

# A BOLD STATEMENT: THE HATHORN BLOCK (1850)

Corner of Main & Front Streets  
Richmond, Maine



*From the 1855 "Map of the Town of Richmond, Sagadahock COY. Maine" surveyed by D.S. Osborne, published by E.M. Woodford, Philadelphia. Note that the Main Street side shows seven windows/bays wide. There are only six.*

In the fall of 1849, two entrepreneurial brothers,  
Captain Jefferson Hathorn and  
Joseph Jackson (a/k/a J.J. or Jack) Hathorn  
began construction of a brick Block  
at the foot of Main Street.

It was to be the culmination of 25 years  
of their family's investment in the young town.  
The largest building in Richmond, the Hathorn Block was  
a bold statement of belief in the community's future,  
an anchor connecting town to river and the world beyond.

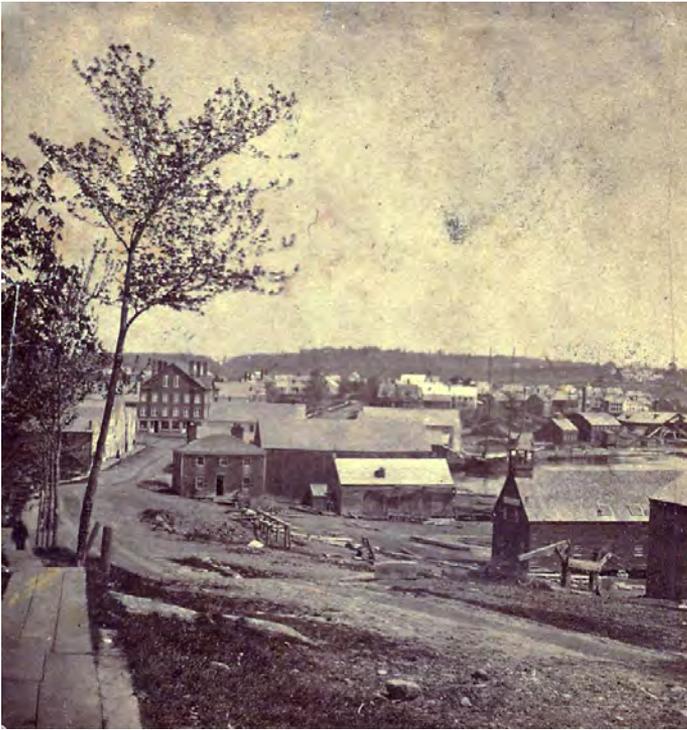
## *Hay, Clay, Wood and Water*

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In 1814, Richmond Village, or White's Landing, consisted of only eight houses, including that of Barzillai White. Nine years later when Richmond became a Town, the village had grown to 13 houses. It was that year that Ebenezer Hatch, the town's first postmaster, built a house where the Hathorn Block now stands. The tax rolls for that first year show that John Hathorn, father of the brothers above and a successful farmer and shipbuilder in Dresden, owned some 300 acres of Richmond farm land. Hay seems to have been his main cash crop.

In 1828, John Hathorn bought all the lands at the lower end of Main Street, north side, down to the river. He soon developed a wharf with barn. Then a hay scale was erected on land now of the Hathorn Block. Before long, Hathorn family members had bought additional lands to the north where a small brickyard was put into operation. In 1832, John Hathorn moved to Richmond. Sons Jefferson and J.J., and daughter Elizabeth soon followed. They bought out the interests of Joseph Langdon in the 1823 Hatch house, and in 1836/1837 built the Richmond House tavern house and stable. The lumber was undoubtedly milled at the sawmill just north on Mill Brook that was then also owned by the Hathorn family. They also opened a second brickyard, this one on Swan Island where the current landing is.

The 1840s saw the Hathorns build several vessels in Richmond including three Brigs averaging 85' – 95' long, 24' wide and displacing 136 to 182 tons. They also built a Ship of 440 tons with a length of 124' and a width of about 28', and a Bark, the "J.J. Hathorn", of 398 tons, 120' long, 27' wide with a draft of 13'6". Ownership rested more heavily with merchant brother J.J., while Jefferson served as the vessels' Captain. Richmond village prospered. It was announced that the train would reach town in 1851. With the future looking promising, the brothers Hathorn decided it was time to be bold. They would build the grandest building in town, firmly anchoring the business district, and their personal interests, to the waterfront.



*C. 1860-1880. Note the busy waterfront and the gambrel-roofed Barzillai White house, here in 1814. It was later moved across the street, used as an epidemic pest house, and then burned.*

## ***Architectural Importance***

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The Hathorn Block is a bold building when observed from the river. Built as mixed use commercial and residential space, internally it is two separate buildings with a continuous brick wall splitting it into north and south halves. Built to fit the corner lot, the south side rooms are out of square. The building is a 6 bay by 6 bay, cross-gabled brick and granite structure with 6 chimneys.

The bricks likely came from the Hathorns' own brickyards. Of transitional Greek Revival to Italianate design, the building shows tripartite massing (3 big segments of 2 bays each). The massive granite lintels and sills, and the commercial floors rendered in cut granite, emphasize the heavy horizontal lines of Greek Revival. This heaviness is nicely offset by the Italianate dentils (or teeth) along the roof edges

and the round arch windows. The original windows were double hung 4-over-4s set in pairs. The commercial space windows on Front Street were 6-over-6s, while the Main Street commercial windows were 3-over-3s.

The importance of this building from an architectural standpoint is evidenced by its inclusion as a contributing building to the Richmond Village Historic District as placed upon the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the National Park Service. In 1997 this building and its neighbor to the west, the Richmond House or Hotel, were placed on the list of Maine's Most Endangered Historic Properties as maintained by Maine Preservation. The Richmond House has since been saved. The Hathorn Block now holds the distinction of being on this list longer than any other property that has not yet either been restored or lost.

## *The Fate of the Hathorns*

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The 1850 Census seems to show Jefferson Hathorn, wife Sally and three children (likely Joseph S. "Jode" age 17, Sallie age 16, and Jefferson age 10), and Lemuel Brown all living in the Richmond House. Son Jode (Captain Joseph S. Hathorn) married Susan Lennan of Richmond in 1854. They immediately went to sea together where Sarah kept a Journal. In 1997 Catherine Petroski published *A Bride's Passage: Susan Hathorn's Year Under Sail* detailing this honeymoon adventure. After one trip they returned to Richmond. Susan, being pregnant, stayed behind. When Jode set out next in 1856, he and his ship were never heard from again.

Jefferson and Sally had buried their youngest son, Volney B., soon after birth. Daughter Sallie married Lemuel Brown in 1853, but she succumbed to death in 1856 just months after Jode was lost. Lemuel Brown became an owner of ships. Jefferson, Jr. (a/k/a Iffy, Jeffy or Jep) also followed the sea. In 1861, at the age of 20, while serving as Mate on the Bark J.J. Hathorn, he went down with the ship. Captain Jefferson finally retired from the sea in the early 1870's. His wife Sally died in

1872. He soon sold the Richmond House to Harrison Springer and moved into the Hathorn Block. Captain Jefferson remarried a much younger woman, Emma Moore, in 1878, and lived out his life in the Hathorn Block until death in 1885. Emma lived here a bit longer before moving to Detroit, Michigan by 1895.

Going back to the 1850 Census, J.J. Hathorn appears next door in the Hathorn Block with his wife Mary, three children (likely Philena W. age 5, Frances B. age 3, and Mary F. age 1) and three boarders. J.J. And Mary had already buried their first two children, both daughters, two months apart in 1843, aged 2.5 years and 5 months. In November of 1851 they would bury their 3 year old Mary F.

Joseph Jackson Hathorn himself died in March of 1854 aged 35. Daughters Philena and Frances would go on and marry and lead full lives. The widow Mary had left the Hathorn Block by the 1870 Census, her youngest daughter Frances having married the infamous Captain Zaccheus Allen in January of that year. The Hathorn family's ties to the sea did continue despite repeating tragedy.

## *A Chronology of Use*

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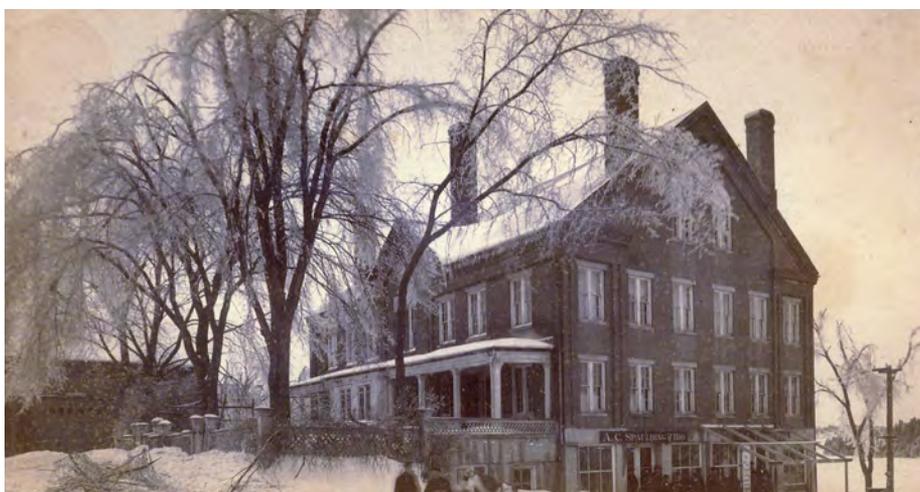
The Hathorn Block opened in 1850. J.J. Hathorn immediately took up residence and undoubtedly used portions of the building to warehouse and sell some of the goods brought into town aboard their own vessels. The shipping records of the 1840s and 1850s should be examined closely in order to tell fully this part of the building's history. In 1852, Richmond's first bank, the Richmond Bank, was incorporated. William Patten was President, F.R. Theobald was cashier and Jefferson Hathorn was one of seven Directors. The Richmond Bank set up for business in the center bay of the Front Street or river side of the Hathorn Block. Later renamed the Richmond National Bank, it eventually moved up Main Street. In 1855, the Main Street commercial space was in use by Patten & Sturtevant who ran a country store.



*Detail from 1878 birdseye view.  
Note that the Main Street side shows five  
bays/windows rather than six.*

In 1867 Ansel D. Blanchard & Ansel B. Gaubert ran Blanchard & Gaubert groceries and dry goods here. Also in the Block was Samuel Jack, Grocer. In 1874, Blanchard & Gaubert were still in business. A.C. Spaulding & Bro., Grocers had replaced Samuel Jack. In 1880, we find Ansel B. Gaubert selling groceries and crockery, etc. His former partner was now an ice dealer elsewhere in town. Also in the Hathorn Block was A.C. Spaulding & Bro. (Abner C. and Milford F.), which sold groceries and also now served as the post office.

A.C. Spaulding was postmaster in 1880 and Zachariah S. Spaulding was postmaster in 1883. The post office moved across the street after 1884 but before 1887. A review of earlier Maine Registers and the local weekly newspaper *Richmond Bee* (1880-1962) should reveal exactly when the post office came and went from the Hathorn Block this time around.



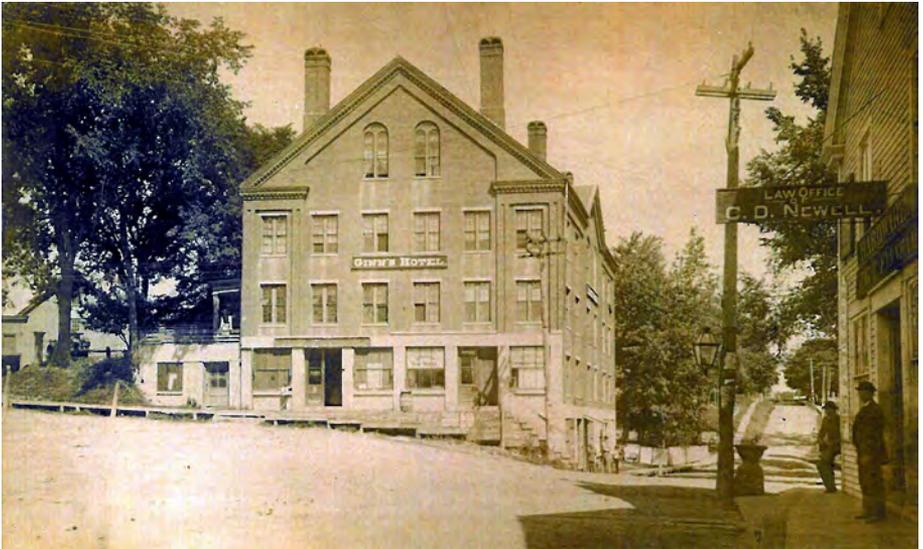
*24 Jan 1886 Ice Storm. This photo was taken by Alonzo W. Kimball,  
a photographer who boarded here at the time.*

In 1889, A.C. Spaulding & Brother were featured in a directory titled "Leading Businessmen of Richmond." Here is what it said:

"A.C. Spaulding & Brother, dealers in Groceries and Paints, Oils, Main Street, Richmond. A firm that supply reliable Groceries at a fair price are, worthy of being liberally patronized, and even more decidedly is this the case when not only Groceries, but other equally useful commodities are furnished in a correspondingly acceptable manner. Messrs. A. C. Spaulding & Brother have done business here in Richmond ever since 1871, and the record they have made for fair dealing and active enterprise, is one of which they have abundant reason to be proud. Their establishment is located on Main Street, where two floors are utilized of the dimensions of 25 X 70 feet, and employment is given to three competent assistants. The firm is made up of Messrs. A. C. and M. E. Spaulding, both of whom were born in Carratunk; the latter being a member of the Odd Fellows and of the Knights of Pythias. A very large stock is carried, comprising choice Staple and Fancy Groceries, Corn, Flour, Feed etc., together with a full selection of Paints and Oils of standard quality. Every provision has been made for the accommodation of family trade, and the supplies furnished, will be found specially adapted to household use. Ready mixed Paints which have become so popular of late years, are handled largely, one of the favorite brands being the "Atlas" which is made by Messrs. Geo. D. Wetherill & Co., of Philadelphia, and is guaranteed to give satisfaction when properly used. Messrs. A. C. Spaulding & Brother, do not confine themselves however to handling the productions of any one house, and their assortment of Painters' supplies is a large and desirable one."

Captain Jefferson's widow Emma still lived upstairs. Alonzo W. Kimball, a well known Photographer and Crayon Artist, boarded here. Alonzo's studio was elsewhere on Main Street. He had been in business here since 1880 and was also featured in "Leading Businessmen of Richmond." (Note his ice storm photo to the left.)

In 1889, Wesley H. Ginn ran an eating house just up the hill on the north side of Main Street (see photo on back - the T-shaped sign above the first mule). In 1892 we find Emerson, Daniel F., groceries, Main St., corner No. Front. This was likely in the Hathorn Block. Also listed is Ginn's Hotel, Wesley H. Ginn, Proprietor, located in the Hathorn Block. You could board by the day or the week at a cost of \$2 per day. Two years later, on 05 April 1894, the Hathorne House [sic] opened. Using the 2nd and 3rd floors of the south half of the Hathorn Block, J.H. Gross was the Proprietor. This business lasted only until 1899.



*C. 1892, Ginn's Hotel (photo courtesy of Maine Historic Preservation Commission).*

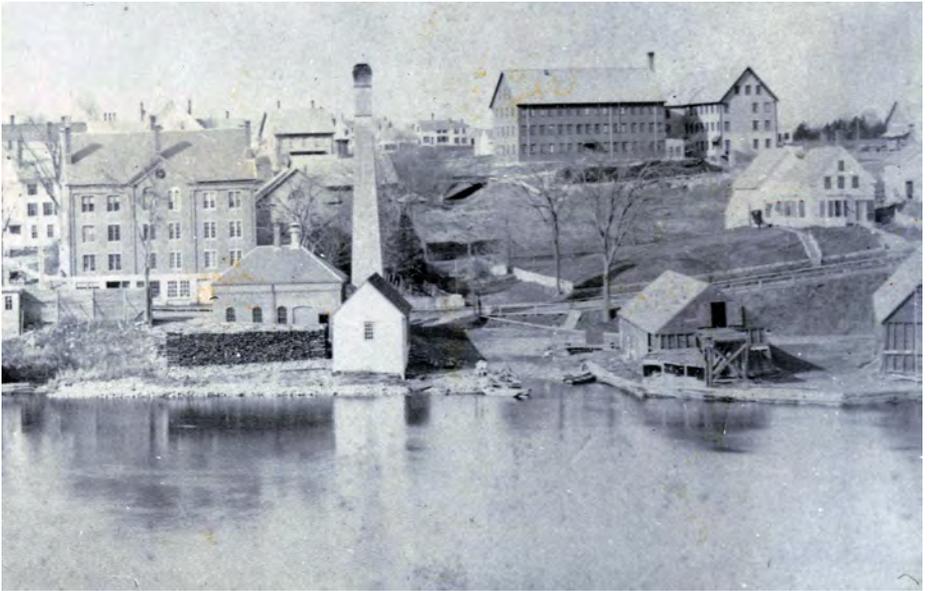
In 1895, the widow Emma Hathorn sold the south half of the Block to George R. Theobold. Sallie Hathorn Brown's descendants maintained ownership of the north half. Theobold was the village postmaster in 1895/6 and 1896/7. The post office was likely back in the Hathorn Block. The next year Thomas G. Herbert was named postmaster and the post office again moved across the street. Soon (perhaps 1898?), the post office across the street in the Hatch Block suffered a bad fire when robbers tried to blow up the safe in the middle of the night. The post office once again moved back across the street into the Hathorn Block. Postmaster Herbert came too.



*1901 A.B. Houdlette*



*1901 A.B. Houdlette. Note shed (over wood?) behind Water District (RUD) offices.*



*C. 1910, Charles Lewis Collection, RH&CS. Note riverside woodpile - no shed.  
Note stable to right of Hathorn Block. Old Brickyard is to the right of the smokestack and  
in the foreground of the shoe factory.*



*C. 1910, Ernest Howe Collection. Note 'For Sale' sign on north half. Note stable, now gone.*



*C. 1910, Ernest Howe Collection. Note commercial activity below, and riverside woodpile to the right.*

In 1915, Benjamin F. Curtis bought the north half of the Block from the Hathorn/Brown heirs. Four years later, in 1919, he bought the south half from Theobald. This deed included all post office fixtures. B.F. Curtis then made a series of ten year leases with the Postmaster General, U.S.A. running through 31 Dec 1949. Each lease details the equipment and security measures required. The last lease included an elevator from the basement so that they could bring in the mail via the northside basement door. Rent was \$600 per year at the end. Harold N. Libby was postmaster in 1926. Donald O. Cate served as postmaster from June 1935 until May 1964. By then the post office had moved to what is now Pierce's Country Store, that move having occurred in 1950 or 1951.



*Note automobile on left side of street, buggy on the right.  
(Photo courtesy of Maine Historic Preservation Commission.)*



*24 Mar 1936. Ice takes out three of five spans of the four-year-old Richmond Dresden Bridge. The Hathorn Block anchors the downtown. Note Richmond Bee office at foot of hill, beyond the 'silent policeman' directing traffic. Who was serving Pabst? (Photo courtesy of Maine DOT)*

By 1936, Central Maine Power Co. opened a store in the Hathorn Block next door to the post office. Here you could pay your bill, purchase electrical appliances and have them repaired. Their phone was “33-2.” Not long after the post office moved out, CMP did too. Soon thereafter, Attorney John W. Quarrington moved his law office and real estate business to the Hathorn Block, 3 Main Street. It is not known what if any use was then being made of the upper floors.



*Real photo postcard mailed September 1948,  
collection of John A. Robbins, Jr.*

In April of 1964, Carlton H. Curtis and Ruie L. Curtis sold the Block to David Klickstein of Bath. Under his ownership many small apartments were rented out. They included the north part of the Main Street commercial space. Howard Beasley ran a barbershop for several years and the commercial space overlooking the waterfront park was home to an “Antique” store handling used furniture, etc. These uses appear to have continued until the early to mid 1970s.



*May 1970. Note diapers on the line to the north, 'silent policeman' in the road.*

Later, David's daughter Alexis made her home in the north half. During a few of those years, the "Merrymeeting Standard", a weekly newspaper, was published here. The Klickstein family sold the building in 2002. Since then, several owners and potential owners have worked hard to stabilize the building and to make the numbers work so that it could be put back into active use. No one has been successful so far.

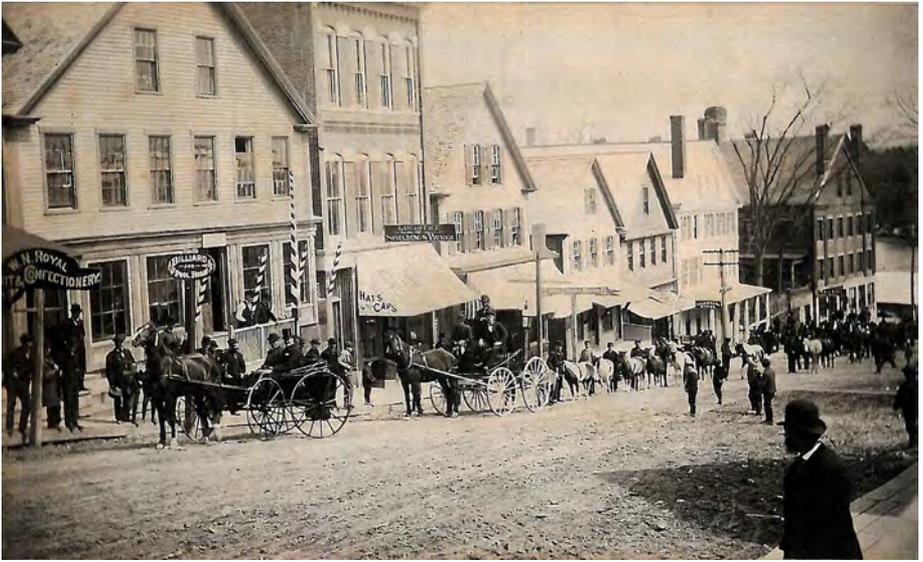
My hope is that Fossil Preservation Partners, LLC can find that success now. If not, the Hathorn Block has reached an end. That would be a great loss to our community. I like to think this building will be here after we are gone, offering opportunity, shelter, and a sense of place and community for our children, and their children, and their children. This building has been around for six or seven generations ... so far.



*C. 1970*



*1971 D. Richard Sturges. Note diapers on the line.  
The 'silent policeman' is still on duty at the bottom of Main Street.*



*C. 1889. A ceremonial occasion, perhaps a Civil War/GAR veterans event or a funeral?  
(Photo courtesy of Maine Historic Preservation Commission.)  
A majority of these seven buildings still stand. Let's keep it that way.*

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are courtesy of the  
Richmond Historical & Cultural Society.

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Additions, comments & corrections solicited.

This publication compiled  
in honor of my friend and mentor Polly Roberts,  
who loved Richmond Village and considered  
its wonderful buildings her children.

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*Documenting connections since 1975*

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