

COUNTY OF GENESEE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

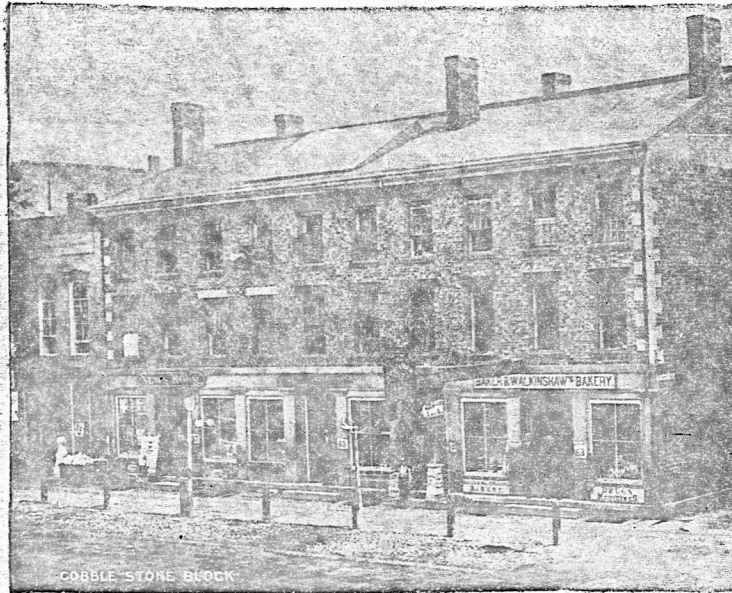
CHARLOTTE M. READ
GENESEE COUNTY HISTORIAN



HOLLAND LAND OFFICE
BATAVIA, NEW YORK

-Block rebuilt again in 1960's
by Urban Renewal 1960's

THE COBBLESTONE BLOCK
ONCE A BATAVIA LANDMARK



Here is the Cobblestone Block. Everyone of the older residents of Batavia remembers it as one of the biggest, best and busiest buildings in Batavia shortly after it was built by the late Benjamin C. and Ones Page. History does not record when it was erected (about 1840), but when it was torn down it gave way to the Tomlinson Building, having stood on the site now covered by Nos. 63, 65 and 67 Main Street, between Exchange Place and the Bank of Batavia.

At the time that the photograph was taken (about 1868) James M. Walkinshaw had succeeded Orlando Fellows and was conducting a drug store at No. 63 in the store that E. D. Reeves now occupies in the same line of trade. Homer N. Kelsey had his jewelry spot along the west wall of the store at No. 65, in which Skinner Bloomfield made gentlemen's clothing and sold haberdashery, with his stock displayed along the east side of the store. Both of the men did such a good business that they finally decided to join forces so a partnership was formed. Afterward Kelsey and Bloomfield moved to the Clark Building, at Main and Bank Street, and subsequently to the Wilson Building.

J. B. and H. Hewitt started their drygoods business in No. 65. Later they moved into the store vacated by N. H. Bierce, where the Bank of Batavia now stands; later to the large store now occupied by J. B. Griffen and subsequently to No. 72, where they re-

mained until they sold out last fall (1908) to the Degnan Brothers. Several changes have been made since those days and now the Ellsworth Variety Store is at No. 65.

Mackey Brothers News Room sign can be distinguished in the accompanying picture. It is rather a singular thing that newspapers and periodicals have been sold in that same location for a great many years, while drugs have been sold for a much longer period at the west end of the building. In 1873 Charles M. Bosworth and Charles L. Backus purchased the business from the Mackey Brothers, James M. and John A., who had moved their newsroom there from 44 Main Street. Mr. Backus soon retired and Mr. Bosworth, sometime later, sold out to Andrus C. Holdridge, son of Billings Holdridge, and who was succeeded by Bradley S. Smith, who had been a clerk in the store. Mr. Smith's brother, Louis E. Smith, was later associated with him. On June 13, 1895, Bradley S. Smith, who had continued the business after his brother had started a shoe store, sold the business to C. K. Haynes of Lyons. During the time Mr. Haynes was in business in Batavia he devised a new means for placing torpedoes on railroad tracks. In 1898 Mr. Haynes disposed of the business to Orville Howard of Wisconsin, who conducted the store a short time, selling it in 1899 to Arthur H. Marshall who now conducts a newsroom on Jackson Street, Mr. Telfair, who is a clerk in the Bank of Batavia, dissolved partnership in 1902. George D. Worthington of Buffalo and his brother-in-law, Leonard C. Wood of Stafford, purchased the stock and conducted a book and stationery store (not handling newspapers), until 1907, when the Mac Greevy-Sleght-De Graff Company of Elmira and Canandaigua, the present occupants, succeeded them.

On the ground floor of the two-story building just to the east of the Cobblestone Block, Niles H. Bierce had his drygoods store for a great many years. Later, T. J. Stephenson sold men's garments on the same site, subsequently moving to the corner of Main and State Streets. Mr. Bierce moved to the wooden building at Main Street and Clark Place and in 1880 put up the brick structure now known as the Bierce Building.

Another occupant of No. 69 was C. M. Bosworth with his shoe store. He sold out to Gillette and Prentice a few years before the building was torn down to make room for the Bank of Batavia (No. 69).

Overhead were the law offices of Wakeman and Bryan, which extended over the whole second floor. Mr. Bryan owned the building and when he died was succeeded in the law-partnership by the late Moses Taggart. Mr. Wakeman's law-partner was William C. Watson, who is at present an active attorney in Batavia.

John G. Milburn of New York studied law in this office when he first came to Batavia from England. From a curly-headed student in these law offices to the presidency of the Pan American Exposition and to be the foremost attorney employed by the Standard Oil Company is quite a jump, but Mr. Milburn was able to accomplish it. A Batavian said the other day that he could remember with distinctness the curly head of the law student protruding from the front window of the office on the afternoon of a hot summer's day. Another law student there was John N. Beckley, who became a prominent attorney in Rochester.

Some of the occupants of the second and third floors of this famous old Cobblestone Block are living today (1909). On the northwest of the second floor Joseph Green had his barbershop a great many years. He was known to all Batavians as Joe and was extremely popular. He could play the fiddle and was in great demand to furnish music at dancing parties. Joe Green's sign can be seen in the picture standing on the sidewalk, and many Batavians have recollections of stumbling over it. Right above is the sign belonging to Dr. Benjamin, the Dentist.

Directly over No. 65 Miss Terwilliger had a bonnet shop. Mrs. Lottie and Emma Insley conducted dressmaking parlors over the newsroom. Miss Emma Insley (1909) is now employed in the J. C. Barnes tailor shop. Back of the Green barbershop, William C. Casey

conducted a boot shop for a number of years. His sons, John P. and William C. Casey, are now proprietors of the grocery store at No. 118 Main Street. Behind the boot shop, Mrs. Mary Perry and her son, C. O. Stetson, frame pictures. Mr. Stetson did the actual work, while his mother superintended the financial interests. John B. Halsted, a money lender, made his headquarters at the same elevation as the boot shop and Dr. Benjamin occupied a suite of rooms on the third floor, where Gottlieb Kies bound books in an adjoining room. Another third floor tenant was Elias Gile, better known as "Pap", who had a cobbling shop.

Q. P. Knight, who made pictures, had his studio just beneath the sky-light which can be seen plainly on the roof of the building. Mr. Knight was the leading village photographer and specimens of his art are stored away by the dozens in plush-covered albums of Batavia families. Old and young alike were subjected to the tortures of the steel head-holder in the Knight studio. At one time Mr. Knight had a partner and the firm name was Knight and Eales.

Two engineering stunts were performed on the old building. The ceilings were much too low, and, as time went on, it was decided that something must be done. The ceilings could not be raised, so each floor in the stores was sawed completely around the base-board. When all was ready the floors were simply dropped down a foot to their new foundation. In spite of this improvement, however, floors became too creaky, the walls too musty and the stocks too dusty. Although hundreds around Batavia grieved to see the building pass away, it was deemed best to have the structure demolished. The old building was destroyed and a new one built on the site without forcing any of the stores to close up even temporarily.

Work was started at the west end of the building about 1881. An addition was built on the rear of all of the three stores. Wooden walls were constructed outside of the stone walls. Baker and Walkinshaw moved in with Mr. Kelsey and when their new store was completed they moved back. The same plan was pursued by Mr. Kelsey, who moved in with the Mackey Brothers. By the time the Mackey Brothers had moved back into their store from the Kelsey establishment, the building which stands on the site today (1909) was completed.

Back of the block there was a wooden building. Benjamin C. and Ones Page, who came to Batavia from New Hampshire in 1838, occupied it before they sold their bake shop to Baker & Walkinshaw. The Pages baked little round crackers and sold oysters, earning an enviable reputation as to the merit of their crackers, which were delivered in brown butchers' paper and sold to hundreds of people throughout Western New York.

Mc Williams Brothers' shoe store was in No. 67 long before this picture was taken. Robert Mc Williams, one of the firm, married a daughter of the late Gilbert Peck of East Bethany and is now a resident of Detroit, Michigan.

Batavia Daily News
April 17, 1909-P55

Copied by: H. Naomi Read
April 14, 1969

GENESEE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY