

Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2021



Bridge Anyone?

Card Table Connects to Delmar's Commercial Past

By Bill Ketzer

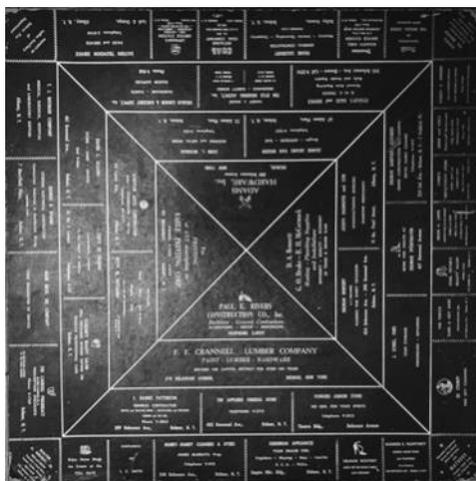
Our Midcentury basement bar (or “Rumpus Room” as labeled on the original building plan) is home to a nifty little card table, a gift from a neighbor who got it from the Delmar Fire Department Auxiliary. Date-stamped July 15, 1953, its wooden frame cradles a fiberboard tabletop displaying a virtual who’s who in Tri-Village commerce for that era. Remarkably, the designer – a guy named Mathers who for decades cranked out thousands of these portables from his garage in Mt. Ephraim, NJ – managed to fit 50 local businesses on this little 30” x 30” tabletop!

Card games like Pinochle, Rummy, Hearts, Poker and Bridge were all the rage in the 50s, so selling advertising space on gaming tables for a solid cause was a sure bet. When the “ladies auxiliary” (as it was called in those days) was founded in 1937, first president Agnes Ryan included card parties in the organization’s efforts to raise money for uniforms, emblem design and a new flag for their role in the upcoming Memorial Day parade, and to “assist the men” at the Hudson Mohawk Volunteer Fireman’s Association convention to follow that summer.

Today, the auxiliary’s membership is still lean and mean at 16 members, and its primary objectives remain “the advancement of civic welfare in the community, promotion of harmony and good

fellowship among its members and cooperation with the Delmar Fire Department.” Perhaps a future installment here can unpack what can only be a rich history of an organization approaching its 85th anniversary!

But for now, the card table.



In general, there are lots of cool things about it. For example, it’s not made from plastic and pot metal. It was hand built in the United States and not attributable to any specific design movement. Despite its age and inch-thick folding legs, a ham-fisted 5th grader can still stand on it to reach a hidden stash of Oreos on the top shelf of any kitchen cupboard. For me, however, the greatest thing about this little keepsake is that so many of the businesses listed are still around today!

Applebee Funeral Home is still operated by the Applebee family at Four Corners in Delmar, where they’ve been since 1932; Handy-Dandy Cleaners is also at the exact same location at 240 Delaware Avenue as when they bought the ad space on my table; Main Brothers - started by siblings Art and Spenser in 1930 – still serves Bethlehem as Main Care; Delmar Bootery, while no longer in Delmar, is coming up on a century of service at its popular retail and repair shop in Stuyvesant Plaza; many Bethlehem families will recognize Robert Wright, the preeminent waste hauler from Slingerlands since 1949; and Daniel “D. A.” Bennett began offering indoor plumbing

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and central heat installation in 1915, and is still going strong in the HVAC realm as a Service Experts Company.

Another neat thing to consider is how all the businesses displayed give us a true time machine moment along the town's main commercial drags on Delaware and Kenwood avenues in an era when Bethlehem's planning and appeals boards were in their infancy, on the cusp of a steady transition to more "modern" zoning strategies with residential development sprawling away from commercially-zoned strips. For many of these operations, the site histories harken back to an even earlier time, before the age of automobiles, when businesses simply sprang up along main roads and major intersections because that's all there was! It is interesting now to see the town revisit the potential benefits of this earlier approach with mixed-use hamlets, which reintegrate residential and commercial development in areas like The Hamlet in Slingerlands or Kendall Square in Glenmont.

With that, I invite our gentle readers to take "The Table Tour!" Both scavenger hunt and history lesson, the basic route below lets you see for yourself where some of these fine businesses once delivered the goods that kept Bethlehem families on the go. Perhaps you'll also pop in and thank some that still do?

One last note: out of necessity, this is a very basic summary of those people and places, and I didn't include Albany-based businesses (though most were owned by Bethlehem residents). Please don't hesitate to email labratsrock@gmail.com if you have more information on any of these families, businesses, or locations. Also let us know if you ever want to host a Friday night poker run!

L. C. Smith

154 Delaware Avenue

Leonard C. "Buck" Smith was a well-known farm equipment dealer, among other things, and this is the site of his lot. He later ran a charter bus service on the same spot, which is now the Healthy Pet Center, another great local business.

Delmar Sanitary Cleaners

224 Delaware/7 Paddock Place

Ralph Milton's cleaning business was located at or near the last residential structure (built around 1910) on that portion of Delaware between Buneau's & Domino's Pizza. His residence on Paddock is right behind Swifty's parking lot.

Studler's Sales & Service (GMC)

243 Delaware Avenue

Albin Studler dealt GMC vehicles and had a home on Cherry Avenue. Original structure is long gone, and current building near Elsmere Elementary has hosted many businesses, including Steiner's Sports before they moved to Glenmont.

F.F. Crannell Lumber

278 Delaware Avenue

By the 1940s Crannell Lumber had already been in business 100 years! Sold "Stokermatic" coal burning furnaces on the site of where locally-owned Bliss Delmar serves up delicious smoothies. Fun fact: the Crannells are direct Mayflower descendants of Plymouth Colony governor Edward Winslow and they still own the property.

Lang's (Louis) Department Store

306 Delaware Avenue

No longer standing. New structure built in 1982 between the old Dempf's bakery site (now Wildbird Junction) and the D&H Railroad overpass. Old Tri Village directories clarify the site is "now located opposite Serviceman's Park."

Helen A. Lang, Realtor

306 Delaware Avenue

See Lang's Department Store. Helen was Lou's wife.

Dooley's Shell Service

308 Delaware Avenue

Remained a Getty service station until at least 2011, which coincides with the company's bankruptcy filing in December of that year. Building was razed by 2014 and Wildbird Junction was built on the site.

Main Brothers 309 Delaware Avenue

Brothers Art and Spenser Main started what is now called Main Care Energy in 1930.

George D. Spawn Electric

7 Merrifield Place/364 1/2 Delaware Avenue

Residence located on dead end street off Hudson Avenue built in 1950. "Doug" is buried in Bethlehem Cemetery and his wife Mina was VP of the Delmar FD Auxiliary. Shop on Delaware razed in the early 1970, now the Key Bank parking lot near Four Corners.

Frank Salisbury Contractors

3 Bailey Avenue

Built in 1916 on dead-end street off Hudson Avenue. This part of town looks almost exactly as it did in the 1950s.

Fowler's Liquor Store

333 Delaware Avenue

Located at the site of the old Delmar Theatre, which was built in the 1940s and operated by the Jarvis family for almost 30 years until closing in 1958. Fowlers operated out of the theater while still in operation, then moved to the corner of Elsmere Avenue and Groesbeck Place (where Savile Road Bicycles now sits). The theater has been redesigned as a strip mall with 333 Café up front.

Delmar Lumber & Builders

340 Delaware Avenue

1930s structure next to Verizon, houses several small businesses including Delmar Wine & Liquor. Now owned by Roger Smith Paint & Wallpaper, which occupied the spot into the 1970's.

D.A. Bennett Plumbing

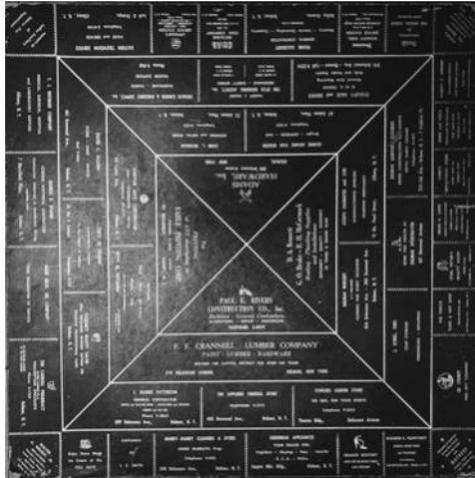
356 Delaware Avenue

The original digs of "Bennett the Plumber" don't exist anymore – the building was likely razed for construction of the new St. Thomas the Apostle Church in the early 1960s.

The Thistle Yarn & Gift

361 Delaware Avenue

Now the site of First Care Medical (next to Adriano's Pizza), this building used to have two storefronts.





The Carroll Pharmacy

372 Delaware Avenue

Structure raised in the early 1970s to make way for Key Bank, near Four Corners. Business was managed by Arthur Starman and had a luncheonette on site.



Jack Leonardo's Delmar Bootery

376 Delaware Avenue

Built in 1948 two doors down from Adams Hardware, now occupied by the very popular, locally-owned, afterschool/home-office friendly Perfect Blend Bakery & Café.

Lippman's Service (Tydol)

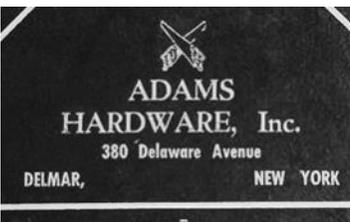
Four Corners

Operation formerly owned by L.C. Smith. Hard to find information on Lippman as the family name is not readily found in local directories. Now the site of Delmar Marketplace, McCarroll's and a Subway franchise.

Tad's of Delmar

Four Corners

Men's clothing shop that lasted well into the 1960s. Unclear to this author which corner of the four hosted this store.



Earl C. Adams Hardware

380 Delaware Avenue

Building is now occupied by I Love Books. Earl was a descendant of the founding "Adamsville" or "Adams Station" family of Delmar. Grandson of town supervisor George C. Adams and great-grandson of Nathaniel Adams, who built the 1836 Greek Revival building once known as Adams Hotel at 393 Delaware Avenue. Later became town hall and now occupied by Bethlehem Chabad.

F. Harris Patterson Contractor

389 Delaware Avenue

2-family home still standing on the corner of Adams Street, currently for sale. Built in the early 1900s.

Delmar Nursery (A. Verstandig)

454 Delaware/390 Kenwood

Greenhouses were located on footprint of The Gables at Delmar townhouse development. Storefront on Kenwood now occupied by 4Corner Laundry Room.

Walter A. Wright Milk

524 Delaware Avenue

Walt Wright was well known in the 30s and 40s for his 101 Acre Ranch at the end of North Street, where his farmhouse still stands. By the 1950s he was working for the United Traction Company and in the dairy business. Unclear if this address was a retail shop or served another purpose.

Applebee Funeral Home

403 Kenwood Avenue

This well-known family business relocated to site in 1932 from Clarksville (business founded in 1904) and remains in business here today.

Warren E. Humphrey, mason

440 Kenwood Avenue

First house after Delmar First Methodist Church heading toward Slingerlands on Cherry Avenue. Built around 1910 and still in very good shape.



Hotaling Coal Company

121 Adams Street

Original 1930 facility still standing, across from Blue Sky Music (former home of the Bethlehem Police and town court). The Hotalings, as *Bethlehem Revisited* puts it, "built houses, taught school, ran businesses, operated farms, and generally contributed to most phases of life" in town.

Continued page 4



Wat is er?

What is this strange item from our collection? The answer is on page 4.

Ethel Pryor's Beauty Salon

135 Adams Street

House built in early 1900s on corner of Nathaniel Boulevard, now houses Treasure Cove Thrift Shop. Previously housed Creative Art Time Studio before 2015.

Jeanne Adams Van Hoesen Antiques

67 Adams Place

Also a descendant of the founding Adams family. Older farmhouse on the street, built in 1912. Most homes there were built in the mid-20s through the late 30s.

John L. Hickman Roofing

73 Adams Place

An American four-square house built in the 1920s.

Betty M. Hotaling Antiques

24 Kenaware Avenue

A tiny, 900 square-foot home built in the 1950s near corner of Stratton Place. Note Vina Hotaling's even tinier 24 1/2 Kenaware house set just behind it!

David C. Scoons Stone & Gravel

461 Kenwood Avenue

Old Delmar Victorian home, built in the 1880s. Still owned by the Scoons family.

Toll Gate Ice Cream

1569 New Scotland Road

Building currently unoccupied, near site of former 19th Century tollhouse heading from town west into the hill towns of New Scotland (part of Bethlehem until 1832).

Robert E. Wright Ash/Rubbish

38 Font Grove Road

In Slingerlands since 1949. Now located at Couse Lane, operating under the Waste Connections group. Still managed (but not owned) by the Wright family.

Eddie & Lou's Stonewell Restaurant

1962 New Scotland Road

Herb & Dexter Davis built the original structure in the early 1950s as a deli. Became an Italian eatery operated by the Ardizzone family for a time. Herb was a builder and had offices at 395 Kenwood (Paddock Building).



Wat is er?

It is a 1945 Captain Midnight Secret Squadron decoder badge.

Captain Midnight was a WWI U.S. Army pilot whose adventures could be heard as a radio serial from 1938 to 1949. Films, a tv show and comic books were also part of the lineup.



When a youngster joined the Secret Squadron, which was basically a Captain Midnight fan club, they received a membership card, handbook and this special badge. The badge allowed them to decode a message using a simple substitution cipher with numbers and letters. For example, 729 on this ring is BHA.

The decoder pin is part of a collection that came to BHA from Earle C. Smith's estate. Earle C. Smith (1898-1958) was a Delmar architect. For many years he and his wife Violet lived on Glendale Avenue in the Elsmere section.

Pictured is Richard Webb as Captain Midnight, 1954 (Wikipedia)



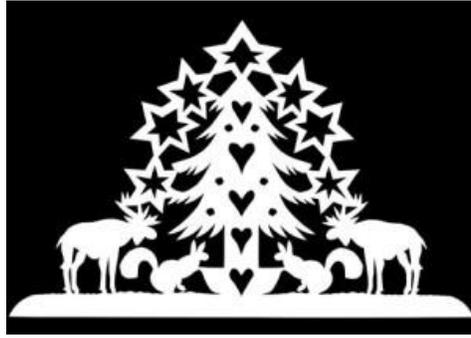
So! You think you LIKE Ice Cream!

TRY THESE ON YOUR SWEET TOOTH

No. 1 - SUPER SODA any flavor	60¢
4 scoops of Ice Cream (2 Vanilla 2 Your Choice)	
No. 2 - The SIZZLING PLATTER	90¢
No. 3 - The BUCKETT For a BUCK TEN	
No. 4 - The DOUBLE SIZZLE	\$1.75
No. 5 - The TOLL GATE DAIQUIRI	3¢
No. 6 - The HAYSTACK 5 scoops high	69¢
No. 7 - The EIGHT INCH High Super Sundae	75¢

TOLL GATE
IN SLINGERLANDS

R. E. ZAUTNER PHONE 439-9824 R. N. ZAUTNER



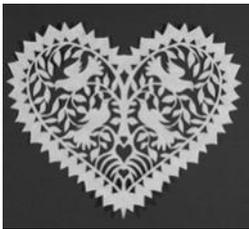
Holiday Open House

*Sunday, December 12 from noon to 4 p.m.
at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum*

Save the date for our Holiday Open House! The museum will be full of beautiful Christmas decorations nestled amongst the exhibits.

Our featured Christmas tree will be decorated with handmade Scherenschnitte ornaments. Scherenschnitte means “scissor cuts” in German. BHA members, taught by Susan Kilgallon, have created the ornaments using this folk art paper-cutting technique that came to colonial America with Swiss and German immigrants in the 18th Century.

Refreshments will be served. Covid-19 guidelines in place at the time of the event will be in effect.



November program

We are pleased to present Ron Gabriele’s talk about what he calls the **Second Battle of Gettysburg**, the 1913 commemoration event that drew thousands of Civil War veterans.

The talk is November 18, 2 pm at the Delmar Reformed Church, 386 Delaware Ave, Delmar.

In 1913, a three-day program to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg was organized. Over 53,000 Civil War veterans from both the North and South attended the encampment. In his talk, Gabriele discusses many of the details of staging this enormous, and forgotten, event.

Ron Gabriele former Associate Professor of Health and Physical at Columbia-Greene County Community College, and for many a sports radio announcer for various Kingston area stations, enjoys sharing his love for a wide variety of history topics.

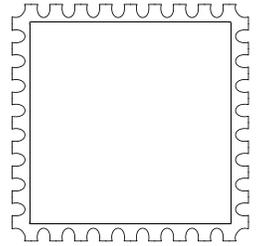
The talk is free and open to the public. Masks and social distancing will be required. For more information, please visit BethlehemHistorical.org.

CORRECTION to Yearbook regarding spring 2022 lectures: All dates are correct but they are *Thursday* evenings.



Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum
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Above: BHA members out and about at the USS Slater.

Right: Many thanks to the volunteers who kept our museum open this season under the leadership of Dawn Pratt. We look forward to reopening in the spring.



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