

John Folsom

May 17, 1756 - August 4, 1839

Folsom Plot 5, Lot 14

Born in Stratford, Connecticut in 1756, John Folsom left home at the age of 14 to learn to be a silversmith. Settling in Albany, he worked his trade, meeting and marrying Elisabeth File from Brunswick, NY. While in Albany, he became a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church.

A successful silversmith, he sold spoons to Philip Van Rensselaer, and joined business with Isaac Hutton from 1786-1790. This partnership was not a successful one and Folsom moved the family from Albany to Union Village, now known as Greenwich, NY. His business prospered and he was able to save enough money to purchase the Glen property on the south side of the Hudson, just over the bridge south of Pearl Village (Glens Falls). He entered the lumber business. The first year was not a success; 10,000 logs were lost. He persevered and went on to be a success as a farmer, merchant, lumberman, manufacturer of cotton cloth, and most importantly as the owner of the toll bridge that crossed the Hudson between Pearl Village and Saratoga County. Everyone who wanted to cross the bridge had to pay him a toll. His cotton cloth factory also included all the water rights to the south side of the Hudson, a most lucrative endeavor as well.

By 1813, he had amassed a fortune, and had overseen the building and renovation of a better bridge. By 1818, he had built a large mansion on the south side of the river. It was later the home of Col. Glenn for whom Glens Falls was named.

When he relocated to the Glens Falls area, he was determined to build a Christian house of worship. Up to that time the area was serviced by itinerant preachers. The Union Church was organized in 1803. It was to be open to all religions and placed at the 4 corners in the middle of Pearl Village. Work progressed slowly; after 3 years it was still without windows, doors and pews; two more years passed before its completion. Folsom donated \$1000 towards the completion of the church. He influenced church members to make the church a member of the Presbyterian Church. They agreed and the church has been in session for two hundred years.

Folsom felt the call to preach on a regular basis and would hire the Old Academy Building on Ridge Street to preach the word. He then built his own preaching house, called the Session House in the middle of the mercantile area in downtown Glens Falls where he preached and organized daily meetings for the faithful.

John and Elisabeth Folsom had 13 children; 9 girls and 4 boys. His daughter Ann married Solomon Goodrich who became associated with his father-in-law in some business ventures

and conducted a school that is believed to have become the Glens Falls Academy. Another daughter, Glorianna, his third born, took her own life in 1827 at the age of 40. She threw herself into the Hudson River. Her body was not found for two years, and is now buried in this cemetery.

Eventually Folsom turned his Session house into a dwelling and stopped preaching for a time, later becoming active once again in the Presbyterian Church. He died at the age of 83 in 1839 and his wife Elisabeth died just 8 months later.

Prepared Evelyn Donahue from a theatrical script written by William Woodward for the Chapman Historical Museums fall Glens Falls Cemetery tour in 2006. Questions and comments should be directed to the Glens Falls City Historian at: City Hall 42 Ridge St. Glens Falls, NY historian@cityofglensfalls.com 518-761-3871.



John and Elizabeth Folsom's and their daughter Glorianna's grave stones.

