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The greater
Great Barrington
area issue

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OUR CORNER OF MASSACHUSETTS

It's time for the first of two issues this year that we devote to a specific town, village, or region – and this time we head on over the border to our coverage area in Massachusetts. Our magazine is distributed from Sheffield to Great Barrington and through Egremont before we head back over to New York via Hillsdale. With that being said, all of this month's feature stories are from this area of the Berkshires.

Christine examines the real estate of Great Barrington, which is quite interesting! She also interviewed the largest private employer in Great Barrington, Jane Iredale, and learned about her cosmetic company for our entrepreneur feature.

CB showcases the work of artist Kate Knapp and shares with us her life and art in the Berkshires. He also features Amy Rudnick and Ben Hillman in our "couple's profile" feature. Meanwhile John tells us all about the story behind the newspaper boy statue that's in Great Barrington. Oh yes, there's a statue devoted to the newspaper boys and girls! John also brings us the story behind the Searles Hopkins Castle that's right in the middle of town. I remember seeing the castle as a kid and wondering all about it: why was there a castle in Great Barrington? Were there any royals who lived in it? And I also remember thinking that it was so mysterious behind those big walls and I could only ever get a glimpse as we drove past. Well, to my delight and thanks to John's piece, I now have a full understanding of the castle and its history.

Claire and Ian take us on a natural journey: Claire tells us all about the beautiful Housatonic River and the struggles it has had due to pollution, and the efforts in place to clean it up. Meanwhile, Ian shares with us a delightful piece about Bartholomew's Cobble and Lime Kiln Preserve, so if you're looking for a nice outing, here are two wonderful spots to explore.

And speaking of things to explore, you can also check out the Berkshire Taste Trails. What's that, you ask? Oh, just a few local spots where you can drink and eat to your heart's delight – and all local stuff, too! Dominique shares with us some of the stops that she made on the Trail and includes a few of her own recommendations.

We enjoy devoting two issues each year to specific areas like we've done in this issue, because it allows us to highlight an area and all of its wonderful attributes. We hope that you enjoy learning more about the greater Great Barrington area!

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



APRIL 2017

One of Great Barrington's colorful and busy streets.

Cover photo by
Lazlo Gyorsok

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A LIFESTYLE MARKETPLACE



KATE KNAPP & HER HOMAGE TO *color & light*

By CB Wismar
arts@mainstreetmag.com

For Kate Knapp, it started in Paris. Certainly there had been many moments leading up to her encounter with the art of Chaim Soutine, the Russian Impressionist who made Paris his home. Soutine died in 1943, so the encounter was not face-to-face, but rather in the galleries, museums, and art books that Kate devoured during her stay in the City of Light.

"I had such an intense feeling," she recalls. "His work was different from what I knew ... what I had been taught. It freed me up to paint as a response to what moved and impressed me."

And, paint she did. By her own estimate, there are well over 1,000 Kate Knapp paintings hanging in homes and galleries, public buildings and museums in widely separated parts of the world. "Art needs to be seen," she emphasizes with an intensity that cannot be ignored.

An early start to a complex career

Painting has been a part of Kate's life for as long as she can remember. Her father, a writer for *The New Yorker* and her mother, who broke

the gender gap in mid-century New York theater production created a home environment that celebrated the arts. "I remember living in Westport and being part of a social community that included artists and writers. Being an artist just came naturally."

Kate pursued her schooling at a boarding school in Palm Beach, Florida. "I was doing abstract collages ... actually won some prizes and had a show at the Four Seasons Gallery when I was 14," remembers Kate. "But the academics just weren't my interest, so at 16 I enrolled at Simon's Rock."

From Simon's Rock, Kate was off to Provincetown, MA, and the Cape School of Art, then to the National Academy of Art and the Art Students League in New York. She had studied technique and color and style. She had focused on abstract expressionism. But it was Paris that the light dawned and Kate Knapp found her focus. "I had the time to wander through museums and galleries ... to absorb the fantastic work of Matisse and Monet ... not just single paintings, but entire collections."



Above, L-R, top to bottom: *Block Island*. Still life. Self-portrait of the artist. All images courtesy of Kate Knapp.

Back to nature and the land

Back in the United States, Kate enrolled at SUNY Binghamton and studied print making. Individual and group shows followed, as did the opportunity to work on a building project in the nearby Pennsylvania countryside. “I was on my own, learning while I worked. I managed to do some ‘spots’ for *Gourmet* that helped keep things going. When the Pennsylvania project ended, I was drawn back to Great Barrington.”

Married and starting a family, Kate and her husband applied their learned construction skills to finding, fixing, and “flipping” houses in the area. All the while, the artist explored her surroundings and allowed her painterly “eye” to be seen.

A place to call their own

It was the 1990s and the country was feeling the success of a burgeoning economy. Those with means bought art and the Berkshires became not only a great retreat, but a haven for artists. “There were seven of us who decided to start our own co-op gallery in Housatonic,” Kate says wistfully. “These were all good artists – serious – who did really fine work.”

Front Street Gallery was born just as the town became a destination for “baby boomers” who were celebrating their success by hopping from gallery to gallery, acquiring pieces and supporting the local community.

Then, as it had begun, it ended. Boom turned to recession. Art became an elective purchase as the public mood shifted. “We were selling pieces in the thousands of dollars, then suddenly, we weren’t,” recalls Kate. “Some of the artists

moved on, some simply cut back, and some of us realized that to get our art into public sight, we had to change our pricing.”

The Front Street Gallery has continued well beyond the departure of the original co-op members. Still nestled in the hamlet of Housatonic, it is Kate Knapp’s studio and gallery, walls lined with her expressive, colorful, engaging paintings.

Overwhelmed by color, light and talent

Stepping into Front Street Gallery extends the invitation to not only contemplate each painting, but to quickly join Kate on her travels. A family home on Block Island has allowed her to revisit the gentle island and paint the landscape, the ocean, the harbor, and the landmarks. Time in St. Croix has provided the same opportunity, with sun-splashed canvases speaking eloquently of a relaxed, island environment that is clearly so enticing. There are wonderfully moody watercolors of Manhattan, as well as open, bucolic vistas in the Berkshires.

And, there is Paris. The allure of the city is enduring, and Kate’s watercolors of Paris scenes, both interiors and cityscapes, belie the impact her time in that city has had.

There are the still lifes, as well. Since Kate works both in oil on canvas and in richly hued watercolor, the contrasts are not in the bold strokes and use of color but in the softer textures in some paintings and the bolder sweeps of landscapes.

A great introduction into Kate Knapp’s prodigious collection is to visit her website and browse through the different categories of her work. In addition to the location-based works and the still life collection, there are portraits, animal paintings, an entire series on the circus and, if you dig deep enough, an introduction to Kate, herself.

As the artist sees herself

Self-portraits by celebrated artists capture a single moment in their careers, depict maturing and change and often reflect the underlying



Above: *Les Poissons des Paris*. Below, left: *Underwater in St. Croix*. All images courtesy of Kate Knapp.

mood of the creative spirit. Looking at Van Gogh’s many self-portraits, it’s not difficult to watch the shift in moods, the conflict and the ultimate despair.

Looking at Kate Knapp’s collection of self-portraits is an entirely different exercise. From her open self-perception at age 18 through her maturing, the reflections of experience and the unavoidable sense of assurance and confidence, Kate’s studio/gallery fully represents her flourishing career.

It is not surprising that a person of such immense talent, so focused on what art can be and do for people would be a teacher and mentor. Kate has long offered classes for those who are just starting out, hesitantly, to see if creating art is something they can do successfully ... to mentoring artists who have chosen to follow their muse wherever it might lead them.

The artist as spiritual leader

When several of her students lamented the difficulty of finding gallery acceptance, Kate found herself in a moment of serendipity. There was a space on Warren Street in Hudson, New York – a town known as a magnet for artists, antique dealers and collectors. There were artists who wanted to have a “safe” place to present their art. And, there was Kate.

Drawing from the experience of having created the original Front Street Gallery co-op, Kate agreed to become Artistic Director and arbiter

of taste for the Gallery at 510 Warren Street – an artists’ cooperative that is enjoying the success of nearly seven years of vibrant existence. As Kate describes the gallery, “We present honest art. Real people. Real things. Real prices.”

We are quick to admit that the term “a force of nature,” penned by George Bernard Shaw can be hackneyed and over-used. Meant to be a tribute and compliment, it describes people whose intensity and influence parallel those of tsunamis and hurricanes.

With justifiable respect, Kate Knapp is a force of nature. •

Kate Knapp’s work can be seen on her website, at 510 Warren Street Gallery in Hudson, NY, at her Housatonic, MA studio/gallery as well as in the Top Hat Gallery on the island of St. Croix. Visitors to the Front Street Gallery in Housatonic are advised to call (413) 274-6607 first to make sure Kate is in residence. Visit her online at www.kateknappartist.com.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist’s statement, and a link to your work to arts@mainstreetmag.com.



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friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends



Frank Rosa is the co-owner and manager of Sutter Antiques located in Hudson, NY. He was introduced to the business by Alfons Sutter in 1985, his partner. He says that it is difficult to pin-point what he loves most about the antiques business, although he likes problem-solving and staying focused on long-range goals. Frank says that he's at his best when he's active: "Running on the Rail Trail, hiking through the Taconic hills, and tennis several times a week are a must." Frank is originally from Brooklyn, and moved to Columbia County in 1989. "I love the S-P-A-C-E! Fields, hills, farm lands, no traffic congestions ... I can go on." Great Barrington has all this plus the small town feel, familiar faces, and tons of activities! Frank is also a big fan of Great Barrington's restaurants.



Rachel Gryner is currently waitressing at Four Brothers in Hillsdale and Great Barrington while finishing up her accounting degree. "I've been working for Four Brothers since I was 15 and in high school. My co-workers are like family and I love being able to interact with customers, local and from out-of-town." Rachel recalls frequenting Great Barrington as a kid – going to the Cove, the movie theatre, and of course Tom's Toys. She is looking forward to sharing those memories and creating new ones with her beautiful eight-month-old girl, Alayna. Rachel and her family are life-long residents of Copake Lake and she says, "There is no day more perfectly spent than one on the lake surrounded by my family and friends."



Ronan Haldane is the middle child of the Irish Haldane clan of Crarryville. He works for the family business, Robert Haldane Inc., with his father and brother creating beautiful landscapes and laying stone. "I like working outside and enhancing what Mother Nature already has to offer. It's fun to be creative and to work alongside my family." After a long day of work, Ronan looks forward to going home and spending time with this wife and high school sweetheart, Carolyn, and their two-and-a-half-year-old son, Harrison. Together, the Haldane family likes to explore the tristate area. Perhaps one day soon Ronan will take Harrison to Catamount or Butternut to hit the slopes like he used to in his younger years. Until then, it's back in the skid steer to move more earth.



Erin Miller is the Director of Wholesale and Education for Barrington Coffee Roasting Company (BCRC) in Lee, MA and is approaching her third year with the company. "What I love most is introducing customers to new exciting coffees from different areas of the world and educating them on our unique way of roasting that highlights each coffee's flavor profile." Erin welcomed a baby girl in January so she is currently enjoying spending time at home with her husband Dennis, their daughter Gretchen and dog Hans. "I also enjoy cooking, traveling, and exploring the Hudson Valley and Berkshires." Erin was born and raised in the Hudson Valley in Lagrangville, right outside of Poughkeepsie, and says that what she loves most about this area are the small towns, food scene, beautiful landscapes, and tight-knit communities.



Kieran Yaple is a second generation arborist with Race Mountain Tree Services and he runs the day-to-day operations. Professionally, his career started climbing six-and-a-half years, although his roots were planted early in life to be in the family business. "Each day presents a new challenge to overcome, and I enjoy working outdoors." When Kieran isn't looking after trees, he is spending time with his family. He was born and raised in Sheffield and after doing some traveling; it's where he's chosen to raise a family of his own. "There really is no place like home. It is a beautiful place to live." Like many of us, Kieran also enjoys the attractions in our tristate area: Bash Bish Falls in Egremont, Coopers Hill at Bartholomew's Cobble in Sheffield, and rock climbing at East Rock in Great Barrington.



Melanie McGinn is a certified hospice and palliative care nurse, and recently earned her MBA in Healthcare Administration. Melanie's hospice career started in 2001 and she has been appointed as the Hospice Director at Salisbury Visiting Nurse Association. "It is such an honor to care for individuals and their families at end of life. As much as hospice nurses seek to provide pain relief and comfort, I feel we receive the greater gift through life lessons shared by our patients." For herself, she enjoys biking, watching movies, and camping at Prospect Lake Park in North Egremont. Melanie is originally from West Cornwall, but lived in Rhode Island from 2002 until last June. "I'll take our lakes and the Housatonic River over the oceans any day. This is one of the most beautiful areas of the country and I feel extremely fortunate to have grown up here."

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cosmetic entrepreneur

By Christine Bates

christine@mainstreetmag.com

It was a surprise to me that the creator of my favorite brand of mineral makeup was Great Barrington's largest private employer and also a driving force in the town's economic development.

How would you describe your business?

We are a comprehensive line of makeup developed with quality minerals and skin care ingredients that are good for the skin. They blur the line between skin care and makeup. All of the *jane iredale* products adhere to the highest standard of integrity. Each product is subjected to rigorous sensitivity and safety tests to ensure it is as good for the skin as it is beautiful to wear. Our mission statement contains these words, "We pledge to provide a product line that has the utmost integrity and the ability to enhance the lives of women through its effectiveness, simplicity and beauty."

Rather than center our business in traditional counter sales or department stores, we work largely through aesthetic industry professionals. Our makeup is a top choice of skin care professionals and is recommended by plastic surgeons and dermatologists worldwide. Our core distribution is through fine spas and salons, resorts, apothecaries, and medical offices.

The aesthetic industry is different from general cosmetics in the sense that products are considered tools in order to help the client achieve results. It isn't enough to look pretty, they have to perform as well.

We think of ourselves as a wellness company and a large part of that is promoting the health of the skin. The skin is our window into the body and the spirit. So, every product I develop is designed as a true extension of skin care. I have always had one goal in mind – to enhance the lives of women. So products and ingredients are scrutinized to make sure they serve a purpose and contribute to beauty and wellness.

Tell me about your background before starting the company?

I had a career in the entertainment industry as a casting director, producer, and writer, but eventually got showbiz burnout. What I'd always wanted to do was to be involved with something that would enhance the lives of women and have some healing aspect to it. I'd seen the bad effects of makeup when I worked with actresses and models, so it suddenly occurred to me that there was a place for makeup that was good for the skin. I'd spent so many years working with women whose careers depended on having a flawless complexion, and the heavy makeup they were using to cover up skin problems was actually aggravating their skin concerns, instead of improving them. I started thinking about a solution – a makeup with true skin care benefits. I have always been interested in fashion, in wellness, in beauty, and in personal expression, so the leap into makeup was a very natural one for me to make.

Why are minerals so great for your skin?

Mineral makeup is a healthy, skin-friendly alternative to traditional makeup.

Women frequently seek options to cover what they consider to be visually frustrating conditions like acne, rosacea and hyperpigmentation. Regrettably, they often make choices that are not effective and potentially make the problem worse. So when I was developing the first product, our Amazing Base Loose Mineral Powder, I took out all of the ingredients that are used in traditional makeup and was left with mineral pigment, titanium dioxide, and zinc oxide among others. These are usually found in the "May also contain" part of the label, but we used them as the foundation of our formulas. We immediately found that we got great coverage with very little product; the minerals soothed the skin; gave broad-spectrum sun protection; provided antioxidant properties and felt weightless while wearing them. People with makeup



Above: Jane behind her desk working surrounded by natural ingredients from her garden. Photo courtesy of Iredale Mineral Cosmetics, Ltd.

sensitivities were able to wear them. We actually tried them on chemically sensitive people and they were fine.

Did you have a business plan when you started? Do you have an annual budget or strategic plan?

No, I didn't have a business plan and, in fact, have never had one. We began quite organically. We incorporated in March 1994 and started with five shades of Amazing Base Loose Mineral Powder. They were a few sample pots of mineral powder that I'd worked on with a chemist in LA. I had one product and one customer. Gradually word of mouth took over and required more financing and more people. I'm told that most female entrepreneurs start by maxing out their credit cards and that was true for me. I borrowed small amounts from friends and family until I could get credit from a bank.

Of course, today it is a different story. We have since expanded the line to include more than 400 products, we are a major privately owned business with hundreds of employees and partners worldwide. Now we have a

detailed annual budget and strategic plans for the future.

How quickly did your business grow?

We knew we were on our way to making it when we got our first mention in *Vogue*! Impacting women's lives began almost immediately. In those days, they let us know by phone; now it comes from all directions, including social media, texts, emails, reviews. And it isn't just about the products, it's also hearing from single moms who've been able to keep a family together by selling our products in their place of business. There's nothing like the satisfaction in that.

Growth was fast and exciting. We had very few competitors and early on got physician endorsements, which added enormously to our credibility. But I've always said that it doesn't matter how many wonderful ingredients you have in your products, if makeup doesn't look good then there's no point. The most important

Continued on next page ...



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thing for us has always been that our makeup looks so good on the skin, but it doesn't look like makeup. It looks like your skin, only better. The person who understood this and helped so much in the beginning was a makeup artist at The Oaks at Ojai, Linda Winn. She took us on with a vengeance and it all spread from there.

Starting a new business is always a challenge but I never doubted myself because I had such faith in the product. Honestly, it never occurred to me that we wouldn't make it.

How do you test your product to make sure that it's good for your skin?

We go through extensive testing for sunscreen efficacy and sensitivity. For example, our products are tested on 50 people to gauge sensitivity. This test requires dermatologist sign-off, which enables us to say "dermatologist tested." We also test for comedogenicity (does it block pores?), heavy metals, and photo toxicity. All ingredient information and safety is contained in MSD Sheets – Manufacturers Safety Data.

We do far more testing on our products than is required. We are also a certified cruelty-free cosmetics brand, recognized by both Leaping Bunny and PETA for our voluntary commitment to no animal testing at every stage of product development and manufacturing. I've always felt that animals contribute so much to our lives and that we owe them respect, especially the ones we domesticated who are now completely dependent on us. Nobody asks them for permission to perform unspeakable experiments on them. Like children, they are completely vulnerable. This pledge to cruelty-free makeup and skin care has always been at the core of our brand. We believe it is an essential element in our holistic approach to creating responsible, healthy beauty. We have a strict quality control process that begins in the laboratory and carries all the way through to the consumer.

How do you sell your product?

We distribute mostly through the professional channel – spas, salons, plastic surgeons, dermatologist, makeup

artists, and specialty boutiques and independent drug stores like Bigelow – my favorite apothecary in Greenwich Village. An important part of our business is now e-commerce, which is seeing fantastic growth. We've also recently expanded our distribution in exciting ways. For example, we sell through Evine Live, Amazon Luxury Beauty, and just opened a flagship store in collaboration with fashion boutique Louisa Ellis here in Great Barrington.

How important is international to your business? Was it difficult to develop?

We create our products here in the United States, and manufacture and distribute *jane iredale* products in about 52 countries worldwide, currently!

Distribution is similar to our US distribution, they're available via retail partners or online. Our international business is very important to us. Currently, we ship half our SKUs overseas. Canada and the UK are neck and neck for number one distributors and have been for years. International business is very rewarding but a high degree of patience is required. It takes time to build a country. Regulations differ – some are stringent, some more lax. We have a very capable department that exclusively deals with our international business.

Are beauty bloggers important to you? How do you cultivate them?

Thanks to bloggers, editors, and reviews, we have so much contact now with consumers – more than ever before. We've always known the importance of bloggers and were one of the first brands to hold events for them. The energy in the room is always incredible. They are so interested and engaged in our brand. We obviously keep them apprised of anything new and hold events each year when we can all get together and chat.

What are the trends in your industry?

Right now there's a large movement in "beauty from the inside out." It's not a trend, per se, but it's an all-important and innovative advancement for the beauty world. It's now understood

that you can effect just as much change in the skin, if not more, by feeding skin from the inside as well as the outside. This means eating well and supplementing your diet with food that the skin loves. It will reward you in many ways: clearer, smoother skin at any age; reduced breakouts, irritation and sensitivity; the skin will strengthen its protection from UV damage and it will glow with health. We can help this entire process with our nutritional supplement, Skin Accumax, which contains vitamins and plant nutrients in a synergistic blend that targets the skin. We've already seen incredible results with this breakthrough. I think this is a trend that's going to get bigger and bigger. In fact, we're adding to our nutritional line-up later this year.

How important is introducing new products?

It's an important part of keeping up with the needs and desires of our customers, whose interests evolve as makeup trends are influenced by fashion, pop culture, seasons, and by the introduction of new innovations and techniques. We introduce new product collections seasonally and pride ourselves on being a holistic brand with fashion-forward colors and wide shade ranges for all skin tones.

At the same time, there are products that remain evergreen. Our mineral foundations were our first products and are still what we're best known for – holistic, clean, high-performing makeup will never fall out of style.

How do you differentiate yourself from competitors?

There are a lot of brands on the market now using "mineral" as a marketing term. The misconception is that all mineral makeup is created equal. The mineral makeup category has been one of the fastest growing and almost every major player has some sort of mineral offering. And while I love what some brands have done, some of the other lines have talc, chemical sunscreen additives, synthetic preservatives, etc. It's important to read the label to see if the brand you're about to buy fits with what you want from a product. Our mineral makeup formula hasn't changed much since we developed ours in 1994. The only change we've made to our original formulas is to add some beneficial ingredients like botanicals and antioxidants. We were the first to use liposomes in makeup like encapsulated algae extracts and antioxidants. Everything we do is based on making the skin as healthy as possible. We use a lot of plant extracts – most of them are certified organic. Their benefits, taste, and smell are in my blood because I'm an avid gardener. Many of them, like pomegranate extract, have active antioxidant properties and help to reverse sun damage. Because our brand is rooted in science, I love it when I find botanicals that combine the natural and scientific worlds. We source most of our plant extracts from Europe where there is a long heritage of appreciating and understanding their benefits. I think this is what differentiates us. In a very real sense, all

Continued on next page ...



Above: The spring 2017 collection includes lipstick, bronzer, cream blush, and eye shadow. Photo courtesy of Iredale Mineral Cosmetics, Ltd.

makeup brands are our competitors but in another sense, I don't believe we have one in our niche.

Can you talk about the importance of branding?

For us, it's very important, especially internationally. Consumers associate quality and integrity with our brand. That didn't come easily. We've had to reinforce that year after year, day after day. But it's been worth it. When people see the name *jane iredale*, they know what to expect.

What do you know about your ultimate customer?

More and more I'm realizing that demographics don't mean much and in a very real sense are less and less important. In today's world, the consumer can shop where she wants, how she wants, and when she wants. This makes pinning her down a thankless task. We don't make products for an age group, a color or a socio-economic class. We make good products that appeal to women (and men) all over the world.

Have you had any product bombs?

Yes, but it was never the product itself. It's always the componentry – the case, the applicator, etc. I used to try to engineer our own, but now I look for something that's already been tried on the market. Much fewer problems that way.

How important is your website, blog, social media, etc.?

All very important and getting more so by the hour. We have inside teams devoted to the website or social media and they each work with outside companies. We've been lucky to find highly qualified and excellent people locally.

Are there any supportive industry groups or entrepreneur groups that have been important to you?

We are proud members of The International Spa Association (ISPA), and have found mutual support and collaboration with this organization since the beginning of our journey as a company. I had the great honor of receiving their ISPA Visionary Award

in 2014 – one of my proudest moments.

I also sit on the boards of the Independent Cosmetic Manufacturers and Distributors (ICMAD) Association, and the Personal Care Products Council (PCPC). Both are nonprofit trade associations that offer support and education for all types of businesses in the personal care world.

What is your favorite part of the business? Any dislikes?

I love the fact that my job doesn't feel like work to me. I find it satisfying, inspiring, challenging, and fun. Not that I don't like to go to the beach once in a while, but I'm at my best when I have something to do. Something where I have to solve problems, move things forward, create something. I can feel my juices flowing and I love that. My job is so intertwined with my life in general that it's hard to separate it. I really don't like sitting in budget meetings and looking at spreadsheets. My eyes start to swim. The financial side of the business is always a burden to me and that's why my husband is such an asset. He had a career at Citibank.

What would your suggestions be to anyone starting their own beauty business?

My advice for future entrepreneurs is:

1. Keep it to the "why." Why do you want to do it in the first place?
2. Maintain employee trust. Don't be someone outside of business and someone else when you come to work.
3. Be emotionally attached and love what you do.

Who has inspired you?

I haven't had a business mentor except for my husband whom I would consider more as the Rock of Gibraltar. When I need a balanced point of view, he never fails. He threw his lot in with me after I'd been in business for a year. He's our COO, my business adviser, sounding board, and stress reliever.

My personal mentor convinced me years ago that I could manage to get a degree while working full time. So I was able to complete my BA at New York University and then my MA. Having that incredible experi-



Above: Jane Iredale renovated and expanded the 19th century Bryant School into a LEED certified, 20,000 square foot home for her company. Photo courtesy of Iredale Mineral Cosmetics, Ltd.

ence gave me so much confidence. Going back to school was one of the most important things I've done. And my proudest moment was when my mother flew from England to see me graduate in my cap and gown. I suppose I would say that all women are my inspiration. I see them balancing families and careers, tragedies and challenges, and sometimes I wonder how they can continue to be so strong.

What are the pluses of having a business in Great Barrington?

Being part of a community where we can make a meaningful contribution. Being surrounded by beauty, fresh air, nature in all its aspects, peace and quiet, farm-to-table restaurants – a literally, vibrant cultural scene from the Boston Symphony to Shakespeare & Co, writers, singers, and artists. Organic farms, outdoor life (the Appalachian Trail runs right by our house), world-famous spas like Canyon Ranch, interesting shopping – no chain stores. On and on, and it just gets better.

Many years ago, I was working in Manhattan, cursing my fate that I had to spend another hot weekend in the city when I got invited by a friend for a weekend in the Berkshires. I didn't know where the Berkshires were, but it sounded better than First Avenue and 74th Street. The next evening, I was on a deck, smelling the fresh air and listening to the Boston Symphony Orchestra drifting over the lake at Tanglewood. It felt like heaven, and it was.

Now I live full-time in Great Barrington, and our bustling company headquarters is right off Main Street. We recently restored a 19th

century schoolhouse to serve as our 20,000-square-foot main building, called The Bryant. It's now a sustainable Gold LEED-Certified building, and we were able to preserve ninety percent of the original structure. We have gardens at every building, even an organic fruit and vegetable garden. We have four buildings in all and 180 employees.

What are your favorite pastimes?

I love to garden and the garden has become an inspiration for our makeup line. From colors, to smells to taste, it's an important part of what we do.

I love to renovate old buildings. As I mentioned, we just moved our company into a renovated school building, built in 1889. A great labor of love.

I love to cook and entertain.

I also keep bees! They are the happiest bees alive foraging on flowers, veggies and fruit right outside their hive. We jar the honey as gifts.

Is politics important to your business or just something you personally like to be involved in?

Politics is important to me personally, but I try to keep it separate from the business. Not always successfully. The Lieutenant Governor has visited us twice. On both occasions it was to see what she could do to help business in the Berkshires. I admire what she and the Governor are trying to do for areas that don't always get a lot of attention.

What are your plans for the future?

Keep doing what I'm doing and growing the company. •

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Getting Greater

REAL ESTATE IN THE TOWN
OF GREAT BARRINGTON, MA

By Christine Bates
christine@mainstreetmag.com

For this month's real estate column we look at Great Barrington, the northern most commercial center of Main Street's readership region. As usual we are grateful for the assistance of the town's assessor and planner, the business community, developers, the Berkshire Record, and local realtors for their help in understanding Great Barrington's dynamic housing market.

Welcome to the Berkshires

Geography, politics, history, and culture define the Berkshires, which were named as one of the *200 Last Great Places* by the Nature Conservancy. The Berkshire Mountains, part of the Appalachians, run north and south-east of the Housatonic River and west of the Connecticut River. Politically all of Berkshire County is more liberal than the blue state of Massachusetts and Great Barrington leans further left with 78% of the town voting for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election and 64% voting to legalize marijuana, a statewide ballot measure that passed in November.

North of the Route 7 antique corridor, Great Barrington's Main Street shops, restaurants, and triplex movie theater, and its big box stores and McDonald's outside the center of town, are a jolt of activity. Great Barrington is more than a gateway to the Berkshires, it is a destination itself. At the turn of the last century Great



Barrington was a mill town and commercial center, and remains the economic hub of the southern Berkshires. For residents it offers a good school system, Bard's Simon's Rock College, a hospital, a variety of grocery stores from Guido's to the Price Chopper, movies, theater, and even an airport. There's an established locavore food movement with a bustling farmer's market, restaurants of all flavors and the esteemed food co-op. There are year round recreational activities, including a community center with a gym and indoor pool, hiking, zip lining, and skiing. Like many towns in our region, affordable housing, employment, retaining young people, and broadband access are continuing issues.

Focus on downtown development

From Alice's Restaurant to today's bustle, Great Barrington has grown with the support of enlightened, committed residents. Maybe Great Barrington's downtown transformation started in 1990 when Richard Stanley purchased the old Miller Hotel, kicked out the drug users, removed the 1960s aluminum facade and

returned the historic building to its 1929 appearance. Or when the Triplex movie theater opened in 1995 on the site of a burned-out lumber yard, or in 2003 when the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center was renovated by the Great Barrington Downtown Historic District and the expanded Berkshire Co-op market was built on Bridge Street. Today after a \$5,000,000 big dig of Main Street, which included 90 new street trees, better lighting and sidewalks, combined with critical under the street infrastructure updates to sewer, water, and storm drainage systems, Great Barrington's downtown center is prepared to support more mixed use development and growth.

Twelve newly rehabbed rental units are planned at the foot of Railroad Street. The first phase of the PowerHouse Square condos, which will include a new Co-op grocery store on the ground floor, are scheduled to be ready by fall 2018 with another 27 condos to follow in Phase 2. Construction of affordable rental apartments will begin soon on the other side of the Housatonic. Berkshire

Above: An architect's rendering of PowerHouse Square on Bridge Street, which will be ready for occupancy in 2018. Left: The Mahaiwe Theater was saved from demolition in 2003 and is now a performing arts center. Photo by Christine Bates.



Continued on next page ...

hotelier Vijay Mahida has permits to convert the old high school into a four star hotel. Total investment in these projects is estimated at over \$70 million. Great Barrington's Town Planner Chris Rembold sees this mixed use development flowing from the vision of Great Barrington's 2013 master plan to remain a vibrant small town and to preserve its historical legacy by encouraging growth downtown with compact residential neighborhoods that are walkable.

GB's residential market is stable

Looking at 16 towns in the southern Berkshires from Sheffield to Lee, Sotheby's 2015 and 2016 statistics show that Great Barrington is the most active town with 71 residential sales (see chart) – 65% of all sales in the region. In 2016, Great Barrington's median priced home was around \$307,000 according to Sotheby's numbers, which puts GB right in the middle of the Southern Berkshire market, but much more affordable than the small, less densely populated towns like Alford and Monterey. Reviewing the last ten years, that median price has hovered around the \$300,000 level with the high point of \$350,000 in 2010.

Over the last five years total annual market activity has remained fairly stable at around \$25 million dollars, even as median home prices have weakened slightly. Judie Owens, a realtor with Barnbrook Realty, suspects that "Some of the smaller towns have more extremes, with more less-expensive housing, and more high-priced housing, and not so much in the middle. Great Barrington has more of a bell-curve mix: less low-end and high-end, with the most volume in the mid-price range." An analysis of price points confirms Owens' hunch (see chart). Over ten years the vast majority of homes sold are below half a million dollars and account for well over half of total yearly sales. Only four properties sold for over \$2 million dollars in ten years, and in a typical year only two or three houses bring more than \$1,000,000.

More condos and affordable rentals coming

Condominium sales are a small part

of the residential market reported by MLS (see chart), averaging around 10% of the market with eight to ten sales reported annually. In many years median reported condo prices are very similar to median home prices. Leslie Chesloff, a broker with Berkshire Property Agents, predicts this will change when the PowerHouse condos on Bridge Street come on the market at prices from \$380,000 to over \$900,000. Not included in these sales numbers are 28 detached condo single family homes sold over the last two years by David Ward, the developer of Barrington Brook, at an average price of \$550,000 for a new three-bedroom 2,200-square-foot-home. Ward characterizes Barrington Brook purchasers as full-time residents who are down-sizing, and second homeowners who spend their winters in Florida.

Breaking ground soon are 45 affordable rentals at 100 Bridge Street, on the formerly PCB-polluted site of New England Log Homes. Developed by the Community Development Corporation, the \$32 million project will also include commercial space, market rate condos and rental apartments, and a riverside park.

Same home resales from 2010 to 2016 saw an average 12% gain

Twenty-three homes in Great Barrington were purchased in the eight years between 2010 and 2016 and then resold according to data provided by Great Barrington's assessor Christopher Lamarre. A same house price comparison provides a controlled view of the local real estate market. Looking at all of these transactions, the average price paid during the period was \$338,196 and the averaging sale price received was \$362,604 – an increase of just over 12%. Of the 23 properties, only one property, purchased in 2010 for \$815,000 and resold two years later for \$600,000, lost money. Homes purchased in 2011 and then resold showed the greatest average dollar price increase – over \$40,000. All of this confirms that Great Barrington, for the past six years, has enjoyed a stable, resilient market.

Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: One of the sold-out three-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath-room condo cottages at Barrington Brook. Photo courtesy of David Atkin Ward. A perfect Victorian restoration at 34 Castle Hill on the market for \$899,000 includes this rebuild, working gas stove. Photo by Gregory Chien. Courtesy of Judie Owens of Berkshire Property Agents.

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES LISTED FOR SALE GREAT BARRINGTON FEBRUARY 2017*

Number of homes listed	48
Total listing price of all homes	\$34,147,898
% of 2016 sales	142%
Median price	\$489,000
Average	\$711,415
# under \$500,000	26
Value < \$500,000	\$8,809,898
% of all listed homes	26%
# \$500,000 - \$1,000,000	12
Value	\$8,779,000
% of all houses	26%
# over \$1 million	9
Value over \$1 million	\$16,559,000
% of all houses	48%

*Does not including pending sales, multiple family homes or commercial properties. Data taken from realtor.com March 4, 2017.

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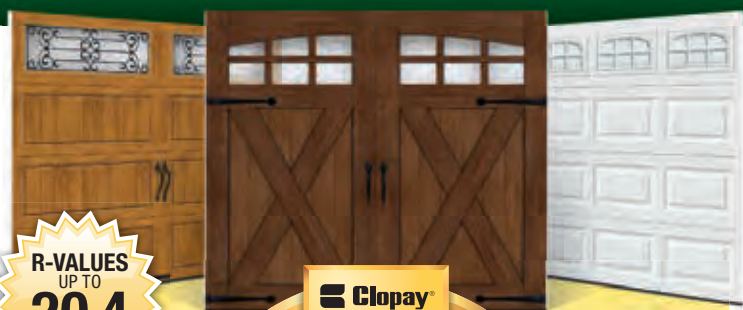
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Where did the houses go?

Only 48 houses were listed for sale when we looked at single family homes on the market in early March – fewer than have been sold in any year since 2007. But the median listing price of \$489,000 was much higher than last year's sold price. Only 26 of the houses listed have asking prices below \$500,000 compared to the 63 actually sold last year in this price range. There are 21 homes listed above half a million compared to nine sold last year – with the most expensive house at 11 Londonderry Drive for almost three million dollars. It's very possible that with spring on the way, new homes will be listed to add to inventory and market activity. The condo market also has low inventory with only seven units for sale including the \$1,150,000 condo at 281 Main Street that is part of the Barrington Hotel.

All brokers report that 2017 is off to a good start and that the Great Barrington market is hot in this happening corner of the Berkshires that was rated as the “#1 Best Small Town in America” by *Smithsonian Magazine*. Great Barrington is prospering because of citizens like Sally and Fred Harris who are leading the effort to preserve the 1857 St. James Church and create a performing arts center with offices and a food pantry in the basement, Jane Iredale's renovated Bryant School, and developer Paul Joffe efforts to save and elevate the 150-year old former Methodist church on Main Street.

It is a town pursuing growth, community development, and preservation at the same time. Actor Chris Noth, who owns a home in the center of Great Barrington, fishes in the Green River and plays on the local softball team. He summed it all up in a *Berkshire Magazine* interview in 2014: “I think Great Barrington is just enough of a town that you don't feel you have to go into New York because you can find things like great restaurants here, but you're still in the country. It's a part of the country that has great cultural ties to dance and theater and the arts, but still has its foot in the poetry of the hills.” ●



Above: With an asking price of \$2,990,000, 11 Londonderry Drive is the most expensive house listed in Great Barrington. Photo by Tricia McCormack. Courtesy of Stephen Schoenfeld of Stone House Properties.

CONDO SALES IN GREAT BARRINGTON 2007 TO 2016*

Year	# sales	Sales \$ value	% change	Median sold price	% change
2007	9	\$3,003,000		\$312,500	
2008	11	\$3,633,667	21.0%	\$290,000	-7.2%
2009	6	\$1,056,000	-70.9%	\$160,000	-44.8%
2010	12	\$3,505,000	231.9%	\$237,000	48.1%
2011	9	\$2,985,000	-14.8%	\$310,000	30.8%
2012	11	\$3,038,900	1.8%	\$286,000	-7.7%
2013	9	\$2,044,400	-32.7%	\$215,000	-24.8%
2014	7	\$1,912,700	-6.4%	\$265,700	23.6%
2015	11	\$3,432,000	79.4%	\$280,000	5.4%
2016	5	\$1,450,000	-57.8%	\$300,000	7.1%

SALES OF RESIDENTIAL HOMES IN GREAT BARRINGTON*

2007	60	\$20,985,110		\$310,000	
2008	58	\$23,072,550	9.9%	\$325,000	4.8%
2009	54	\$19,509,000	-15.4%	\$340,000	4.6%
2010	53	\$24,010,500	23.1%	\$350,000	2.9%
2011	59	\$22,934,162	-4.5%	\$315,000	-10.0%
2012	59	\$25,846,200	12.7%	\$312,500	-0.8%
2013	74	\$26,997,300	4.5%	\$327,500	4.8%
2014	60	\$19,971,400	-26.0%	\$307,000	-6.3%
2015	59	\$26,031,750	30.3%	\$299,750	-2.4%
2016	71	\$23,994,525	-7.8%	\$298,000	-0.6%

* Sales data supplied courtesy of Berkshire County Board of Realtors.

RESIDENTIAL PRICE SEGMENTS GREAT BARRINGTON

Year	# sales < \$500k	% total sales	# sales > \$500k	Total sales
2007	50	69.0%	10	31.0%
2008	45	54.8%	13	45.2%
2009	43	64.4%	11	35.6%
2010	37	44.1%	16	55.9%
2011	44	49.4%	15	50.6%
2012	44	41.4%	15	58.6%
2013	61	64.4%	13	35.6%
2014	51	66.7%	9	33.3%
2015	45	47.8%	14	52.2%
2016	63	75.2%	8	24.8%

Ten year average 57.8%

42.3%

* Sales data supplied courtesy of Berkshire County Board of Realtors.

2016 SOUTHERN BERKSHIRE MEDIAN HOME PRICES COMPARISON*

7 towns with highest median home values	# sold	2016 median home price	Population
Alford	8	\$612,000	495
Monterey	23	\$470,000	961
Egremont	28	\$445,000	1,225
West Stockbridge	22	\$423,000	1,360
Stockbridge	28	\$387,500	1,947
Lenox	42	\$313,000	5,025
Great Barrington	71	\$307,000	7,527

All 16 towns in
Southern Berkshires 110 \$309,000

* Information provided by William Pitt Julia B Fee Sothbeys International Realty. Note that Sotheby's Great Barrington median home price of \$307,000 corresponds closely to Great Barrington assessor's data of \$315,000 and Berkshire County Board of Realtors median price of \$298,000.

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Extra! Extra! Read all about it...

By John Torsiello
info@mainstreetmag.com

The newsboy/newsgirl has almost become a thing of the past.

Where once youngsters walked or rode their bicycles around country's neighborhoods, a satchel of newspapers slung over their shoulders, and delivered them to an eagerly waiting society, men and women now drive around roads and streets in the wee hours of the morning bringing newspapers to customers.

"You don't even see your delivery people anymore," said Gary Leveille, a former delivery boy himself and author of *The Mystery and History of the Great Barrington Newsboy Statue*. "They drive by in the night and toss the papers on lawns or on driveways."

But the newsboy and newsgirl aren't forgotten in this southwestern Massachusetts town. The locals, with the help of various organizations and outside individuals through the years, have preserved the "Newsboy Statue," located between Maple Lane and Newsboy Monument Lane, a bit outside of the town's central business district.

The newsboy

The five-foot high bronze figure of a newsboy stands on top of a 10-foot high polished granite base. The newsboy is wearing a pushed back cap, opened collar shirt, jacket, knickers, and long socks. In his raised right hand he holds up a copy of a newspaper for sale. A bundle of newspapers are tucked under his left arm. The monument was once served as a

watering trough for horses, dogs, and cats. Various fountain heads are embedded in the base (see image below).

In 1895, Col. William L. Brown the part-owner of the original *New York Daily News*, funded this monument to what he considered to be the unsung heroes of the newspaper industry. The monument was sculpted by David Richards and cast by Maurice J. Power. The monument was a gift to the people of Great Barrington and was installed in October of 1895. It was restored on its 100th anniversary in 1995. The monument was again refurbished and a ceremony held last year, at which a number of newsboys that attended the 100th anniversary in 1995 returned.

"At the 1995 ceremony we had a number of young newspaper carriers," said Leveille. "Some of them returned last year and they are now adults. There were no kids at the latest ceremony, which shows you just how much the industry changed in those 20 years."

Indeed. Starting around 1995, the Internet began its inexorable march to replace the printed word. Of course, there are still newspapers being run off the presses and sold, but their numbers continue to drop and circulation is nowhere what it was during the heydays of the newspaper. Much news content is now delivered online, and free circulars delivered in bulk to businesses and other locations have blossomed like daffodils in the springtime.

"We have had a lot of individuals contribute to the reconditioning and upkeep of the statue," said Leveille, who has had a lifelong fascination and involvement with the monument. "For instance, the New England Association of Circulation Executives has been very involved and helped us raise upwards of \$15,000 for the statue." Leveille said that Barrie Hughes, who worked at the *Stamford Advocate*, became fascinated with the statue and its history when he saw it while visiting town. He is said to have gone as far as cashing in a life insurance policy to help restore the monument.

Being made of bronze, the statue has fallen victim to the harsh New England weather through the years. But each time citizens, officials, and organizations have risen to the challenge to bring the statue back to its original luster. It now shines and looks as it did when it was unveiled over 120 years ago.

Buried treasure?

While there are other newsboy statues, Leveille said the Great Barrington monument is the oldest of its kind in the world. Because of the aforementioned changing trends in the newspaper industry, it now stands mainly as a reminder of all those youngsters who pedaled papers in all kinds of weather for years upon years.

"There is a misconception that newsboys were waifs and homeless kids in the city," said Leveille. "That really wasn't the case. Most of the kids, there were girls as well as boys who delivered papers, were from blue collar families who were trying to make a few bucks to help support the family or earn money for themselves."

The cost of the monument is not known, nor is the name of the youngster who posed for the statue. "We never found those things out," said Leveille. "And there are all sorts of stories attached to the statue, like there being a treasure buried beneath it. It makes it more fun and mysterious."

Mr. Brown

The person who commissioned and paid for the statue, William Brown, is an interesting figure. During the American Civil War he fought with the 88th and the 125th Ohio Volunteers. After the war, he moved to Virginia City, then the capital of the Montana Territory. He was Chief Clerk of the Territorial Legislature, and also engaged in gold mining.

A few years later he returned to Youngstown, OH. He was a delegate from Ohio to the 1872 and 1876 Democratic National Conventions. In 1874, he was *aide-de-camp* to Gov. William Allen, with the rank of colonel. In 1875, he was elected to



the Ohio State Senate. From 1875 to 1880, he published the *Vindicator* in Youngstown. In 1880, he moved to New York City and became a partner of Benjamin Wood, co-publishing the *New York Daily News*.

Brown was a delegate from New York to the 1884 and 1888 Democratic National Conventions; and a member of the New York State Senate from 1890 to 1893. After the death of Benjamin Wood in 1900, his widow, Ida, reportedly ousted Brown from management of the *New York Daily News*, and Brown retired to an estate in Great Barrington, where he engaged in horse and cattle breeding. He died here in 1906.

Colonel Brown had the statue erected near his summer home in what remains a fairly pastoral Berkshires setting. Things have changed, of course. Roads have been altered and Col. Brown's home burned to the ground in 1931. But the statue remains, as a loving monument to another era and the youngsters who faithfully brought newspapers from the press and into homes.

Leveille's book on the Newsboy Statue may be purchased on Amazon and in some bookstores. •





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Berkshire Taste Trails

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By Dominique De Vito
info@mainstreetmag.com

Lucky, lucky, lucky us. We are blessed with amazing food and beverage offerings right in our back yards!

Looking for a great local brewery where you can enjoy a flight of beers and food that's been locally sourced to go with it? Done. Looking for a place that turns apples from its own orchard into fabulous fresh and hard ciders? Done. Looking for cheese that's about as fresh as you can get, whether it's made from the milk of cows, goats, or sheep, but you don't want to poke around a grocery store for it? Done. Or maybe you're looking for a restaurant where the chef is über-committed to cooking with ingredients sourced from local farms. Yes, we have that, too. In abundance.

And lest you think you need to spend hours researching where to find these places, or that they'll require a long or challenging drive to get to them, think again. They're all right here between Sheffield, Massachusetts, in the south to Bennington, Vermont, in the north, to Chatham, New York, in the west – and of course the Pittsfield to Great Barrington corridor in the heart of the Berkshires. They're part of the Berkshire Taste Trails, established in 2011, of which there are three: one for beer and cider, one for cheese,

and one for charcuterie. The Trails are part of the consortium of Berkshire Farm & Table (www.berkshirefarmandtable.org), an organization whose mission is to “promote the region as a source and destination for local food in a region that offers not just a landscape, but the *terroir* that gives us our taste of place.”

As a resident of this area and a “foodie” myself, I know about many of the breweries, cideries, and farms that are listed on the Taste Trails, but I didn't know about all of them. I also didn't know that they were part of a collective set of Trails (I discovered this while looking up something else, as often happens). The other thing I didn't know was that there were very clear maps on the BFT website showing where the venues are on the Trails. Not only do the maps put things into perspective, but they're drawn in a whimsical style that's very appealing. How could you not want to explore this richness of local foods and drinks?

Trail time!

On a recent Saturday, with the sun high in the cold winter sky, I set out to explore some of the enticing venues on the Taste Trails. Since I live in Ghent and was surprised (but delighted!) to see neighboring Chatham Brewing on the list, it was my first stop.

Chatham Brewing is celebrating its ten-year-anniversary in 2017, and they've come a long way from the alley off of Main Street where they started to a state-of-the-art brewery at the end of Main Street that is now a destination watering hole for locals and tourists alike. Sidle up to the bar there and you can choose a flight of samples from an extensive list of beers. Perennial favorites are the Farmer's Daughter, Czech Rd Past Pilsner, Local Hero, Maple Amber, and Spike Devil Porter, but their list typically features



Photo source: istockphoto.com contributor draghich

nearly 20 varieties, and – like all good breweries – they're constantly experimenting. The beers are fantastic and everyone is super-friendly. Large windows facing the street make for a friendly and community-focused feel. If you get hungry, a food truck operated by Grazin' serves up all locally sourced foods that pair perfectly with the beers.

From Chatham I headed to Hawthorne Valley Farm Store in Harlemlville, about 15 minutes away. Hawthorne Valley (HV) is a biodynamic farm that operates a store that is a foodie's paradise. It's on the Cheese Taste Trail, and it's easy to see why. Besides several cheeses made from their milk, HV carries a great selection from New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, and other nearby states, as well as a first-rate selection of Old World cheeses. And so much more. I spent

Left: The Hawthorne Valley Farm store in Harlemlville is part of the Cheese Taste Trail and their selection is quite impressive.



Continued on next page ...

too much time just gazing and salivating over the selection, and came away with a piece of Aged Alpine cheese and a large container of yogurt.

Into the Berkshires

Then it was east to Great Barrington where the Barrington Brewery was my next stop. The brewery is just outside of town and was easily identified by the giant oak cask with the name painted in bright colors out front. There's a restaurant that's part of the brewery, so the experience is less "tasting room" than bar/restaurant, though of course what's on tap is lots of fresh-brewed Barrington beers. I chose a five-tasting flight that included the Berkshire Blond, Barrington Brown Ale, and Black Bear Stout. At the bar it's impossible not to notice the ceramic steins hanging above the bartenders' heads, many of which have sayings on the bottoms. They're the personal steins of Barrington's Mug Club. Gotta like that. In fact, gotta like everything about the place, which is all about great beer, a great vibe, and great food.

As I was heading to Sheffield, I passed The Meat Market, one of the places on the Charcuterie Trail (most of which are restaurants, which makes sense). The Market was closed for renovation. Turns out they have expanded their business to include a restaurant called Camp Fire that

"marries the goodness of our butcher shop with the menu development and ethos of our catering company." That's worth another visit.

I wanted to get to Big Elm Brewing in Sheffield before they closed, so I proceeded south through thriving and funky Great Barrington down Route 7. Just before the turn-off on Silver Street, I passed Berkshire Mountain Distillers. Because it's a distillery it's not on the Taste Trails, but it's worth knowing about its proximity to the brewery if you're planning a visit.

Big Elm Brewing was a warehouse-type building housing all the brewing equipment, with a modest but cozy tasting room where the public interfaced with the production. People (even kids) were going in and out of the back, and a very friendly bartendress poured the flight of four beers I requested. They included their signature 413 Farmhouse Belgian, a Lions English-style amber, and their oatmeal stout called Gerry Dog. Not a "miss" on the list; they were all so fresh and so tasty!

Last but not least I headed northwest to Hilltop Orchards/Furnace Brook Winery in Richmond, MA. On this cold day there was a roaring fire going in a large room that also had a TV (on mute), music coming in over speakers, and large comfy couches and side chairs where people who might



have been snowshoeing if it was a "real" winter were, instead, enjoying glasses of wine and cider. Furnace Brook has been making Johnny Mash cider (and now Johnny Mash Dry Gold) for nearly a decade. Really refreshing and the perfect toast to a delightful day.

But wait, there's more!

Getting back to how lucky we are to have this wealth of distinctive "taste makers" to visit in our area, as you can imagine, it would be foolish to try to do them all in a day. Since we live here, we can visit them at our leisure, and if you want to take to the Trails with out-of-towners, you can see which are closest to you and combine them with other great things to do here. Berkshire Farm & Table does plan a Spirits Trail and a Wine & Spirits Trail to be added later this year so more folks can discover Berkshire gems Les Trois Emme Winery and Balderdash Cellars, as well as Hudson-Chatham Winery just down Route 66 from Chatham Brewing (and on the way to another foodie Mecca, the city of Hudson, NY). •

You can learn all about the Trails and their recommended shops (and more about the food scene in the Berkshires and its environs) by visiting www.berkshirefarmandtable.org. Links are provided for all Trail stops. Do double-check the hours of the destinations you have in mind. The listings do need to be updated. Happy tasting on the Trails!

Above, top to bottom: Dominique's selection at Barrington Brewery and then her selection at Big Elm. She certainly didn't go thirsty! Below, left: Ceramic steins hang above the bartenders' heads at Barrington Brewery.





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Troubles along the Housatonic

By Claire Copley
info@mainstreetmag.com

The Housatonic river flows approximately 140 miles from Western Massachusetts, through Connecticut to the Long Island Sound. The river provides amazing beauty, famous white water paddling, and great fly fishing. With more than a hundred thousand acres of public recreation land throughout the watershed, opportunities for swimming, canoeing/kayaking, fishing, sculling, boating, hiking, camping, and cross-country skiing abound. The Appalachian Trail runs along the river for five miles between Kent and Cornwall Bridge, farther north the trail parallels the river for about one-mile in Sheffield, MA.

The Housatonic is the largest river in our area. The watershed, or the land area which drains into the river, encompasses 1,948 square miles. The Housatonic watershed provides many “critical habitats”—areas which support the survival of rare and endangered species. Among the most important critical habitats are the marble ridges and ledges, caves, calcareous (calcium-rich) wetlands, and lakes and ponds. In these areas, the soil and surface water is less acidic, making the land especially suited to agriculture.

Marble ledges, such as those in Bartholomew's Cobble in Ashley Falls (one of my favorite walking places), are home to many types of uncommon ferns, including the Narrow-leaved Spleenwort and the Slender Cliffbrake. Caves, predominantly found in Salisbury, provide habitats to bats, invertebrates, and salamanders. Calcareous wetlands, like Robbins Swamp in Canaan and Beeslick Pond and State Line Swamp in Salisbury, support lush and diverse plant species such as the Spreading Globe Flower and Showy Lady's Slipper. These in turn attract an abundance of insects and bird species.



Photo: Lazlo Gyorsok

History of the river

The Housatonic was named by the Mohicans who came across the Taconic mountains from New York, long before European settlement. Sheffield was the first town incorporated in the area in 1733. The river provided rich agricultural lands, food, and water to the early inhabitants. In the eighteenth century, the river was used to power iron forges farther north in Pittsfield, MA. These factories made iron ploughshares and anchors and nails.

In 1800, the Crane paper mill was founded there. Soon there were saw mills and grist mills, dye works and textile factories all along the banks of the Housatonic, spreading south from central Massachusetts. The power of the Housatonic drove industrial development. As the mills became more sophisticated, more people and businesses moved into the area. These factories and mills dumped wastewater into the river.

In many ways, those who controlled the water power in Pittsfield, controlled the economy of the area. Crane established more and more paper mills along the river and was soon manufacturing all the paper currency for the United States.

William Stanley, a Westinghouse

trained electrical engineer, moved to Great Barrington in 1886, and with the support of Westinghouse, used the water power of the Housatonic to create and install the nation's first alternating current (AC) system to provide electric lights along Main Street. Four years later he moved to Pittsfield and established the Stanley Electric Manufacturing Company. General Electric (GE) bought Stanley Electric in 1903 and expanded its operations in Pittsfield on the banks of the Housatonic.

GE operated a large-scale (254 acre) industrial facility that included the manufacturing and servicing of power transformers. Thanks to the success of GE, Pittsfield's population grew to almost 50,000 by 1930. At its peak during the 1940s, the GE plant employed 13,000 people and was the defining company in the area. The company operated in that location for the next sixty years.

PCB use

As electricity came into widespread use, equipment suppliers like GE and Westinghouse became major users of a chemical compound called polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB). During this time, more and

more information on the dangers of industrial chemicals was emerging, and special attention fell on these PCBs. Problems began to appear at plants manufacturing these compounds, and by 1937 reports were being written about effects of PCBs on the health of workers in these plants. GE began scaling back operations in Pittsfield in the 1970s and shuttered division after division between the 1970s and the early 1990s.

The controversy around the pollution of the Housatonic occurred at a time in history when there was increasing awareness about environmental degradation. Beginning in the late 1950s and through the 1960s, Congress responded to increasing public concern about the impact that human activity could have on the environment. Increased focus on environmental pollution led to the establishment of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on December 2, 1970. The EPA consolidated in one agency a variety of federal research,

Continued on next page ...

monitoring, standard-setting, and enforcement activities to ensure protection of the environment. From this point on PCBs were monitored closely.

Environmental damage

In 1969, according to a Massachusetts Water Resource Commission quality analysis, General Electric was dumping about 1,143 pounds per day of suspended solid waste into the river. This discharge contained large quantities of PCBs. PCBs were classified by the EPA as probable human carcinogens. From 1969-74, GE invested in a “phenol recovery unit,” to remove the toxic waste from its wastewater. Still, the commission cited GE as the source of “quite possibly the most significant source of pollutants” in the river.

The entire Housatonic River and its floodplain are heavily contaminated with PCBs that originated from the GE facility in Pittsfield. PCBs are also associated with numerous non-cancer health effects, including neurological, immune, endocrine, and reproductive issues. The rate of natural dissipation of the type of PCBs in the Housatonic River is very slow; on the scale of hundreds of years.

Beginning in 1970, when high levels of PCBs were detected in a random sampling of milk from dairy cows in Lenox, Massachusetts, agencies were increasingly aware that the toxic chemicals were damaging agriculture and wildlife throughout the Housatonic watershed area. After testing of groundwater, soil, river sediments, and wildlife it was determined that the contamination would require a major effort to correct. In 1979, the impacted areas in and around Pittsfield joined numerous other sites around the country in size and cleanup challenges, to be termed “Superfund Sites.” That same year, concern over the toxicity and persistence (longevity) of PCBs in the

environment led the United States Congress to ban their domestic production.

The buildup of PCB levels within animals is termed “bioaccumulation.” Because PCBs do not break down, they are carried up the food chain as smaller animals are consumed by larger ones. The EPA’s primary concern in the area is the possibility of humans coming into direct contact with or ingesting PCB contamination. People are exposed to PCBs in three ways: ingestion (consuming animals contaminated with PCBs); through the skin (dermal absorption); and inhalation (when PCBs volatilize and move into the air). All are toxic and may produce a variety of problems for humans. Since 1977 there has been a ban on fishing and consumption of wildlife from areas of the Housatonic. These restrictions will remain in place until the levels of PCBs decrease.

The cleanup

In 1991, the EPA ruled that GE was responsible for the cleanup of the original site. The area constituted a stretch of the river about two miles in length, as well as several land sites they had used as dumping grounds. Unfortunately, the toxic PCBs were now spread all the way down river to Long Island Sound. Ponds and lakes downstream have trapped high levels of PCBs and because the river has been dammed at several points downstream, PCBs have been trapped and formed dense toxic beds. Just locating these potential “hot spots” was a task that would take years of monitoring and testing. General Electric also disposed of waste chemicals on land, leaving several toxic land sites in and around Pittsfield.

To date, GE has dredged some 110,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil from the river at the original site. Over 15,000 cubic yards were dredged from nearby Silver Lake, and another 158,000 removed from nineteen off-site areas. There remains what is termed the “rest



Above: A postcard from back in the day of the Housatonic River.

of river” project. This has been in dispute for several years between GE and the EPA.

It is debatable whether the years of cleanup have helped much, even though GE has spent hundreds of millions of dollars and is far from finished. In 2014, PCB levels in local ducks were still very high due to bioaccumulation. We are very fortunate to have both solid local advocacy and the EPA insisting on responsible cleanup of the river. Several local organizations have served as the primary voice for the Housatonic and its residents.

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), is a tristate non-profit citizen’s environmental group, working to conserve the natural character and environmental health of its communities by protecting and restoring the land and waters of the 2,000-square-mile Housatonic watershed. The Housatonic River Initiative is a coalition of Berkshire County residents who advocate for the river and its health. Save the Housatonic is a coalition of conservationists and Housatonic River watershed stakeholders including a variety of smaller organizations. There are many more organizations working to collectively advocate for the cleanup as well.

Rest of river plan

In October 2016, after years of negotiations between the EPA, GE, and other stakeholders, the EPA released its final decision on the “rest of river” cleanup plan. It holds GE responsible and requires the cleanup of neighboring communities along the river. The plan requires dredging and removal of toxic sediments

to an out-of-state licensed facility, which GE is opposing. The project would cost an estimated \$613 million and last 13 years following a two-year design period. The project combines targeted removal of soil and sediment, riverbed capping for the first 11 miles, and monitored “natural recovery” through the south Berkshires and Connecticut – a 125-mile stretch.

It is likely that GE will appeal the terms of the plan and that the “rest of river” cleanup will drag on for many years. The Housatonic situation reflects all the difficulties and contradictions that these environmental disasters contain. Before 1970 the information about environmental risks to our health and welfare remained difficult to obtain and highly subjective. The EPA has allowed us to put the scientific, governmental, and environmental communities in conversation, and to harness the knowledge they produce towards building a safer, healthier community.

The question of whether it is possible to restore the river to a clean, healthy, waterway remains unanswered. Many are still hopeful that the scenic Housatonic will one day be safe and healthy again. Others are not so sure. But it points out for us the importance of prior investigation of ecological impacts of any business proposal in our area and having this knowledge before businesses move into an area of delicate balance, rather than waiting until it is too late. I sincerely hope it is never too late for the restoration of the Housatonic River Valley. •



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AMY RUDNICK & BEN HILLMAN

Art, science... & magic!

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

He's a film making history buff who wrote and illustrated children's picture books, is fascinated by astrophysics, made long bows and arrows in England during a college study leave, met his wife while he was looking for a penguin and loves to plant trees in Sheffield, MA.

She wanted to be an archaeologist, studied anthropology before taking a job working in the ichthyology department of the Museum of Natural History, became the director of event and conference services at the museum ... and knew where to find a penguin.

Amy Rudnick and Ben Hillman have a wonderful way of making visitors feel immediately comfortable in their Sheffield home. The chaos is controlled, the laughter is genuine, and the sense of accomplishment is palpable.

Since that home is also their office, projects move from the kitchen into the front room and back as separate phones ring with pressing questions about up-lighting, potted ficus trees, twelve frame dissolves, toy packaging, and the latest news from the Flying Cloud Institute. This is a couple with as many facets as a finely cut gem.

Amy Rudnick grew up on Long Island, attended Stoney Brook State and moved from anthropology to

end up taking a job at New York's esteemed Museum of Natural History. Initially working in the department of ichthyology, she was asked to handle some events hosted at the museum and ended up spending 19 years running the department that handled all events and conferences. She was the contact person for outside entities that had requests to utilize the museum facilities. Amy has the imagination to look at an empty space and turn it into a captivating event.

Ben Hillman was also raised on Long Island in a family of scientists. A circuitous journey through college ended up at Pratt Institute where he studied illustration and graphic design. His sojourn in the British countryside learning how to make bows and arrows was less of a career choice and more a manifestation of an inquiring and fertile mind. Ben is a dreamer who can make those dreams come alive.

The art and whimsy of children's literature

Fascinated by the influence of children's books ranging from the storytelling classics by Howard Pyle and Nancy Wyeth of the Brandywine School to the more contemporary works of Maurice Sendak, Ben tried his hand at creating children's books of his own. "It only took 12 years to get *That Pesky Toaster* published," Ben says with a generous laugh. "I clearly had to find something else to do."

His skills at illustration and design were elemental components in the world of advertising, so with a partner, Ben formed an agency. Huttner and Hillman boldly ventured into the advocacy and advertising world of social movements, and soon Ben was designing posters and print advertising for thorny political movements.

Posters and flyers evolved into television spots that required anima-



Above: Amy Rudnick and Ben Hillman Below: The cover to Ben's children's book, *That Pesky Toaster!* Photos courtesy of Amy and Ben.

tion and production skills. As the business grew, so did Ben's abilities and expertise. During the pre-production for a TV spot, the agency needed to source a penguin, which set the scene for Ben meeting Amy. After all, where else would you find a penguin in New York City but at the Museum of Natural History?

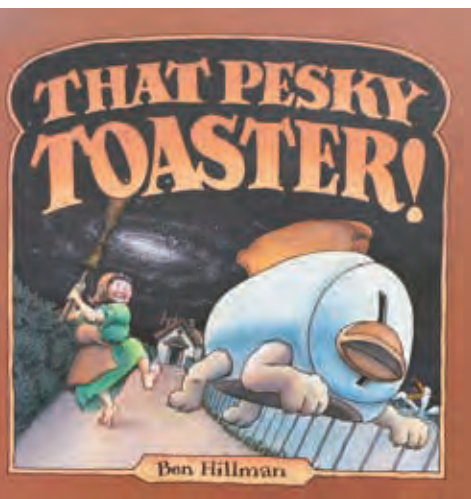
Creating magical events

As Ben's production talents broadened to include the special effects that are so essential to storytelling from :30 second spots to 120 minute features, Amy was refining her skills as an event producer. More than a planner, she not only understood the complexities of taking a raw space, filling it with the complexity of furniture and props and *décor* and lighting but creating the thematic components that led to successful client experiences. Magicians. Each in their own specialties, Ben and Amy were creating

experiential magic. And, to their good fortune, they were living in the city that abounded in opportunities for both of them – the city that never sleeps.

So why leave New York and move to the quiet charm of Sheffield, MA, especially when you're at the height of your careers? With the arrival of their daughter, Maizy (now a student at nearby Bard College), Ben and Amy had some decisions to make. They often visited friends in the Berkshires who worked in the special effects industry that Ben knew well. In fact, there were two burgeoning special effects companies in Berkshire

Continued on next page ...



County that were busy providing segments to television, commercials and feature films. As she surveyed the potential to continue her career, Amy identified the fact that there were several institutions in and around Great Barrington, Lee, Stockbridge, and Pittsfield that could use her event production expertise. Why not go out on her own?

The country life

It's been 19 years since they moved into their Sheffield home, and the phone has not stopped ringing. Ben has managed to create several more children's books including a four volume set of kid's science books for Scholastic Press. His short films – the category “quirky” certainly applies – have been screened in film festivals and on media outlets around the world. He even managed to board a Russian ice breaker and sail to Antarctica where he filmed *Bach of the Antarctic*, breathtaking in its scenery and classically funny in its storyline.

His advertising campaigns for Zoe for Kids, Flipphandle, Dragonfly, Taste of the Tropics, and Main and Me allow Ben to combine his design and graphic animation skills with his command of live action production. Corporate programs for Fairview Hospital, Clean Energy,

and Goldman Sachs keep his hand in the world of corporate media.

As for Amy, her observations about the potential for excellent event planning being a viable commodity in the region have certainly been realized. Building on her successes in New York, she's created events for an impressive list that includes Barrington Stage Company, Berkshire Grown, The Berkshire Museum, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Shakespeare & Company, the Berkshire Theatre Festival, and, most recently, Fairview Hospital.

Amy's specialty is working with non-profit and charitable organizations to create fund-raising opportunities that engage, entertain, and encourage. Funding is always a precarious venture for arts institutions and philanthropic ventures that rely, heavily, on the generosity of their supporters. Amy understands the balance, the finesse – and the need to create the magic.

And, it should be noted that both Amy and Ben have not kept a distance between their clients and their own sense of community. The old axiom that encourages those who need something done to ask those with no time to spare is really quite true.

For Ben, the community and the environment are particular passions. Perhaps because of his experiences



in the Antarctic or stemming from his days focused on clean energy production, he focuses on the noble task of planting trees in Sheffield – for both beauty and ecology.

Amy is deeply devoted to the Flying Cloud Institute – an educational foundation that focuses on promoting educational experiences in both science and the arts. She is their Board Chair. Flying Cloud Institute's mission “is to inspire young people and educators through dynamic science and art experiences that ignite creativity.” Their STEM programs (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) target the region's schools and joyfully encourage young students to explore, discover, and embrace both science and art.

The power of imagination can be very strong. When that imagination is present in two genuine and wonderfully inventive individuals, great partnerships are born. Amy and Ben. Ben and Amy. The imaginative force is palpable.

And, the phone rings ... ●

Feel free to contact Amy Rudnick at www.amyrudnick.com and Ben Hillman at www.benhillman.com. Ben's business card offers “Fresh Ideas Delivered Daily.” We're certain that applies to Amy's capabilities, as well.

Above: One of Amy's magical events. Below, left: The cover to *Bach of the Antarctica*. Photos courtesy of Amy and Ben.



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Something for everyone

Bartholomew's Cobble & Lime Kiln Preserve

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

Through the haze of a late winter sky, the sun marches slowly toward the top of Mount Washington, and another day slips into night. Weeks can slide by in this fashion, and before I know it, I haven't been out in the sun in a long, long time. Sure, maybe I jogged for half an hour last week, and maybe I walked along Main Street in Great Barrington one Saturday afternoon, but I haven't ventured deep into nature since the snow and ice started falling.

I have the best excuses, too: work ran late; there's too much snow; there's not enough snow; there's too much ice; I have to Swiffer my kitchen.

Sometimes, I'll admit, I'm just not in the mood to get all dressed up and geared up for a long winter outing. I just want to be outside for a little while in a quiet, beautiful spot. Enter the Sheffield Valley.

Two for the price of one

Two preserves make the most of this relatively flat but ecologically diverse area. The Lime Kiln Farm Preserve and Bartholomew's Cobble offer quick weekday respites for those of us who work in the area, with easy access from major roads, yet relative

silence, thanks to the rolling hills that muffle the traffic. The southern Taconic range rises sharply from the Housatonic Valley near Sheffield, creating a dramatic contrast between the mountains and farmland that has inspired many a painting. In the fall, the mountain is a wall of color that is among the most picturesque in New England, and while many choose to scale the Undermountain Trail to view the spectacle from above, the view from below is perhaps more varied and striking, situated as it is against a backdrop of blue sky, continually shifting in the shadows of late afternoon.

The Massachusetts Audubon Society owns a gem of a property, nestled between Routes 41 and 7 on Silver Street in Sheffield. From the Lime Kiln Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, a 1.8-mile trail affords views of the Taconics and the distant Berkshires across several open meadows within the property. Visitors to the sanctuary, however, are rewarded by much more than vistas. The winding trails guide hikers through a variety of habitats, starting with a marshy field that is flush with birds that gives way to meadows that are riddled with rabbits in the warmer months and criss-crossed with deer tracks in the winter.

The Lime Kiln was an actual limestone kiln

The Lime Kiln from which the property derives its name still stands on the

northern apex of the trail, commemorating the brief period from 1909-1912 when limestone from the area was quarried and converted to lime in the furnace. As with most industrial artifacts, it is a bit of a blemish on the landscape, but worth a look.

The trail arcs back to the south from there, skirting former quarries and storage bins under a canopy of deciduous and coniferous trees, and allowing the time-crunched hiker to opt for a shorter one-mile loop instead of delving deeper into the property.

The longer journey is worthwhile, though, meandering through quieter pine groves and taking in an interesting glacial erratic on the Boulder Spur that sits on the edge of a secluded meadow. The relative isolation, sparse traffic, and thoughtfully-placed benches throughout this property make it an ideal spot for a quiet picnic, just far enough from Silver Street to allow a sunset toast without getting lost in the dark. The nominal donation suggested at the entrance is well worth the expense.

Continued on next page ...



Above top: The expansive view from atop Hurlburt's Hill takes in multiple states and often features circling raptors. Above: The kiln that gives Lime Kiln Preserve its name still stands on the northern section of the property.

Bartholomew's Cobble

Bartholomew's Cobble, located several miles to the east on Weatogue Road, receives a bit more traffic, but is equally varied in its offerings. The Trustees of Reservations steward this property and also request a small donation to use their trails, but again, the money is well-spent.

The eastern half of the property is the more ecologically diverse section, with trails that cover the "cobbles" from which the area gets its name: twin quartzite and marble outcroppings that are the vestiges of long-receded oceans. A wildlife viewing blind overlooks a bend in the Housatonic, allowing hikers to view the ducks, geese, and small cattle herd that call this area home. The Ledges Trail descends to the river itself from the blind, and curious hikers can walk out into the clam shell before heading back toward Weatogue Road and the Visitor's Center.

Two other trails bisect this circuit, traversing the mineral-rich soil and diverse fern growth that make this property unique. Bailey Trail is a conifer-shaded amble along a stretch of the Housatonic that connects to some longer, quieter trails on the southern part of the preserve.

Across the road, Hurlburt's Hill offers a vigorous 1000' climb to a 20-acre field that features incredible views of the Taconics and beyond. On clear days, Mount Greylock is visible in the distance, and hawks and other raptors regularly wheel along the thermals above the meadow. A bench awaits the winded hiker atop the hill, and even the most athletic visitor may

find himself pausing to take in the views from the spot, made even more interesting by the guide to predatory birds that stands beside the bench.

Something for everyone

These areas offer something for every visitor. Lime Kiln Farm is excellent for trail runners, with gradual inclines and wide trails, and athletes can dash to the top of Hurlburt's Hill for a solid workout. Nature lovers can take in expansive vistas or lose themselves in the diversity of ferns in the Cobble.

For those with a historical bent, nearby Ashley House offers a glimpse inside a Revolutionary War-era dwelling. Bird watchers will appreciate the variety of songbirds in Lime Kiln's meadows as well as the majesty of the gliding raptors that circle Bartholomew's Cobble. I've gathered ramps near the glacial erratic in the spring and walked among butterflies in the summer.

In general, however, these are not areas for rigorous hikes, but for restorative strolls through interesting, bucolic terrain. If you have an hour and want to get just a little bit lost in nature, these are your places. ●



Above top: A placid stretch of the Housatonic skirts the cobbles. Above, L-R: Shady walks through the Lime Kiln Preserve's coniferous forests provide a welcome escape from the daily grind. Moss-covered "cobbles" of quartzite, marble, and limestone give Bartholomew's Cobble its name.

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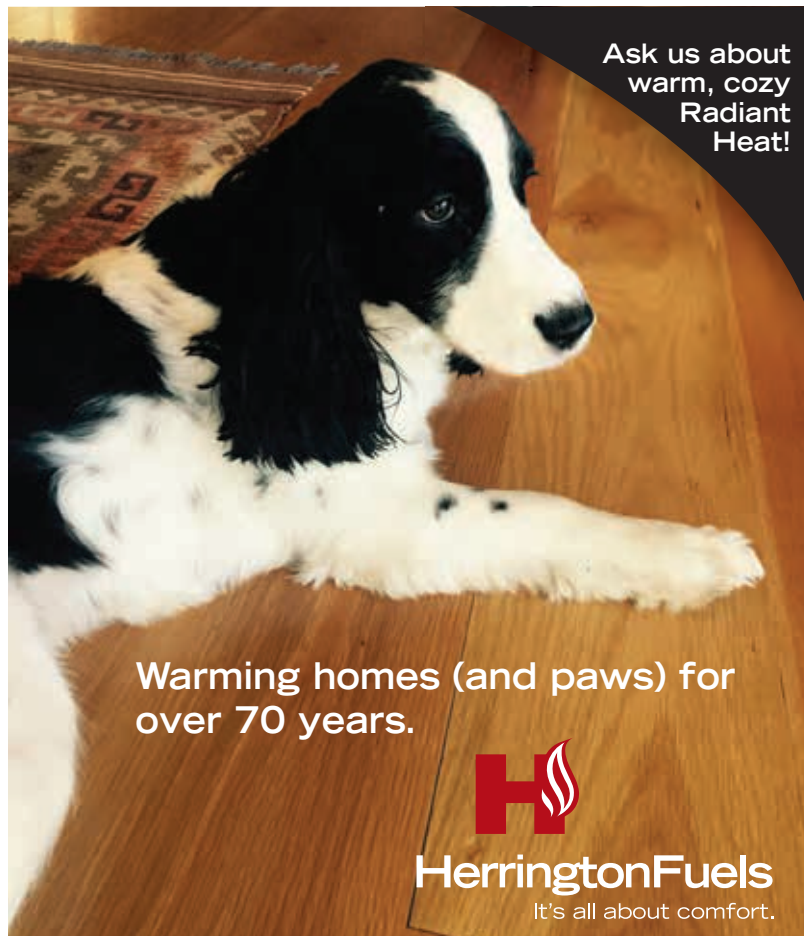


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Searles Hopkins Castle

By John Torsiello
info@mainstreetmag.com

Within easy walking distance of downtown Great Barrington, MA, and sitting grandly like a monument to another era is an impressive stone building set on 62 acres surrounded by high walls. It is known as the Searles Hopkins Castle and it has been a unique landmark of the Berkshires ever since it was completed in 1888.

For almost 30 years, the 60,000-square-foot mansion and adjacent 6,000-square-foot carriage house have been home to the John Dewey Academy. Tours are available only for prospective students and their families. The castle was for sale a few years back. The asking price? A cool \$16 million. But it has since been taken off the market.

Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins

The seven-level structure has a stunning 36 working fireplaces and is filled with detailed woodwork and literally tons of marble in its interior. Both the exterior and interior of the castle are in excellent condition, a credit to its original builders.

No expense was spared in making the Castle, its exterior softened by several large, round spires that rise

three stories high. A red roof adds a touch of distinction to the building, as do its several tall chimneys that rise about the building on all sides.

The Searles Hopkins Castle was built over a three-year period from 1885 to 1888 by Mary Sherwood Hopkins, the widow of Central Pacific Railroad magnate Mark Hopkins, who had passed away in 1879 at the age of 66. At the time of his death, Mark Hopkins was reportedly one of the wealthiest men in the US. After launching a career as a merchant in New York, he traveled to San Francisco where, in 1861, he became a founder and treasurer of the Central Pacific. San Francisco's Mark Hopkins Hotel was built the site of his former home on Nob Hill.

It was modern for its time

The design of Searles Hopkins Castle was done in a style reminiscent of Chambord, the older part of Chenonceaux, France, near the river Cher. Blue dolomite from a quarry on what is known as East Mountain in Great Barrington was brought onto the property and cut down in stone dressing sheds. The Castle, when it debuted, was very modern for its time and was equipped with indoor plumbing and electricity. Many of the early electrical fixtures are still intact. Other unique details include curved rooms, curved pocket doors, and carved wood and marble fireplaces. An organ that was used in the music room and the Castle's elevator were once powered by water from nearby Lake Mansfield.

The vestibule of the castle is floored with moriah marble from an area near Lake Champlain with French griotte, veined and spotted red and dark green marble from the Pyrenees in Europe and portvenere, vert maurin and American black marble from Glen Falls, NY, also employed.



A reception room to the right of the vestibule is paneled in black walnut with a fireplace of old, red Italian marble, and has an elaborate ceiling that is said to be reminiscent of fan vaulting in the Henry VII Chapel at Windsor Castle in England.

A "Great Hall" has woodwork of hand polished English oak, as does much of the building.

An atrium nicknamed "The Heart of the House" has sidewalls of rose of ivory marble taken from the Atlas Mountains of Africa. The room has 16 pillars and flooring of native white marble. Mexican onyx panels conceal electrical lights, which when on give the illusion of sunlight seeping into the room.

The Castle's music room is 50-feet long and entered through the atrium beneath carved oak pillars. The room has a dome shaped ceiling 42 feet above the floor. There are carved oak seats where the former owners of the castle and guests reclined and listened to classical music. A balcony on the second floor and a third floor window allow music to flood the upper floors from the room.

Above: The exterior of the grand and beautiful Searles Hopkins Castle. Below, left: The castle has an added touch of distinction thanks to its red roof and many chimneys. Photos courtesy of John Dewey Academy.



Continued on next page ...



Above: The Castle's many interior rooms have beautiful details and materials from around the world. Photos courtesy of John Dewey Academy.

The dining room is of Moorish style and paneled in antique oak wood with a fireplace of French groitte and Belgian black marble. The room opens to a private porch.

One of the more visually stunning and eclectic spaces is the drawing room done in Louis XIV style. The mantelpiece of the fireplace (portvenere black and gold marble with gold bronze ornaments) alone was valued in 1922 at \$25,000. The room's ceiling was painted on canvas and the woodwork of the room is embellished in real gold leaf. A morning room opens to the southeast side of the castle.

An upstairs hall once served as a family living room and the ceiling is said to be modeled after a palace in

Venice, Italy. Upstairs, there is also a circular library with dark native oak, a billiard room finished in butternut wood, and a suite, once occupied by Mary Hopkins, on the east wing of the castle that has a mantle of *bois d'orient* and Siena marble in its sitting room.

The designers successfully imbued the castle with a sense of openness through the use of large windows and a central atrium that has sunlit vistas of a portico, lawns, pond, and faux Greco/Roman temple that hovers over the water feature to the south of the castle. The light marble floors in many of the rooms and opaque ceilings lend a further air of lightness to the building.

The architects

More intriguing perhaps than the magnificent architecture of the castle is the provenance behind it and the people who originally and subsequently lived in the home, as well as those who had a hand in its design and construction.

The Searles Hopkins Castle was designed by McKim, Mead, and White and it is believed that the legendary and somewhat notorious Stanford White was the primary architect of the building. White was considered an embodiment of the American Renaissance style of architecture. He was murdered in 1906 at the age of 53 by millionaire Harry K. Thaw, the jealous husband of Evelyn Nesbit, a popular actress and artist's model with whom White was said to have had a relationship with. The resulting court case was dubbed "The Trial of the Century."

Hopkins and Searles

After her husband's death, Mary Hopkins returned home to Great Barrington, where she became companions with Edward Searles, who served as the interior designer of the Castle. Mary Hopkins also adopted the adult son (Timothy) of her widowed housekeeper, but she later disinherited him. A scandal ensued as Timothy Hopkins successfully sued his mother for a portion of

her estate, although most of it went to her much younger (by 22 years) second husband, Searles.

Mary Hopkins and Searles spent much of their time in Europe, where they acquired a number of finishings for their Great Barrington mansion, which they called "Kellog Terrace." Mrs. Hopkins died in 1891 at the age of 73.

After his wife's death, Searles inherited Mary Hopkins' estate, which included 25 percent ownership of the Central Pacific Railroad and considerable real estate holdings in San Francisco, New York, and Methuen, MA, in addition to Great Barrington.

Searles collaborated with architect Henry Vaughn on a number of large buildings, including the Stanton Hardcourt Castle, now known as the Searles Castle in Windham, NH; the Dream House, known as the Searles Mansion on Block Island; and the Mary Francis Searles Science Building at Bowdoin College in Brunswick ME. Searles died in 1921 at the age of 79.

The Searles Castle property, which has 1,000 feet of frontage on the Housatonic River, also boasts a 6,000-square-foot guesthouse that is comprised of meeting rooms, bedrooms and apartments, as well as a barn and tennis courts. Formal gardens once graced the open space around the lagoon.

It is impressive, unique, and if its rooms could talk there would certainly be enough grist to form the basis of a reality television show. The Searles Hopkins Castle has been a Berkshire Hills landmark for over 100 years and remains a piece of living history. ●

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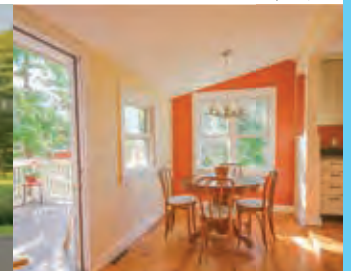
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It's a necessity in life to have a roof over your head. But when it needs replacing, or repairing, who can you call to make sure it's in tip-top condition? Husband and wife duo, Dorothy and Mike Linde, started Berkshire Roofing & Gutter in 2005. Their specialty is residential roofing – primarily using traditional asphalt shingles, but they also use many other types of roofing materials such as metal. Mike says a great product to use is Luxury shingles – they are initially a bit pricey, but have a lifetime warranty and so you shouldn't have to worry about your roof ever again. Don't forget about your gutters, they are important, too! Berkshire Roofing & Gutter install copper, aluminum, and galvanized. Mike and his team of 12 guys are licensed and serve Berkshire, Columbia, and Dutchess counties. They treat your home as if it were their own by using large tarps, protecting your house and your plants, too. All jobs are done in a fast, neat, and clean manner. Berkshire Roofing & Gutter have an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau and are also proud to say they offer a ten-year warranty on their work. Call today, and you are guaranteed to get a phone call back during the same business day to set up a time for a free estimate.



Berkshire International Film Festival

World-class film festival in the heart of the Berkshires. 40 Railroad Street, Great Barrington, MA. (413) 528-8030. biffma.org

The Berkshire International Film Festival (the BIFF) is a world-class festival celebrating its 12th season June 1-4 in Great Barrington and Pittsfield, MA. It attracts over 4,000 tourists and locals to kick off the summer season with sold-out screenings, award-winning releases and premieres, and plays host to industry professionals and special guests like YoYo Ma, Bruce Dern, Noah Baumbach, Gretta Gerwig, Kevin Bacon, Doug Trumbull, Sheila Nevins, Patricia Clarkson. BIFF is one of the "Top Ten Events in Massachusetts" as cited in *Yankee Magazine* and has built a reputation for being a festival that brings the world to the Berkshires through film. For the seventh year, BIFF is proud to present the annual Filmmakers Summit; a two-day talent academy offered to the 2017 film selection filmmakers. This includes a multi-dimensional program led by known industry professionals with panel discussions, lectures, special events, and breakout sessions. The BIFF Filmmaker Summit is designed to celebrate and support the advancement of filmmakers and recognize film as a relevant and important medium. Plus the BIFF is not just a festival, it engages audiences year-round with collaborative community events, special screenings, and parties as a part of the REEL Friends Film Society.



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Have you ever wondered if your homeowners or businessowner's policy afforded flood insurance coverage? Many folks do think there is coverage for flooding water that may seep into their basements, or if you reside in an area that has public storm drains that cause flooding waters into a basement area during a heavy rain, are they covered? The answer to all these scenarios is an emphatic NO! The only provisions for water damage to the interior of ones basement would be a limited coverage provided by "backup of sewers and drains" or "sump pump malfunction coverage." These are typically sublimits of coverage, usually providing \$25,000 for cleanup costs. Otherwise, you need to obtain a flood policy through your agent which is underwritten by the Federal government program, FEMA. Anyone can apply, even if you are not in a flood zone, rates are determined by flood zone, yet premiums are relatively inexpensive. If you think your property is prone to flooding, call your agent and get a quote. Remember, people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan!

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There's spring in your step...

As we step through March and slide toward April, our minds turn to the returning sun and warmth. We find ourselves sipping tea and coffee in a sunny window or on a deck bench, eyes closed, rays soaking into our marrow.

Trees are doing the same. Fluids are pumping, cells dividing, chlorophyll is producing sugars, bound water is becoming free water. The steam is rising from the sugar shacks. All of life takes the turn to increased metabolism, to rebuilding the fibers of our beings.

Thankfully we've seen some recovery of water tables and stream levels following a punishing drought last year. Most people I talk with are able to share a story of a tree they saw die unexpectedly as we edged our way into late fall.

It is time now, to think of having your lawn trees fertilized to provide the nutrition for the rebuilding of fine roots lost to low soil moisture last year. Follow that with an inspection in mid-late June of your trees' crowns to be sure they have a head full of leaves – leaves of rich, green color and normal size. Watch them through summer with a keen eye during August. Early coloration of deciduous trees is a common sign of stress.

Remember to look up ... and call a Certified and Licensed Arborist. (Early spring will bring early tick activity – remember to check yourself daily and consider having your property sprayed for ticks and mosquitoes).



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BRUSH UP ON PAINTING:

TIPS FROM HIGH ROLLERS

Sometimes spring cleaning just isn't enough. We all want to freshen up our home to give it new life, but it doesn't need to cause stress or break the bank. Instead of renovating or remodeling, simply adding fresh paint revamps your home without causing anxiety or costing a fortune.

House painting, whether interior or exterior, is a manageable and inexpensive DIY project that will give your home new life, and can even be fun!

As your grandmother (or mother) used to say, "the devil is in the details," so don't skimp on the prep work. After you've purchased your materials (don't skimp on those either), and protected your rhododendron, you're ready to go! Scrape (to remove all failing paint), scuff sand (to open up the pores so the paint has something to grip), and then be sure to clean all surfaces. Use a pump sprayer filled with a Clorox-based solution followed by a thorough rinse with the garden hose. Beware of power washing, as high PSI can damage your wood and leave your boards too wet to paint for weeks.

Use an electronic moisture tester to make sure the wood is under 15%, and spot-prime all exposed bare wood with a penetrating oil-based primer. Finally, apply your topcoats of latex paint, working around the house in the shade, as painting in direct sunlight on a hot day can result in bubbling. Feeling daring? Try painting one door a bright color you love!

Step back, and admire your new home, now with added value, curb appeal, and protection from harmful UV rays and harsh weather (not to mention your neighbors' ridicule). Happy painting!



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