

Hastings – brick block and wooden building – Main and Broad Streets

The House on the Corner of Broad and Main



The two buildings pictured above have been Bethel village icons for 150 years.

Early 1820s – O'Neil W. Robinson, born in Chatham, N.H., came to Bethel early in the (18) twenties, purchased large tracts of real estate, built the house and store afterwards known as the Robert Chapman stand. (Lapham)

May 1, 1835 – O'Neil Robinson sold to Robert A. Chapman house and store and land on Bethel Hill. Land was bounded on the west by the Common and on the east by land of Dr. Mason and Hiram Allen. (Lapham)

Portion of 1858 map of Bethel Hill – starting at the south-east corner of Main and Broad Streets and moving south on Broad Street: R.A. Frye's Law Office, R.A. Chapman & Co's store, R.A. Chapman, Office, D. M. Mason, J. Hastings. (1858 Oxford County Map)

On the 1858 atlas the corner now occupied by Annie Hastings was marked "Richard A. Frye's Law Office" and "Hiram Young's Harness Shop" Young's Harness Shop was upstairs and on the first floor he had a liquor agency for some time. His son Elmer (1858-1921) continued to make harnesses in the days before the automobile. Previous to the arrival of lawyer Frye it is believed that John Oliver (1795-1861), the hatter, had a place here, as well as a dwelling. (Bethel Historical Society Courier, 1997)

The (pre-1858) building was later moved down Church Street across from the Congregational Church and his shop moved to the area where the Opera House Condos are today.

Reminders of Bethel's nineteenth century commercial prosperity, these two structures dating from the late 1850's still anchor the corner of Broad and Main Streets at Bethel Hill (village). Like many similar Maine buildings of the period they were arranged to provide floor space on the ground floor and living quarters above.



The brick block, with its ornate "false front" was built by Robert A. Chapman, once Bethel's wealthiest businessman. When completed it was advertised as "one of the tallest brick buildings north of Portland". It has most recently (1991) been occupied by the law office of Gordon M. Gillies and (after Gillies) that of (Attorney) Daniel Reich. The wooden structure to the left, which is uniquely

designed to match the angle of the corner lot (and is so marked on Bethel's 1880 map) is today the home of Mrs. Annie Hastings, whose husband and father-in-law both had law offices here. (Bethel, Maine - An Illustrated History, Randall H. Bennett, 1991) **Photo shows buildings as they appeared after 1920 the year Miss L.M. Stearns moved her store into the Brick Block.**

There is good reason to believe that Robert A. Chapman also had the wooden attached house constructed shortly after the brick block was finished. A recent photo of the attic interior of the Hastings house shows its direct connection to the brick building.



Roof connects directly to the brick building's wall, left and main roof interior, right

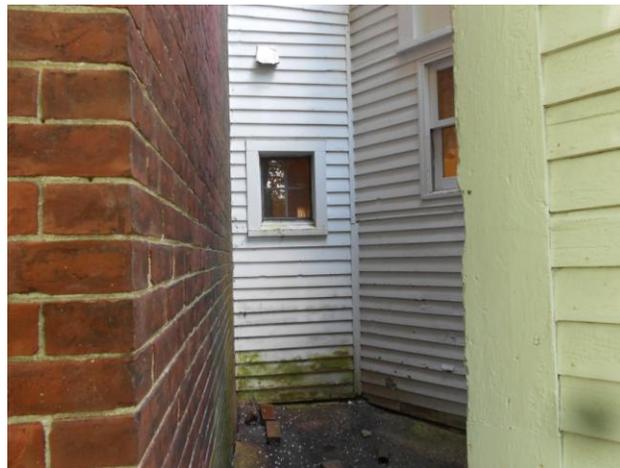


Photo above left shows the entrance to the Hastings's law office and right photo the law office layout inside with secretary's desk, and Lawyer Hastings' office through left door, file room and closet in right rear.

Circa 1903 – “By recent purchases including the Chapman property on Main Street, William W. Hastings became the owner of all property on the south side of said street from the public library to the Savings Bank” (in the Cole Block). (Bethel News Special Illustrated Edition January 1904)

Others connected with this site have been Charles Lucas (1857-1916), who purchased Milton Penley's meat business in October 1899 sold beef, pork, lamb, sausage, tripe, oysters, clams and peanuts, Llewellyn Ramsell (1878-1937), and John S. Alien, (1863-1909) grocers. Alien was killed by his horse. (BHS Courier 1997)

1925 - Will of William W. Hastings: I give the brick block and land to Moses A. Hastings; I give to Henry H. Hastings the wooden building at the corner of Broad and Main Streets and the land connected therewith now occupied by him and Fred E. Wheeler. (Hastings Will)



Where the wooden house meets the Brick Block

HASTINGS BROS.



Store of Hastings Brothers

The following article was printed in the Bethel News Special Illustrated Edition of January 1904

Bethel's well stocked hardware store is the one conducted by Hastings Brothers. This store is in the two story block located on Main Street opposite the Post Office and occupies the main floor and basement. In 1886, Mr. William W. Hastings purchased of S. O. Brock the store and stock in trade but subsequently went West leaving the store in charge of a younger brother; upon his return his brother, T. F. Hastings, was admitted to partnership and since that time the firm has been known as Hastings Brothers, and through their diligence and enterprise the business has assumed large proportions.

Aside from the sales room and basement there is a large storehouse filled with heavy hardware and a workshop where tinsmithing of all kinds is promptly and neatly done. The stock is general including shelf and builders' hardware of every description, supplies for lumbermen, millmen, builders and mechanics, guns, revolvers, ammunition, fishing tackle, sporting goods, cutlery, crockery, glassware, tinware, and a full line of stoves and ranges.

Hastings Brothers are prepared to execute any order for plumbing, steam or hot water heating, roof and gutter work and all repairs connected therewith. The firm's rapidly increasing patronage embraces all sections of Oxford County and localities outside which fact speaks much in praise of their personal popularity and business integrity.

In addition to their hardware business they have extensive lumbering interests, in which business they are associated with their father, Maj. G. A. Hastings, and their brother, D. R. Hastings of Auburn. In this connection it is sufficient to say, that the Hastings family as here referred to, own and operate the largest lumbering business in Maine outside of the corporations.

William W. Hastings senior member of the firm, was born February 15, 1851, and is the son of Maj. G. A. Hastings and Dolly Kimball Hastings. Prior to entering the hardware business he was employed by a New York firm (Mills & Gibbs) as salesman in the West. He is the present town treasurer and has held the position for the past five years. He is one of the heaviest property owners in the village. By recent purchases (1903 or very early 1904?), including the Chapman property on Main Street, he became the owner of all property on the south side of said street from the public library to the Savings Bank.

Thomas F. Hastings, junior member of the firm, was born Jan. 14, 1871, and has always lived in Bethel. In 1893, he married Miss Grace G. Mason, daughter of Charles Mason of Bethel. Mr. Hastings is now superintendent of the Bethel Water Company and has full charge of the system. He has no aspirations for town offices but is a most efficient member of the Fire Company. He has a delightful

cottage on Songo Pond where his friends are all made welcome and where he dispenses hospitality with a free hand.