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DURATION

1h 1m 10s

5 SPEAKERS

Mary Chang

Wint Aldrich

Malachi

Bruce Naramore

Speaker 6

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:01] Mary Chang**

Hi, this is Mary Chang and I'm a volunteer from historic Red hook. And here, as part of the interview team, I'm going to let them introduce themselves.

[00:00:11] Wint Aldrich

This is Wint Aldrich. I was for many years the town historian in Red hook and very involved in the Elmendorf, especially in the early days.

[00:00:21] Malachi

My name is Malachi. I'm the tech coordinator.

[00:00:25] Mary Chang

It is July 17th, 2026, and we are here interviewing Bruce Naramore, and we are recording at the Elmendorf Inn in Red hook, New York. So, Bruce, would you mind introducing yourself and telling us where and when you were born?

[00:00:44] Bruce Naramore

I was born in 1951 in Worcester, Massachusetts. Didn't spend too much time there. I actually was brought up for, oh, the first 13 years or so of my life in town of New Providence in New Jersey, and eventually made my way to Syracuse before coming down here to Red hook in 1980.

[00:01:13] Wint Aldrich

And 1980 was the beginning of your distinguished service as the site manager at Clermont State Historic Site, which lasted until when?

[00:01:22] Bruce Naramore

Well, I was there until the summer of 2007. And had time that so that we could wrap up celebration of the steamboat bicentennial of course. Of course.

[00:01:39] Wint Aldrich

And that was a wonderful, wonderful celebration. During this period you, you told us a few minutes ago that you had different places of residence first here in the village and then elsewhere in Columbia County. But when did your engagement in very local history begin? Right. Right at the start of your residence in Red hook.

[00:02:06] Bruce Naramore

Well, I believe there was probably a 6 or 7 month break in period for me up at Claremont. But sometime in the early part of 1981 Rosemary Coons approached me to tell me about this project that had been really, I think, given a, a start because of the bicentennial in 1976. And when the weather was nice enough, she took me into this building that was falling in upon itself. But you could tell even then that there, there was a story here, and there was a potentially very interesting restoration process that could be applied if funding could be pulled together. And they had started that already. I, I stayed out of the fundraising for the most part, but I enjoyed my tour that led to numerous sit down sessions with Rosemary and others. You mentioned Barbara Bielenberg earlier went and they'd been working on a historic structures report and got me involved in that. And that's, that's really my first involvement with, with the Friends of Elmendorf.

[00:03:35] Wint Aldrich

So the acquisition had already occurred, the acquisition from the Grand Union that was something that we were pushing in the context of the National Bicentennial, because Grand Union, as the world here locally knows, was a it was a British controlled company. And. And they were hearing our our complaints and, and concerns and they agreed to sell the property to, to us for a nominal amount. Really. And you're right, the next stage was raising funds for restoration.

[00:04:15] Bruce Naramore

Yeah.

[00:04:17] Mary Chang

Could you tell us something more about the Historic Structures report? You mentioned that you had been working, that you worked on that project.

[00:04:24] Bruce Naramore

Right. More more as somebody to bounce ideas off of and to talk through the ever changing historical background. The building presented. And I am not in a position anymore to remember all the details of this, but I would often spend time. On weekends, primarily sitting down with rosemary cones, and she'd be going over what had been written during the week. I might have some input into into that, but you know, I would say Rosemary, from what I remember was the one that was primarily primarily involved in putting pen to paper and trying to pull all of this information that we kept coming up with. I think it was one of those who was a regular supplier of historical data and putting it into a coherent form for New York state parks, who really oversaw the projects that were to take place between 1981 and 1987 when I moved out of Columbia or moved into Columbia County.

[00:05:52] Mary Chang

Tell us. Tell us a little bit about Rosemary.

[00:05:54] Mary Chang

We've heard her name come up many times in different interviews. But what was your connection to Rosemary like?

[00:06:03] Bruce Naramore

Well, Rosemary, I think, tracked me down. She knew that I had been appointed as the director up at Claremont. And she had worked before I came here with my predecessor, Cheryl Gould. And Cheryl was another one who was living in Red hook before she took a job up in Saratoga, right down the street. As a matter of fact, on Cherry Street got involved because she was a member that wanted to be a member of the community. And the Elmendorf Group was interested in the expertise that she got restoring Claremont on this project. So I came in as the new guy, but somebody who they hoped would be interested because I had also moved to Red hook and I was and I did what I could during the time I was here. I think back at the the years that I was here at the Elmendorf and, and the one thing I remember always is the work on the structures report. I remember my summer vacation, I think it was 1981, maybe it was 82 when I spent two weeks underneath the south wing of the building. Basically salvaging archaeological materials that were discovered there. And that was done with the the approval of state parks the Bureau of Field Services. And as I say, it was just strictly a mitigation project because later on that year, the first major project here was part of stabilizing the structure, and footings were being installed beneath the flooring in this area. So it was an interesting experience. We found quite a few artifacts under there, including, I believe, 18th century shoes and, you know, clay pipes, which you'd expect from, oh, 18th and early 19th century, primarily how they got in there. I'm not sure. This was like, what's that?

[00:08:34] Mary Chang

Were the shoes like.

[00:08:35] Wint Aldrich

Oh, they're in the collection. I'm sure somewhere.

[00:08:39] Bruce Naramore

Well, I brought in somebody Cynthia Morrison, who was a town resident and she had been working as a seasonal. At Claremont. She had a background in archaeology, had worked on some of the mitigation and salvage work up at Martin Van Buren Historic Site in Kinderhook. And so she did a lot of the cataloging and. Identification of objects, and I believe most of them are. All of them are still here. I haven't seen them in a while, but I did see the cases that are coming back into this building that once held most of them.

[00:09:24] Wint Aldrich

Yeah.

[00:09:26] Mary Chang

So what was the process?

[00:09:29] Bruce Naramore

Well, the process is going down every day with a trowel and working my way along a trench and where they had marked off where these footings were going to go. We would very carefully scrape away layer after layer, and anything that was discovered would go into the baggie.

[00:09:56] Wint Aldrich

How much space did you have? How much space was there to operate?

[00:10:00] Bruce Naramore

Not much.

[00:10:01] Wint Aldrich

Were you just basically had to stay on your on your stomach and.

[00:10:06] Bruce Naramore

For the most part. Yeah, yeah. Once in a while is a change of pace. I'd lean over on my side, but it was

[00:10:16] Wint Aldrich

You had, you.

[00:10:17] Bruce Naramore

Wouldn't want to have claustrophobia and do that job.

[00:10:21] Wint Aldrich

You had good light down there. I mean.

[00:10:23] Bruce Naramore

They had they had lighting down there. Yeah.

[00:10:26] Wint Aldrich

Now, the rest of the building has a proper basement. But. But there was only a crawl space here.

[00:10:31] Bruce Naramore

It was crawl space here, and I'm not sure altogether. I know that we entered the south wing by getting down into a crawl space in the central core of the building.

[00:10:48] Wint Aldrich

Well, maybe there was no basement. I don't know. So it shows you my ignorant level.

[00:10:54] Bruce Naramore

My my my. Crawling around underneath the building was pretty much limited to this. This particular wing.

[00:11:04] Wint Aldrich

Could you give a word? I just nobody was higher in my estimation than Rosemary Coons. But she did not come from a background of understanding anything about really. What you would call archaeology and material culture and so forth. And historic preservation. But you did your previous work in Syracuse put you in charge of the salt museum. Isn't that.

[00:11:35] Bruce Naramore

Yeah. I was worked up for the Onondaga County Museum's office. So I was used to some of the work that was involved here, but more up that way was I was working with archival material.

[00:11:51] Wint Aldrich

I see.

[00:11:52] Bruce Naramore

So some of this was relatively new to me. I mean, I had a certain amount of book knowledge, but there's nothing better than practical experience for something like crawling around under buildings. But Rosemary had really educated herself and of course she had benefited from working with, with Cheryl Gold. Oh yes. As well. In the, I guess years leading up to that point.

[00:12:22] Wint Aldrich

I should say that that Cheryl Gold, who was absolutely wonderful and got Clermont underway as an open, historic site and a documented site in preparation for the National Bicentennial. It had been owned by the state, but essentially closed for ten years, I guess more or less. Cheryl did go to work for state parks, as did her husband up in Saratoga, Jim Gold, and sadly, she got quite sick many years ago now and has died. So we can't capture her recollections of working here. But I am assuming that that you saw your, your period volunteering at the Elmendorf as something that was not disconnected from Claremont. This building was indeed older than the surviving structure at Claremont which had been destroyed in 1777 by the British.

[00:13:29] Bruce Naramore

Yeah. I haven't had an opportunity to take a look at the structures report, so I'm not sure exactly which dates are now being presented as the dates for this structure here, but it certainly goes back to the 18th century, later 18th century. And I didn't see it as disconnected. I mean, Edward Benson as well was had a connection to the folks who were residing at Claremont and being part of, of local and statewide and even national government during the years. So anyway, I just wanted to get back to Rosemary. I think Rosemary had took advantage of people that were out in the community that she knew might have information or knew more than she did. And she mined that. And she really, in the end, I think, is the one who was most responsible for what's in paper that I'd love to see. I'd love to see some more copies of the structures report.

[00:14:47] Wint Aldrich

But I'm sure we can make that available to you. I, I myself haven't looked at it right.

[00:14:53] Bruce Naramore

If it's not already on, on line. And I know that a lot of the archives that the historic Red hook group has are now online. That would be great.

[00:15:10] Wint Aldrich

I'll just chime in about Rosemary. She was an extraordinarily dynamic personality eager to learn, eager to persuade others of her point of view about things the sunniest of dispositions. She was During the day during the week, working as the principal office manager for Norton's insurance here in Red hook, a local insurance company. But. Her heart was really in in this. And I'm not at all surprised that she recruited you as soon as she heard you were. You were in the well, not only at Claremont, but also living here in the village.

[00:16:02] Bruce Naramore

She's certainly one of the first people I think of when I think about the Elmendorf Inn. There's there's others. I was trying to put a list together in my head. I came down here today. Certainly Doug and Shirley Brown, who had a major role in getting the store going that supplied a good part of the funds that were needed to restore the building. I think also of Herman Gorgons, who was the the architect, his wife, Lillian, was involved in fundraising.

[00:16:45] Wint Aldrich

Oh, yes.

[00:16:46] Bruce Naramore

Norma and John Liuzza were a couple who were often to be found in the, in and in the store. I mentioned a couple of others earlier who got involved in the project, but there was far more people than that. There was a real community effort.

[00:17:11] Wint Aldrich

Did you ever work with her? Clara Locey and John Locey.

[00:17:15] Bruce Naramore

Clara and John. Yep. I knew them as a couple, a couple of the originals, and they were slowing down a little bit by the time I got here.

[00:17:24] Mary Chang

So after your two week summer vacation digging. What happened after that? Can you tell us about after your archaeological dig?

[00:17:35] Bruce Naramore

Well, once I got taken care of, then we had to start preparing this part of the building for restoration. Now, we didn't have a contractor that came in and dismantled sections of the building that were beyond the restoration period of the building. So demolition was our board members responsibility. And that was something I had no little problem with. Once we identified what was not historic and what might be that needed to be kept as documentation of what was there that might relate to some of what we're going to be restoring. So this second floor in the south wing was sagging about three feet. It was not someplace that we could have had anybody move into at that stage. So we had to do a lot of dismantling of I believe there was a, a stairway possibly down here, but don't hold me to it. But there were interior walls that had been put up in the, probably the early 20th century that had to be taken apart. So I got involved in some of that work, and I really got to enjoy watching the other folks who I worked with while I was here. Are put together, the actual restoration because there wasn't that much by the time I moved to Columbia County. A lot of the demolition had been done, but the actual work of restoring the building hadn't started. So I as I say earlier, I left Red Hook for Columbia County sometime between 1986 and 87. When I first moved to Columbia County, I was close enough to remain involved. But by 87, I was living up in Hudson, and I had a fiancée up that way. So that kind of limited my time in Red Hook.

[00:20:09] Wint Aldrich

How long was it that you remained working at Clermont? What was the retirement date? Did you say 2000?

[00:20:16] Bruce Naramore

Well, I worked till 2007, and then I came back about 1514, did a couple of years of volunteer work as an archivist, but it's been a while. I'm truly retired now.

[00:20:36] Mary Chang

So you were part of the demolition crew? Were you part of the demolition crew? Did you help take down walls?

[00:20:45] Bruce Naramore

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I we had our crowbars and.

[00:20:51] Mary Chang

Can you tell us a story about that time or what you remember?

[00:20:55] Bruce Naramore

I just remember it was another interesting summer. I did not dedicate my entire vacation to it. We had about, oh, 3 or 4 members of the board or or I guess Herman was there. And I'm not going to hazard a guess as to names, but people that were very much involved in. The restoration part of the project were also members of the demolition squad and we had a good time.

[00:21:32] Wint Aldrich

Did you ever have any hesitation about what you were demolishing? Absolutely, absolutely. I mean, you, I would, I would worry about it even though it had been vetted by state parks or by Gorgons or by.

[00:21:50] Bruce Naramore

It was it had been well vetted. And what we had to remove was fairly obvious, unless we were restoring this building to its 1927 period.

[00:22:02] Wint Aldrich

Okay.

[00:22:03] Bruce Naramore

Which just didn't have the kind of political support that you might want. I mean, I say this as a guy who was responsible for furthering the restoration of Claremont to its circa 1930 appearance. And that's what you see up there today. But we didn't take that route here, and I'm just fine with that.

[00:22:30] Wint Aldrich

So were we.

[00:22:32] Mary Chang

So how did that process. I'm just trying to imagine that process. I mean, did everybody come together and take different jobs or did everybody just, you know, like have masks on?

[00:22:44] Bruce Naramore

And it it was an established fact. By the time I became involved, they pretty much focused in on what they wanted to present to the public. And you know, there were some new documents that arose from time to time that might have tweaked things five, ten years, one way or another. But the essentially what was decided on during the period between the bicentennial and my arrival in the Hudson Valley is what what you see now.

[00:23:25] Wint Aldrich

I think the feeling was that this was the newer end of the building.

[00:23:30] Bruce Naramore

Right.

[00:23:31] Wint Aldrich

And that it was appropriate to interpret it, restore it and interpret it to that slightly newer period circa 1810 or something like that. Yeah. And that was convenient because this was the, the larger room that could be used for the community events and meetings and so forth. And you immediately get a sense, partly because of the floorboards and, and other aspects of the middle room and the tavern room that those are older and, and they're being interpreted as an older space.

[00:24:09] Bruce Naramore

Yes. Well said.

[00:24:13] Mary Chang

Well, what happened after demolition? Did you have a chance to see what happened after the demolition and the restoration. The actual building.

[00:24:22] Bruce Naramore

Well, the actual restoration of this wing took place after I had gone to Columbia County. Now I'd stop in now and then just to see how things were going. Just as I've, I've been in here a couple times within the last two years, but it's it was just always a revelation. Every time I came in, there'd be something else that had been completed. So until now, you've got the entire building essentially restored or stabilized at the very least. And a lot of it's being used. I'd say what about 75% of the structures being being used these days?

[00:25:11] Wint Aldrich

Well, the historical society was the principal occupant of the smaller room at the north end of the second floor. Yeah. And that function has moved over to the this little late 18th century building next door, which we had hoped to buy. Elliot Lindsley and I were very keen to buy it. It was only \$16,000. But or not. But we just didn't have the money because it had retained its original look. The profile of the building and everything. Well, it was bought from other people. They enlarged it. And and the Ellen and Sam Phelan in more recent years, when it came on the market, acquired it. And it's been reconditioned so that there's a rental apartment upstairs. Must be a very small apartment. And downstairs. What do they call it? The annex or something. But it's where all the archives are.

[00:26:10] Bruce Naramore

Yeah. I had an opportunity to take a look at it.

[00:26:13] Wint Aldrich

You saw that. So. So that's at least some of what used to be upstairs is there. Although I don't think everything's been taken out of the second floor yet. And I'm not sure how the rest of these spaces, how actively they are used and how frequently. But but the historical society and the Friends of Elmendorf merged as historic Red hook as a new corporation about. Well, I suppose it must have been about ten years ago now or a little bit more. And I think that Clara Locy and Rosemary Coons would heartily approve.

[00:26:53] Bruce Naramore

I think so, too. And I'm very pleased to be a member of historic Red hook, in part thanks to my. And I probably should be ashamed rather than admit this, but I'm a life member of the organization.

[00:27:10] Wint Aldrich

So am I. Right? There are many who acquired life membership when it was not all that expensive. I imagine it'd be cause be rather expensive now for people to become life members, but they should be very grateful to have us, Bruce, since we were present at the creation, so to speak.

[00:27:33] Bruce Naramore

Well, you were, and I and I came in.

[00:27:35] Wint Aldrich

Yeah.

[00:27:36] Bruce Naramore

You know, during the second coming here. But yeah, I think the first room that I saw that got the treatment was not this one, but the the tavern room and the L addition where.

[00:27:55] Wint Aldrich

The.

[00:27:56] Bruce Naramore

Oven is located.

[00:27:57] Wint Aldrich

That wonderful beehive. Yes. Yeah.

[00:28:02] Mary Chang

What did you remember from seeing that room restored? Excuse me. What did you remember? What do you remember from seeing that space.

[00:28:11] Bruce Naramore

Back over there. My memories of that are somewhat vague. I'd have to go back in there and refresh my memory.

[00:28:23] Wint Aldrich

I think it was a functional matter because they knew they wanted to have functions here with refreshments. Yeah. And so it was obvious to use the kitchen for that. Not obvious to use the beehive oven, however, but but so the whole thing was put in in order and and the tavern room is where most of that occurs.

[00:28:47] Bruce Naramore

Now, I was trying to remember where we meet when the board got together, and I think it was that tavern at Wynn. But whether it was to the front or back, I can't really recall.

[00:29:04] Mary Chang

So we've heard through doing these interviews, How important the public was in saving the in was did the public what was the public's role or involvement in the restoration process?

[00:29:19] Bruce Naramore

Well, I'll just I'll mention one, one thing that kind of brought in a lot of folks from the community and that were the auctions that were run for several years to support the restoration. And this not only brought in lots of folks from the Red hook community and beyond to go to the auction itself, but people to contribute. Many of them had been conditioned previously by contributing to the, the shop. But some of the more quality items were, were put up for auction here from folks throughout the Red hook community. Some of these were things that had been rehabbed by town, talented members of the group. Doug and Shirley Brown, for example took a couple of old kitchen chairs that had been discarded at Claremont and didn't have seats had been painted over by state parks some time back in the 60s missing a leg. And they, they fixed the, repaired the seat, fixed the broken elements, repainted. Actually, they, I think they stained it. They'd be, they, they exposed the old wood and put them up for auction. And I happened to bid on them and still have them. The only complication is that once it was They were sold to me at the auction. I had to put them up as an offer to state parks to take them back, because they'd come out of there one time. So it's someplace up there are the records of the collection's acquisition committee of the Bureau of Historic Sites, where they decided, no, they didn't want to take those chairs because they had been altered too much from their original condition, which was true. You wouldn't want them in your house otherwise, but that's some of the type of things that, that, that showed up at auction that had been donated and often repaired by the crew.

[00:31:58] Mary Chang

The crew. Meaning.

[00:31:59] Bruce Naramore

Meaning the folks that were either, involved in the fundraising effort itself or were involved in the store or were talented craftspeople. You know, you get a busted up old chair. You can either put it in the wood fire, or you can bring it back to an appearance where it's going to be appreciated and used. And these were all people that made those things happen who were giving their time.

[00:32:37] Wint Aldrich

I have to say that from my own experience, the committee on registers, I mean, the Committee on Collections at Peebles Island State Parks were very severe judges. And I'm sure that it was based on experience of many state historic sites, which had been which had had things foisted on them over the years, and once there, they couldn't be disposed of. And they were inappropriate. But I would I would go out and beat the bushes among descendants of Livingston for really nice, nice things and and get get agreement. And then I would routinely have to refer them to the collection on the Committee on Collections, only to be told not interested. And then then what? I just had to go back to the donor. Or they went into some kind of holding pattern, but I guess it's good to have have the people really looking hard at that sort of thing. Here at the Elmendorf. I don't think that was ever necessary because the the Bielenberg, among others. They were great collectors of antique furnishings and so forth. And they had a sense, like the chairs that we're sitting in today, Windsor chairs of replicas that could take a lot of use, were appropriate to the room, and were appropriate to be owned by the organization here for use. So I don't know how many how many objects there are in the in the building that that qualify as 18th or early 19th century antiques. But the important thing is that the building itself does that. And, and what else is here can be used for or program purposes.

[00:34:47] Mary Chang

It's so curious that, I mean, you'd think that antiques that have been that are broken and like you said, they're ready to be disposed of. Or if you refurbish them, you can use them again. They have a new life. They become something new. But yet there's a sense of, oh, but they're not like they were before. Now there's something different. And does that, does that mean they lose value? Or what do you think that I don't know. Can you say more about that?

[00:35:14] Bruce Naramore

Yeah. I just think, you know, I had absolutely no trouble offering at no cost to the state of New York, those chairs. Because what I, what I had to, to maintain above all else was reputation for integrity. So someone could easily confuse my purchase of these Claremont chairs is somebody who is abusing his position. And so I, I, like I say, I had no problem at all doing that. It just was amusing to me to an extent that I had to go through this. We had already decided we didn't want the chairs at Claremont. So Mrs. Mcvittie, who was the last of the family at Claremont, gave the chairs to the Elmendorf, and they were, like, I say, a wreck. The Elmendorf folks repaired them, put them in presentable condition, and I bought them at the auction. Then I had to offer them back to the state. It would have been a good deal for the state if they'd wanted them.

[00:36:38] Wint Aldrich

But that was only because you were employed by the state. That's right. Nobody else would have to.

[00:36:43] Bruce Naramore

Nobody else would have to do that. No. So I still have those chairs, and I'm still willing to give them back to Claremont. For the record, But I don't think they want them now either.

[00:36:57] Wint Aldrich

There is another chair that you will remember. It was a great interest to the state and to you as the site manager. And that is the Livingston cipher chair. Oh, yes. There was a suite of, I think, eight of them made by a very good furniture maker in the middle of the 18th century. And the splat in the middle. These are side chairs. The splat in the middle was very carefully carved with the initials R, M, L. Robert and Margaret Livingston and how they came to be made, whether they were involved. I don't think they were a wedding present. I think they were a little older than that or newer than that, but they were pretty significant. And there were none at Claremont. They had all been divvied up among the family. In fact, we had one at Rokeby, which has been on permanent loan at the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum for many years. It's still there.

[00:38:00] Bruce Naramore

I just saw the one at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

[00:38:04] Wint Aldrich

And.

[00:38:05] Bruce Naramore

A few weeks.

[00:38:05] Wint Aldrich

Ago I've been out there and I've looked at it. I've. I hope they've corrected the. There was something wrong in the in the, you know, the card describing it and explaining it. And I asked the curator, I wrote them and said, correct this. I don't know what it was, but there was some error of fact. But in any event, there was a Livingston descendant who, for reasons that I don't now remember, had one of these chairs missing the splat and and was prepared to give it to Claremont. The rest of the chair was was intact. And the decision by the collections Committee at Peebles Island was. Yes, we'll accept it if our master craftsman here at Peebles Island can replicate from the Aldrich chair or from some existing model, the splat. And they did that, and you can see it now at Claremont. But of course, the splat is in pristine new wood, and the rest of the chair is in ancient mahogany. And so it tells you right off this is a replica. This is a repair. And so that's, that's not what was acceptable in your chairs. Incidentally, this is the artist whose name I couldn't remember.

[00:39:35] Bruce Naramore

Ooh.

[00:39:36] Wint Aldrich

Let's see the paintings behind you.

[00:39:44] Mary Chang

So something we're interested in thinking about is the community impact. What's your sense of I guess from your perspective as the director of Claremont Historic site and your involvement here, how? How, what, what, what is the value of these historic sites for young people today or for communities today?

[00:40:09] Bruce Naramore

Well, I mean, for certain members of the community, this building serves as a kind of a community center. Brings people together whether they have a strong grasp of its history or not. I think it really does stand out as I drive sometimes from my house down to Poughkeepsie to grab a train to Grand Central. I always notice this building as I enter from either side. It's gratifying to see it the way it looks today. And there was a time when the building was pretty much unpainted. It was painted but had lost much of it. And if anything just look like a sore thumb. It looks today as a building that this town, this community is proud of.

[00:41:16] Wint Aldrich

I think that's absolutely true. I think people around here, when I was growing up, they thought of Rhinebeck as the historic village. Very self-conscious about its heritage. And Red hook was just sort of not much there. And this building didn't help because it was coated in asbestos shingle or something. It was already deteriorating. And it was just sort of there as the kind of building that you wouldn't notice at all. It was an Amoco station where the convenience store is now on the south side of it. And on the north side of it, nothing that I can remember, certainly, certainly the the CVS was, was not there. And that's indeed where the Grand Union was going to build. And this was going to be the part of the approach to the Grand Union and the parking lot for the Grand Union. And that's why the Grand Union Corporation had bought the whole corner lot here. And, and it didn't occur to them, and it didn't occur to the Rhinebeck planning folks that there was anything amiss about that until Rosemarie Coons and company got to work on the effort to to preserve the bill, to understand the building and Preserve it. Explain that it is much more than what it appears to be.

[00:42:54] Mary Chang

Do you. Do you feel like it is important for. Why do you think it might be important for young people to know about the history of the historic sites?

[00:43:05] Bruce Naramore

How do we know about the history of the building?

[00:43:08] Mary Chang

Well, why do you feel like it's important for people to know about them? I'm thinking young people these days. Do you feel like the historic sites?

[00:43:19] Bruce Naramore

I think it can help to route people and give them a sense of place belonging, the idea that they're, they're not alone here that there have been generations before there will be generations after hopefully. And And I think that's something that is, you know, it's not tangible. It's not something you necessarily can see. But I think it produces. Feelings of that that make the community stronger.

[00:44:05] Wint Aldrich

There's another aspect to it, which is, I think you could say is time travel. If people could understand that when this was built, there was very little else in what today we think of as the village of Red hook, the more settled little hamlet was in upper Red hook, and Tivoli wasn't called that, but but it was a river landing that was important. And and this intersection down here really was not of much consequence. And and this building was the consequential building. There were no churches near it. The big private house that we call Mayland had not yet been built. And and so it's not surprising that local meetings occurred in this building and the, the local government when it formed in 1812, we understand, met perhaps in this very room. The town board and so many other functions of government and, and community enterprises were based here. So if, if young people can come here, can learn about that, and then just look out the window and realize that none of this was here. It was Is pasture land and with an occasional horseman coming up the Albany Post Road from Manhattan to to Albany and. And staying here because it was a it was an overnight place as well and a place of refreshment. It's sort of, as I say, it's sort of time travel for them in their, in their mind.

[00:46:06] Bruce Naramore

Went there's a question that we kind of went past that I'm curious about and that is, can you tell me about any naysayers? And I had to give that quite a bit of thought. And I cannot come up with a single instance where I was confronted with somebody who was negatively and very vocal about it negatively feeling negative towards the idea of restoring this building. They may not have been contributors, but they weren't. What I would say are real naysayers leading the the crowds against the effort.

[00:46:52] Wint Aldrich

I think that you're you're right at the time that you came into the picture in the early 80s, but at the time that we were trying to get this away from the Grand Union, which in effect was telling the Grand Union, we don't want you in Red hook. We don't want your store here. You have to remember, there was a small grand union that they wanted to sell that that was back where that was it for a while. I think that was the CVS later. And I can't think what it is now, but it's across from the post office. But they wanted to make a big presence here and it involved taking this and so To protect this. Basically, we. Which would have complicated their locating a store here because it would have taken a critical piece of the real estate away from them. There was opposition. I think the real estate. Community and the people who were worried about the tax base. This was very attractive in the village to have a foreign corporation build a big store that that would help the tax base. So I suspect that Lloyd Hartman I mean, I'm just speculating, but Lloyd Hartman, who was the longtime president of what was then called the first National Bank of Red hook. They had moved into the the KeyBank building that's there today, but they hadn't sold out to the KeyBank yet. He would be the sort of person who would say, well, this isn't a good business for our village.

[00:48:36] Wint Aldrich

And. But I think by the time you came, the acquisition had occurred. Those issues were past. This was a tax exempt parcel, the tax exempt structure on it. And and as you say, not all of these people would have been eager contributors, but they would have accepted the reality. And meanwhile. The store went away and indeed the store went out of existence. The corporation, Grand Union Corporation, I think does not exist today. Yeah. And we have Hannaford outside the village. I remember that off of route nine. And people are perfectly satisfied with that. Yeah. And in fact, there was a little controversy about that because they were buying another historic building there, and I was very involved in that Saint Margaret's home, and the arrangement was made that they would build up on the hill, and they would have a separate driveway, and they would figure out with the town what to do about Saint Margaret's. And, and they ended up giving it to the giving it to the town of Red hook. And and it's been restored now and it will be reused in some appropriate way. So these are, these are markers of progress in my point of view. And your point of view, Bruce, of progress in the community's attitude toward its heritage and, and making that heritage useful to the community.

[00:50:15] Bruce Naramore

Yeah, I would say that certainly must have been a considerable amount of change in public perception of this over the five years from 76 to 281. And I think back at who some of the most vocal supporters of the project were when I came here. Among them were Lady Kintner and Paul Fredericks at Apple Valley Realty. So that doesn't that doesn't account for all of the real estate community, but certainly some saw value in the project.

[00:50:54] Wint Aldrich

So both of them are wonderful. And Paul proved to be wonderful about Saint Margaret's. Lottie, we've interviewed a few months ago and she's in her early 90s and is still carrying the flag for this project. I mean, she's good. She cared a lot about about it then. And, and she is the sort of person that would would be in the face of a Lloyd Aikman or something, you know, if they were saying negative things locally about it. And I don't mean to be mean about Mr. Hartman, but he's no longer with us, so it doesn't matter.

[00:51:38] Mary Chang

Is there anything else about the restoration process that you think it's important for people to know.

[00:51:43] Bruce Naramore

About.

[00:51:44] Mary Chang

The restoration process?

[00:51:46] Bruce Naramore

I'm not sure I know what they don't know. Because this building was open regularly, folks in this in the community to check in on various stages of the restoration.

[00:52:07] Wint Aldrich

And state parks was as well because there were grants, right? So that, so that.

[00:52:12] Bruce Naramore

Right.

[00:52:13] Wint Aldrich

There was a checking back and forth. I think to be sure that it's being done intelligently.

[00:52:21] Bruce Naramore

But this building, certainly in the early years that I recall, was never truly locked up in the public kept out. And I remember many times when volunteers who were working in the store would get to talking with people from the community or from outside the community who expressed an interest in what was going on, and they'd get an escorted tour through here. So it always seemed to be open for inspection. And they people that I knew there wanted to share what they were learning with other folks who stopped by, maybe just to browse through the the books or what have you, but they might end up in this room or the tavern. So yeah.

[00:53:16] Wint Aldrich

It's always been useful. And it certainly was particularly useful in those early days when we were looking for Supporters and interested citizens that we are in walking distance of. I mean really only one long block from the the crossroads in the middle of the village. And so people would be going into the post office or going into these stores along here. And very easy to look in on the Elmendorf. If we'd been out in the countryside the way Saint Margaret's is it would be different. I mean, you'd have to drive there. And so I think that many people came in, and I should add one thing, because I'm going to forget to say this. If I ever get to sit in your chair, Bruce, and be interviewed, I don't think I have been. But before the Bicentennial, before Rosemary Coons, there was a look at historic architecture here, and all this rather small area of Red hook by a group from Cornell. I think they made a report. They actually thought the Amoco station was a very good example of 1930s. Design of a roadside. Gasoline stations and now long gone. But it was there that this first got into the literature, this building. And they said, do you people know what you have here? And of course nobody did. And I should find I mean, a copy of that report must be in the archives here. But that was the opening gun and it must have been about 1970. And And we ought to take a look at it, because I think they talked about perhaps four buildings in central Red Oak and and, and that gives you a sense in 1930s Amoco station and a late 18th century tavern. They had rather a, a wide vision of, of buildings. So we ought to, we ought to take a look at that because I think when we get around to writing this up briefly for people it's useful to know who gets credit. And I just wish I could remember the professor's name who led that effort from Cornell, but it would be in the in the record.

[00:56:06] Bruce Naramore

That's something that should have been cited in the structures report as well.

[00:56:11] Wint Aldrich

It probably was. I, you know, look. What other anything else occur to you in terms of.

[00:56:26] Bruce Naramore

Let's see. You know, one of the questions here asks about advice for people trying to accomplish something similar. And that's one of these easier said than done things. Because when I think of this project, the most important thing was the diverse group of people who came together and saw it through. I mean, there are a lot of projects that started during the bicentennial that never made it to the end point. But what I see here today and never saw it while I was living in Red hook is really the fruition of what people who I met here were telling me. This is what we're going to do. Back in 1980.

[00:57:25] Wint Aldrich

Yeah.

[00:57:25] Bruce Naramore

So I say that if you need a committed, enthusiastic, willing to learn group of people, but that enthusiasm has got to be at the forefront.

[00:57:41] Wint Aldrich

And it's got to be sustained. And that's, that's what happened. I mean and then it reached over to the new building and the sense of ongoing archival work and helping students, perhaps high school students, you know, do history projects and everything. It's bringing information together and, and an understanding. So it's I must say, I can't think of other projects that. I suppose sooner or later we're going to worry about the churches because the church attendance will be falling off. And what do you do with churches and so forth? But and up in Claremont, Hamlet of Claremont, there's a little Episcopal chapel I think is used for weddings or something designed by Richard Upjohn. It's a, it's a nifty little thing. And next to it the town owns the one of the early public schools. I guess it is, isn't it? Is that now the town hall? I can't remember how it's being used, but that that's. So there's a there's a sense in in that community which is not as rich a community as Red Oak of identifying and hanging on, reusing some very visible structures that that help to tell its, its story. So just carry this message from town to town. You know, it's like the Minutemen.

[00:59:31] Mary Chang

Well, Bruce, I would like to thank you so much for speaking with us and for being one of those critical people who helped contribute to the restoration and to the story. I think the continuing story of of this in. And is there anything else you would like to share with us?

[00:59:49] Bruce Naramore

No, I just, you know, I, I did a very small part here during the time I was here, but certainly pales in comparison to the people I mentioned and many who I failed to mention today. I just I wish my memory was better. For some of the detail, but to May 1981 and 1987 are the same years.

[01:00:18] Mary Chang

Well, you know what I have to say. I feel like you're being very modest because you were the one who got down, you know, under the floorboards and the footings and you were excavating. And that is what an incredible part of the story of this end to be a part of. And the things that you found and, you know, thank you very much.

[01:00:38] Wint Aldrich

The town historian wasn't down there. Historian was.

[01:00:45] Bruce Naramore

At all.

[01:00:45] Wint Aldrich

Who knows where.

[01:00:47] Mary Chang

Is there anything else you would like to add or ask?

[01:00:49] Wint Aldrich

No, I think this is just terrific, Bruce, that you've been able to come back to Red hook today and and share these recollections with us.

[01:00:58] Bruce Naramore

Well, it's always a delight to come back to Red hook.

[01:01:02] Wint Aldrich

Well thank you. That's that will get into the record too. We love the compliments. Now we'll go off and have some lunch.

[01:01:10] Speaker 6

Okay.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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