

## Seltzer

The Gomberg Seltzer Works in Brooklyn was established by Mo Gomberg in 1953 and is still in the same family. It is the only NY factory still producing seltzer the old fashioned way in large glass bottles which are able to be refilled. They use NY tap water which is one of the best public waters in the country<sup>1</sup>. They filter it three times before adding the CO<sub>2</sub> gas. Now not as big as it used to be, Gomberg still fills over 3000 bottles a week.

There are many other similar small to medium businesses that survive in NY and it is one of the things that I notice on my many trips to NY. A few of the others I have noticed include Tender Buttons, a store that just sells buttons, started in 1964 by Diana Epstein. The original store was not in its present location and the original store was also used for 'Happenings' and as a meeting place for artists like Jasper Johns, Ray Johnson and Lenore Tawney to talk about art and 29 shades of the colour green. The name Tender Buttons was taken from a work by Gertrude Stein published in 1914. The book had been named after a sign for tiny mushrooms seen in a vegetable market in Paris. I was in the store last December and the lady serving (the same one who has been there every time I have been in the store) has a reputation for being a bit curmudgeonly which she is a tad, but that is fine by me. Each purchase is still written out by hand on an invoice pad with carbon paper behind each page and the total added up in her head. As I entered, a lady was leaving, singing the praises of the shop, "keep doing what you are doing here, never stop, this is the most beautiful shop in the world..." The sometimes cranky storekeeper was quite embarrassed by the lady's talking but was in a very good mood when I paid for my buttons.

I love hardware stores. In Australia, the big chain Bunnings has forced most small operators out of business but on Manhattan there seems to be many small stores dotted around. On my walks around I keep seeing them, usually a chaotic install of varieties of nails, tools and associated stuff. I use copper nails on some of my frames and stock up on them on my trips as they are hard to get in Sydney. I often go into OK Hardware in SOHO and the gentleman behind the counter remembers me and says, "the man from Australia back for more copper nails, still in same spot at back of shop".

Add stores such as Fountain Pen Hospital, Putnam Rolling Ladder Company, Bellitte Bicycle and Casey's Rubber Stamps to scratch the surface of the numerous similar stores which add to your experience of the city. In some way these are small things to happen and notice, but our lives are kind of a never ending compendium of events and the good moments can give you reason to keep waking up in the morning to venture out into the world.

---

<sup>1</sup> NY water comes from the Catskills, Delaware system.