

THE HISTORIAN NEWSLETTER

Volume Five, Issue Three

Winter 2019

A Message From The President

Greetings:

The Christmas open house at the Jacob Thompson house on December 9th from 1 to 4 was well attended. We had a steady stream of visitors who came to see the house decorated for the holiday season. The rooms were decorated for the season in period fashion. Also, many people came to look at the World War I exhibit, which we left up from September's open house, for those who had missed it. This was also well received and generated much interest. I would like to thank Bill Dominick for his work in preparing the house and providing the decorations and refreshments for the day.

It has been a busy few months for historic preservation in our town. Due to the interest of Town Administrator, Evan Brassard and Town Planner, Dan Laroche and the support of Paul DeMaio, Custodian/Building Coordinator, we have come to a new place in the town's preservation of historic public assets. The World War I minenwerfer cannon has been restored and painted, and as of just this last week, the newly refurbished wooden wheels were delivered. They are going to the painter to be painted and, as soon as they are ready, the minenwerfer will be re-assembled and placed back in its original location, in front of the north tower at Memorial Town Hall. Also, the gas light, which originally was located atop of the Cushman Fountain, has come back from being restored and, I believe, we will be waiting for spring and nice weather to reinstall and illuminate this original fixture. Who knows, the way the weather has been going, perhaps we will see it soon-

er than we think!

Memorial Town Hall's front two offices have been getting a make over. The old mid-century drop ceilings have been removed and all of the hidden wiring for electricity and alarms have been re-routed behind the walls and above the tin ceilings. The walls have been prepared and restored to the original texture. The Historical Commission has studied the original finishes and came up with what they considered to be the original colors and their placement on the walls. Two new period appropriate chandeliers were purchased: an eight-light for the north office and a ten-light for the larger south office. They are breathtaking! I am sure we will have some public viewing in the future and I hope you will all attend.

This newsletter's historical question is a bit of a brainteaser and something I had never heard of until I perused a recent acquisition. I hope you all enjoy it and get the answer right.

I hope 2019 will continue to be an exciting time in the preservation of Monson.

Dennis



What Used To Be There?

Written by Dennis and Mary Swierad

In this edition, we will be focusing on the buildings in the area of 68 - 76 Main Street between today's New England Pickers and dentist Dr. Piecuch's office. I am sure many of you cannot image just how much change has happened in that relatively small location.



George E. Grout Store

Section of original outdoor sign

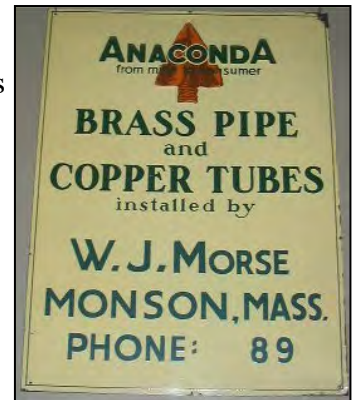


We will start with the original house that still stands at 68 Main Street. This house was built sometime after 1870 by George E. Grout where he conducted his business as a watchmaker and jeweler, dealer in watches, clocks, jewelry, silver, plated ware, diamonds, optical goods, fancy goods and notions, fruit, confectionery, stationery, cigars, tobacco and holiday goods. He ran this store along with his



wife until sometime before 1912 when Eugene Foskit bought the property and set up a contractors shop. After that, the Morse family lived in the house with William Morse conducting his business as a plumber up until the late 1960's.

Thereafter, it had a succession of owners and renters. Today, it is a private residence.



The area between 70 and 72 Main Street was the location of Barton's Block which was built sometime before 1855. A valuation list from 1857 names Nehemiah P. Barton as the owner. Like today many businesses came and went in Barton's Block. Some of



them were Monson Boot & Shoe, George L. Fuller; W. A. DeMerritt, druggist; H. N. Butler, Baker; Ralph Clifford, Retail Boot & Shoe Dealer;



Adolph Miller, tailor; Albert Homer, meat market with Frank H. King sup-

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plying the meat; George Griffin, beer saloon; Chapin's Drug Store and Music Lessons by Mrs.

family until the late 1950's. It went through a succession of owners before being taken down sometime after 1987 and replaced with the multi-family building which stands today.



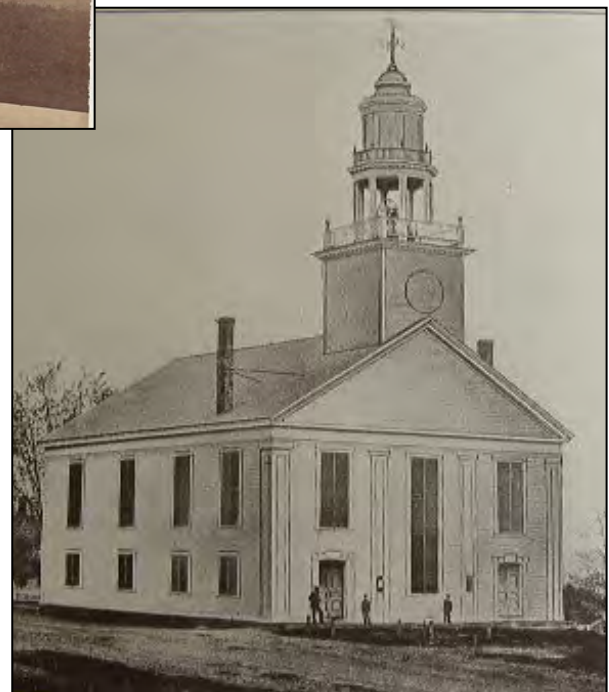
Right side of photograph - Barton's Block in 1884, note how Main Street drops down towards Grout's Store

The last area 74-76 Main Street has a particularly interesting lineage. The first building on this site actually started out life up the hill, as the Second Congregational Church Meeting House. It was built in 1803 by Monson architect and builder Luther Carter. It stood at its original site for sixty-eight years. In April of 1871, it was sold to Daniel G. Green with the stipulation that it was to be moved.

Harlow Chapin. Some of the organizations that also met in Barton's Block were the Father Mathew Temperance Society, the Grange and the Day Spring Lodge. There is also indications that rooms were rented.

In the 1870's, it appears that the building was owned by King & Meacham, at which time it was slightly moved to the east (more explanation to come). In 1880, Daniel G. Green is listed as the owner. In 1888, it was purchased by B. A. Day and re-named the Day Block.

On April 10, 1895 the building burned to the ground. The vacant lot was purchased by the Flynt Granite Co. and remained with them until Dr. Perlin Soule bought the property to build a two-family structure in the 1910's. Dr. Soule hired Frank F. Maguire, carpenter and builder to construct the building which used salvaged lumber from the Cushman Hotel. The property remained with the Soule



The following are excerpts from the local newspapers:

May 13, 1871 "The old church is slowly moving . . ."

May 20, 1871 "The old congregational church is slowly moving onto the Barton lot, Mr. Green having decided to move the dwelling house to the south and make room for the church, which will be fitted up for stores and shops below, and for a concert and audience room above. Mr. Trask of Springfield does the job of moving and although having many serious obstacles to encounter at first, is now progressing finely."

FRANK F. MAGUIRE,
Carpenter and Builder.

Plans and Specifications furnished if desired.
ALL WORK GUARANTEED.

ALSO AGENT FOR IRON BUILDINGS.

Residence:
Flynt Avenue near Mill Street.



May 27, 1871 "Completely moved off original foundation."

August 5, 1871 "Old Congregational Church is moved just south of Barton's Block, Barton was moved due east fitted with a basement. Albert Homer, meat market and George Griffin a small beer saloon - both in basement. Frank H. King will be supplying the meat."

The amount of engineering that must have been used is almost unbelievable. Not only did this very large, two-story building with a steeple have to be moved downhill, it also had to be completely turned around and backed into the space which proved to be too small. And because of this, the entire Barton's Block, which was also a massive building, had to be moved just slightly to the east. But before that happened, a brand new granite block foundation had to be built for it to sit on. And let us not forget, the moving of these buildings was all done by oxen.

With this move begins the short history of Green's Hall. Like Barton's Block, this building was used for businesses, organizations and room rentals.

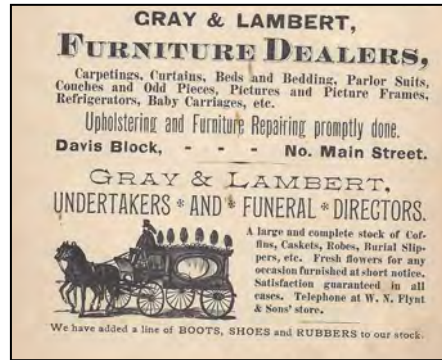


F. E. Howe Delivery Wagons - Green's Hall

Some of the businesses were Maguire Bros. Fish & Oysters; Gray & Lambert, Furniture Dealers; Frank E. Howe, Meat Market; A. A. Fountain's Barber Shop; James Curley Ice Cream Parlor located in the basement and E. F. Willis, Clothier & Hatter. Some of the organizations were the Harmony Club and the Republican Town Committee.

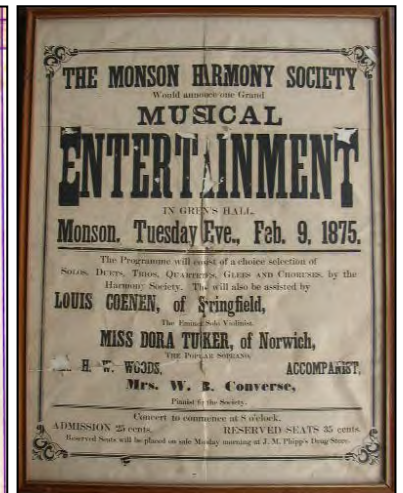
By 1894, the building was owned by Mr. Davis of Longmeadow.

On April 10, 1895 this building also burned to the ground. In the early 1900's, Dr. Perlin Soule



built the two-story multi-family dwelling unit that still stands today. This building was also constructed by Frank F. Maguire using salvaged lumber

from the Cushman Hotel.



The following is an article that appeared in The Journal on Friday Evening, April 12, 1895:

"MONSON.

A \$20,000 FIRE"

"Two Business Blocks and Two Dwellings Burned. Man Supposed to Have Perished In the Flames."

"Monson was visited Wednesday night by a fire which promised for a while to destroy every building from the Academy north to the Cushman House, and only by most desperate efforts on the part of the firemen and citizens was this calamity prevented. As it was the flames destroyed \$20,000 worth of property before they were under control.

The fire was first discovered about 11 o'clock in the front part of Gray & Lambert's store in Green's block by F. Q. Ball as he was returning from Dr. Soule's house, where he had been spending the

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evening. An alarm was immediately given and the fire department responded promptly, but the flames had gained such headway that they were beyond the puny efforts of two small chemical engines to subdue them. A strong wind was blowing and so fanned the flames that in 30 minutes Green's block was burned to the ground. The houses and barn in the rear and to the south followed next, and only by almost superhuman efforts on the part of the firemen was their progress toward the south stayed at this point. Meanwhile Day's block to the north had caught and was burning furiously, threatening to sweep away Grout's and Flynt's stores adjoining. At this juncture some one suggested the felling of a large elm tree, which stood between the burning building and those threatened, in such a way as to fall upon the wall of the burning building and push it away from the structures to the north. This was done and proved successful, as in its fall it tore down the burning walls and the worst danger was over. At this point the help which had been summoned from Palmer arrived, but was too late to be of any use, and the engine which had been brought down by special train was not unloaded. Too much credit cannot be given to the members of the Monson fire department for the work done by them.

Shortly after the fire was discovered in Green's block it was found that Charles Stone, a roomer in the building, had not gotten out, and a ladder was run up for his use in descending from a window. The ladder proved too short, and in jumping the four or five feet intervening between the window and ladder he fell to the ground and was severely if not seriously injured about the back. His recovery is yet doubtful. Another roomer in the building, Albert Dean, is thought to have perished in the flames, as nothing has been seen of him since he left the barber shop of A. Fountain at 10:40 o'clock, about 20 minutes before the fire was discovered. At that time he was considerably intoxicated, and it is supposed that he retired and was too much under the influence of liquor to help himself, and no one thought of him during the few minutes that elapsed before the building was completely enveloped in flames.

Green's block, where the fire was first discovered, is owned by a Mr. Davis of Longmeadow. It was formerly the Congregational Church, built early in the century, had been remodeled into stores, tenements and a hall, and removed from the hill to its present site. It was occupied by F. E. Howe's meat-market, Gray &

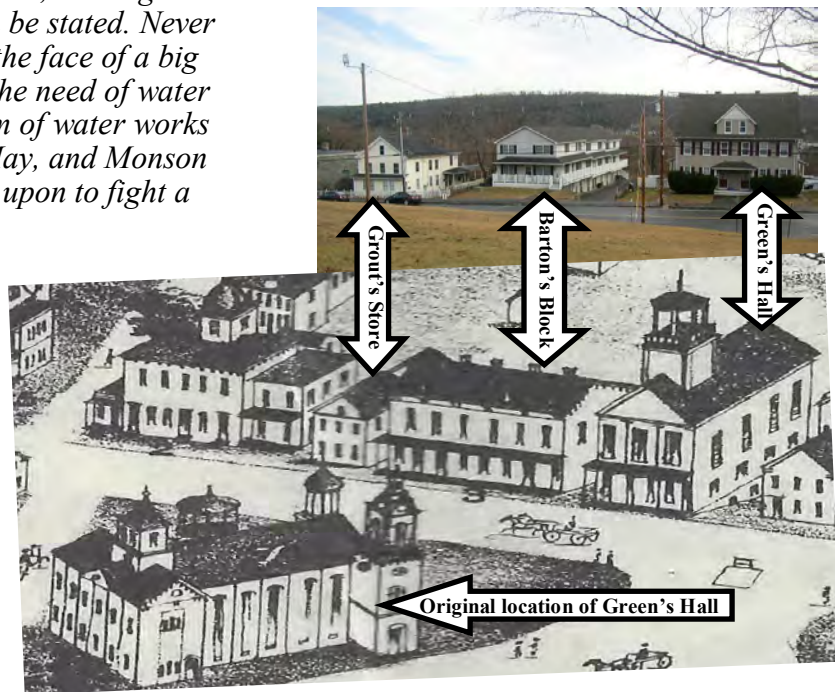
Lambert's furniture store, and A. A. Fountain's barber shop. The contents of both stores are a total loss, along with the buildings. Day's block, owned by B. A. Day, was occupied by Henry N. Butler, baker, Adolph Miller, tailor and Grange Hall. Most of the movable contents of the building was gotten out. It was also occupied by the families of Jeremiah Carter, L. R. Robertson, Mrs. Elizabeth Barr and S. S. Fitzgerald. The Barton house in the rear was occupied by Florence Sullivan, Timothy Donohue and Emmanuel Fuzzy. Only a part of its contents were saved. The Hamilton White house on the south was occupied by Patrick Duffy and Mrs. Maggie O'Keefe. The contents of this building were removed.

The loss on Green's block will be about \$5000, on Day's block \$4000, on the Hamilton White house and barn \$3500, and on the Barton house \$1000. Gray & Lambert carried \$5100 insurance.

There are many theories afloat as to the origin of the fire, but nothing certain can be ascertained. Mr. Fountain did not leave the building until 10:40, twenty minutes before the alarm was given, and says everything was all right at that time. That the fire was of incendiary origin seems quite probable, although as yet nothing of a different nature can be stated. Never was the helplessness of the town in the face of a big fire more apparent, and never was the need of water better demonstrated. The new system of water works will be in operation by the first of May, and Monson will probably never again be called upon to fight a fire against such odds."

Bibliography

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- MA Historical Commission MACRIS



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New Acquisitions



left: Monson American Legion Charter Membership Roll, two hats, Women's Auxiliary, Junior Auxiliary, WWI soldier

top: WWI Poster

bottom: Three Gaouette photographs, left to right - unknown young lady, Dr. Perlin Soule, Mrs. Eldene Soule, Perlin's wife



**Answer to Last Edition’s
“Where Was This?”**



This gazebo was located on the hill behind the gray house at 235 Main Street. Some people may remember the house as Dr. Eldridge’s dentist office.

**This Edition’s
Historical Question**

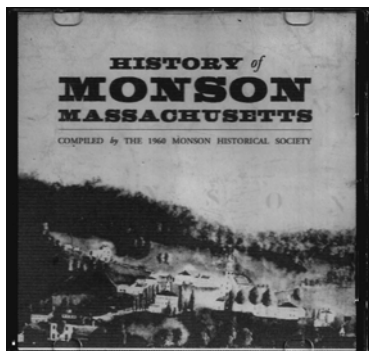


What is the connection between Adolph Hitler’s Hindenburg and Monson?

Welcome New Members

- Joan Watson - Monson, MA
- Dylan & Bethany Mann - Monson, MA
- Pamela Gainer - Monson, MA

Items For Sale

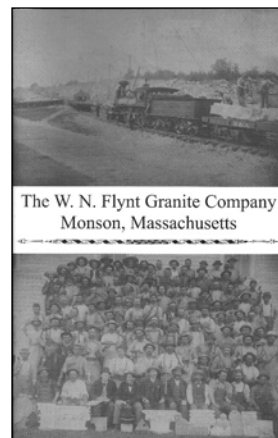


The History of Monson, Massachusetts Book written by members of the Monson Historical Society, Inc. in 1960 is now available in PDF format on a CD.

If you are currently a member of the Society, the fee to obtain the CD is \$15.00. For non-members, \$20.00, which includes one year free membership and our quarterly newsletter. Shipping costs for the CD are included in the fee.

Please include your email address to receive the newsletter.

Also available is the 12 page booklet about the W. N. Flynt Granite Company. Cost is only \$3.00 with shipping cost included.



Please make your checks payable to **Monson Historical Society, Inc.**

Mail your request to: **Monson Historical Society, Inc.**
1 Green Street, Suite 1
Monson, MA 01057

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Jacob Thompson House Museum
built 1811
Seven Main Street
Open on Occasion
or
By Appointment



Fuller House
built 1869
One Green Street
Business Rentals
and
Second Floor Office of the
Monson Historical Society, Inc.

- Dennis Swierad - President, Historian and Genealogist, co-Newsletter Editor
Tamara Cabey - Vice-President, Rental Manager
Leona Brahen - Secretary, Computer Manager, Webmaster
Kevin McNabb - Treasurer
Paul DeMaio - Board Member, Buildings and Grounds Manager
William Dominick - Board Member
Denis Duquette - Board Member, Membership, Publicity
EmmaLadd Shepherd - Board Member Emeritus
Mary Swierad - Accessionist, Collections Manager, co-Newsletter Editor



Membership Renewals occur on May 1st of each year and are good through April 30th of the following year. (For example, a "5/1/2019" membership means you are a paid member from 5/1/2018 to 4/30/2019).

For Postal Mail Recipients of Newsletter

Check the date on your mailing label. If it reads "**5/1/2019**" (or a later date), your membership is **current**. If it reads "**5/1/2018**" (or an earlier date), it is time for you to renew.

For Email Recipients of Newsletter

Check the "Subject" line in the email. If it reads "**Monson Historical Society Newsletter**", your membership is **current**. If it reads "**Monson Historical Society Newsletter/Renewal**", your membership has expired and you will need to update it. Please read the text in your email for renewal instructions.

NOTE

Until we get set up on the Historical Society's email account, please be aware that the newsletters will be sent from this email address: DCDuquette@msn.com (Denis Duquette).

Check your "Junk" email folder, in case it gets sent there.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please take the time today to complete the membership form and mail it back to the address listed on the form, along with your check.

Your membership will be updated.

MONSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address (for newsletter) _____

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY!)

Indicate a membership category and enclose a check made out to:
"Monson Historical Society, Inc."

(Note: Membership renewal is May 1st of each year)

_____ **Individual \$10⁰⁰** _____ **Family \$20⁰⁰**

_____ **Life Membership \$250⁰⁰**

Return to: MHS Membership - One Green Street, Suite One - Monson, MA 01057

Any information you provide us will be kept in strict confidence and will
NEVER be given out or sold at any time.

***And as always, we **THANK YOU** for your continued support of the
 Monson Historical Society, Inc.!***

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