

*Barbara Bielenberg
58 Fraleigh St.
Red Hook, NY 12571*

NEWS FROM

the Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook

Box 1813

Red Hook

New York 12571-0397

**TIVOLI MAYOR MARC MOLINARO TO SPEAK AT
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S ANNUAL DINNER
MEETING ON JUNE 25TH AT ELMENDORPH INN**

SPRING 1996

Tivoli's dynamic young Mayor will be the featured speaker at the Annual Dinner Meeting of the Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook. The evening will begin at 6:00 p.m. with punch and hors d'oeuvres served eighteenth-century style in the newly restored Tap Room and Kitchen of the Elmendorph Inn. Wide-board floors have been repaired, walls plastered and missing parts of the Federal mantel replaced completing the first floor restoration of the historic 1760 inn. The event will be the first public viewing of the completed rooms.

At 6:30 p.m. a buffet supper of Chicken Orcutt, Rice Pilaf, Garden Salad, Rolls and Butter will be served in the Parlor, with tables set up for dining, dessert and the program in the spacious South Room. The annual meeting will include the election of three Trustees (see article elsewhere in this newsletter), and the presentation of the annual Junior and Senior Heritage Awards, awarded for "notable accomplishments made with the Town of Red Hook that preserve, amplify and/or extend the area's historic heritage."

Marc Molinaro will speak about the renaissance occurring in Tivoli, and the role local governments can play in bringing about positive change. Marc became interested in politics while a student at Red Hook High School. He began attending Tivoli Village Board meetings where he attracted the attention of long-time Mayor Edward Neese. He was elected a Trustee at the age of 18, becoming the youngest elected official in New York State. As Trustee he worked on water and sewer improvements, created a new municipal park and instituted a Drug Abuse Resistance program in the Village.

When Neese retired from office, Marc ran unopposed and was elected Mayor in March 1995. In addition to running the Village, Marc is a Political Science major at Marist College in Poughkeepsie.

A reservation form for the Annual Meeting and Dinner is included in this newsletter. For more information call (914) 758-2923 or 758-6204.

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From the President's Keyboard: WHO NEEDS AN HISTORICAL SOCIETY?

In a time when "community values" are sometimes hard to determine, a knowledge of the past is a guide line connecting us to the hardworking men and women who tilled the soil, built houses, barns and shops, argued and traded and through their efforts created the community we now call Red Hook. The records of the past are preserved in maps and diaries, in letters and photographs, meeting minutes, slides and video tape.

It is the mission of a **Historical Society** not only to *collect* and *preserve* these records, but to make them available for study and display. Educational programs tie the past and present together, increasing knowledge and understanding of the community. (Continued on page 2.)

WHO NEEDS AN HISTORICAL SOCIETY?continued

Our **Historical Society** is fortunate to have the Elmendorph Inn as its home, incorporating so much of Red Hook's history within its ancient walls and providing an inspiring venue for lectures, and programs for Red Hook's schoolchildren. This spring we will be working with nine classes of students and plans for fall programs are already in the works.

We look forward to working with the Friends of Elmendorph to create the *Rosemary Coons Historical Archive Center* on the second floor--a space which will allow us to bring together the historical records of Red Hook, now scattered in boxes, trunks and files, in closets and under beds, all over town.

With this *Newsletter* we begin a new outreach program to inform our members of forthcoming lectures and programs and to introduce some of the interesting people, places and happenings, which have played a part in our community's past. We hope to encourage our *Junior Historians* by publishing their stories or artwork, and we welcome input from our readers on topics of interest.

We can only afford to mail our newsletter to dues-paying members so we hope you'll take a moment to fill out the *enclosed application for new members and renewals*. Our Calendar Year begins July 1st so NOW is the time we need to hear from you

Barbara W. Bielenberg, President
Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook

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THREE TRUSTEES TO BE ELECTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

Nominated for re-election to a second term--

Carol Brener is past President of the Historical Society and has been arranging the lecture programs. In 1991 she moved to Rhinecliff from New York City where she owned Murder Ink., the bookstore; earlier, she wrote for *New York*, did a guidebook to Manhattan, and worked as an economic and statistical researcher. A serious gardener, she was a volunteer with the Central Park Conservancy, the N.Y. Street Tree Consortium and Montgomery Place; she also worked at Hudson Valley Raptor Center and Northern Dutchess Hospital Thrift and Gift Shops, as well as baking for the Rhinecliff Volunteer Fire Company Ladies Auxiliary sales and Friends of Elmendorph events.

William Johnson has resided in Red Hook for 39 years. Retired from IBM, he keeps busy as Treasurer of the Red Hook Grange and of The Order of the Eastern Star, Hendrick Hudson Chapter. He is former Treasurer of the Red Hook Methodist Church. Bill is an active member of the Friends of Elmendorph and a volunteer worker in the Elmendorph Etc. shop.

Nominated for a first term--

Mirko Gabler was born and educated in the Czech Republic and came to the United States in 1973. Well-known for his architectural woodwork and exhibition design, he has made a specialty of restoring and reproducing the Dutch Kas or storage cabinet. An example of his work can be seen in the Elmendorph Parlor. While recuperating from a back injury he began writing and illustrating children's books. His published works include *Tall, Wide and Sharp-Eye*, *Alphabet Soup* and *Brakus, Krakus*.

Nominations for the three vacancies may also be made from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

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WHO WAS EGBERT BENSON?

By profession Egbert Benson was a lawyer. He was also a patriot, a public servant, and a judge. He was born in New York City on June 21, 1746 and was proud of his Dutch heritage. During the Revolutionary War he worked for the termination of British rule.

He attended Kings College (now Columbia University) from which he graduated in 1765. His legal education was acquired in the office of John Morin Scott and he was admitted to practice in January 1769 in New York City. Finding business difficult to establish there, he came to Red Hook in 1772. At that time "Red Hook" was the area now known as Upper Red Hook. Benson had a general practice centered on real estate and litigation.

Egbert Benson was the first Attorney General of the State of New York serving from 1777 to 1789. During part of this time he was also a member of the New York State Assembly representing Dutchess County. He was a delegate to the Congress held under the Articles of Confederation (1784-1788) and to the Annapolis Convention (1786).

In 1789 and 1790 he was one of six commissioners from the State of New York who negotiated with commissioners from Vermont to establish the boundary between the two states. The town of Benson, Vermont, located near the border, was named in his honor.

Benson represented Dutchess and northern Westchester Counties in the House of Representatives from 1789 to 1793. He served as a Justice of the New York State Supreme Court between 1794 and 1801 and was named a Chief Judge of the United States Court for the Second Circuit, one of the "midnight Judges" appointed by President John Adams in the last hours of his term. The appointments were later repealed by his successor, Thomas Jefferson.

Benson was a friend and admirer of Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay was a close friend from college days. (A copy of a Gilbert Stuart portrait of Benson which still hangs in John Jay's Katonah home hangs in the Elmendorph Inn.) During the Revolutionary War General Washington employed Benson as an arbitrator for the Army in a dispute with a supply contractor and while he was active in State government Benson served as an advisor to Governor George Clinton.

During the remainder of his life he performed limited professional and public duties/ He was one of the founders of the New-York Historical Society in 1804 and served as its first president until 1816.

His friends were always pleased when he came for a visit. His humor and pleasant ways made him popular with children as well as adults. He died at Jamaica, Queens on August 24, 1833 at the age of 87.

Marlene Hejnal

NOTE: A paper, *Egbert Benson, Forgotten patriot of Revolutionary New York* will be presented by Robert Ernst of Adelphi University at a Conference on New York State History at the State University College at New Paltz on Saturday morning, June 8th. The Conference, which is sponsored by the Hudson Valley Study Center and the New York State Museum Institute begins on June 7th. For more information call Stefan Bielinski at (518) 474-6917.

From a JUNIOR HISTORIAN--

On March 26 at the Elmendorph Inn, many children came from Mill Road school to show indian projects they made. The projects they made were great! Some were loghouses others were roundhouses. Each person got to talk about their projects. Also a special guest came. The special guest was a man dressed up as an indian. It was really neat! He talked about many things the indians wore and used. Like arrows, dishes, clothes and tools. I think it was very interesting and educational. It was great!!

By
Kim Cordier
 4th Grade, Mill Road School



Historical Society Trustee Larry Thetford displays a fingerwoven sash made by Eastern Woodland indians to an audience of Society members, Mill Road students and their parents.

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OUR ARCHIVES

An inventory of our archival holding is being made, with the data entered in a computer file. This allows searching for specific items. When the trustees were asked if we would like to participate in the recent "Museum, Barrytown" exhibit at Bard College, our Barrytown items were quickly identified.

The trustees also felt we should have duplicates of our photographs. This has been started. The negatives will be stored in an off-site location for protection in the event of fire, etc.

It is hoped the time will come when our holdings can be displayed for public viewing. The north room of the second floor of the Elmendorph is the anticipated location. A protective environment of proper heat and humidity which will treat our treasures with kindness is our goal. This will also provide comfortable facilities for anyone doing research about Red Hook.

Our archives are specifically established to preserve items pertaining to the Town of Red Hook, including the villages and hamlets of the town, the history, culture, industries, schools and people and information about Egbert Benson. If you have items or collections of items that reflect these areas you are encouraged to consider the Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook as a fitting location for them.

Marlene Hejnal
 Chair, Archive Committee

MEMBERSHIP FORM

EGBERT BENSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

Box 1813 Red Hook, New York 12571-0397

APPLICATION / RENEWAL YEAR JULY 1, 1996 - JUNE 30, 1997

Name(s) (Please Print)

Mailing Address

Telephone Number ()

ANNUAL DUES

Check appropriate line(s); make check payable to "Egbert Benson Historical Society"

☐ Family \$12 ☐ Individual \$8 ☐ Student (Under 18) \$1
☐ Contributing \$25 ☐ Sustaining \$50 ☐ Life (\$100 or more)
☐ Business or Organization \$15 DONATION _____

If you wish to serve on a committee, please (X) below:

☐ Archives (collecting and cataloging historical documents)
☐ Publications
☐ Membership
☐ Newsletter (writing, printing, mailing)
☐ Hospitality (meet and greet members at regular meetings and arrange for refreshments)
☐ Program (meet once or twice yearly to plan monthly programs and prepare information for Newsletter)

RESERVATION FORM

ANNUAL DINNER

EGBERT BENSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

Tuesday, June 25, 1996

At the Elmendorph Inn

North Broadway (Rt. 9), Village of Red Hook

6:00 p.m. punch and hors d'oeuvres

7:30 p.m. annual meeting and awards

6:30 p.m. buffet dinner

8:00 p.m. speaker

Name(s)(Please print) _____

Phone _____ Number of Persons @ \$10.00 _____ Dinner Amount Enclosed\$ _____

PLEASE MAKE DINNER CHECKS PAYABLE TO: RENNERS

PLEASE NOTE: For your convenience, Dinner check and form and/or Membership check and form (please do not combine the two in one check) may be sent to:

Mary Cioffi

RD#3, Box 72

Red Hook NY 12571

DINNER RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JUNE 15TH.



The Heermance / Bulkeley House on West Kerleys Corners Road. Built early in the eighteenth century, it continues to be the centerpiece of one of Red Hook's productive farms.

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Box 1813
Red Hook NY 12571-0397