



NOW & THEN
at the
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Maria L. Carr, Editor

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FAREWELL FROM MARIA CARR, EDITOR

Eleven years ago, Barbara Allen, former Curator of the Museum & Archives, formed a Historical Collection Committee of which I was a member. At one of our meetings, Barbara asked for suggestions to make people more aware of the M&A and what it contained. I suggested that the Museum & Archives should have a bimonthly newsletter in email form. I felt that it should contain lots of pictures with tidbits of local history as well as information about programs, upcoming events, donations, and exhibits put on by the M&A. As no one else had time to do a newsletter, I offered to create it. It was not something I had ever done before and it was a learning process as it progressed. We came up with the name *Now & Then* and the logo was created by Linda Brazeau. It has evolved to what it is today – a three-page email newsletter with lots of pictures, information about the M&A, and history of the town.

Even though it was a lot of work and very time consuming, I thoroughly enjoyed being editor of the "Now & Then" newsletter and delving into the town's past. That said, all things must come to an end sometime. This will be the last issue I create, as I have decided to move on to other projects that have taken a back seat these past 11 years.

I would like to thank you all for your interest in the newsletter. Without that interest the newsletter wouldn't have existed. Back issues can still be accessed on the library website. -- Maria Carr

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The North Stockbridge Farmers' Club and Others

The North Stockbridge Farmers' Club, according to Carl Wurtzbach in 1938, was "a combination of Agricultural Society, Grange, and Debating Society adding much to the social activities of the village". It held meetings every two weeks at the houses of the members for the discussion of subjects relating to the farm and the garden. The Club's constitution states that its object was "to encourage and develop an increased knowledge of, and taste for, Agriculture, and all the industrial and ornamental pursuits connected therewith". It goes on to state that in the Autumn of each year there would be an exhibition of animals, fruit, vegetables, and domestic manufactures for which prizes were to be given. Ladies were allowed to enter items in categories other than those pertaining to *Dairy*, such as in the *Flowers* and *Household Articles* categories. Frieda Bell wrote "No doubt in early days life was too difficult for many social activities but soon interest in library and school started. A North Stockbridge Farmer's Club was organized in 1846".

There were also debating clubs, singing schools and a lyceum where papers were read by various members discussing current questions of interest. A lyceum is an Institution for popular education providing discussions, lectures, concerts, and other similar activities. There were meetings with Lyceums in nearby towns. One record tells of walking to a Lee meeting "over the fields where the snow was crotch high". A copy of a manuscript was found among papers of Theodore S. Heath in the attic of the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Acly on Willard Hill Road, which was occupied by Mr. Heath from about 1857 to 1868. During this period, Mr. Heath was apparently editor of the "Mirror", a publication of the "Curtisville Lyceum", and the papers found pertained to this organization.

Another group was The Interlaken Winter Club which celebrated its fourth anniversary in November 1940 with a dance at Citizens' Hall (*currently IS183*). An award was given to the best waltzer. A document in the M&A states that the selectmen, William G. MacClintic, Nathan M. Shaw, Jr. and Fred B. Williams, rented the south room at the Interlaken School (*Citizens' Hall*) to the Winter Club "to be used by them as a club room at a monthly rate of \$4.00". The rental fee included the use of the Hall for their weekly Saturday night dances. The agreement goes on to state that "The flush toilets will be shut off for the winter months. The outside toilets to be used will be reconditioned at the club's expense."

The Interlaken Thimble Club, the Interlaken Community Club and a women's committee under Mable Wylie which used Citizen's Hall as a USO for Service men also are mentioned in records.

INTERLAKEN FIRE DEPARTMENT

In 1913, the town of Stockbridge appropriated \$3,000 for a firehouse in the Interlaken section of the town. The land and house (*which must have been torn down*) were purchased for \$50 and the firehouse was built in 1915 for a cost of \$2948.53. This became Hose Company No. 4 of the Stockbridge Fire Department and was officially organized June 8, 1915.

A library was established in Curtisville (*currently Interlaken*) in 1814 and was originally at the school house that was next to the church (*this building was moved to Trask Lane after being replaced with a new school building and is currently used as a private residence*). There was a short period of time when there was no library until in 1915. Miss Elizabeth Cavanaugh, teacher and principal at the Interlaken School, saw a need for establishing a village library. That library was located in the fire house at the top of the stairs of the second floor in a small area partitioned off from the rest of the room. It was open once a week and had a lending service of books supplied from the Stockbridge Library. It operated until 1947.

According to a paper written by Carl Wurtzbach "it is said that at one time Curtisville could boast the only fire engine in Berkshire County outside Pittsfield."

The members of the fire department not only attended fires and other fire department business; but they also helped within the community. According to a document entitled, *1977-1978 Report of Old Curtisville, Inc.*, by John Davis Hatch "Work was also done during the year by members of the Interlaken Fire Department who cleared the underbrush and small trees from the mill races and mill site of the Pagenstecher mill below the brick store." Several of the town reports in the 1960's mention that the Interlaken Fire Department sponsored a skating rink at Curtis Park which they flooded each winter.

An addition to the Interlaken station house was completed in late 1993. The addition was dedicated on June 19, 1994 to Warren J. Haywood (1927–1993), a 50-year member and former foreman for the Interlaken station.



Interlaken Volunteer Firemen in front of the Interlaken Fire Department (taken prior to 1972) – from left to right: Russ Clarke, Tilo Kaufman, Tom Barnes, John Downs, Bob Dunne (*in truck*), George Emerson, Gerry Cardillo, Ed Johnston, Ed Oppermann, Don Haywood, Clyde Wade, Francis Brazee, and Robert Acl. On back of the truck - unidentified boy, Warren Haywood and Roland DeVoe



WHO LIVES, WHO DIES, WHO TELLS YOUR STORY

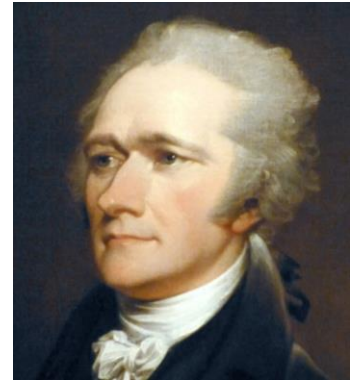
by Joshua David Hall



A noteworthy part of our country's history is the July 1804 duel between former Secretary of State Alexander Hamilton (*pictured right*) and Vice President Aaron Burr, Jr. (*pictured left*). The death of Hamilton sent shockwaves throughout the nation and led to the ultimate condemnation of Burr.

So, what does this have to do with Stockbridge, you might ask? How does our small Berkshire town find itself wrapped up in all of this? If you have a chance, I recommend reading Ron Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton, but

I would also recommend, to balance the scales, to read *Fallen Founder* by Nancy Isenberg. Both authors have done a great deal of in-depth research and although each glorifies and vilifies, having read both, I think it helps one better understand a very complex and convoluted history that is, as I tell my students, as clear as mud.



"My grandfather was a fire and brimstone preacher" is how Aaron Burr begins his song "Wait for it" as part of Lin Manuel Miranda's acclaimed musical, *Hamilton*, and this is where our story begins. Aaron Burr, Jr. was the grandson of the Rev. Jonathan Edwards (*pictured left*). Rev. Edwards, having moved to Stockbridge in 1751 after being unceremoniously kicked out of Northampton, married his daughter Esther to fellow Great Awakening minister and then President of the College of New Jersey (*today Princeton*), Rev. Aaron Burr, in Stockbridge in 1752. Esther moved to New Jersey with her husband and there began her new life.

The Burr family began to grow. In 1754 a daughter, Sarah, was born and in 1756 the junior Aaron Burr. There were great expectations for these two children who were being raised by parents who greatly supported equal education as well as enlightened piety. However, as unpredictable as the Berkshire weather, life changed for the Burr family. In 1757, upon a return trip to Massachusetts, President Burr died of a fever. This set into motion a series of events that would prove tragic for the family. Upon the elder Burr's death, the Rev. Jonathan Edwards was asked if he would take the position as President of the College of New Jersey. He resigned as minister in Stockbridge in 1758 and removed to Princeton. Caught in the throes of a small pox outbreak, Jonathan Edwards would be dead by March of 1758, Esther Burr dead by April 1758, and Sarah, Jonathan's wife, by October 1758. In just over a year the Burr children had lost both parents and both maternal grandparents. This placed them in the care of family, particularly their uncle, Timothy Edwards, who was still in Stockbridge (*Timothy Edwards home on the corner of Pine and Main Streets pictured right*).

Aaron Burr, Jr.'s time in Stockbridge would be brief, as Timothy would move his family to New Jersey for a period of time. Aaron's sister Sarah would go on to marry Tappan Reeve, and Aaron would begin his education looking into a number of career avenues including the ministry, like his father and grandfather, and the law. The American Revolution would give him an opportunity to pursue military avenues, and it would be here that Aaron Burr would first meet Alexander Hamilton.



Timothy Edwards eventually returned to Stockbridge, due to his wife's health, and would stay in regular contact with his nephew, giving advice, asking for assistance in various matters, and admonishing Burr for his sometimes impetuous and rash decisions. This included involvement in the law and politics. However, when in need of legal advice, Timothy would not hesitate to reach out to his nephew. Burr's legal career would bring him in close contact with Alexander Hamilton and would eventually lead to him running for Hamilton's father-in-law's seat in Congress and ultimately in running for President in 1800 and becoming Vice President to Thomas Jefferson.

So, now let's talk about Alexander Hamilton. Although he never visited Stockbridge in person, his words certainly did, and he was not that far away when visiting his father-in-law, Philip Schuyler in Albany, New York. Hamilton makes his way into our story by way of the Sedgwick family. Theodore Sedgwick was, following the Revolution, a well-connected Federalist and member of the first Congress. Hamilton, being a Federalist himself, allied with many strong Federalists. First serving as a (*continued on next page*)

WHO LIVES, WHO DIES, WHO TELLS YOUR STORY Cont.

Senator from Massachusetts, Senator Sedgwick became Representative Sedgwick in 1799 and was quickly elected as Speaker of the House, a position which he held until 1801. This gave them a good reason for sharing political views.

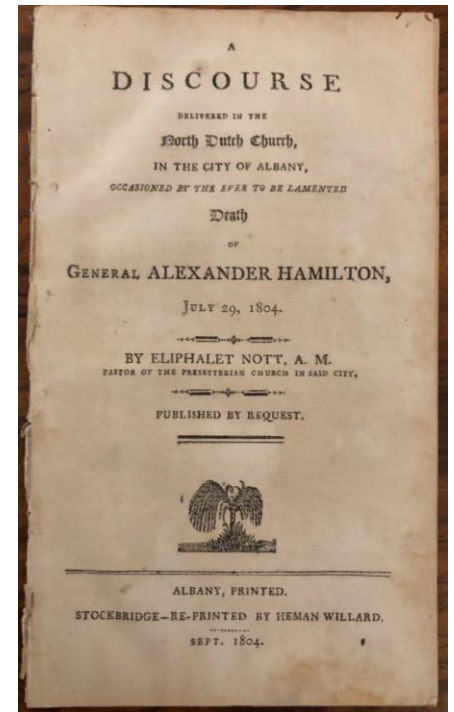
Alexander Hamilton and Congressman Sedgwick would be in regular contact with each other over the years. Perhaps this is why Sedgwick petitioned in 1792 to have the first Post Office established in Berkshire County here in Stockbridge, to deal with the voluminous number of letters coming from Hamilton and others?

The rest is history. Hamilton and Burr would meet on the dueling grounds in New Jersey on that fateful summer day in 1804. Hamilton died and Burr lived with the blame for the remainder of his days, another 32 years, whether rightfully or wrongly. Regardless, Burr's political career was over, making President Jefferson quite happy. Electa Jones in her 1854 history of Stockbridge wrote of Burr,

"He is said to have lived in Stockbridge. He was, in the family of his uncle, but was little at home, and obtained none of his training here. We do not claim him as a Stockbridge Man and are happy not to do so."

Clearly, Burr was not welcome in Stockbridge! And as for Hamilton, well we have in the Stockbridge Imprint's Collection a local (*Stockbridge*) printing of the eulogy given in Albany for Alexander Hamilton (*pictured right*). Also, it is said that the last letter that Hamilton wrote, was to Theodore Sedgwick according to John Sedgwick's book *War of Two*. Does that mean Hamilton got the last word?

That is how the worlds of Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton met in the town of Stockbridge, through family and politics. We know of Edwards and we know of Sedgwick, but somehow Burr and Hamilton have been lost in our explanation of our history, which of course depends on "who lives, who dies, who tells your story."



A THANK YOU NOTE FROM BARBARA ALLEN

On November 1, Barbara was presented with a lovely monogrammed box filled with good wishes for her future projects and with notes and photographs thanking her for her time in the Museum & Archives. She would like to thank all who sent messages for the box and all who sent cards, emails, or called.

The best part of the twenty-three years were the friendships made.
— Barbara Allen

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS

If you're interested in bits of history about Christmas, catch the program, *Santa's Good Deed*, on local television station CTSB. You may even recognize some of the voices of local people.

It will be playing at 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, December 1, 8, 15, and 22. CTSB is available in South County on Channel 1301.

STORY OF EARLY CHRISTMAS TREES

The year 1830 was a significant one for Charles Follen. It was the year he became a naturalized citizen of the United States and the year his son, Charles Christopher Follen, was born. This child's arrival was probably the chief factor leading to Follen's introduction of the Christmas tree.

The event took place in December 1832. That is the date of a description by Harriet Martineau, an English Unitarian and journalist who was visiting Boston at the time. Follen, remembering the German Christmases of his youth and wishing to recreate the magic and beauty of a decorated tree for his young son, went out into the woods near his Massachusetts home and cut down a small fir. The tree was set in a tub and its branches hung with small dolls, gilded eggshells, and paper cornucopias filled with candied fruit. The tree was illuminated with numerous candles. Martineau describes the unveiling of the tree at the Follens' Christmas party: "It really looked beautiful; the room seemed in a blaze, and the ornaments were so well hung up that no accident happened, except that one doll's petticoat caught fire. There was a sponge tied to the end of a stick to put out any supernumerary blaze, and no harm ensued. I mounted the steps behind the tree to see the effect of opening the doors. It was delightful. The children poured in, but in a moment every voice was hushed. Their faces were upturned to the blaze, all eyes wide open, all lips parted, all steps arrested."

Follen was not the first person in America to have a Christmas tree. Decorated trees had been seen in Pennsylvania in the 1820's. But there is good evidence that Follen was the first person to bring the decorated tree to New England and, after he set the example, the custom spread. In fact, the Christmas tree made its American literary debut in an 1836 story called "New Year's Day," written by another friend of Harriet Martineau, a Stockbridge writer named Catharine Sedgwick.