



# NOW & THEN

at the  
LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES  
(Downstairs at the STOCKBRIDGE LIBRARY)

ISSUE #26

MAY 2013

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"NOW & THEN"

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Past issues may be accessed

at the Library website

[stockbridgelibrary.org](http://stockbridgelibrary.org)

## 2013 CEMETERY WALKS 4 PM (\$5 suggested donation)

Mark your calendars

Meet in the Proctor Hall Parking Lot

May 18 – Changed the World; Buried in Stockbridge  
June 8 –Where Do I Get That? Stockbridge Work and Business, 1875  
July 6 – The People Who Created Those Famous Stockbridge Sites  
August 3 – Unmarked, Unknown, Forgotten; A tour of Unmarked Graves  
September 14 – Back to School; 250 Years of Education in Stockbridge  
October 5 – The Gravediggers Tour; Steven Tucker's Life and Times

## THREADS OF MEMORY MAY EXHIBIT

From earliest times people have decorated their homes and clothing with a wide range of various techniques using embroidery, quilting, crocheting, tating and knitting as well as other methods. This exhibit showcases hand worked pieces from the collection of the Library's Museum and Archives as well as those on loan by local residents. Also on display will be various items used to create these items – threads, needles, hooks and much more.

Some of the highlights of the exhibit are the Stockbridge Bicentennial Quilt with blocks depicting local subjects embroidered and appliqued by Stockbridge residents, a monogrammed pin cushion belonging to local, 19<sup>th</sup> century author Catharine Sedgwick and chair seats embroidered by Elizabeth Williams West around 1750.

## MOHICAN HISTORY IN STOCKBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS SEMINAR

May 11 - 9am to 5pm

The Native American Institute of the Hudson River Valley will be holding a day-long seminar this month with the involvement of the Library's Museum and Archives, Rick Wilcox, Jorja Marsden, Chris Marsden, the Town (lending the use of the town offices), The Trustees of Reservations and the First Congregational Church.

The morning will include guest speakers Bernard Drew, Gary Leveille, Stan Joseph and Lion Miles discussing aspects of the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe during their time in Stockbridge. A catered lunch will follow the speakers; and the afternoon will include a walking tour of key town historical sites. It will all culminate with a gathering and closing ceremony at the First Congregational Church.

To make reservations, contact the Native American Institute at [NAIHRV.org](http://NAIHRV.org) or 715 793-3970.

## TEA WITH ABIGAIL – A Living History Program

At 2 pm on June 22 Abigail Williams (1721-1791) will be receiving callers for tea in the Library's Bement Room. Nineteenth and early twentieth century Stockbridge ladies (all in period costumes) will be stopping by for tea and local gossip of their times. Tables will be set up so guests may partake of refreshments as well as listen to and join in the conversation. Tickets will be \$5 (*available at the Library*). Reservations are suggested as space is limited. For more information contact [ballen@cwmar.org](mailto:ballen@cwmar.org)

## STOCKBRIDGE TOWN HALL

Research by Rick Wilcox

Since 2005 Stockbridge residents have transacted town business at the building at 50 Main Street (previously the Plain School and Williams High School). The town didn't always have such a spacious place to call Town Offices. Churches were not just a place of worship in the 1700's and early 1800's; but a building where all town business was conducted. (Information on the 3 meeting houses and where they were located was discussed in issues 6, 7 & 8)



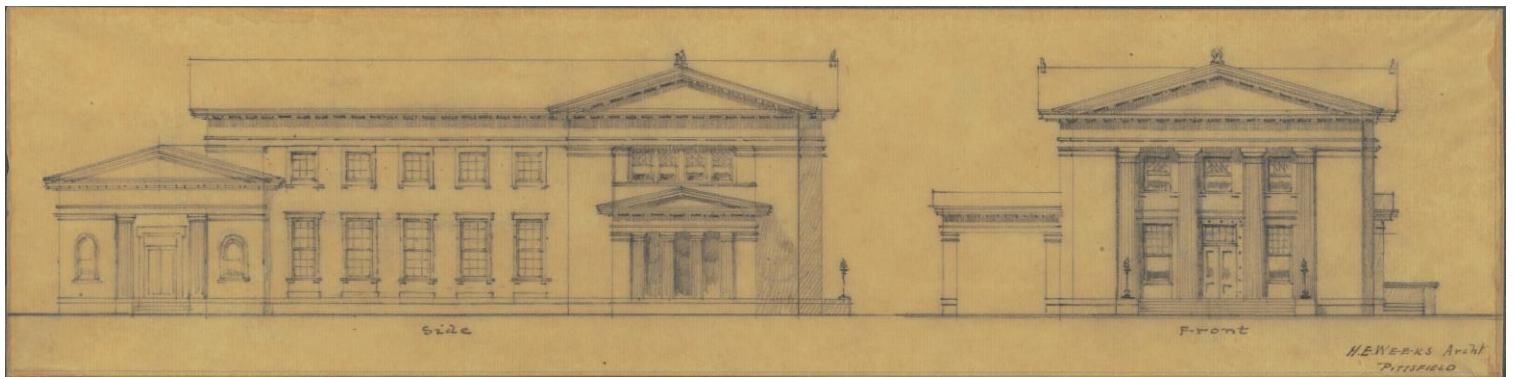
In 1839 Stockbridge erected its first building to be used for town business which was separate from the church. The special town meeting of Dec. 3, 1838 refers to it as a "Town House". It was located at what is now 6 Main Street just east of the church; and was on property owned by the church. The church granted the town a lease free of expense so long as the town shall choose to occupy it for town purposes and that it would be built on a line with the front of the church. This building was used for town meetings and maybe offices until 1885 when another building was built at 34 Main Street (pictured left - currently the Yankee Candle Shop). Designed to be fire proof, it included an entranceway along with offices for the Selectmen, Assessor and Town Clerk on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would be used as a storage area and a full basement would include a jail. In addition to the 2 jail cells located in the basement of 34 Main Street building, the town had built a stone lockup on Shamrock Street which cost \$998.62 in 1876. This was later torn down.

In June of 1902 records show a fire at the 6 Main Street building from a kerosene lamp exploding, causing damage of \$968.88 to the building. This was also the year when additional land was leased from the church which gave them the right to remodel, enlarge or rebuild; but on a line no further north than it currently stood. The existing building was moved to the rear of the lot, turned sideways, facing it east, and preserving the front which became the door to the police department and assessors' office. The upstairs became storage (you can see burned timbers up there from the fire). A new part to the building was added to the front which included an auditorium (with a stage) large enough to seat 500 people. If you look at the building from the back part of the parking lot, you can see how it was a separate building before the renovation. One of the M&A architectural drawings at the time of the renovation which is pictured below shows that older building on the far left incorporated into the newer much larger addition. The building at 34 Main Street was still used for town offices and the new renovated building was referred to as Town Hall.

The Town Hall (6 Main Street) was condemned in the early 1960's by the State Dept. of Public Safety. In 1963 Mrs. Rodney Procter gave a generous donation to renovate the building. An upstairs hall was added, becoming known as Procter Hall, and allowing them to remodel the downstairs for office space. There was also a smaller room and a large kitchen upstairs. Sealed bids for the property at 34 Main Street were accepted and opened at a special town meeting held May 4, 1964. This is when the town moved its records to Town Hall (6 Main St.) and sold the Town Office building at 34 Main Street at auction for \$7,500.



In 2005, having outgrown the building, the town voted to make the school building (which was no longer being used) into town offices giving them the much needed additional space for offices, storage and meetings. Exactly what will happen to the Town Hall building at 6 Main Street, only the future can tell.



## WOMEN'S GUILD

A bank book from the Housatonic National Bank in Stockbridge (recently donated to the M&A by Kathleen Oppermann) shows the Young Women's Guild having \$68 on Dec. 16 of 1955. The final entry is a withdrawal of \$81.14, leaving a balance of \$3.68 just before it was closed in Apr. 23, 1957. The Young Women's Guild was one of those groups that existed in the town; but have long been forgotten. It was a group of 6 to 8 women, mostly who had small children, in the late 1940's and 1950's. During that period, many women stayed at home and took care of their home and children. Usually there was only 1 car in the family; and that was used by the husband to go to work.

The women in the Young Women's Guild met at one another's homes every Tuesday while their children took their naps. It was before texting, tweeting and all the electronic conveniences available today which allow us to interact with our friends and family without being in their presence. Television was in its infancy. They met to discuss things and have some "adult conversation" after being in the house all day with their young children. They also raised some money and donated it to local organizations. Some of the members were Nan Helberg, Lillian Schatz, June Thomas and Kathleen Oppermann. *Does anyone remember this group or know of other obscure groups that existed in the town?*

## RECEPTION AT THE LIBRARY

On April 21<sup>st</sup> the Library's Museum & Archives hosted a reception to showcase its newly restored and installed Heaton Hall Mantle (thanks to Chris and Bob Marsden and Francis and Greg Pilling) with the newly acquired paintings of William and Anna Whitney (thanks to anonymous donors) hung over it in the M&A (pictured right). "Ghosts" of Stockbridge's past were available in the Bement Room along with memorabilia on display of Heaton Hall and the Whitney and Lynch families to help the guests to better understand this slice of our Stockbridge history. Pictured below (left to right) are Mert Heaton Plumb, Abigail Tarbox Whitney and John Cooper Lynch chatting with those that attended.



Pat Jaouen as Mert Heaton Plumb



Susan Coles as Abigail Tarbox Whitney



Jeffrey Bradway as John Cooper Lynch

## MUSEUM & ARCHIVES HOURS

**Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9-5, Thursdays 9-1 and Saturdays 9-2**

*If you plan to spend time researching, it is always a good idea to call (298-5501) to check for availability.*