

# MAUSERT BROTHERS LEFT BIG MARK ON PARK

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Editor's note: In this first of a three-part series on the history of the Mauseurt Block in Adams, the Transcript takes a look at the building's genesis at the turn of the 20th century. On Saturday, March 9, the next installment will appear in print and online at [www.thetranscript.com](http://www.thetranscript.com).

ADAMS -- A pair of brothers from Albany, N.Y., had Park Street's Mauseurt Block building erected in just eight months in 1900-01. But the structure one sees there today, in the process of a complete renovation, remains fundamentally unchanged.

"That building is such a strong structure," said Steven Stenson, whose company, REDPM is the developer behind the block's revitalization. "You don't see steel so thick in buildings today. ... You could drive a truck on the ground floor with no problems whatever."

The story begins when brothers George and Conrad Mauseurt moved east to Berkshire County toward the end of the 1800s and established an ice business in Clarksburg, which grew to market ice cream as well, and a bottling company.

"I think they were entrepreneurial at heart," Ryerson Mauseurt, a descendent living in Albany, N.Y., said. "They would deliver these huge blocks of ice around and they made a good living at it."

Conrad leased the present Park Street lot from owner John L. Barker on Jan. 20, 1900. He had two timber-frame structures built there and housed within them several stores and offices.

Soon, these buildings would be moved to Spring Street across the railroad tracks behind the lot, as the brothers would partner with architect James Fleming in creating the present structure, of which the Transcript then said "those who are qualified to judge pronounce the plans as calling for the handsomest business block in Berkshire County."

Fleming had learned his trade from Charles and Frank Waters, another set of brothers who constructed many of the town's most noteworthy buildings.

"Most of the brick schools in Adams, the old Renfrew Mill, which is no longer there, and possibly the Jones Block and the Firehouse Cafe," Eugene Michalenko, of the Adams Historical Commission, said of the buildings erected by the Waters brothers.

But John L. Barker, who sold George Mausert the lot, wanted a say in the direction. Barker preferred a hotel for the site. Before anything more than the foundation was built a fight ensued.

A Transcript article dated Sept. 22 reads: "[A policeman] found Mr. Barker busy at work [at 3:30 a.m.] tearing down the foundation. He had a crowbar and was working like a mad man. The officer told him he must stop and took him to his home in Summer street. It is thought that Mr. Barker's mind may be effected and no doubt he will be examined by physicians."

Barker received no citation from police.

To this story, Stenson adds, "In 1900, you were able to destroy a building, apparently, so long as you were a gentleman. You just had be sure and see a physician after."

The Mausert Block was designed in one month, built out of brick, marble and steel in eight more months and was filled with businesses by its opening in March, 1901. Dry goods and grocery stores were joined by a hat maker, a jeweler and upstairs business offices.

On the third floor, a large theater soon played host to a secret society, the Hoosuck Valley lodge of Odd Fellows, who hosted a 250-person banquet there on May 29, 1901.

A fire in 1903 did \$10,000 of damage -- to a building originally valued at \$40,000 -- and set a scared horse running down Park Street, where it nearly injured many, the Transcript reported.

Clarence W. Gallup was the building's next owner, acquiring it from the Mauserts in 1906.

Gallup would undertake a series of improvements and lease space to businesses that would come to play a huge role in the building's future.

Among these were attorney and eventual building owner Walter J. Donovan, who leased office space for his firm, Donovan and O'Connor, in 1914.

The other fellow, who leased space in 1925, had a name that would be remembered by generations of town families: F.W. Woolworth.

For more details, visit [www.mausert.com](http://www.mausert.com), where a timeline of these events and links to the original Transcript articles will be posted as the installments of this series are published.