



NOW & THEN
 at the
LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES
 (Downstairs at the STOCKBRIDGE LIBRARY)
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smanl@roadrunner.com
 Maria L. Carr, Editor

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RENOVATION PROJECT

We needed an elevator. That's where it all began. The Library's first floor was accessible to all but the Museum, office, and mezzanine areas were unreachable for anyone who found it difficult to use the stairs. The process and cost of installing an elevator triggered a full renovation.

At last the elevator shaft has been built (*pictured right and left*) and the walls and floor are being assembled along with a panel of custom buttons (*pictured left*). The power will be connected soon.

Other parts of the project are moving forward. Windows are finally in place and a large one (*pictures below center*) in the back wall provides beautiful natural light to the new main staircase.

An existing plaque honoring Nathan Jackson, founder of the original Library, has been placed within

the arch uncovered during construction (*pictured below right*). The arch will remain exposed, and is the only place where the Library's original masonry can be seen. If you recall, the entire Library was sheathed in brick following the 1938 addition. Two other plaques, originally located in the front wall and later moved downstairs, will be placed in the wall of the multipurpose room on the museum level.

For now, wires are everywhere. But eventually they will be hooked up to lights, computers, and phones. The brass and glass light from the front entry porch ceiling will be reinstalled (*pictured below left*).

The end is coming closer every day.



CORRECTION

In the September issue of our newsletter in the article on the Drinking Fountain/Watering Trough it referred to the “Main Street renovations of 1987”. This was incorrect. It should have been 1997.



RATHBUN STORE ON CHURCH STREET



(Picture courtesy of Harold French)

The house at 27 Church Street (pictured today upper left) has an interesting history. According to the Historical Commission's files, it was built c. 1875 – 1885. Mr. Sears and his wife and family lived in it for some years. Sears “manufactured flavoring extracts which were widely known and used.” The next family to occupy the house was that of Mr. A. N. Wood who had a meat market in what later became the dining room. When the Wood family moved to Pittsfield, Frank L. Rathbun purchased the house and for some time conducted a grocery store in the former meat market (pictured above). Frank L. Rathbun was the great grandfather of Harold French. The market eventually closed. The next family was that of Mr. & Mrs. James Stevens. When they moved to Pittsfield, Mr. Roland Wingate bought the house in 1923. In 1928 Mr. and Mrs. William Masters purchased the house and made considerable improvements. Masters was a gardener for Henry Iverson Parsons of Bonnie Brae, Prospect Hill Road. He was also an excellent painter and paper hanger. He constructed a small greenhouse in the rear of the house and raised flowers and vegetables and had a good business in market gardening. At some point the part on the left in the picture above was removed. In October 2000 the house suffered a devastating fire which took the life of Mary Kiley and caused considerable structural damage. Once again it was remodeled and improved. With all that the house has gone through over the years, it still looks basically the same from the outside.

THE FIRST EUROPEAN SETTLER IN STOCKBRIDGE

By Lion G. Miles

We know a good deal about John Konkapot and his small Indian community in Stockbridge but how much do we know about the first European settler here? He was a Dutchman with the unlikely name of Jehoiakim Van Valkenburg, a free spirit who spent his entire life struggling against authority and seeking independence as a farmer.

Born in Kinderhook, N.Y. in 1690 or 1692, Jehoiakim (or "Yokun") first arrived in Stockbridge about 1728 and obtained a land grant of 1200 acres from the settling committee of Housatonic. He became a personal friend of Chief Konkapot and built a house as his residence close to Konkapot's wigwam on what is today's Goodrich Street.

The Indians allowed three Dutch families to settle on the Upper Housatonic lands (Stockbridge), John Des Brewer (Burghard), Elias Van Schaack, and Van Valkenburg. We have no writings from Van Valkenburg and he signed his name only in the Indian fashion using "VB" as his totem sign, suggesting that he was illiterate or partly so. However, he learned enough of the Mohican language to act as the tribe's interpreter, saying that he understood the Indian language "but not very well."

In 1736 the General Court in Boston ordered that a township be laid out for the Housatonic Indians. The court sent a committee to survey the land and remove the Dutch settlers from town. They reported that "Joakim Van volkenberry with a numerous Family is settled above the [Monument] Mountain within the Township laid out to the Indians who has something more than three settling Rights Confirmed to him by the Committee for Housatonnuch. The Man is the Interpreter for the Indians of whom they are extremely fond, inasmuch it will be in vain to endeavor to remove him."

Van Valkenburg held out for a year and refused to accept equivalent lands outside Stockbridge but he finally agreed to accept various locations in Great Barrington and Sheffield. In 1738 he sold his land in Stockbridge to Ephraim Williams and partners and moved south.

Jehoiakim moved again in 1765 to Otsego County in New York and built a house on Schenevus Creek near the Susquehanna River. Richard Smith, a lawyer and later member of the Continental Congress, visited him in 1769. Smith wrote that "he is a Dutchman but speaks good English, ... built the House, but found the Orchard already planted by the Indians." Jehoiakim told him that he could walk 40 or 50 miles in a day, a remarkable feat for a man in his seventies.

At the beginning of the American Revolution, Jehoiakim joined the Tryon County militia as a scout. He was in his eighties at the time. In November 1781 he was with his company at the Upper Schoharie fort when a party of Indians and Tories under the Mohawk chief Joseph Brant raided the county. The militia pursued the enemy to Lake Utsayantho (now Summit Lake) and attacked them. When half the American force retreated, they left Van Valkenburg's company outnumbered and exposed to enemy fire. Jehoiakim and another soldier were shot down and scalped.

To be slain by Indians in New York was a tragic end for a man who had been such a good friend to the Stockbridge Indians. As a measure of justice, Jehoiakim's brother Henry encountered an Indian after the war who was carrying his brother's gun. Henry seized the weapon and the Indian was later found dead in a swamp.



READINGS AROUND THE HEARTH **Friday, December 4 at 5 p.m. at St. Paul's Church**

The Stockbridge Library, Museum & Archives will once again present the annual program of seasonal readings. Volunteers in period costume will present readings for your holiday entertainment which will include a Christmas story by Harper Lee.

Join us to get in the spirit of the holidays.

(pictures from the 2014 program)



MUSEUM & ARCHIVES TEMPORARY HOURS

The M&A office and display area has relocated to 14 Main Street in the Merwin House.

The display area of selected items is open to the public on Fridays and Saturdays from 10-1.

For research or donations, please contact Curator Barbara Allen at 298-4703 to make an appointment. *(If you need to contact the Library, call 298-5501)*