

BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

03347

UNIQUE SITE NO. 03347.020028

QUAD _____

SERIES _____

NEG. NO. _____

L

YOUR NAME: Phil Gallos/Mary B. Hotaling DATE: 9/21/83

YOUR ADDRESS: Box 59, Saranac Lake TELEPHONE: (518) 891-3080 ext. 59

ORGANIZATION (if any): Historic Saranac Lake

IDENTIFICATION

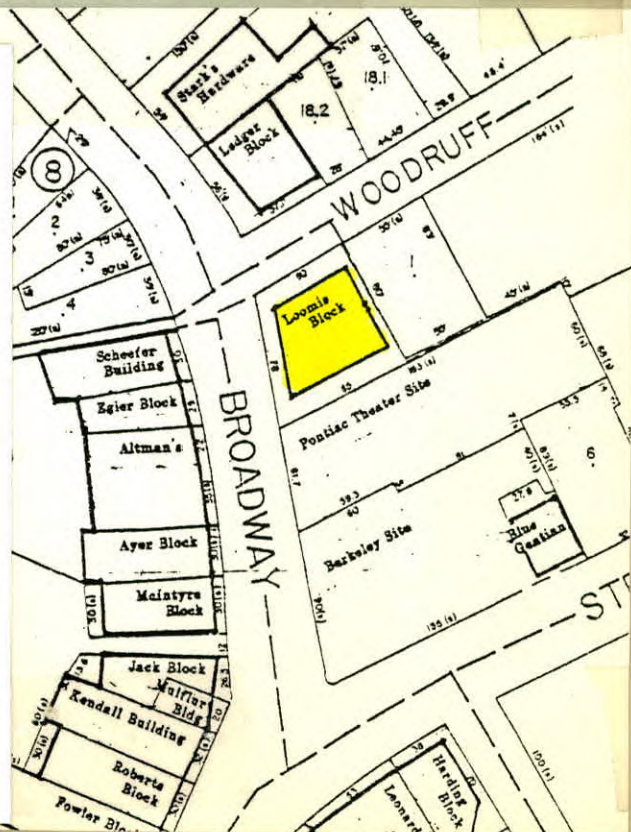
- 1. BUILDING NAME(S): Dukett Building; Loomis Block
- 2. COUNTY: Franklin TOWN/CITY: Harrietstown VILLAGE: Saranac Lake
- 3. STREET LOCATION: 15-17-19 Broadway *Now 14 Broadway*
- 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public b. private
- 5. PRESENT OWNER: Edward J. Dukett ADDRESS: 88 Riverside Dr., Saranac Lake
- 6. USE: Original: Loomis' General Store Present: stores & apartments
- 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes No
Interior accessible: Explain stores open for business

DESCRIPTION

- 8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard b. stone c. brick d. board and batten
e. cobblestone f. shingles g. stucco other: _____
- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: a. wood frame with interlocking joints
(if known) b. wood frame with light members
c. masonry load bearing walls
d. metal (explain) _____
e. other _____
- 10. CONDITION: a. excellent b. good c. fair d. deteriorated
- 11. INTEGRITY: a. original site b. moved if so, when? _____
c. list major alterations and dates (if known):
Between 1920 & 1930, upper story gutted by fire & removed. Later, street sides of building stuccoed. At least one upper level of verandas has also been removed.

12. PHOTO: See attached also.

13. MAP:



14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known b. zoning c. roads
 d. developers e. deterioration
 f. other: owner plans renovations
15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:
 a. barn b. carriage house c. garage
 d. privy e. shed f. greenhouse
 g. shop h. gardens
 i. landscape features: _____
 j. other: _____
16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):
 a. open land b. woodland
 c. scattered buildings
 d. densely built-up e. commercial
 f. industrial g. residential
 h. other: _____
17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: In the Berkeley Square
 Historic District.
 (Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)
18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):
Veranda. (See attached.)

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: Probably shortly after August, 1896.
 ARCHITECT: _____
 BUILDER: Frederick W. and Hattie D. Loomis.
20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

SEE ATTACHED.

21. SOURCES: Franklin County Clerk's records, Malone, N.Y.
22. THEME: Pioneer Health Resort

ATTACHMENT

Berkeley Square Historic District

Saranac Lake, N.Y.

15-17-19 Broadway

12: PHOTO:



THE LOOMIS BLOCK

This building, also called the Downing Block, is one of three situated on lots that were sold by Russell Eugene Woodruff.

R. Eugene Woodruff was one of Saranac Lake's earlier developer/builders. He is best remembered as being the contractor who built St. Luke's Church (1879) in the Church St. Historic District.

In the late 1870's and throughout the 1880's, Woodruff amassed substantial acreage along the Saranac River below Broadway. Through this land he made a street, and near the downstream end of it he built a lumber mill. The mill is gone, but the street remains and bears his name.

In August, 1896, Woodruff sold a 5840 sq. ft. lot at the south corner of Broadway and Woodruff Street to Frederick W. and Hattie D. Loomis. The price was \$1500 for part of a lot the seller had bought for \$100 not quite 20 years before.

The Loomises built a three-story brick building that pretty much filled their new property at 19 Broadway. Fred Loomis then opened a store which occupied nearly all of the ground floor. This was Loomis' General Store. It was a major supplier of such items as packbaskets (they hung all around the walls), traps, and hunting equipment. It was also the primary outlet for school supplies and the sole distributor of text books.

Until fairly recently, Saranac Lake High School students did not get textbooks gratis from the school district and the State Education Department. They had to buy their own. Fred Loomis had the contract to sell them, and he made sure he had in stock exactly which books were needed but always a few more of each than were initially required. The difference between this approach and that of E.L. Gray (who took the distributorship after the Loomises left town and who was always coming up short) was the difference between satisfaction and headaches -- and satisfaction meant profits.

Fred Loomis retired and he and Hattie sold their building to George B. and Annabell "Belle" Downing in Oct., 1920. They moved away to Vermont; and when Fred died, he left \$350,000 to the Fresh Air Fund -- an organization that arranges summer vacations for inner city children with participating Fresh Air families in the North Country.

When one looks at the Loomis Block today, one sees four

storefronts -- a large one on the corner and three smaller ones south of that. In the southern-most of these -- a very long and narrow space -- George Downing and Grant Cane opened a restaurant that became as popular, with a different set of people, as was the Blue Gentian.

The clientele at Downing and Cane's, with Micky Cimbric behind the bar (the Blue Gentian had no bar), was primarily young, extroverted, gregarious. Many of these people were in the process of curing. Tuberculosis was a young person's disease, and the village was full of men and women in their 20's who were lusty and bright and vitally alive regardless of the fact that their lungs harbored a deadly bacteria. The truth of the matter was that many who came to Saranac Lake were only marginally afflicted and were receiving the best of care. Furthermore, if correct hygiene were practiced, tuberculosis was not the galloping contagion that people not familiar with it feared.

So, the young patients came to Downing and Cane's (sometimes looking a good deal more healthy than the non-patients).

The restaurant was the social hot-spot of the village. Also, located adjacent to the Pontiac Theater, Downing and Cane's became the place to go after the movies. Often, between shows, there would be two lines of people on the sidewalk -- one in front of the Pontiac and one in front of Downing and Cane.

After George Downing's death in 1954, Grant Cane moved the restaurant to the Thompson Building, though Belle Downing retained ownership of 19 Broadway.

The Thompson Building, just outside the District and the last multi-purpose commercial structure built in downtown Saranac Lake, was erected by Alexis Thompson, one of the regulars at Downing and Cane at their original location. He was a millionaire, owner of the Philadelphia Eagles, and a poor judge of character.

He renovated a large, old cure cottage on Lake Street, called it the Eagle's Nest, and had his team training for several summers on the Petrova Avenue athletic fields.

"He loved Saranac Lake," Bill McLaughlin remembers. "There's no end to the good he would have done for this town if people hadn't abused him."

Alexis Thompson was rich and generous, and many an unscrupulous opportunist took full advantage of his unwariness. One of the last times Irving Altman saw him, "He was in Downing and Cane's, surrounded

by parasites. He didn't seem to understand that these people didn't care about him -- they just wanted his money."

Finally, after one particularly outrageous deal involving a team of Huskies in Lake Placid, a cruel dawning came to Alexis Thompson; and he left the area he had so loved, never to return. When he died, he died alone in an hotel room -- broke.

Downing and Cane went out of business in the mid-1960's. Belle Downing died in 1972; and, in November of that year, the executrices of her estate sold the Loomis Block to Edward J. Dukett, a local man who owns several residential buildings in the village. Some years ago, Mr. Dukett put a wood-burning boiler in 19 Broadway, and now the Loomis Block is the only building in the District (and probably the only major commercial building in the area) which obtains heat and hot water exclusively from wood fire.

Sometime between 1920 and 1930, fire gutted the upper story of the Loomis Block. This was cut down to just above the second-story ceiling level, and a new roof was built. The roof has seven skylights. Later still, the street sides of the brick exterior were stuccoed.

The four entryways to the storefronts and the residences upstairs are all under segmental arches of varying span; and the space between the display windows and the floor above is filled with Luxor prisms. Unfortunately, they have all been painted. The ground-floor storefront trim is bronze.

Running the entire length of the Woodruff Street and Broadway sides of the second story is a veranda with a very small, recent enclosure at one end. The roof of this veranda, 135 feet long, is supported by unadorned, wooden pillars joined by gently arched tie-beams that, at their apexes, touch higher, straight tie-beams.

The veranda is the outstanding feature of the Loomis Block, but it needs some repairs -- especially one section of its railing. The building in general could use a new coat of paint; but is in relatively good condition.

by Phil Gallos

Emms ←
Gauger -