Elsie the Cow

Schodack has a connection to the Borden Dairy Company's mascot "Elsie the Cow," who once lived in a barn near the Albany-Hudson trolley line, now the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail. The company was founded in New York by Gail Borden, whose 1865 condensed milk patent spurred regional dairy farming. Borden became a national dairy brand, and in the late 1930s the company created a cartoon cow, "Elsie," to help advertise its pure milk.

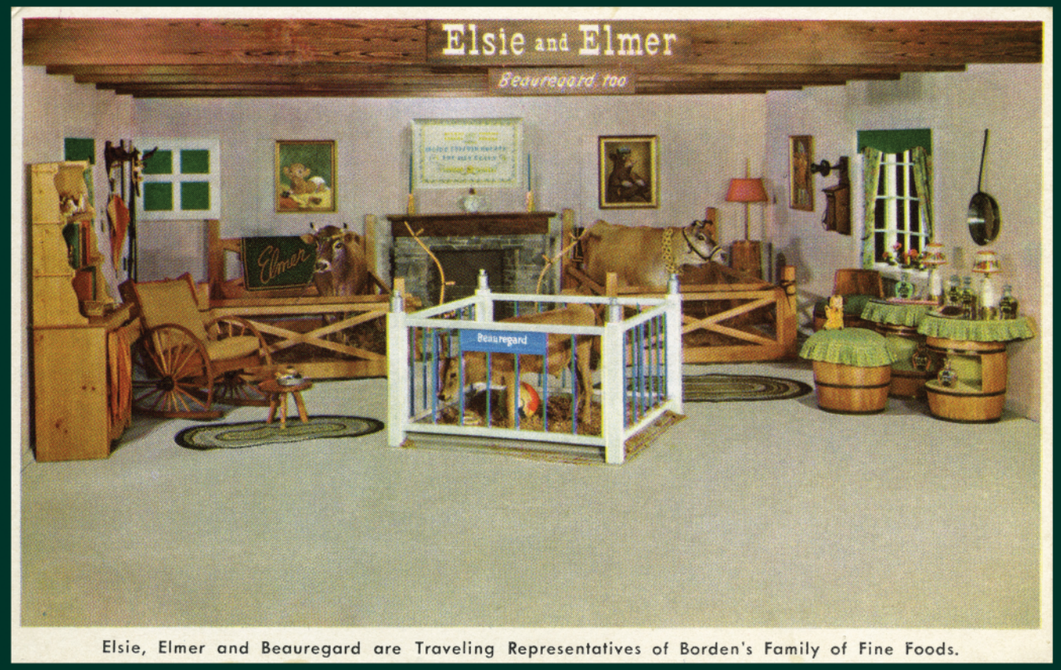
World's Fair

The "Borden's Dairy World of Tomorrow" 1939 New York World's Fair exhibit featured dairy machinery, but most visitors wanted to know which live Jersey cow on display was Elsie. Borden chose a cow named "You'll Do Lobelia" to be the first real live "Elsie," and fourteen million people saw her at the fair. When Elsie gave birth to baby Beulah, Borden gave Elsie a husband, Elmer. After the fair, Elsie toured the US by train to promote Borden products.

▲ BORDEN'S IMAGE
A collage of vintage Borden advertising images including "Elsie the Cow." In 2000, Ad Age named Elsie one of the "Top 10 Advertising Icons" of the twentieth century. Source: Milestone Heritage Consulting.

Schodack's Elsie

Tragedy struck in 1941 when the first Elsie lost her life in a New Jersey truck accident. Borden quickly adopted a new Elsie, a Jersey cow named "Noble Aim Standard." When this Elsie was not traveling to advertise Borden products, she lived nearby at Schodack's Moordenier Hills Farm, on Payne Road just south of the trolley line. In 1947, Elsie gave birth to a calf, Beauregard, named in a contest that drew over a million entries. Elsie and Beauregard toured the US together through the 1950s in a tractor-trailer carrying her "Barn Colonial" boudoir display. This Elsie eventually retired, but her successor's appearances remained popular at events like the Indianapolis 500, the Kentucky Derby, and state fairs into the 1970s.



▲ BARN BOUDOIR
This 1950s Borden postcard shows Schodack's Elsie with Elmer and Beauregard in the "Barn Colonial" boudoir display, which included playful farm-related furniture and knickknacks. Source: Schodack Town Historian.

▲ SCHODACK HOME
Elsie nuzzles her newborn calf in a hay-filled stall in 1948 at Moordenier Hills Farm, which was located about a thousand feet south of the trail. Source: Schodack Town Historian.

▲ ELSIE IS A GOOD GIRL
Elsie enjoyed all the comforts of home in her "Barn Colonial" boudoir, including portraits of fictional family members Uncle Bosworth and Great Aunt Bess. Source: Schodack Town Historian.

◀ MILK RIDES THE RAILS
The Albany-Hudson trolley line carried freight, including local farm products. Milk cans were placed on platforms like this one at Schodack Centre for easy loading onto refrigerated boxcars. Source: Schodack Town Historian.

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