends. Over some 70 years, Lomax would record and share many thousands of hours of folk songs, starting the folk revivals in the USA and Europe (see <http://www.culturalequity.org/>).

Lev Naturalist

By now everyone at Lev knows that a leveret is a young hare, the mascot of the greatest of Harvard Houses. But what about the other Houses? What are their mascots? Well, there’s Dunster’s moose (really red deer if you look at the antlers, and Lowell claims the red deer too, along with a fistful of arrows) and there’s Kirkland’s boar. Eliot adopted the noble, but extinct, Mastodon. Cabot has the big-headed sculpin (le chabot in French), Winthrop has the royal lion and two Houses, believe it or not, have plants (Adams’ oaks and Currier’s apple tree). Newer Houses have adopted animals too, including Pfoho’s polar bears and Quincy’s penguins, and of course, Mather’s gorilla. The original Harvard shields of the River Houses were adapted from family crests by heraldist Pierre de Chaignon la Rose ’95 (and member of Hasty Pudding, Signet and Phi Beta Kappa, allegedly “...without taking a single lecture-note”). De Chaignon was commissioned to develop the House shields and went on to design those of the Harvard graduate and professional schools and Radcliffe College; and also shields for Yale and Princeton, Catholic University, Notre Dame and diverse other Catholic institutions.

So that is our Harvard House menagerie. Next time, we’ll look beyond the wildlife banners hanging outside the House, and into the natural history of the littler animals that actually live among us on the inside....

October 26th, 2020

Lev Lore

Pete Seeger to Give Song Recital Today

NO WRITER ATTRIBUTED

February 27, 1947

Banjoes and folk ballads are bread, butter and life to Pete Seeger, erstwhile member of the Class of 1940 who will return to Cambridge in a free, informal recital for the Food Relief Committee this afternoon in Emerson D at 5 o'clock.

Remembered by recordings such as "Lonesome Train," and Columbia Workshop broadcasts, the tall, lanky, blue-eyed singer has played his banjo and sung his songs for millions of people from coast to coast, with such other ballad "greats" as Woody Guthrie and Alan Lomax.

Thumbed His Way to Fame

After his two years here in Leverett House, Seeger spent three years bicycling and hitch-hiking up and down the east coast doing odd jobs and singing at small parties and meetings. In 1939 he met Woody Guthrie, who led him on a western tour that covered 45 states and on which Seeger says he "learned to sing in saloons for the first time."

Seeger's later hits included discovery of "Winoweh," a tune improvised from a recording of ostensible anonymous folk music from Africa. When Seeger was told of the actual origin, he gave all royalties and rights to the authors. In the 1960s, Seeger would revisit our neighborhood of Mt. Auburn and DeWolfe in Club 47, at 47 Mt. Auburn St. (a plaque hangs at the site, between Daedelus and Tommy's), where Bob Dylan and Joan Baez (her first gig, at 17) got their start. Joni Mitchell, Taj Maja, Lead Belly and Mississippi John Hurt were all part of the scene. Folk gave rise to the folk rock of the late 60's and eventually rock and roll. It all started at Leverett with Lead Belly and Pete Seeger. House Master Ken Murdock can also be honored for facilitating the musical events.

The House of Blues was founded in Harvard Square in 1992. With the intention of focusing on folk music from the Deep South, Hollywood and music icons invested in and opened the first of what would soon grow to be a highly successful chain of music venues. Dan Akyroyd, Aerosmith, George Wendt, Paul Schaffer, John Candy, River Phoenix, and Harvard University were among the first investors. The House of Blues now exists in 12 locations across the country, though the original location in Harvard Square closed in 2003. The origin of House of Blues serves to add to highlight the importance of the music culture of Harvard Square.

Lev Naturalist

When you turn on the lights in a room at Lev, you may see some quickly moving creatures. If you see a big dark-brown cockroach it likely is a so-called American Cockroach. They are one to one and half inches long and now occur all over the world but they are not native to the Americas. They were likely carried here from Africa and the Middle East in the ships of the early colonists. American Cockroaches are also all over Harvard Square, especially around trash bins. They don't mind being outdoors and an adult female can live for two years and have up to 150 babies (sometimes from unfertilized eggs, no males needed!). American Cockroaches can carry bacteria on their legs so it is good to keep your room clean and free of the crumbs and moisture they need to hang around.

Those early ships also brought the much smaller, half-inch long, light brown, so-called German Cockroach, native to Southeast Asia (not Germany) and now worldwide too. German cockroaches don't like to be outdoors but they can have 5-6 generations in a year and so their populations grow fast inside when there is food and water available.

Keep your place tidy and the cockroaches will head for the neighbors (!).

You may also see in your closet or drawers some tiny, gray quarter-inch long insects called silverfish. They kind of look like little silvery shrimp running fast. They are clean and harmless and are native here, and remarkably, are also identical to their ancestors that evolved hundreds of millions of years ago, long before any animals, insects or not, had evolved wings. Appreciate them, they are like living fossils, the not-quite-missing links between the first flying insects and their shrimp-like ancestors!

November 2nd, 2020

Lev Lore

*“As some poor stranger wrecked upon the coast,
With fear and wonder views the dangers past,
So I with dreadful apprehension stand,
And thank the Powers that brought me safe to land:
A drunkard now no longer—that is o’er.
Free, disenthralled, I stand a man once more.”*

LEVERETT HOUSE

Presents

Ten Nights in a Barroom

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

MAY 29, 1933

A home for performance since the beginning, Leverett House presented in May 1933 in the Dining Hall “Ten Nights in a Barroom,” a play adapted from the African American original silent film released during Prohibition in 1926 (see a clip here on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlcDrsdmQgM>).

The film was one of four produced by the Colored Players Film Corporation, an integrated production company based in Philadelphia whose aim was to counter racial stereotypes through presenting excellence in performance and the example of integrated teamwork.

“Ten Nights in a Barroom” has a temperance movement theme, and Prohibition was repealed in December of that year, 1933.

The Leverett student stars in the photo are (l to r), K. Dimenna '34 (as Mrs. Slade), R. I. Cummin '35 (as Mehitable Cartwright), F. J. Ritger '35 (as Mrs. Morgan), and N. de Tarnowsky '35 (as Mary Morgan). Each would be around 105 years old today.

Lev Naturalist

With snow on the ground, we're being visited by unusual birds from the boreal forests of northern Canada. This is what is termed an “irruption year” for northern finches, a little-understood, occasional surge in their movements south of the usual wintering ranges. Large, bright yellow, white and black Evening Grosbeaks, smaller Redpolls and even the parrot-like Crossbills are showing up in Cambridge and beyond. These and other rarities have been spotted by students and other citizens in Mt Auburn Cemetery and along the Charles River and reported in e-bird (e-bird.org) hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Check it out. You can see what birds are being seen in your area too and even sign up for daily reports of sightings and locations of the handful of rare species. In northern VT, for example, there is a report of a Northern Gannet and Black-legged Kittiwake on Lake Champlain, very far from the offshore haunts of these oceanic birds. Getting outside and focusing our eyes on distant objects is restorative, particularly as we puzzle over, and sometimes solve, the little mysteries of what we see. One thing is for sure-- not only is the natural world beautiful, it is also full of surprises.

November 9th, 2020

Lev Lore

We pass over the terrace of the Leverett Library every day on our way to the Towers, back to the DHall, or to the door that opens to the offices and spaces within. With the exception of the few days in the year when the terrace is used to hand out keys to arriving students, or to accommodate the House staff and speakers for Commencement, the library terrace itself barely receives a glance. Yet, this spacious open terrace is the frame for a floor-to-ceiling sculptural mural, by none other than the renowned Italian artist Mirko Basaldella, and is signed simply, Mirko 1960. Mirko Basaldella was born in Udine, Italy in 1910 to a family of artists. His approach reflects his early exposure to Cubism and his work through the war years and after was recognized with a 1955 exhibition at MOMA, and award of first prize in the Sao Paulo Bienal, another at

Carrara, and later by the National Academy in Rome and in the Roman Quadrennial. Mirko's best-known work is the enormous, magnificent bronze gates to the Mausoleum of Ardeatine Cave in Italy. In 1957, Mirko Basaldella was appointed Director of Design at Harvard, where he taught students in the studios then located at Peabody Terrace where he made monumental sculptures for public and private collections. Mirko co-founded the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies and, in 1963, was named Director of Design Workshops in the new Corbusier-designed Carpenter Center. In 1960, Mirko was asked to create the extraordinary sculptural mural for the terrace of the new Leverett Library, where it remains as pristine and moving as the day it was installed. Mirko Basaldella passed away in Cambridge on November 24, 1969

Lev Naturalist

We know about Weeks Bridge, and the fish that run through the river below, but what about the river bottom, some 18 feet below the surface? Among the innumerable bottles, cans, supermarket carts and automobiles, is a slow-moving army of mussels! Not the familiar blue ones from the sea that sometimes star in HUDS bowls, but larger, mobile freshwater mussels that swarm in river bottoms around the world. Here in the Charles River, there are 4-5 different kinds but the most abundant by far is the beautiful *Elliptio complanata*. I saw my first examples two years ago, open on the exposed bank under the Weeks Bridge, their gorgeous, pink-pearly interiors shining in the sun after a gull had lunched on the rest. This species occurs from Georgia to Canada and west to Lake Superior. The tiny, baby clams are spread by the female mussels in a streamer of mucus that catches passing fish long enough for the musselets to attach to the fish gills where they develop for several months before jumping off to take up their life plowing the river bottom. Today there are hundreds of thousands of these abundant mussels in the Charles, filtering millions of gallons of river water every month to gain their diet of algae, fungi and bacteria plankton. The next time you walk over the Weeks, think of the myriads below, unseen but hard at work cleaning your river!

Caption: *Elliptio complanata* under the Weeks Bridge

November 16th, 2020

Lev Lore meets Lev Naturalist



If any House owns the Weeks Footbridge, it is Leverett House, right? According to the *Crimson* (October 7, 1926), the John W. Weeks Memorial Footbridge was completed by end of December, 1926. The design was by Andrew Canzanelli of the storied firm of McKim, Mead and White, architects of much of Harvard, including HBS, as well as some of the best architecture in NYC, including Penn Station, the American Museum of Natural History and most of Columbia University.

The reinforced concrete footbridge is 500 long and 25 feet wide, with three arches spanning the Charles river. The graceful design is faced with white Indiana limestone and bricks on either side. Designed to carry steam heat and electrical cables to HBS, the bridge now also carries fiber optics. Building the bridge through spring summer and fall of that year took 175 workers deploying 10,000 barrels of cement and 25,000 bricks at a cost of \$195,000.

The bridge is named for John Wingate Weeks (1860-1926), originally from NH and later Mayor of Newton, MA, the MA representative for Massachusetts (1905-1913), then Senator (1913-1921) and finally Secretary of War from 1921-1925.

Weeks is best known for a bill he introduced in the House of Representatives and signed into Law by President Taft in 1911. The Weeks Act made it possible for the national

forest system to expand into the eastern United States on the artful premise that connects forest headwaters protection to protection of commerce, a goal of the US. Constitution. Forests protect water flow, which protect streams, and so protect navigability and therefore commerce. The Act is said to be one of the most successful pieces of conservation legislation in U.S. history, with nearly 20 million acres of forestland protected.

<https://foresthistor.org/research-explore/us-forest-service-history/policy-and-law/the-weeks-act/>

Today, the temperature of the Charles River under the Weeks Footbridge is 51 degrees F. (in case you were wondering).

Caption: Here's what it looked like in early 1927. Notice the differences of landscape, including Leverett House on both sides of DeWolfe Street.

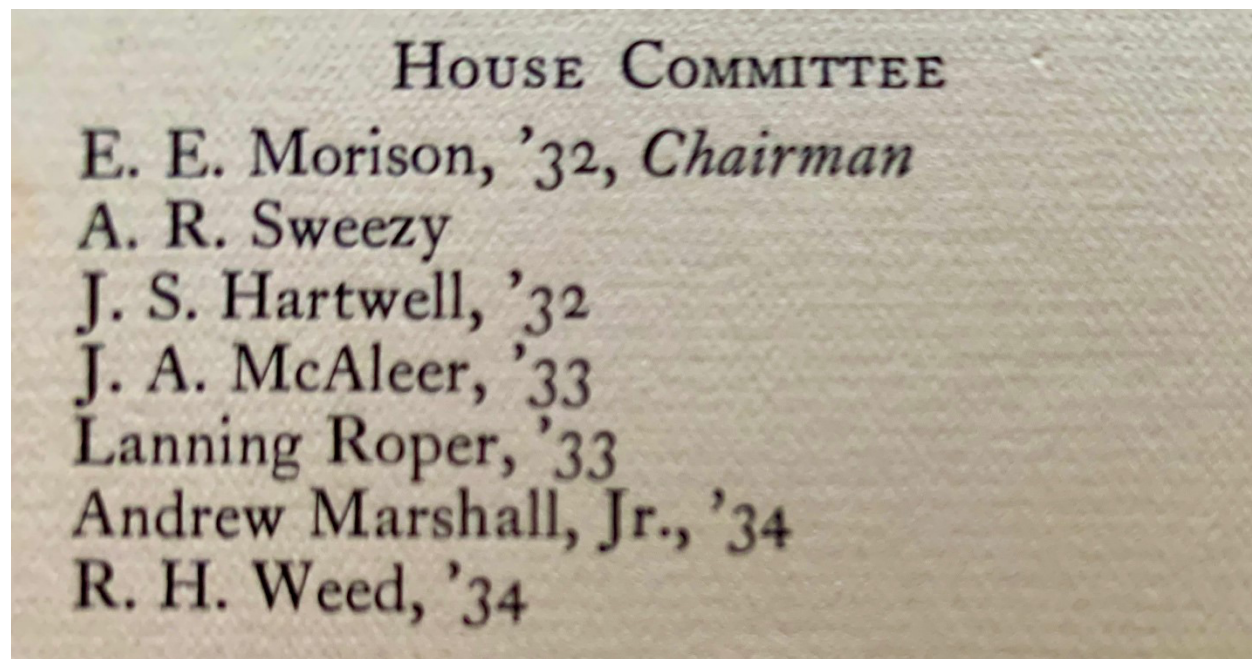
November 24th, 2021

Lev Lore

We're entering the 90th year of Leverett House. The first House Committee was appointed by the House Staff and they were ready to go by the spring of 1931, months before the House opened for students the following September. There were two students from each class: E.E. Morison '32 (Chair), J. S. Hartwell '32, J. A. McAleer '33, Lanning Roper '33, Andrew Marshall '34, and R.H. Weed '34, plus Economics Tutor A. R. Sweezy for support and guidance.

By the time year two in the life of Lev arrived, the HoCo held open elections, and nine more students were added to the original seven. With the strength of a 16-member team, no wonder they could hold dances in the DHall, organize radio shows, put on plays and more. HoCo still has a very generous budget, so let's see what is possible for next year, the hoped-for year of our return to campus and the 90th anniversary of the incomparable Leverett House! Dances in the Dining Hall, anyone?

Caption: Leverett House Committee 1931-1932



Lev Naturalist

I had just turned onto Dunster Street in front of the Hasty Pudding clubhouse, walking with our family dog Kotaro early Thursday morning, when I heard the high peet of a Cardinal alarm call. I spotted the brilliant-red bird high in a vine-covered tree in the patio behind the clubhouse, and when I also saw several agitated House Sparrows with the Cardinal, I knew there must be an owl nearby. After a moment I spotted a large and magnificent Barred Owl nestled in the leaves of the ivy draping the large elm tree. The beautiful, brown-striped bird seemed unruffled by the complaints of the songbirds and they soon left him alone. We stayed around for a while, showing the owl to excited students passing by. We came back later in the afternoon and the owl was still there. It's a good spot for an owl to spend some time (with so many delicious rats around), and we wish great success to a bird that belongs more in the mature forests of western MA than the streets of Cambridge. Barred Owls are known for their remarkable yowling duets ("who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all," check it out on Youtube or e-bird!). This visitor from the faraway forest blessed the brick haunts around 02138 and we hope others can see the bird before it leaves for quieter places.

Caption: Barred Owl in back of the Hasty Pudding clubhouse on Dunster Street.



December 1st, 2020

Lev Lore

From the Crimson (2.24.1965):

“Aaron Copland will spend three weeks at Harvard this spring while he makes a television series on "Music in the '20's" for WGBH, the Boston educational television station.

The 64-year-old composer will spend the week of April 9-16 in a guest suite at Leverett House and the weeks of March 12-19 and May 1-8 at Dana-Palmer, a University residence house near the Union.

Richard T. Gill '48, Master of Leverett House, said yesterday that he hopes to arrange an informal dinner during Copland's visit to which members of Leverett who are interested in music would be invited.”

A frequent visitor to Harvard, Aaron Copland had first been appointed as a Visiting Lecturer on Music, in January 1944, to deliver five public lectures on modern music under the Horatio Appleton Lamb Fund. Copland would later that year write *Appalachian Spring* for Martha Graham, earning him the Pulitzer Prize and establishing his place in the firmament of great American composers

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LGjLBzAhKw>

Copland returned to Harvard in 1951-52 as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry. However, Copland's associations apparently caught the attention of the House Un-American Activities Committee. According to the *Crimson* (of 1.7.1953), "music composed by Aaron Copland, 1951-52 Charles Eliot Norton lecturer, will be deleted from the Inaugural Concert [for Dwight D. Eisenhower], following the efforts of Representative Busbey (R-III.) who charged "with all the vigor at my command" that Copland has "a long and questionable record of questionable affiliations." Copland's deleted compositions included A Lincoln Portrait...<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiWZhNhLRTw>

Lev Naturalist

The Lev mascot may be a hare, but turkeys are much more present inside and outside the House (especially at this time of year!). We've been seeing a small band (they seem too serious for a flock) of males and an occasional solitary female, patrolling Cowperthwaite, Grant and Flagg Streets this week in search of acorns. Turkeys were abundant here in the colonial days but had disappeared by 1851, along with most of the forested land that was converted to agriculture. Around 1970, a few dozen were trapped in New York and released in western MA and VT. Today there are more than 20,000 here and 50,000 in VT. This same pattern of early extinction and successful re-introduction occurred in NH, CT, RI and ME and now the total New England population is close to 200,000 birds. The return of the Eastern Wild Turkey is one of the greatest of conservation success stories. In case you wondered, domesticated turkeys are not the same birds. Instead, they are descended from turkeys originally domesticated in Mexico and Central America 2000 years ago and brought from Mexico to Spain in the 16th century, and then back to the Americas for the market. In Mexico they often serve turkey with chocolate!

December 8th, 2020

Lev Lore

While he was an undergrad in Eliot House, Jim Cramer '77 (currently of CNBC), wrote a regular column in *The Crimson* simply called *Jazz*. On November 20, 1975, Jim writes, "I was just sitting in the newsroom minding my own business when Freddie Hubbard walked over to my typewriter. FREDDIE HUBBARD--one of the greatest trumpeters alive. My God, and he's staying at Leverett House all week." The following summer, Jim wrote again in the *Crimson* about Freddie Hubbard's visit at Leverett, "I've been saving an interesting story about Freddie that I can unload now that he's back in town. It seems that this great trumpeter--and he is by all means great--came to Harvard this fall as part of a new Learning From Performers series. That program brings the best in performing artists from various fields, to Harvard for a week stay. During that period they teach, coach, play and eat with Harvard College students. Well, Freddie came in fashionably late, of course, and proceeded to have a very high time with a couple of freewheeling students in Leverett House.

Anyway, to make a long story short, near the end of the week, President Bok, a known jazz fan himself, invited a bunch of resident musicologists and other dignitaries to a fancy cocktail party/reception (not very fancy, there was no Canadian Club) in honor of Hubbard. The party was expected to kick off about 5 p.m., but one-half hour and 45 demi-tuna fish sandwiches later, the great trumpeter still hadn't shown up. Pretty soon President Bok began to lose patience with the avant-grade jazz movement. By 5:40 some of the more eminent musicologists, refusing to be put on hold by this former Coltrane side-man, departed. There were several uneasy jokes. By quarter of, Frederick the Great still hadn't made an appearance. That was enough for President Bok. He exited quietly, but with a look that would melt a complete collection of the trumpet king's greatest hits.

Anyway, Freddie never showed and his malscheduling will always be a source of embarrassment for the Learning From Performers people.

Nevertheless, Freddie is usually on time for his concerts.” And Leverett House still hosts Learning From Performers!

Freddie won the Downbeat award the year (1975) he visited us. Check him out here with Airtio (hosted by Chick Corea and Quincy Jones!): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snLEnvzRII8>

Caption: Freddie Hubbard thanks to Leverett House.

Lev Naturalist

We know about Weeks Bridge, and the fish that run through the river below, but what about the river bottom, some 18 feet below the surface? Among the innumerable bottles, cans, supermarket carts and automobiles, is a slow-moving army of mussels! Not the familiar blue ones from the sea that sometimes star in HUDS bowls, but larger, mobile freshwater mussels that swarm in river bottoms around the world. Here in the Charles River, there are 4-5 different kinds but the most abundant by far is the beautiful *Elliptio complanata*. I saw my first examples two years ago, open on the exposed bank under the Weeks Bridge, their gorgeous, pink-pearly interiors shining in the sun after a gull had lunched on the rest. This species occurs from Georgia to Canada and west to Lake Superior. The tiny, baby clams are spread by the female mussels in a streamer of mucus that catches passing fish long enough for the musselets to attach to the fish gills where they develop for several months before jumping off to take up their life plowing the river bottom. Today there are hundreds of thousands of these abundant mussels in the Charles, filtering millions of gallons of river water every month to gain their diet of algae, fungi and bacteria plankton. The next time you walk over the Weeks, think of the myriads below, unseen but hard at work cleaning your river!

Caption: *Elliptio complanata* under the Weeks Bridge



December 16, 2020

Lev Lore

“Unit number 5. That was Leverett’s original name. After the House system has been formally approved and Lowell and Dunster already built, the remaining five houses were designated merely by architects’ unit numbers. By this time, Leverett House was already half built.” K. Murdock. 1941. Hutch History.

As you know, McKinlock Hall was donated in 1926 as a freshman dorm, and so all that remained to form Leverett House five years later was to build Mather Hall just across Mill Street. Mather Hall was renamed Stone Hall when it was given 30 years later to start the upstart Quincy House in 1961, but it still has the initials LH up near the roofline. Add the Dining Hall and Master’s Lodgings and you have Leverett circa 1931. A coin toss decided the name (we won). Prior to 1931, it was freshmen who lived in McKinlock and a few other dorms along the river, while the seniors lived in the yard, and the sophomores and juniors lived wherever they could find a room in Harvard Square or nearby. This of course supported private construction of some very nice apartment buildings, but since not everyone could afford to rent, President Lowell gained support for the idea of the class-shared Houses. We’re glad he did.

Lev Naturalist



Ever notice the blue sign on the fence at Kirkland that says Manning's Wharf? Believe it or not, the salt waters of the Charles River lapped up Dunster Street at high tide not so long ago. The Charles River dam was constructed in 1910 near the present-day Museum of Science and stopped the salt-water tides from flooding upstream to Cambridge and Watertown, enabling eventual construction of the River Houses. Unfortunately, the dam also prevented the herring, shad, alewives and smelt from their yearly spawning runs upstream, and so a replacement dam complete with fish ladders was in place just downstream by 1978. Were it not for that early dam, however, we'd all be crowded into Harvard yard, the salt flats reeking at low tide, and the mosquitoes would be thick!

February 1st, 2021

Lev Lore

Anyone notice the bell in McKinlock Courtyard? The wooden frame that holds it has the name Pennoyer carved into the front, after the man in whose honor it was originally cast in 1790. The bell was given to Harvard in 1945 by the village of [Pulham St. Mary](#) in England where it had hung in the tower of the school since 1790 but had recently been removed because the belfry had rotted. Unlike the famed Lowell bells nearby, no one will be asking for this bell back because the school was closed in 1988.

The Pennoyer Bell honors William Pennoyer (1603-1671) who was a London merchant who traded all over the known world, to India, Madagascar, The Levant, Barbados, Virginia, Massachusetts, Guinea, Italy, Germany, and Holland. He left money to support two scholarships and two fellowships at Harvard, and for a free school in Pulham St. Mary. Pennoyer scholarships are still awarded. Leverett got the bell because John

Leverett received a Pennoyer scholarship for £20 in 1694 when he was a tutor, and of course, Leverett later became Harvard President and changed the course of instruction at the College. No small feat.

Lev Naturalist

Given the preferred adornment of our Vice President Kamala Harris, we thought it important to know more about pearls. A pearl is the beautiful response of an oyster to a minor irritation. The irritation may be a grain of sand, a speck of grit, or a tiny bit of shell deliberately placed inside the shell by a pearl farmer. The response of the oyster, or freshwater mussel, or conch—any mollusk with the right kind of coating on its shell, can produce a pearl. The edgy bit is wrapped in a smoothing layer of calcium carbonate known as nacre, and then another, and another, for as many as it takes to produce an object of a size that no longer irritates but can rest tucked snugly away in a fold of flesh.

Oysters and freshwater clams are most well-known for making pearls, but any mollusk with a shell can make one too. Some of the most beautiful are from the pink Queen Conch of the Caribbean.

The mouth of the Charles River has many thousands of oysters that clean the river of algae and fungi that float down, away from the freshwater mussels upstream.

February 8, 2021

Lev Lore

Seems like every old Harvard building, gate or fence has the Veritas shield on it, but guess which Harvard building also has the Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts? You guessed it- our own McKinlock Hall! The East wing with the dining hall has the familiar crimson Veritas shield on the end gable, but the gable of the west wing features the brilliant blue Great Seal, complete with the image of the Objibwe Leader Ase-anse, also known as Little Shell. The Great Seal itself was designed by Paul Revere in 1780 to signify the newly won freedom of the colony from the rule of the Crown. Why this is on McKinlock Hall, however, remains a mystery for now.

Lev Naturalist

Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival in China and many countries in Southeast Asia, is next Friday, February 12. It has been 4 billion years in the making. This moment in time each year is the occurrence of the first new moon that appears between January 21 and February 20th and marks the first day of the lunisolar calendar. While the Gregorian calendar generally followed by Harvard and other institutions helps in tracking the seasons of the year (spring always falls in the same months, for example) the lunisolar calendar also traces the moon's phases, and coordinates with the varying angle of the sun through the constellations near which the full moon can be seen from earth and so it reflects the seasons too.

The advantage of tracking the moon as well as the sun is that while the effects of the sun and seasons on nature are obvious, the effects of the monthly lunar phases are easy to overlook. Apart from fact that animals see better on moonlit nights, the most dramatic

lunar effects are those of the moon pulling on the largest moveable substances on earth, the oceans, but it isn't just oceans that feel the moon- so does everything else.

You can measure this effect on everything from the strength of palm leaves to the success of seedlings to the quality of wood produced at the full versus new moon. This has been known to scientists for years, to violinmakers and foresters for centuries, and to indigenous people for millenia. Even oysters grown far from the ocean respond as if there were tides, and so do many other animals. There is an imperceptible tide in a bathtub of water and in a cup of coffee.

The tug of the moon on earth is as pervasive and constant as the gravity from which it comes. It makes sense to recognize the importance of these rhythms in our lives, due to moon and sun, and the dance of the earth in reply.

February 15, 2021

Lev Lore

Poetry has beat in the heart of Lev since the earliest days of our House. The famed Irish poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats stayed at Leverett House in the first year, 1931, 90 years ago. In 2003, Lev student Pete Buttigieg '04 recommended Yeats as still timely reading. Foresighted was that young man, now in his second week as the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. Things are looking up.

From the Crimson(9.29.03):
Frightened—and Fighting Fear
Liberal Art

By [Peter P.M. Buttigieg](#)

September 29, 2003

If you feel like getting goose bumps today, borrow your English-concentrating roommate's copy of the Norton Anthology of English Literature and read W. B. Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming." Though written in Ireland in 1922, many observers have pointed out that the poem seems almost explicitly about the second coming of the Bush Administration.

"Things fall apart," Yeats wrote; "the centre cannot hold."

W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot spent time in Leverett House in our very first semester, fall of 1931. Let's plan a celebration on the 90th anniversary!

Lev Naturalist

Today there will be over ten hours and 36 minutes of daylight, up from the paltry nine hours and 4 1/2 minutes on December 21st. We're aimed at 15 hours and 17 minutes on June 21st before we again begin the long slow slide into the darkness of winter.

The daylight in Cambridge is lengthening more rapidly now than at any other time of year. Today we have two and a half minutes more light than we did yesterday, and the brains of neighborhood birds are starting to swell in response as testosterone begins flooding the song control nuclei (SCN) of the avian brain. Robins are starting to sing

around the neighborhood on warmer mornings, cardinals too. But I'll believe that spring is here when the first song sparrow once again throws back his head and pours out his heart on the bank of the Charles by the foot of the Weeks Bridge. Watch for a recording via the Lev Instagram on that great, hopeful day!

February 22, 2021

Lev Lore

A note about the long association of Robert Frost '99 with Leverett House appeared in the Rabbit Read of August 4th, and it is time for an update. You may remember that Robert Frost was an extended guest of Leverett House when he taught poetry at Harvard as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry in 1935-36. On March 23, 1936, Frost was the guest of honor at the Leverett House monthly House Dinner. Afterwards he read from his own works and led an informal discussion in the Junior Common Room.

Frost later returned to Leverett as the Ralph Waldo Emerson Fellow in Poetry in the academic years 1939-1940 and again 1941-1942. He finally bought a house in Cambridge at 35 Brewster Street in 1943. He said once that he liked visiting colleges. He didn't, he explained, "know a better place for a poet to hang around for two or three years. The wandering Frost was referring to his own history of never being at any single university for more time than that, having spent a bit of time at Dartmouth, Harvard, Amherst, U. Michigan, and several smaller schools.

When Robert Frost was the Ralph Waldo Emerson Fellow in Poetry from 1939 to 1942, he also hung around Adams House, as the guest of Housemaster Reuben A. Brower, who had introduced Frost to Leverett House a few years earlier when Brower was a graduate student and a Leverett House tutor under Ken Murdock. Brower had become a friend of Robert Frost when Frost was still an Amherst faculty member, and Brower was an undergraduate at Amherst College.

Fast forward to January 20th, 1961. Former Winthrop House resident John F. Kennedy '40 invited 87-year old Robert Frost to read a poem at his Presidential Inauguration. Facing a blinding sun, Frost found that he was unable to read the script he had prepared and so instead recited from memory "The Gift Outright," a poem he had written years before. On January 20, 2021, the remarkable 23-year old Amanda Gorman knew to have her own freshly-written inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb" firm in memory well before approaching the podium, 60 years later to the day, looking out towards a brightness ahead.

Lev Naturalist

Over in Mt. Auburn Cemetery, the Great Horned Owls are already on eggs, and early this Sunday morning, a Peregrine Falcon streaked over Harvard Square, in pursuit of some small unseen bird. The Peregrine pair that nests on the Boston University tower downstream from us courting and preparing for egg-laying next month. The Red-Tailed Hawks are carrying sticks to their nesting site on the window well at the SW corner of the top floor of the Smith Center this week as well. The local Bald Eagles are no doubt starting to rebuild their huge stick nest, and they patrol the river daily for fish or ducks they can grab. Last week, Quincy House FD Leslie Duhaylongsod spotted an adult Bald

Eagle flying between Quincy and Lowell. Two years ago an eagle was spotted flying one afternoon over the Weeks Bridge downstream towards BU. Ten minutes later, the bird came rocketing back upstream, low on the water, pumping madly as an irate Peregrine repeatedly dove on it from above. The two birds vanished up the river towards Watertown, and the Peregrine returned moments later, sauntering back to its mate high on the BU tower. For all of these large predatory birds, spring is already here. Our songbirds, however, must wait for the greening trees and lawns to provide insects, worms and other small creatures. But they are already starting to sing in anticipation!

March 1, 2021

Lev Lore

You may not know that the Leverett Library is actually called the Saltonstall Library, named for the ten generations of the Saltonstall family who were Harvard alumni and continued supporters. Leverett Saltonstall '14, HLS '17, was governor of MA, then a long-serving US Senator and he was generally moderate and very well-liked (he was also related to the Leverett family). Senator Leverett Saltonstall worked closely with then-Senator John F. Kennedy and with his top Aide, Ted Sorenson, who remained at Kennedy's side as advisor as he entered the White House. Sorenson later wrote the definitive Kennedy biography while esconced high in G-Tower in the academic year 1964-1965, courtesy of Housemaster Richard Gill. Sorenson later admitted to have written the iconic Profiles in Courage for JFK. The ties of Lev are wide and deep.

Lev Naturalist

Leverett senior Amir Siraj '21 is on leave this semester pursuing his dual interests in astrophysics and piano. His latest publication with professor Avi Loeb supports the idea that the impacting object that ended the dinosaurs may not have been an asteroid as long thought, but rather a comet that ricocheted off Jupiter, hurling a piece straight at Earth. If the Loeb-Siraj calculations are right, comets are about 10x more likely to hit us than we thought. On the bright side, the dinosaurs did not really go extinct after all because birds are actually a kind of dinosaur- just take a look at the scaly, clawed feet of the next chicken you see!

March 8th 2021

Lev Lore

Ever wonder about that bronze and granite sculpture in the middle of the McKinlock courtyard? The piece is called Sungate and it was created by Boston sculptor Murray Dewart '70. Sungate was installed in the fall of 2003. The idea of installing sculpture there came from a Leverett resident tutor who realized that art would elevate the atmosphere of the otherwise classical courtyard. Jack Megan of the Office for the Arts was contacted, and he soon made the connection to Mr. Dewart. Murray Dewart was born in St. Johnsbury VT in 1947 and graduated from Harvard in 1970, where he was a resident of Adams House. Today, Murray Dewart is a prominent sculptor and he has created and installed similar gates and other works in China and around the United States. Dewart views the Sungate as a metaphor for passage, fitting for a House, don't you think?



Lev Naturalist

The Red Maples that line the Charles River and the streets of Cambridge are starting to flower, a sure sign that it's maple syrup season! Red Maples can be tapped to produce maple syrup but the main source of the syrup we know is the Sugar Maple. The first big run of the season in VT was last weekend, and tappers in the sugarbush are already in the main runs of sap. Why does a sugar maple invest so much sugar in it's sap? Easy. Its anti-freeze. A single tap in a mature tree will produce about 10 gallons of sap, enough for one gallon of Vermont maple syrup. The Red Maples along the River and streets of Cambridge do produce enough sugary sap for syrup but most are too small to be tapped. While all trees have tiny canals called xylem that are usually filled with water, in maples these are filled with gases such as carbon dioxide. Freezing temps at night pull the sap in the roots up into the xylem as the gas evaporates. Warm temps in the day then heat up the tree and creates internal pressure that makes sap to flow out of any opening. A series of freezing nights and warm days are ideal for sap flow and syrup-making. Taps facing the early morning sun flow first and others follow the sun's warmth around the day and around the tree. But as the days warm over the weeks of spring, buds break, bacteria begin to multiply, and bitterness starts to tinge the delicate maple flavor. After four or five weeks at most, the maple syrup season is over again for another year.

March 15, 2021

Lev Lore

In March 1938, 22-year old Billie Holiday had been fronting the Count Basie band for nearly a year, perfecting her vocal technique through a grueling road schedule across the country, and was ready to take the next step forward in her career. Her departure from the Basie band on March 3rd followed a week-long engagement at the famed Apollo Theater in Harlem.

In early 1938, 27-year old clarinetist and bandleader Art Shaw's 14-piece band was struggling. Following a year of traveling for back-to-back, one-night gigs, their recording contract ended at the end of 1937. Seemingly of the blue, Boston brothers Si and Charlie Shribman took them under contract with a home base at their renowned *Roseland-State Ballroom*, starting on March 15th of that year (83 years ago today), playing two nights a week and broadcasting over Boston's CBS station WEEI. Days before, Art Shaw had invited young Billie Holiday to join his orchestra for a March 9th engagement at Madison Square Garden. The next Tuesday they debuted their musical collaboration here at the Roseland, which they promoted in the press as the headline-grabbing first integrated orchestra. Each later wrote of the moment in their memoirs.

Remarkably, on that Friday, March 18th, 1938, the new Art Shaw Orchestra was hired by Leverett House Master Ken Murdock to play the spring dance in the Leverett Dining Hall. No recordings or photos exist but there is a clipping of the event. The productive Shaw-Holiday match lasted through most of 1938, transforming their music, and it included a great recording session in July that produced the instrumental that drove the orchestra to the top of the charts: *Begin the Beguine*. And Art quickly changed his name to Artie. No doubt they played that piece in the Lev dhall and the others they recorded that summer. Here's the July 1938 recording of Billie Holiday with the Artie Shaw Orchestra:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGrU7n9m2Yo>

Whose up for a re-play with a swing dance next year?

That historic engagement at the Roseland over on Mass. Ave., near Wally's Café and later, the Berklee College of Music, was prescient in another way too. Thirteen year-old Malcolm Little was working shining shoes there and met Billie Holiday for the first and only time, he recounted. Neither could have known then that he would, some 26 years later, also move a large audience in the Leverett Dining Hall, as Malcolm X. The date was March 18th, 1964.

Incidentally, March 18, 2008, was the day that the momentous *A More Perfect Union* speech was given by then-Senator Barack Obama at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia in the course of the contest for the 2008 Democratic Party presidential nomination. Clearly, the stars align on the date of March 18th.

May we declare March 18th as a Leverett holiday, perhaps *Holiday- X*?

Caption: The Art Shaw Orchestra at Leverett on March 18th, 1938.



Lev Naturalist

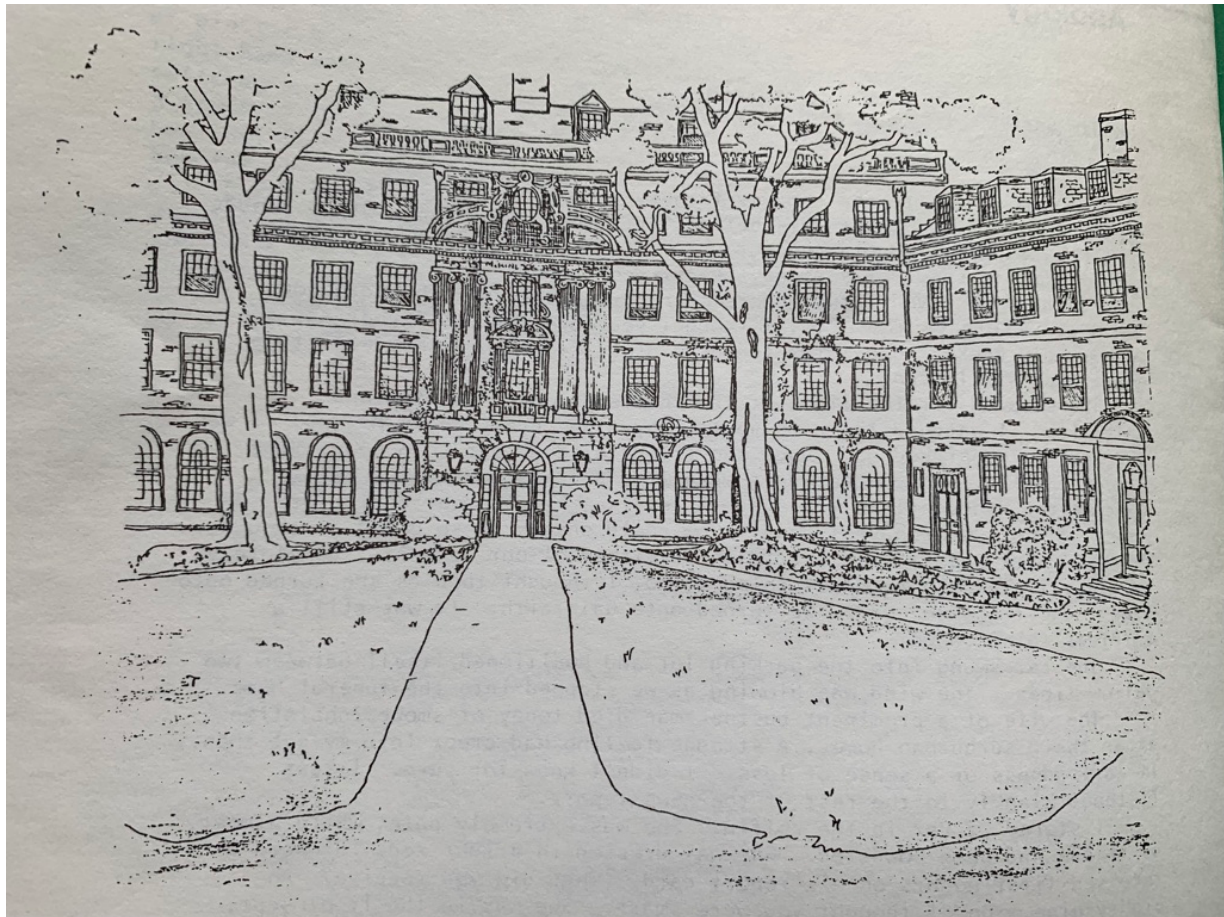
We're at a crossroads in the season of change of a historic year. Unprecedented numbers of birds that breed in northern Canada spent the winter here. Crossbills are still hanging upside down on the tops of pines from Mt. Auburn Cemetery to Salisbury State Park along the coast north of us. In the same trees are pine warblers that have arrived from further south, and they are now joined by one of the friendliest flycatchers around, whose name sounds like their incessant call: *Phoebe*. These small gray and white birds are the surest sign of spring here. Eastern Phoebes are fearless and usually nest near houses. They call their name and wag their tails incessantly, perching on a small leafless branch as they wait to sally forth after a moth or fly. There are many other signs of spring around, from blooming snowdrops to the new leaves of tulips and daffodils pushing up through the detritus of winter, bringing hope with them.

March 22, 2021

Lev lore

Through the 1960s, the spring theater productions of the Leverett House Arts Society were embedded in an ever-larger annual extravaganza, the Leverett Arts Festival, begun under Master John Conway, and which included plays, recitations, a film series, jazz and classical music, singing, poetry, student art competitions and much more. From 1960-1962, the art show was housed under a giant geodesic structure, a "space frame pavilion" following the design of Buckminster Fuller. The structure was touted as the most ambitious project ever attempted by Harvard students, its construction supported by the College and a Ford Foundation grant. When erected for the May 1960 Arts Festival by some 25 Leverett residents, the pavilion covered 1500 square feet of the McKinlock Courtyard. Buckminster Fuller himself spoke in the Dining Hall on May 11 of that year to open the arts festival.

The space frame pavilion, a geodesic dome 30 feet high, was next erected in the Tower courtyards in 1961-62 to house the art and sculpture shows until finally being dismantled when May winds threatened to carry it away. Throughout the 1960's, Leverett House was known to have the largest, most inclusive Arts Festival at Harvard, with prizes in the annual art competitions awarded to students from across the Houses. Several other nearby Houses soon began their own arts festivals-- Dunster, Adams, Quincy, and even the Yard joined in 1966. Some of the festival concerts were taped by WHRB for later broadcast and are still in the WHRB archives. A prominent element of the Leverett Arts Festival was always theater, especially musicals, on which we will have more next week!



Caption: Pen and ink drawing of McKimlock courtyard by Carol Ostrow '78 for the Leverett Art Journal.

Lev Naturalist

Here in Cambridge, we mark each spring by looking for the low, fetid blooms of skunk cabbage in the swamp just beyond Eliot Bridge. They actually produce heat to warm the tiny flies attracted to their rotten meat color and odor. What reeks for some, smells sweet to others. Saturday March 20th was the first day of spring, the vernal equinox. This

date marks the halfway point in the return of the sun's warmth to the north. At 5:37 EST Saturday morning, the sun was positioned directly overhead at the equator, at a point 5 miles south of Meru, Kenya. On this day of the year and another in fall, every place on earth has exactly the same day length, and therefore also night length: 12 hours. In fact, that is exactly what the word equinox means: equal night, *aequus nox*, in Latin. Twice a year, fall and spring, there is worldwide equality in access to the energy source of all life on earth, the sun. That's something to think about, perhaps for more than two days a year.

March 29, 2021

Lev Lore

From the very first days, theater production was a prominent element in Leverett House. Theater was therefore a leading element of the Leverett House Arts Festival that was begun in 1960-1962 and spectacularly housed under a geodesic dome in the Leverett courtyards. The theater productions of the Leverett House Opera Society flourished under Richard Gill from 1964-1972, and were then guided by Music Tutor Archie Epps. In 1972, the Leverett House Opera Society joined forces with the Harvard Advocate to launch the first all-Harvard Arts Festival, filling the first two weeks of May with events in nearly every House, and spilling out onto Harvard Square as well.

Some twenty years later, in 1992, John Lithgow '67, who was very involved with directing several Leverett Opera Society productions (listed below), was inspired as a new Harvard Overseer to found *ArtsFirst*. This renaissance of the all-Harvard Arts Festival that John Lithgow continues to host is nearing its thirtieth year. Here below are some of the earlier Leverett House productions leading up to the first all-Harvard Arts Festival and successors.

Leverett Opera Society productions:

1964. *Così Fan Tutti*

1965. *Le Renard* and *The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore*, John Lithgow director.

1966. *Bach and the Beatles*

1967. *The Marriage of Figaro*, John Lithgow director.

1968. *The Fantasticks*

1970. *Play of Daniel*

1971. *The Marriage of Figaro*

1972. *Don Giovanni*

The Leverett Opera Society was eventually absorbed into the encompassing new Leverett House Arts Society, founded in the spring of 1971. According to *The Crimson* (Nov. 08.1971): "*The Leverett House Arts Society was created last spring. Its inaugural production. The Roar of the Greasepaint--The Smell of the Crowd, has just closed after playing to consistently sold out houses. Leverett House is the only one at Harvard which has its own stage: it was constructed in the Old Library as a project of the Leverett House Spring Arts Festival of 1971.*" Fifty springs ago!

Leverett House Arts Society productions:

1971. *The Roar of the Greasepaint-The Smell of the Crowd*

1972. *Threepenny Opera*

1973. *A Thousand Clowns, Guys and Dolls*

1975. *The Apple Tree*

1976. *Doctor Faustus*

1977. *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl, A Thousand Clowns*

1978. *Guys and Dolls*

Lev Naturalist

A naturalist reading Robert Frost or Pablo Neruda recognizes another. When Frost wrote the lines below, some 100 years ago, he surely had in mind the early leaves of beech, among the very most beautiful, golden and ephemeral of the leaves of spring. The beech leaves of Mt. Auburn Cemetery are today unfurling, as they are of the beeches nearest to each of you. They are worth seeking out. Like all material things, such leaves will fade, but it is not their permanence that gives them value. Nor with spring, or our time together.

ROBERT FROST

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature's first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay.



Caption: *Beech leaves in spring.*

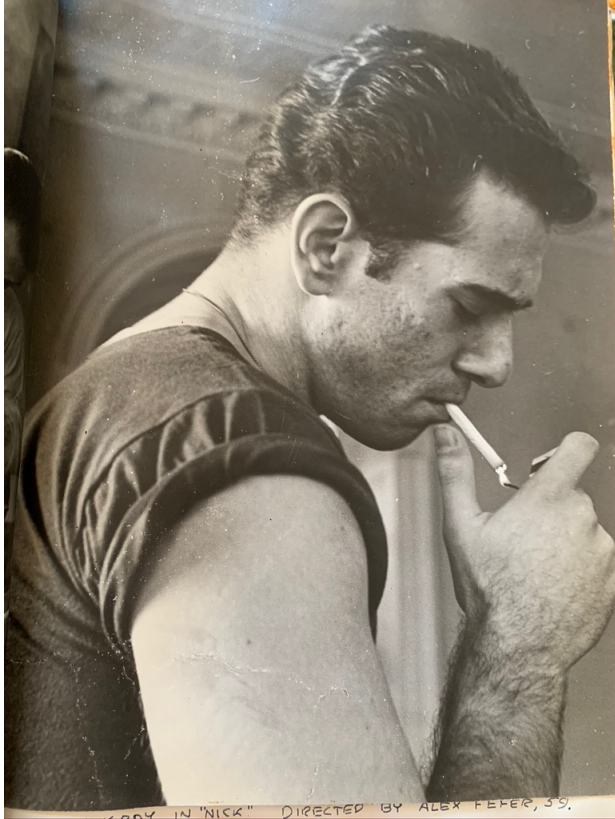
April 5th 2021

Lev Lore

Is he smoking in the Dining Hall? Yes, tobacco culture pervaded Leverett House and nearly every other space, public or private, in 1957. That was the year the Leverett Drama Society presented *The Questioning of Nick* in the Leverett Dining Hall (the library theater was still a library). Lev undergrad Edward McKirdy '58 was in the title role.

According to the *Crimson* (12.06.57): "*The Questioning of Nick* is a terse, well-constructed character study of a high school hoodlum. Arrested for assaulting a fellow-member of the school's basketball team, he is subjected to a subtly-conceived interrogation by a pair of police detectives, who finally reveal the frightened boy hiding behind the facade of a tough guy. Kopit's point may be a modest one, but he makes it with skill and ends up with the most theatrically accomplished undergraduate play produced here in recent years. The playwright is fortunate because the three actors in his work all present fine performances. As the hoodlum, Nick, Edward McKirdy not only looks right, but also hits upon just the right way of moving and talking."

Edward McKirdy '58 went on to Yale Law School and a luminous career as a NJ attorney specializing in property rights. He passed in 2008 at the age of 81. On the other hand, the author of *The Questioning of Nick*, Arthur Kopit '59, was himself an applied sciences concentrator who went on to a long career as a playwright. He has been a three-time Tony nominee and twice a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Art Kopit, 83, lives still in NYC.



Caption: Edward “Nick” McKirdy ’58 lighting up in the Dhall.

Lev Naturalist

Today robins run across the lawn, stopping to cock their heads, listening for earthworms. Twin magnolias spread their snowy blooms in the McKinlock courtyard; their pink cousins by the library are swelling open. The butter-yellow tulips planted by students and tutors two falls ago will soon color the courtyard slope by Cowperthwaite Street. We count on all these flowers to arrive every April. The beauty of flowers and birdsong each spring is a reminder that the natural world is much more than comprehensible, it is shouting under the chaos that arrests our attention instead.

Instructions for living a life

Mary Oliver

Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.

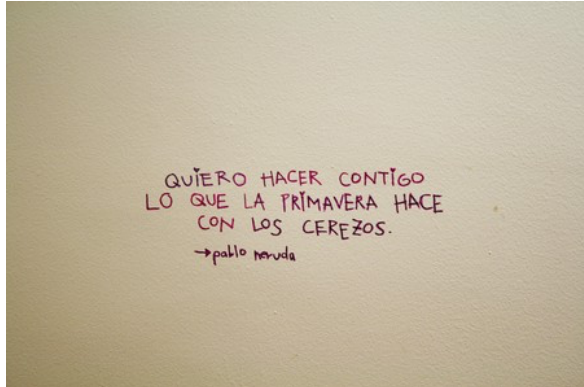
As with her poetry, this exhortation of naturalist poet Mary Oliver late of Provincetown holds a universe of meaning: of mindfulness, awe and sociability. Here’s why.

Modern medicine has now measured how our interactions with nature and with people influence our health. Witness the sights, scents and sounds of nature, whether of pines on the horizon, herbs underfoot, or birds in the bush, and you lower your stress hormone levels as well as your inflammation response; you also slow your heartbeat,

ease your mind and boost your immune system. Our responses to nature are known by many words--*shinrin-yoku* in Japanese, *friluftsliv* in Norwegian, *biophilia* in English-- and they are surely more often felt than named. Modern medicine also reveals how our ties to each other shape our health through a strengthening response called *social gene expression*. Like biophilia, this is also more often felt than named, and we do not need words for the joy that comes when you multiply their effects together, like with experiences outdoors in the company of friends. Everything we touch, touches us back.

“I want to do with you what the spring does with the cherry trees.”

Pablo Neruda



Caption unneeded.

April 12th, 2021

Lev Naturalist

Over Mill Street today, and very likely where you are too, high on dead branches overhead, Downy Woodpeckers are tapping out their loud, fast staccato, a signal that serves the twin purposes of birdsong: attracting a mate and warning a rival.

Down by the river, the Song Sparrows and Red-winged Blackbirds are singing their hopeful serenades on both sides of the Weeks Bridge. Soon, female birds will arrive. Not many species sing duets, but our red-wings do. For a bystander listening to their courtship, it can be hard to tell that there are two birds singing, so perfectly placed are the piercing notes that the female inserts among the gurgling phrases of the male. Their timing is perfect, and not by coincidence. For birds that duet, the females are checking how well the males can synch (even after they're mates!).

Everywhere you look this week, all is green and gold. Bright daffodils look like they were flung along the river, walkways and walls, and soon there will be dandelions on every lawn. Green and gold, the colors of spring, the colors of leaf and sun, and the wonderful colors of Leverett House. Dark green was granted as the principal Leverett House color in January, 1931, months before the House opened, when the other six Houses on the river and square were assigned red or blue. We are the only House that sports the green of growth, the green of hope, the green of promise and peace, and the gold that follows. May green and gold always remind you of your House on the river Charles!

Lev Lore

From the Boston Globe. April 6, 2003. By Johnny Diaz.

“Ahh, spring! Snow falling. Rain pelting. Poems sprouting along the Charles River.

To celebrate the alleged arrival of spring, a group of Harvard tutors and students from the school’s Leverett House have ushered in the season with what they call a ‘poetry pick-me up.’

Last weekend, just before the snow rolled in, students posted—literally and in cyberspace—50 famous and spring-celebrating poems, sonnets, and haiku by William Wordsworth, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and William Shakespeare, among others. They stretch from the Weeks Footbridge to the Eliot Bridge along both sides of the Charles River, in hopes of helping joggers, dog-walkers, and cyclists get over the winter blues.

‘This year, the winter was so long and everything seemed so bleak politically and economically,’ said Lois Hetland, one of the resident tutors at Leverett House. She led the project with fellow resident tutor Yonatan Grad, who got the green light last month from the Metropolitan District Commission.

The poems selected were suggested by students at Leverett House, Harvard Medical School, and residents at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Grad said.

‘The idea has been a combination of celebrating spring through poetry and stewardship to the community,’ Grad said. ‘We are showing our appreciation for the beauty of the river and its banks.’

Last Sunday, the pair and Harvard students pounded stakes into the ground along the river and posted the laminated literary works. They also picked up nine bags of trash. ‘It was really the time to do something that would help pick up the community’s spirit,’ added Hetland, a 20-year Cambridge resident.”

Wouldn’t it be nice to do something like this again sometime? Today, Lois Hetland is an Art Professor in the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Yonatan Grad is a professor and researcher at the Harvard School of Public Health. He was an active member of the Leverett House Arts Society in 2003 and came up with the idea of placing sculpture in the McKinlock courtyard, installed that fall.

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April 20th, 2021.

Lev Lore

We found them! GSD friends found photos of the aluminum geodesic dome that was fortuitously being stored at Lev, and that belonged to its famed designer, R. Buckminster Fuller. The dome was being erected by students on the afternoon of May 26, 1962 in the new Towers courtyard. This was only a few hours before it would house the second performance of a play about undergrad life, *Mr. Ooze*, that was written by

Lev Senior Blair Brown '62. On the following day, the dome would shelter much of the rest of the Leverett House Arts Festival for that year. It was needed to replace the four-year-old, student-built, wooden space pavilion that blew apart in high winds a week before. Playwright Blair Brown '62 went on to the GSD, where he was Class of '65. In 1964, Blair and a GSD classmate, Lev alum Leonel Spiro '60, had trouble finding art and architectural supplies, so the two 20-year-old friends founded a small store called Charrette in Cambridge that became the largest supplier of art supplies on the continent-- and for over 45 years. There's no limit to what Lev friends can create!



Caption: Lev Senior, playwright Blair Brown '62 scaling the dome; Erecting RB Fuller's geodesic dome in the courtyard. May 26, 1962.

Lev Naturalist

Which came first, the turkey or the egg? Early Saturday morning, on a walk with Kotaro, we spied a large, speckled egg sitting alone on the stones beside a driveway on Athens Street, one street over from DeWolfe (and in sight of G. Tower). A few blocks away, we spied four wild turkeys: a strutting gobbler, a hen, and two other gobblers looking hopeful. Why lay a lone egg in a spot where there is no hope of incubating it? There are inscrutable mysteries in the turkey mind, but we know that sometimes a bird just needs to let an egg out.



Caption: Wild Turkey egg; Extra large chicken egg with Wild Turkey egg. April 17, 2020.

April 26, 2021

Lev Lore.

*The booklet, **Leverett 30 Years**, was published in the spring of 1961. This was the 30th anniversary of the House and the origin of the Towers and Library. It was edited by Blair Brown'62 and contained contributions from House Masters (i.e., Faculty Deans) past, present and future. John Conway, former Master Leigh Hoadley, SCR member Benjamin Wright, the Towers architect Jean Carlhian, Senior Tutor (today's Resident Dean) Richard T. Gill, and several graduating seniors. John Conway's successor, Richard T. Gill, wrote a poem for the occasion.*

Ode to the Towers

By Richard T. Gill

With tinted glass and cinder-block
The modern age is come:
With air forced up through golden
drapes
And ventilation hum;
With elevators skipping floors
(They rise at such a speed)
And lights which artfully contrive
Dark shadows where we read;
With heady crown of metal scrap
Of quite unique design
Surveying night lights in the Charles

And the *Coca-Cola* sign.
Detractors come (in Envy's estate)
And frown and groan and shiver,
And speak of Hilton hotel chains
And the broken line of the River.
But say what they will (with the scorn of
the scorned),
The final word is ours:
Without Shepley, Bullfinch
And Jean Carlhian
We'd have Mather instead of the
Towers!



Caption: May 1961. Cover of 30th Anniversary booklet; Towers being crowned, the library still under wraps.

Lev Naturalist

If you venture out some evening soon, and are in a quiet place, and listen, you may hear a stream coursing high overhead. Millions of tiny songbirds are heading north, twittering in social cohesion as they go, landing at dawn to rest and feed for a few days before launching again towards their breeding grounds. Around Cambridge, Cornell's e-bird alerts each day report the arrivals of the first brilliant warblers, the first hummingbirds and, wonderfully, the first swallows swooping over and under the Weeks Bridge. Bank Swallows, Rough-winged Swallows, Cave Swallows, Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows and the largest of them all, Purple Martins, have arrived. All swallows catch insects on the wing as they stream and wheel over water. They are poems in air. Swallows are never furtive, always trusting, and usually twittering, chittering and burbling their soft calls as they fly. Much is written about the songs of thrushes, the beauty of warblers and orioles, and the skittering shoals of shorebirds by the sea, but nothing matches the joyous flight of swallows, darting, whirling, soaring and plunging for the invisible hordes of insects that hover over river, pond or lake. No doubt there are swallows near water where you are- they are worth seeking out!

Under the surface of the Charles, silvery hordes are surging upstream. We'll check in on the annual herring run, and the predators that follow them, next week.



GONZALO GIRIBET 2021

*Caption: Rough-winged Swallow over the Charles River.
Photo by SCR member Gonzalo Giribet.*

May 3, 2021

Lev Lore

The Art Show and Space Frame

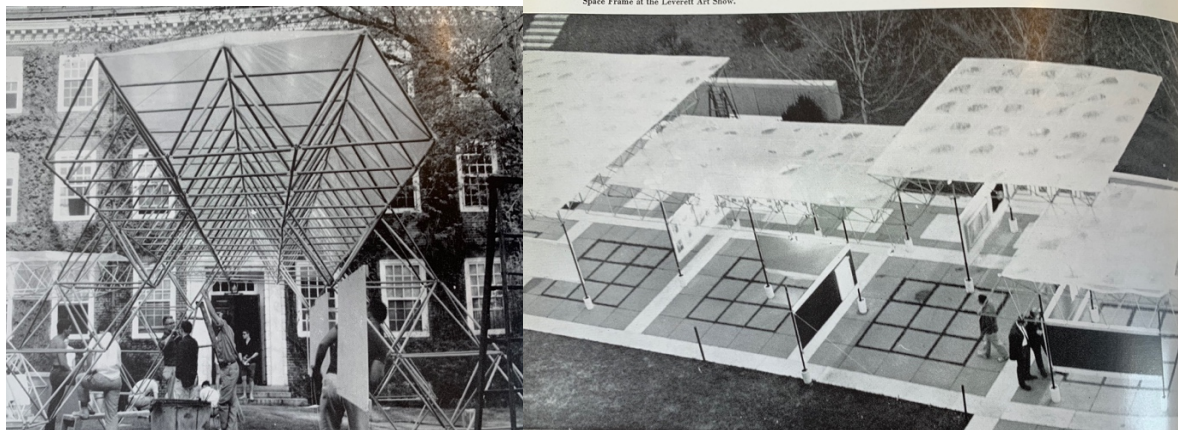
By James Lynch '61

Published in *Leverett 30 Years*, Blair Brown (ed.) 1961.

“The annual Leverett House Art Contest began in 1958 with a little Ford money and sprinkling of enthusiasm. There was no real organization behind it, only Marvin Sadik and a spontaneous gathering of interested students. The judges awarded a few prizes, everyone had his share of sherry, and the students left with the idea that it might be fun to try it again. 1959’s contest assumed somewhat greater significance. Leonard Baskin and Gyorgy Kepes judged, and dinner was highlighted by a lively conversation between Mr. Baskin and a student, yet the Leverett House Art Contest was still a humble affair, going no further than the Junior Common Room.”

“Then it happened. Perhaps Lionel Spiro, the world’s most indomitable optimist, started it but he had backers. Mr. Sadik wanted to do something BIG. Messrs. Immerman, Lynch and Smith were pushing too. We decided to apply Buckminster Fuller’s space frame or octet truss principle to a pavilion that would house the exhibits. The scheme was not easily sold. There were skeptics; there was no money; there were problems in design and worst of all, we were inexperienced students groping enthusiastically yet ineffectively for ideas. But this was Cambridge, and quite soon the Ford Foundation lent financial backing: we obtained wooden dowels, screweyes, wood preservative and polyethylene at discounts; and Mr. Wainwright of Geometrics, Inc. supplied advice. Even the Atomic Energy Commission backed us, loaning a drill press. Soon word came that Mr. Fuller would speak at the house.”

James Lynch moved back to his hometown of Bayfield, Colorado and began an architectural firm, Jay Lynch Architects that he runs still. Marvin Sadik became the Director of the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery. The Lev judges, woodcut and sketch artist Baskin, and Bauhaus architect Kepes, had remarkable careers and are worth looking up...



Caption: 1959. Space frame pavilion going up in McKinlock courtyard; 1960: Space frame pavilion erected in the Towers courtyard.

Lev Naturalist

There are three kinds of herring in Massachusetts waters, the blueback, the menhaden and the alewife. What we have in the Charles now are mostly alewives, the bluebacks will come later in June when the water is warmer. Their larger cousin is the shad, which also come up the Charles to breed. These are all anadromous fish, like salmon. Born in freshwater, they mature in the sea, and return to their birth waters to spawn. Our Charles River eels do the reverse (they are all born in the Sargasso Sea!). The fishcams under the Charles River bridges are capturing the frenzy as you read this note, 10 fish per hour turns to 100, then 1000, and soon 10,000 herring will cross every hour in front of the cameras as they peak this coming week.

By mid-May, over 800,000 alewives will have struggled their way some twenty miles upstream, over the fish ladder at the New Dam in Cambridge, up another at the Waterdown Dam, and on to the sandy banks of the Waltham spawning grounds. But not before countless thousands are consumed by legions of hungry predators. Patrols of huge striped bass follow the scents and sounds of herring from below, while overhead are innumerable sharp-eyed gulls, cormorants, eagles and osprey. Yet, these tireless fish continue to brave the gauntlet of their finned and feathered enemies, as they have on their annual migrations up this river for over 10,000 years.



GONZALO GIRIBET 2021

Caption: Osprey with alewife. Photo by SCR member Gonzalo Giribet.

May 10, 2021

Lev Lore

The Art Show and Space Frame...continued.

By James Lynch '61

Published in *Leverett 30 Years*, Blair Brown (ed.) 1961.

“...At eight o'clock the next morning an almost overwhelming number of house members appeared. Tagging behind was a crew of Life photographers. The pavilions were built in the courtyard, while a second crew, unbeknownst to the multitudes, assembled the tower in the alley between the dining hall and D entry*. By ten o'clock, the roofs had been assembled. By twelve, the legs were done. At two o'clock, the three sections stood in the yard.

Meanwhile, back in the alley, the tower had been completed. As the artisans backed away from the long chain of octahedrons, the architects slipped silently from the crowds in the yard, and joined these workers in forming a procession. A band began to play and the jubilant group marched slowly, yet triumphantly into the courtyard. Struck, the crowd backed away, gaping, eagerly and awed. The tower's bottom octahedron was anchored in the ground and the structure raised. In that last grand moment, our leader, Spiro, started to climb the tower.

The band played on, louder and faster. The crowd cheered. Up and up he went scampering up the tower like Winnie-the-Pooh clawing his way up the honey tree. Spiro was ecstatic...Today was his day...that was until the tower broke...down went the Pooh...down went the tower, but Spiro laughed and the honey tree was re-built, missing but two octahedron trusses.

Later that week Fuller spoke. The *Crimson* was impressed. Eight hundred listeners were impressed. And Fuller stayed a day longer than he had planned. All that was left was to build a different structure in 1961, brighter and larger, with leaks in the roof.”

*note: This alley is the now roofed-over Light Court.



Caption: May 1961: *Illegitimus Non Carborundum*: The magnificent, long-overdue, Leverett Tower briefly rose in McKinlock Courtyard. It was crowned by Walt Disney's 1957 gift to Leverett House for our 25th anniversary—his own original drawing of *Thumper*, the enthusiastic leporine deuteragonist of the 1942 film hit, *Bambi*. *Thumper* was removed from Leverett House by unseen hands decades ago and waits for us in the Harvard Art Museum archives...

Lev Naturalist

May days are warmed by the return of the sun from its winter retreat in the tropics. Do sounds also come north? Does a Cambridge spring sound like the Caribbean? In some ways, yes. Some sounds are common to both places, such as when the early morning light is welcomed by the slow lament of Mourning Doves and the incessant cheeping of House Sparrows. Both Cambridge and the Caribbean are also serenaded, day and night, by the virtuosic performances of Mockingbirds, with their gorgeous, paired phrasings in improvised repertoires. Overhead at our latitude are the wheeling, twittering Chimney Swifts by day, and the buzzing Common Nighthawks by night, while in the Caribbean there are Palm Swifts and the ubiquitous Antillean Nighthawks. Our resident pair of Eastern Kingbirds, perched as sentinels in the box-elder at the head of the Anderson Bridge, are every bit as pugnacious and vocal as the Gray Kingbirds of the Caribbean, hectoring every larger bird that ventures too near.

For all these many similarities, there is nothing here in Cambridge that sounds quite like the dreamy, wheezing trills of bananaquits along the streets of Santo Domingo, or the brilliant bands of screeching parakeets hurtling overhead to the fruit trees beyond the horizon, or especially, the low, staccato growls of lizard-cuckoos, stalking their fleeing prey among the snaking trunks of fig and framboyan.

There is one common Caribbean sound, however, that has retreated from Cambridge, but it can still be heard in the countryside: the pre-dawn trumpet of roosters, crowing the sun to rise out of the eastern sea. How far do you have to go, wherever you live, to hear the roosters crow?



Caption: A rooster crows in the Dominican Republic.

September 27, 2021

Lev Lore

“Unit number 5. That was Leverett’s original name. After the House system had been formally approved and Lowell and Dunster already built, the remaining five Houses were designated merely by architects’ unit numbers. At the time, Leverett was already half built, McKinlock Hall having been donated and constructed in 1926 as a Freshman dormitory.”

So wrote Prof. Kenneth B. Murdock, the first Faculty Dean (then called Master) of Leverett House, in the chapter, *Birth of a Hare*, from his account of the first ten years of Leverett House titled Hutch History (1941). A lucky coin toss later and Unit number 5 became Leverett House. The only House buildings that are older than McKinlock are Standish and Gore Halls of our neighbor Winthrop House, both also built as Freshman dormitories twelve years earlier in 1914.

Everyone knows that the namesake of Leverett House, John Leverett, was a pivotal President for Harvard’s trajectory as a liberal arts college, but few know that he was named by his father Hudson Leverett (namesake of the House mascot), for his own father John Leverett (the elder). John Leverett (the elder) was an English colonial magistrate, merchant, soldier and a governor of the [Massachusetts Bay Colony](#). He was born in England, and he moved to Massachusetts as a teenager. He was opposed to the strict Puritan religious orthodoxy that established the colony and neither believed the colony should be subject to the English crown. Leverett Circle in Boston is named for him and was built on farmland he owned at the mouth of the Charles River. He is buried at the [King's Chapel Burying Ground](#) in Boston. [Leverett, Massachusetts](#) is named for him. Grandson [John](#) Leverett was the seventh President of [Harvard College](#), and another grandson [Leverett Saltonstall](#), was an influential mid-century governor of [Massachusetts](#). Leverett Saltonstall was a frequent visitor of Leverett House and was instrumental in raising donations from the Saltonstall family for the 1961 construction of the Leverett library.

John Leverett received the Pennoyer Fellowship while studying at Harvard (and is the reason we have the bell in McKinlock courtyard which is from the Pennoyer family in England. John became an attorney and served as a justice of the peace, a judge in several MA courts, including for [Middlesex County](#) in [Cambridge](#), and was a legislator and finally Speaker of the [Colonial Massachusetts](#) House of Representatives.

John served for sixteen years as [President of Harvard](#) from 1708 till his death in 1724. He designed Massachusetts Hall, still housing the office of the President of Harvard. In 1709, Leverett served as an emissary from Massachusetts to New York to plan military cooperation for a failed plan to invade [Canada](#).

Those were the days, when a Harvard president could steer the College forward, serve as a judge and legislator, design a major building and in his spare time, plan an invasion....

Lev Naturalist

Last Wednesday was the autumnal equinox, the second of two dates each year when the entire world shares equally in the ultimate source of all life, the bounty of sunshine. That's worth celebrating. Day equal to night, wherever you are. The fall is bringing birds south too and Mt. Auburn Cemetery is as good a spot to see rarities as any around here. The Feminist Bird Club of Boston runs local bird walks and you can find them on FB. If you want to know about exciting local sightings, subscribe to the daily e-bird notices for Middlesex County from Cornell's Lab of Ornithology. Here's the report for Sunday, September 26, below.

- Ruby-throated Hummingbird (6 reports)
- Yellow-throated Vireo (1 report)
- Veery (1 report)
- Clay-colored Sparrow (1 report)
- Blue Grosbeak (2 reports)

If you want to know more, check out e-bird (<https://ebird.org/home>).

October 5, 2021

Lev Lore

*“The hare in pastures or in plains is found,
Emblem of human life; who runs the round,
And, after all his wandering ways are done,
His circles fills, and ends where he begun,
Just as the setting sun meets the rising sun.”*

John Dryden (1631-1700), a contemporary of John Leverett (the elder), and England's first Poet Laureate (1668)

Other Houses may have the ungainly moose, a large-headed fish, a bear, a boar, or an acorn or apple tree. Some even have lions. We at Leverett are blessed with the most fleet and clever of all, the hare. And not just one hare, but three hares. Unlike the more provincial House mascots, hares occur all over the world from the tropics to the temperate zone. They are fleet tricksters in folk tales from Africa to Asia to Europe,

outwitting lions and more. No other animal has the magical, mysterious symbol like the circle of three hares. A circle of three hares sharing three ears is found from the 6th century caves of Mogao in China to the transepts of medieval churches in England.

The three circling hares are present in Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist contexts, ranging back to the 6th century. They are carved in stone, painted on cave ceilings, rendered in silk, in wood, in silver and bronze and cast in ceramic and glass. The earliest verbal description is in 16th century Dutch and there are many others in the following centuries of English prose. Evidence suggests that the motif of three hares originated in China before the 6th century and traveled with the Silk Road from Asia to the Middle East, including Syria, Pakistan, Egypt and Persia. The three circling hares are especially prominent in medieval churches in Germany, France and particularly in Devon, England though no one knows why. It may not be coincidental that the Leverett family, with their family crest of three hares, first appeared in Oxfordshire, not far from Devon, in the 13th century. The power of the motif has traveled far and wide. The magic is in the mathematical puzzle posed, three hares chasing each other, each with two ears but having only three ears in total. The number three is symbolic in many cultures and religions, and the wheel of circling hares may symbolize endless pursuit. I like to think the motif symbolizes 3:2 rhythms but that may be a leap too far...



12th century ceramic tile from Egypt or Syria, showing three circling hares sharing three ears.

Lev Naturalist

Did you know that every McIntosh apple you have ever eaten came from the exact same tree, a tree found growing in 1811 on the Ontario farm of John McIntosh? Likewise, the green apples you find in the Lev dining hall all come from one tree found in 1868 by Maria Ann Smith growing in a waste pile on her farm near Sydney, Australia. Apples originating thousands of years ago in Middle Asia, and every once in a while an apple tree is discovered that has a mutation or new combination of genes and produces a distinctive and desirable new apple (there are 7500 kinds now!). But, the seeds of that apple won't produce a tree with similar fruit (because of a little gene mixing thing called sex). Instead, you have to take a branch from the tree and graft it onto other trees. The original tree then achieves a delicious form of immortality—so every apple of a particular kind grows from the same tree even when their genetically identical branches are scattered across a million different rootstocks! A hundred years ago, my Lebanese grandfather grew 25 different kinds of apples in his Vermont orchard, from the huge pie

varieties called Northern Spy and Wolf River to the eating apples like Cortland and McIntosh. You can taste some of this diverse immortality yourself here in MA if you come along on the apple-picking trip the House and HoCo co-sponsor each fall. Watch for the flyers la

October 11, 2021

Lev Lore meets Lev Naturalist

Which River House is the oldest? Not Winthrop, even though Gore and Standish Halls are more than a dozen years older than McKinlock. It's a kind of trick question.

Anyone walking down Mill Street, flanked by venerable brick walls with the patina of age that just exude history, correctly feels that, together with Adams House, these are the original Houses: Kirkland, Eliot, Winthrop, Lowell, Leverett, and Dunster, now celebrating their 90th birthdays. But these Houses are even older than they look--much, much older. These old bricks are made of prehistoric mud. Mud that accumulated over a million years from flecks of eroded rock drifting down the river that drained the Berkshires. The eons of silt and sediment built up the great beds of clay later dug by the many Boston brick companies to make bricks for building a hundred years ago. Of those old companies, today only the Stiles and Hart Brick Company survives (look for the S & H embossed on the bricks around Harvard). One could easily say that the bones of these storied buildings were first assembled a million years ago. Surely this makes the brick structures the oldest buildings at Harvard. You could say this but you would be wrong.

Have you ever looked closely at our newish-seeming Towers and Library, now in their 60th year? They are not made of concrete, despite their grayish color (which is definitely warmer than the actual concrete of Mather). These wonderful, steep, cliff-like facades are built with Indiana Limestone.

The Indiana limestone formed in a quiet tropical sea very much like the Bahamas, some 330 million years ago. It is made not of microscopic bits of bedrock washing down from the Berkshires. Instead, this limestone is the accumulation of quadrillions of beautiful, tiny calcium shells of one-celled animals called foraminifera. Today, there are thousands of foraminifera species (forams, for short) in the sea. They are still so abundant that forams form the pink sands of Bermuda (check it out when you're there this spring, Hasty Pudding people...!). Sometimes Victorian microscopists made microscopic art of forams and diatoms with a microscope (and infinite patience) to form nearly invisible geometric patterns on glass slides.

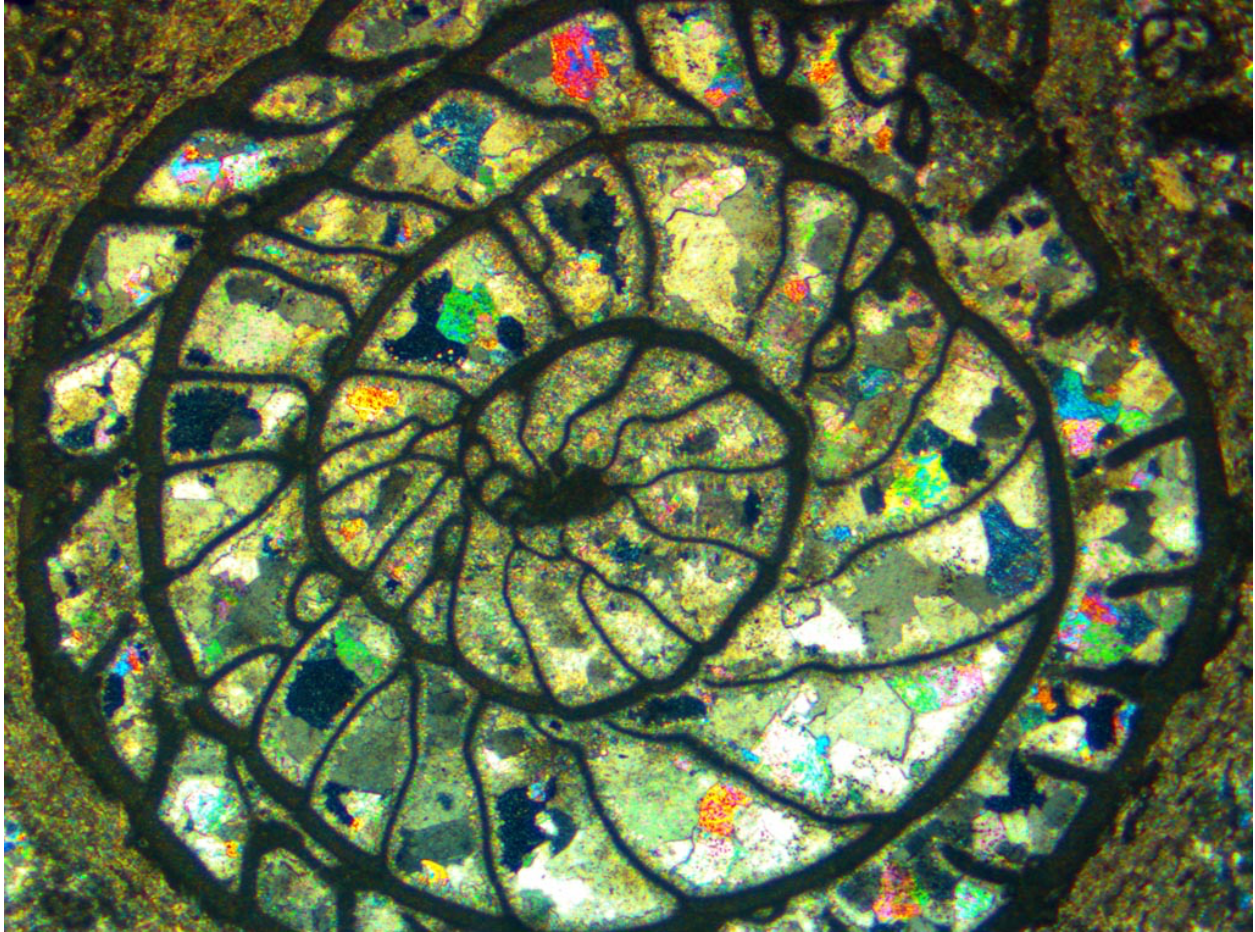
Today our Tower residents live in some of the largest works of foram art on earth. We are in good company. Other monumental sculptures of identical Indiana Limestone include the Empire State Building and Yankee Stadium, the National Cathedral and the Pentagon. And many of the most wonderful buildings in Chicago too (and don't forget those cute little medallions on the side of the Weeks Bridge...!).

This is recycling on a monumental scale. The lime originated as CO₂ in the atmosphere coughed up by volcanos and dissolved in the oceans, then extracted by forams whose shells built up on the ocean floor and were buried and solidified into stone over hundreds of millions of years.

There is ancient earth history under our feet too. The white marble on the courtyard patio is limestone squeezed so long and hard by the earth that it was transformed into something even more beautiful. The bluestone on the library patio and under the tables on the lawn was once clay buried at the mouth of an ancient river where it emptied into the sea some 400 million years ago. One hard thing in the courtyards is not like the others however. The granite steps are not like bluestone, or clay or marble or limestone at all. The hard flecked granite is the once fluid extrusions of lava that cooled deep in the earth about 300 million years ago. The deeper the burial, the slower the cooling and larger the black and white flecks of crystals you can still see in the steps.

So our Towers are sculpted slabs of limestone, while McKinlock and DeWolfe are ceramic, built of bricks fired from clay in the great kilns of the brickyards. One has drama, the others have intimacy. Life should have both, no?

When you look out across the Charles from your cliffside dwelling high in the limy Towers, and you see the dramatic, brilliant colors of fall, please know that the only other place in this wide world with trees of such glorious reds and oranges and purples is China. And that's a story for another time.



A thin section of the foram *Schwagerina* from the Permian chalks of Spitsbergen. Image by Silvia Spezzaferri, University of Fribourg Switzerland

October 18. 2021

Lev Lore

Excerpts from **HUTCH HISTORY from 1931-1941**. Kenneth Murdock. 1941.

Rabbit Hops

“Just as long as Leverett House has been in existence, the Rabbits have been putting on white tie and tails and giving parties loosely classified as “dances.” The first of these affairs ever held in Leverett’s wedge-shaped Bullfinch Dining Room was given on the night of March 31, 1932. The House had been open only a little over six months, and because of the doubtfulness of success, the dance was held in conjunction with Adams House, a dinner in the latter preceding the “piece de resistance” in the form of Joe Smith’s Copley Plaza Orchestra.

“Prior to the spring of ’38, Leverett had never paid more than \$300 for an orchestra, but the clamor for a big-name band induced the committee to sign up **Artie Shaw’s** orchestra at a cost of \$475.”

Billie Holiday had joined the Artie Shaw Orchestra the week before, and they opened at Roseland in Boston, playing on March 17th and again on the 22nd. In between, Shaw agreed to play the dance at Leverett House. Over 50 years later, a biographical performance focused on the life and music of Billie Holiday was staged at Pfoho, then called North House. Here's a report from thirty years ago, the April 11th 1991 edition of *The Crimson*.

Yesterday's the Way for Holiday

Yesterdays Directed by Craig Cochrane At North House Through April 14
By Alexander E. Marashian. April 11, 1991

Yesterdays: the life and music of Billie Holiday is, to my knowledge, an unprecedented Harvard production. It is not, strictly speaking, a play, a musical nor a concert. Instead, *Yesterdays* is about the possibilities of jazz. The juxtaposition of jazz numbers and dramatic monologues results in a fresh interpretation of Holiday's life that manages both to entertain and to challenge the boundaries of theater at Harvard.

Though it takes for its subject one of jazz's great tragic figures, *Yesterdays* is not concerned with scaling the heights of Holiday's mythic stature, nor with undoing it. Rather, it engages its audience in discovering Holiday's life through her own music and that of others. Like a great jazz composition, *Yesterdays* hovers about its theme without suffocating it, evades static and predetermined theatrical structures, defies classification and resists resolution.

The piano trio kicks in at the end of the first number and accompanies the rest of the show. Craig Hickman performs an animated "Embraceable You"--one of Holiday's most famous numbers--and then introduces Holiday herself, who is played by Ketanji Brown. The transition from student jazz concert to drama is innovative, but awkward. Brown, who affects Holiday's dialect in both her monologue and musical performance, is the only member of the cast/company to represent a historical character.

Following an impressive version of "Ain't Nobody's Business," Holiday launches into a fragmented account of her personal development, beginning with an unhappy childhood and touching on her experiences as a prostitute and in prison. These narrative snippets--excerpts from Holiday's autobiography adapted by Brown for this production--provide valuable insight into the emotional life behind Holiday's compositions and are well-integrated into the musical program."

As far as can be told from the Harvard Alumni Directory (our definitive research tool, after google), the writer Alex Marashian '92, from Adams House is an award-winning editor and creative director based in Berlin and associated with the international supergroup *Pink Martini*. The director Craig Cochrane '91 is self-employed and serves as Director of Mobile Media Institute at USC. The star of the show, Kenaji Brown '92, is now changing the world.

The Honorable Kenaji Brown Jackson is an American attorney and jurist serving as a [United States circuit judge](#) of the [United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, appointed by Joe Biden, and replacing Merrick Garland](#). Because it covers Congress, this DC Court is second in importance only to the Supreme Court, of which three of the Justices, including Chief Justice John Roberts '76, a proud Lev alumnus, formerly held the seat now occupied by Kenaji Brown Jackson.

Jackson was elected as a member of the [Harvard Board of Overseers](#) in 2016.

Kenaji Brown started by giving voice to Billie Holiday and is now giving voice to the people of DC. Who knows what her next appointment may be?

Lev naturalist

Tiny herring fingerlings are drifting downstream these days, making their way to the safe haven of shallows and marshes along Boston Harbor and the north and south shores. If you watch the Charles, you might see their dimpling the surface. A telltale sign of their presence is the presence of circling birds overhead and bass roiling the waters nearby. Meanwhile, vast shoals of millions of their main predators, huge adult striped bass, are now migrating south towards Long Island. Some will make it as far as the Chesapeake Bay. Surfcasters are having luck on the beaches of Plum Island just north of us. A free-diving friend on Long Island last week said that the river bottom there was completely obscured by an endless carpet of stripers, as far as the eye could see. The drama of these shore migrations is more than matched by what is happening offshore. Forty miles out, around the edge of the continental shelf, a feeding area called Stellwagen Bank is seething with shrimp, fish, seabirds and hundreds of whales. Legions of Humpbacked Whales are preparing for their annual migration to the warm, crystal waters of the Silver Bank of the Caribbean to give birth to their hippo-sized young. Thanks to our intrepid students, Leverett House has secured tickets for a boat trip to see them on October 31st. Keep an eye open for the announcements and lottery for spots!



RR. 11.1.21

Lev Lore. Wells, Welles and Weil (but alas, no whales).

Dateline October 30th 1931. H. G. Wells visited Leverett House for dinner and discussion with students in the JCR. Wells was famous for his 1898 novel *War of the Worlds*, a tale inspired by his horror over the effect of the British Empire on Tasmania. Wells asked himself what would happen were Martians to invade Britain, and the resulting novel became a world-wide sensation that has never gone out of print. Fast forward exactly seven years later, on October 31st, 1938, a young actor/director/playwright named Orson Welles broadcast his radio adaptation of the *War of the Worlds* nationwide, causing widespread panic as at least some listeners did not hear the disclaimers that this was fiction (delivered on Halloween, no less!). The national papers reported the chaos in New Jersey as panicked citizens fled the city, certain that slow-flying craft with raygun-toting aliens were set on taking over. It seems we've long had an appetite to be frightened, and the recently-leaked videos of UFOs in the *New York Times* are an even more interesting distraction.

October 30-31, 2021. Alfred Jarry's hilarious 1896 play *Ubu Roi* was in the Library Theater this weekend for the first time on campus since 1965, when letters of protest were received from irate citizens who thought it "obscene and indecent" and too salacious for Harvard (to be fair, it even shook Paris when it opened there). But Harvard is not so prudish as Paris, past or present. This year's wildly successful production was a collaboration between OFA, UC and HRDC. By all accounts, it soared over the bar set in 1965.

The star of the 1965 *Ubu Roi* show was one Andrew Weil AB '63, HMS '65. Weil had already established his star power on campus three years earlier, when he was the Crimson reporter who interviewed and then outed Psychology prof Timothy Leary to President Pusey. The report made it to the *New York Times* and speeded Leary's inevitable exit from the university and into the annals of infamy. Andrew Weil himself

went on to fame and enormous fortune as the head of a healthy living enterprise in Tucson AZ. It's worth looking him up.

Lev Naturalist

Behind F-Tower, on the corner of Athens and Grant, are two large female ginkgo trees dropping their bright yellow fruits on the pavement. You'll notice them before you get there because their slimy masses are famously stinky, exuding an odor (like vomit, cat poop or rancid butter) that originally evolved to attract carnivorous dinosaurs. Thanks to the fossil record we can piece together what the world of dinosaurs looked like. Giant Tree Ferns, horsetails, cycads and conifers. And a few giant dragonflies too. Now you know what the world of dinosaurs smelled like-- you need go no further than our back yard. Many plants evolved flowers or fruits that to us smell like rotten meat or worse, and they also have colors that are meant to attract the eyes of carrion flies or other scavengers. Our local skunk cabbage attracts flies that pollinate it, while Asian durian (so strongly smelling that it is banned from airlines) attracts tigers that relish the pulp and defecate the seeds far from the mother tree. Ginkgos are much older than any of these plants, and evolved their symbiosis with the carnivores that were around 200 million years ago. But as dinosaurs disappeared so did ginkgos...almost! For a long time they were known only from fossils until naturalists found ginkgos being cultivated by monks in ancient monasteries in the mountains of China, Japan and Korea. Some of these trees are over 1,500 years old. While the monasteries were obviously not around in the Jurassic, the ginkgos had become so rare in the wild that only careful human cultivation ensured that we'd be able to continue to experience both their sublime beauty and the putrid perfume of their fruits, the viscous nibbles of those erstwhile gourmands named- *T. rex*!



Ginkgo leaf then and now.

RR. 11.8.21

Lev Lore.

Ninety years ago next month, our Leverett mascot, a stuffed hare named Hudson, disappeared, only to be recovered by a clever Lev student who found where it was stashed over in Dunster House. Last month, history rhymed as one of the tall plants

gracing Lev went missing from the Library Theater, and the House was once again sad with loss.

Then suddenly last week, quite wonderfully, the unexpected happened. The plant magically re-appeared in the LT along with the most charming letter of remorse, full of humor and humanity that brightened our day. We are taking the liberty of transcribing the letter here for you, with the hope that this will brighten your day too, dear reader. And thank you, dear *borrower*. Live Lev Love!

“Hi there, here is the plant!

We are extremely appreciative for the hard work of the custodial and management teams, and truly apologize for making anyone’s day harder.

These plants are a wonderful sight of greenery throughout the house, (clearly something we desire), and provide a natural feeling to the space that Mather students could only dream of. We brought the plant to a friend in good humor, and had certainly planned to return it within days. Here it is! Early!

Again, thank you for the careful curation of the Leverett atmosphere and the maintenance of this wonderful house on our behalf.

With humor, gratitude and Lev Love,

A Reformed Plant Thief”

Lev Naturalist

Fall has landed with a shiver. Some bright leaves linger, but many are on the ground and slowly shriveling against the coming cold. Sunday’s turn back of the clocks lent another hour of morning light, but only by picking the pocket of the afternoon. This is the other moment each year when we are wistful for what is leaving, as so beautifully written by the most frequent famous visitor to Leverett House, Robert Frost.

Frost’s words capture the melancholy of passing things, a pang tempered by an appreciation of ephemerality itself. The Japanese concept of Wabi Sabi honors the beauty found in the fading of a rose, the wilting of a leaf and the crack in a cup. There is beauty everywhere, even in decay, and this season reminds us of the intrinsic poetry in the inevitable arc of the material world as the dazzle of shining perfection slowly recedes.

Nothing Gold Can Stay
Robert Frost 1923

Nature’s first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf’s a flower;

But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.



RR. 11.15.21

Lev Naturalist.

Take a look around the various food offerings in the Lev servery today. See any Native American foods? Sure you do! Corn, pumpkins, squash, sunflower seeds, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peanuts, yuca, avocados, papayas and chocolate, vanilla and maple!

All of these were food crops developed from native plant species in the Americas by Native Americans. Just try to imagine the world cuisine without them. You can try some Native American contributions to the food world on Tuesday evening 11/16 in the JCR from 7-8 as part of a Study Break offered by the wonderful Race Relations Committee. See you there!

Lev Lore.

There is an ongoing archeological dig in Harvard Yard at the site of the Harvard Indian College. The project is part of an initiative by the Harvard University Native American

Program (HUNAP) started in 2005 to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the Indian College. HUNAP is celebrating its own 50th anniversary this year.

Where did the Indian College come from? Harvard was going bankrupt in 1646 and so the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England donated funds on the condition that they be used for the spiritual and educational advancement of local Native American students. The Harvard Indian College was built in 1655, educating both Indian and English students “in knowledge and godliness.”

Native American students went to classes and to the dining hall with the English students to absorb the Puritan teachings and tell their tribes. The Indian College even installed a printing press that published the first Bible in the United States, the “Eliot Bible,” published in Algonquian by the missionary John Eliot.

The Indian College was only ever home to five native students, only one of whom graduated: Caleb Cheeshahteumuck, a Wampanoag, in 1665. The building was torn down in 1698 but although Harvard promised free housing to any Native American students in the College, not a single Native American student graduated until three centuries later.

Tiffany L. Smalley '11, the first Wampanoag member to graduate since Cheeshahteumuck in 1665, said she took the Anthropology 1130 course that oversees the dig in 2007 because of personal links to the Indian College. Tiffany Smalley now works for Google in San Francisco.

About 2% of the Class of 2024 is Native American or Native Hawaiian, and HUNAP continues to be a supportive presence for them. With HUNAP support, Eli Langley '21 was able to successfully advocate for Indigenous students to receive credit for proficiency in their native languages.

The Wampanoag are a group of people belonging to the Massachusetts, a [Native American tribe](#) from around Greater Boston, and the most numerous of the New England tribes. The name comes from the [Massachusetts language](#) term for "At the Great Hill," referring to the [Blue Hills](#) overlooking Boston Harbor from the south. Our local NPR radio station, GBH, gets its call sign from the Great Blue Hills (though some said it stands for God Bless Harvard, which rescued the station in its early years by donating a transmitter).

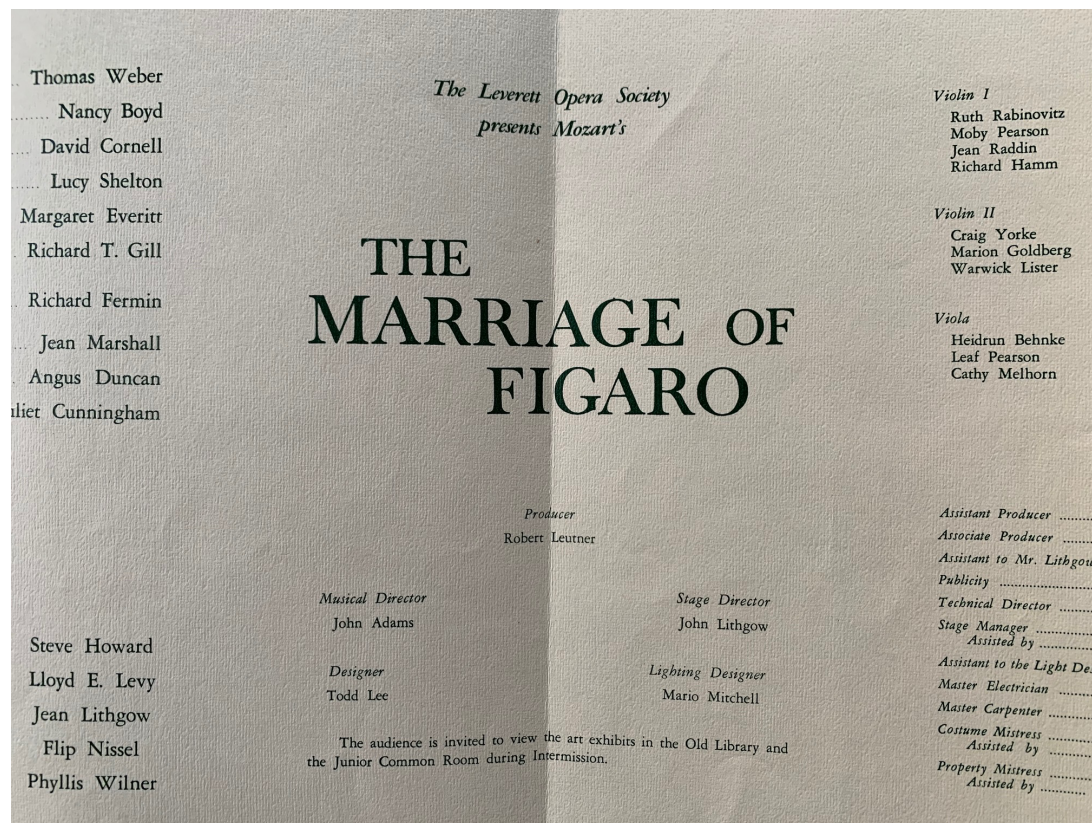
Leverett House is the only House to feature an image of a Native American on the building. It's located on the Massachusetts Seal beneath the south facing western gable of McKinlock Hall, overlooking the Quinobequin (now known as the Charles River).

RR. 11.22.21
Lev Lore.

When Economics professor Richard T. Gill was the Faculty Dean (then called Master) of Leverett House in the 1960s, he developed a passion for opera. Gill had been taking voice lessons to help him quit smoking, and discovered that his basso profundo was rather compelling. One of his first public performances was in the Leverett Opera Society's 1967 production of the *Marriage of Figaro*, directed by none other than the later-to-be *ArtsFirst* champion, actor John Lithgow '67. One thing led to another, and Richard T. Gill soon left Harvard to join the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where he would go on to tour internationally and sing in some 86 performances over the next 14 years before stepping down. You can watch Richard Gill on youtube where he introduces the monopoly edition of his *Economics USA* television series:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fjb3znTevgc>

Before he was at Lev, Richard Gill was the assistant dean in the College who successfully lobbied to make senior theses optional (the "Gill Plan," as it was known), and eliminate the Honors, non-Honors distinction that went with it. His brilliance at Lev is reflected in his conviction that it is dining hall conversations that are the essential heart of the House. Richard Gill left a copy of the 1964 Harvard Student Handbook that we will share pages from soon. His brother David gave the House the antique 1906 Steinway in the JCR.



Lev Naturalist.

What would an American holiday meal be without Native American foods? The turkeys are not the kind you see around Cambridge, they are descendants of wild turkeys first domesticated by the Aztecs in what is today Mexico. Those original birds were brought back to Spain and they became the ancestors of our domesticated turkeys when the Spanish brought them to their colonies in North America. Pumpkins were the food of mammoths and woolly rhinos and were on their way to extinction when Native Americans in the American south began to cultivate them ten thousand years ago. Cranberries are bog-loving relatives of blueberries and were first cultivated by Native Americans in New England who used them for food and for dyeing their textiles. They called them *sasemineash*.

Ever seen a drunk robin? Now is the season. Every fall, robins raid the fruit-laden crabapple trees around Cambridge, and as the fruits ferment, the birds get a little tipsy. Sometimes you can see them under the trees. There's a crabapple tree on Banks Street behind the Towers that is worth keeping an eye on as fermentation follows the frost. The mountain ashes and tiny pears along Grant and Banks are also popular with robins.

Now that the flaming orange and yellow maple leaves are down, what remains are the longer lasting, deeper reds and maroons of oaks, especially the pair that stand like sentinels at the foot of the Weeks Bridge. In the Towers courtyard are the purpling leaves of rhododendrons and azaleas and the extraordinary hues of the *Fothergilla* that flank the walk between the library and the recycling area. There is even a fall flower blooming. It's those spindly yellow petals on the witch-hazel shrubs by the Cowperthwaite gate. If you go out the gate at dusk and stand by the row of hornbeam trees just across from Dunster, you will be transported by the murmurings of roosting starlings, filling the air with tropical sounds as they slip off to sleep. This is a beautiful time we're entering, past the obvious brilliance of fall and into the deeper shades of winter.

If you missed past issues of Rabbit Read, or would like to look something up, you can find all of these columns compiled at the House History page of the Lev website:

<https://leverett.harvard.edu/rabbit-read-o>



Fothergilla



Hamamelis

RR. 11.29.21

Lev Lore.

Stephen Sondheim passed away on Friday. He was 91. He started out as the lyricist for *West Side Story* (music by Leonard Bernstein '39 of Eliot House), then on to *Gypsy*, before his composing and wordsmithing for such classics as were performed in the Leverett Library Theater (and Broadway) over the years. Here's a few reviews in the *Crimson*, excerpted here in honor of the most important composer-lyricist of the second half of the twentieth century, a graduate of our neighboring Williams College.

From *The Crimson*:

"A Funny Thing...

Happened on the Way to the Forum tonight and April 22, 26-29 in the Leverett House Old Library Theatre

By Elizabeth Samuels

April 22, 1972

AS 2000 PEOPLE in Sanders Theater voted to strike against the war and the PALC continued its occupation of Massachusetts Hall. *A Funny Thing Happened on The Way to The Forum* previewed at Leverett House Thursday night. This musical, though, has no redeeming social value; the mask it puts on is tunefully announced in the opening song: "Weighty affairs will just have to wait... Tragedy tomorrow, Comedy tonight!"

From *The Crimson*:

“Modern Love

Marry Me A Little Directed by David Reiffel Musical Direction by Richard A. Shore At
Leverett Old Library through December 10

By Amy E. Schwartz:

December 7, 1983

PEOPLE WHO started out thinking of Stephen Sondheim as just a clever lyricist have long ago given him his due as an artist--and a chameleon. As soon as he started writing the music to go behind his own words. Sondheim began varying the roles he could play--sliding a melody off key or twisting a double-entendre into mid-line, he was the vitriolic social critic in *Sweeney Todd*, the light satirist in *A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum*, the gentle troubadour in *A Little Night Music*; he was blandly anthologized as cultural phenomenon in *Side by Side by Sondheim*. Sondheim's tools are unquestionably the right ones: a versatile versifier can be anyone.”

Today Richard Shore is Music Director in the College of Performing and Visual Arts at the University of Northern Colorado. David Reiffel is a composer, songwriter, playwright and sound designer on the Faculty right here at Northeastern University.

And finally, a Crimson reporter of a half-century ago, Frank Rich, in conversation with Stephen Sondheim right here at Sanders Theater in 2009:

Good Deeds: Sondheim Seduces Audiences

By Rachel A. Burns, Crimson Staff Writer

November 20, 2009

It is not surprising that Stephen Sondheim, arguably the most influential living Broadway composer and lyricist, knows how to work an audience. Last Saturday night, he received a standing ovation as he walked into a packed Sanders Theatre to present “An Evening with Stephen Sondheim: An Onstage Conversation with Frank Rich,” an event organized by the Celebrity Series of Boston.

Frank H. Rich '71, currently a New York Times columnist and formerly their chief theater critic, first met Sondheim after writing a Harvard Crimson review of “Follies,” a Boston production for which Sondheim wrote the music and lyrics.

Upon reading the review, Sondheim contacted him requesting a meeting. Sondheim was impressed by the article, not because of its positive assessment, but because of how adeptly Rich had understood the play. During Saturday night’s onstage conversation, Sondheim stressed that in theater it is supremely important that the audience understand and connect with the material.

“The audience is your collaborator. There is another character in the room, and you have to consider that. It’s not about pandering, it’s about clarity,” he said. “If they’re not liking it because they don’t understand it, that is a theatrical sin.”

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2009/11/20/sondheim-audience-todd-sweeney/>

Lev Naturalist

Have no fear, bunnies. It is nearly time to hibernate! According to the all-knowing Wikipedia:

Hibernation is a state of minimal activity and metabolic depression. Hibernation is a seasonal heterothermy characterized by low body-temperature, slow breathing and heart-rate, and low metabolic rate. It most commonly occurs during winter months.

Around Lev, the woodchucks, jumping mice and little brown bats all hibernate. But bears, raccoons, chipmunks, squirrels and opossums are just deep sleepers, waking up every few days or weeks to stretch. In the hills west of us, Snowshoe Hares stay active and are starting to turn white to match the snow that’s coming but our local cottontails will do fine staying just as brown as they are today.

RR. 24 January 2022.

Lev Lore. 60 years ago this spring, a Leverett junior named Tom Rush played guitar and sang at the 1962 Leverett Arts Festival under a geodesic dome. He had a year of playing at Lev under his belt. Check out Tom’s influential career since then, which includes first introducing Joni Mitchell’s songwriting genius to the world, influencing a young James Taylor, Jackson Browne and many more. He played here at Lev way back when and at Club 47, at 47 Mt. Auburn where Tommy’s Convenience Store and Daedalus are today. Today Tom is based in Rockport, just up the coast. <https://www.tomrush.com/about/> Wouldn’t it be great if he visited Lev again this spring?

Here are a couple of excerpts from the Crimson in those days, and a poster from the May 1962.

The Crimson. May 2. 1962. LEVERETT ARTS FESTIVAL.

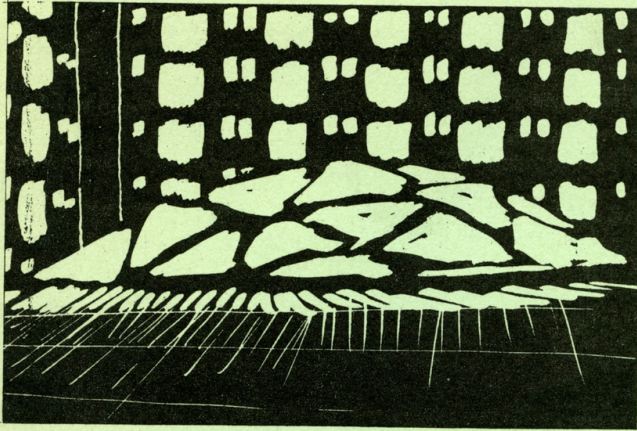
A 30-foot high geodesic dome in of the Leverett Towers will be the setting for the House annual Spring Arts Festival during second week of May. The dome, 50 feet in diameter and covered with a plastoid skin, will college-wide contest in painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking drawing. The exhibits will be displayed on pulleyed panels which can be to the dome's ceiling to form an auditorium for the presentation of an outdoor play.

July 22, 1965

Unfolksy Tom Rush Sings The City Blues By Patricia W. Mccullough

Interviewing Tom Rush wasn't the easiest thing to engineer. His telephone number isn't listed in any phone book, much less the Harvard alumni files; and when I called the Club 47 where he performs, the manager made me feel a little like a fourteen-year-old girl trying to get into the Beatles' dressing room.

Finally locating him, I suggested we have lunch on the CRIMSON. Rush thought this was a good idea until he remembered that he never eats lunch because he doesn't get up before 2 p.m. Contrary to my expectations, however, Rush turned out to be quite unassuming. An easy-going one-time English major, he lives inauspiciously on a Cambridge side-street with a male roommate, a shelf of Ian Fleming and an autographed picture of Judy Collins.



LEVERETT HOUSE SPRING ARTS FESTIVAL MAY 7-17



FEATURING A 30' HIGH GEODESIC
DOME ▲ LEVERETT HOUSE COURTYARD
▲ EXHIBITS OF PAINTING ● SCULPTURE
▲ PHOTOGRAPHY ●●● ALL EVENTS
TO TAKE PLACE UNDER THE DOME



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- | | |
|--------|---|
| MAY 7 | ALL EXHIBITS OPEN |
| MAY 8 | 3:30 AWARDING OF PRIZES
P.m. FOR ART |
| | 8:00 p.m. "MR. OOZE" AN ORIGINAL
PLAY: TICKETS \$1.00 AT CCOP or KI-7-1081 |
| MAY 9 | 8:00 p.m. "MR. OOZE" |
| MAY 11 | 4:15 p.m. SCHNEIDER'S BAND
8:00 p.m. "MR. OOZE" |
| MAY 12 | 4:30 p.m. FOLK SINGING WITH TOM RUSH |
| MAY 13 | 4:30 p.m. HARVARD WIND ENSEMBLE |
| MAY 14 | 8:30 p.m. PIANO RECITAL: MISS DIANA
WRAY ALLEN [IN THE JUNIOR COMMON ROOM] |
| MAY 15 | 4:30 p.m. AWARDING OF LITERARY PRIZES
8:30 p.m. PIANO RECITAL: MR. GEOFFREY
HELLMAN [IN THE JUNIOR COMMON ROOM] |

Approved, L.H. ARTS FESTIVAL. MAY 16, 1962

De. Ralte

Lev Naturalist

In early December, the first winter moth appeared fluttering along the ground near the MAC gym. It was a male. These little brown moths are the only ones flying this time of year and will be around through the winter. It's generally too cold for insect flight muscles to work, but winter moths are special: they are capable of heating up their bodies in a process called endothermy, and second, they have oversized, lightweight wings that carry their tiny bodies aloft with only few strokes. Winter moths were introduced here about 20 years ago from Europe via Canada, and their cold-weather abilities allow them to emerge and lay their eggs on trees before the winter sets in, making them the first to chomp new leaves as they unfurl in the spring. Only the males have wings. The females are flightless and emerge from their hiding places in the soil to climb up trees and emit pheromones that call in males so the females can choose whether or not to mate with them. So if you see a moth flitting about the River Houses in the next month, you know what is up- fear for the leaves of spring!



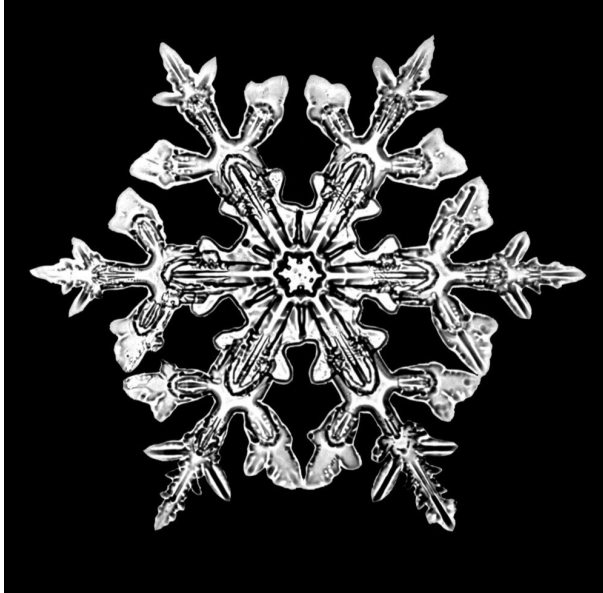
RR. 1.31.22.

Lev Naturalist meets Lev Lore. If the weekend's record-breaking storm puts you at a loss for words, here are some for the wonderful white stuff outside: *neige, nieve, neve, snijeg, snih, sne, sneenw, sneachda, shney, sneg, schnei, sno, snow* (French, Spanish, Portuguese/Italian/Galician, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Scottish Gaelic, Yiddish, Russian, Luxembourgish, Norwegian, English). It is clear that these northern countries really only have different spellings of the same, ancient Indo-European word for it, with or without the *s* at the beginning. While it is often said that the Inuit have 50 words for snow, and the Sami have 180, the Scots hold the record for the most variations of the word-- 421 variants that are used depending on the size of the flakes and what they're doing (lots or little, swirling or floating, melting or freezing, and so on). Whatever it is called, snow is certainly a beautiful inconvenience.

The beauty part comes from the way the delicate crystals form, suspended in air as they grow into shapes that reveal the geometry of water molecules as they solidify at different temperatures. Like pearls, snowflakes nucleate around a particle of something else, and they attract supercooled water droplets that usually freeze into hexagon-shaped crystals that fall from the clouds and collect in drifts that insulate the earth from the freezing air to come. The inconvenience part is self-explaining...

The beauty of snowflakes once captured a curious man named Wilson Alwyn Bentley, who was born in 1865 in a farmhouse in Jericho, Vermont. "Snowflake" Bentley was captivated by the beauty and uniqueness of each and every snowflake. *No two alike* became a phrase that originated with him for the "miracles of beauty" revealed through his microscope. Bentley photographed thousands of snowflakes, and wrote many popular and technical articles about them. His book of these

masterpieces, *Snow Crystals*, was published in November of 1931, 90 years ago, as the very first fall of Leverett House was underway. Sadly, Bentley passed away that December, but his sensitivity lives on in the exquisite volume of his photos that has never been out of print.



Snowflake photo by W.A. Bentley.



W.A. (Snowflake) Bentley



McKinlock after the storm of '32. The courtyard elms didn't yet reach the upper floors.

Lev Naturalist

It's been over a month since the sun reversed its southward course and turned back to warm the north. Hard to tell because we're having blasts of arctic air that was breathed in and out by arctic animals and plants before it got to us. Now all the borders and boundaries are erased by the snow. Walking along the Charles at this temperature seems like walking on the moon, especially in the golden hour just after the sun has set. You can sometimes hear the whisking wingbeats of our neighborhood pair of swans in their rowing flights overhead as they search for patches of open water.

We are also in the middle of the celebration of the Lunisolar New Year. The lunisolar year begins on a different date every year of the widely used Gregorian calendar. This moment in time each year marks the occurrence of the first new moon (that's the phase you can't see except for the stars it blocks out behind it) that appears in the window of

time between January 21 and February 20th. While the Gregorian calendar (named for Pope Gregory in the 16th century) helps in tracking the seasons of the year (spring always falls in the same months, for example) the lunisolar calendar also traces the moon's phases, and coordinates with the varying angle of the sun through the constellations near which the full moon can be seen from earth.

The effects of the sun and seasons on nature are obvious, but the effects of the monthly lunar phases are easy to overlook. Apart from fact that animals see better on moonlit nights, the most dramatic lunar effects are those of the moon pulling on the largest moveable substances on earth, the oceans, but it isn't just ocean tides that feel the moon, so do trees and animals of all sorts. Maybe us too, some say. The tug of the moon is as pervasive and constant as gravity, so it makes sense to recognize the importance of these rhythms in our lives and the dances of our earthly tides in reply.

This is also the year of the Tiger, the largest cats on earth today--as beautiful an animal as there is---and famously effective in their use of strategic planning and patience in hunting their prey. This is the year for leadership, for tackling new challenges and for being brave. Next year is the year of the Rabbit, need we say more...?



Swans mate for life

Lev Lore.

There were naturalists in Harvard College long before Lev. The first Professor of Natural History was appointed in 1805, William Dandridge Peck (1763-1822), who was also the first entomologist in the fledgling United States. Peck's best-known pupil was Ralph Waldo Emerson '21 who gravitated more towards nature writing. A like-minded younger acquaintance of Emerson's was Henry David Thoreau' 37. Emerson and Thoreau knew each other well and, together with a dozen or so men and women, formed the Transcendentalist Club here in Cambridge based on the noble premise of the inherent good of nature and people. At Thoreau's graduation, Emerson spoke against the colonial approach of a Harvard education and argued for an American Scholar who would learn from experience as much as from books. He was soon banned from speaking at Harvard, a ban lasting for three decades. When Emerson said that Harvard taught all the branches of knowledge, Thoreau quipped: "Yes, all the branches and none of the roots."

This may or may not have been true then of Harvard, but it doesn't matter because we have always had the roots of knowledge around us. They are reached not with books but with our senses and our sensibilities; they lie in our connections to nature and to each other, in the worlds of Emerson and Thoreau, of Lao Tzu and Confucius, of W.E.B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes, of Emily Dickinson and Sylvia Plath. The roots of knowledge are in our experiences, and how well they support our ascent of the branches above. Climb, Leverett, climb, you too are transcendent!

Lev Lore meets Lev Naturalist.

A stand of slippery elm rings the sodden green at the bottom of Dunster and Holyoke streets just above Mill. Everyone knows the large, eternally wet lawn that lies at the doorstep of Winthrop, Eliot and Kirkland Houses, below the MAC gym. The reason it's always wet is that a river runs through it. Town Creek once ran down alongside Dunster Street, and ended in a brackish marsh complete with oysters, crabs and shorebirds. Here you're standing on filled ground over a creek that still seethes through the soil. The once broad salt marsh that it fed had stretched from near Mt. Auburn Hospital to the Western Avenue bridge. Imagine the sight and smells of the great marsh that flourished below Harvard Square!

The mouth of Town Creek was flanked by a large wooden wharf that jutted out into the river from the end of Dunster Street, earlier known as Water Street. Just above the wharf, near the present corner of the MAC gym, stood the house of Captain John Bonner, famed navigator and ship designer (and maker of the first map of Boston in 1722), just an oyster shell's throw away from what was originally called Manning's Wharf (College Wharf on old maps). The wharf was built in 1651 and served for many years as a main crossing point to Boston for Cambridge, Belmont and points north. Town Creek was eventually filled in, bridges were built, and the wharf was long gone by the time the Charles was finally dammed in 1895, lowering the river level and halting the daily flush of salt water up the Charles. Gore and Standish Halls were soon built on top of the old marsh, and the construction of McKinlock Hall erased Dyke Street (named for Daniel Dyke, the English academic and author of *The Mystery of Self-Deceiving*, 1615) that ran parallel to Mill. A few years later, the construction of Dunster House likewise did away with two other riverside streets, named Beaver and Otter (a hint of the watery past!).

Though the Town Creek was filled in and paved over, and structures built on top, there was no stopping the water drainage which remained flowing downhill as it had for many thousands of years, draining the higher area of Harvard Square, Harvard Yard and surrounding lands beyond. The creek simply moved underground-- as the building managers of the MAC and Kirkland, Eliot and Winthrop know far too well. Today all you can see of Town Creek is that great expanse of soggy lawn spanning the area between these buildings, where the creaking, wooden wharf once stood.

The flowing underground creek is also why this wet patch is surrounded by about the only large native trees that can stand having waterlogged roots--Slippery Elm. These swamp-loving trees are so-called for their mucilaginous inner bark. The Wampanoag

people have long used this slimy under layer as medicine, and it provided the extract that was the main ingredient of *Thayer's Slippery Elm Lozenges*, born in Cambridge in 1847 and soothing the throats of our singers ever since.

Incidentally, this is the same Cambridge family that lent their name to Thayer Hall that was built in 1870 as more affordable housing than an apartment in Harvard Square was for Harvard students.

Today is Valentine's Day, a day to declare your love for Sweethearts, the little candy hearts with phrases that began in the same year as Thayers, 1847, by Chase and Company (later the New England Confectionary Company, Necco). Oliver Chase invented the lozenge-cutting machine used by Thayers too. Salve for your throat, salve for your heart, born right here.

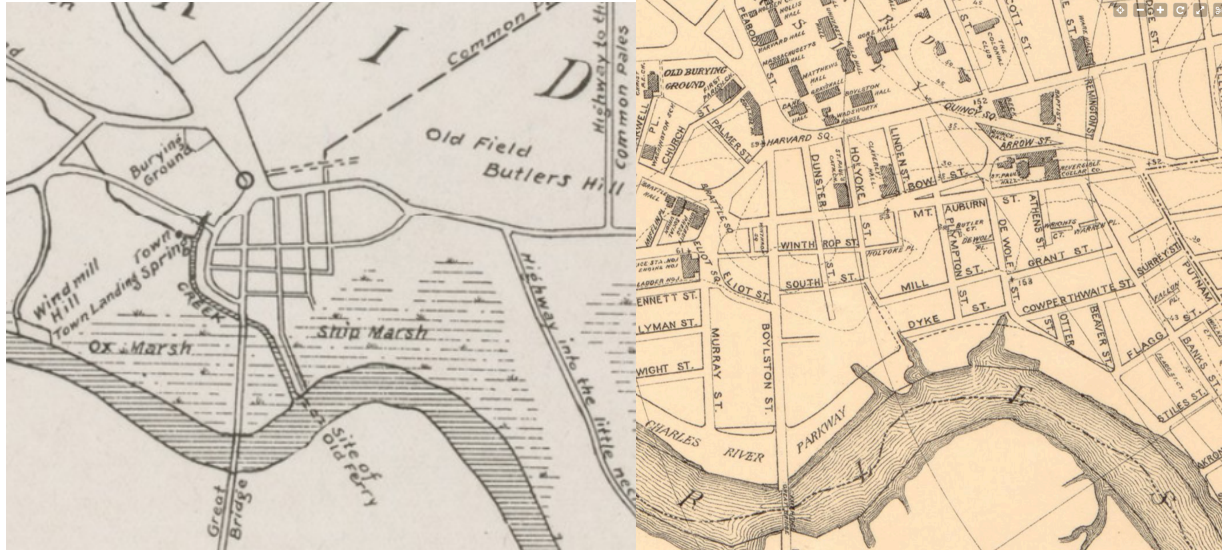


Thayers Lozenges, Nature's Gentle Demulcent...

Two maps of Cambridge. The first as it was in 1700, showing Ship Marsh where Leverett and the other River Houses are today. The College Wharf enters the Charles River below Dunster Street and docked the ferry that crossed to Boston.

The second map is some 200 years later, in 1894, the year before the Charles River Dam was built and lowered the river and drained the inlets that were all that remained of the once great marshes. McKinlock Hall was built some 30 years after this on the ground between Mill Street and the now-buried Dyke Street. There were still three river inlets nearby, one below Dunster Street, another inlet below Holyoke Street and still another at the bottom of DeWolfe.

The next time you are in front of McKinlock Courtyard, try to picture what was there 100 years ago, the waving marsh grass, the wooden river boats on the water, and the horse-and-wagon traffic on Dyke Street out front.



RR. 2. 21. 22.

Lev Lore.

Ode to the Towers

by Richard T. Gill 1962

With tinted glass and cinder-block
 The modern age is come:
 With air forced up through golden drapes
 And ventilation hum;
 With elevators skipping floors
 (They rise at such a speed)
 And lights which artfully contrive
 Dark shadows where we read;
 With heady crown of metal scrap
 Of quite unique design
 Surveying night lights in the Charles
 And the Coca-Cola sign.
 Detractors come (in Envy's estate)
 And frown and groan and shiver,
 And speak of Hilton hotel chains
 And the broken line of the River.
 But say what they will (with the scorn of the scorned),
 The final word is ours:
 Without Shepley, Bullfinch and Jean Carlhian

We'd have Mather instead of the Towers!

Lev Naturalist.

Winter is a quiet time outdoors, and without many colors or smells. Our natural cravings for sensual input are instead met in indoor settings, from music and art and the slow enjoyment of food. The true masters of slow food, however, remain outdoors all winter and they don't eat alone. These tiny consumers are known as lichens. They start out as a few cells of fungus and a few of algae. Together these two very different organisms form a partnership that turns rock into food. The fungus provides the architecture and the alga is the powerplant, using the sun's energy to make enough sugar for both partners. When the lichen grows on a rock, the fungus is not only a sturdy home, it also slowly dissolves the stone with weak acid, releasing the minerals the lichen needs. Slowly, the lichen grows, the rock crumbles, and eventually other creatures come to live in the growing habitat. Sometimes, however, the lichen's stone is not on the ground but upright on the side of a building or on a gravestone in a cemetery. Sometimes the stone is in a fence, as in the slate plaque inscribed with the Leverett House name that has rested in the black iron grid that has surrounded the Towers Courtyard since the spring of 1962. By the closed gate facing the corner of DeWolfe and Grant Streets, there is a piece of slate that proclaims the Library and Towers for Leverett House. If you look closely, you can see many tiny patches of *Parmelia* lichen, very slowly growing over the last sixty years, very slowly consuming that bit of ancient sedimentary stone bearing our House name. In another thousand years or so, the sign may be really hard to read, but for now, all we can think about is really slow food.



Parmelia lichens growing on the Leverett plaque.

RR. 2.28.22

Lev Lore.

Now in its 178th year, the Hasty Pudding Theatricals has finally matured enough to enter the annals of Lev Lore. With over half a dozen Lev students leading the production this year, from writing the script, to composing the music, leading the band and generally helping make everything work, this is a great year to attend *Ship Happens!* Stay tuned for free tix (courtesy of HoCo and the House) for the Wednesday night show. Here's how the show looked in 1877, while still an embryo. Smaller stage, smaller cast, and a much smaller band, but the heart was there beating large!



Ye Puddynge Theatrycals. 1877.

Lev naturalist.

There are two native plants that bloom in the snow. The obvious one is witch-hazel, that shrub with spindly yellow flowers near the Lev library and around the other river Houses. This one, called *Hamamelis vernalis*, is so named because it is early spring blooming, and is native to the Ozarks mountains south of us. Our local witch-hazel is called *Hamamelis virginiana* and blooms in early winter in November and December and occurs everywhere east of the Mississippi River. Native Americans knew witch-hazel well as it provides a treatment for skin ailments, and for colds and other illnesses. Witch-hazel still used for skin care, both for us humans as well as for rubbing down horses. Our local entrepreneurs, the Thayer family, has been producing witch-hazel tinctures for 175 years and still going strong! In case you remembered that there is another plant blooming now, it's called skunk cabbage, and its big smelly flowers are melting their way up through the snow in swamps in search of little flies.



Thayers extracts alongside their source.

RR. 3.7.22

Lev Lore.

In our historic first spring as a House, Leverett held hands with Adams House and hosted its first dance in the dining hall. Here's the notice from the Crimson below:

[Adams-Leverett Dance Takes Place Tonight](#)

COPLEY-PLAZA ORCHESTRA WILL PLAY FROM 10 TO 3

March 31, 1932

Adams and **Leverett Houses** are combining tonight to give their first formal dance, which will take place in the Leverett House dining hall from 10 to 3 o'clock tonight.

One hundred ninety reservations have been made for the dinner, at which the University Instrumental Clubs will entertain. Mrs. Baxter, wife of J. P. Baxter 3rd, associate professor of History and Master of Adams House, will be hostess to the patronesses at the dinner.

Joe Smith and his Copley-Plaza orchestra will provide music at the dance. The room will be illuminated by a system of indirect lighting, while panels, bearing the three

rabbits and the oak sprig of Leverett and Adams Houses, will be placed over the windows.

On March 18th, 1938, some six years after that first Leverett dance, Billie Holiday performed in the Leverett Dining Hall. Ms. Holiday was in her first two weeks accompanying the Art Shaw Orchestra in that historic year, and they had just begun their several month engagement at the Roseland State Ballroom in downtown Boston. As recounted later, Billie also happened to meet a Boston teenager in those days who was working at the hotel. Neither could know that 26 years later, in 1964, this very same young man would deliver a historic speech in this very same dining Hall at Leverett House, and on the very same date as Billie's own debut, March 18th. The young man's name was Malcolm X.

Lev naturalist

The Ides of March. A storied date, but why? The ides are the day that the New Moon rises, and so it differs a bit from year to year in parallel with the lunisolar calendar. In this year of 2022, the New Moon will rise on March 15nd. The New Moon each month is on the same side of the earth as the sun, and so we only see the dark side of the moon. Because New moons cross our skies with the sun, we only see their shadowed form, which is nearly invisible in the bright light of day. Why are the Ides of March such a famously ominous warning? After all, March is a month for maple syrup making, for mating of eagles and owls, and for the clarion whistles of cardinals. Spring is waking, and with it a time to sit in the warming sun and absorb some peace.

The Ides were ominous for the Romans because the Ides of March was the day for settling debts. This was therefore the date chosen by the conspiring Roman senators for the assassination of Julius Caesar, and so, thanks to William Shakespeare (*"Beware the Ides of March..."*), the Ides have long been associated with ominous tidings. But every date in human history has its highs and its lows.

In 1932, as Leverett was waking to its joyous first spring as a House, there were ominous tidings just offshore, where the Ides of March brought ill fortune to a wonderfully charismatic local bird, the Heath Hen, a coastal version of our western Prairie Chicken. The very last, lonely male Heath Hen, an eight-year old male known locally as Booming Ben, was last seen strutting his dance and booming his call on Martha's Vineyard on March 11th, 1932. This beautiful native species passed into extinction 90 years ago this month. You can see a stuffed specimen on display at the Harvard natural history museum on Oxford Street. Remarkably, an ancient, disintegrating film of Heath Hens, the only footage known, was discovered just a few years ago, and now can be seen on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOFphkQnRqE>

While the Ides of March brought ill fortune to Caesar, and to Heath Hens, they bring the warmth of increasing sunshine to us and to our local grazers, the ever-present Canada Geese.



Goose tracks on the College Wharf Green, below the MAC.