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RED HOOK ARCHIVES

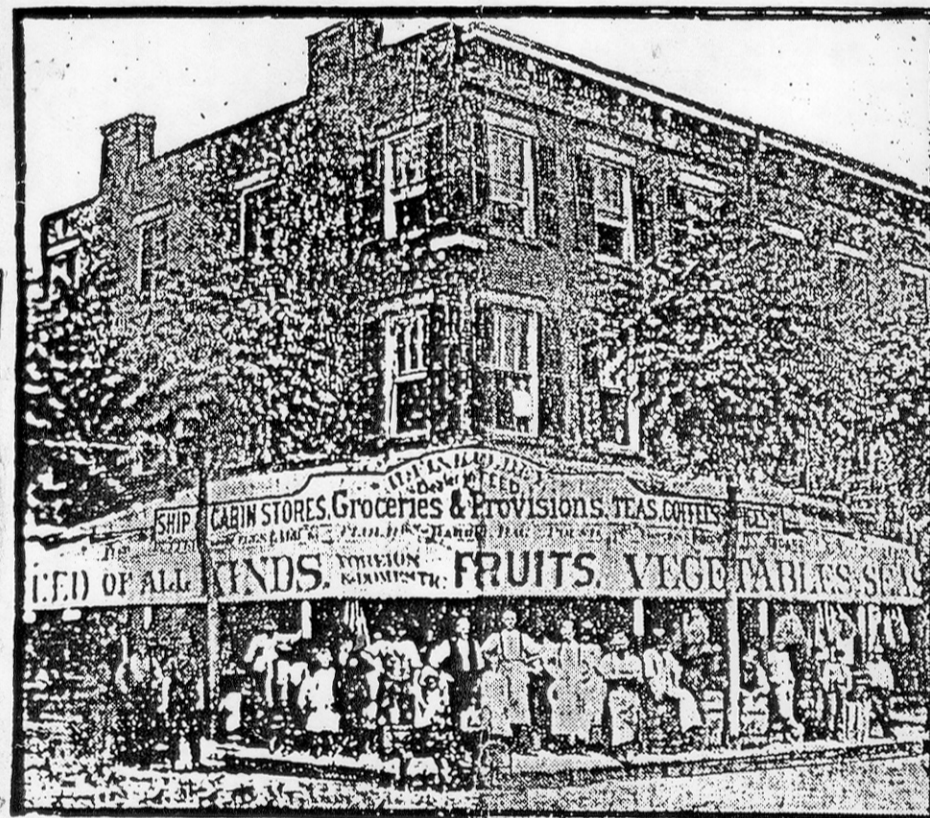


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A Trip Through Red Hook In The Past

The Building of The Atlantic Docks,
The Construction Of Erie Basin
Dredging The Buttermilk Channel
It's People and Businesses



This is a photo of H. Finkledey's Grocery and Provision store (circa 1890). It was located on the corner of Partition Street (which is now Coffey Street) and Conover Street. It was the pride of the neighborhood, and later was occupied by Joe Tedesco's Resturant and finally by Jackie Dell's Bar & Resturant.

Red Hook was originally a sand hill jutting into New York Bay, it's highest point was located at what is now Coffey and Conover Streets. It was dotted here and there with salt marshes and islets north to Wolcott Street to Hamilton Avenue and east of Van Brunt Street to Gowanus Creek. The hill was connected to the mainland by a single meandering road called Red Hook Lane. This thoroughfare started at Fulton Street between what is now Smith Street and Boerum Place and crossed Court Street at Butler Street. It continued beyond Hamilton Avenue, across Remsen Island, across Garretson Island (the site of Visitation of the Blessed Mother R.C.Church) to Van Dyke's mill pond and then to Conover and Van Dyke Streets. Buttermilk Channel was a shallow creek and at low tide it was not unusual to see sttelrs and indians wading across to Nootens Island (what is now Govenors Island).

Historically, Red Hook is one of the oldest points of interest in the country. It was designated 'Red Hoeck' on the early New Amsterdam maps. During the Revolutionary War, Red Hook figured prominently in the battle of Long Island. General George Washington, anticipating a British and Hessian invasion from the sea, ordered the fortification of Brooklyn. Red Hook & Govenors Island were the first places occupied by the 'Yankees' under General Israel Putman. Fort Defiance was located approximately from Van Dyke to Partition Street (now known as Coffey Street); the fort consisted of four 18-pounders, and was considered small but strong enough to protect the hill from any attack from the from teh bay. However, the enemy circumvented the defenses and landed in the lower bay approaching Fort Greene from Flatbush and Flatlands; thereby necessitating the evacuation of Red Hook and the surrounding area.

The foundation for Red Hook's development was laid just prior to the Civil War by the building of the Atlantic Docks, it's grain elevators and later the 'Erie Basin' with its large floating marine railway and graving docks and many great warehouses. Not only did these warehouses and piers afford facilities for commerce of the seven seas; but also the largest industrial machine and boiler shops in the country. More grain was shipped from the Atlantic Docks and Erie Basin than any other ports in the world.

The Atlantic Docks occupy a forty acre basin just opposite Governors Island. It was considered the biggest development south of Hamilton Avenue in the late 1830's, Col. Daniel Richards (for whom the street is named) made a survey of water depths from Atlantic Street (now Avenue) to Red Hook including Buttermilk Channel and beyond to the Penny Bridge at Gowanus creek. Based on his survey, the Atlantic Dock Company was organized July 8th, 1840 and the district extending from India Wharf south of Hamilton Avenue to Clinton Wharf to William Street (what is now Pioneer Street) and west to Commercial Wharf (an extension of Conover Street) to the Buttermilk Channel was dredged. Huge storehouse, grain elevators and piers were erected around the edge of the basin. A 200 foot gap was left on the Buttermilk side for the entrance and exits of ships. Inside the basin additional covered piers were built from the north side (eventually they became piers 33, 34 and 35), and on the south side more piers were built (which became 36, 37 and 38 later in years). During modern times they were some of the busiest piers in Brooklyn.

The Name William Beard will always be associated with Erie Basin. It was his monument; and while he lived was the pride and joy of his old age. Into it's construction he poured his years of experience as a builder and contractor as well as his accumulated savings. He was born in Ireland in 1804 and apprenticed as a stone mason during his youth, Mister Beard left his homeland May of 1825 for New York. Ten years later found him grading and paving Brooklyn streets and constructing sewers. He settled permanently on Amity Street and in 1843 he purchased a half interest in a site that stretched south of Elizabeth (now Beard) Street from Van Brunt to Columbia Streets. He later bought another quarter interest, and J.P. Robinson purchased the remaining quarter interest. Fact is that most of the property was under water at high tide and most of the streets running east to west existed only on paper. Just opposite the car barns on Richards and Partition Streets were a colony of shanties and pig styes built along the alleys in the marshes. All the land from tide water to Hamilton Avenue, it should be remembered, is filled in or man made land, so that the section required foundations set on pilings.

Haren Keeler

11/5/02

Dear Florence,

Attached is a brief history of Red Hook or Erie Basin as it was sometimes called. It is a very interesting walk down memory lane.

The photo of the quarry stone at the corner is the building where I spent most of my childhood (7 to 18 years) before that I lived at 101 Van Brunt St. (my grandmother owned the house).

My family lived in the cold water flat just above what was the Tedesco bar + grill.

I was born in 1918 + my maiden name was Beach. My uncle owned a bar + pizza restaurant @ 101 Van Brunt St. across from the grill.

The building is no longer standing.

Although most families were low to middle income, we shared healthy + happy childhoods. It was a more simple lifestyle but it allowed us to be children. Interestingly, I don't recall any late life kids. Most mothers were home + if there was the occasion that a mother would not be, someone else's mother would take her place.

My father was a longshoreman. Could he tell you stories? I have very good memories of my childhood in Red Hook + would like to reminisce with someone who can appreciate the information. Haren

Donation; \$1.00, All proceeds go to
Visitation Church.

I hope you enjoyed reading this bit of nostalgia as much as I had preparing it. It certainly was a lot of fun reminiscing with people like Chink and Felou, Red Ianno, Jean Esposito, Savo, Pete Natale, Sadie Pisano, Dominick Scolaro, Hagles Jenzen and especially Helen Cipuly for allowing me the use of her journals from Christ Chapel, and also Sister Marjorie for her journal.

Many thanks go to Dick and Goochie of Argus Chemical Co. for some work on these books, and a huge 'Thank You' to Annette Amendola and L.I.C.H. for the bulk of the printing of same.

Thanks one and all!

JOHN-NAKE) GREELEY
37-96-HUBBARD-AVE
RIVERHEAD, N.Y.
11901

Jerry Graziano

The Pioneer Iron Works, reknowned builders of sugar plantation machinery, steam engines and heavy steam driven rollers (used for street paving), were located on Pioneer Street at the foot of Inlay Street and extended back into King Street. Along the east side of Inlay Street were many machine shops and boiler factories, and at the corner of Delevan and Van Brunt Streets was the world famous La Bastie Glass Works.

The section extending from the east side of Ferris Street to the west side of Richards Street and from Beard Street as far north as Verona Street was occupied largely by many tenement houses and many private dwellings. Many of these homes were without water and tenants were obliged to carry water from city pumps that were located on street intersections. Many of these private homes were located on Pioneer Street, between Van Brunt and Dwight Streets, also on Wolcott Street and Dikeman Street between Richards Street and Dwight Street, also Coffey Street between Ferris and Conover Streets, and Van Dyke and Beard Streets, between Conover and Van Brunt Streets.

The Atlantic Dock Company Inaugurated a new ferry service between Hamilton Avenue to Wall Street. The Union Ferry Company which was organized November 19th, 1854 subsequently took over that line. The Hamilton Ferry Service began it's operations on November 6th, 1864. The Van Brunt and Erie Basin Railway with it's six cars and twenty five horses was opened to traffic on February 15th, 1861. Prior to that time Van Brunt Street was graded and paved with cobble stones from the foot of Van Brunt Street to Hamilton Avenue. The fare was three-cents.

A one-horse street car (with a five-cent fare) known as the 'Crosstown' operating with a few dinky cars opened new horizons to Red Hookers at that time. It ran from Richards Street to Hamilton Avenue and thence along Columbia Street to Atlantic Avenue to Court Street, to Br'klyns City Hall and west to Newtons Creek then to Hunters Point and Long Islan City. Horses were changed along the route and an extra horse was hitched to the car at Atlantic and Columbia Streets to aid the car in ascending the hill as far as Clinton Street.

Thousands found work here in Red Hook, and yet for years it remained a small isolated community, maligned by writers (most of whom never saw the place). To many well meaning but misguided social workers, Red Hook embraced everything south of Atlantic Avenue; and even the city of New York itself in the 1930's built the "Red Hook-Gowanus Health Center" on Baltic Street, which location was as far removed from Red Hook as it was from Gowanus. Moreover, none of the houses of the so-called 'Housing Authority' (which broke ground in the late 1930's) were actually located in what we knew as Red Hook.

To build a basin four times the size of the Atlantic Docks was truly a herculean effort in those days due to the primitive transportation facilities. The construction was temporarily delayed during the Civil War. The Erie Basin which embraces an area of 161 acres stretching from Van Brunt Street to Columbia Street is protected by a breakwater more than a mile long. The piles and crib work on this side of this wide sheltering arm reaching from the gap of Van Brunt Street to the dock extending south of Columbia Street were driven in over a period of years by Mister Beard. At that time boats of all kinds came to for cargoes. Later the great clipper ships (much later the steamships) arrived with nothing but rock ballast and left laden with grain and other foodstuffs and raw materials. This rock ballast was dumped into the crib work and mingled with other matters and mud which was dredged from the basin. Thus there is buried in this barrier stones from all parts of the world.

Occupying the block from Richards to Verona Streets, diagonally opposite Visitation Church, to Dwight Street and Delevan Street was the Cheseborough Manufacturing Company (makers of 'Vaseline' and other petroleum products). A creek carried this company's waste to the tide waters at Erie Basin. Along the creek on filled in land below the level of Richards Street were squatters shanties, while on the other side along Hicks and Henry Streets were other tin shanties and pig styes. Those living on that side of the creek were known as 'Creekers' or 'Cake' while those living on the west side were known as 'Pointers' or 'Pie'.

Van Brunt Street

398 Scaffidi, Car Service
400 S, Laub, Optometrist
402 A & W Scheu, Bakers
406 Ente, Buuter & Eggs
408 DeGennaro, Meat Market
408 Louie's Meat Market
410 V.F.W. Post 5195
412 V.F.W. Post 5195
414 Papalardo, Dry Cleaner
416 Leslowitz, Stationary
416 Johnny Pop, Luncheonette
418 Carsten's Grocery
424 Gus Beyer, Butcher
424 Cheneski, Chandler
436 Campione, Barber
438 Cowhey & Sons
440 Cowhey & Sons
446 Jerry's Hardware
500 Kane Shipyard

Richards Street

126 Pioneer Movie House
135 H. Hoen, Plumber
136 Emmett Candy Store
146 Leonards Garage
147 Auletto Fruit & Veg.
149 E. Meyer Candy Store
158 Gaspar's Barber Shop
171 Stephens, TV & Radio
173 Boyd/O'Conner Laundry
177 Bernstien, Cleaners
177 Pops Sandwich Shop
177 Mabel Caldwell, Candies
180 Lee, Chinese Laundry
182 Cacciato, Shoe Repair
182 Alberts, Shoe Repair
183 D'Angelis Meat Market
184 Volpe's Pharmacy
185 Jerry's Delicatessen
186 Buddy's Dry Cleaners

Richards Street (cont.)

186 Master's Hats Blocked
187 Bud & Packy, Bar & Rest.
188 B. Goodman, M.D.
188 McGuire's Candy Store
189 Bellman, Meat Market
189 Felix McCabe, Fruits
191 W. Pils, Delicatessen
192 Arnolds Delicatessen
193 Ferraro's Barber Shop
208 Sweggins, Wine & Liquor
211 C & C Seaman Supplies
222 (Greasy Spoon) Diner

Conover Street

121 McGuinn's, Bar & Grill
127 Tri-Eagle Milk Company
133 Lombardo, Bar & Rest.
133 Momo's Bar & Restaurant
135 Momo's Bar & Restaurant
135 Nivkies Candy Store
137 Gambardella Candy Store
139 Dee's Bar & Grill
142 Lettera's Bar & Rest
143 Serreca's Restaurant
145 Graziano, Candy & Ices
147 (a) Caroline, Meats
147 (b) Rosario Grocer
147 (b) Chickie, Groceries
149 Clam Bar
149 George's Restaurant
149 John & Blackie's Rest.
148 Mary's Restaurant
156 Crupi's Restaurant
156 Mamie's Restaurant
158 Maeder, General Store
158 Savinos, Groceries
166 Spezio, Grocery
170 Monti, Candy Store
181 Calise, Coal & Ice
182 John's Candy Store
184 Gabes Bar & Restaurant
184 Jackie Dell's Bar

Van Brunt St. (west)

Van Brunt St. (east)

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 360 Federal Laundry | 343 Toms Poultry Parts |
| 360 Small Deli (?) | 343 Clara's Chicken Parts |
| 360 Tom's, Cleaners | 345 Ruggerio, Fruit & Veg |
| 362 Skee & Pat Pool Room | 347 Butler Groceries |
| 364 Weinberger, Grocer < 358 | 347 Coin Launermat |
| 364 Roseman's Deli. < 376 | 347 Riverbank Hardware |
| 368 Morris, Clothing | 349 Reliable Cleaners |
| 368 A. & P. Grocers | 349 Star Car Service |
| 368 Associated Grocery | 349 D & F Venetion Blinds |
| 370 Van Houlton Confection. | 351 Roseman's Delicatessen |
| 370 Michel's Luncheonette | 351 Bergen Delicatessen |
| 370 Buddy & Mike Luncheon. | 351 Anna Graves Resturant |
| 370 Ken & Helga, Luncheon. | 353 Schoens, Variety Store |
| 372 Trunz, Pork Store | 353 Freemans Variety Store |
| 372 Anthony's Meats | 353 Majors's Variety Store |
| 374 Staderman, Hardware | 357 Kintzburger, Meats |
| 376 Dreyfus, Meats | 359 Roulstons, Grocers |
| 376 Roseman, Dele < 351 | 359 John Leech, Grocery |
| 376 Candida, Lingerie | 361 Berstien, Dentist |
| 376 Davidson, Pharmacy | 361 Flats Fixed |
| 376 Kingdom Of Jehovah | 361 Abe's Grocery |
| 376 Hobby Shop | 365 Grom's Pharmacy |
| 376 Bike Shop | 369 G. Peterson, Plumber |
| 376 Gena's Variety/Hobbies | 373 Chinese Laundry |
| 378 Fingers, Bakery | 375 Lando's Fruit & Veg |
| 378 Eddy White, Candie | 375 Reale, Grocery |
| 378 Little Visitation League | 377 Ciro's Bar & Resturant |
| 380 Katz, Vending Service | 379 Ciro's Pizzeria |
| 380 Blum's Used Clothing | 381 Laundermat |
| 380 Jimmy's Record Shop | 383 Fabretti's, Variety |
| 380 Reale, Insurance < 384 | 385 Candy Store |
| 382 Caffaro, Candies | 389 Leo, Radio Repair < 341 |
| 384 Seibold, Mortician | 391 Geritano, Shoe Repair |
| 384 Reale, Insurance | 393 Sichenzia, Billiards |
| 386 Ann-C & F Cleaners | 393 Van Brunt Social Club |
| 388 Jimmy's Fruit & Veg. | 395 Buonocore, Grocery |
| 390 Rose's Beauty Salon | 397 Pisano, Resturant |
| 390 Jimmy's Barber Shop | 399 Mike's Barber Shop |
| 392 Parmigiani, Candy Store | 399 Chi-Chi Candy Store |
| 392 Georgiana, Candy Store | 401 Bianchi, Bar & Pizza. |
| 392 Morrissey, Candy Store | 403 Grogan, Hardware |
| 392 Calise, Candy Store | 405 Grogan, Hardware |
| 396 Bird Feed Store | 419 Jim & Mike O'Brien Rest. |

In the old days there were many sling shot wars between the boys of P.S. 27's on Nelson Street and the boys from P.S. 30's which was located on Conover Street. These battles took place after school hours, and many the bloody nose resulted from these encounters.

Between the Burtis Shipyard and Conover Street was an open beach area where the boys used to swim in the summer. For years one of the many floating bath-houses was moored at the foot of Conover Street which served as sort of a recreation place and fishing pier. The bath-house was open to male and female bathers on alternate days. Later there was "Edison Beach" which was located at the foot of Dikeman Street to the channell and to the bulkhead facing pier 39. Most youngsters quickly learned how to swim, as they were thrown in by the biggers boys (who made sure nothing happened to the kids). There was also a tremendous 'ball field' just off of the Edison building on Dikeman Street. Many great ball games were played there by neighborhood teams (the Felwinns, the Reveliers/Lynroys and Visitation to mention a few). On Ferris Street between Sullivan and Dikeman Streets and to almost the channel was a huge area of tall grass and trees which was used as a picnic area by many families, the kids would climb the trees to pick cocoons, grasshoppers and butterflies. Many people would just loll around or maybe read a book under the trees (being careful a caterpillar did'nt fall on your head). The men fished thru all hours of the night, dotting up the area with their lanterns burning brightly. And many the arguement as to who caught the biggest eel (which were pretty big in those days). Oh yes, the area was always a great lovers lane, used by many of the young adults at that time.

On Richards Street were the Rosin Yards of John Casey and Company, which went on fire so many times that it was said that the fire horses of Fire Company Number Two on Van Brunt Street would automaticaly head for Mister Casey's yard whenever the alarm would sound.

" Oh sure, there really was a Red Hook"

The End

The following are just a few of the businesses that flourished in Red Hook thru the many great years. These came by word of mouth from friends who liked to reminisce about the 'Good Old Days' which were great! Please allow some margin for error as to actual addresses.

Van Brunt St. (west)

Van Brunt St. (east)

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 214 Ship Maintenance | 215 Twin Barber < 272 |
| 230 Bono's Grocery Store | 215 Pauline Russo Grocery |
| 262 Trolley Car Barn | 217 Pop's Spaghetti Shop |
| 264 Trolley Car Barn | 225 C & R Auto Repair |
| 266 Trolley Car Barn | 251 Martins Saloon |
| 268 Trolley Car Barn | 251 Archer's Bar & Grill |
| 270 (a) Shoe Store | 251 Champ Farley Bar & Grill |
| 270 (b) Meyer's Candy Store | 251 Nellie Collins Bar & Grill |
| 272 Twin Barber | 253 Waymers (?) |
| 274 Campagna Grocery Store | 255 Banks Riggers < 269 |
| 274 Serrapica's Grocery Store | 261 Blanco Ship Scaling |
| 274 Tagliafaro, Grocery | 267 Smoked Pork Products |
| 276 Shuffle Inn Bar & Rest. | 267 Italian Bakery |
| 278 Cardinal Boiler Co. | 269 Fry's Saloon |
| 278 Ace Fork Lift Co. | 269 Banks Riggers |
| 280 P. A. L. | 269 DiPasquale Dry Goods |
| 280 Silver Dome S.A.C. | 269 Leo, TV & Radio Repair |
| 282 Boilermakers Local | 271 DiPasquale Luncheonette |
| 286 Bertucci, Groceries | 271 Miutto, Florist < 277 |
| 294 Sapir's Keys & Junk | 271 Gargoyle Social Club |
| 296 Didonne's Movie House | 273 Perna, Candy Store |
| 296 Oscars Pool Room | 277 Miutto, Florist |
| 296 Joe Barra Club | 277 Pivan S.A.C. |
| 296 Munchies Sandwich Shop | 279 Mariooch Grocery Store |
| 298 Pagano's Candy Store | 279 Romeo's Pizzeria |
| 300 DiNardo's Pool Room | 281 J. Lauretta, Barber |
| 300 Linda's Cleaners | 283 Tambino, Shoe Shine |
| 302 Pisano, Fruit & Veg. | 283 H. Gordon, Attorney |
| 304 Winkleman, (Taffy Dick) | 285 Natale Shoe Store |
| 306 York, Glazier | 285 Max Pollack, Notary |
| 306 Windell, Cigar & Ice's | 287 Sal's Butcher Shop |
| 316 Luncheonette | 287 I.L.A. Local |
| 318 Blitstein, Plumber | 289 Donza, Pharmacy |
| 320 Walski (Donza) Pharmacy | 289 Pioneer Meat Market |
| 320 Sal's Grocery Store | 291 Konkolowski, Ideal Rest. |
| 322 Parmigiani, Candies | 291 Knotty Pine Bar & Rest. |
| 322 Anthony's Dine & Dance | 293 Kealings Delicatessen |
| 324 Anthony's Dine & Dance | 293 Margie Hero Shop |

Van Brunt St. (west)

Van Brunt St. (east)

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 324 Donohue's Beer Hall | 293 Anna's Grocery Store |
| 326 (a) Parmigiani, Candy | 295 P. Holmuller, Barber |
| 326 (a) Brothers Candy Store | 295 Casq Loran, Lingerie |
| 326 (a) Palmer's Candy Store | 295 John's Photo Studio |
| 326 (a) Camera Club | 297 H. Flood, Funeral Home |
| 326 (a) Lucy's Luncheonette | 297 Shoe Repair |
| 326 (a) John-John's Candy | 297 Vinny, Electric & Keys |
| 326 (a) Kelly, Cleaners | 303 Falco BarberShop |
| 326 (b) Skee's Barber Shop | 305 Dennis & Lou Carpenters |
| 326 (b) Gambarella, Car Ser. | 307 Manziuso, Bakery (?) |
| 326 (b) Cycle Air Condition. | 307 Ardito, Italian Bakery |
| 328 Hop Wah, Chinese Laundry | 307 Colleen Cleaners |
| 336 Shanks Pool Room | 307 Doughnut Shop |
| 336 Crisimalli, Grocery | 307 Tato Mack Club |
| 336 Giliano, Ital. Bakery | 309 Macaroni Store |
| 336 Campanella Trucking | 309 Roulston, Grocer < 359 |
| 336 Skinny's Variety Store < 356 | 309 Blue Star Pizzeria |
| 338 Reamers Candy Store | 309 Blue Star Meat Market |
| 340 Bill & Al Hamburgers | 309 Skinny Varity St < 336 |
| 342 Angelo's Barber Shop | 311 Pool Room |
| 342 Franks Barber Shop | 313 Crespo, Shoe Repair |
| 344 Gardella's Beer Hall | 315 (a) Shoe Store |
| 344 Crupi Bakery | 315 (b) Baby Goods |
| 344 Kate's Grocery < 358 | 315 Busy Bee Candy & Soda |
| 344 Amendola, Groceries | 317 Kingy's Meat Market |
| 346 Malt & Hops Supplies | 319 A. & P. Grocer's < 368 |
| 346 Willems Ice Cream Parlor | 321 Ann's Fruit & Veg. |
| 346 Irv's Luncheonette | 321 Bernstein Tailors |
| 346 Heyer,s Luncheonette | 323 Tony's Pool Room |
| 348 Buonocore's Grocery | 325 Nichol's Clothing |
| 350 H. Kremmer, Bakery | 327 Gus Meyer, Candy |
| 350 A. Kullen, Bakery | 327 Modern Barber |
| 350 Lucy, Resturant | 329 Elias Malt & Hops |
| 352 Phil's Chutney Mfg. | 329 Erie Basin Wines |
| 352 Bohack Grocer's | 329 Ullman, Wine & Liquors |
| 354 Bachman, Tinsmith | 329 Ronnie's Wine & Liquors |
| 354 Fried & Fresh Fish Store | 331 R. Bachman, Tinsmith |
| 356 Jimmy's Barber Shop | 331 Madow/Keystone Malt |
| 356 Nancy, Beauty Salon | 333 Mrs Mester, Fish Store |
| 356 Skinny's Variety Store < 398 | 335 Sobol, cigar & Novel. |
| 358 Baures, Ship Chandlers | 337 Lanning, Pharmacy |
| 358 Weinberger, Grocer | 337 Davidson, Pharmacy |
| 358 Kates, Groceries | 339 Sugarman, Clothing |
| 358 Tony's Grocery Store | 339 Braunstein, Cloth's |
| 358 Fr. Moroney Council, K.C. | 341 Leo, Radio & TV |