

# HISTORIC RED HOOK

## **James B. Ashdown, Jr.**

1874 - 1910

Red Church Cemetery, Tivoli

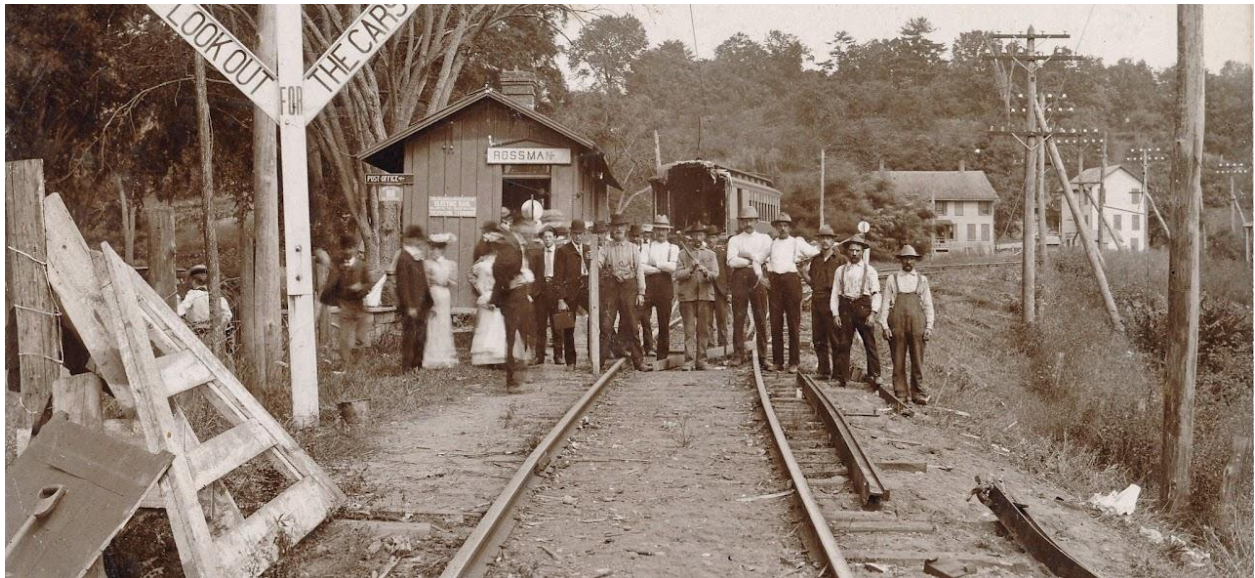
*Granite obelisk on 2-tiered base, north of church, west of fence.*

In the 1880 census, enumerators picked up six-year-old James B. Ashdown, Jr. living with his grandmother Anna Hopton and uncles Charles and Clarence Hopton in Tivoli, and also with his parents James and Mary Ashdown in Germantown, splitting his time between the houses for some reason or another. James Jr.'s' uncle, Charles Hopton was a switchman, uncle Clarence Hopton was a fireman, and his father, James Ashdown was the station agent for Germantown.

James Sr. was originally from England and married Mary Hopton who died at 84 years of age in 1921 at her home near the Germantown station, outliving both her husband (1890) and sons. He was the Germantown station agent from 1874 to 1889 and in the 1880s kept a lemon tree tall enough to reach the ceiling growing in a box planter. Its blossoms perfumed the station building and the rind of these lemons was described as thick and bulky but the taste was "nice" and "not so sharply acidulous." James Sr. resigned in September 1889 from his post due to poor health and died seven months later. The *Columbia Republican* newspaper called him "a faithful husband, a kind and gentle father, and a truly good citizen."

James Jr. studied telegraphy in Ghent in 1893 and by 1901 was working the day shift as a telegraph operator posted at signal tower No. 77 near the Germantown station of the Central Hudson railroad. His brother Charles worked the night shift at "Hallenbeck's switch".

# HISTORIC RED HOOK



*Rossman Station*

James Jr. was involved in an Albany and Hudson Electric railroad train wreck on Saturday, August 2nd, 1902 from which he escaped with no injuries. He helped with rescue and recovery efforts and had “pitiful tales of the suffering” to tell when he got home. A special express train to Hudson had been added to the schedule to accommodate large crowds visiting the Electric Park at Kinderhook lake, a tourist attraction operated by the railroad. A delay of the local train in Albany, plus a malfunction of the shoe that connected it to the third rail caused time to be lost on the schedule. Just as the local was gearing up to leave the Rossman station in Stockport, it was struck in the rear baggage car by the express train which “ripped it into splinters in a second, the crashing glass and woodwork flying in every direction. The impact was so terrific that three of the cars were thrown off their trucks and one car went off the track.” Two people from Hudson were killed and over 40 were injured, and, as was typical in this era, the injuries were vividly described in the reporting. A year before, the same railroad had its first wreck, in which, of 75 total passengers, five were killed and 25 were injured.

James Jr., “an exemplary young man...of considerable promise”, died at the young age of 36 after a long illness—a “complication of diseases” resulting in pleuropneumonia

# HISTORIC RED HOOK

which ultimately killed him. The Order of Railroad Telegraphers sent a large delegation and “Some Time We’ll Understand” and “Thy Will be Done” were sung at the funeral service conducted from his home. He was survived by his mother and brother, Charles.