

**WEEKLY NOTES ON HISTORY & NATURAL HISTORY OF LEVERETT HOUSE**

*Excerpted from Rabbit Read, the Leverett House Weekly Newsletter*

*Notes by Brian D. Farrell, Faculty Dean*

**April 20<sup>th</sup>, 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 Whippoorwills, 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 it 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](mailto: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 a 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](mailto: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](mailto: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....!

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

## **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/>

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

## **July 28<sup>th</sup>, 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-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.

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

## **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.

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

### **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 24<sup>th</sup>, 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...

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

### **August 29<sup>th</sup>, 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 02138, especially around Leverett House as well as around Lev North at 05473, 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...!

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

## 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\\_mgJyh5113dD8gB9Udk7iWfT99o7O?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DNw_mgJyh5113dD8gB9Udk7iWfT99o7O?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 it’s 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 23-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 ssseeettts 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...

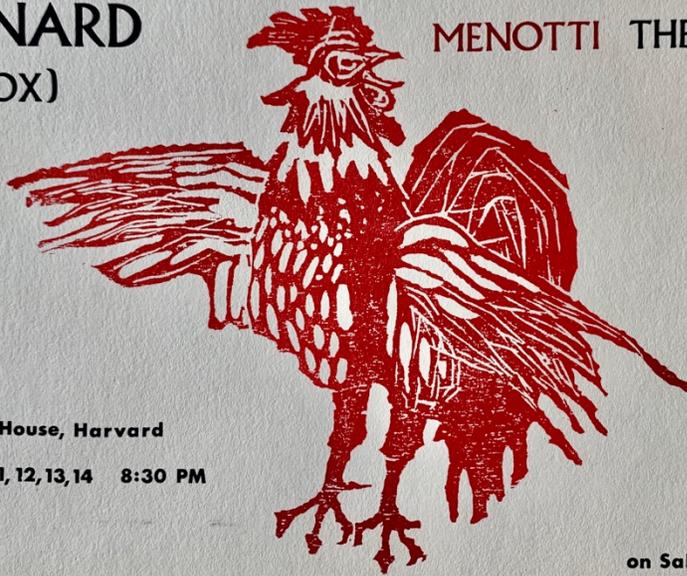
Next time: Why do leaves change into so many different colors in the fall? Hint: This occurs in New England and in China...

**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

Banjos 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.

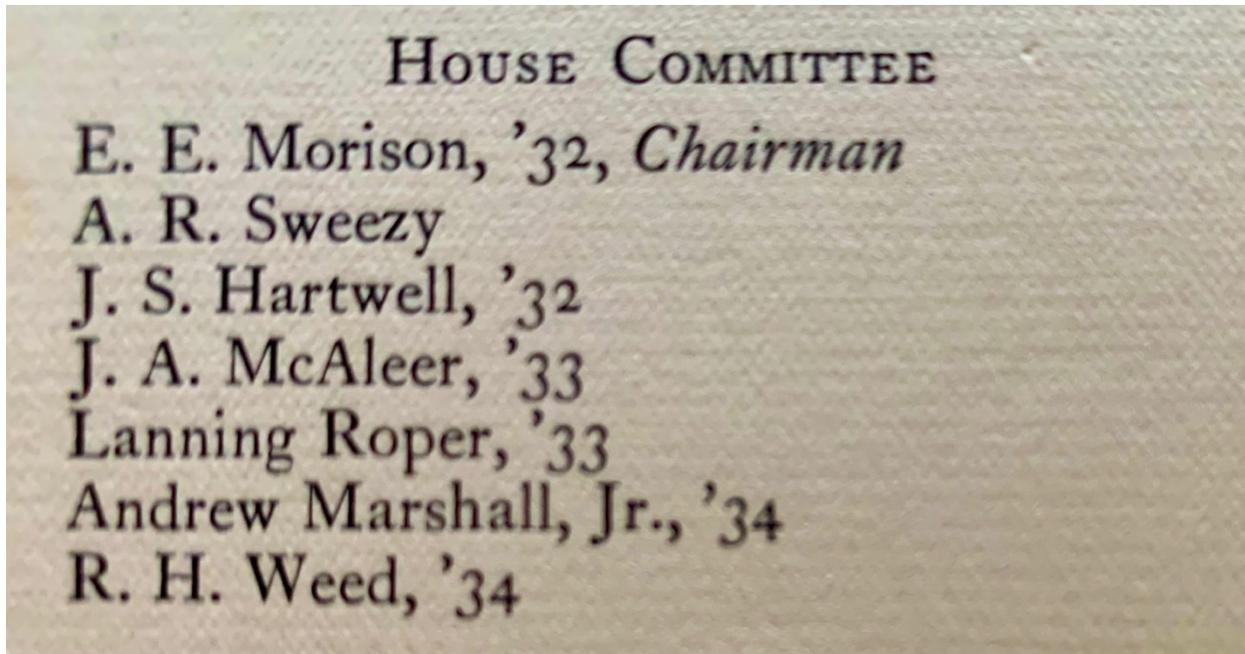
### **November 24th, 2021**

#### *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 Flag 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 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 ½ 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 its 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.