



Egbert Benson

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

P.O. Box 397 Red Hook, N.Y. 12571-0397

Winter 2009

### Historical Society Receives Two Important Collections

Two recent donations have greatly expanded the holdings of our Archive. The first came from James B. Hardin who visited Red Hook this past summer to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion of his Red Hook High School class. Jim's ancestors were among the first settlers of this area, including many of the Elmendorphs mentioned in Bobbie Thompson's article elsewhere in this issue. In each generation family member retained Deeds, Wills and other family papers. The collection dates back to November 24, 1739 and Jim has provided us with a detailed inventory of 142 documents. Because the family prefers to retain physical possession of its papers, he has provided us with digital copies of the documents. A file of 38 personal Elmendorf\*, Potts and Budd letters (1860-1902) includes this description of Upper Red Hook written by Mary Elmendorf around 1861

#### "Description of our Village

Our Village is a quiet little hamlet set many miles distant from the blue waters of the Hudson. It makes no pretensions to style either in respect to its inhabitants, or their dwelling places. No stately mansions rear Gothic fronts to the bending heavens. No wonders of architecture attract the gaze of any passers by. But more than one simple white cottage smiling out from its surrounding of shrubs and trees seems as though it might be the abode of rural contentment.

Ours is a flourishing village too, although it contains no manufactories, but is peopled by industrious Dutch Farmers. It contains a church and parsonage, an Academy, a common School, two Stores, and a Blacksmith's shop and other Mechanics shops sufficient to supply all our needs.

Our Village dignitaries consist of a Dominie, a Doctor, a Lawyer, and a justice of the peace. We are also favored with an artist who takes up his summer residence among us. Our Village also contains two Hotels, which are patronized especially on Election Day or on occasion of any other grand performances. We also have two Village School marms, on whose merits or demerits I dare not expatiate as one of them presides over our assembly. We have a lofty hill which commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. Time would fail me to tell of the blooming gardens, numerous fruit trees, the woods and lanes where we wander on pleasant summer days. Our Village will not perhaps attract the notice of the gay and fashionable, but have I not said enough to convince my learners that it is deservedly dear to the hearts of those who dwell among its peaceful scenes.

Mary Elmendorf

The second donation contains the research files William McDermott created for his landmark book about the life of the "common man" in Dutchess County in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Gleanings from these fascinating files will appear in future newsletters.

\*The spelling of early Dutch and German names frequently varies.

## National Landmark Vista Threatened

Ask almost any old-time resident of Red Hook about the Red Hook Hotel which stood on the southeast corner of Broadway and West Market and you'll be informed about the building's prominence in the community and learn that "it didn't have to be torn down. It was only slightly damaged by the fire." This said with regret and a touch of anger that the historic old building has been replaced by a modern gas station/convenience store..

Now, history threatens to repeat itself. The Red Hook Village Planning Board is considering a request by officials of St. Paul's Lutheran Church on South Broadway to subdivide its 14.9 acre property into five lots for the immediate purpose of tearing down the ancient caretaker's house south of the church edifice and combining the newly vacated lot with one to the south to permit their sale as a building lot for a new bank building or other commercial use.

To quote the successful National Register nomination form submitted to the United State Department of the Interior, "The church complex includes six contributing buildings: the church (1889-90), **cemetery caretaker's residence (c. 1790)**, cemetery office (c. 1920), parish hall(1884), parsonage (1903), and small barn (19<sup>th</sup> century); **and one contributing site, the cemetery.**"

Drive slowly, or better still – stroll down South Broadway past the delightful octagonal Public Library, and the gracious Massonneau house (formerly Dr. Zipser's home and office). Further down, pass the landmark Episcopal Church and Chapel and the handsome stone St. Christopher's Roman Catholic Church. Across the street, the lovely Victorian buildings associated with St. Paul's Lutheran Church are set back from the busy highway. Behind them can be viewed a tranquil landscape of ancient trees and gravestones, especially where the vacant land on either side of the caretakers cottage opens up the view.

Now, use your imagination to replace that lovely vista with yet another bank building, or a block of modern shops or restaurants. The uniquely gracious entrance to the Village of Red Hook will be forever changed and a new road cut added to busy Route 9.

Barbara W. Bielenberg

St Paul's Lutheran Cemetery caretaker's house  
South Broadway, Red Hook, New York

Photo by Craig Vogel November 2008



## 1960's Aerial Views of the Village of Red Hook



This 1960's photo shows the northeast side of the Village of Red Hook.

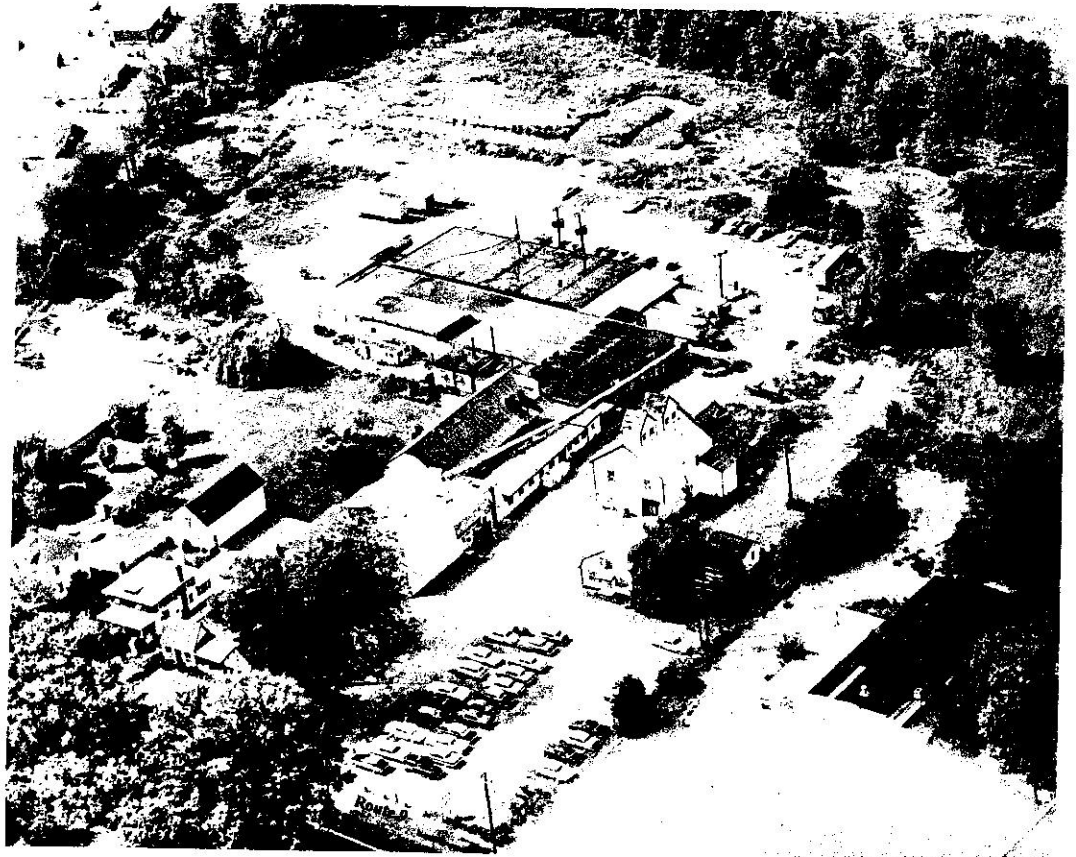
This is the corner of Route 9 North and Cherry Street.

The historic Red Hook Diner faces Route 9 and a gas station is on the corner of Cherry Street. Graves Street is at the upper right corner of the photo.

The photo is in the EBHS Archives from the Colburn Collection

This 1960's picture shows the south side of the Village of Red Hook. Route 9 is at the bottom of the photo. The Orchard Hill Pie Factory is in the center of the photo. Recently this area was converted to senior housing. Universal Building is in the lower right corner of the photo. This building now houses the Red Hook Central School administration offices.

The photo is in the EBHS Archives from the Colburn Collection



## Genealogy

I love to do genealogy searches. I am not a professional, just very amateurish. I usually have a specific family in mind and then I go and find everything I can, (that we have the records for) about that family. I don't go and look for all the relatives because I found that the various uncles all named their male children the same names and they were usually all born about the same time.

This family in question is the Cornelius Elmendorfs. I start with the tax records, then the Articles of Association in 1795. These are lists of signers and non-signers that either agree or disagree with the movement to free them from British rule. Then I go to the census records, baptismal and death records.

The earliest tax record was for Jacob in Rhinebeck for June 1767-1778. He was the only one. Elmendorf? They were parishioners in the Upper Red Hook Church, which was St. John's Dutch Reform Church. Hummm, Dutch? Why not look in Kingston.

So I found going backwards, Jacobus Conradt van Elmendorf, born about 1643 in Rijnburg Zeeland Holland. He had a son Conradt, christened in 1669 that had a son Cornelius, christened 31 Oct 1697, who married Engeltje Heermanse whose grandchildren show up in Upper Red Hook. Then we get back to Conradt Cornelius Elmendorf who was christened 31 July 1731 in Kingston and his son Cornelius C. Elmendorf, christened 1755 in Kingston and died 20 Feb 1825 in Upper Red Hook.

So we find our Elmendorfs in Red Hook. On the Articles of Association Cornelius and his brother Samuel are listed as signers. On the 1790 Census there is Cornelius, Jacob (brother), John and Samuel. On the 1800 Census only Cornelius and Cornelius I. are left. On the 1850 Census there is a Cornelius E., age 45, a farmer whose farm value is \$10,000. There is a Jacob C. Elmendorf who is also a farmer age 68, whose farm value is 20,000. Finally there is Edmund, age 73, no occupation listed and farm value is \$50,000.

Now we come to the Elmendorfs as important men in the Red Hook area. Firstly Cornelius Conradt, born in 1755, was a hotel keeper in Pine Plains at the Stissing house. He lived in Northeast. Six of his eight children were born there, he was in Rhinebeck in 1797. He built the Red Hook Hotel in 1799 on the corner of Rte 9 and West Market Street. Then his brother John was at Elmendorf Inn from 1799 to 1803, after that Cornelius's nephew Jacob Cornelius Elmendorf was the innkeeper at the Elmendorf Inn. The house at Budd's Corner's was owned by Cornelius Edmund Elmendorf, son of Jacob Cornelius and the school house near that intersection was called the Elmendorf School, District #1

Cornelius is the best first name in the Elmendorf Family. There are seven variations of the name from 1643 to 1860 and one Cornelia. The thing is that my son married a young lady from Kingston whose last name was Elmendorf. Her father was Cornelius.

**Barbara Thompson**

**Reminder: It's time to renew your membership!**



**EGBERT BENSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Of RED HOOK  
P.O. Box 397, Red Hook, N.Y. 12571-0397  
(845) 758-1920**

December 2008

Dear Member:

Thank you for your continuing support of the activities at your local historical society. Through your financial assistance, we have been able to continue our archival activities of the history on the Town of Red Hook. We are also able to provide informational programs designed to educate and entertain our members and guests. We provide our members with our newsletter on a regular basis which contains articles focusing on the local history of the Town of Red Hook and it environs. Our office at the Elmendorph Inn, where archival records are maintained, is scheduled to be open for use by the public every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Please telephone the number listed above on the day of your visit to insure that we are there.

As 2009 approaches, it is time again for our annual request that you consider continuing your membership in the Society and/or consider providing a donation that will permit us to continue our archival and informational activities. You should know that we are an all-volunteer, 501 c (3) organization and all contributions are fully tax-deductible. The 2009 membership fees, which are the same as in previous years, are as follows:

Student (under 18 years)	-	\$5.00
Individual	-	15.00
Family	-	25.00
Contributing	-	50.00
Sustaining	-	100.00
Life	-	200.00

One of the major expenses incurred by the Society continues to be for the postage and printing needed to mail postcards to you announcing monthly program meetings. We also have been using E-mail to distribute announcements to those who have indicated that they are willing to receive same through your computer.

If you have any questions on the matter of memberships or have any suggestions regarding our programs and services, please let us know.

Patrick J. Higgins  
President

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Please detach this section and return to the address noted above. Thank you!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Member(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address or P.O. Box

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State and Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mail Address

Membership or Contribution Amount:

- \_\_\_\_ Student (Under 18) - \$5.00  
\_\_\_\_ Individual - \$15.00  
\_\_\_\_ Family - \$25.00  
\_\_\_\_ Contributing - \$50.00  
\_\_\_\_ Sustaining - \$100.00  
\_\_\_\_ Life - \$200.00

**MEMBERSHIP FORM 2009**  
**The Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook**  
P.O. Box 397 Red Hook, New York, 12571

Name(s) (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

Dues: Please check: Individual \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ Contributing \$ 50 \_\_\_\_\_  
Family \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining \$100 \_\_\_\_\_  
Student (under 18) \$5 \_\_\_\_\_ Life \$200 (individual) \_\_\_\_\_

Donation (indicate any company matches please) \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits of membership : Advance notice of monthly programs ~ The knowledge that you support the collection, preservation, and dissemination of the history of the Town of Red Hook .

