

*Memories of Ol' Red Hook
From the Burton Coon Collection
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Recollections of Red Hook #13: The Millionaire

I do not know that the village ever had but one millionaire—Edward Martin. It fell to my lot to get somewhat acquainted with him, and to get some inspiration from his personality. From what I have been able to learn he must have been one of the young men that Horace Greeley advised to “go west and grow up with the country”. At any rate he went west and made good. He was exposed to all the hardships of that climate in an underdeveloped country; and he told me that many times while at his work of surveying, he would sleep out in the span when as he said, “he could have knocked a man down with the chunks of frozen mud in the morning.” One of his maxims which he had said had much to do with his start in life was “to make himself as useful to his employer that he couldn’t get along without him”. And he stated to me this worked so well that he “passed all of his competitors, and went on ahead clear out of sight.”

He was at one time president of the old Galena R. R. in Illinois, and became quite a figure in the commercial life of the state. With a rare foresight he bought a tract of land near the city of Chicago which was afterward absorbed by the city and brought him a round million of dollars. Then it seems the old home in Red Hook that had been beckoning to him with

increasing insistence through all the years finally drew him back to the east. He spent the rest of his life tilling the farm in which he took great pride and satisfaction, and in doing good in an unostentatious way.

In his last years, especially, he was very benevolent. He pledged his support for the repairing of the Shookville Church in 1890 which cost him nearly \$500 and he expressed great satisfaction with the result. He gave several thousand dollars to both the Lutheran and Methodist Societies, when they erected their new church in the village; and he helped many a poor person to some necessary article of furniture in such a quiet way that the public did not always immediately find it out. Anything low or mean or unworthy was very distasteful to him. He had a high sense of honor, and especially appreciated honesty and industry and thrift in his fellowmen.

He educated at least one young man for Christian Ministry—Philip Cole, and offered to do the same with others. Like all self-made men he had some very radical views, but they sprang from principals which he had thoroughly tested during a long life. What a difference there is between such a man and some of the young men of today who ornament the street corners and grace the poolrooms, or drive an automobile recklessly along the highway. To all such fellows I recommend the life and character of Edward Martin.

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