



Friends of Saxonville



Newsletter of The Friends of Saxonville, P.O. Box 3236, Framingham, MA, 01705-3236

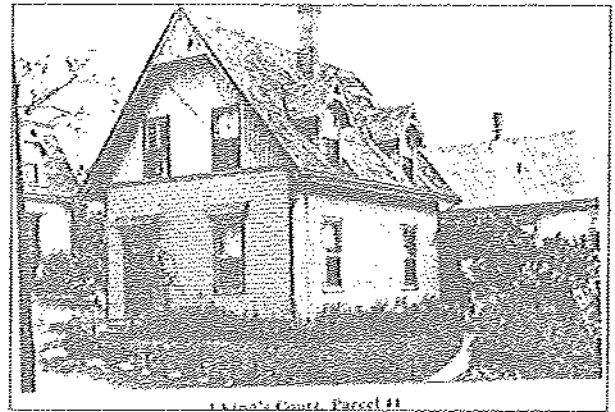
Fall 2004

The Day Saxonville was Sold

By Cynthia Buscone

Bang! The sound of the gavel crashed large upon the homes and hearts of Saxonville residents on Saturday, October 22, 1938, the day on which Freeman's Auction Company assisted the Roxbury Carpet Company in divesting of its entire holding of residential mill properties. Since transportation and housing had been limited around mill sites, mill owners had commonly supplied accommodations for their workers. But with the depression dragging on and transportation improving, the new owners of Michael Simpson's mill had determined that this approach was no longer necessary or economically sensible.

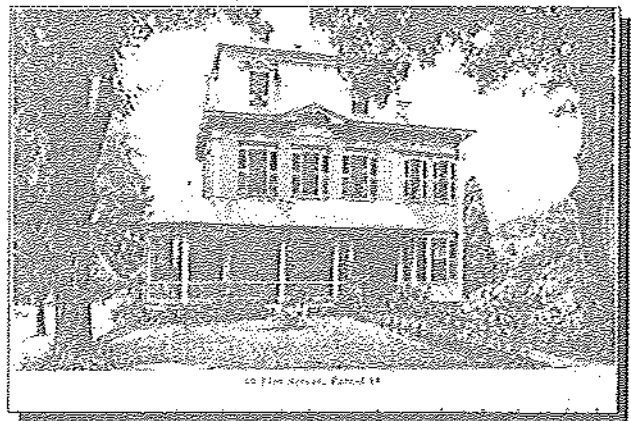
It was a sound business decision, but for the occupants of the houses, some of whom had lived in the same homes for two or three generations, paying rent to the mill, the prospect was a terrifying one. As enthusiastically as the auction company presented the joys of home ownership and the quality of the homes in question (In the 1870's Michael Simpson - a benevolent mill owner by all accounts, had embarked on an ambitious project for housing his workers that had led an 1873 newspaper account of the plan to comment, "he appears to want them to be models of comfort and convenience") how could home ownership be possible in such tight economic times? How could someone come up with the ten percent cash deposit that would be required on the day of the sale, let alone the remainder of the purchase price? Even though cheery newspaper ads touted the fact that 75% could be had in the form of mort-



1. King's Court, Parcel #1

gage at 6%, that still meant that the cash difference between the 10% at the hammer and the 75% mortgage, had somehow to be scraped together within thirty days!

As the days ticked off to the auction, fear and excitement mounted. It truly was a fact of life that Saxonville was a company village! If one were to stand in McGrath Square and turn a full 360°, everything in sight belonged to the mill! This was the way life had always been. Now, with the Framingham News reporting on ominous doings far away, and the 130' brick mill smokestack lying scattered in the mill yard, a testament to the force of September's hurricane, what other up



10. Elm Street, Parcel 14

heavals were lying in store?! The upcoming auction had an air of unreality about it!

But real it was, and this was what was going on the block according to the auction house prospectus. Beginning at 10 AM, 69 parcels would be sold. Each was listed in the folder. There

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- Shop Sax 5th held November 5
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were 29 cottages and single family residences, 26 two family dwellings, 5 three family homes, one four family home, and 4 tenement blocks housing from six to ten families. There were also four buildings that offered a combination of store space and apartments.

They were described as "typical homes in the community where they are found... widely distributed over the town...no one passing along the streets ... could identify them as company owned properties (Even the auction



162 Water Street, Parcel 5

house had noted the quality of Simpson's mill housing!). They are equipped with modern improvements and conveniences. They are consistently occupied." Indeed, many were described as having full indoor plumbing and central heating.

Auction day dawned unseasonably warm according to the Framingham News, which estimated a crowd of 2000 and pictured a sea of anxious faces at one of the first houses to go on the block - 126 Water Street, which had been assessed at \$1400 and sold that morning for \$1900. The paper went on to say that "...crowds roamed the streets, neighbor bid against neighbor and speculators bid against both." Fortunes were made and homes lost that day. Bud Neal, with tears in his eyes, managed the winning bid on 22-24 Chestnut Street, the family home where he and his sister Kitty lived. Stanley Karp remained the tenant on the other side of the house. Old timers said there were hard feelings for years over houses lost and long time occupants evicted. Bidding was brisk as people who had lived in their homes struggled to save them. "There was humor and pathos as sad-eyed old couples tearfully watched homes pass from their control to someone with more money". Alfred Collier and his wife got separated in the crowd and began frantically bidding against one another. Ultimately they were able to purchase their house at 73 Elm Street.

On Monday the Framingham News front page headline read, "SAXONVILLE HOUSES SOLD AT AUCTION!" The lowest sale prices were for two small cottages, one at 182 Central Street, the other at 14 Purchase

Street - \$400 each. The highest price, \$8800, and fiercest bidding, centered on the building at 1645 Concord Street, housing the First National, the Saxonville Branch Post Office and two apartments.

The Odd Fellows saved the Lodge home by bidding \$7550 for the handsome building at the corner of Danforth and Concord streets which also housed Schaltenbrand's Drug Store and the Michael Simpson Reading Room. The News reported that properties sold at the rate of ten per hour, that there was no break for lunch, indeed no lunch room within a half a mile, and that the entire auction took seven hours. "The hammer fell with finality as home after home fell to the highest bidder". By the time the six o'clock bell sounded in the fire house tower, the sun had set and the auction was history. Tired villagers trudged home. The auction company closed up its local office at 1 Central Street and departed. Inside the homes lost and won that day lights flickered on and hot dogs and baked beans went from the stove to the super table. "Thus passed out of existence the Roxbury Carpet Company Village."

Sources:

Framingham News, October 20,21,22,24, 1938.

Michael Simpson: The Saxonville Mills and the Roxbury Carpet Company. Gene Reid.

Auction Prospectus of Samuel T. Freeman and Company, Boston, Massachusetts.

Special thanks to John Neal



1645 Concord Street, Parcel 36

New! ***Business Membership Opportunity!***

Friends of Saxonville is pleased to announce its new business membership category. Participants receive a valuable package of promotional services including:

- * Listing in each edition of Friends of Saxonville's quarterly newsletter
- * Listing on Friends of Saxonville's new webpage, www.saxonville.org/businessmembers.htm
- * Framingham.Com ad package - one year listing on website's new Find it In Saxonville page plus... a three month on-line coupon
- * Discounted participation in all future Friends of Saxonville corporate activities, such as Shop Sax 5th held November 5

Annual dues are \$100. If you are interested in becoming a business member & supporting a local non-profit that works non-stop to improve your neighborhood, please contact Charlene Frary at 508-877-3556 or CFraryRltr@aol.com

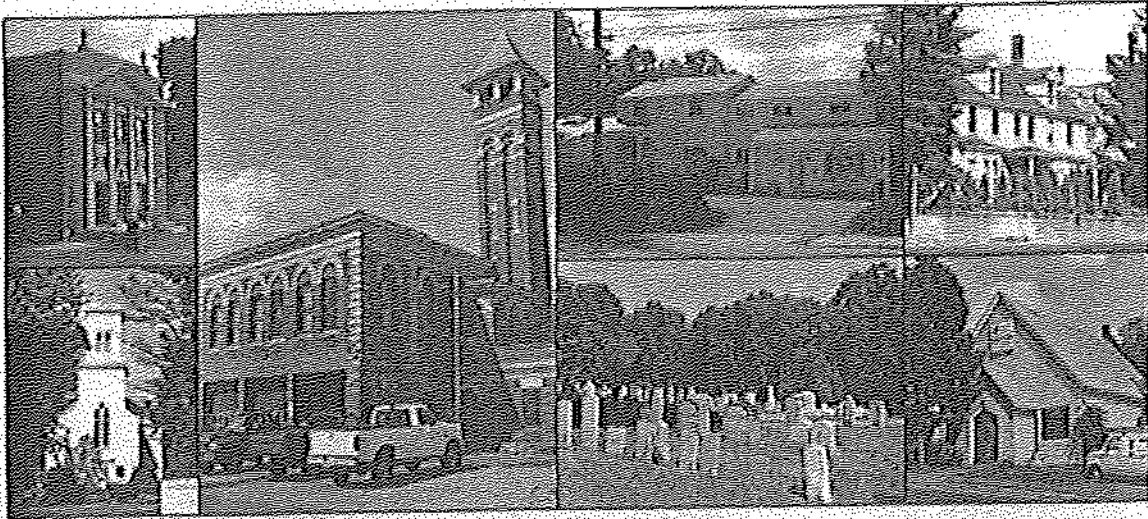
Please support our new business members!

Nexum Development 508-877-1020 www.nexums.com	7 Central Street
Law Office of Joseph Shields 508-820-2939	600 Worcester Road Suite 501
North Framingham Plaza Gordon Real Estate www.gordonre.com	508-370-3333
Charlene Frary MetroWest Homes	508-620-8880 www.charlenefrary.com
Computer Care Associates Lisa or Jon Shapiro www.help4computers.com	508-370-8080
Mary Kay Cosmetics Rhona George	508-877-4244 rhonamk@rcn.com

Saxonville

Just twenty miles from Boston,
In Massachusetts State,
Lies a pretty little village,
As to you I will relate,
A village that is noted
For its woolen twist and twill,
'Tis the pride of Massachusetts
And they call it Saxonville.
No soul that ever lingered
Neath its tall majestic trees,
No lips that ever breathed
Its sweetly scented breeze,
Could fail to praise the beauty
Of each valley, dale and hill,
Each brooklet, stream and meadow
In the place called Saxonville,
Its daughters, too, are beautiful,
The best wish of my heart,
To them and to their lovers,
This day I do impart,
God give them health and happiness,
And keep them from all ill;
And may they know no sorrow
While they live in Saxonville,
In it shady groves and valleys
I have spent full many an hour,
And its scenes have oft like magic
Woke enchantment in my bower,
I have listened half enraptured
By the humming of the mill,
To the rippling waters
As they flowed through Saxonville,
But time has wrought its changes
And, alas, I'm far away
From that pretty little village
In another state today,
And though evening 'round me gathers,
My heart beats wildly still
For the friends I loved in boyhood
In the place called Saxonville.

Signed only, J.P.



Saxonville Historic Walk

1. Saxonville Fire Station (1902). "High Victorian Eclectic" design currently housing Engine 2 of the Framingham Fire Department. It was built when canvas hoses had to be hung in a drying tower after each fire. The only other such tower in Framingham is at the old Hollis Street Fire Station, which is now a community center.

2. Athenaeum Hall (1847). First called the Saxonville Town Hall, this building has served as a school, meeting hall, jail, veteran's center and hospital over the years. Recent renovations will preserve the building for future generations.

3. Saxonville Mills Building #7 (1850). This is the oldest building in the complex, and the only mill building to survive the great fire of 1883. A railroad spur used to go right inside this building.

4. McGrath Square. Named for James J. McGrath, a Saxonville lad killed in World War I while trying to save the lives of his fellow soldiers. The square was once the site of the town pump, the only water source for the entire neighborhood before indoor plumbing.

5. Saxonville Mills Main Tower (1884). The towers reflect the "Second Empire" or French Mansard design that was the fashion at the time. The bell inside set the routine for village life in Saxonville for many years. The bell used in the original mill complex was cast by the Paul Revere foundry, but melted in the great fire. Framingham Historical Society has a piece of the original bell on display.

6. The Saxonville Falls and Dam (1863). The water power at these falls has been used to drive mill wheels since 1659 when John Stone built a grist mill here. The transition to steam power began in the late 19th century.

7. Liberty Apartments, 11-13 Central Street (1823). Typical multi-dwelling housing for mill workers. Dates back to the earliest textile mills of the 1820's. Before its name was changed to McGrath Square, this area was called Liberty Square.

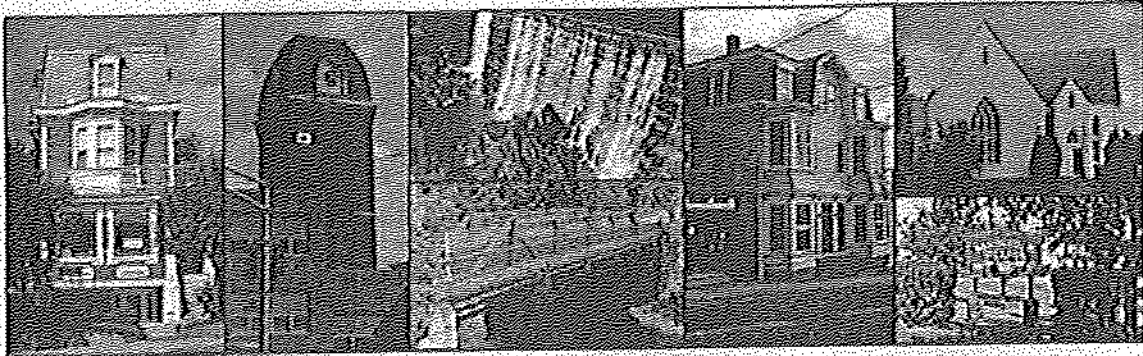
8. 7-9 Central Street (c. 1880). One of many commercial and private Saxonville buildings either built or remodeled in the Second Empire style. This building was moved in the 1980's to center it between its neigh-

bor. The old Saxonville fire station was once located to its left (being directly across the street from the mill when it burned down in 1883 did not seem to help).

9. Mill Store Block, 1-3 Central Street, (c. 1830). Significantly remodeled in the Second Empire style in about 1880.

10. Site of Michael Simpson's 'Cottage', 50 Elm Street. Simpson took over the Saxonville Mills in 1859. He lived in a mansion on this site that he called his cottage. From this hill he could survey hundreds of acres that he owned. Prior to this, the area was the site of a Native American village. Simpson died in 1884 and the mansion lasted into the 1930's.

11. Optional excursion to Edwards Church (1827) and Cemetery (1838). Framingham's second oldest church was built just one year after the First Baptist Church at Framingham Center. First built as the Saxonville Meeting House for use by various denominations, it was soon taken over by the congregationalists. The cemetery is owned and managed by the town. Conrad Horan, Civil War Medal of Honor hero is buried here.

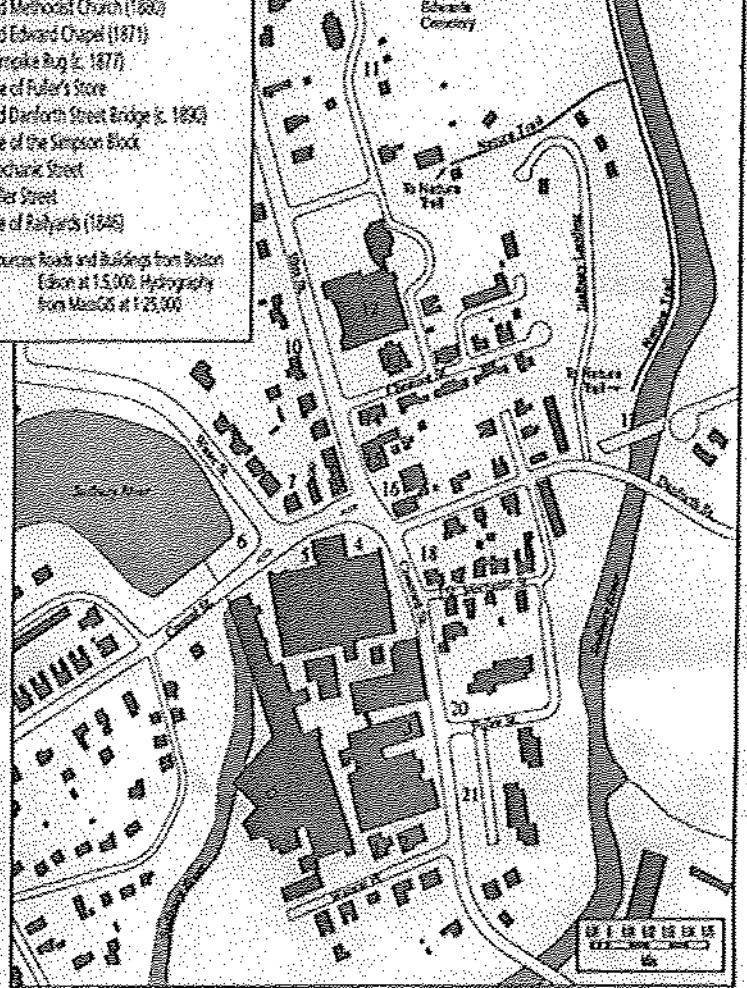


Legend

1. Saxonville Fire Station (1902)	13. Old Methodist Church (1880)
2. Athenaeum Hall (1847)	14. Old Edwards Chapel (1871)
3. Saxonville Mills Building #7 (1859)	15. Turnpike Rug Co. (1877)
4. McGrath Square	16. Site of Fuller's Store
5. Saxonville Mills Main Tower (1884)	17. Old Danforth Street Bridge (c. 1890)
6. Saxonville Falls and Dam (1865)	18. Site of the Simpson Block
7. Liberty Apartments (1823)	19. Mechanic Street
8. 7-4 Central Street (c. 1880)	20. Fuller Street
9. Mill Store Block (c. 1930)	21. Site of RailYards (1846)
10. Site of Michael Simpson's "Cottage"	
11. Edwards Church and Cemetery (1838)	
12. Stapleton School (1922)	

Data Sources: Roads and Buildings from Boston Edison at 1:5,000. Hydrography from MapGIS at 1:25,000

Saxonville Historic Walking Tour



12. Stapleton School (1922). This elementary school replaced a wooden school on this site since the 1850's. The older building served as the Saxonville High School until the 1900's. It is now named after Mary Stapleton, long time Framingham teacher, principal and School Committee member.

13. Old Methodist Church (1880). The Methodist Church in Framingham goes back to the 1790's. This church once had a tall steeple, but it was lost during a hurricane in 1938. Since the Methodists built their modern church on Water Street, this church has been used by Baptists, and is now a Taiwanese church.

14. Old Edwards Chapel (1871), built by the Edwards Church as a social hall, it was converted to commercial use in 1961.

15. 3 Elm Street (c. 1877). Another Second Empire commercial building.

16. Site of Fuller's Store. Luther Fuller was the Saxonville Postmaster and served as Framingham's State Representative for many years. His general store and post office no longer stand, but his name is remembered in Fuller Street, just down the road.

17. Optional excursion to Danforth Street Bridge (c. 1890). Danforth Street is still lined with worker housing from the 1870's and leads to an iron bridge and Danforth Park. The old bridge is a rare example of Pony Truss structure and it is included on the Historic Massachusetts list of the ten most endangered structures. Beyond this, on top of the hill at Danforth Park, was once located a Native American fort. The street and the park were named for Samuel Danforth, a 19th century builder, not Thomas Danforth, originally Framingham's largest land owner.

18. Parking lot at Danforth and Concord Street — Site of the Simpson Block. A wooden, three story commercial building on this corner housed Saxonville's first library, called the Simpson Reading Room. In the 1920's it was the scene of a small riot by striking textile workers.

19. Mechanic Street. Named long before auto mechanics, this street housed carriage makers and other craftsmen.

20. Fuller Street. Named to honor Luther Fuller (see #16) this street was originally named Church Street because the Methodist Church was located at the end. The name had to be changed when Saxonville was incorporated into Framingham, because there was al-

ready a Church Street in Framingham.

21. Saxonville Village Apartments - Saxonville Train Station. It would not be surprising if these apartments are also sitting on the place where John Stone, Saxonville's first European resident, originally brought his family when he built at Otter Neck. In 1846 it became the site of the rail yards and station of the Saxonville Branch Railroad which led to Nashua Center. When these apartments were built, the excavation was interrupted by the discovery of the old locomotive turntable. If you continue further down Concord Street, past the Patrick McDonald House, to the bridge over the Sudbury River you can see the old railroad bridge structure to the right.

Shop Sax 5th

November 5, 2004

In tandem with launching its new business membership opportunities, Friends of Saxonville hosted its first pre-holiday shopping event at St. George's Church Hall. The event aimed to connect local entrepreneurs, crafters and artisans with Saxonville residents. More than 100 guests attended the event, which served as a fundraiser for Friends of Saxonville.

The committee thanks the following participants for joining us in this inaugural effort:

The Pink Ribbon Foundation
 Linda Fair
 Discovery Toys – Audrey Colby
 Whimsical Design – Sandra Espinosa
 Network Business Solutions – The Synnestvedts
 Moonrise Jewels – sue Davis
 Framingham Historical Society and Museum
 Baubles, Beads & More – Patty Dilbarian
 Avon Products – Cindy Lutch
 Computer Care Associates – the Shapiros
 Leslie A. Miller Original Papercuts
 Usborne Books – Robin Stockdan
 S&L Sales – Steve Lutch
 Silverstones – Peggy Groppo
 Portraits by Nina – Nina Jordan
 Tastefully Simple – Norma Satow
 Mary Kay Cosmetics – Rhona George
 The Traveling Vineyard – Nancy Cassano
 InVogue Spa – Tammy Donaghey
 MW Knits – Amy Weader
 Scarfs by Ellen Cormier
 Sahiba Anand
 Francine Haggerty
 Boy Scout Troop 21
 Feline Adoption and Rescue Society
 Exit First Choice Realty

Special thanks go to...

Framingham.Com for sponsoring the event, Irene Dunne of Well-Dunne Services for coffee, Panera Bread for cookies, Steve Pratt for musical accompaniment and Boy Scout Troop 21 for clean-up duty!

Photos courtesy of
 Jonathan Shapiro



**Exclusive -
Saxonville Items for Sale!**

Woodcuts \$15

A charming rendition of the Athenaeum from *The Cat's Meow*.

T shirts \$15

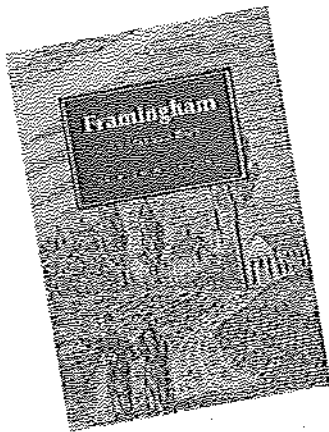
This shirt proudly identifies you as a Friend of Saxonville and includes a photographic image of the Athenaeum

Hats \$15

Forest-green colored baseball cap sports the modern Athenaeum logo and "Saxonville"

Town History - \$24.95

Thanks to special consideration from the Framingham Historical Society and Museum, you can now purchase Framingham - An American Town by Friends of Saxonville volunteer and Town Historian Stephen Herring. Order through us and 50% of the sale price will benefit Friends of Saxonville initiatives.



To order, mail your check payable to Friends of Saxonville to PO BOX 3236, Saxonville, MA 01705. Local orders delivered free of charge. Send inquiries to CFraryRltr@aol.com

Website gets a Fresh Face!

If you haven't visited us online lately, you must check out Friends of Saxonville's website,...

www.saxonville.org

New information, including past issues of this newsletter, are featured and complemented by color photos for a fun on-line look at how Friends of Saxonville works to preserve, enhance and protect the Saxonville community.

For website comments or suggestions, please email Brett Peruzzi at brettperuzzi@comcast.net

**Board of Directors
Friends of Saxonville**

Jim Barry, President
Jan Harrington, Vice President
George Dixon, Treasurer
Charlene Frary, Secretary
Tom Sydell
Brett Peruzzi
Susan Silva
David Longden

John Stasik

The Board welcomes the return of Friends of Saxonville co-founder, John Stasik!

The Board of Directors meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm. Meetings are open to the public. If you are interested in attending, please contact Charlene Frary at 508-877-3556.