

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF RED HOOK

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The architecture of Red Hook documents the culture of the town through the evolutionary process of building. It coincides with the growth and expansion of American society. The result of this process is a record of the development of the town through the architectural and cultural histories that remain as its built environment.

The architectural styles found within the Town of Red Hook, outside the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, span nearly three hundred years of building traditions and prevailing tastes. Beginning with the simple structures of the Dutch and ending with twentieth century alterations to late Victorian farmhouses, architectural features from not less than nine period styles are represented. There are examples of Dutch, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Italian Villa, and Second Empire, followed by eclectic styles like Queen Anne, Chateausque, Colonial Revival and Bungalow/Craftsman.

Formal control of land along the Hudson River was held as a manor or a patent. The Dutch and the English gave these large land grants. The patentee, Pieter Schuyler sold parcels of land in the current town of Red Hook in the early 1700's. A few structures from the earliest period of settlement survive, and those that do illustrate the Dutch building tradition. They tend to be 1 1/2 story frame or stone buildings with steeply pitched gable roofs. The Dutch buildings within the town postdate Dutch rule of the colony (ca. 1665). Many Dutch settlers continued to use their native building traditions to build houses until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Regional characteristics emerged in the use of the local Hudson Valley materials of limestone or clapboard. Colonial lifestyles and technology influenced both the size and design of these modest dwellings.

By the mid eighteenth century, manufacture and use of brick was widespread. It offered choices of building materials to be used alone or combined with another. Modest, vernacular farmhouses on Pitcher Lane and Spring Lake Road are rare surviving examples of eighteenth century Dutch residential design.

Barns did not always accompany these early farmhouses because the rudimentary design of the dwellings combined living and storage under one roof. Later, large barn complexes supported expanded farming operations as the business of farming became a more important function. Earlier dwellings were redecorated and enlarged based on the prosperity of the farm. A notable example is the Colonel Heermance farmhouse on West Kerley Corners Road. The interior finishing in the Heermance House exhibits a high degree of craftsmanship in the later rooms added to the east of the original core.

The Federal period of American architecture began after the American Revolution and continued into the early nineteenth century. The influence of the Adams Brothers was

incorporated into Federal building stereotypes known as Neoclassical or Adams style. In the early years of independence, though, our new nation tried to create an identity derived from the English models. The Federal period typified symmetry and had identifying features like elliptical fanlights, small entry porches, 6/6 sashes aligned vertically, and two room plans. Front facades were generally five-ranked, often with Palladian style windows. Asher Benjamin's The American Builder's Companion or a New System of Building in the United States of America (1806) became a very influential work. It stressed America's ability to develop its own style and gave way to the Greek Revival style. Federal style building persisted locally until the 1840's (Benner House on Benner Road, Homestead Farm on Orlich Road and the Beckwith House known as the Haven on Guski Road).

The popularity of Greek inspired architecture took hold of American tastes in the early nineteenth century and continued until the 1860's. The low pitched gable roof, wide entablature, pedimented porches with Doric columns, doors surrounded by narrow sidelights and transoms in elaborate frames are characteristic of the style. A prominent example is the Staats House on Budds Corners Road (Rt. 79), the Lambert House on Rt. 9 north of Feller-Newmark Road, and one of the Fraleigh houses on Rt. 199, known as Gilead Grove. Several small scale examples also exist.

After the decline of the Greek Revival period, the Italianate movement became popular. The publication of A.J.Downing's Cottage Residences in 1842 created architectural competition. This influential pattern book offered several alternatives to the prevailing Greek Revival style. Italian Renaissance examples were portrayed by Downing in his Italian Villa designs (1840-1880). The elaborately decorated Pitcher House on Pitcher Lane and modest farmhouse adaptations like houses on East Kerley Corners Road and Starbarrack Road are Red Hook's stellar examples. Still other examples can be found in the hamlet overlay district of Upper Red Hook (not separately inventoried in this project).

Industrialized building technology expanded construction capabilities. The advance of the machine age provided large quantities of mass-produced building components like jigsaw cut trims, paneling, bricks, and cast iron. The transportation of these materials, by the extensive rail network that crisscrossed the country, gave every home owner the opportunity to personalize their house in some form. Decorative trims enhanced Gothic and Italian designs and made them more interesting or distinctive, but served no functional purpose. New prosperity among Americans in the 1850's created a waiting audience for A.J.Downing's Hudson River Bracketed style seen on a cottage on Pitcher Lane.

Characteristically, roofs had low pitches, projecting eaves, groupings of rounded head windows, arcaded loggias and towers in the Italianate style. It was, however, a tower that distinguished the concurrently popular Villa style from the larger extant Italianate examples. The ability to choose among several architectural styles became an expression of individuality, and the use of different styles began to influence the design of streetscapes.

A break from the more traditional classical styles to the romantically adapted Gothic and

Italian styles was the impetus for larger scaled buildings, freer plans, complex forms and the details favored after the Civil War. By the 1870's, the Italian designs evolved into the Second Empire style with the use of a mansard roof. The roofs usually had dormer windows, square towers, and asymmetrical plans similar to the second Staats House (Linden Farm) on Budds Corners Road.

The Victorian era ended with the Queen Anne and Shingle styles. Wood shingled wall surfaces, asymmetrical plans, and irregular steeply pitched roofs prevailed. The complex compositions of the Shingle style were unified by continuous wall and roof treatments. Queen Anne examples were differentiated by cylindrical towers and polychromatic facades. Though altered, the Sipperly House at Rokeby and Middle Roads has basic Queen Anne features.

Interest in historic architectural forms resurfaced after the Centennial celebrations in 1876. Georgian and Adams detailing can be found on some late Victorian buildings. The historic representations were more clearly expressed in the Colonial Revival style (circa 1890 - 1945). It gained popularity after the Chicago Exposition of 1893. A Revival house was generally larger than its historic counterpart with many of its design elements exaggerated. Examples of this style have enriched window, roof, and entrance treatments like elliptical fanlights or monumental porticos. This was the dominant style during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Colonial Revival buildings were joined by those of Chateausque design after 1900. The Robert Chanler House on Benner Road is typical of the Chateausque style. It was designed by noted architect, Whitney Warren. These designs were considered part of the Eclectic movement that included most building types popularized between 1900 and 1930.

Plans for architect-designed houses became available to the general population in the 1890's with the publication of plan books. The books contained detailed drawings of various styles and made them available through mail order catalogs. Materials were not supplied but specifications were included with each set of plans. The onset of mass produced building components took hold of America by 1916. Sears, Roebuck & Company popularized the purchase of prefabricated houses through their catalog. They were affordable enough for the average family and gave them an opportunity to grasp part of the American dream. Basic models could be embellished and high styled models could be modified to suit individual needs. Every essential item required to assemble the house was supplied by Sears. Though Sears became the most notable supplier of prefabricated houses, other companies offered the same services. Across the country, single lots or multi-street neighborhoods were developed overnight. The opportunity to choose a distinctive style made these houses very attractive to the vast majority of would-be homeowners for whom architect-designed residences were unattainable. Though not documented to be Sears catalog houses, several catalog style houses stand on lots north of the village line on Route 9. From a simple one story bungalow to a Colonial Revival model, eight different house types were built.

Bungalows were popular house styles during the Eclectic period. Typically the buildings were a single story with a broad, moderately pitched gable roofs. Porches often ran across the front facades and had stout, battered piers supporting them. The use of rough brick, cobblestone

masonry was common. The Teator House on Echo Valley Road exemplifies the Bungalow style.

In 1688, Colonel Pieter Schuyler received a patent for land he had purchased from the Indians near Tivoli. It ran from the shore near Magdalene Island (Cruger's Island) eastward, then north to lake Metambesen (Spring Lake) and west to the Hudson River. Most of this land comprises the northern half of Red Hook. A large portion of it was sold to Harman Gansevoort, who sold it to the Knickerbacker family in 1704. The Dutch established the first settlements at Tivoli and Barrytown in 1713. By 1719 other divisions of the patent had occurred. Rights to use mill sites, cut timber from or drive teams and wagons across neighboring land was reserved. The retained right permitted access from the eastern sections of the town to the river. The earliest roads, in a formal sense, did not develop until after 1725.

Several major roads laid out by the middle of the eighteenth century are still important thoroughfares serving current residents. East and West Kerley Corners Roads developed as a route from the farm district to the river at Tivoli. Spring Lake Road and Shookville Road, off Hapeman Hill Road were important links to towns in Connecticut. Route 9 was known as the King's Highway as early as 1709. It traveled through the center of Upper Red Hook. Historic road patterns can be found along portions of Spring Lake Road, and at the eastern end of Feller-Newmark Road. These narrow, winding roads, developed from cow paths or wagon routes that follow the contour of the surrounding land.

Red Hook's rolling terrain is broken into picturesque hills and dales that supported an abundance of orchards, cultivated fields of grains, and fine country residences. The town has chiefly been an agricultural community, since it was first inhabited. The White Clay Kill along Rt. 9-G and the Saw Kill (called Metambesen) tributary of Long Pond (now Spring Lake) east of the village are important natural waterways that weave through the town. In addition, several significant archeological areas have been identified. A camping area at Pitcher Lane (3,500 year old artifacts), near the barn at Spring Lake Road and Reed Road (4,500 year old arrowheads), and a possible burial site behind the Devereau School off Vosburgh Road have been identified in Red Hook. These important sites contain many natural attributes common to local Indian life.

Though there is much dispute about the origin of the name Red Hook, there is little doubt that it originated with the Dutch and the translation for their "Roed Hoek" has been widely interpreted. Indians are said to have remained in the northwest corner of the town after white settlers had arrived, and the hook shaped place was called Red Man's Corner. Another account says early sailors saw a hooked point of land jutting into the river that was covered with bright red berries. Yet another version claims the town derives its name from a red brick tavern that stood at Upper Red Hook.

The Town of Red Hook was formed from the Precinct of Rhinebeck on June 2, 1812. The fertile land of the interior sections of the town have supported agriculture and orchards for hundreds of years. Throughout its history, agriculture has been its principal occupation. Wheat was a very lucrative product in the early 1700's. By 1756 Dutchess County was the second most

populated county in the New York colony. Farming was the county's primary economic base throughout the eighteenth century, and it remained the major industry until the 1960's. By 1813, after separating from Rhinebeck, records show that livestock(hogs, sheep) was the mainstay of the community. Sheep ranked number one and its related industries were equally important townwide. Manufactured products consisted of fulled cloth (flannel, wool) and thin cloths (cotton, linen). A total of sixteen thousand yards were produced in homes. Three fulling and carding mills and two cotton and wool factories were in operation in the town, one on Oriole Mills Road, one on the Saw Kill at Rock City and another on Mill Road. The wheat crop declined in the 1840's, in part, because of a ready supply coming through the Erie Canal from the west. Crop diseases were also prevalent in this area. Sheep raising declined as a result, but local dairy operations increased.

The 1855 census lists 292 land owners in the town of nearly 3,750 people. Most residents did not own the land they worked. Land values fell in the late 1850's because of the change from dairy and grain farming to orchards. Fruit growing had become the main form of agriculture in Red Hook. Over 14,000 bushels of apples and 500 barrels of cider were produced in 1855, ranking Red Hook fifth in the county.

In 1855, 554 houses valued at \$588,355.00 were listed in the census. Most were frame, 24 were stone(value - \$37,950.00), and 18 were brick (value - \$129,500.00). Apple production steadily increased and placed Red Hook second in Dutchess County. Within 20 years, orchards had overtaken the grain and livestock of the early days of Red Hook. The population continued to increase in the early twentieth century. During the 1950's, the town experienced its largest growth as it became a bedroom community for local IBM plants. Today large farms occupy most of the land in northern Red Hook, though substantial farming operations are found scattered throughout the town. The retention of farms as historic and cultural resources coupled with the architectural and natural features within the boundaries of the town help maintain the rural character so much a part of Red Hook.

A leisurely trip through the town is a history lesson. Learning about the development of the town is as easy as looking at the abundant architectural, cultural and natural resources it has to offer. Respect for and appreciation of the unique circumstances that created Red Hook and helped it prosper is very important. It defines the community's commitment to preserve its sense of place.

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SURVEY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL, HISTORICAL, CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES OF
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