The recent demolition of the Cheshire Inn in our neighboring town brings to mind the many buildings in Adams that are gone or have been significantly altered. They are houses, churches, schools, factories and businesses that made the town look important and created a dramatic backdrop for small town daily life. Some were built in outlandish styles and some were fine pieces of architecture. They were expressions of the popular fashion of their time. They were the product of economic wealth.

These pieces of Adams are gone. They have been replaced with new structures or remain empty lots. This is a photographic record of those places which are lost to us forever.

*Each photo is marked with the names by which the buildings were known through their history.*

Lost Adams

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The corner of Center and Myrtle Streets, where the TD America bank stands today, was occupied by a hotel for nearly 122 years. The photograph shows the Greylock Hotel in 1939. In the foreground, men are watching workmen build forms for the Adams Post Office foundation. The street level store fronts were occupied by the Adams office of *The North Adams Transcript* and a hardware store. At the time of its demolition in 1967, the columned portico was gone and the building was covered in asphalt shingles. Its demolition was part of the Urban Renewal of 1967.

This illustration, from the 1881 pictorial map, shows that the structure had not changed much in 60 years.
This building is still standing on Park Street but was dramatically altered by a fire in 1949. The massive pitched roof was replaced with a flat one and half of the tower was removed. It served as our Town Hall from 1884 until 1997 and still serves as the Berkshire Country Northern District Registry of Deeds and the Adams Police Department.

For a period of its history, it was known as the Opera House because the second floor was an auditorium. Town Meetings and high school graduations were held there as well as performances by traveling theatrical and musical troupes and visiting authors. Mark Twain did his stand up routine here on December 1, 1884 shortly after he published *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. *Tom Sawyer* was published eight years earlier.

The last occupants of the performance space was The Photoplay, which showed motion pictures. After the fire, the second floor was remodeled into offices for the expanding town government.

**The Opera House**

**Town Hall**
During the Civil War, Adams Selectmen resolved to consolidate the 20 school districts – 7 in South Village and 13 in North Village – and to build two large graded schools in each village. The 1868 Annual Town Meeting approved the construction of the South Adams Academy and the Drury Academy in North Village.

The South Adams Academy was built in the architectural style of its time called Second Empire or French Mansard. Other notable buildings in that style are the Louvre Museum in Paris, the Executive Office Building next door to the White House and the house in the Hitchcock movie “Psycho.” It’s a dramatic style that usually includes a central tower, ornate brackets at the roof line, heavily accented windows and the unique uppermost floor that seems to be part of the roof.

The school had 12 rooms on three floors. One of the rooms in the building was initially used to house the high school which had four different locations in town before it came here. All the other rooms were used for the graded system of first through eighth grades.

This school once stood on Liberty Street next to the old Adams High School but was demolished some time after the new Adams Memorial School opened in 1953. The exact date of its demolition is not known. The Wacky World playground now occupies most of its footprint.
Isaac Collins built this massive piece of Second Empire architecture four years after the Civil War ended at the location now occupied by the Big Y parking lot on Center Street. Mr. Collins was the South Adams resident who spearheaded the efforts to divide Old Adams into North Adams and Adams. His building housed some of the town’s major institutions. All four Adams banks were located here. The post office was here until it was moved to Park Street in 1895. (That is the present location of Smith Brothers-McAndrews insurance agency.) Lawyers, insurance and real estate agents occupied the second and third stories. The Lodge of Masons had their temple in this building.

After it suffered a fire in 1915, the top floor and the ornate cornice were removed and the brick was painted white. It was demolished in the Urban Renewal of 1967.
These churches are numbered in chronological order of when they were built. Of the churches on these two pages, only one is gone. The youngest one, №8.

№ 1 - The old Baptist Church, built in 1836, had a spire that was shattered by lightning in 1889 and was removed. But a clock and bell, installed in 1841, was saved because the village depended on it for the correct time. The church still stands as a fellowship hall attached to the present Baptist Church.

№ 2 - The original Methodist Church which was the former St. Jean Baptiste Hall and the former Buster’s Garage. Today it is the Adams Redemption Center on Commercial Street.

№ 3 - St. Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Church was originally built as the Congregational Church on Park Street where the Mausert Block is today, across the street from the Town Hall. It was moved down the street in 1870 when the Irish bought it to be the first Roman Catholic house of worship in South Adams. Today it is the back end of the Simmons Furniture Store. The spire was removed when the store front was added in 1902.

№ 4 - The Congregational Church on Park Street, built in 1868, lost its tall slender spire during a March wind storm in 1902.
№ 5 - St. Paul's Universalist Church, built in 1872, disbanded in 1929. It is now the Elks Lodge on Center St. It is not known when it lost its spire.

№ 6 - The Trinity Methodist Church, built in 1897, disbanded in 1968. Its spire appears in photographs in the early 1950s but it is unknown when it was removed. It is now the Masonic Temple on Center Street.

№ 7 - The Polish National Catholic Church, named Our Lady of Perpetual Help, still stands on Murray Street. Built in 1907, the church was sold at auction in 1942 and converted to apartments. The bell that once hung in its spire is now at the entrance of a restaurant in Laughlin, Nevada at a hotel casino resort called The Colorado Belle.

№ 8 - St. Rita's Italian Catholic Church, once stood on Howland Avenue and was a mission church to St. Anthony’s of North Adams. It burnt in 1927. No known photo of it exists and pictured here is an architect’s rendering of a proposed new church.
This mill was a prominent structure in the center of town that grew from a 2-story wood structure in 1849 to a 3-story, brick V-shaped factory in 1911. When completed, it filled the corner of Center and Commercial Streets.

They produced fine Linen Ledger paper that was used for public records and therefore had to be archival and long-lasting. Paper, well-made, can last for centuries or even millennia.

The paper company was founded by Levi Lawrence Brown and his uncles, Daniel and William Jenks. After L.L. Brown’s death, the mill was owned by A.B. Daniels and continued in his family until it closed in 1973. It was salvaged by Barry Krock and demolished the following year. He sold a portion of the property to world-wide chain restaurant, McDonald’s. The other portion of the property was turned into the Town Common in 1986 with government and privately-donated funds.

L.L. Brown Paper Company
It is not exactly known when L.L. Brown built his home on Commercial Street. Because it was constructed in the Italianate style, it most likely was built before the Civil War.

For a period of time, Mr. Brown was considered the richest man in Berkshire County. His wealth came from many sources: paper, textile, Zylonite, oil, brokerage and real estate. In the 1890s, the wealth vanished and Mr. Brown died in 1901 leaving debts, adjusting for inflation, would equal $40 million today.

His widow abandoned the house and it was empty for 20 years. In the 1920s, the mansion, by then an eyesore, was bought by C.T. Plunkett who tore it down and donated the land to build, what is known today as, the C.T. Plunkett Elementary School.
From 1889 to 1958, this company was the largest employer in Adams. Within 10 years of its incorporation, four very large mills were built on both sides of Hoosac Street. That decade was the period of the greatest economic prosperity in the history of Adams.

When the third mill was built, a clock tower was added which could be seen from many places in downtown. It was demolished in 1972 when the mill was demolished, even though there was an opportunity to save it as a free standing structure.

Today, Mill #1 still stands as a prominent piece of architecture in town. It became the Berkshire Square apartments thanks to the vision of one individual developer, Michael Capizzi.

Two other elements of the original mill complex are still with us: a portion of Mill #4, standing along the banks of the Hoosic River and the yellow brick office building which appears in the photograph below the clock tower. It was the executive offices of the corporation.

The most enduring piece of this enterprise is its last name—Berkshire-Hathaway which is used by Warren Buffett, a “wizard of Wall Street.” Berkshire-Hathaway doesn’t make textiles anymore; it makes money by buying stock in other companies. Its own stock price was recently valued at $169,400 for just one share.
W.C. Plunkett, the father of W.B. and C.T., built this mansion in 1869 on Park Street and named it after his mother's ancestral estate in Ireland. It is another example of the Second Empire architectural style similar to the Collins Block and South Adams Academy. All were built in the same year, all are now gone.

The sons formed the Berkshire Cotton Mfg. Co. and dramatically increased their family's wealth. The older son, W.B. lived the rest of his life in this house.

He twice served as host to the President of the United States, William McKinley, when he visited. For 10 days, Montrath was the “White House” while the president conducted executive business during his stay.

A member of the Plunkett family lived in the house until 1936. The house was sold to three Adams businessmen who shortly after the sale tore it down.

The Greylock Federal Credit Union occupies this site today.
The Renfrew Mfg. Co. was built a few years after the Civil War ended and slowly expanded over 50 years. It pushed the development of Adams northward creating the last and largest industrial village in the town’s history which was called Renfrew. It attracted emigrant weavers from County Renfrewshire in Scotland. They lived in the long brick row houses that stretched down Columbia and Friend Streets. They wove ginghams and damasks in the mill until 1927.

The original Arnold Print Works in North Adams (now home to Mass MoCA) bought the mill in 1929, enlarging its operation and calling the Adams plant, the Jones Division. They printed cloth. This business passed through several owners in the 50s and 60s. In 1967, local businessmen bought it to save it from closing. They named it after the original Arnold Print Works. The operation closed on July 3, 1984 and most of the buildings burnt in the largest fire in Adams’ history on November 26 of that year. The original 1869 mill did not burn. Michael Cappizzi attempted to save this building too, but it was demolished in January, 1994.
With profits from the Renfrew Mfg. Co., James Renfrew, Jr. built this Queen Anne style estate in an isolated area off East Street. In 1883, a contracting company, that specialized in building mansions, came to town with the craftsmen capable of creating a palatial residence for a small town mill owner.

The Renfrew family lived there for 18 years and sold it to the Catholic Diocese of Springfield for the Sisters of Providence who operated a sanitorium/vacation spa for priests and nuns. Some visited for convalescence and others just for vacation. More lodging rooms were added to the mansion, a chapel was attached to it and two more buildings were built.

The Greylock Rest, as it was called, was sold in 1968 to a private school who failed to pay real estate taxes. The mansion burnt November 25, 1977 and the three-structure complex was torn down.

The Town of Adams took the property for back taxes. The remaining building on the property still houses the Youth Center and it used to house the Council on Aging there also until this year.
This building could potentially have been another Roman Catholic parochial school in Adams. The pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Rev. Thomas C. O'Connor, used his own personal funds to purchase property and build it on Valley Street adjacent to the church.

Over a period of several years in the 1920s, he personally built the school of his own architectural design which he modeled after his family’s ancestral estate in Ireland. The building was made of rusticated cement blocks and had a castellated roof-line making it look like a medieval structure. He called it Castle Rathconnor.

Unfortunately, the Rev. O’Connor died suddenly at the age of 62 on New Year’s Eve 1926 when his building project was still not completed. In 1930, it was sold at auction to settle his estate. The Probate Court controlled the sale of his property since he died without a will. The school’s ownership ultimately came into the possession of the Bishop of Springfield. The sales occurred at the same time that the new addition to the Notre Dame school was under construction.

The building was never opened for any use. The given reason, as passed down by oral history, was that it was structurally unsafe, built on a sand bank. In 1947, the building, being empty for over 20 years, was sold to Stanley Krutiak who demolished it for salvage and was given rights to take the sand and gravel from the property.

In 1971, the Bishop of Springfield deeded the land to the Adams Housing Authority to construct the Columbia Valley Elderly Housing complex which now occupies the site.
This building was the town’s first school designated exclusively as a high school. It was built in 1891, on Liberty Street. In 1910, the school was doubled in size with an addition to the right. The building held grades 10 through 12. Ninth grade was in Renfrew School and the South Adams Academy, its next door neighbor, until C.T. Plunkett Junior High School opened across the street from it in 1924. This created a small campus of three buildings on Liberty Street: The Adams High School, The South Adams Academy and C.T. Plunkett Junior High School.

Adams Memorial High School on Columbia replaced this high school in 1954 but the building continued to serve as an elementary school until the early 1970s. It was torn down after Hoosac Valley High School was built. It is now the open area next to the Wacky World playground.
When Montrath, the Plunkett mansion, was demolished the lot stayed vacant for a dozen years. Three years after World War II ended, Jacob Wineberg and his son, Mervin built Adams’ first free-standing super market.

Jacob had been in business since 1917 and operated a meat market on Myrtle Street and a grocery store on Summer Street. The Adams Super Market on Park Street was the first in a chain of five free-standing super markets that bore the Adams name up and down Berkshire County.

The Park Street market was remodeled and improved through the years but on February 28, 1968 a fast-moving electrical fire burnt it beyond repair. The Greylock Credit Union now occupies this space.
There had been a concert hall or auditorium at this site on Park Street since the 1850s. The building became one of Adams’ first motion picture “movie” theaters, The Atlas. During the 1930s, when what could be called the heyday of movie popularity, the old theater building was torn down and replaced by a modern theater with a capacity of 1200. The house was packed for opening night of the new Adams Theater on January 14, 1938. In 1947, Kahlil Joseph bought it and his son, Marshall operated it until 1967 when it closed becoming a victim of home television and dwindling patronage.

Every movie theater had to have large outlandish signage to hype the movie-viewing experience. In Adams, we had this art deco marquee with a wide fluted column proclaiming our town’s name in neon lights. It is not known when it was removed.
Some homes are crafted in such a way that they are objects of great architecture. This house is designed in the Federalist style of architecture similar to the Susan B. Anthony birthplace which dates the construction of this house to be near the 1820s. Its symmetry, the four tall chimneys, the stepped gables, the multi-paned windows and the classic columned front entrance create a fine looking structure. But the overall best feature is that the house is built of cut stone, maybe local marble or limestone. It was demolished when Lucy (Jenks) Noble and her husband Edward J. Noble built their house on 17 Commercial Street which is today the Haflinger Haus Restaurant & Inn.

This fine example of Georgian architecture was most likely built in the 1830s. It served as a post office and a Masons Lodge Temple. It was also the boyhood home of Charles Pierce Burton, author of the boy adventure series, “Boys of Bob’s Hill”.

Of the three houses on Park Street, it was the only one demolished when C.T. Plunkett built his mansion which is today the Adams Town Hall. The other two houses were moved—one to Pleasant Street the other to Bobs Hill (B Street).