

GENEVA HISTORY MUSEUM



**HOME OF THE GENEVA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**543 SOUTH MAIN STREET
GENEVA, NY 14456**

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FIRST FLOOR

Main Hall

In the Main Hall you have a good view of the architectural and stylistic changes of this house over 200 years. The period rooms are original to the construction of the house and the Federal style of the period. Later additions and decorative changes are seen in the hallway, office and Gift Shop.

Period Rooms

Part of the original house, these rooms served as the front parlor and dining room before the 1870 addition. The period rooms feature furniture and decorative arts from early America to the Colonial Revival style.

Back Office Gallery

In 1858 this room was added on to the house as the master bedroom. Look for the speaking tube to the right of the door. It was used to summon servants. In the mid-20th century the room served as the kitchen.

The current exhibit is "All Things Geneva: Items From the Clothing Collection." To discover more about clothing history or play fashion bingo go to

<https://genevahistoricalociety.com/exhibits/all-things-geneva-clothing-exhibit/>

Gift Shop

As part of the 1870 remodel this was space added onto the house and served as the dining room. In the mid-20th century it was the library. The door off the Gift Shop led to the back porch which was removed in 1965.

LOWER LEVEL

Hucker Gallery

Originally this space was the backyard. With the expansion of the Historical Society's public programs this multi-purpose space was added to the building in 1965.

The current exhibit is "Geneva's Changing Landscapes." To explore more of Geneva's stories, go to www.genevahistoricalssociety.com.

Please ask a museum staff member for access to the Discovery Room.

Hallway Gallery

The Research Room was the original kitchen. Note the original fireplace with an oven to the side and a place for firewood. During the 1800s it was very common for the kitchen to be in the lower level of upper class homes.

The current exhibit is "An Educated Citizenry: Education in Geneva." To explore more about education in Geneva, go to <https://genevahistoricalssociety.com/exhibits/an-educated-citizenry-education-in-geneva-education/>.

THE FAMILIES OF 543 SOUTH MAIN STREET

Charles and Eliza Bulter

After their wedding in October 1825, Charles and Eliza Butler purchased "water lot 21" south of the village square. Four years later the couple moved into their new home and laid out the gardens on the natural terraces that extended to the lake shore.

The Prouty Family (1842-1902)

Phineas Prouty Sr. first came to Geneva after the War of 1812. He established a hardware business and became involved in a variety of community activities. The Proutys moved from their home on the outskirts of town to 543 South Main Street in 1842. His daughters, Harriet and Sarah, urged him to move so they could be closer to their friends and social life in Geneva. The move must have paid off as Harriet married Thomas Hillhouse in 1844 and Sarah married Alex Chew in 1849. The third child, Phineas Prouty Jr. studied law and passed the bar but at his father's request pursued a business career. In 1855 Phineas Jr. married Adelaide Cobleigh and they shared the South Main Street home with Phineas Sr. until his death in 1862. Phineas Jr. and Adelaide raised six children in the house. The only son and youngest child, Phineas Prouty III inherited the house in 1891. He sold the property in 1902.

The Rose Family (1902-1919)

Charles Rose was a widower with four children and a professor at Hobart College in the departments of Modern Languages and History. In 1902 he purchased 543 South Main Street from the Prouty family, living here with his family until his death in 1915. Four years later the Rose children sold the property.

The Chew Family (1921-1960)

As a child Beverly Chew often visited Geneva (his great-grandfather was Phineas Prouty Sr. and his grandmother was Sarah Prouty Chew). In 1912 he moved to Geneva to work for the Standard Optical Company. Nine years later he was elected President of the company and purchased the house at 543 South Main Street. In 1960 Beverly and his wife Edith deeded the house to the Historical Society to be used as its headquarters and museum.

EVERY BUILDING TELLS A STORY

The Prouty-Chew House has changed considerably since it was built for Charles and Eliza Butler in 1829. It originally resembled the Federal-style house to its north. In 1858 the Proutys added a one-story, one-room addition on the south side (now the Back Office Gallery) to be used as the master bedroom. With a growing family requiring more room, in 1870 they added the narrow addition to the north (now an office) and a dining room (now the Gift Shop). At this time, the roofline was changed and the house was "modernized" in the Italianate style. A second story "studio" was added to the south wing in 1883.

Each floor had a purpose. The basement was the kitchen and service area while the first floor contained the public spaces (parlors and dining room) and the second floor was private space (bedrooms).

Over the years, the front doorway has changed from the Federal style to Italianate to Colonial Revival and back to Federal. The interior of the house retains the Federal era details in the period rooms while the floor, trim, and details of the Main Hall and Gift Shop reflect the Victorian remodeling done by Phineas and Adelaide Prouty.