

HISTORIC RED HOOK

The Burnett Family of Undertakers

St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery, Red Hook

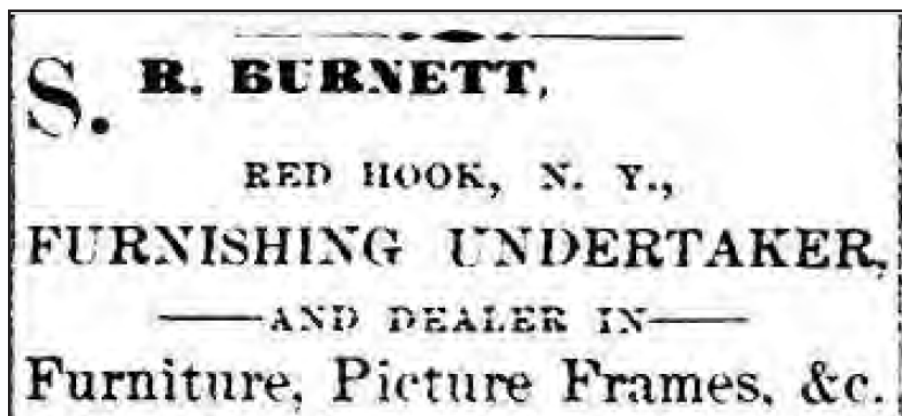
Large grey granite rectangular monument with

BURNETT on one side and LASHER on the other.

North side of the cemetery west of the north-south access road



At 26 years of age in 1865, Red Hook native and “cabinet maker” Stephen Burnett (1829–1911) and his young family were recorded in the New York State census in Red Hook. Ten years later he was labeled a “furniture dealer”, and in the 1880 Federal census as an “undertaker”, showing us the progression this profession took, not only for Burnett, but for many men who adapted to changing times.



Red Hook Journal, 27 Feb 1885

Before the funeral became an industry, a furniture maker was just the man who crafted coffins. As the culture shifted following the Civil War and preserving the body of the deceased became popular, families looked to the furniture maker to undertake arrangements for the funeral and burial. This is how cabinet maker Stephen R. Burnett became undertaker Stephen R. Burnett.

Stephen operated the firm Near & Burnett with George Near until 1869 when he went independent and incorporated his sons in the business. In 1886 when he retired and passed the company on to his sons, Frank and William, they renamed it Burnett Brothers. Frank bought William out in 1922 and added his great-nephew Lloyd H. Rockefeller in 1933 forming Burnett & Rockefeller. Today, the business is owned by the Troy family under the name Burnett & White.

BURNETT Bro's.,
 (SUCCESSORS TO S. R. BURNETT,)
Red Hook, N. Y.
Dealers in Furniture, Picture Frames Uphol-
stry Goods, &c.
 A General Assortment constantly on hand.
Repairing and Upholstering Neatly Done.
FURNISHING UNDERTAKERS.
 A full Line of Caskets and Trimmings and every requisite for the care and
 burial of the dead, kept in stock to select from.
 Having had several years experience in the business, we feel confident we can
 please all who will favor us with their patronage. Give us a call.
F. E. BURNETT. **W. E. BURNETT.**

Red Hook Journal 31 Dec 1886

Frank (1885-1934) and William (1860-1952) were Stephen's only children with his wife Sarah E. Eighmy (1833-1921) daughter of Rhinebeck native George D. Eighmy. William married Ella Hermance and they had one child, a son Eddie who died in infancy. Frank married Estella Lasher, a daughter of Jacob Lasher and Catherine Sipperly. Though they did not have children of their own, they adopted Bertha M. Donnelly, the daughter of a family friend, Armenia Ham Donnelly McCoy, who they cared for until she was married. Frank's Lasher in-laws share the monument with the Burnetts; their family names are on the eastern side.

All three Burnett men were prominent in the Odd Fellows fraternal order, the sons following their father's lead, holding high office in the Rhinebeck Lodge, Christian Lodge No. 379, and Shiloh Encampment No. 68 (a higher branch open to Third Degree members). In addition to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Frank was a charter member and the first master of Red Hook's Hendrick Hudson Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. He was involved with the incorporation of Red Hook as a village and in setting up its first public water works, and served as village clerk. Frank was also a member and trustee of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

William lived to age 92 and was the first chief of the G.W. Wilbur Hose Company (which became Red Hook Fire Company), president of School District No. 4's Board of Education, and was a member of the Red Hook Businessmen's Association, the Grange, and the Red Hook Society for the Apprehension and Detention of Horse Thieves. When he died, three distinct services were held at his funeral home: an Odd Fellows service at 7:45, Rebekah services at 8:00, and Fire Company services at 8:15.

All three Burnett men, their wives, and little Eddy Burnett are buried together in the cemetery in which they helped lay hundreds of their neighbors to rest.

Research and writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2025

Sources:

"A short history of the Funeral Director profession" 09 Apr 2018 goldencharter.co.uk/news-and-info/2018/a-short-history-of-the-funeral-director-profession/

"Funeral History in the United States" woodvalecemetery.com/funeral-history-in-the-united-states/

1865 New York State Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Stephen R Burnett

1870 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Stephen Burnett
 1875 New York State Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Stephen R Burnett
 1880 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Stephen R Burnett
 1892 New York State Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Stephen B Burnett
 1900 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Frank E Burnett
 1900 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Stephen R Burnett
 1910 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Frank E Burnett fam#9
 1910 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co. NY - Stephen R Burnett fam#8
Columbia Republican, 3 Oct 1911
Commemorative & Biographical Record of Dutchess County P. 883
findagrave.com/memorial/87968750/frank_e_burnett
findagrave.com/memorial/87968789/estella_c-burnett
findagrave.com/memorial/87968924/stephen_r_burnett
findagrave.com/memorial/87968955/sarah_e-burnett
findagrave.com/memorial/87969008/william-e-burnett
findagrave.com/memorial/87969098/ella_l-burnett
findagrave.com/memorial/87969145/eddie-burnett
findagrave.com/memorial/88513114/bertha-moore
 New York, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1659-1999 for Armenia McCoy Saratoga Wills, Vol 0036-0037, 1897-1903
 NYDI Stephen R Burnett 28 Sep 1911 Red Hook cert #42916
odd-fellows.org/about/odd-fellows/encampment/
Poughkeepsie Eagle, 30 Sep 1911
Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise, 29 Sep 1911
Poughkeepsie News Press, 11 Sep 1884
Red Hook Advertiser, 3 Apr 1869
Red Hook Advertiser, 30 Oct 1869
Red Hook Journal, 6 Oct 1911
Rhinebeck Gazette, 20 nov 1952
Rhinebeck Gazette, 3 Nov 1939
Rhinebeck Gazette, 4 May 1934
 Rickers, Don. "Cabinets to caskets" Oct 25, 2020 pelhamtoday.ca/local-news/history-cabinets-to-caskets-6347548