



The words “temporary quarters” had been removed from the sign by the time this photograph was taken of Fred A. Darrin’s tiny pharmacy in the 1930s. (*Photograph from the archives of the Aurora Town Historian’s Office*).

Small West End Building Housed ‘Tiniest Pharmacy’

by Robert Lowell Goller

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After Fred A. Darrin’s drugstore was among several buildings at the village’s west end destroyed in a massive early-morning fire on Sunday, Feb. 26, 1933, he re-opened across the street.

But to say he downsized would be a gross understatement; his new pharmacy measured a mere 18 by 22 feet.

It was intended to be a temporary arrangement. According to one account, the pharmacist had planned to construct a larger building in its place and relocate the tiny structure elsewhere on the lot. But Darrin soon removed the words “temporary quarters” from his sign and operated the pharmacy from the building until his retirement in 1937.

The pharmacy’s small size—and Darrin’s ability to both operate the business and live in it—drew attention from outside East Aurora. One Buffalo newspaper in April 1935 called it “what is believed here to be the smallest drugstore in this part of the country.”

“In three smaller rooms behind the main part of the store, Mr. Darrin and his wife have their living quarters, his office and the prescription room,” the newspaper article added.

The small building at 203 Main St., across from Hamlin Avenue, is drawing attention again nearly 90 years later following an application to the village from the current owners, who are seeking to demolish or relocate the building.

Darrin was a druggist in Buffalo before coming to East Aurora. "He recalls with pride that he furnished all the medicines, oxygen and other supplies used to keep President McKinley alive after he had been shot at the Pan-American Exposition," one newspaper account noted.

He had been a pharmacist in East Aurora for 25 years when the fire on the north side of Main Street forced him to downsize to the tiny building on the south side. According to news reports of the fire, Darren and his wife barely escaped before the stairway to their living quarters came crashing down.

"A soda fountain and lunch counter (are) about the only feature(s) lacking here which (are) found in the modern drug store," the April 1935 article about the tiny pharmacy noted. "Mr. Darrin reports that he has not noticed much decrease in his business while in these small quarters. He has seldom, if ever, had to turn away a customer because he didn't have what they asked for, the proprietor declared."

According to property records, the building at 203 Main St. was constructed in 1900, although given the size of the building, it could have been moved to its current location. The front part of the building seems to appear as a one-story "vacant office" on the 1920 Sanborn Insurance map. Maps indicate that the rear portions of the building were constructed between 1920 and 1927.

Although Darrin's tiny drug store might be the most intriguing use of the unique building over the past century, a digital search of the *East Aurora Advertiser* and telephone directories preserved in the archives of the Aurora Town Historian's Office also reveals a history of small businesses and even a substation of the East Aurora Post Office.

Before Darrin moved his drug store and residence to the building, it was home to The Dorrell Tea Room in the late 1920s.

In the autumn of 1937, Darrin was succeeded by James W. Booth, who opened a "new, modern pharmacy" across the street on the northwest corner of Main Street and Hamlin Avenue.

After Darrin's retirement, The Florence Shop children's and women's apparel store occupied the tiny building. The Beauty Nook salon began there in 1940; the Grenier Radio Sales and Service shop later in the 1940s; the Paulette Baby Shop in the late 1940s; Robert C. Cully's flower shop beginning in 1949; the Candy Cottage in the 1950s and 1960s; and Yoerk Memorials beginning in the late 1960s. Many current East Aurora residents remember it more recently as the one-time headquarters of East Aurora Locksmith.

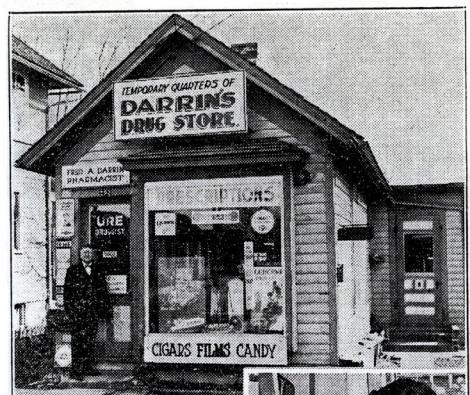
It was during the tenancy of Grenier Radio Sales and Service shop that the tiny building also doubled as a satellite post office.

"Money orders, postal notes and stamps will be available, and mail and parcel post will be accepted," the local postmaster said in announcing the opening of the satellite office in the July 31, 1947 issue of the *Advertiser*.

It was among several locations for a satellite post office at the west end in the years following the merger of the Willink and East Aurora post offices in 1913, to save residents from having to travel to the main post office at the east end of Main Street.

The owner of the radio shop also served as postal clerk, but the arrangement was short-lived. Less than a year later, in February 1948, the local postmaster announced that the satellite post office at 203 Main St. would close with Grenier Radio Sales and Service's relocation to larger quarters.

Tiniest Drug Store Hereabouts



Darrin's West End drug store,
East Aurora, and Proprietor Fred
A. Darrin. This store, which may
be the smallest of its kind in
the state, is being used as temporary
quarters until Mr. Darrin replaces
a larger structure destroyed by fire.

WEE PHARMACY MEASURES BUT 18 BY 22 FEET

Takes place of original drug-
store which was fire-
swept in 1933



On April 16, 1935, a Buffalo newspaper featured "what is believed here to be the smallest drugstore in this part of the country." Fred A. Darrin relocated his pharmacy and residence to the tiny building on Main Street near Hamlin Avenue after a fire destroyed his previous location two years earlier. (From the archives of the Aurora Town Historian's Office).