



CITY OF PEEKSKILL

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

John G. Testa
Mayor

Historic Peekskill Pier Named After Company That Built It

“Fleischmann Pier” Has Served Industry, City for Many Decades.

Change from “China Pier” to Fleischmann Pier Celebrates Business, Workers, and Peekskill History and Resource to be celebrated at Charles Point Park Weds. Oct. 29 at 4:00 p.m.

For Immediate Release

Monday, October 23, 2003

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PEEKSKILL, NY— In the celebration of the labor of its citizens, the strength of its industry, and days when Peekskill was the yeast-making capital of the world, the City is renaming China Pier as Fleischmann Pier.

Arriving in Peekskill in 1900, The Fleischmann Company quickly became one of the city’s most important businesses. “The largest Fleischmann plant is situated at Charles Point, Peekskill-on-the-Hudson, N.Y.—a beautiful, ideal and advantageous location,” the company said in a 1915 release.

By 1915, the company’s huge Charles Point facility had more than 125 buildings, consumed more than 5,000 bushels of grain, corn, rye and barley a day, was equipped with more than two miles of railroad and used 22.5 million gallons of water and 5,000 tons of coal a month

Though the company changed its name to Standard Brands in 1929, locals still called it Fleischmann. With buildings containing more than 1.5 million square feet of space, the Fleischmann facility took up close to 100 acres. More than 1,000 people worked at the Fleischmann Plant at its peak, and veterans include such Peekskill notables as George Pataki, who recalls working in the Gin Building that is now the home of the Crystal Bay Restaurant.

Still, there was one significant bottleneck at the plant. “Molasses is the base of yeast,” recalls Alphonsus J Collins, who worked for Fleischmann for 17 years, much of that time spent at the pier. The thick, dark liquid is put through several processes and eventually becomes the food that helps the yeast grow.

For many years, molasses came to Charles Point aboard big oceangoing ships that were unable to dock and unload their cargo because there was nowhere for them to go. Instead, the ships anchored in the Hudson, and molasses had to be discharged into barges, which then carried it to shore. Since the molasses had to be kept heated throughout this process, this approach cost Fleischmann a great deal of time, labor and money.

Peekskill resident Stuart M. Robinson had a better idea. Robinson was Fleischmann’s “traffic manager.” That meant he was responsible for the efficient transportation of all the goods Fleischmann consumed or produced. He realized the best way to move molasses was to build a pier dedicated to the job.

“Stuart Robinson actually went to the main office in New York City of Standard Brands and said, ‘We’re wasting money bringing it in barge after barge. We need to use ships,’” Collins says. So a channel 30 feet deep and 100 feet wide was dug into the Hudson, and the pier was built in 1938.

Because of the job it did, Fleischmann's pier has an unusual structure. Most piers from that era are wide and low. At 500 feet in length and six feet in width, Fleischmann is long and narrow. That's because the ships that called on it were unloaded with pipes rather than cranes since they carried molasses and grain rather than crates and cases of goods. The pier was designed to unload molasses and nothing else," Collins says.

"Pieces salvaged from the one-foot diameter pipe that carried the molasses make up a sculpture that now stands near the pier's entrance. When it was restored in the 1980s, the Pier was named China Pier after some of the great sailing expeditions that departed from the Hudson River, and to pay tribute to the River's role as an engine of global commerce and of American economic development.

Former Fleischmann workers such as Collins wanted a name that was closer to home which more directly recalled Peekskill's manufacturing past. They were also perturbed by the fact that few if any vessels from China ever called at the pier and that none of the ships that departed the pier were actually headed towards the Far East. "Most of the ships were from the Caribbean," Collins says.

Mayor John Testa also believed a name change was in order and the Common Council agreed. "Peekskill has been home to some very important companies and people. It's vital that we pay tribute to the individuals and businesses that helped build America," says Mayor John Testa.

Fleischmann Pier is important not just because of its history, but as a resource for Peekskill, says Burchenal Green, executive director of the National Maritime Historical Society. "There are very few deepwater piers along the Hudson, and the Pier is one of them," she says.

As a deepwater pier, Fleischmann has hosted a number of tall ships and will continue to do so in the future. Today most of the Fleischmann buildings are gone, but the Pier still stands. Aficionados consider it to be one of the better fishing and crabbing spots on the Hudson, and it offers a magnificent view up and down the River.

“Not long ago, Charles Point Park was little more than a dumping area and the Fleischmann Pier was at risk of decay and collapse. Now it is a resource for Peekskill and everyone else. Standard Brands used to say ‘It is Fleischmann’s yeast that raises the nation’s bread.’ Anyone who wants their spirits raised need only go out on the pier that Fleischmann built,” Testa says.

