Stephen Mack built this timber framed Greek Revival style house in 1839, probably using funds awarded to him and to his half Native American children in treaties between the Federal Government and the Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) and Potowatami tribes. The two story house has a full limestone basement with an indoor cistern. The first floor consists of an entry way with stairs leading to the second floor, a parlor and a large kitchen. The house originally had two chimneys, one for the kitchen fireplace and the other for a cast iron stove in the parlor. The second floor consists of bedrooms. Mack had the house painted white. According to Edson Carr’s History of Rockton, at that time it was the finest house in Winnebago County.

After Mack’s death in 1850 and his estate was settled, tenant farmers lived in the house. Sometime in the late 1880s, two one-story additions were built at the back of the house. After the Forest Preserve District bought the land in 1926 and a golf course there, the golf course caretaker and his family lived in the Mack house until 1950 when a new house was built for them where the Stevens building now stands. In 1950, the Mack house was in such poor repair that it was going to be demolished. It was saved by a petition of people from the community. These people founded the Rockton Historical Society which then used the house as a museum. The house is now used by Macktown Living History for educational programs.

The original Macktown (Pecatonica) cemetery was on the first hole of the golf course. Hononegah, Stephen Mack, and their son Henry, who died at age 11, were buried there. When, in 1880, a tenant farmer decided to remove all the cemetery markers so that the land could be plowed, friends of the Mack family moved Hononegah and Stephen to Philips Cemetery 3.5 miles to the southwest. In 1962, the bodies were exhumed and moved to this small final resting place. The newspaper articles documenting these moves make no mention of Henry being moved along with his parents. He may or may not actually be buried here.

Archaeologists have conducted two projects in the vicinity of the Mack house and cemetery. In 1980, archaeologists carefully excavated blocks at the corners of the Mack House to establish the original ground surface and to uncover the original design of the front door steps. In 1992, the undisturbed grass-covered area north of the house and west of the cemetery was part of a 30-acre systematic survey of Macktown. During this survey archaeologists excavated small holes approximately 35 cm in diameter and 35 to 50 cm deep at 30 feet intervals. Like the soil from the excavations at the house corners, all the soil from the holes was sifted through ¼ inch hardware cloth. Historic and prehistoric artifacts larger than ¼ inch were recovered. Given the lengthy occupation of the Mack House, it is not surprising that excavations at the corners of the building and the systematic survey of the area immediately to the north yielded modern artifacts near the surface, items from tenant farmers or the Mack family just below, and finally prehistoric tools and debris on the bottom.

Historic

The land immediately around the Mack House is relatively undisturbed, but areas farther to the east, west, and south have been disturbed by building and plowing. The most significant artifacts come from the excavations at the north corners of the house and from the area north of the house and east of the cemetery. Here historic objects such as glass fragments, historic ceramics, clay pipe fragments, clay marbles, square cut nails and other metal objects have been found in areas undisturbed by construction.

Prehistoric

In one shovel probe a broken tool and the chips of stone from its creation were recovered from the same hole. We can imagine the flintknapper working on his tool-to-be—perhaps a knife or projectile point. The knapper hits the item too hard or in the wrong spot; the unhappy knapper leaves the broken tool and flakes right where they fell. Hundreds or thousands of years later an archaeologist finds this broken tool and all the chips in one spot indicating that this part of the site has not been disturbed.

Historic artifacts

Buckles, clay pipes, and marbles.

Ceramics.

Glass bead.

Prehistoric artifacts

Broken tool and chips.

Tool fragments.

Lithic artifacts.

Prehistoric ceramics.