



Egbert Benson HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

P.O. Box 397 Red Hook, N.Y. 12571-0397

SPRING 2001

FAREWELL TO THE RED HOOK DRUG STORE

The February 21st closing of **The Red Hook Drug Store** has left the community shocked and saddened. For almost one hundred years, a family-owned drug store has occupied the handsome brick building on the northwest corner of Broadway and Market Street.

Benjamin Franklin Gedney built the building around 1870 to house Red Hook's first department store selling "dry goods, groceries, medicines, etc." In 1926, **Edmund Bassett** (born in Red Hook in 1865) wrote "I remember the hall over the store, and a saloon in the basement, and I remember when they changed the hall into rooms for city boarders. I also remember when Mr. Gedney built the row of stores on West Market Street. At first they had an archway to drive to the rear of the building but that has been closed." The West Market Street addition housed a variety of stores: one for boots and shoes, one for hardware, etc., a restaurant, a vegetable stand and a bakery. Later, the telephone company occupied the top floor of the Broadway store.



A 19th-century view of the Gedney Building. Note the Gedney House hotel sign and kerosene street light.

Courtesy Fred Briggs

The Gedney building became a drug store around 1917 and in the 1920's and 30's it was operated by **Archie Paine** who lived in an old house set on an acre lot on Fraleigh Street.

Paine pasted the prescriptions he filled in 1933 in a 1931 suit and coat catalogue salvaged from the clothing store next door. The album is a virtual who's who of the medical profession serving the Red Hook community at the time.

Joseph E. Vigeant wrote his prescriptions on **Red Hook Drug Store** pads, while **L. Edward Cotter**, and **L.W. Stoller** used their own letterheads. **E.K. Losee** scrawled his orders on any old scrap of paper at hand. Doctors from Rhinebeck, Germantown, Pine Plains, Hudson and Poughkeepsie are also represented. **Lou and Susan Maher Pepe** presented the album to the Historical Society in 1996 when they accepted the Society's **Heritage Award**

accepted the Society's **Heritage Award** for the **Red Hook Drug Store's** historic displays

In the 1940's **Walter** and his father **Frank Beane** operated the drug store, assisted by a young lad from Tivoli, **Dan Griffin**. Upon his graduation from pharmacy school he became **Walter Beane's** partner. The Gedney building was by this time owned by **Don** and **Alice Norton** and around 1945 they remodeled the front, removing a wooden porch on the first floor, moving the large store windows forward and installing the graceful white marble stairs leading to the front door. The design is said to be based on an example at **Colonial Williamsburg**.

A soda fountain was a popular feature of the drug store and in front of the store was an electric popcorn machine. **Governor Thomas E. Dewey** often stopped on his way from his home in Pawling to his office in Albany and bought popcorn to eat in the car.

Walter Beane died in 1958, and **James Maher**, a pharmacist from Mamaroneck, learned that **Dan Griffin** was looking for a new partner. Driving up Route 9 to visit his wife's grandmother in Germantown, Maher decided to stop at the Drug Store and look around. He liked Griffin and the two soon became partners and worked together until Griffin's retirement in 1987. The business prospered and the soda fountain was removed to make more room for greeting cards, cosmetics and other sundries. A barbershop located behind the drug store on West Market Street was relocated and the space turned into the pharmacy. **Jim Maher's** daughter **Susan** helped out in the store. After

graduating from **Northeastern University** with a degree in pharmacy she joined the staff as a professional, taking over the business in 1994.

In a thoughtful letter of farewell addressed to her former customers and friends, **Susan Maher** recalled her youthful memories –

"I grew up in Red Hook visiting my father at the drug store. As so many of you also do, I remember coming in to sit at the soda fountain for a grilled cheese and cherry coke. For me, there was always the hope of leaving with a treat of rock candy or licorice from one of the glass candy jars behind the counter if Dot VanSteenburgh was in a good mood. She usually was. I was a young mother when I returned from college to work for my father and his partner Dan Griffin. I returned to many familiar faces, lots of new faces, and an abundance of smiles. I went from being a kid who hung around the drug store to a professional who was able to care for patients and their families ... I can't think of a more wonderful way to spend 20 years and I thank you all for that."

All prescription records were transferred to the **CVS Pharmacy** on North Broadway. Three of Susan's employees: **Kevin Burns**, **Melissa Maher** and **Stacey Frankle** went to work for CVS.

Contacted for comment, the present owners of the Gedney building, **Carlene** and **Richard Baright** expressed their desire to find a new tenant whose business would continue to serve the Red Hook community as the drug store has for so many years.



Seasonal decorations and bright flowering window boxes have made a joyful contribution to the Village center.

Photos courtesy Susan Maher.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S KEYBOARD

Barbara W. Bielenberg

It's Time to Renew Your Membership – NOW - Please!

We need 200 paid up members to continue to send out postcard notices of our meetings and Newsletters three times a year. Using bulk mail it costs **\$2.30** to post and print a year's worth of postcards to each member and nearly **\$2.00** to print and post three newsletters. That's **\$4.30** spent on each member – **whether or not the dues are paid.**

So why don't we just drop delinquent members from the mailing list?

Because we believe our programs are interesting enough that **most of you want to know about them** – and because the important part of the mission of the Historical Society is —

- *To promote and encourage historical research and to foster and promote public knowledge and interest in the history of the Township of Red Hook.*
- *To develop and publish materials relating to the history of the Township of Red Hook.*

So – if you've been meaning to renew, **please do it now!** Even if you never come to a meeting – the other half of your **\$8.00** membership helps pay our monthly donation to the **Friends of Elmendorph** for the use of the Inn for our office and meetings, and pays for office and archival supplies so that we can continue to preserve and share our historical resources.

Our dues are so ridiculously low that the many members attending our February 27th meeting on "Ice" voted to increase individual dues to \$10.00 and family dues to \$15.00 effective January 2002, and many members elect to add a donation or upgrade when they do renew.

PLEASE RENEW NOW, AND INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN ALSO!



SUMMER BOARDERS COME TO RED HOOK

Fred Briggs has shared with us a *Summer Home Guide* published by the Philadelphia, Reading & New England R.R. in 1894. It lists a number of hotels and boarding houses located in or near Red Hook, and indicates that the rural atmosphere we cherish today was already a selling point at the close of the 19th-century.

RED HOOK, DUTCHESS CO., N. Y.

A land of plenty this, where health and good living reign, six miles from the Hudson River. The air is light, clear, and invigorating, and local enthusiasts are wont to declare that their village possesses "the best drinking water in the State." The village contains three thriving churches—the Episcopalian, Methodist, and Lutheran. There is beautiful scenery in every direction, the mountain views being especially fine.

RED HOOK STATION—Red Hook Post Office.

A. J. GEDNEY—Boarding house. One-quarter mile. Accommodates 16. Adults, \$6 to 8; transients, \$1.25 per day. House is situated in a healthy locality, commanding splendid views. Excellent fishing; raises own vegetables. Free transportation if advised. Convenient to churches. Refers to the station agent.

THEODORE F. COOKINGHAM—Farm house. Four miles. Accommodates 12. Adults, \$7; children, \$4; transients \$1.50 per day. Stage will meet guests if advised. Bass, pickerel, and trout fishing. Good lively accommodations. Refers to William Sittlingham, 123 Fifth Avenue, New York.

JOHN A. FRALEIGH—Rose Hill Farm. One and one-half miles. Accommodates 12. Adults, \$7; children, \$3; transients, \$1 per day. Will meet guests at station; no charge. Boating and fishing in numerous lakes and streams in vicinity. Pleasantly located on an elevation. Perfectly healthy, plenty of shade, extended views in all directions. Good roads, excellent water. Hot and cold water throughout the house. Refers to Mayor Schirlen of Brooklyn, and Horatio Powks, 11 Park Row, New York.

JAMES LEARY—Farm house. One and one-half miles. Accommodates 17. Adults, \$5; children, \$3; transients, \$1 per day. Free conveyance from station. Table liberally supplied with vegetables, plenty of fresh milk, butter and eggs. Location healthy, fine mountain views, enough shade, fine walks and drives.

H. E. ELLSWORTH—Red Hook Hotel. One-fourth of a mile. Accommodates 50. Rates, \$6 to \$8 per week. Pleasantly located, first-class table, every convenience. Write for particulars.

R. G. MORE—Farm house. One mile. Rates, \$6 to \$8. Full particulars upon application.

MISS SARAH M. BOLINBAKER—Farm house. Two miles. Rates: Adults, \$5; children half price. Accommodates 12. Free transportation from station.

FRANK NELSON—Farm house. Two miles. Accommodates 5. Adults, \$5. to \$7 per week. Full particulars upon application.

ELLERSLIE, COLUMBIA CO., N. Y.

Beautifully situated in a rich farming locality; good water; game in abundance. This is the nearest station to Elizaville, N. Y., three-quarters of a mile distant.

ELLERSLIE STATION—Elizaville Post Office.

Z. P. SMITH—Farm boarding house. One-half mile. Accommodates 20. Adults, \$5 to \$6; children, \$3 to \$4; transients, \$1 per day. Free carriage from station. Raises own vegetables. Pickerel, perch, and bass fishing, boating, etc. Two beautiful lakes of over 70 acres each, within five minutes' walk of the house, with plenty of shade trees. Beautiful mountain scenery and natural waterfalls. A pleasant place to spend the summer. Refers to Charles O'Malley, 81 Fulton Street, New York.

J. N. COUSE—Farm house. One mile. Adults, \$7. Full particulars upon application.

JACKSON CORNERS, DUTCHESS CO., N. Y.

This quiet little hamlet is located on the Rhinecliff Branch, eighteen miles from the Hudson River, and surrounded by a prosperous farming locality.

JACKSON CORNERS STATIONS—Jackson Corners Post Office.

PETER J. NEAR—Farm house. One and one-half miles. Accommodates 20. Rates upon application; transients, \$1 per day. Free transportation from station, Mount Ross. Excellent fishing and boating in near by stream. House is situated on high, healthy grounds; has large, airy rooms. Raises own vegetables. Further particulars on application.

WILLIAM M. DECKER—Lafayetteville post office. Farm boarding house. Two and one half miles. Accommodates 20. Adults, \$5; children, \$2.50; transients, \$1 per day. Free transportation from station. Daily mails. Beautiful mountain scenery. References upon application.

RED HOOK HISTORY BOOK NEARING COMPLETION

Barbara Bielenberg

I've just had an advanced look at **A Brief History of Red Hook**, which Historical Society Trustee **Clare O'Neill Carr** has been working on for more than two years and I'm delighted to report it's a project well worth the wait. **Clare** has unearthed a remarkable collection of photographs to illustrate her richly detailed text. Every **Red Hook** resident and visitor will want to have a copy!

The book is a generous gift to the community from **The Wise Family Trust** and all profits will benefit our **Historical Society**. A companion book telling the story of **Rhinebeck** is also being produced. Both volumes should be ready for sale this summer. Watch for further information!

Egbert Benson Historical Society Spring Schedule

(All programs will be at 7:30 p.m. at the **Elmendorph Inn**,
unless otherwise indicated.)

- March 27** Ogden & Ruth, America's Aristocracy, a slide talk by **Tom Kernan**, Interpretive Programs Assistant, **Mills Mansion State Historic Site**
- April 24** Fisheries of the Hudson: Past & Present with Emphasis on Shad, Sturgeon And Striped Bass, a slide talk with **Steve Stanne**, **DEC Hudson River Estuary Program**
Note: this program will be held at the **J. Watts DePeyster Fireman's Hall** in **Tivoli**.
- May 22** The History of Fruit Growing in Red Hook with **Larry Thetford** and **Local Fruit Growers**.
- June 12** The Historical Society's Annual Dinner Meeting with election of new
6:00 p.m. Trustees, Heritage Awards * and guest speaker, **Alan Neumann**, architect and President, **Hudson River Heritage**.

*We invite you to nominate candidates for Heritage Awards in the following categories:

- **Written or Recorded**
 - **Architectural**
 - **Artistic**
- **Environmental**

(Nominations may be made in each of these two categories:

Senior: and individual or group over the age of 21;

Junior: an individual or group under the age of 21.)

Nominations must be received by June 1st.

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MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2001
(It's time to renew your membership for 2001)

Name(s) (Please Print)

Mailing Address

Telephone Number (Area Code)

ANNUAL DUES

Check appropriate line(s): make check payable to "Egbert Benson Historical Society"

_____ Family \$12 _____ Individual \$8 _____ Student (under 18) \$1
_____ Contributing \$25 _____ Sustaining \$50 _____ Life (\$100 or more)
_____ Business or Organization \$15

Additional contributions are most welcome and are eligible for company matches: DONATION \$ _____

We invite you to help with the work of the Society. Please check here () if you would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP: • Advance notice of monthly meetings • Three newsletters each year • The knowledge that you support the collection, preservation and dissemination of the history of the Town of Red Hook.

NO 2001 ON YOUR MAILING LABEL? PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

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