



## Egbert Benson HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

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

### FROM THE PRESIDENT'S KEYBOARD

Barbara Bielenberg

## WINTER 1999

**Who Needs Local History?** Ask the homeowner who found the builder of his house in our census records, the high-school teacher who laminated copies of two of our maps for use in his classroom, the school librarian who copied an 1876 school-district map for a forthcoming exhibit, or any of the number of people we've provided with genealogical information.

**Who Needs Local History?** A year ago we posed that question to the Red Hook community and asked for donations to restore a room on the second floor of the Elmendorph Inn as an Historical Archive Center named after the late Village Historian and founder of the Friends of Elmendorph, Rosemary Coons. More than \$7,000 was raised—enough to complete the restoration, and level and carpet the floor.

Additional donations have helped us furnish the Archive Center with second-hand lateral files, an office desk and shelving. Pete Bulkeley arrived with a useful two-drawer file, Joe Kavaky gave us a TV and VCR, and an anonymous donor contributed a serviceable computer. Other cash donations have helped us purchase expensive but essential archival boxes and files.

In appreciation of your donation to the Local History campaign, many of you became members of the Historical Society for the first time. We hope you've enjoyed some of our programs and our newsletter and will continue to support the collection and preservation of the history of the Town of Red Hook by renewing your membership NOW. A family membership is only \$12.00 so please consider stepping up a level. And if you make a donation (always welcome) other than your membership, let us know if your company will match your gift.

**Check your address label. If it doesn't say 1999, your dues are due NOW!**



### "SHERIFF" BOB CHANLER AND THE "MONSTER CLAMBAKE"

Clare O'Neill Carr

Some of the liveliest stories to come out of Red Hook's entry into the new twentieth century were when politics came to town, putting the small farming community in the headlines. In 1896, Red Hook even hit the front page of *The New York Times*, when presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan vacationed in Upper Red Hook. It was a local man, however, who generated the greatest political excitement in Red Hook, around the turn of the century, with a political campaign that was talked about in town for generations. "Sheriff" Bob Chanler's run with politics in the first decade of the century swept up Dutchess County, and Red Hook in particular.

One of eight Chanler orphans, great-grandchildren of William and Margaret Astor, Robert Chanler was raised at Rokeby, handsome, wealthy, impulsive and full of undirected energy. He was living in France, and was already recognized in New York and Paris as a decorative painter of some note, when he decided in 1901 to come home and run for state assemblyman from the Red Hook district. He set about making himself known to his electorate as only a Chanler could do, as local residents were to recall for many years.

Chanler first bought a farm near the village in 1901 and set aside thirty acres for the town, where he immediately established Chanler Park. The park was south of the village between the Post Road and the railroad, at the site of Triebel's Garage, near Old Farm Road. Chanler built a ballpark there, with bleachers for the patrons, a racetrack for horse races, and even a landing strip for airplanes. He sponsored half a dozen baseball teams and brass bands throughout the county, equipping them all and outfitting them in new "Chanler" uniforms. He set up at least a half-dozen fire companies, also equipped and uniformed with the "Robert Chanler Fire and Hose Company" logo. He sponsored picnics and races and games to the accompaniment of his own brass bands,

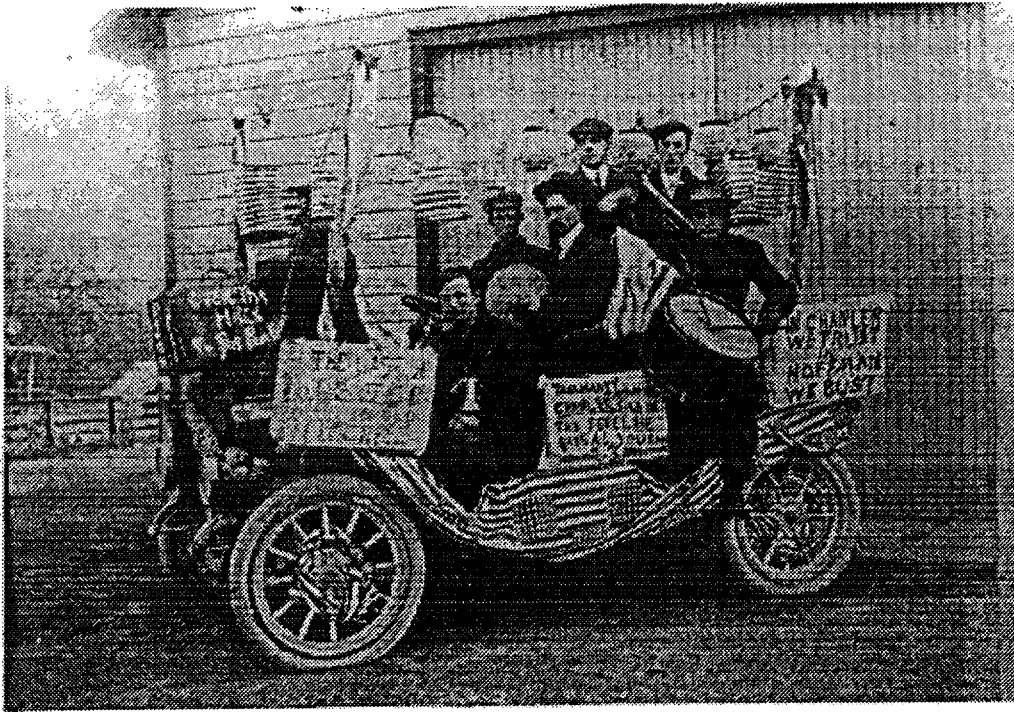
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and to the delight of the local citizenry.

In a winning stroke, Chanler imported a European prize bull to his Red Hook farm to improve Dutchess County farmers' stock, and offered its services free of charge. An imported blooded stallion followed, for the benefit of the local horse stock—on the same terms. The gesture worked, and soon Dutchess farmers were winning prizes in stock competition with Ulster, their long-time rival.

It came as no surprise when Chanler won his bid to represent the district in the New York State Assembly in 1901 and for several terms. But his most famous run was for Dutchess County Sheriff in 1906, when he shared the Democratic ticket with his brother, Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler. Lewis was the Supervisor of Red Hook and was running for Lieutenant Governor with newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, who was challenging republican Charles Evans Hughes for state governor.

Chanler Park was lively that summer, and local residents were treated to the sight of the first motor car to be used in a political campaign in Dutchess County, as Lewis made his way around the byways and back roads in an open automobile. But in August, the Chanler brothers, Democrats in a heavily Republican county, pulled out all the



"Sheriff" Bob Chanler's campaign car

(Losee Collection EBHS)

stops. Right before announcing his candidacy for Dutchess County Sheriff, Bob Chanler held a picnic that was like nothing seen in town before or since. On one of the hottest days of the year, the entire county was invited to Red Hook to attend "Mr. Chanler's Monster Clambake." began one early August morning with a parade of fire rigs and companies, drum corps and brass bands, not a few of which were "Chanler" outfits. Over 3,000 people were gathered that day beneath a "mammoth" tent that held 500 at a sitting. They

consumed 65,000 clams, 2,000 bluefish, 80 barrels of sweet potatoes, 1,200 pounds of chicken, 1,800 lobster and 6,000 ears of corn, among other delectables. Eight-hundred loaves of bread and 300 pounds of butter accompanied the meal, washed down with 3,000 bottles of beer and 3,000 bottles of soda. Afterwards, they smoked 5,000 cigars.

To top off the day, the Chanler baseball team accommodated the crowds by beating its rival, Chatham. Guests didn't leave until after 5 o'clock, wrote *The New York Times* reporter, "each one with a warm spot in his heart for Robert W. Chanler." Bob Chanler was on hand, urging people to eat and enjoy the parades and sports. There were drills and speeches. Chanler, who was plagued with a lisp, was not a big public speaker. Others spoke on his behalf. But he famously loved a good time, and he encouraged his guests. When several score of men swarmed the beer pit and became noisy, Chanler routed them out, tactfully, cajoling them. "Now, boys," he reportedly said, "it isn't that I want to be stingy. But I don't want anybody to get full, with so many ladies on the grounds."

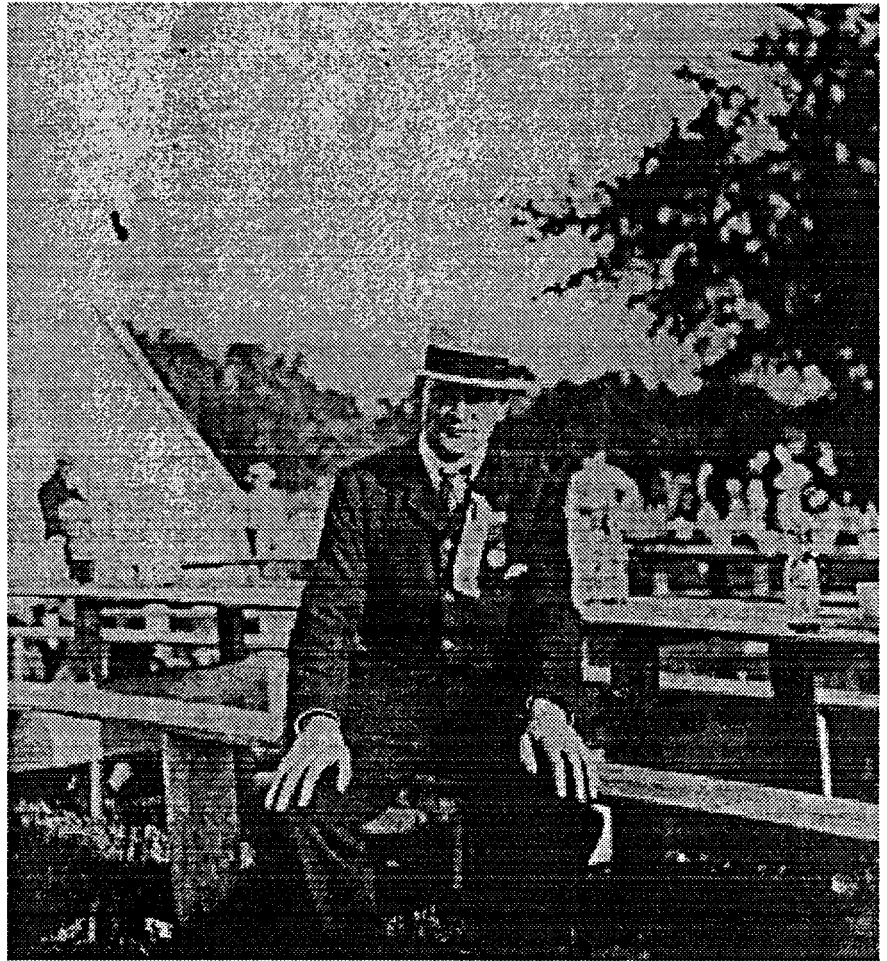
In the last frantic weeks of the campaign, Bob literally galloped around the countryside in Western garb, with six-shooters strapped to his waist, drumming up votes. Not surprisingly, Chanler and his brother both won their races that year. In fact, for the first time in half a century, the Democrats swept into office, with the ironic exception of the governorship. Lewis Chanler became lieutenant governor, but to Republican Charles Evans [continued next page]

Hughes. Bob Chanler, on the other hand, swept into the sheriff's office that year with a majority of 2,787 votes.

Chanler reported election expenses of \$3,900 that year, not including the clambake, the baseball clubs, the brass bands, the beer and the incidentals. The sheriff's salary in 1906 was \$4,000 a year. One can be excused for asking the question: Just what did "Sheriff" Bob Chanler expect to reap from his political career?

Red Hook reaped a good story for a good many years.

**Postscript:** This story is excerpted from the forthcoming publication, "The Town of Red Hook: A Brief History." Research for the chapter on politics in Red Hook at the turn of the century came from contemporary newspaper accounts, interviews with local residents and the as-yet-unpublished sequel to *A Pride of Lions*, by Lately Thomas (New York: William Morrow, 1971). *A Pride of Lions* tells the intriguing story of the Chanler orphans, raised at Rokeby in Red Hook.



*Candidate Robert W. Chanler at his clambake in 1906*

*(Losee Collection EBHS)*



*It's time to renew memberships. If your address label doesn't say 1999—your dues are due NOW!*



## ARCHIVE UPDATE

Linda Keeling, Archivist Pro Tem; Barbara Thompson, Registrar

One of the most meaningful aspects of our Historical Society collection, according to **Bobbie Thompson**, is the record of the "common man" it preserves. Unlike many historical collections which focus on the lives of the rich and famous, our old deeds, newspapers, legal documents, pamphlets and photographs portray everyday life and work of farm families and tradespeople. Our map collection is particularly interesting to Bobbie for the early maps often list the owners of farms and businesses.

Bobbie handles every scrap of paper that moves from storage boxes to our new file drawers: it's she who removes all rusty paper clips and staples before listing the item on the growing computer index and refiling it in archival folders. She is hard at work most Tuesdays, often with help from **Linda Keeling, Kate Dewsnap, Shirley Brown and Barbara Bielenberg**.

Among the items recently accessioned is a collection of 155 survey forms describing Red Hook Village homes and commercial buildings compiled by Dutchess County Landmarks and a team from Cornell in 1975 and donated to the Society by the Red Hook Public Library. We are grateful to the Library

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for storing so many historic records of the community until the Historical Society finally found a suitable "home of its own."

**What do we need now?** More archival files and boxes and a **good reliable NEW desktop copy machine**. In the interim, we'd be grateful for the donation of **any good reliable desktop copy machine** (and you might get a nice tax deduction). We're about to start indexing and rehousing the papers and drawings of Frank Teal who was the sole surveyor and civil engineer working in the area for 52 years until his death in 1949.



## VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAMS SCHEDULED

Our Historical Society and the Friends of Elmendorph are co-sponsoring a series of lectures and workshops to prepare student and adult volunteers to conduct tours of the Village of Red Hook and the Elmendorph Inn and participate in other volunteer activities. The training sessions will be held at the Elmendorph Inn from 3-5 p.m. every other Tuesday, beginning on February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Hudson Valley and Red Hook history and the role of inns such as the Elmendorph will be covered. Theories of restoration, furnishing and interpretation of historic sites will be discussed and there will be practice sessions for tour guides. The planning committee consists of **Linda Greenblatt, Kate Dewsnap and Barbara Bielenberg**. For more information, or to register to participate, please call Linda Greenblatt in the evening at 758-8361.



### Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook 1999 WINTER / SPRING SCHEDULE

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| January 26  | <b>Recalling the Bicentennial:</b> slides, photos and memories of the many local history activities.  |
| February 23 | <b>Remembering Milan and Rock City</b> with Milan Historian <b>Patrick Higgins</b> and longtime residents.  |
| March 23    | <b>Gomez-Mill House:</b> the earliest Jewish Homestead in North America, it was built in Marlboro in 1714; presented by <b>William Maurer</b> , Director.         |
| April 27    | <b>Dorothy Day and the Catholic Workers</b> , presented by <b>Charles Doyle</b> at the Watts DePeyster Fireman's Hall in Tivoli.                                  |
| May 16      | <b>Sunday Afternoon Historical Society Benefit:</b> <b>Tom Daley Slide Show and Reception at Rokeby.</b>  |
| May 25      | <b>Fourth-Grade Olana Art Project</b> , exhibit and presentation by <b>Mirko Gabler</b> .   |
| June 22     | <b>Annual Meeting</b> , featuring <b>Robert Engel</b> , Curator of Clermont State Historic Site, speaking on <b>The Other Hudson: Wilderness and Great Camps.</b> |

# The Red Hook Journal.

AN INDEPENDENT, LOCAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

JANUARY 1899

The grippe has a strong hold on many of our citizens, who are confined to the house in consequence. 1/6

When a man begins to talk about purifying politics he wants an office.

The prospect for a good ice harvest from the river is not encouraging. 1/6

The Catskill ferryboat has stopped running and the river at that point is now crossed on the ice. 1/6

The death of Emeline, wife of the late Leonard Ten Broeck, occurred in this village Dec. 31st. She was buried in the Lutheran cemetery on Tuesday. She was 75 years of age.

The next meeting of the Farmer's Club will be Jan. 13th, at the residence of Dr. H. Neher. A full attendance of the younger members is requested as matters of special interest to them will be presented.

Samples of the new one dollar bills soon to be issued are being shown at the treasury department; they are printed from an entirely new design and are practically free from the defects of the old issues. 1/6

J. E. Holmes of Wurtsboro, Sullivan County, has sold to Middletown dealers in furs, the pelts of 1,000 muskrats this season, also 300 skunk skins, 60 mink, 50 red fox, 30 frey fox, 50 possum, 5 wild cat, 1 bear, 3 otter. He received \$600 for the entire collection. 1/6

MADALIN. — The oyster and chicken supper given by the Y.P.S.C.E. was well attended considering the cold stormy weather. . . . Scarlet fever has become a bane of our village, and if warm weather continues we shall have some of the village quarantined. 1/6

An auction sale of horses took place at Teats' stables Thursday afternoon.

The revival meetings in the M.E. Church in this village, are increasing in interest. Notwithstanding the intense cold the congregations are large. Much good has been accomplished already with the prospect of greater developments. They will be continued next week. Preaching every evening. All are invited. 1/13

The first two figures of 1899, when added, equal either of the last two, and the last two, when added, equal the first two. 1/13

When some men make mistakes they repeat them by way of apology. 1/13

William H. Budd, who during the past season was captain of the barge Enterprize, on Jan. 2d took charge of the Rhinebeck, Slate Dock, office of the Saugerties and New York Steamboat Company. 1/13

At the annual election held at the First National Bank of Red Hook on Tuesday, the following Directors were chosen for the ensuing year: B.B. Hoffman, J. W. Elseffer, J. N. Lewis, Clarence Shook, Peter F. Potts, H. E. Miller, Irving Fraleigh, Frank S. Ormsbee, A. Piester. At a subsequent meeting of the Board, B. B. Hoffman was re-elected President. 1/13

Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Benner, who have been spending awhile here, have returned to New York. 1/20

*The Wanamaker Store*

IS REACHED IN NINE MINUTES  
FROM THE GRAND CENTRAL STATION

BY THE NEW YORK & PUERTO RICO RAILROAD CARS  
FOURTH AVENUE

GREAT STOCKS,  
ARTISTIC ATTRACTIONS,  
AND LOWEST PRICES

SUPERIOR SERVICE.  
UNITE IN COMMANDING  
YOUR INTERESTED ATTENTION

JOHN WANAMAKER  
formerly  
A.T. STEWART & CO.  
BROADWAY 9th and 10th STS.  
NEW YORK

A large force of men are at work filling the ice houses at Barrytown, and all along the river between Po'keepsie and Albany. 1/20

Trackwalkers on the Hudson River railroad are soon to be required to ring up at the tower houses at certain times during the night. The system is now being put in. 1/20

S.S. Schoonmaker has purchased a handsome team of gray horses of Green Co. parties for his undertaking business. 1/20

People who in these days are gulled by lottery concerns, imitation beans, pinchback (gold) watches, quack advertising dodges, and the hundred and one schemes that are being carried on, and have been for years, and been exposed by the newspapers times without number, deserve to be beaten, as they almost invariably are. They refuse to patronize home dealers and old friends, and are taken in by strangers. 1/20

Harry Van Steenburgh, who works at the creamery at Fraleigh's Switch, had a finger crushed by a push car Wednesday. 1/20

William W. Coons, an old and well known resident of Shookville, town of Milan, died Jan. 13th, aged 70 years.

Wm. I. Coopernail, son of W. C. Coopernail, of Upper Red Hook, the only member of Co I, from this town, returned home last week from Honolulu, after a stormy voyage, and was welcomed by his many friends. He is looking well, and appears pleased with his army experience.

The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad is reorganized and on Thursday a certificate of incorporation was filed in the county clerk's office. The road is now called the Central New England railway company. 1/20

The Eleventh Annual Ball of the F. S. Ormsbee Engine Co., of Tivoli, will be held at the Fireman's Hall, Friday evening, Feb 3rd. A good time is promised all who attend. 1/20

A Masonic pin was lost Friday night last. The finder will oblige the owner by leaving it at this office. 1/27

The house formerly owned by the late Alvah Fritz, on Church St., has been sold to Harry Shook, for \$550.

A thunder shower passed over this section Tuesday night. In New York and other places it was quite severe.

The ladies of Christ Church will give a supper in the Parish House, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, Feb 1st and 2d. Supper 25 cts. 1/27

The James S. Armstrong Hook & Ladder Co., will hold their regular monthly meeting, on Wednesday evening, Feb 1st, at 8 o'clock. Important business will be transacted.

The jury in the celebrated Morehouse-Curtis kissing case came into the court room, Tuesday morning, and the foreman announced that they were unable to agree on a verdict.

#### NOTICE

S. Vogel & Son, of Kingston, N.Y., will arrive in the stables of B.S. Teats in the Village of Red Hook, on Wednesday, Feb 8th, with a choice carload of Michigan horses, which they will offer at private sale until Thursday, Feb. 9, when they will sell at public auction at 1 p.m. 1/27

Horace Moore, who is a trackwalker on the section between Barrytown and Tivoli, was held up near the former place and relieved of his watch and pocket knife. He says three men did the job, one holding a revolver to his head and the other two searching him. 1/27

Mild weather caused a break in the work on the ice at Barrytown. 1/27

Bert Griffing left town Monday to attend school at the H. R. Institute at Claverack. 1/27

The 25th anniversary of Christian Lodge, 379, I.O.O.F. will be held at the Lodge Rooms, Saturday evening, Jan. 28th, at 7:30 o'clock. 1/20

ROCK CITY. — There are a number of people who intend starting for pastures new in the spring. . . . Kilmer's buzz saw is making music on the neighboring wood piles. . . . Miss Lena Fraleigh, of Red Hook, has been the guest of relatives here. . . . The truant officer has had some exciting experiences. Probably he could imagine himself in "the wild and wooly west". . . . Many farmers are becoming discontented with agricultural affairs. . . . Several of the people have been taking pleasure trips across the river. . . . The "strikers" didn't seem to frighten the ice men from this section. . . . The beautiful Scotch collies of George Davis have been sold to Po'keepsie parties. 1/27

**Every kind of Grocery,**

**Wall Paper and Matting,**

**Pens and Pencils,**

**Inks and Stationery,**

**Tobacco and Cigars,**

**Crackers and Candies,**

**Horse Blankets and Whips,**

**Earthenware, Dry Goods, Notions,**

**Ready at all times for your patronage**

**Red Hook, N. Y.**

TO LET. — Small house, conveniently located, in the village of Red Hook. apply to R. J. CARROLL

MADALIN. — Sanfrancisco Minstrels drew a crowded house last Friday night and all were delighted with the troupe. They will come again in the spring and will be greeted by a full house. . . . Mrs. Laura Pitcher sang Sunday evening in Trinity church and will continue to sing every Sunday evening. All who listened to her, and every seat was filled, were delighted. 1/27

Drs. J. E. and E. K. Losee, of Upper Red Hook have both been confined to the house by sickness. 1/27