

Francis H. **Ruggles**

By Douglas H. Shepard, 2013

Andrew **Young**, History of Chautauqua County, New York (1875), p.657 lists **Ruggles** as the Board of Supervisors' Clerk in 1834. The Town of Pomfret Assessment Roll for 1836 lists him (for the first time) as holding ½ acre assessed at \$275. (A note at the beginning says the roll was in the collector's hands in December 1836.) The house and lot were on Mechanic Street, today's Forest Place.

The *Fredonia Censor* of 1 June 1836, 3:1, reported that FHR, Esq., of Fredonia had been appointed a delegate to the State Convention. The issue of 2 May 1838 reported that he was a member of the Board of Excise of Pomfret meeting at Asa **Peirce's** home on the 7th. The 25 July 1838 issue reported he had been admitted an Attorney at the Supreme Court. Probably late in 1838, he acquired a two-acre lot, probably with a house already on it, on Temple Street. The *Censor* of 2 January 1839, reported his late house and lot were for sale, but the 1839 Assessment Roll (dated 21 August 1839) shows him still holding both properties.

However, there is a deed of 10 June 1841 from Zena **Bliss** of Burlington VT to Henry J. **Ruggles** of Rutland which is for the property F.H. **Ruggles** was occupying and paying taxes on in 1839. Henry J. (S.?) **Ruggles** of Poultney, Rutland County, VT deeded it to Francis H. **Ruggles** on 24 August 1843 for the same \$1,000 he had paid **Bliss**.

The *Censor* of 20 November 1839 announced that Francis H. **Ruggles**, Esq., of Fredonia, would be an Associate Editor of the paper. The editor, Ebenezer **Winchester**, was planning to issue *The Settler* for six months from April 1840. It was a political advocacy paper supporting William Henry **Harrison** for President. **Winchester** gave up the *Censor* in April 1841. There is a 16 June 1841 announcement that he was leaving his accounts with **Ruggles**. In a subsequent issue, 21 July 1841, **Ruggles** had an ad that as "Attorney & Counselor at Law and Solicitor in Chancery" he would "henceforth give his undivided attention to professional business."

In 1842, Benjamin F. **Greene** studied law with **Ruggles** (Young, p.636). A retrospective column in the *Censor* of 13 January 1892 referring to 1842 stated "F.H. **Ruggles** had an office in the rear of the Post Office in the **Johnson** House [roughly today's *1 Park Place*], on Center street, where the late Judge B.F. **Greene** studied law." In an ad in the *Censor* of 27 July 1842 **Ruggles** added "Commissioner in Bankruptcy" to his other functions.

Young, p.649, states that **Ruggles** was a Judge in 1843 and there is a passing reference to him as "Judge **Ruggles**" in the *Censor* of 18 November 1845. It was in an ad for L.S. **Watkins**, portrait painter "at the residence of Judge **Ruggles**" and at the **Johnson** House for a short time. The ad ran into 1846.

The *Censor* passed from Ebenezer **Winchester** to Robert **Cunnington** in April 1841 and one year later from **Cunnington** to [Willard]. **McKinstry** & Co [Levi L. **Pratt**]. On 10 April 1844 **McKinstry** announced that **Ruggles** and Benjamin F. **Greene**, Esqs., would have charge of the political department of the paper "as Editors till after the Presidential election."

Ruggles is included in the 1845 New York State Census for Pomfret. His household included three males, five females, one male subject to military duty and one person entitled to vote. In October 1846 he was nominated to represent the 8th District of New York (the *Fredonia Censor* 6 October 1846). **Young**, p.653, lists him as a Senator from the 8th District. (He adds a description of what was included in that district at various times.)

Although the assessment rolls for 1847 through 1851 show **Ruggles** still owning his Temple Street house and lot, the 1850 Roll does add "M.S. **Woodford**, Agent" next to **Ruggles'**

name, and when he sold the property to a John **Smith**, the deed of 1 August 1851 described him as "of Albany."

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