

## **Stickney Hill, history notes by Jon Roe**

The McLean family were early investors and developers in Vernon and Rockville. They recognized the potential of the Tankerhoosen and Hockanum Rivers and were involved early with the Phoenix and Warburton Mills on the Lower Tankerhoosen. What they learned with the Tankerhoosen mills they took to Rockville purchasing land and building mills throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Francis McLean (1777-1861) in 1821 purchased the land in Rockville on which the Rock Mill would be built. He also invested in the Frank and Florence Mills.

For our story he was a leading investor in the paper company on Paper Mill Pond from 1833-1840. His property likely included today's Stickney Hill.

### **The Stickney Family**

John Stickney (1818-1893) was born in Maine. He married Mary Hale, whose family owned most of the area of Pleasant and Lawrence streets prior to the development of Rockville. When he moved to Rockville he ran Francis McLean's paper company. John's father-in-law was publisher of a New York City newspaper which used paper supplied by Stickney's company. Stickney bought and sold partnerships in several other mills in Rockville.

He built his home, 'Evening Side,' on what was then Pleasant Street (now Pine Street) in 1847 overlooking his mills and with a view of Central Park and downtown Rockville. The property may have been part of the Hale Farm.

Here he raised his family, which included a daughter, Caroline. Caroline, later a published author on botany, wrote and published near the end of her life a biography of her days growing up in Rockville in the 1850s. She had an excellent memory for detail.

Known as Deacon John, Stickney served the First and Union Churches in the same office forty-four years. The church was important to him and was integrated into family life.

Although he never owned what is today the MCLT preserve Stickney did acquire a number of the properties and tenements along Pleasant Street during his time there and his name is linked to the area. Caroline in her book talks about walks in the woods and her chore of taking the cow to pasture each day.

Most of Stickney's Pleasant Street property was sold to Charles McLean in 1889 shortly before his death.

### **The Corbin Family**

Brothers Lewis and John Corbin were stone cutters, who came to Rockville in the 1840's to build the foundations of the many new mills and factories. Lewis worked his way up to management becoming a partner with John Stickney in the envelope business. In 1849 John built a house for his mother at the end of Pleasant Street where family members would live there until recent times.

By 1899 John Corbin (1835-1926) owned and farmed the south side of the hill in the preserve.

Old photos show the south side as farmland and the north side as woodlands, which may reflect the different ownership as well as better sun and soil for farming on the south side.

### **After The Stickneys**

Charles Nobel McLean (1850-1916) came into ownership of part of Stickney Hill and lived on Pleasant Street. He had a reservoir on top of the hill which he sold to the water company in 1894 with a small piece of property.

The Rockville Water & Aqueduct Company (after 1957 the CT Water Company) built a standpipe on the hill in 1897 and added a second in 1923. A pipe was laid from the Shenipsit Lake pumping station which runs along the current stone wall. From the standpipes it flowed down Reynolds Street, past Stickney's house to Rockville and the mills. It was used for the mills, fire department and houses.

The standpipes came down in the 1990s and the hill reverted to forest as it was when Indians camped at Shenipsit Lake and hunted on the hill.

The history of Stickney Hill is a glimpse at the history and relationships of Rockville. The same families built and ran the mills, bought up farms and built homes for workers migrating into the city to run the mills. The prominent families - McLain, Hunt, Stickney and others - were linked in board rooms and through the church. Skilled craftsmen such as Corbin also found a comfortable place in the community.