

Old Creamery To Cease Operations

New Loading Platform To Be Located At Site

When the Red Hook Creamery closes its doors on the afternoon of Monday, August 31st, "Finis" will be written in large letters to the final chapter in the history of an enterprise that has served Red Hook and Vicinity faithfully and well for more than three quarters of a century.

In yielding way to the inevitable march of progress and efficiency the closing of the local plant will mark the end of the career of an enterprise that began as a local co-operative organization sometime during the last half of the Nineteenth Century, and grew through the years into the thriving establishment that the present generation of residents of this area know as "The Creamery".

Sometime after the close of the Civil War a group of local farmers and dairymen, desiring a better manner of disposing of the products of their dairy efforts, organized what came to be known as a Separation Plant and Butter Factory. This plant was situated on the Old Mill road just north of the village and, as nearly as can be ascertained, was located on the land now owned by Mr and Mrs Max Arnold just south of the old Fraleigh Mill.

Directors of the undertaking were Henry Elting and Dudley Kerley. The intake of the plant was good for the times during which it was in operation and it is related that it served its patrons with a great degree of success.

The enterprise functioned with satisfaction to all concerned for a goodly number of years till the march of time and expanding business necessitated a change in the set-up.

Messrs Elting and Kerley retired from active connection with the enterprise and the undertaking passed into the hands of D. W. Wilbur, this village. Then about the year 1893, Wilkes and Twill of New York City came to Red Hook and decided that a change of location to facilitate shipment of the output of milk, which by now had grown from a Butter Factory into a Creamery, and rented land from L. P. Fraleigh (I) near the well known "Fraleigh Switch" of the local branch of the Central New England Railroad. This plot of land was located just to the north-east of the present Fraleigh cow barn and near the entrance of what is now known as the Allendorf Road which leads past the Ward, Newmark, and Decker properties.

Ira Travis served as manager of

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Old Creamery

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the new plant which handled some 50 cans of milk per day at its peak of activity.

The old building near the Fraleigh Mill, after standing vacant for a number of years, was struck by lightning and burned.

Growth of the plant must have been rapid for, sometime about the turn of the century, D. W. Wilbur bought land from James Baxter with expectations of erecting a larger and better building. This plot of land, some 2 or 3 acres in extent, was a portion of the well-known Laplands farm and the building erected thereon formed the nucleus of the present creamery plant.

Sometime later this plant was taken over by the Beakes Dairy Co. of New York City who operated it with the names of J. Hopkins and J. Anderson appearing on the records as acting managers. Too, the Wilkes and Twill Creamery was Co.

taken over by the Beakes Dairy. The Beakes firm must have operated the plant with a goodly degree of success for, in 1912 George Cooper came to Red Hook to handle things at the Creamery and operated the place for the Beakes Company till they relinquished their holdings in 1927.

Mr Cooper must have been a man of considerable foresight and ability. When he came to the plant, ice was the only cooling agent used for chilling the milk and the daily intake was little better than 50 cans. When he left the Creamery in 1927, the beginnings of the electrical cooling system was on its way and the intake of the plant boosted to 325 cans of milk per day from some 123 dairies.

An epic milestone in the career of the plant came in 1927 when it was taken over by the Dairymen's League Co-operative. This organization leased the plant to a firm whose name is known and famous wherever milk or dairy products are mentioned, the Borden

Fernal Products Division of the mighty Borden Company.

Even at the close of the Butter Factory so many years before, the Bordens had been active in the area with collection points at Elizaville and Pine Plains, and, after the close of the plant on Mill Road, had secured some business from the local producers.

Thomas Talleur of Clinton Corners came to Red Hook as manager for the Bordens and remained till 1937 when he removed to Warwick, N. Y.

Talleur was succeeded at the plant by Charles Ostrom who came to Red Hook from Apulia, N. Y. and who was destined to be the last manager of the Red Hook Creamery. Mr Ostrom was a long-time employee of the Borden Company having entered their service in 1907, and under his supervision the plant reached the peak of its productivity and efficiency.

Completion of the changeover from ice to electric cooling of the milk before pasteurization, and increased efficiency in the handling of the milk which boosted the total days processing to the peak figure of 560 cans, were only a part of the results attained by Mr Ostrom while operating the plant.

Ninety-six electrical cooling units were placed in operation entirely eliminating the somewhat uncertain ice-cooling process. The yearly quantity of milk handled was raised to some 17,519,787 pounds or 203,718 cans per year, a far cry indeed from the small total handled at the old Butter Factory on Mill Road.

Mr Ostrom, who reached retirement status in April of this year after 46 years with the company, consented to stay on at the plant till all arrangements could be completed for its closing. This closing was brought about largely by the advent of Big Business methods into the local milk processing field. Instead of delivering their milk at the creamery as of yore, the local producers will make their hauls to two collection points, one at the site of the old creamery and the other at Nevis Four Corners. From these points the milk will be transported by refrigerated trucks to the large Borden plant at Mount Vernon and pasteurized and processed there, thus eliminating the cost of the operation of the Red Hook unit. This has been made possible largely by the development of the present day methods of the rapid transport of milk from collection point to processing plant.

Mr Ostrom after his retirement plans to remain in Red Hook where he has made for himself a host of friends. The two other employees of the plant, Fred Hicks of Red Hook and Frank Passini of Miller-ton, who have 25 and 28 years of service with the company to their credit, will be offered places elsewhere with the organization.