

Then & Now on Main Street

302/304 Main Street

By: Karen Ferguson, Town Historian

The property at 302 Main Street currently serves as an apartment building owned by the Finch family operating as RJR Investors. Rob Finch told me his family has owned the property for 25 years and bought it from Mr. Rychlewski.

This building was most-likely converted to multi-family apartments around 1981 when a sewage construction permit was obtained. At that time, it was classified as a 6-bedroom house.

Prior to this, the building was owned by Sarah Elwood, former Town Clerk. She obtained the building and altered it in 1968 (per building permit records) to become a dwelling and the Town Clerk's office. Occupancy was granted on January 8, 1969.

So that is an overview of the property for approximately the last 60 years. Now let's go back even farther to 1884.

In the Spring of 1884, Jehial Berkalew, E.H. Booth, J.A. Emmons, Charles Rider and William West incorporated the Kirkwood Wagon Works Factory on this same property. By the following year, they were expanding for production on a large scale. *(A buggy that was made at the Kirkwood Wagon Works Factory resides at the Kirkwood Historical Society Museum in School #2 located at 303 Main Street.)* I'm not certain how long the wagon factory was operational because it was forced into bankruptcy and then became the home to the Mfg. Chemist's business. J.A. Emmons is thought to have established that business but Jehial Berkalew also owned a Mfg Chemist's business in Binghamton. It is possible the two continued to work together. Eventually the business would close due to a fire.

According to a 1908 Plat Map, the property was then listed as belonging to W.H. Roberts and doesn't indicate a business, which could mean the Chemist's building fire was prior to this time. Although there was a fire, it appears as though the entire building wasn't damaged and the reason a portion of it exists and is now the apartment building as mentioned earlier.



Then: Wagon Works Factory



Sarah Elwood's Building & Close-up of Town Clerk Entrance