



Egbert Benson HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

P.O. Box 1813 Red Hook, N.Y. 12571-0397

WINTER 2000

Note: *Among the collections added to our Archives recently was a carton full of photographs, menus, newspaper clippings and advertisements collected by Howard Laib, a former owner of the Red Hook Hotel and presented to the Society by Robert Rockefeller. On May 23rd Bob, and former Hotel employee Margaret Doty will moderate a meeting devoted to "Remembering the Red Hook Hotel", but we couldn't wait till then to share with you some of the photos and information. So read on --*

INN AT THE CROSSROADS: The Red Hook Hotel, 1799-1963 **Clare O'Neill Carr**

It stood at the corner of the Kings Highway and the "road to the river" for 150 years. In 1894, when it was known as the Howard Ellsworth Hotel, it barely escaped the flames of the famous fire that led to the incorporation of the village.

The old Red Hook Hotel was built by Cornelius Elmendorph in 1799, just a quarter mile south of the Elmendorph Inn operated at the time by his brother John. According to old newspaper accounts, the hotel had a succession of innkeepers in the 19th century, including Andrew Knox, Getty DuBois, Stephen Decker and the Crane sisters. It was once known as Schaeffer's National Hotel, indicating another innkeeper who either leased or owned the building. But it remained longest in the hands of one family who ran the inn for 78 years.

Howard Ellsworth, a young man from Red Hook who is said to have gone west in the gold rush fever of '49, returned to his hometown in the 1850s and purchased a blacksmith shop in Annandale, which he operated very successfully for a number of



Red Hook Hotel, c. 1900.

years. He was so successful that, after the Civil War, in 1867, he purchased the hotel from the Crane sisters, and is said to have given the Red Hook Hotel its name. He operated the hotel from 1867 to 1924, when he retired at the age of 92. Writing of the period after the Civil War, Mr. Edmond Bassett, a native of Red Hook, wrote in "Reminiscences of Red Hook: A Story of the Village" that he remembered a shoe store

and a meat market that shared the north end of the hotel building. Above the store was a hall that served the town for many years as a polling place and court room.

Shortly after Ellsworth retired, his granddaughter and her husband, Thomas A. Jennings, took over the operation. They owned and operated it for another 21 years, until it was sold in 1945 to Howard Laib.

Robert Rockefeller, newly discharged from service in World War II, worked for Laib beginning in 1945. He remembers that the Handy Gift Shop occupied the South end of the building in a space which later became Attorney William Walsh's law office.



Postcard View of Red Hook Hotel c. 1947.

The Laibs ran the hotel for five years during a period of change for Red Hook. The new Taconic Parkway, which was constructed from New York City north through Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties beginning in the 1930's, was lengthened to reach Red Hook in 1947. With the terminus ending at Lafayetteville, plans went forward to widen Route 199. Traffic would be routed from the Taconic through Red Hook and north to Albany. Businessmen, including Howard Laib, were optimistic. The Red Hook Hotel was renovated once again, and the famous Elbow Room was advertised in new billboards around Red Hook. The Elbow Room quickly became a popular place for local businessmen to gather for a drink after work, their wives joining them later for dinner.

Starting in 1950, the hostel was owned by a succession of owners: Mary and Steven Csutoras, Daniel Sorin and Lillian Sabella. But as the automobile gained prominence in the rural landscape of 20th century Red Hook, trade in gas and oil became more profitable than trade in the famous Elbow Room bar and restaurant. So when fire broke out on Saturday, Jan. 11, 1963, the old building did not survive the damage.

Fire companies came from Tivoli and Red Hook. The fire was put out, but not before three bedrooms and assorted rooms on the south side of the building were damaged by the flames. The Elbow Room and dining rooms were not harmed, and there was some talk of renovating the old building. It had 16 bedrooms, a kitchen, large dining room and bar room. By that time, it had already been renovated extensively, but old newspaper accounts mention original mud and straw walls.

Despite the fact that the fire did not do irreparable damage to the structure, and in spite of a lively debate in the newspaper over whether or not to save it, the owners decided to sell and the village landmark was torn down to make way for a gas station.

In 1963, the historic preservation movement was in its infancy in small town America. The corner property proved at the time to be more valuable as a gas station, to serve the increasingly present age of automobile travel. Years later, when the country was swept up in the nation's Bi-Centennial energy, the same scenario threatened another historic stagecoach stop in the village, the Elmendorph Inn, and the lesson of the Red Hook Hotel was not lost on the town. The community successfully pulled together to buy and restore the Elmendorph, literally saving it from the bulldozer.

**List of Owners/ Landlords - Red Hook
Hotel property (Rockefeller/Laib
Collection)**

- 1797 Philip Bonesteel
Cornelius C. Elmendorph
(built hotel 1799)
- 1800 John Duffie
John Mastin
- 1812 John DuBois & Peter G.
Sharp
- 1836 Gitty DuBois, widow of John
DuBois
Andrew P. Knox
- 1854 Mrs. Arabella Crane
- 1867 Howard Ellsworth
- 1926 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Jennings
- 1945 Mr. & Mrs. Howard Laib
- 1950 Mr. & Mrs. Steven Csutoras
Dan & Betty Sorin
Mrs. Lillian Sabella
- 1964 Valley Oil Company



*Bartender Tom Malone entertaining customers in the
Elbow Room.*



*Hotel staff c.1950: bus boy Al Newman; bartender
Tom Malone; waitresses Margaret Riddleburg (Doty)
Marge Teator and Elizabeth Traver.*

(All photographs: Rockefeller/Laib collection.)

RED HOOK AND THE REVOLUTION

Red Hook Town Historian J. Winthrop Aldrich has sent us an interesting addition to the annals of Red Hook. In October 1777, shortly after the British burned Kingston. Major-General Israel Putnam sent one of the most important letters of the Revolution from Red Hook. British General Burgoyne had just been defeated at Saratoga. The story continues with a quote from the book Israel Putnam, Pioneer, Ranger, and Major-General by William Farrand Livingston "On October 20th, Putnam was at Red Hook. From there he forwarded to Washington a copy of the terms of Burgoyne's surrender, as finally agreed upon at Saratoga. (General) Gates, impressed by his own greatness, had neglected to send any dispatch on the subject of the capitulation directly to the Commander-in-chief."

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

We ended 1999 with some very significant additions to our collections. Please join us in thanking the following donors:

Carrie E. Burger: Four albums of 19th-century trade and greeting cards, one of which is an 1841 ledger with clippings as well as cards, and three autograph albums which belonged to Alvia, Jessie and Frank Stickles.

Katherine L. Dillman: A 1928 photograph of the third & fourth grades of the Red Hook Central School with their teacher, Miss Maupie Coons.

George F. Michael and Barbara M. Bradsell: A large collection of local history books and pamphlets, 18 Red Hook Central School yearbooks Hardscrabble from 1952 to 1989 with some omissions, four albums of newspaper clippings, photos and slides related to the building of the Red Hook High School, a collection of yearbooks of the Historical Club of Upper Red Hook from 1947 to 1989, and a large number of other items reflecting the activities and interests of Red Hook School Board President and prominent dentist Dr. George F. Michael and his wife, Edith Redder Michael.

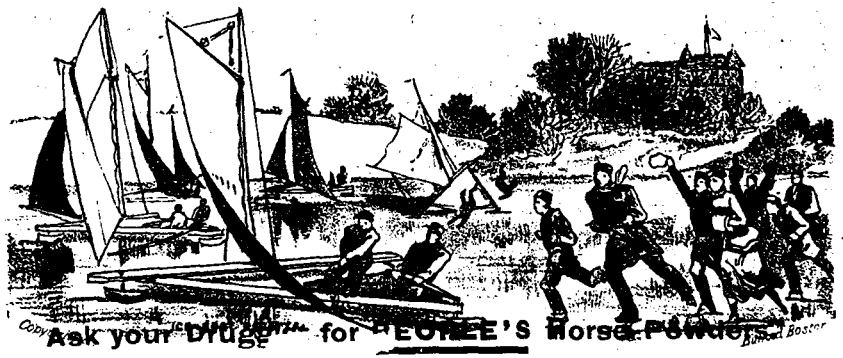
Robert Rockefeller: A large collection of photographs, menus, licenses, advertisements, clippings and other items related to the Red Hook Hotel, collected by former owner Howard Laib.

Ruth Bornschlegel: Finished artwork for our letterhead and envelopes. Ruth has further refined and improved the logo which we have all come to enjoy because it so beautifully portrays the historic rural character of Red Hook.

Stanton Tremper Jr: Permission to copy photographs and an article about his father's Red Hook Ford dealership.

Helen Henderson: Permission to copy a large collection of 17th-century Livingston letters.

Rosemary Coons Levine: Bicentennial gown worn by her mother, Rosemary Coons.



Trade card: Burger/Stickles Collection

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S KEYBOARD

Barbara Bielenberg

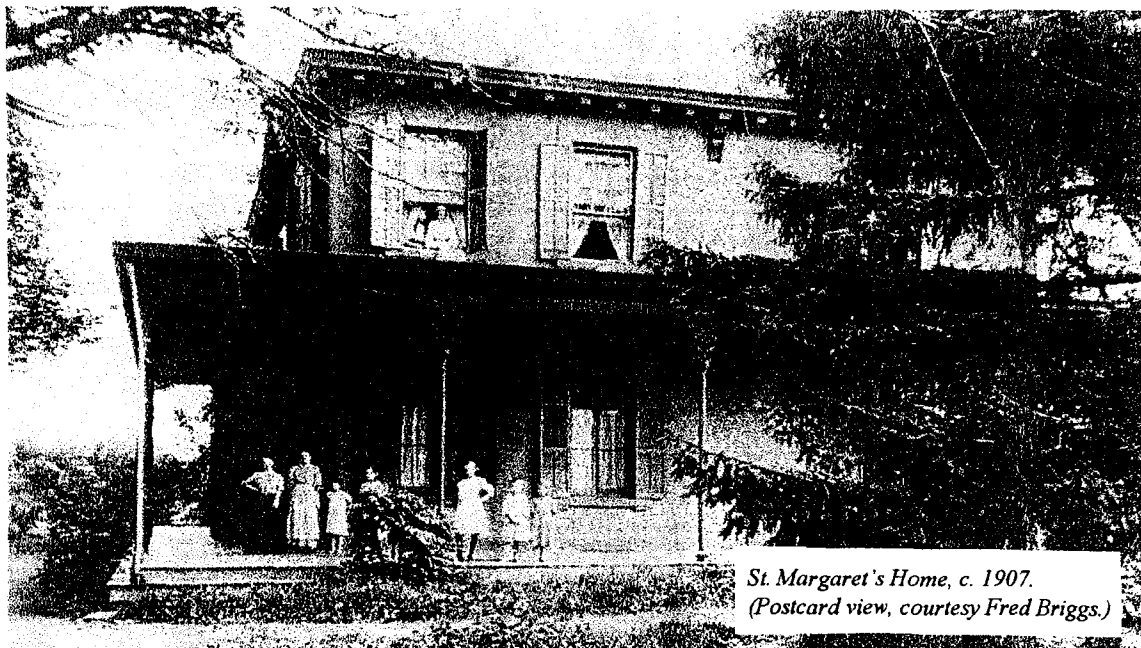
HAPPY 2000! A correspondent has observed that 2000 used to be the cost of a luxury car, the down payment on a house, tuition for several years of college or a whole year's wages for a beginning teacher! In 1773, Jacob Kip rented 81 3/4 acres of Red Hook farmland from Mrs. Armstrong for 19 bushels of wheat, 2 fat hens and one day's service. Our files are full of such interesting information.

Change is inevitable but history reminds us where we came from and can guide our future. The photograph of **St. Margaret's Home** reminds us that the gracious old building once played an important role in this community as a refuge where orphaned daughters of poor families could receive an education and training to prepare them for employment as domestic servants at a time when job opportunities for young women were scarce.

The newly accessioned Rockefeller/Laib collection brings to life the hospitable old **Red Hook Hotel** - a large building whose architecture might serve as a model for future commercial development. We are fortunate that most of our many fine old buildings can serve the 21st century as they did the 19th and 20th. As we face the challenges of growth and development in our community, they can help us preserve our sense of place and the uniqueness of our town.

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find a list of the exciting recent additions to our collections. We're especially grateful to Kate Dewsnap and Betty Mae VanParys for patiently listing each new acquisition. Special thanks to Tom Daley who has made slides of many of the Red Hook Hotel photos and documents to show at our May meeting. And thanks also to Stephen Lawson for helping us learn the possibilities of our powerful new computer, purchased with the help of two generous anonymous donations.

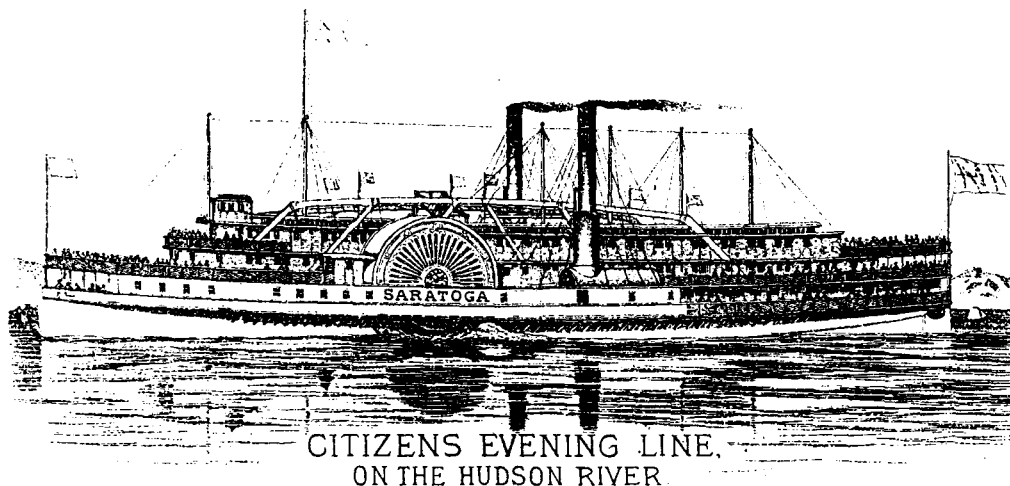
Now we need money to buy two steel library shelves to hold our burgeoning collection of books and notebooks, and more archival boxes and storage materials. Properly caring for our important collections is a costly business! At the same time we're exploring ways we can help the Friends of Elmendorph cover the operating expenses of this earliest of Red Hook buildings. **Now is the time to renew your membership if you haven't already done so and please consider adding a donation and volunteering your energy and ideas!** (If you have a new 911 mailing address, please be sure we have that also.)



WINTER/SPRING MEETING SCHEDULE

All meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at the Elmdorph Inn unless otherwise noted.

- January 25** The Astor Orphans, a talk by J. Winthrop Aldrich.
- February 22** Ice for Profit and Pleasure, films of old-time ice cutting and slides of ice boats and the endangered Roosevelt ice boat shed with Reid Bielenberg.
- March 28** The Samuel F.B. Morse Historic Site, a slide talk by Duncan Urquhart, Curator of Education.
- April 25** Tivoli Meeting to be held at the J. Watts DePeyster Fireman's Hall in the Village of Tivoli. Steamboats & Ferries of the Hudson River with Roger Mabie, President, Hudson River Maritime Center.
- May 23** Remembering the Red Hook Hotel moderated by former employees, Robert Rockefeller and Margaret Doty.
- June 20** Annual Meeting, featuring a slide talk by Tom Daley on Endangered Treasures of the Hudson Valley.



Trade card: Burger/Stickles Collection

YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS IMPORTANT TO US. PLEASE RENEW NOW.

The Red Hook Journal.

AN INDEPENDENT, LOCAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 1900

The days have begun to lengthen.

The collector gives notice of the time and places of receiving taxes.

The first snow of the season came with the opening of the year, and was very light.

Several farmers in the town of Milan have lost sheep that were bitten by dogs.

The Town Clerk's Office has been removed to the residence of the new incumbent, Mr. Warren Burnett, at Madalin.

C.J. Rockefeller will ship a car load of cows and calves from Tivoli next Tuesday, for which he will pay the highest market price.

At a meeting of the James S. Armstrong H. & L. Co., it was decided to organize a drum corps. Also, to hold a smoker in the company's rooms Wednesday evening, Jan. 10th.

New Years day was very quietly observed in this village. Some of our citizens went out of town to spend the day, while others came to visit friends here.

Don't forget the Literary Society meeting at Dr. H. Neher's next Wednesday evening.

E. H. Collin offers his Millinery and Fancy Goods Store for sale, and will sell goods at cost or less in order to reduce his stock.

The Hudson Republican says the icemen in that vicinity, and all along the river are highly elated over the excellent condition of the ice formation in the Hudson.

Mr. J. J. Benner, formerly of the village, is engaged with the Morse Iron Works in Brooklyn, on government vessel repairs.

COLLECTOR'S NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given to the taxable inhabitants of the Town of Red Hook, that I, the undersigned, Collector of taxes in and for said town, have received the warrant for the collection of taxes for the year 1899, and that I will receive taxes at E.C. Perrine's Store, in the Village of Upper Red Hook, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., each day, for four consecutive weeks, commencing January 2d, 1900, exclusive of the following days, when I will be at the following places to receive taxes: Jan. 5th, at the Hotel of J. Lewis Daly, Red Hook; Jan. 8th, at the Hotel of Mrs. Jonas Saulpaugh, Madalin; Jan. 12th, at the Hotel of Sylvester Kisselbrack, Barrytown; Jan. 15th, at the Hotel of Howard Ellsworth Red Hook; Jan. 19th, at the Hotel of Martin Lasher, Upper Red Hook; Jan. 22d, at the Hotel of Lewis Wasner, Tivoli; Jan. 26th, at the Hotel of W.H. Simmons, Annandale. The sittings at each place will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

CHAUNCEY HAM, Collector,
Dated Jan. 1st, 1900

Mr. John Elseffer left town Wednesday, for Southern California for the winter and spring.

Cutting ice will be the next thing in order. The mill pond has about eight inches of good clear ice, and some of the farmers expect to fill their houses soon.

Mr. Van Wyck, of the firm of Van Wyck & Collins, Po'keepsie, was in town Wednesday looking after some work in our cemeteries.

The Legislature convened at Albany Jan 3d, the opening session being without special features. Governor Roosevelt's message was read in both branches of the Legislature.

Orra Jackson, a farmer at Salt Point, died suddenly on Tuesday, the 2d. He was engaged helping a neighbor butcher, and the work was nearly done, when he was noticed to fall back and dropped dead without saying a word.

The regular meeting of the Ladies Aid Society will be held at the home of Mrs. W.E. Burnett, on Monday afternoon at 3 o'clock, Jan. 8th.

MRS. G.S. AUCOCK, Sec.

ROCK CITY. — Martin Schauntz wedded on Christmas day in Highland a lady of that place. His friends and relatives in this vicinity wish them well . . . Those who attended the New Years Fair in Rhinebeck had a happy time . . . The supper given the Sunday School in the hall on Tuesday evening of last week was a gay and festive time, notwithstanding the cold weather . . . Prof. Lehman's singing class is making mammoth progress and people are looking forward to the coming concert as the crowing event of the season . . . Rev. Hay last Sunday had an address for the last of 1899 . . . Martin Cookingham, of Bridgeport, Conn., has been a guest of friends out in the suburbs . . . The snow on New Years Day made many smile.

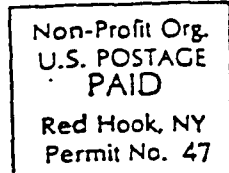
NOTICE.— The undersigned would be pleased to act as nurse in families where her services may be needed, by the day or week. Terms moderate. Good reference given. Application may be made to Dr. Cookingham, Red Hook, or to

MRS. AUGUSTA WELCH,
Pleasant Plains, N.Y.



Egbert Benson HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

P.O. Box 1813 Red Hook, N.Y. 12571-0397



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NO 2000 ON YOUR MAILING LABEL? PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP: • Advance notice of monthly meetings • Three newsletters each year • The knowledge that you support the collection, preservation and dissemination of the history of the Town of Red Hook.

We invite you to help with the work of the Society. Please check here () if you would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities.

Additional contributions are most welcome and are eligible for company matches: DONATION \$ _____

Check appropriate line(s): make check payable to "Egbert Benson Historical Society"
Family \$12 Contributing \$25 Business or Organization \$15
Individual \$8 Sustaining \$50 Life (\$100 or more)
Student (under 18) \$1

☒ ANNUAL DUES ☐

Telephone Number (Area Code)

Name(s) (Please Print)

Mailing Address

MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2000

Egbert Benson HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK
P.O. Box 1813 Red Hook, N.Y. 12571-0397

