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DURATION

1h 9s

6 SPEAKERS

Mary Chang

Wint Aldrich

Naomi Fata

Malachi

Lottie Kittner

Speaker 6

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:01] Mary Chang**

So this is Mary Chang. I am the oral history coordinator from historic Red hook. It is January 16th, 2026, and I am interviewing Leocadia Kittner recording at 23 Church Street, Red hook, New York. And I am here with some fellow interviewers who will introduce themselves and also our tech coordinator. So please introduce yourself.

[00:00:30] Wint Aldrich

Okay, this is Wint Aldrich. I have been involved with the Elmendorf and with the Historical Society in Red hook for over 50 years. And I'm just delighted at this new enterprise of making records of the origins of these organizations. Now, historic Red hook.

[00:00:50] Naomi Fata

I am Naomi Fata, and I have lived in the area for a number of years. And I think I joined this project because my homeschooled son is part of the tech coordinator.

[00:01:06] Malachi

My name is Malachi Fata and I'm the tech coordinator.

[00:01:11] Mary Chang

Okay. Thank you all. So excited to be here. Lottie. And I'm, could you tell us a little bit more about your name?

[00:01:18] Lottie Kittner

Well, I'm, I have too many, but I'm Lottie Kittner known 90% of the time here as Lottie Kitner. My name is for the record, I'm Leokadia Kitner. However, that's a mouthful. Five. Five syllables. See, I told you, I go off on a tangent. Can you cut some of this out?

[00:01:49] Mary Chang

You're doing. You're doing great. Would you mind telling us a little bit about where and when you were born?

[00:01:54] Lottie Kittner

I was born in Brooklyn. Otherwise known as Greenpoint. Very polished section. And from there, my husband dragged me up to Red hook on a business real estate. He started Linden Linden acres. But that's a sad story. I got involved with the Elmendorf by I didn't I didn't know about the Elmendorf. I knew about I was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and it was at the Chamber of Commerce meeting that I heard about the, the, this group. No, it's not even a group. It was Rosemary Coons who was. I was at a meeting of the chamber. Can you cut and snip and cut? Okay. It was at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, and the speaker was supposed to be Winty Aldridge, but he was called off because his wife. How dare she have a child at the middle of our historic meeting. But she did. She had the baby. And so this Rosemarie Koons was asked to speak in place of him. Well, I never met him or heard a more dynamic speaker, a more mesmerizing other than when she by the way, you know, he's the verbiage. His words are marvelous. But she came on and started to talk. We have a building in Red hook that needs to be saved and da da da da. It has to be torn down. And she was I wish she were here. Anyway, the thing is that See.

[00:03:57] Mary Chang

Could you tell us when this was? When you heard this talk?

[00:04:01] Lottie Kittner

Well, this was a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, and I was part of the Chamber of Commerce. I became Secretary of the chamber, a minute taker. And that's when Rosemary Coons also found out that I can take notes. And so she wrote me into the Elmendorf because she says, I don't want to be a recording secretary and corresponding secretary. I want to be at the meeting because she had a lot to say. And so silly me said, yeah, sure. But I never took minutes. People don't understand that minutes are different than notes. And so I could not paraphrase went to his comments at all because he just. I love his speech. I love his take on. I'm sorry, but you know, I do what I think of you. But anyway, there are going to be a lot of anyways here that you're going to have to cut out.

[00:05:12] Mary Chang

So is this the 1976 National Bicentennial meeting? Or was.

[00:05:17] Lottie Kittner

This. No, no.

[00:05:18] Mary Chang

What year was this?

[00:05:19] Lottie Kittner

This was just an ordinary meeting of the Chamber of Commerce in which Wendy Aldrich couldn't make it because he was had to be with his wife and baby daughter. And so he he got Rosemary to take his place. And you couldn't have gotten a better person. She mesmerized that meeting. Where? At that meeting, the Elmendorf got donations right then and there from the members. And I told Wendy, I said, there's one member who never donated, who promised and never did. And would you believe he was a money man? I won't let it. You can put the.

[00:06:03] Wint Aldrich

Yeah.

[00:06:04] Mary Chang

Was that the first time you heard of the Elmendorf?

[00:06:07] Lottie Kittner

Probably because. Absolutely. The first time, because I had no idea of. I had my own little world I was in. My husband was in real estate. I hated the business, but I was locked into it. But what happened is because I could type and record, I became valuable. Ha ha ha.

[00:06:35] Wint Aldrich

So I might just fill in a little bit here. The date of, of that meeting of the Chamber of Commerce was, I believe, the 30th of November 1974. And the reason that that I remember this, and I don't remember a lot of detail, is that that happened to be the centennial day to the day of Winston Churchill's birth. And although that doesn't seem to have any bearing on either Red hook or the Elmendorf, the fact that the Elmendorf was then owned by an American company that had come under the control of British investors, the A and P Corporation grocery chain. The. The people who owned the Elmendorf. British investors were in a position just on the verge of the American Bicentennial to destroy the. The most important piece of history in our village. And so somehow Churchill, who himself was half American, his mother was an American. And of course, with FDR was helpful in saving the world in World War Two. It all seemed to to be at peace. Well, when I had to be in New York with my wife my daughter was born a few days later. She's now a wonderful pediatric medical doctor in one of the New York City hospitals with her three brilliant children living in the city. But it all, it all comes back very clearly. And I can't tell you how happy I was to hear that in my absence. Somebody far more effective than I could have been. Yes, because she was herself a member of the Chamber of Commerce. She worked for for an insurance company here, the Norton's. Right. And and was known to all of these people all fairly conservative people who were not generally in favor of of taking property off the tax rolls and doing nonprofit things with it. She was able to, as Lottie says.

[00:08:57] Lottie Kittner

Fire up.

[00:08:58] Wint Aldrich

The audience. Fire them up and, and convert them to donors. With the exception, I guess, of the president of the bank. Oh, but never mind that.

[00:09:08] Mary Chang

Oh, why don't you can you say more about that? Because one of our questions is what were some stumbling blocks and were there some naysayers?

[00:09:15] Lottie Kittner

Yes.

[00:09:16] Wint Aldrich

Well I think he just perhaps wasn't. Well come on.

[00:09:20] Lottie Kittner

He didn't hear Rosemary. So when you hear Rosemary, you don't become a naysayer. They came later.

[00:09:30] Wint Aldrich

Rosemary Coons became very soon. I don't think she was already that the village historian appointed by the village board. And and and continued to be absolutely a just a firecracker in support of, of both the Elmendorf and the parallel organization that we formed, the Egbert Benson Historical Society, which worked in tandem and now of course, joined is historic Red hook. Rosemarie was was, was wonderful. But we should go back to Lottie now.

[00:10:11] Lottie Kittner

Well, the thing here is that at that meeting I'm a member of the chamber. Just a member. I wasn't even a secretary or anything. And this woman comes up and starts talking about Elmendorf and talking about. And I said, that's, you know, it's a building that should be torn down because it was a mess. And but I wasn't that, you know, that smart to put two and two together yet. But anyway, the thing here is that at that meeting, Rosemary spoke about the history because she was very much a historical buff and she knew that she wanted to save that building, too. And she spoke. I know I am not a historical, historical person at all. I view history as, okay, it's happened, you know, let it go. But she is so impassioned and so serious about what she was doing that I. Wow, this woman has something to say. And so I listened, and all of a sudden everybody listened. And when she was looking for donations, all of a sudden, I'll donate a hundred. I'll donate a. And these are chamber members, and I don't know how or why, but they were. Will, they all will back. In other words, putting up their money and pledging. As I said, there was one whose pledge never, never surfaced.

[00:11:52] Mary Chang

So why? Why did Rosemary and others feel it was important to save and restore the. In.

[00:11:58] Lottie Kittner

Well, she felt, I think she had a history of a base base in her. And she liked. She liked history and she wanted to to keep. I think because I never. It was just who she was. She was preserver of history wanting to keep that building even. She was far, you know, very much in favour of keeping that building. She said that is the oldest building in rhetoric. That is about the only thing we have to point to, to, to to make Red hook special and Red hook was her love. And so she wanted to preserve whatever there was. And she moved those people, hard nosed business people at that meeting to donate \$100. And that was you could probably find in the in the minutes someplace, not mine. But there should be a amounts donated. And we got quite a bit. Well, they got I wasn't even part of it. I was just a member of the chamber. And she motivated these people. And it became a cause. And the beautiful part of that cause is because here we are. It's an English, British or English company who owns it and they want to tear it, tear part of our history down. She was marvelous. I mean, you know, it was like, rah rah. And

[00:13:47] Mary Chang

Do you remember the elmendorf in before it was renovated?

[00:13:51] Lottie Kittner

Oh, I finally went to look at it. It was. It was. Yeah.

[00:13:56] Mary Chang

Can you describe.

[00:13:57] Lottie Kittner

Miss.

[00:13:58] Mary Chang

The building?

[00:14:00] Lottie Kittner

Well, the problem with it was that the Grand Union had a building that was to the left and behind it, so that when you're coming up right route nine, the Elmendorf was, in its view, first for a while, and it was disturbing to the British, to the American, to the British that they want. They didn't want they wanted that whole corner. Actually, they owned that whole corner. So. All I can say is that Rosemary fired up that that group of people to to to say, yes, we want to preserve it. Believe me, after you had seen the building, you said, preserve what? But she was marvelous. I miss her so.

[00:14:57] Wint Aldrich

I should say, by way of explanation, that that the building dates from the 1750s and was one of these road houses, we might call them taverns. It was a tavern where you could stay, but you could also visit the bar and get some food. And it was the only building really that was in what we call the village of Red hook. Now, there was no village. It was just a crossroads. And There were the Beekman Arms was was the next one to the south in, in Rhinebeck. So that's, that's really what it was. The village of Red hook evolved 50 or 75 years later in the 19th century. And experts had looked at this and just said, this is the real McCoy. This is an authentic building that had been changed. It had asbestos shingles on it. And, and then because the Grand Union had, or the A&P had had bought it and were intending to tear it down, that word had gotten out and some antiquarian people, one man in particular, who didn't want to see it all wrecked and taken off to the landfill. And so he asked if he could have the floorboards, which were original, and he and Grand Union said sure. And so he had taken the floorboards. So the first thing that we had to do long before we actually took title was to get all that flooring back or get a promise that it would come back so we could secure that and then do more research. And then, as Laurie said, begin to raise money. And were we raising money to buy the building and the lot, or are we raising money? We just frankly, to make trouble for the owner so that they so that they would give it up to us?

[00:17:02] Lottie Kittner

No, it was Rosemary. It was strictly historical. There was no with her. That's why people believed her.

[00:17:11] Wint Aldrich

Yes.

[00:17:12] Lottie Kittner

And because she was this is an important building. We should not just go almost like saying we have nothing else here because the What was what was in Red hook? One of the reasons Red hook used to be known as the bar. Lots of bars, practically a bar at every corner, every street. And so why? Because all the, quote, important people lived in Rhinebeck, and their workers who worked for the families in Rhinebeck lived in Red hook. So that's why you have these little houses. There were no big mansions or, you know.

[00:17:58] Wint Aldrich

With the exception of Maitland, of course.

[00:18:00] Lottie Kittner

No, no, no, that's that wasn't even considered Red hook. That was Red hook. And, but it was, it really was a historic was pointed out that it was the last historic that we could point with pride that had meaning in Red hook and we shouldn't let it go.

[00:18:27] Wint Aldrich

So you and you have to remember that this was this wonderful meeting was in November of 1974. And six months later, it was the bicentennial of the battles of Lexington and Concord. Oh. Did we? And everybody knew that this was coming. And how are we going to celebrate the bicentennial? And and how are we going to do that in Red hook? And this was the issue. Yeah.

[00:18:57] Lottie Kittner

Well, all I know is Rosemary clicked on it and everybody said, yeah, Red hook is always, you know, like like something you don't even want to remember. And it became important.

[00:19:11] Wint Aldrich

Yeah.

[00:19:11] Lottie Kittner

And there I am at the meeting, and I'm a newcomer because my husband dragged me from New York. Brooklyn. But I was already in New York. I graduated in 19 whatever it was. And I was not historical at all. As a matter of fact, I was raised in a male dominated family where women were unimportant. And we very rarely had anything to say. And here I am, watching this wonderful woman fighting for something that she truly believed. And I liked that. And so she was the instigator of all of this. Yeah. And she was the people, the, the, the person who turned people into saying, yeah, you know, Red hook shouldn't always be. And that's when actually things started because of the Elmendorf people started to fix up their houses. I mean, it was marvelous. What? That woman, my dear, dear, dear friend, was made happy, happened. And Yeah.

[00:20:41] Mary Chang

So how did Rosemary inspire you in particular?

[00:20:45] Lottie Kittner

I'm there. I'm there at the meeting.

[00:20:47] Mary Chang

Yeah.

[00:20:48] Lottie Kittner

I'm. I'm new to the area. Fairly new, but I knew nothing about Red hook. My husband was in real estate. He made me get a license. I hated the business. I have to tell you, it doesn't bring out the niceness in people. I would like, not like that in scratch, scratch, scratch. Anyway there I am, a captive audience wanting to learn about the area also. And here this woman is saying Red hook is important. We have a building that's old, old, old, authentically old. And how can you not listen to her? And so she converted a lot of the members into donators. And that was the start. That was the actual start of the Friends of Elmendorf.

[00:21:47] Mary Chang

Oh. So the day after that.

[00:21:49] Lottie Kittner

I went, I went back to my office and. But Rosemary worked in the real estate insurance agency around the corner. And so she and I got to talking, and the more I talked to her, the more I realized this woman is sincere. She's not a grabber, you know. Whatever it was, you know what? People grab on to something just to get involved In something that the way she spoke, it was going to be important.

[00:22:25] Mary Chang

So did you become a member of the Friends of Elmendorf?

[00:22:29] Lottie Kittner

Well, Friends of Elmendorf didn't happen until, well, later. I became a a person who liked Rosemary. There were not too many sincere people around that I thought I would follow, but she, I would follow. And so she, they were having. I don't remember that. I don't remember some details. That's why I wish I could have. Well, I don't I'm not sure. You got to forgive me for not being sure.

[00:23:08] Wint Aldrich

The record will show exactly when the organization was incorporated and so forth. It probably was informally meeting before that.

[00:23:17] Lottie Kittner

Was all informal meetings. Absolutely. And so I followed Rosemary. I, I liked her, I liked her sincerity because, you know, in the real estate business sincerity, it's it's I call it what is it called when you not mind not misspeak, but you're always in the right person in the right group because you're following them. But whether everybody else is, is that's another story. All right. Get off me!

[00:23:57] Naomi Fata

So what was the timeline as far as once you had the meeting? How long did it take to start the actual restoration or to.

[00:24:07] Lottie Kittner

One whole host? Lifespan is very long and, and I cannot. Pinpoint. That's why I was happy to be able to when I got involved. When I got involved in the chamber, I became a secretary. That's why I was. That's why I got involved in things. Because people wanted my secretarial skills, my typing, my record keeping, and But you grew to love. To love Rosemary. Her her sincerity was real.

[00:24:48] Mary Chang

Can you say something? Tell tell us about a a memory that you have with Rosemary like that between the two of you.

[00:24:56] Lottie Kittner

Oh, well, because we lived. Worked around the corner from each other. We probably I, I'm not quite sure, but I think I was invited to a meeting and they one of the reasons Rosemary used to say to me, I don't want to be recording Secretary and. Corresponding Secretary. She says, I want to be at the meeting and I can't talk when I'm taking notes. So she says, could you take. Take the recording secretary. I says, what does that involve? Well, she says, it's just taking the, the the minutes. Now, I'm from Brooklyn. I'm from a real estate. I was a legal secretary and I used to take dictation. So what you said, I wrote. And so my shorthand was pretty good, but a lot of us. In other words, you have to have knowledge to be able to be a recording secretary because the recording secretary, even though you're enamored with the speakers, like Winty saying things because I try to take him down verbatim. And that's what those were. Those will be in my. But you'd have to go back to the record to find out at what year it was. And that's why I said, now I know the minutes of the Elmendorf are up in Albany.

[00:26:32] Naomi Fata

So how did the committee eventually get the building from the grocery store chain?

[00:26:39] Lottie Kittner

Oh, that was a world war. World International World war the British want to take away our history and everything. I all I used to sit and watch and go, wow, okay, whatever you say I agree with. Because from Rosemary it would be fact. And never worried about anything she said.

[00:27:05] Naomi Fata

So.

[00:27:05] Lottie Kittner

Or him because he he was revered by everybody. Wenty Aldridge is ahead of the. I have news when Wendy Walter was president of of the committee of the. What was that Bicentennial committee they made him president. Rosemary was corresponding secretary and recording secretary. I was just, you know, bystander or whatever. And he spoke and I just fell in love with his speech, his as has the way he put things. I mean, I have him in the minutes.

[00:27:42] Wint Aldrich

It was all a lot of nonsense, you know perfectly well.

[00:27:46] Lottie Kittner

No, no, no no no, not you. You everybody said Wendy Aldridge that, that gave that group stature. Did you know that at least to me it did. I had no idea who you were nor was I impressed with who's who because I have learned that who's who sometimes I don't want to know them. Because I was not a good salesman. Because, as I said, it requires a double speak, because you're trying to convince a person that that house is is worth it. When in your heart, you know it's going to be a challenge. And my attitude is they should know it's a challenge. They should know why they're buying it. So I was not a good salesman. So basically I, my husband was was it? But he died. And so all of a sudden I am now an owner of property. I come from a family that women don't own. My father owned, he was a Polish in in Europe, and he married an Austrian woman because her husband died and she is not allowed to own property. Can you imagine this? And so he had to get married. So not too many. I guess it wasn't too big an estate. So they found my husband in the Polish section and he married her.

[00:29:22] Lottie Kittner

But they had children because my father was one of the children. And it was interesting to learn. I mean, I was so stupid about life and about world. And here I am learning the punches, how women were treated. And so he owned a property, and guess who owned it? Who owned it? We. My father. There was a problem back then, and it was 1913, 1912, 13 where things were getting crazy in Europe. And my father, who is now in Austria, in Austria, and there was trouble with Germany and Austria. And my father said, I am Polish. I am not going to be Australian. Or Austrian. Excuse me. And so he is my father. My father became the son and he was in the military. His mother, who was Austrian, got him into the Austrian army. I thought he was in the Polish army, but he was when I was trying to find find him. But he was in the Austrian army. Well, when it looked like Austria was going to become German, my father said, I'm not German, I am Polish. And he stuck to it. So that's why.

[00:31:03] Wint Aldrich

Is that when he came to Brooklyn.

[00:31:05] Lottie Kittner

That's when he came. Well, his his leaving the Army was quite an ordeal because he had to escape. He talked about his his leaving, actually trying to leave the Austrian army as we leave Poland. Leave Austria. And as his stories were marvelous but I couldn't understand them quite. But it's okay. I, I learned a little bit more. But the thing is that women are not allowed to own property. So that woman and her, she. I don't think she had children or anything because she married my father, my father's father and became supposed to be Austrian. Well, he wasn't he didn't like what was going on in the outskirts outside of Austria because Russia, not Russia. Germany. Now he was in the Russian sector of Poland. That was another story that he didn't like because the Russians, not the Russians, the poles on the other side were. Were were Polish. And so he did not want to become a satellite of Russia of of of Russia, well, Russia, of Germany, because he didn't like the way they were taught. I don't know, whatever I couldn't put I don't want to put words in his mouth, but he was very, my father was very strong. And as I said, women were brushed aside. You are here for our our our our bidding. My mother had ten children, so I guess that was bidding.

[00:32:58] Mary Chang

Can you tell us when you were born?

[00:33:01] Lottie Kittner

92832 but, but.

[00:33:05] Mary Chang

Do you feel strongly about your Polish identity?

[00:33:07] Lottie Kittner

I went to a Polish parochial school. I spoke Polish at home before I spoke English. As a matter of fact, my mother never learned English. But my Polish identity was not a feeling. It was an acquired taste. Because I don't like anybody knocking anybody down. But I also felt my father was owning property that really wasn't his. And because I, I guess I have an honor streak, but for women, that's what I think I learned it, but yes, it's a very interesting. Growing up, I had to unlearn not being female.

[00:34:01] Mary Chang

Well, I can understand why Rosemary was such a powerful figure. She was you?

[00:34:06] Lottie Kittner

Oh, absolutely. I just adored her because I was, you know, I felt I was a woman. Women don't count.

[00:34:14] Mary Chang

Sounds like she played a great role in motivating.

[00:34:17] Lottie Kittner

You know, that never occurred to me. But that's probably where I got it. And yes, it's important. And I got two daughters who drive me crazy because that's supposed to. I hope I'm not taking up too much of my time.

[00:34:35] Mary Chang

You're doing fine. You're doing great. Could you say something more about you? You said that it was World War Three. Well, so could you say something about those who were against the renovation?

[00:34:47] Lottie Kittner

Well, the the people who are conservative had there were two types, those who felt strongly about Red hook not being a satellite of Rhinebeck because that's what we were. As a matter of fact, we were the poor satellite of Rhinebeck because that's where all the bars were. That's where all the working people lived. And so what's there to save in Red hook? And that was I learned that was the attitude. And. Well, I'm living in Red hook now. And here we have a woman who has pride and we have an old building. Now, the Rhinebeck had the Beekman Arms, which was an old building, but I don't think it was as old as the Elmendorf.

[00:35:36] Wint Aldrich

I think you're right. I think that was the 1790s. And we're the 1750s. Yeah. But it served the same function on the on the Albany Post road.

[00:35:44] Lottie Kittner

Yes.

[00:35:44] Wint Aldrich

Oh, yes. A roadhouse.

[00:35:46] Lottie Kittner

Well, but yeah. And I was surprised to learn that the roadhouse, how they when you slept, you slept in a common bed. Did you know?

[00:35:55] Wint Aldrich

Yeah, I think so, yeah.

[00:35:57] Lottie Kittner

And it was very I was charmed by Rosemary's knowledge, and he was wonderful. She was very much for the Elmendorf.

[00:36:15] Wint Aldrich

I might just respond to Naomi's question about how the organization well, it didn't acquire title, but acquired responsibility for the building. Yes. And started started work. My recollection is that you you were raising money and and the money was a little unclear whether we'd ever raise enough to buy it actually, at market value. And of course, the company wanted it, wanted to remove it because they wanted to have a flourishing business there.

[00:36:51] Lottie Kittner

They wanted.

[00:36:52] Wint Aldrich

A visit. I think something was happening to their plans. Maybe nationwide. Anyhow, well.

[00:36:58] Lottie Kittner

The British, what is a British company doing in.

[00:37:00] Wint Aldrich

America? Well, so I mean, there was a lot of competition, obviously in grocery chains. And so I think that the money that was raised may have been the records would show this. It was agreed that we could lease it. You see, the thing is, we couldn't spend any of this money that we were raising tax deductible money. Yeah. Improving the property that's owned by a for profit corporation. Yeah. And nor did the Grand Union or did the A&P want us to do that.

[00:37:33] Lottie Kittner

No, they wanted us away.

[00:37:34] Wint Aldrich

So so it was sort of a we wanted to lease it so that we could have some sense of possession and show it to people and document it, and.

[00:37:45] Lottie Kittner

I don't know.

[00:37:46] Wint Aldrich

And that went on for a while, I think maybe for two years. I don't remember exactly when they finally gave up the ghost and.

[00:37:55] Lottie Kittner

Oh, are you kidding? The war was declared.

[00:37:57] Wint Aldrich

Yeah, well, I think it was after the Bicentennial. Maybe. Maybe it was.

[00:38:02] Lottie Kittner

The bicentennial that really.

[00:38:04] Wint Aldrich

Made seven or something like that.

[00:38:06] Lottie Kittner

And that's when I got really involved in the bicentennial.

[00:38:10] Naomi Fata

When you say a war, was it to the extent of like a lawsuit or.

[00:38:15] Lottie Kittner

No, no. No verbal.

[00:38:17] Naomi Fata

Just. Okay.

[00:38:18] Lottie Kittner

Battlefield. Right in the middle of the streets. Oh, it was, it was it was war. You couldn't even say you were British.

[00:38:31] Naomi Fata

Oh, so it's more of, like, a nationality?

[00:38:34] Lottie Kittner

No, it was it was a it was a people sense of place. People taking ownership of something that they felt they didn't have. And when the Elmendorf was shown to be historic, how old it was. How can you tear down a building that. That is probably the oldest, you know. She was marvelous and convincing people don't give up anything like that. Work for it and work on it. And I was right with her.

[00:39:12] Wint Aldrich

And there was evidence that that the Patriots in 1776 were local patriots were meeting in that tavern. Oh, yes. I mean, this was a and the Committee of Safety and so forth. People like Edward Benson, who was a local lawyer and later became the first attorney general of the state of New York. I know he he was that was so so there was this there was this sense that as we built the argument and as people had road signs and.

[00:39:48] Lottie Kittner

Oh, it was, it was a wonderful.

[00:39:50] Wint Aldrich

War. Oh, we could humiliate these executives.

[00:39:55] Lottie Kittner

That's what we.

[00:39:55] Wint Aldrich

Did. Of a of a British owned company. And and in the end, it just wasn't worth it for them to. I mean, at first they were amused by this. And then they realized their public relations people said, this is going to be in the New York Times and on CBS and NBC. You better you better fix it somehow. And they fixed it by just giving up, having a store in Red hook. I think.

[00:40:22] Mary Chang

So. Can you say more about how people responded? It sounds like there was a lot of pushback against the Grand Union's plan. What did this pushback look like from community members?

[00:40:31] Lottie Kittner

Well, I'm sure not. I don't know, but I'm sure that people didn't go to the Grand Union anymore.

[00:40:36] Wint Aldrich

It was A and P, right?

[00:40:37] Lottie Kittner

No, a and P was the store to the to the right. They were doing fine. They would have loved the Grand Union to go away and. But the Grand Union.

[00:40:50] Wint Aldrich

That was the British owned. All right. I'd forgotten that. Yeah. Sorry.

[00:40:53] Lottie Kittner

Yeah. A&p was not British owned. It was the Grand Union. Grand union? How dare they?

[00:41:01] Naomi Fata

So eventually, did they give it as kind of a historic donation to Red hook, or did you have to buy it?

[00:41:10] Wint Aldrich

I, I don't remember.

[00:41:13] Lottie Kittner

I don't remember that either. But I do know that it was it was ours. Let's put it that way. Because.

[00:41:24] Wint Aldrich

And then the money could be raised to, to, to restore it.

[00:41:27] Lottie Kittner

Remember, the bison was legitimate.

[00:41:29] Wint Aldrich

Not for profit. The bicentennial and getting tax deductible gifts.

[00:41:35] Lottie Kittner

The fact that the bicentennial came in between that raised everybody's ire or whatever you want to call it, a feelings of, you know, nationality. This is ours, right? And so far, more people were convinced that this old, old, old, dilapidated building that is now a derelict needs some love.

[00:42:04] Wint Aldrich

That's right.

[00:42:05] Lottie Kittner

And identity. And it had an identity. And it took Rosemary to show that up. And she was quite a remarkable woman.

[00:42:14] Wint Aldrich

And to persuade people who generally would not have been in favour of a of a tax deductible property. I mean, a tax taxable property becoming tax deductible.

[00:42:27] Lottie Kittner

But.

[00:42:28] Wint Aldrich

Being restored, being off the tax rolls taking away business from a food store and so forth. So so it was a pretty dramatic shift and.

[00:42:41] Lottie Kittner

It was marvelous that our people. As I said, Rosemary was wonderful. She was able to convince people that it was an important piece of Red hook to keep for, for future. And she managed. She absolutely managed to get people involved and started the Egbert Benson Society. Now, I don't know if that's right. Now, the reason she fell in love with. She was a devotee of Egbert Benson. As a matter of fact, the. The Historical Society used to be known as the Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red hook.

[00:43:21] Wint Aldrich

That's correct.

[00:43:22] Lottie Kittner

Well, then the people came in and said, that's too long a name. And da da da da da da. And they had no love for Egbert Benson. Now, Rosemary had an absolute disaster when the building was called Egbert Benson. She and her husband, the first bicentennial party. Rosemarie Koons because there was already stuff in the window that became part of its basic. It's amazing what came back. And she See, I do get off at a tangent. I'm sorry. She was the one who got the Egbert Benson. Egbert was as he said.

[00:44:09] Wint Aldrich

He was the first attorney general of the state. Right. And before that, during the revolution, he was in charge of the Committee on Safety. And

[00:44:18] Lottie Kittner

But he wasn't. But he was in New York.

[00:44:21] Wint Aldrich

Well, he was born, or his family came from Tivoli. Came from upper Red hook.

[00:44:25] Lottie Kittner

That's right.

[00:44:26] Wint Aldrich

So but he was in New York City person. And then during the war, of course, he had to be in Poughkeepsie or somewhere, but yeah. But but the interesting thing about Benson was that he lived to be an old man. He wrote books. He was an historian. He never married, so he had no children. So the argument we made was we are all his children. And and he was a founding father, president of the New York Historical Society, which is the granddaddy of all the great historical societies. So. So you had all of these.

[00:44:58] Lottie Kittner

We had.

[00:44:58] Wint Aldrich

All these rationales for celebrating.

[00:45:01] Lottie Kittner

Him. And so a lot of people started to follow because someone liked his that he was a historian. Number two. Number two, that he kept records of. Right. And so it just gelled.

[00:45:17] Wint Aldrich

You know, what Rosemary did was she made she was so good at thinking of these things because she wanted always to get publicity for. Yes. Once, once the historical society was formed, I mean, there was a feeling that we don't want to get distracted. We want to raise money to Restore. I mean, first a choir and then to restore the Elmendorf. But it's just a different mission to acquire artifacts and documents relating to Red Hook's town history. And and to celebrate that and to give lectures and so forth. So that's why the Historical Society was formed as a parallel organization. And eventually they merged. But she, she said, well, how can we how can we make this a bigger issue geographically, a bigger issue? And she said, well, we have a dynamic and very popular attorney general in the state. He was Nelson Rockefeller's attorney general for all of his 16 years. I think his name was Louis Lefkowitz. And attorney generals can be called generals. So it was General Lefkowitz. And somehow Rosemary got to him. And she was she was his favorite person in this part of the Hudson Valley, and she talked about.

[00:46:38] Speaker 6

The redhead alarm time is.

[00:46:41] Mary Chang

I'm just going to pause it.

[00:46:42] Speaker 6

Okay.

[00:46:44] Lottie Kittner

That's all. Alarm time is 12:30 p.m..

[00:46:49] Wint Aldrich

Okay.

[00:46:50] Lottie Kittner

Yeah. Go ahead.

[00:46:51] Mary Chang

Wait. Hold on. Is it going.

[00:46:54] Malachi

I don't know, I mean.

[00:46:56] Mary Chang

Oh, did we hit record because I don't see the record button on. Record.

[00:47:06] Naomi Fata

I think it was recording.

[00:47:09] Mary Chang

Okay.

[00:47:11] Wint Aldrich

So was it back on. So so Louis Lefkowitz came to at least one event down here and he was just ebullient about my, my, my favorite redhead. Rosemary and Rosemary did have a real bush of red hair and oh, it was just it was a political match made in heaven. I mean, these these two. Lefkowitz was absolutely without a hair on his head and but whipsmart and And he loved being connected to the first attorney general.

[00:47:48] Lottie Kittner

Yes. Well, absolutely. And he the thing is that Rosemary was able to convince anyone that came in her sphere of anything that she wanted. And I was it was very it's marvelous. The thing here is, though, that I knew I would throw everybody off the track. So what track are we on?

[00:48:14] Mary Chang

I wonder if you can say a little bit about the process of renovation. What did it look like? Smell like, sound like?

[00:48:21] Lottie Kittner

Well, the process people, the funny thing is that even the people who were. For saving the Elmendorf because it became a political English, you know, rah rah America. And I think there were some people, if we could kick the English out of the British out of America, that would be fine. But my I was not of that ilk. So I was kind of sold on a sideline and watching. And it was amazing how things you could see the groups some burn it down, get rid of it or some. Oh, we got to save it, you know. And so it was the ladies, I believe not so much the gentlemen who banded together. But I'm sorry.

[00:49:23] Wint Aldrich

Clara. Lucy was one.

[00:49:26] Lottie Kittner

Oh, Clara. Lucy. Well, she was a true His story and her husband's the both of them.

[00:49:31] Wint Aldrich

They were really the stories and and they were they were perhaps more on the side of starting the historical society.

[00:49:37] Lottie Kittner

Oh, absolutely.

[00:49:38] Wint Aldrich

But they were certainly in favor of saving the building because they saw it as a home for the historical society, which it became.

[00:49:45] Lottie Kittner

Yeah, yeah. It was very interesting to see. Now, me, I'm a sideliner, and I just believe anybody who can convince me that they're honest. And I hate to I hate this is why real estate was hard for me. Because you have to learn double speak. And I'm not good at double speak. You'll find out.

[00:50:10] Naomi Fata

So at one point, you mentioned having to get the boards for the floor back. Like what other types of.

[00:50:18] Lottie Kittner

I did not know anything about that.

[00:50:20] Naomi Fata

Did you? Okay. Were you involved in any of the interior work in the Elmendorf?

[00:50:27] Lottie Kittner

No, because I am not. Even though I was in real estate. Dragged in by my husband, not because I wanted it. So you know where I'm coming from. So I was interested in the reasons, the passions of people. I like passions because they're true. And she was passionate. And how could you not follow Rosemary? But the thing here is that when I got thrown off the track. Choo choo choo choo. Back, back. I'm sorry. When she take over.

[00:51:09] Wint Aldrich

Well, I'll just say in response to that. We do expect to be interviewing Reed Bielenberg. Reed was a youngster when his parents moved to Red hook, right down here on Fraley Street. And his mother, Barbara, and his father, Bob, became a key players in the restoration of the building and read will know when they came back. I think it was about the time of the bicentennial and and and read as a, as a youngster was with them and has ever since, I mean, 50 years later, his whole world is the restoration of buildings and of boats and so forth. So he got, he caught this, this bug very early. And he will remember very clearly about the process. And some of it was aesthetic to make it more attractive to bring people in who will contribute money. And some of it was functional because I think there were foundation problems and, and chimney problems and so forth, roofing problems. And they wanted always to do it. Right. And they learned about what right is. And so they don't make mistakes. But they had to get the asbestos shingles off the outside. So it would look like an old building or an older building. And slowly restore one room and have it available for events. And so it's, it's, it was a long process and money had to be raised. Certainly the, the grand union folks didn't, didn't give us any money. They just gave us the property. And I think that we didn't have to buy it. I think that it was a gift.

[00:53:01] Lottie Kittner

You're right. So what happened is.

[00:53:03] Wint Aldrich

And they didn't do their job. I mean, they they were out of there. That's the property that became the drug store.

[00:53:11] Lottie Kittner

Now the the name of the minister in Tivoli.

[00:53:14] Wint Aldrich

Elliot Lindsley. And we're going to interview him next week.

[00:53:17] Lottie Kittner

All right. Well, he was very instrumental in getting the building for us.

[00:53:23] Wint Aldrich

He did.

[00:53:24] Lottie Kittner

Do you remember what he did? He went down to the company and shamed them into no.

[00:53:29] Wint Aldrich

I think he did. I think he did. And wearing his clerical collar.

[00:53:33] Lottie Kittner

Oh.

[00:53:34] Wint Aldrich

And he was he's an Episcopalian. So he's Anglican, you know, and they're Anglican. English.

[00:53:40] Lottie Kittner

So he was marvelous when he came back and said, we got the building. I think if we could have got him in for sainthood, we would have, because that was a really remarkable how we got the building. It was it was no, no more struggle, no more. But I think they didn't want to start World War, American English War and Red hook.

[00:54:08] Wint Aldrich

Yeah.

[00:54:09] Mary Chang

So we're going to finish up pretty soon. But can you tell us a little bit about what you feel was learned through the INS restoration process?

[00:54:18] Lottie Kittner

What I learned is never give up. If you want to save something, you can save it. You can Really? Do. It's amazing what people will come up and do if you get to the right core of the people. And Rosemary did Elliot. Elliot. Lindsley. We couldn't believe what he was able to acquire because of his. As his clerical collar, of his background of because he was you know, whatever the connection he had with them, they were shamed into it, I think. And that was fine. We got it.

[00:55:06] Wint Aldrich

Well, I think he probably also said, do you really want this to be a feature story in The New York Times?

[00:55:13] Wint Aldrich

And, you know, they were always worrying about their stock prices and everything. In it.

[00:55:17] Lottie Kittner

Oh, absolutely. No, he was good. I, you know, he was, but he he he lived in a house that was old and that the second floor. You didn't see the windows were at the floor level and you would not. That's to fool the tax collector that you only have one and a half stories, whereas inside. But from the outside, the windows. Now I wish I had. I got busy with Elmendorf and with the historical Society, so I was not able to follow some of my curiosities.

[00:56:02] Mary Chang

Is there anything more you'd like to share about the Inn's restoration that we haven't talked about yet?

[00:56:08] Lottie Kittner

As far as I was concerned, I had very little to do with the restoration because it was not in my purview. It was not in my. Even though I was in real estate. It was not my interest. So I left that to the people who really cared. Rosemary. And plus Wendy. And you did care.

[00:56:31] Wint Aldrich

I cared intensely about it. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:56:34] Lottie Kittner

Yes.

[00:56:35] Mary Chang

But it sounds like you made a big contribution in being participating in these organizations in the Elmendorf in the historical society. And taking minutes is a tremendous

[00:56:49] Lottie Kittner

Yeah. But it was already the, the nitty gritty work was already done by the minister, Rosemary, Rosemary Winti and the minister. We were lucky. Call it luck. Lots of luck because it was good.

[00:57:10] Wint Aldrich

I think that you legitimized this as a project among the business community. In a way, you were right in the center of the village. So was Rosemary. Well that's true. The rest of us were somewhere else. Eliot was up in Tivoli. I was at Barrington.

[00:57:27] Lottie Kittner

That's true. My office was right in the center. Rosemary worked for someone. I was free and clear with what I wanted to do with my time in the business. And so, as a matter of fact, one of the things that reminds me. Rosemary says we're going up to. And I forget where there's a big meeting. And she says, I'm going. So I says, well, I'll go with you so that you can have company. So I went with her, and it was from that meeting a man came because of Rosemary and basically me too, because he says, I kind of sort of was a chatterbox because I so believed in what she was doing. And when he came down to Red hook. Wanted to talk to Rosemary. She's an employee, so she couldn't take the time. So everybody said anything to do with the island or sent them to my office. And so that's how I got involved. So this man came down to Red hook and I said something to him. I said, I said, do you remember when Red hook had sidewalks that were uneven, that were absolutely a mess? You took your life in your hands to walk. And he got us the sidewalks. Oh.

[00:58:49] Wint Aldrich

So he was from the state government? Yeah.

[00:58:51] Lottie Kittner

No, he was he was part of investigating. And once he met Rosemary, it was. He was convinced.

[00:59:01] Wint Aldrich

I see. I see. Well, that's. I'm not surprised. Yeah.

[00:59:06] Lottie Kittner

It's it's see, you were important because of your stature in the community. You or somebody. Did you know that?

[00:59:14] Wint Aldrich

No. I recently become the town historian.

[00:59:17] Lottie Kittner

No, I'm not talking.

[00:59:18] Wint Aldrich

Inexplicably, for 43 years, I was the town historian.

[00:59:23] Lottie Kittner

No, no, you were far more. As a matter of fact, I. You were Win-t Aldrich of the Aldridges. Yeah.

[00:59:31] Mary Chang

Well, I feel like I'm very inspired by you and your role. Oh, and.

[00:59:37] Lottie Kittner

It sounds like record keeping. Yes.

[00:59:39] Mary Chang

That's important. But you also supported Rosemary to go accompanying her to meetings and then being the go to person for all the people with questions. Yeah. She couldn't have done that on her own.

[00:59:48] Lottie Kittner

No, that that would have been a problem because you needed somebody to steer and to kind of sort of. So if you want to call me a steering wheel, that's okay.

[00:59:57] Mary Chang

Thank you so much for speaking with us.

[01:00:00] Naomi Fata

Yes. Thank you.

[01:00:01] Wint Aldrich

Yes. Thank you very much.

[01:00:03] Lottie Kittner

Love you.

[01:00:04] Wint Aldrich

Guys. Very good session.

[01:00:06] Lottie Kittner

Well, I'll be happy. I'm sorry if I, I.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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