



## 2014 Annual Report

Launched in late 2013 as a consolidation of the Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook (EBHS) and the Friends of Elmendorph (FOE), Historic Red Hook celebrated a successful first year, thanks to its hard working Board of Trustees, numerous volunteers and enthusiastic community support.

We began our “rebranding” early in the year with a crisp new graphic identity, highlighted by a sleek logo and strong tag line: *Bringing History to Life...* We developed a handsome new, responsive website [www.historicredhook.org](http://www.historicredhook.org) that is easily readable on mobile devices. Furthering our goal of using technology to best advantage, we produced a 90-second video that looked at our town in a whole new way and quickly went viral on social media.

Adding drama to Historic Red Hook’s new look, we repainted the Elmendorph Inn’s first floor public rooms with custom-mixed, period-appropriate colors, and installed museum-quality LED lighting upstairs and down, for a warmer, more welcoming experience for our visitors.

On the operations side, we installed both a powerful database system for managing archival collections and membership, and a new financial accounting system. To generate a wide membership base, we invited all former FOE and EBHS members, as well as new people to join Historic Red Hook. By year-end, we were able to boast more than 200 members. At an overflow first Annual Meeting, October 1, members formally approved an eleven-member provisional Board of Trustees.

Throughout the year, we diligently sought to strengthen ties with other key organizations. For the Village of Red Hook’s September 20 Hardscrabble Day parade, we celebrated the Red Hook Central School’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a one-room schoolhouse float sporting students at period desks, schoolmarm, and authentic-looking wooden outhouse. After the parade, we installed the “schoolhouse” in the lobbies of the Mill Road School for the enjoyment of students, teachers and visitors until late fall. Bringing history to life again on September 26, we hosted Red Hook’s fourth-grade classes in a tour of the Elmendorph. They’ll not easily forget meeting “Cornelius Elmendorph” and his no-left, no-right buckle shoes, nor the “Ice Boss” showing them the tools of the ice harvesting trade and miniature scale model of Barrytown’s huge, horse-powered icehouse, now long gone.

With the Dutchess County Historical Society, we co-hosted a 'Dutchess Heritage' Lecture on September 18, featuring Palatine historian Philip Otterness. Partnering with the Red Hook Public Library, we presented a program on October 2 featuring local author Jack Kelly on the Revolutionary War in the Hudson Valley. Topping things off with the Library, we secured a Pomeroy Foundation grant for a historic marker highlighting the library's unique octagonal structure, to be installed in 2015.

Continuing to chronicle Red Hook's unfolding story, we wrote an article for the 2014 Dutchess County Historical Society's Yearbook profiling the Fraleigh Family's founding and five-generation stewardship of Rose Hill Farm, one of Red Hook's top "pick-your-own" fruit farms and, at 217 years, one of Dutchess County oldest, continuously operated family businesses.

On November 1, we opened the doors of the Elmendorph to more than 200 visitors to Red Hook's first annual Chocolate Festival. We treated them to a chocolate "FunDo" tasting and a "pop-up" exhibit detailing in archival photos and objects the life and operation of Red Hook's own W.H. Baker Company, producers of "guaranteed as absolutely pure" cocoa butter and other chocolate products.

Partnering with The Red Hook Community Arts Network, we hosted a November 16 panel discussion with local farmers and chefs, moderated by photographer Francesco Mastalia. Mastalia's newly-published book of portraits "*ORGANIC: Farmers and Chefs of the Hudson Valley*" showcased his glass-plate photographic techniques and offered us the opportunity to display some of our historical glass-plate images of local agriculture as backdrop.

December saw a festive, delicious and financially successful Benefit Dinner and Auction, followed by our traditional "Dutch Christmas" open house, and season-capping Red Hook Area Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting.

Meanwhile, our dedicated, hard working History Committee volunteers kept the second-floor Rosemary Coons Archive Room abuzz, cataloging, organizing, and fulfilling research requests by visitors from near and far. In 2014 we accepted several unique donations, among them a pair of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Wheeler family mementos --a wonderful sampler stitched by Juliett Wheeler, honoring the Red Hook Academy, and a coverlet, dated 1829, owned by her sister Mary. We made substantial headway cataloging and digitizing existing collections, too, including the glass-plate photographs of Harriet Martin Dey (of the local Martin family) who photographed Red Hook scenes in 1899-1900.

We organized the Red Hook Public Library's Local History collections, which had been transferred to us in 2013, and which include an important series of genealogy books and local newspapers. To open our collections to the world, we had the newspapers from 1859-1917 uploaded to [www.fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com) and digitized our postcard collection, uploading a sampling to [www.HRVH.org](http://www.HRVH.org).

Finally we were grateful for the help of several interns, including a Bard College junior who received a summer stipend from Bard's Center for Civic Engagement to help us with a historical survey of village buildings.

All in all, an exciting first year for Historic Red Hook and we look forward to an equally rewarding 2015!

Sincerely,

Claudine Klose  
President, Historic Red Hook