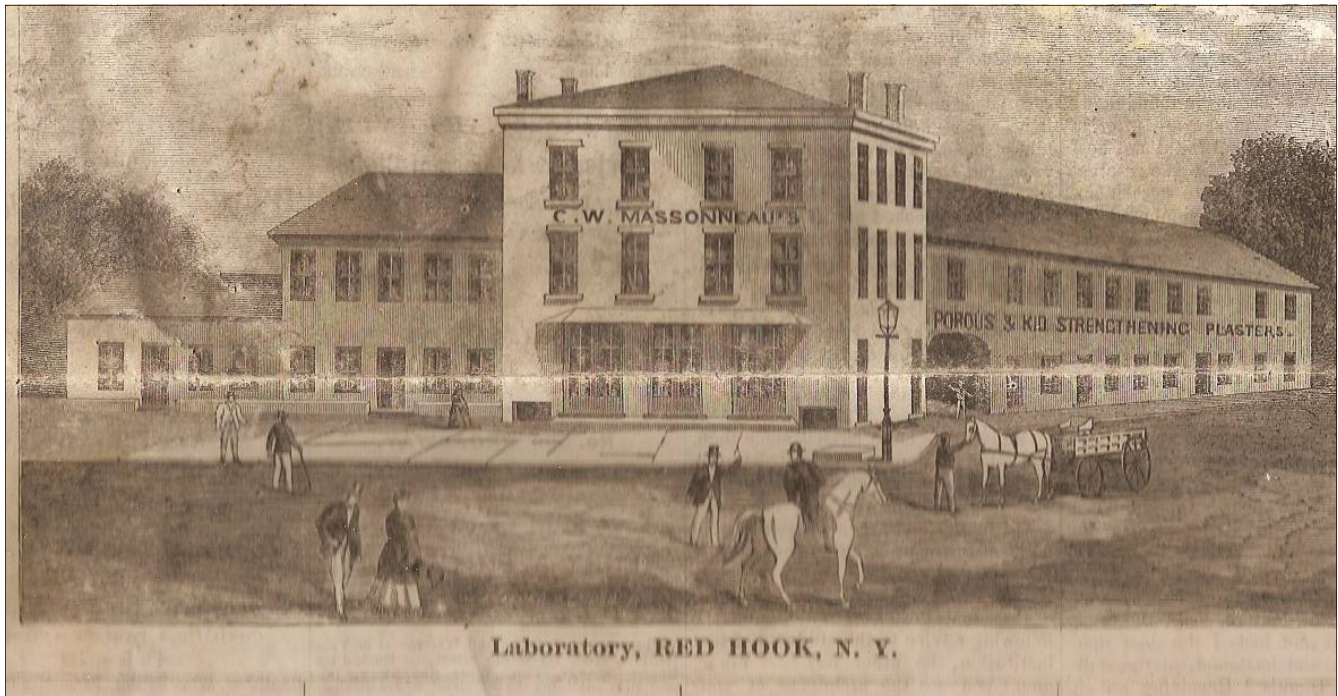


SPRING 2008



From the January, 1872 issue of "The Aurora Borealis"

EBHS Receives Massonneau Documents

A collection of 38 original Massonneau bills and letters dating from 1822 and including a rare 1872 issue of "The Aurora Borealis" published by Charles W. Massonneau has been given to our Society by former Red Hook resident **Kay Verrilli** on behalf of **The Museum of Rhinebeck History**. The donation results from the Museum's decision to limit its collection to items directly related to Rhinebeck and is another example of the generous cooperation between the historical agencies of our two towns.

The collection of documents sheds new light on the activities of the prominent Massonneau family long identified with Red Hook's tobacco industry. The first Massonneau of whom we have a record was the French immigrant Claudius G. Massonneau who married Catherine Livingston, daughter of Robert G. Livingston. He operated mills near Rock City and was road master from those mills to the Rhinebeck Lutheran Church in 1789. In 1812 the Massonneaus established a store at the Red Hook four corners on land purchased from John Armstrong. Claudius Massonneau built the Tobacco Factory in 1830 for the manufacture of chewing tobacco and cigars.

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Historical Society's Annual Dinner on May 20, 2008. see page 5

The President's Letter by Patrick Higgins

The Egbert Benson Historical Society has been enjoying a very successful 2008. We have had wonderful programs thanks to members of the board who are constantly scouting for interesting speakers. . Our Historical Society is only as strong as the participation of its members. The program presenters spend many hours preparing their material for the program. Many of our speakers have slide presentations which take extra effort for them to prepare and for us in setting up the room. .We do appreciate your support with your dues but we also miss your physical presence at the meetings.

Our refreshment committee has been doing a top notch job; each month they seem to outdo themselves with their array of goodies. Our thanks go to Beth and Mike Pascarella and Carol Annas for their work in the refreshment department. We also owe a great deal of gratitude to Hannaford Store and Terry's Bakery for their generosity in supplying us each month with cakes, cookies and juices.

On May 20th we will be having our annual dinner with guest speaker Stan Mersand, Dutchess County Historian. The position of Dutchess County Historian had been vacant for over five years; two years ago Bill Steinhaus appointed Mr. Mersand to the position of historian. In the two years he has had the position Stan has done wonders with rearranging the county archives and working with the various county municipal historians.

The Egbert Benson Historical Society will be honored to have Stan Mersand as their dinner speaker at the May banquet. He will speak on the position of a county historian and the history of Dutchess County. May 20th promises to be a wonderful evening with good food, good friends and a great speaker. We are looking forward to seeing you all there.

Industrious Wintertime

There have been many activities ongoing at the Archives room of the Historical Society this fall, winter and early spring. There was a query from a gentleman in Maine about the Curley Family. We looked up census, birth and baptismal, marriage records and sent it off to him. Unfortunately there was little co relationship to the man he was looking for, but he sent a nice thank you note.

Thence came a local man who was looking for a picture of the old gas street lamps that were used in Red Hook in the late 1890's. We searched thru our photographs and came up with exactly what he wanted.

But the main activity came with Mike Frazier from the Rhinebeck Historical Society who helped both Barbara and I in various ways. One was explaining the vagaries of the computers we were using, Power Point to be explicit and the other was the better way of defining the maps that we have from Frank Teal and Robert Decker.

We have four big file drawers of the rolled Teal-Decker maps involving Red Hook, Rhinebeck, Clermont, Milan & Hyde Park. I thought I had done a fair job of putting each drawer into an alphabetical list of the maps. To find a particular map you would have to go through each one to find the one you were looking for. Mike showed me what he has done with the Rhinebeck maps giving number, date, and persona, type of material used, names, location, notes and dimensions. Well, I have finished Drawer # 1. There were 199 maps, 27 of which are those of Teal. Each one is in a smaller roll with the identifying numbers on them. One of Teal's maps, the Brehmer Farm in Milan, is done in ink with meticulous detail of house, road, stream, woods, swamp and orchard. Only three more drawers to go.

In cooperation with the Rhinebeck Historical Society, Mike has been sifting through the Teal Rhinebeck files looking for maps and information that would augment the understanding of the Teal maps they were given. This is of mutual benefit to both Societies.

Barbara Thompson
Archivist

EBHS Receives Massonneau Documents (cont.)

The Aurora Borealis was published by the Massonneau Brothers to promote the use and sale of “Massonneau’s Celebrated Arnica & Iodine Porous and Kid **Strengthening Plasters**” The tabloid size newspaper featured entertaining fiction and humorous stories as well as advertisements. According to the paper, “Stubborn **Rheumatism** is soon brought to terms by **Massonneau’s Plasters**. **Neuralgia**, “hard pain” as the term literally means, is soon eased by **Massonneau’s Plasters**. **Weak Spines** are strengthened. **Varicose Veins** are reduced, **Crick in the Back and Neck** is removed and **Pain in the Hips** allayed by **Massonneau’s Plasters**.” A display advertisements offers to mail Plasters to any part of the United States on receipt of 25 cents. **Edmund Bassett** in his **Reminiscences of Red Hook** called the paper very interesting and remembered seeing many copies especially after Massonneaus’ son Harris joined the firm.

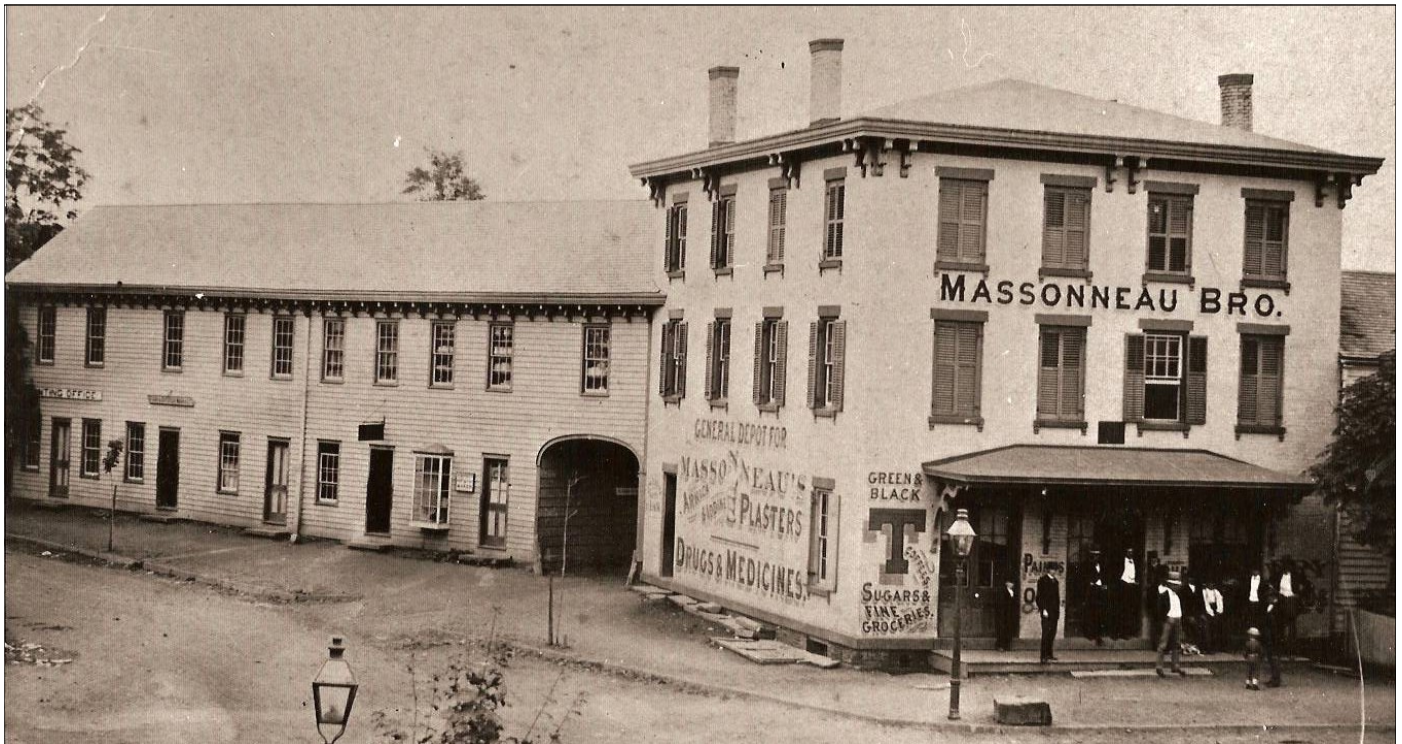
The three-story brick building featured in **The Aurora Borealis** (now housing Merritt Books) was built in 1855. The engraving reverses the structure. The long wing, fronting on East Market Street was described by Bassett in his “Reminiscences”. “The building east of the store was divided from the store by an archway for teams to pass to the public shed. There were about four divisions in the building occupied by different parties for business purposes”.

“I remember John Pulver’s cigar Store; Virgil Group’s fish and oyster market; some engineers connected with the construction of the Rhinebeck and Connecticut Railroad and the Red Hook Journal. The upper part was used for storage for stock for the store.....Sometime later the archway was closed and the upper part was changed to a hall with the entrance on the east end. This hall was the means of much pleasure for the people in the old days.” According to an early photograph, a Post Office came to occupy the East end of the building and it was an early home of the Red Hook Public Library.

Bassett continues his description –“The row of buildings, south of the store building, were once dwelling houses and were fenced in but one by one they were changed to business places. A Mrs. De Alveris from New York, the English wife of a Spaniard, opened a millinery store in the one on the corner of Tobacco Street.....later Simon Dinglar had a barber shop there..... M.R. Green had a market in the row for some years. This row has been changed very much and part has been replaced by Scism’s Garage.”

We are exceedingly grateful to **The Museum of Rhinebeck History** for the donation of this enlightening collection of documents.

Barbara W. Bielenberg



Massonneau Building as described by Edmund Bassett Note advertisements painted on the walls
EBHS collection

HOW HENRY PITCHER CAME TO ATTEND THE RED HOOK SCHOOL

as told by grandfather, John Ham to grandson, Maynard Ham.

“I’ll tell you a story about Henry Pitcher. The Pitcher place was down there where the Motor Rest (Lenahan and Lopez) is now and Henry was just starting school. He went to school at the old Stone Church schoolhouse where his sister was the teacher and they walked to school together. I can’t remember her name but I remember she was an awful nice girl.

Henry thought he was pretty smart, his sister being school teacher and all. Well, there started to come back to the school stories from the little girls people of them coming home with their backsides all black and black all over their drawers. This went on for awhile and one day Henry, he was a little feller you know, a lot smaller than the others, raised his hand in the schoolhouse, in those days the toilet was outside, a section for the girls and one for the boys. Well, Henry went out and when he came out of his side he went in the girls side. In those days you had lamp black from the oil lamps. Well, his sister came out after him and caught him marking the edge of the seat with blacking. She after him, and he run up toward the road slip-pin’ and slidin’ on the mud and stones and his sister after him. He got away and headed for home. It was just down the hill past the Lown place and then up a ways. Well, when he got home he told that his sister beat the devil out of him. When she got home the devil was to pay and what a terrible thing to do marking up the privy seat. Henry swore he was never goin’ back to school. His father said he was and Henry wound up at the Red Hook School, that’s where old Voorhis has his soap factory “(The Old Soap Factory Paints).



The Old Stone Church yard with its school building on the left and the outhouse in the center

Photo by Maynard Ham