



# NOW & THEN

at the  
**PROCTER MUSEUM & ARCHIVES**  
 (Downstairs at the STOCKBRIDGE LIBRARY)  
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### BERKSHIRE THEATRE CELEBRATES – 90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

The Stockbridge Library, Museum & Archives is proud to partner with Berkshire Theatre Group to present an exhibit entitled *"Berkshire Theatre Through the Eras"* which will be on view in the Procter Gallery from April 3 through June 30. Featuring photographs, letters, posters, props, and costume pieces, this exhibit will chronicle the 90-year history of Berkshire Theatre through each of its distinct

eras. Lillian Lee, Berkshire Theatre Group's Grants Administrator and Archivist, is planning the main exhibit. Barbara Allen, Curator of the Library's Procter Museum & Archives, will curate the portion of the exhibit highlighting the building's life as The Stockbridge Casino. A **reception** with the curators will be held on **April 20 from 5 pm – 7 pm**.

In conjunction with the exhibit, Kate Maguire, Artistic Director/CEO of Berkshire Theatre Group, will be the featured speaker at the Stockbridge Library Association's annual meeting at 6:30 pm on June 12. Berkshire Playhouse was originally founded by the Three Arts Society to revitalize an iconic building in Stockbridge and create a local, regional theatre, one of the first in the country. Celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berkshire Theatre gives residents a chance to really explore the history of this important building.



The Casino has been an integral part of Stockbridge society since it was completed in 1888. Once it was converted into the Berkshire Playhouse, it became even more connected with the life of the town. The people of Stockbridge acted on stage, worked on sets, housed artists, and were part of the everyday operations of the theatre, as well as going to see the shows. This exhibit tells that story and shows the people behind the theatre.



(Pictured – above left - actors at a 1959 rehearsal of *"You Never Can Never Tell"* at Old Mill on Yale Hill Road; above right - Poster for *"Stage Door"* starring Jane

Wyatt; left - part of the footlights from the Casino found in attic at 17 Main Street (Mrs. Mary Averill, of the Field family and who lived there, was a member of the casino); right - 1911 Follies poster.



### Stockbridge Library Chamber Concert Series Continues -- Friday, April 6, 2018, 6pm

The Stockbridge Library, Museum & Archives is pleased to present a Berkshire Chamber Players concert, generously sponsored by The Sherman-Chester Wealth Management Group. M&A Curator Barbara Allen will make brief comments before each piece of music to place it in local historical context. Following the concert, the musicians will be available for a question and answer period and to talk with members of the audience.



Cellist Ronald Feldman, violinist Natalie Kress, and violist Charlotte Malin will return for the final concert of the current 2017-2018 series. They will be joined by violinist Freya Liu, and Ryan Little and Josh Thompson playing horn. The all-Mozart program will feature Adagio and Fugue in C minor, K. 546; A Musical Joke in F, K. 522; and Divertimento in B flat, K. 287.

Tickets for the concert are available at the Library on a first-come, first-served basis; space is limited and advance ticket purchases are highly encouraged. Tickets are \$15 each or \$10 for students with valid student ID. To reserve tickets or for more information, call the Stockbridge Library, M&A at 413-298-5501.



## CASINO

By Barbara Allen



Within the Museum & Archives' collections is a hefty leather-bound book (*pictured right*) with "Minutes of the Stockbridge Casino Company" written in gold on the cover. The contents tell of the beginning of an organization that has existed for 132 years adjusting to the needs of the town as they changed.

Seven gentlemen of Stockbridge met in 1886. They were Joseph Choate, David Dudley Field, Jr., Henry D. Sedgwick, W.E. Doane, Ferdinand Hoffman, James Hague, and Prescott Hall Butler. Their purpose was to form a corporation to "establish and maintain a place for a reading room, library, and social meetings." To do so, they would sell shares at \$50 each, set up a board of directors, write a constitution, and solicit memberships.

The plans moved quickly. The directors signed up 80 members and raised a total of \$5000. Although it is not mentioned in the minutes, the Company arranged for the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White to draw up plans for the building. The original drawings are held by the M&A. They include an auditorium, a gallery, a card or club room, a ladies' parlor, a theatre with stage, a very large billiard room, and a kitchen in the basement.

Although it was voted not to spend more than had been collected, several of the founders offered additional financial help. Joseph Choate felt that the building should have gas pipes and he paid to have them installed. Mrs. Butler offered to take on a mortgage for the furnishings. The Casino opened for the 1888 season.

Almost immediately, the members began using the Casino for various activities. Ironically, Rule VI of the handbook stated that: "No game for stakes or money shall be permitted" (*In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the word casino described a club house or public room used for social meetings, gaming, dancing, music, etc.*) The Casino held concerts, plays, minstrel shows, tableaux, and variety shows. Some were put together by local residents and some were from outside groups who rented the venue. Dances called 'Hops' were held for different age groups. It was important to have a piano so the directors chose to rent one each season. Eventually the Company added a bowling alley and tennis courts for members to use (*the bowling alley is not mentioned in the minutes as being added, but they do mention charging for its use in 1892*).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Walter Nettleton and Frederic Crowninshield proposed holding an annual art exhibition. Artists with local connections offered their paintings, drawings, and sculpture. Daniel Chester French, Lydia Emmet, Augustus Lukemen, Marie Kobbe, and Edith Hastings as well as Crowninshield and Nettleton exhibited over the years. Each year the exhibit was touted in *The New York Times* and other newspapers. Several of these paintings hang today in the rooms of the Stockbridge Library – evidence of the quality of the work on exhibit.

As the years passed, people's taste in entertainment changed. The Board of Directors tried to come up with alternatives. They considered expansion but were unable to purchase the Carey property behind them on Casino Street (*Sergeant Street*). They suggested starting a boy's club to use part of the building but members didn't agree. At the same time, the building was aging and the upkeep surpassed the budget. The original membership was also aging and the numbers interested in the organization were declining. It became apparent that the Casino could not be maintained.

The Casino finally came to an end in 1927 when Mabel Choate wanted the Main Street property for the Mission House Museum. Some of the Stockbridge citizens formed a new organization, Three Arts Society, acquired the Casino building, move it to the other end of town, and establish it as the Berkshire Playhouse. Ninety years later, it is the Main Stage for the Berkshire Theatre.

*Pictured above top – the Casino building before it was moved (tennis courts in front);*

*pictured above bottom – the building as the Berkshire Playhouse, and pictured below right and left – the Casino building and the Mission House on the same property before the Casino was moved)*





### FIREMEN

The fact that the Stockbridge Fire Department has played a long and important part in this town became evident during February and March. Members of the three fire stations, Stockbridge, Glendale and Interlaken, helped mount an exhibit in the M&A Procter Gallery by lending many photos, scrapbooks, and artifacts for an exhibit.

They also spent an evening telling stories about their experiences fighting fires and making friends. We thank them for the protection they offer us and for giving us a glimpse of their world.



### THE MUSEUM & ARCHIVES REOPENS

As of last Saturday, March 31, the M&A is once again open to the public. Over the last several months parts of the main display room have been dismantled, rebuilt, and refurbished following the water that intruded (*due to a crack in an upstairs radiator*). Thanks to the expertise of conservator, Hugh Glover of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, the artifacts that were damaged by the water now look better than ever.

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped us move the collection to safety and to those who helped clean and put things back in place.

*(Spinning wheel – at left with water damage; at right after restoration)*

**Hours -- Tuesday 9-8, 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 (298-8190) to check for availability.*



### BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

**Thursday, April 26 in the Bement Room at 6:30 pm**

Due to scheduling and reconstruction issues, we were unable to hold our monthly *Behind Closed Doors* programs this winter. As we don't want to completely miss the season, we will offer a special edition of the program using the theme "*From Private to Public*" on April 26. Three people associated with institutions here in Stockbridge will share information about how their buildings, which were built as private homes, were adapted to completely different purposes. Join us to hear Laurie Norton Moffatt speak about Charles Butler's *Linwood House*, Joan Burkhard discuss Frederic Crowninshield's *Riverbrook*, and Greg Farr talk about Mrs. Dwight's *Old Corner House*.

### M&A INTERN

**Jenney Maloy**, the Library's children's librarian, has been working on her MLIS degree through Simmons College. One of her last classes before graduation is an introduction to archives. Her instructor has approved doing her internship in our Museum & Archives with Curator Barbara Allen as her mentor. On Thursdays from January through April she has been sorting, processing, and describing the Ingleside Papers.

Asked about this experience, Jenney commented "Prior to this internship I had little understanding of how important archives are to American Society. Archives like ours are the memory keepers and the truth tellers of history. I'm surprised at how patriotic working in an archives has made me feel!"

### REVISITING INDIANTOWN

A Mohican history seminar, *Revisiting Indiantown*, will be held **Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am to 5:00pm**. The morning at Stockbridge Town Hall features presentations on the origins of Stockbridge as "Indiantown" as told by members of the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe. The afternoon will feature a self-guided Walking Tour of 11 Mohican cultural sites on Main Street. The Library M&A will be a special stop on the Walking Tour from 2:00pm-5:00pm, featuring a chance to view several important documents from our archives about the Stockbridge Tribe, and to hear stories shared by Mohican elder, Woody Davids.

The Walking Tour is open to the public. Pre-registration for the morning presentations is currently full, but there are several ways to participate: Info at [www.mohican.com/indiantown](http://www.mohican.com/indiantown).