

The StoryStudio? What's That?

By Claudine Klose, Board Secretary and Collections Committee Chair and Chris Klose, Programs Committee Member, August 8, 2023

The Place for Red Hook Stories Past, Present and Future

People frustrated in their search of the past often exclaim, "If these walls could talk!" The green nineteenth-century clapboards of Historic Red Hook's new StoryStudio, at 5 Cherry Street, stand silent, of course. But within them lie the archives of more than 250 years of Red Hook history.

Volunteers will be happy to introduce visitors to our new research space and help guide them through the archives, recently relocated from the second floor of the Elmendorph Inn. The StoryStudio is open to the public every Tuesday, from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., every first Saturday of the month 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon, and by appointment. You can contact us at info@historicrodhook.org or by leaving a message at 845-758-1920.



Claudine Klose has led the charge in moving the collections and furnishing the StoryStudio.

Whether tracing genealogies, confirming dates of houses and buildings, or uncovering personal stories, family archivists, amateur historians, and professional researchers alike can enjoy the StoryStudio's modern, comfortable space featuring ergonomic furnishings, height-adjustable worksurfaces, and state-of-the-art computer systems designed for easy identification, access to, and retrieval of hundreds of cross-referenced files.

Particularly interesting are stories of some of Red Hook's oldest farm families, such as the Fraleighs and the Teators, brought to vivid life through generations of their letters, correspondence, business records, family bibles, marriage certificates, photographs, diaries, and journals. For genealogists, records of local churches, cemeteries, census information, and surname files offer useful background. School yearbooks, family histories, and personal papers help round out many stories. To help uncover the history of homes and neighborhoods, there are maps, historic surveys, and a library of local history and architectural information.

Photos, records, ledgers, and memorabilia from long-gone businesses such as the Red Hook Hotel, the First National Bank of Red Hook, and the Red Hook Drugstore, and organizations such as The Red Hook Grange and the Red Hook Society for the Apprehension & Detection of Horse Thieves offer fascinating portraits of life through the decades.

Many of the more than 300 visitors to Historic Red Hook's recent Then & Now festival were the first

to explore the StoryStudio and marveled at how easily hundreds of images of local businesses, farms, houses, landscapes, and people could be searched and viewed on CatalogIt, our new cloud-based database.

Some who had only a vague notion that there was a center for Red Hook's history were amazed to see the original items in StoryStudio's exhibit cases, meant for rotat-

ing displays of particularly interesting historical items, such as, this time, the scrapbook assembled by the Red Hook Hotel's owner, Howard Laib, in the 1950s, a photo album of houses constructed by local builder Frank Coons in the 1920s and 1930s put together by his wife Edna Coons, and a mid-19th century ledger by local lawyer Jacob Elseffer documenting his court cases.

Trained volunteers will soon be recording oral histories of people about themselves, their families, their memories, and their lives in Red Hook today. (Our next oral history project looks at Red Hook's pandemic experience, with a special focus on our Spanish-speaking residents.) For those interested in hearing what their neighbors have said about Red Hook in the past, there are audio recordings of interviews conducted in the 1980s by Upper Red Hook's Roger Leonard and others. Search the Stories link on our website to find selected audio and video interviews, as well as written accounts and researched stories.

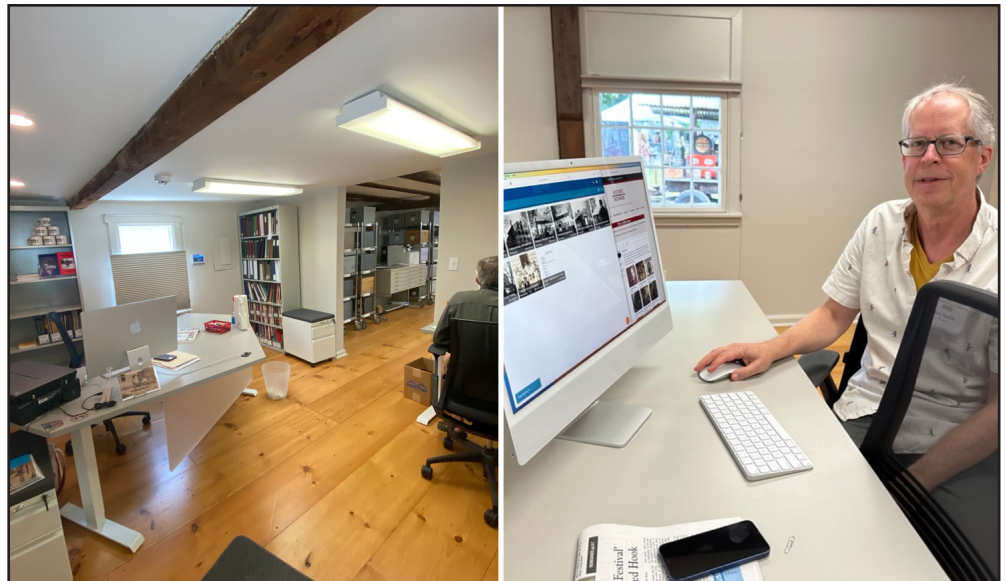
Also easily accessible to those who want to explore Red Hook's history from home, selected images are available online at historicrodhook.org/collections. More than a century of local history in Red Hook newspapers, from the first Red Hook Weekly Journal in 1859 through the Red Hook Advertiser of 1969, can be searched at historicrodhook.org/historic-newspapers. An almost complete run of the quirky but incomparable Barrytown Explorer (1958-1982) is also available. Other collections can be found at nyheritage.org/organizations/historic-red-hook.

Lastly, we present the testimony of two Connecticut researchers who recently visited the StoryStudio in a successful search of their family connections, as revealed in the stories of the Saulpaughs, Lashers, and Koedams, who had all been neighbors in mid-19th century Red Hook.

We hope to see you in the StoryStudio soon!

A Visit to the StoryStudio

Thirty three years after meeting each other at their first job in Connecticut and subsequently doing genealogy work together, Lisa Michaud (née Golden) and Cathleen Brennan discovered in February 2023



Board Treasurer Jim Haskin has devoted countless hours to organizing the collections on our new database.

that their great grandparents were neighbors in Tivoli, NY, way back in the mid-1800s! This prompted the long-time friends to dust off their old records, make a list of questions they wanted answered, and take an overnight birthday road trip on June 19 and 20. Their destination? Historic Red Hook's archives located in the StoryStudio at 5 Cherry Street.

Due to research conducted over those two days and assisted by archives volunteer Nancy Bendiner (who ahead of their visit had researched both of their families to give them a lay of the land), collections committee chair Claudine Klose, volunteers Thea Burgess and Jim Haskin, and even Town of Red Hook's historian Emily Majer who dropped by, they eventually found themselves visiting Cathleen's great grandmother's grave exactly 110 years after her passing.

What an exciting genealogy girls' weekend they had at Historic Red Hook where they reviewed the old Lutheran church index records together to document births, marriages, and deaths during the morning and then explored the local cemeteries in the afternoon where they found their families' grave sites.

With volunteers working in the StoryStudio helping her navigate Historic Red Hook's new database CatalogIt, Cathleen immediately was shown a historic photo of the Koedam residence before it was torn down. In turn Cathleen shared a scrapbook of newspaper articles from the early 1900s and focused on Tivoli because Cathleen's great grandmother was a Tivoli native. She also showed HRH another picture of the Koedam homestead. It was Cathleen who first inspired Lisa to explore Red Hook genealogy, so Cathleen knew Derrick Koedam immigrated from Holland and landed in New York in 1847 and subsequently served in the Civil War. Cathleen was thrilled to find Derrick and Martha's gravesite at the Old Red Church Cemetery in Tivoli.



Cathleen Brennan, HRH's volunteer Nancy Bendiner, Lisa Michaud, and Red Hook Town Historian Emily Majer look over a family tree.

Lisa, from a much larger family native to this area, found plenty of relatives in multiple cemeteries in Red Hook, Tivoli, and Germantown.

Both ladies would love to stop by to explore the Hudson Valley again and spend more time. They're excited to visit the archives at the StoryStudio to see what else can be discovered given that their families were neighbors. They'd also like to clean their descendants' gravestones so they are in more cared-for condition. And anticipating celebrating the Fourth of July, Vet-



Emily Majer and Cathleen Brennan look over the scrapbook Cathleen shared with HRH.

erans' Day, and Memorial Day, they plan to pursue avenues to ensure their ancestors are honored with markers recognizing them as veterans who fought for our early country's independence in the Revolutionary War and served our nation in the Civil War.

Welcome home, Cathleen and Lisa! For those Red Hook residents related to the Saulpaughs, Lasher, and Koedams, you have some new cousins to meet the next time Cathleen and Lisa are in town.