

Then & Now on Main Street

312-328 Main Street

By: Karen Ferguson, Town Historian

This month's article is about the businesses that used to line Main Street in the portion of land that lies between Suburban Septic and the bridge.

I would love to be able to tell you I know the exact dates of existence for all of them; however, the deeds for those properties tell me ownership, not the businesses. I am relying on pictures, maps, and old Binghamton Directories to fill in some of that information.

I can begin by stating that I have traced the property back to 1809 when it was first owned by Abraham Berkalew. It was sold to him by James Fisher. *I will be digging into that transaction a little more because I never had James Fisher in any of my records prior; however, the deed books that I need to look at are in the process of being digitized and not available.*

Abraham Berkalew died in 1837 leaving this section of land to his daughters, Mary and Ann Berkalew with Mary being the one listed on the deed. According to genealogy records, neither of them married. Anna died in 1867 and Mary passed in 1873. According to their wills, the new heir became their nephew Jehiel W. Berkalew, son of their brother Peter. This property was described as being all the farm, including the island totaling about 100 acres, as evidenced on the plat map from 1875.

However, after Ann passed away in 1867, Mary subdivided some of the property now known as 312 & 316 Main Street and sold it to William & Ann Lewis. According to the 1872-1873 business directory, William was a blacksmith and operated his business out of 316 Main. The house at 312 eventually became a rental property for the family.

While the houses are of interest, it is the vacant land behind them that was once a bustling hub for the community. It was the site of the Kirkwood Creamery and the Kirkwood Milling Company as depicted on the 1908 Map. I am not sure how long the businesses were in operation but a newspaper article states the Creamery burned down on September 13, 1927. It was owned by the American Milk and Cream Shipping Company of Brooklyn and managed by George Musk.

These properties were handed down through the Lewis family until Frederick Lewis passed away in 1947, at which time Amy McDonald took ownership as executor of the estate. She then

sold the property to Elta Benjamin in 1949 who, in turn, sold it to his grandson Marchie Diffendorf in 1974.

Marchie told me that the house at 312 Main Street was relocated on the same property in 1965 to make way for the new bridge that was being built. The current owner, Jim Guinan, shared the picture of the house when it was jacked up in its new location.

As I stated above, Jim Guinan is the current owner of 312 Main Street along with his wife, Theresa. They purchased the house in 1977. That same year Marchie sold the house at 316 Main Street to its current owner, Jeff Brown.

I also want to briefly mention the houses at 328, 324 & 322 Main Street. This is part of the property that Jahiel inherited from Mary. When he passed away in 1907, it went to his only surviving child, George W. Berkalew. The property was then sold to Albert & Susan Payne in 1917, Charles & Oril Pierce in 1922 and eventually to William & Bertha Alden in 1924.

The Alden family operated a Cider Mill out of 328 Main Street throughout the 30s and 40s. For a short time, they lived next door in the house and property listed as 324 & 322 Main Street. When Bertha passed away in 1929, the Alden family leased the house. The Manarky family (John & Winifred) lived there in the 30s and helped run the cider mill and take care of the horses Don & Duke.

The Alden family sold the Cider Mill property at 328 Main to Kermit & Francis Furman in 1955. Following their deaths, the family sold it to Rodney & Pamela Hoover. When Rodney passed away, Yvonne became the executor and sold it to the property's current owner, RYCH properties in 2023.

The house and property at 324 & 322 Main Street was sold to Elta Benjamin in 1952 who then sold it to Gary & Connie Harding (his granddaughter) in 1977. Robert & Adrienne Simon bought the house in 1986, Kym & Charles Lewis bought it in 1991, and the current owners are Carl & Amanda Bennett who bought it in 2014.

If you know more information or have pictures of these businesses in operation, please let me know so I can add them to our historical records.



Creamery & Mill that was located behind 312-320 Main Street adjacent to railroad



312 Main Street House moving



312 Main Street Now



316 Main Street Then (Blacksmith Home)



316 Main Street Now

***Additional pictures are posted online and on the bulletin board in Town Hall**