



Egbert Benson HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

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

ANNUAL MEETING 2001

ALAN NEUMANN TO BE SPEAKER AT ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 12th

Historic preservation architect and current president of Hudson River Heritage, **Alan Neumann** A.I.A., will speak about one of his favorite topics, the 19th-century Romantic Landscape movement, which was born in our own "backyard" and had a profound influence far beyond the Hudson Valley. Neumann's slide talk will follow dinner and the Historical Society's Annual Meeting, which this year will include the election of three new Trustees as well as the presentation of the 2001 Heritage Awards. Biographies of the Nominating Committee's candidates for Trustees appear elsewhere in this newsletter but nominations may also be made from the floor.

Members of the Historical Society are also invited to propose individuals or projects to receive a Heritage Award. Information about the awards is also provided. Recent award winners have included **J. Winthrop Aldrich** for the publication of **Lately Thomas's** *Astor Orphans*, Bard College for relocating the new Performing Arts Center, **Gerald Briffa** for his restoration of 7539 N. Broadway (the Scism House) and **Woody Klose** for calling attention to the importance of old barns through his talks, articles and the reconstruction of an old barn on his own property.

The deadline for nominations for the 2001 Heritage Awards is Monday, June 5th. Nominations must be in writing and follow the guidelines printed in this Newsletter. Dinner seating is limited, so early registrations for the Annual Dinner are recommended. A reservation form is included in the Newsletter.



The Manor House: "The Manor House from the east, showing the original building as opened in 1926, and the wing addition built in 1928. The photograph was made on an afternoon when all on the property assembled on the Manor House lawns for an afternoon of picnicking and entertainment." — William Mathews

THE ABANDONED VILLAGE

Clare O'Neill Carr

Editor's Note: *The following article is adapted from "In Search of the Lost Village" by Clare O'Neill Carr which appeared in the Spring 2001 issue of About Town. We are grateful to Donna Matthews for permission to reproduce the accompanying photographs and captions from her grandfather William Mathews' photo album.*

Each spring at the Tivoli Bays Estuarine Sanctuary, in a ravine near the old Cruger Island Road, a carpet of daffodils pushes its way through the muddy winter landscape in a burst of glorious green and gold. Donna Matthews, who grew up not far from the ravine, walks there to view them

with her two sons. To the Tivoli native, it is more than a nature walk. It is a memorial. Her grandfather, William Matthews, planted them almost 75 years ago, in the middle of a sprawling farm and summer community he inspired and devoted his life to – Ward Manor – now called by local students and hikers, the abandoned village.

“It is my favorite place,” said Matthews. “My grandfather would walk through (Ward Manor) all the time... His heart was always at the farm... But he would never be walking without pockets full of daffodil bulbs, and he would just plant them wherever he went.”

When she was a child, the 900-acre estate, now part of Bard College and the Tivoli Bays preserve, consisted of more than a dozen summer bungalows, tenant cottages, a boys and girls camp, several large barns for a dairy operation and a large herd of Black Angus, poultry sheds and stables, pig pens and rabbit hutches, a huge concrete swimming pool and the imposing gray stone manor house.



Sunset Lodge: “A summer place of rest and peace for old folks who still work on in the city as best they can during the winter months... The stretch of meadow directly in front of the house is the general playground for the girls’ camps. Much of the time of the Sunset guests is spent in watching the youngsters at their play. Often too, may some of them be seen picking their way through fields and gardens, sampling fallen fruit in the orchards, or sitting about under the great trees in restful quiet. A blessed place of kindness to old age is Sunset Lodge. Retrospection of the vacations spent there in the summer just gone, anticipation of perhaps another ahead, both brighten and hearten during the winter’s cold and difficult days.” - William Matthews

The old manor house, now a Bard dormitory, is all that is left to see of the community, unless you poke through overgrown woods where the foundations of some of the houses and the pool can still be seen. At one time there were 56 buildings at Ward Manor, stretching from Kidd Lane in the north, to the Cruger Road in the south. The operation employed scores of workers from nearby Tivoli and Red Hook. The manor, which was an elegant home for elderly people, operated all year round until the 1960s, along with the dairy and farming operations. The camps and bungalows opened for the summers.

William Matthews, an author, social activist and head of the Family Welfare Department of the New York City Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, opened the community in 1926, with the support of his friend, William Ward of the Ward Baking Company. Ward bought the former Livingston estate, endowed it and asked his friend to run it as a summer retreat for overworked city families of limited means. For 40 years, Ward Manor operated according to Matthews’ principles. When he died in 1946, his son Bruce Matthew, father of Donna, continued his work.

Guests worked alongside the employees to grow vegetables, help with cultivating and weeding of gardens, build and repair furniture and paint and decorate rooms. “There is a belief at the manor,” wrote Matthews in his courtly, Victorian prose in *In and About A Gray Stone Manor House*, “that discontent and unhappiness come frequently from idleness and that their opposites may often be found in useful occupation.”

Civility prevailed at Ward Manor. It was 1926 and the country was in bad times. Many guests, as Matthews always called his residents, had lost any money they had. Many were artists and craftsmen, a kind of Bohemian group, Donna Matthews recalls. But life at the Manor was meant as a refuge.

Above the arched stone entrance, there remains an inscription that Matthews put there in 1926:

*"You must come home with me and be my guest
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honor you."*

The boys' camp, devoted, in Matthews' words, to fun, work and discipline, was an example of his philosophy. It was a discipline that brings freedom, he said, a freedom that comes from an acceptance of common control, or, put in modern verbiage, teamwork. The boys built their all the camp buildings at Cruger's Island by themselves, mostly from lumber from the crumbling Cruger mansion, in the summers of 1927 and 1928.

"Boys put on weight, acquire a coat of tan, learn a bit about trees, birds and frogs. trustworthiness, of playing fair, of staying on the job - this too is mixed into the hours play and work," wrote Matthews. "The island camp life helps boys to find the way to high roads."

Some local citizens remember the old Ward Manor from roaming its woods and swimming holes as children, or learning to swim at the Ward Manor pool, when the local school bus would drop them off as it drove right through on the once-paved road between Cruger's Island Road and Kidd Lane.

"It was amazing," recalled Red Hook Village Mayor Earl A'Brial, who, like so many local youngsters, used to swim at the Ward Manor pool. "There were cows and pigs and chickens. It was pretty well self-sufficient ... there were nice stone fireplaces and screen porches on the bungalows nestled all in the trees." And there were always about a dozen workers at the place throughout the winter to run the farms. In summer there was employment for twice that many.

One popular place was Bungalow Hill, the center of the 18 bungalows that were scattered throughout the woods and meadows. Perhaps the only reminder vacationers had of the city they had left were the signs hanging from some of the



Old Swimming Cove on the White Clay Kill: *"All day long during the summer months, a passer-by may hear shouts of laughter coming from the swimming pool."*—William Mathews

bungalows, plainly designating the old city hotels: the Sherry, the Plaza, the Ritz, Prince George, the Commodore, the Biltmore. Reggie Moore of Tivoli remembers that high hill, overlooking the river. It was so steep that he and friend got stuck one day trying to drive a car up the side. The swimming hole was also an attraction. It was located in the White Clay Kill just near the bridge on Kidd Lane, and he and his buddies would go there, slipping in the water on the other side of the creek from the swimmers - of course, they were usually from the girls' camp - before being shooed away by the counselors. The swimming pool, where local lawyer Woody Klose, among other local high school students, used to lifeguard and teach swimming in summer, served the surrounding community as well after it was built in 1938. The old masonry barn, which can still be seen, was the scene of square dances open to the community for many years.

The boys and girls camps operated until the 1950s, the old age home until the 1960s, when

Ward Manor was sold to Central Hudson after operating for almost 40 years.

In those days Central Hudson had plans of building a nuclear power plant on Cruger's Island. The buildings became a liability, and were either burned, hauled away or torn down. The pool was filled in; the paved road was abandoned. The remaining elderly at the manor house were transferred to other nursing homes. Even a small cemetery on the place was left to fade, overgrown, into the woods.

Central Hudson transferred the Manor and the southern part of the property to Bard College in the 1960s, where it is completing construction of a major performing arts center, designed by world-famous architect Frank Gehrey, and placed right over top of the Manor's beautiful garden and fruit beds.

Plans for the power plant dissipated and in the 1970s Central Hudson sold the rest of the 900 acres to the state, which developed the Tivoli Bays National Estuarine Sanctuary.



Inside The Greybarn: *"The part of the barn that was once used for storage of hay and grain became a place for play and arts and crafts work on rainy days. The writer recalls the arrival of the first party of greybarn girls, a bus and truck load, all exclaiming and chattering. A brood sow and her litter of young were drowsing under a nearby apple tree. At the sudden arrival of so many humans, they turned tail and scurried gruntingly and squealingly their retreat down over the hill. They never returned."* – William Matthews

Donna Matthews said that all in all these changes are a pretty good reincarnation of her grandfather's beloved Ward Manor. William Matthews always referred to himself as a gardener and lover of nature. He would probably be happy, she said, to see the bays and their wildflowers and wildlife protected, and a world class music center rising on top of the old Manor's blueberry patch.

WELCOME TO THE NEW NEKOS RED HOOK DRUGSTORE

Barbara Bielenberg

In our last issue we bemoaned the loss of the Red Hook Drug Store, a fixture at the Village four-corners for the past 84 years. We are delighted to learn that sometime in June the Village landmark will reopen as Nekos Red Hook Drug Store. The new owners are Peter Nekos, who also owns the Boiceville Pharmacy and David Ray, formerly a pharmacist at CVS in Red Hook. Ray and Nekos have been friends for 15 years and jumped at the chance to work together as soon as they heard the store would be available.

Between them they have 58 years of experience in the drug store business and the new store will reflect their desire to run a high volume prescription business offering competitive prices and personal service. To that end they have literally stripped the store back to the brick walls and greatly enlarged the prescription area. There will be two computer terminals to speed processing of orders.

Their plans for the rest of the store are still evolving but, contrary to rumor, there will definitely not be a soda fountain. They do plan to carry quality gift items and a small inventory of greeting cards, as well as wheel chairs and other medical necessities. We are pleased to welcome Nekos and Ray to our community and applaud their desire to keep a Red Hook tradition going!

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S KEYBOARD ... Barbara Bielenberg

This is the last time I'll be writing to you from this corner of the Newsletter. **Larry Thetford**, **Nancy Hetzler** and I must retire after six years as Historical Society Trustees and officers. **Larry** and **Carol Brenner** shared the presidency in the dark days before we had a home in the Elmendorph Inn. (They still work together once a year – pruning the Elmendorph apple trees.) **Larry's** advice has been invaluable to me over the years. **Nancy** has cheerfully and graciously served as refreshment chairman and most recently, as Recording Secretary. I am exceedingly grateful to them all for their friendship and assistance.

There are so many others who make a President's life easier. I think of **Marlene** and **Al Hejnal** who maintain our ever-changing membership database and produce our mailing labels. **Al** drove through that February snowstorm to deliver labels for our postcards. (Copy Cat couldn't open for two days so in spite of **Al's** efforts we ran a bit late!); **Bobbie Thompson** who keeps our records straight in the Archive Center, answers genealogical requests and always knows where everything is when researchers come looking for help; **Kate Dewsnap** who cheerfully sorts and files clippings and obituaries and **Evie Seils** who never let chemotherapy and radiation stop her from checking our mailbox and keeping our financial records straight throughout her recovery.

Maynard Ham who carries Red Hook Village history in his head and lovingly produces a monthly 100-year old Newspaper. And dear **Clare Carr** who enlivens our Trustee meetings with enthusiasm and ideas and never fails to come up with an interesting article for the Newsletter, even when pressed to the wall with the demands of the Red Hook History book project. **Thank you all** and to everyone else I forgot to mention – my apologies and gratitude!

Looking to the future –

A Brief History of Red Hook written by **Clare O'Neill Carr** and profusely illustrated with photographs, many from the Historical Society archives will be introduced to bookstore owners and other retail outlets at a gala reception on **July 14th**. Thanks to the generosity of **The Wise Family Trust** our Society will benefit from each book sold as will the Rhinebeck Historical Society from **Nancy Kelly's** companion **History of Rhinebeck**. Look for them wherever books are sold. The proceeds will help insure the financial security of our Society.

A parting word – An active Historical Society is not just about the past. It can also influence the future of Red Hook by playing a pro-active role; encouraging and assisting in the preservation of historic buildings, stone walls and vistas throughout the Town; reminding youngsters and older residents of the values which built our Town and contributing to a sense of the special nature of the community. At our Annual Meeting we'll be electing some excellent new Trustees who will be able to make our Society ever more relevant. We hope they will receive the support and encouragement of an active membership working together to preserve the past for the future.

Thank you for your friendship and Best Wishes to you all —

NOMINEES FOR ELECTION TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Nick Annas Recently retired from a long career in engineering; Nick continues to serve as a consultant to the electrical utility industry. He is a past member of the Red Hook Board of Education and the Red Hook Economic Development Committee and currently serves on the Red Hook Town Water Board. In addition to membership in a number of civic organizations, he serves as a volunteer interpreter at Montgomery Place and pursues a variety of personal interests ranging from early western outlaws, to target shooting, auto racing and cooking.

Maynard Ham A life-long resident of Red Hook, Maynard has retired from teaching Art in the Red Hook High School. He inherited a love of local history from his father, the late Red Hook Village historian. Each month he scours ancient copies of The Red Hook Journal and compiles a paper of 100 year-old news and advertisements.

Victoria Young Victoria is a native of California and graduated with a B.A. in History from California State University at Fullerton. While in college she was active in sorority affairs and continued her participation after graduation on a regional and national level.

She and her husband, Steve, live on West Kerley Corners Road in Tivoli.

Note: Nominations may be made from the floor at the Annual Meeting. Only paid-up members are eligible to participate in the election.

NOMINATIONS REQUESTED FOR HERITAGE AWARDS

Now is the time to honor those individuals or projects that you have observed and admired in our community. Each year the Historical Society solicits nominations of significant contributions to the historic heritage of the Town of Red Hook. Nominations may be made in one or more of the following categories:

- Written or Recorded: typed or published texts; taped photographic or audiovisual material; documents or research work.
- Architectural: historic restorations, preservation or design applications, which reflect or enhance the vintage rural character of the Town.
- Artistic: artwork, artifacts or replicas, in any media or material, which depict, typify or enlarge comprehension of the past.
- Environmental: site works that conserve, restore or beautify settings reminiscent of the areas past.

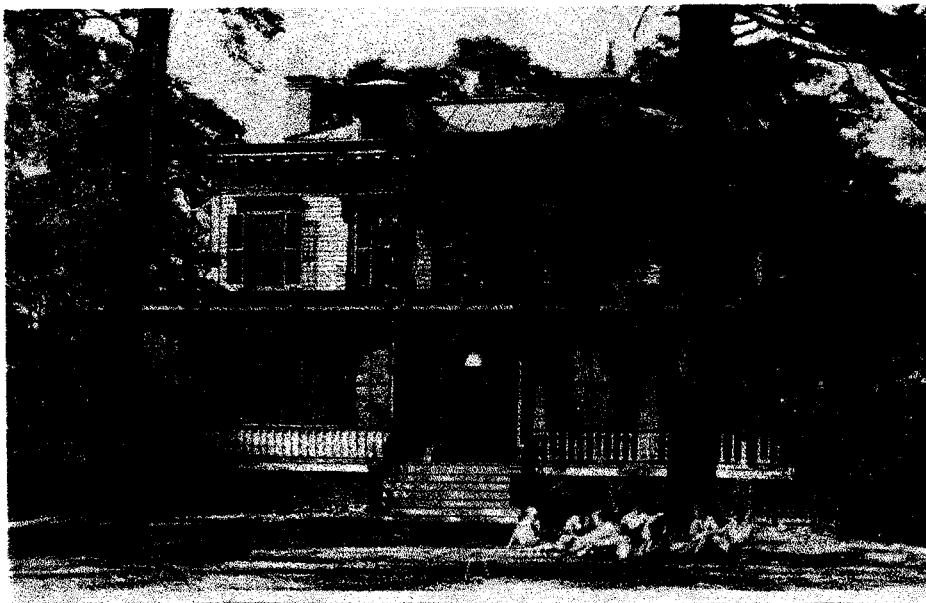
Nominations may be made in each of these two categories:

- Senior: an individual or group over the age of 21;
- Junior: an individual or group under the age of 21.

Nominations must be received by June 4th. Mail to the Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook, Box 397, Red Hook, NY 12571-0397. Please include the following:

- Award category;
- Identification of the nominee by name, title or location;
- Your name, address and telephone number in case we need more information.

An objective Heritage Awards Committee will evaluate nominations received by the due date. Winners will be notified and a formal presentation made at the Annual Dinner Meeting on June 12th. Awards include a complimentary membership, award certificate and complimentary dinner. For more information, call 758-2923.



Homestead House: *"An eighty year old landmark for many years unoccupied now echoes to the laughter of Homestead girls."* – William Mathews,

This old mansion was rennovated by Matthews and his staff to house one of the girls' camps set up in 1926. Formerly known as the Ham House, Homestead House became the home of writer Saul Bellow and, later, artist Matt Phillips. It remains a private home.

**DON'T MISS THE
ANNUAL DINNER MEETING OF THE
EGBERT BENSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK**

**Tuesday, June 12, 2001
At the Elmendorph Inn
North Broadway, Red Hook**

6:00 p.m. Punch and Hors d'oeuvres
6:30 p.m. Buffet Dinner

7:30 p.m. Meeting & Awards
8:00 p.m. Speaker, Alan Neuman

Dinner Menu

Chicken Cacciatore
Breaded Porkloin with Mushroom Gravy
Homemade Noodles

Green Beans with Red Pepper
Boulangier Potatoes (Braised in stock
with Glazed Onions)

Rolls and Butter
Chocolate Kahlua Cake
Coffee and Tea

Cost: \$15.00 per person.

DINNER RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY JUNE 6TH

Please make checks payable to RENNERS
And mail to: Mary Cioffi
Old Post Road North
Red Hook, NY 12571

RESERVATION FORM

Name(s) (please print) _____

Phone _____ Number of Persons @\$15.00 _____

Amount Enclosed _____

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

MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2001
(It's time to renew your membership for 2001)

Name(s) (Please Print)

Mailing Address

Telephone Number (Area Code)

☒ ANNUAL DUES ☐

Check appropriate line(s): make check payable to "Egbert Benson Historical Society"

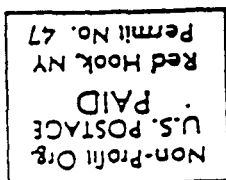
_____ Family \$12 _____ Individual \$8 _____ Student (under 18) \$1
_____ Contributing \$25 _____ Sustaining \$50 _____ Life (\$100 or more)
_____ Business or Organization \$15

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

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

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.

NO 2001 ON YOUR MAILING LABEL? PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.



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