

The Portraits on the Library Walls

by Jean Luddy

Six imposing portraits grace the main reading room of the Rockville Public Library. These paintings depict people who were significant leaders in the history of Vernon and Rockville. With the exception of one, the portraits show members of the Kellogg and Maxwell families, prominent business and civic leaders who also had an interest in free public libraries for local citizens.

The present Rockville Library building was given to the Town of Vernon in 1904 in memory of George Maxwell by his wife, Harriet Kellogg Maxwell and his children, J. Alice, William, Francis T. and Robert. When George Maxwell died in 1891, he bequeathed the sum of \$10,000 to the town of Vernon for a free public library with the stipulation that the town would match the sum within five years. In 1895, the Rockville Public Library was incorporated with local business and civic leaders serving as the trustees. That year the Town of Vernon allocated \$10,000, matching the Maxwell gift. Before the Library moved to its new building in 1904, it was located in a building on nearby Elm Street.

Both the interior and exterior of the new library building reflected classical influences. White marble from Vermont was selected for the outer stonework. Ionic columns were placed across the front to flank the front door. A piece of marble with the image of a book carved into it was mounted over the front door. The vestibule inside the front door was lined with Formosa marble. Sienna marble and stained oak finish the interior walls in the main reading room.

The portraits begin along the left side of the reading room as one enters the library. Starting on the left wall facing Union Street, visitors will see the portrait of George Maxwell. The portraits of Colonel Francis McLean and Harriet Kellogg Maxwell are seen as one turns toward the wall with the window that looks out at the addition for the Children's Library. Paintings of George Kellogg, Nathaniel Olmstead Kellogg and Eliza Noble Kellogg appear on the back interior wall of the reading room. The portraits of Mr. and Mrs. George Maxwell, Mr. and Mrs. George Kellogg and Mr. Nathaniel Kellogg were donated to the Library by William and J. Alice Maxwell, children of George and Harriet Maxwell. The portrait of Colonel McLean was given by his great, great, granddaughter, Mrs. Mae D. Chapman. The lives of these early leaders are outlined in the following short biographical sketches.



George Maxwell- Born Claremont, Massachusetts 7/30/1817.

Died Rockville 4/2/1891 George Maxwell moved to Rockville in 1843. He worked in the textile industry for many years beginning with New England Company. After ten years there, he went to the Hockanum Company, starting as Treasurer, and then becoming President. At one time, he was the Treasurer for the Springville Company. In addition to holding administrative positions in local woolen textile companies, Mr. Maxwell was active as a business and civic leader, serving as vice-president of the Rockville National Bank, president of the Rockville Gas Light Company, president of the

Rockville Railroad Company, treasurer of the Rockville Water Power Company and president of the Rockville Aqueduct Company. A member of the Republican Party, he served as a state representative in 1871 and as a state senator in 1872. His interest in libraries and his belief in the ability of individuals to improve their education if given access to books and information led to the bequest in his will for money to establish a library for all citizens.

Colonel Francis McLean- Born Bolton, Connecticut 9/26/1777. Died Vernon 11/18/1861 A natural leader and innovative man, Francis McLean recognized that the new technologies coming out of the Industrial Revolution offered more opportunities for someone with ambition than a life in agriculture. In 1805, after completing a term of service in the local militia where he rose to the rank of colonel, McLean built a grist mill, saw mill and dam on a stream in Vernon. Next, he invested in the Warburton Mill in present day Talcottville. By 1821, he had sold this building to the Kellogg brothers and purchased land along the Hockanum River where he built the Rock Mill, the first factory in the Rockville section of Vernon. McLean was actively involved in the design and construction of this factory building which remained standing until the 1920s. McLean expanded his interests by constructing a paper mill along the Hockanum River just above the falls, giving the pond its present name. By 1837, the mill village along the Hockanum was large enough to consider itself as a separate area within the Town of Vernon. At a special town meeting gathered to choose a name, "Frankfort", in honor of McLean, was considered before "Rockville" was chosen.



Harriet Kellogg Maxwell- Born Rockville 5/2/1824. Died Rockville 1/24/1913. Daughter of George Kellogg and Eliza Noble Kellogg, Harriet Kellogg Maxwell was born in Rockville after her father moved to the new mill village. In 1846, she married George Maxwell. They had nine children, four of whom survived to adulthood. Following her husband's death in 1891, she and her children were actively involved in working to make a local library into a reality. The family selected Charles A. Platt, a well-regarded architect, to design the new building. Family members were present at the dedication on June 29, 1904. The flagpole near the front of the building was given by the Maxwell family in her honor. Her portrait was painted by artist Charles Noel Flagg.



George Kellogg- Born Vernon 3/3/1793. Died Rockville 8/8/1870 George Kellogg, a member of a prominent Vernon family, was educated in local schools and worked on the family farm. In 1821, he joined with Francis McLean in building the Rock Mill. He served as the Agent of the Rock Company from 1828 to 1837 and again from 1846 until 1870. In 1837 he was one of the investors who built the New England mill company and served as the Agent for this firm. In 1857 and in 1865, he represented Vernon in the state legislature and in 1866 was elected to the state senate. He sponsored a lending library for his employees. He also actively supported the temperance movement.



Nathaniel Olmstead Kellogg- Born Vernon 2/26/1790. Died in Kelloggville (now Talcottville) 5/13/1854. Nathaniel Kellogg and his brother George purchased the Warburton mill complex along the Tankerhoosen River in 1833. Nathaniel was chosen to manage the business because he had training in textile making processes. Eventually, George Kellogg decided to invest in the new mill along the Hockanum River. Nathaniel then became the sole owner of the mill. He expanded the village, now named Kelloggville, by building some additional dwelling houses for the workers. After his sudden death in 1854, the factory and surrounding assets were sold to the Talcott family and the village was renamed Talcottville.



Eliza Noble Kellogg- Born Middletown, Connecticut 3/3/1799. Died Rockville 9/21/1892. Eliza Noble married George Kellogg on 1/1/1817. She had five children, four of whom reached adulthood. Her daughter Harriet Kellogg married George Maxwell. In his memoir of his early days in Rockville, William Cogswell remembered working at the Rock Mill when he first came to town in the 1820s. He lived at the men's boarding house run by George Kellogg. Mrs. Kellogg cooked all the meals for the male boarders. She lived in Rockville for over 70 years before dying at the age of 93.



Information for this article came from
Cascades and Courage by the Rev. George Brookes,
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