

## The Elmendorph Inn: A Brief History

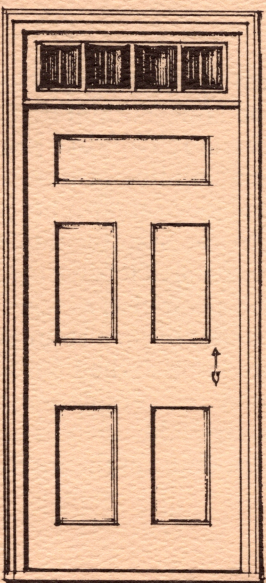
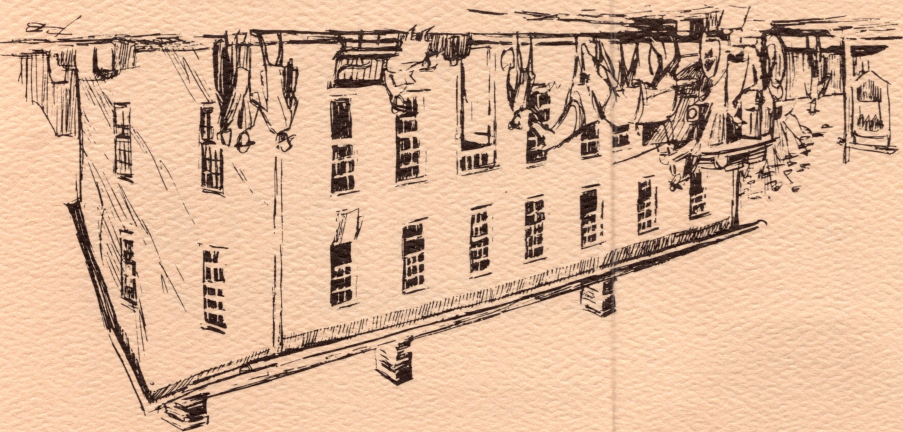
"Taverns occur practically as frequently as shops. A traveling American stops in front of nearly every one, if not for punch, at least for water with whisky."

JULIAN URSYN NIEMCEWICZ 1799

During the early years of the Republic, the tavern was a center of life in America's towns and villages. Here townspeople, farmers, and travelers exchanged news of the day, discussed community affairs, and relaxed in convivial fellowship. The Elmendorph Inn was typical of thousands of taverns that dotted the nation's landscape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was built originally as a simple one and a half story farmhouse at the intersection of the Albany Post Road and the road to Salisbury, Connecticut, a key factor in its later development.

## A • Community • Restoration • Project

## The Elmendorph Inn



The restoration of the Elmendorph Inn has been aided by grants from the America the Beautiful Fund, the Richard Jenrette Foundation, New York State and the Federal government, and the IBM Corporation. Essential to the success of the project is the support of the community, however. The Friends of Elmendorph welcome your assistance so that we may preserve this important reminder of the Hudson Valley's past for future generations.

The Friends of Elmendorph, Inc. is a private not-for-profit corporation, organized under the laws of the State of New York. The Friends have been granted tax exempt status by the IRS and are listed with the New York State Charities Registration Office. IBM has approved the Friends of Elmendorph for its two-for-one Matching Grant Program. For further information please write to:

*Friends of Elmendorph  
Post Office Box 1776  
Red Hook, New York 12571*

During the Revolutionary War the Inn was operated as a tavern and general store where, according to tradition, local patriots gathered to discuss strategy against the British and their Tory neighbors. In 1785, when a stagecoach line was opened between New York City and Albany, it became a regular stop, where passengers refreshed themselves and horses were changed. John Elmendorph, for whom the Inn is named was one of a succession of proprietors during the stagecoach era. Between 1785 and 1850 the Elmendorph Inn served as the community center for the growing Village of Red Hook. For thirty years after the Town of Red Hook was incorporated in 1812 the Inn hosted meetings of the Town board and local courts of law. In 1817, the first Dutchess and Columbia County Agricultural Fair was held on the grounds of the Elmendorph, by then called Loop's Tavern. The increased activity led to several enlargements of the building. In 1800 a kitchen ell was added, and in the 1820's a two-story south addition was constructed.







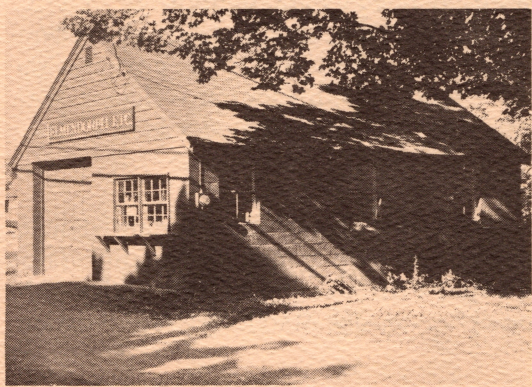
*The west facade of the Inn was restored in 1984. The work included the reproduction of the 12 over 12 sash on the first floor level. This work was based on a surviving 18th century window on the east side of the building.*

Competition from the steamboat lines and the Hudson River Railroad led to the disappearance of inns like the Elmendorph along the Albany Post Road. By 1854 the Inn had become a two-family dwelling, providing needed housing for the families of farm and factory workers in the bustling village. The Elmendorph remained primarily a multi-family residence for the next 100 years, however from 1887 to 1894 the first area kindergarten held classes in the building. It also housed a country store between 1944 and 1966. The Elmendorph was abandoned in the late 1960's and as the 200th anniversary of the nation's Independence approached it was threatened with demolition. In the Spring of 1975 the Friends of Elmendorph was organized to rescue the historic building and to restore it to its traditional role as a community center.

In 1977 the Friends of Elmendorph purchased the building from the Grand Union Company. Although its potential significance had been noted by a survey team from the Cornell University School of Architecture, mid-twentieth century alterations had obscured the building's past to the untrained eye. However research undertaken by the Friends and preservation specialists revealed a wealth of architectural treasures. The removal of post-World War II asphalt shingles uncovered clapboard siding, some dating to the eighteenth century. Mud and straw insulation was found behind the clapboards in the oldest part of the building. Portions of the original shingled gambrel roof were discovered in the attic. A beehive oven, wide floorboards, hand-hewn beams, early wood panelling, crown molding, and two elaborately carved Federal mantels had survived intact. The building's architectural significance was recognized with its listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.



*Carpenters from Craft Construction Company discovered mud and straw insulation dating from the 18th century when clapboards were removed from the north end of the building. The original clapboards were replaced after repairs were made.*



*The Elmendorph, Etc. thrift shop is located next to the Inn on North Broadway (Route 9) in Red Hook. Open on Fridays and Saturdays between May and October, the shop has been a major source of funds for the restoration.*

Restoration began in earnest in 1981 when the Friends were awarded a Federal matching grant through the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation. The first phase of the work included sill replacement, the rebuilding of stone foundation walls, and the repair of deteriorated joists and timber posts. Salvage archaeology undertaken prior to the stabilization work resulted in the recovery of several thousand artifacts dating from the period in which the Elmendorph was operated as a stagecoach inn. These items are currently being cataloged for use in public displays and by researchers. In 1984, restoration of the front facade was completed. Future phases will involve the completion of exterior restoration, rebuilding of chimneys, the installation of heating and electrical systems, and the finishing of the interior to its circa 1825 appearance.



*These Red Hook Girl Scouts prepared refreshments from 18th and 19th century recipes for sale at the Elmendorph's Arts and Crafts Festival in 1984. The festival was funded, in part, by the Dutchess County Arts Council.*

Since 1975 the Friends of Elmendorph have raised over \$100,000, of which over 80% has been applied directly to building restoration and maintenance. Most of these funds have been raised locally through donations and membership dues, and by sales in the volunteer-operated thrift shop "Elmendorph Etc." The Friends have also sponsored a number of special events for the public: lawn concerts; a fall "Apple Festival"; and two very popular traditional arts and crafts festivals. When restoration is complete the Elmendorph Inn will once again accommodate a wide range of community activities. Public meeting rooms, an arts and crafts center, a tourist information office, and quarters for the Village Historian and the Egbert Benson Historical Society are planned for the building. The Friends are also considering a restored "tavern room" for the enjoyment of travelers and townspeople alike.