

HISTORIC RED HOOK

2016 Annual Report

Looking back at 2016, we owe special thanks to our enthusiastic, hard-working Trustees and volunteers – and to the greater Red Hook community– for helping us deliver another great year of bringing history to life! Highlights for our third year include:

Public Programs

Our 2016 Sunday afternoon history lecture series began January 31 with “Public Health Care Comes to Red Hook and Rhinebeck,” a well-attended talk at Northern Dutchess Hospital. In collaboration with the Rhinebeck Historical Society and the hospital, we invited Pace University’s nursing historian Dr. Sandra Lewenson to share her research into the early days of rural health care in our region. On March 20, local historian Dr. Meg O’Sullivan, who teaches women’s studies at SUNY New Paltz, challenged us to think differently with her fascinating talk at the Elmendorph “Add Women and Stir: Rethinking Prohibition and 20th Century Drinking.” And on September 25, Milan’s Bicentennial Co-chair Bill Jeffway shared a wonderful presentation called “Milan: Peeling Back the Layers,” that explored the diverse heritage of our neighboring town, now preparing for its 2018 Bicentennial.

We experimented with a few different program formats in 2016, in collaboration with other local organizations. On Saturday May 7, again in partnership with the Rhinebeck Historical Society, we showcased “Racing Through History,” a unique gathering of veteran stock car drivers with their colorful cars and memorabilia from the golden days of stock car racing at the Rhinebeck Speedway. The day-long event at the Dutchess County Fairgrounds drew hundreds of visitors and provided an opportunity to collect valuable oral history footage for archival use and for a DVD shedding light on this ‘untold story.’

As part of Red Hook Community Arts Network’s ARTZ DAYZ, we worked with the local Theatre on the Road group of actors to offer, on Saturday, July 17, a skit interpreting the history of St. Margaret’s Home. Working again with Theatre on the Road, and with the village of Tivoli and the Tivoli Library, we presented a delightful production of ‘A Christmas Carol’ on Saturday afternoon, December 3, to an enthusiastic crowd of families in Tivoli.

On Sunday, June 19, Historic Red Hook hosted “It’s All About Place!,” its second annual House & Barn Preservation Exposition at the Elmendorph celebrating the traditions and

skills that enrich our sense of place. More than a hundred visitors enjoyed mingling with preservation experts, watching open-forge blacksmithing, and listening to presentations on restoring a 250-year-old Dutch farmhouse, state and federal preservation incentives, and others. A Dyson Foundation grant helped fund the day, which also included live music and tasty food.

We worked with the Office of the Dutchess County Historian Will Tatum to offer a spirited social get-together at the Elmendorph on Friday, July 8, as part of the 2016 Dutchess County Historic Tavern Trail series. More than 60 attendees savored the evening's featured tastings of local spirits and brews, live music and tavern-history presentation.

On the first Saturday in October, the Elmendorph served as the Tour Center for Hudson River Heritage's 'Country Seats Tour' of the Town of Red Hook, with ticketed visits to several of its most interesting historic buildings.

On Veteran's Day Weekend, with support from Historic Red Hook's grant from Arts Mid-Hudson, Tivoli's StoryHorse Documentary Theater produced "The Kept Private" – a live theatrical reading about a local African-American farmer's experience during the Revolutionary War. Presented in a barn in Upper Red Hook, professional actors delivered a powerful dialogue from transcripts and historical documents to a sold-out audience. The production sparked conversations still pertinent today about race and community.

Community Outreach

As part of its continuing community outreach, Historic Red Hook participated in Red Hook's major seasonal events, particularly Hardscrabble Day and the Chocolate Festival.

Crowds of all ages gathered in The Elmendorph's rooms and front lawn on Hardscrabble Day to sample the ever-popular homemade apple pie and ice cream, gawk and pet the assembled sheep, pigs and llamas, have their photos taken sitting on "Cornelius Elmendorph's" antique Allis-Chalmers tractor, and test their skill at old-time 'apple-bobbing.'

In November, as part of Red Hook's Chocolate Festival, more than 100 chocolate lovers young and old flocked to the Elmendorph for chocolate-dipped fruit kabobs, marvelous musicians (including twelve-year old Molly Jeanne on her guitar), and a table-top exhibit of archival photos and objects detailing the history of Red Hook's own W.H. Baker Co., producers of chocolate.

Our annual Dutch Christmas Open House on December 4 welcomed visitors to enjoy holiday music from Red Hook Middle School's sax quintet, lovely singing and strumming from twelve-year old Molly Jeanne and other local musicians, all while sipping hot mulled

cider, munching on homemade cookies and, as a special feature, fresh-baked goods straight from the wood-fired beehive oven, courtesy of Tivoli Bakery's Mike Gonnella.

Throughout the year, we continued to work with other key local organizations, especially Bard College and the Red Hook Central Schools. During two weeks in January, a team of Bard's Digital Humanities students created a fabulous interactive website based on Historic Red Hook's recently-acquired Fraleigh collection (www.historicredhook.org/multimedia). We also hosted Bard's History Intern dinner on Feb 17, signing up two summer interns into the bargain: Willa Field, who helped us with historic preservation and survey work, and Noah Segal-Gould, who designed an interactive digital tour of the Elmendorph Inn.

Also during the summer, Board members Jen Huber and Thea Burgess, both teachers at Red Hook's High School, helped us develop a display on the history of the school system, 'Back to School: The Way It Was,' for the Elmendorph's second floor.

Later in the year, an entire class of Red Hook Middle School seventh-graders on assignment from Mr. Armstrong, their teacher, tramped to the archives to research the histories of various Red Hook buildings.

Video Histories

As part of Historic Red Hook's October 6 Annual Meeting, Board member Seth Kramer premiered another of his moving video history profiles, "Claude Potts Way," celebrating Tivoli's long-time apple grower.

Fundraising

Our winter 'Tavern' nights featured Soup Night, on January 23, with music by GrassFed, and Chili Night, on February 27, with music by Maggie Rothwell. The Elmendorph was filled to capacity with friends, neighbors, visitors – and much good cheer. The year's biggest fundraiser, the November 19 Gala Auction and Dinner, featuring auctioneer 'Cornelius Elmendorph,' was a great success, generating more money than any previous auction.

Archival Collections

Bobbie Thompson continues to volunteer in the Archives Room on Tuesday mornings and we were very pleased to welcome enthusiastic new volunteers, Nancy Bendiner, David Case and Alva Kramer, who have been busily helping catalog and organize the collections. In 2016 we acquired two major digital photo collections - one from the Claude Potts family and the other, relating to the Schutte family, from Robert Ludwig. Thanks to Ellen and Sam Phelan, we made great progress organizing the Fraleigh collection, and we digitized other, existing photo collections to enable better, easier access to researchers and the general public.

Administration

Operationally, we maintained our database of collections, memberships and contacts. At this writing, we count 246 active members and 340 subscribers to our e-bulletin.

At our 2016 Annual Meeting we were delighted to welcome two new board members, Elliott Bristol and Bill Jeffway, and thank former Trustee Robert McKeon for his two years of service on the board.

As we mark the progress of our third year, it is a privilege to thank all of our loyal members, volunteers, supporters, friends and collaborators, and look forward to an equally rewarding and fun 2017!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claudine", written in a cursive style on a light-colored background.

Claudine Klose
President, Historic Red Hook