

HISTORIC RED HOOK

George Bickerstaff

1828-1902

Eliza Bickerstaff

1821-1897

St. John the Evangelist Cemetery, Barrytown

Small marble tablet with slanted top and flared bottom on the north side of the cemetery near the shed

George and his wife Elizabeth Hallon (who was referred to as “Eliza” when her death was announced in the local paper) were born in Ireland. He came to this country in 1874, possibly aboard the *SS Elysia* which departed Glasgow, arriving in New York on April 14 of that year. His wife followed a year later. They can be located in the 1880 census residing with William G. Donaldson, his sister Eliza, and sister Isabel and her husband Robert Bronson at their mansion “Edgewater” in Barrytown. George was their gardener and his wife Elizabeth and three other Irish women, Bridget Conly, Jane Lundy, and Abbey Downey, were listed as servants, all living at the same address.

A few years after they were enumerated at Edgewater, George had made enough money to purchase his own home. In 1888, a strong thunderstorm passed over the area, sending bolts through windows, blowing over fences, killing cattle, and burning down barns full of hay. George’s house was struck by lightning but suffered only minor damage.

The Bickerstaffs do not appear to have had any children of their own, however, their stint with the Donaldsons must have formed some tight bonds with their fellow countrywomen. Abbie Downey and Jane Lundy lived with Bickerstaffs when they appeared in the 1892 New York State census. Jane had since married James Kisselback and had two children, Eliza (who could be named for Mrs. Bickerstaff) and Amanda (who might be named for her grandmother) and they all lived together. By 1900, the census shows that Eliza Bickerstaff had passed three years prior, and Abbie Downey had moved on, but the Kisselbacks remained. James worked for the railroad and George was a day laborer at 72 years of age. That year’s census also reported that George owned his own home outright

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with no mortgage. A month before he passed in 1902, the newspaper informed everyone that he had sold his house to Jane Kisselback for \$1, as a parent would do for a child.

It's not known if there was a blood connection between Jane Lundy Kisselback and George and Eliza (Hallon) Bickerstaff, but it's clear that they were as close, if not closer than kin.

James and Jane Kisselback are buried at St. Paul's in Red Hook. Amanda Kisselback went on to marry Harold H. Fraleigh, and Eliza married Frank Kolbinskie.