

HISTORIC RED HOOK

2019 Annual Report

Thanks to the continued generosity and enthusiastic support of the community, 2019 -- our sixth year as Historic Red Hook -- was a blockbuster, highlighted by the Memorial Day weekend opening of the Elmendorph Green and the StoryStudio. These new spaces permit us to offer more programs and events, indoors and out, and welcome many more people.

Exhibiting History

The StoryStudio's inaugural exhibit -- *Alexander Gilson: From Property to Property Owner* -- a collaboration with Bard College, Dutchess County Historical Society and the Red Hook Quilters, was an immediate success, attracting more than 500 people and winning a **2019 Award of Excellence** from the Greater Hudson Heritage Network. Born into slavery on Montgomery Place, Gilson eventually became an acclaimed plant developer and Red Hook property owner. He, his mother and sister are buried in the 1840 Methodist Burial Ground on Cherry Street. Inspired by the Gilson story, board member Sarah Hermans undertook a comprehensive census of the Burial Ground, compiling many of the life stories of the families interred there (<https://www.historicredhook.org/cherry-street-cemetery>). Historic Red Hook and Bard College continue to do research on Gilson and related stories.

For the Memorial Day parade, we proudly displayed *Over Here: The Yet-to-be-Told Stories of Dutchess County's Men, Women & Children in the World War 1917-1919*, a pop-up traveling exhibit created by the Dutchess County Historical Society.

How About Them Apples!, the StoryStudio's second exhibit, opened on September 21, Hardscrabble Day, featuring stories, photos and artifacts from Red Hook's rich apple-growing history. Particular attention focused on Upper Red Hook growers William S. Teator (1860-1930) and John Losee (1907-1983). Among the visitors was Bruce Bathrick, a descendant of the Hubbard apple-growing family, also of Upper Red Hook. We were pleased to record an oral history with Bruce of his recollections of life on the farm. The exhibit nicely complemented our Elmendorph Green Hardscrabble Day activities as well as 'Hudson Valley Apples,' last year's collaboration with Bard College's Experimental Humanities program <https://projects.eh.bard.edu/hvapples>. Our ongoing strong relationship with Bard was recognized with a 2019 Bard Community Partnership Award.

Programs and Events

Living History

Groundhog Day, February 2, saw history come alive at the Elmendorph when some thirty costumed historical interpreters from around the country welcomed more than 200 visitors of all ages to experience everyday life in Red Hook on February 2, 1774. The interpreters portrayed local women attending a sewing circle, a fiddler preparing for a country dance, tavern workers preparing food over the open hearth, as well as travelers pausing for refreshment and bringing political news of the day.

School Field Trips

On June 7 and September 26, Red Hook Central School fourth graders mobbed the Elmendorph on their annual field trips – expanded this year to include tours of the StoryStudio’s exhibits, the Methodist Burial Ground and period games on the Elmendorph Green.

History Happening

We inaugurated the Elmendorph Green on June 8 with a ‘History Happening Festival’ featuring our cadre of loyal local expert craftspeople plus a celebration of the 100th Anniversaries of the Red Hook and Tivoli Fire Departments. Their two big red antique pumper trucks – Red Hook’s 1924 Buffalo and Tivoli’s 1954 Mack – were the day’s star attractions. We were also joined by the Red Hook Public Library, who sponsored a popular history scavenger hunt, and the Red Hook Alumni Association. Great local bands played lively music, Bard’s Mobile History Van collected oral histories, kids enjoyed face painting and making old-fashioned whirligigs and a good time was had by all. The festival was supported by a grant from the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.

Community Events

September 21 – On Hardscrabble Day, families gathered at the Inn and on the Green for our always popular homemade apple pie and ice cream ‘social,’ plus enjoyed apple bobbing, apple grading and cider pressing using antique equipment, “apple yoga,” apple displays and of course the *How About Them Apples!* exhibit.

November 2 – Hordes of chocolate lovers young and old flocked to the Elmendorph – transformed, for Red Hook’s annual Chocolate Festival, into an 18th-century chocolate house – to sample hot chocolate, antique drinking chocolate-making demonstrations, traditional tavern games and a pop-up exhibit detailing the history of Red Hook’s own W.H. Baker Chocolate Co.

December 7 – Families in Tivoli enjoyed a free production of Charles Dickens’s ‘A Christmas Carol’ produced by Theater on the Road and sponsored by Historic Red Hook, the Village of Tivoli and the Tivoli Free Library.

December 8 – Wreathed and garlanded in its seasonal best, the Inn welcomed holiday merrymakers to our annual Open House. They enjoyed the best in live music from Red Hook Central School student musicians and other local performers, as well as hot mulled cider, homemade cookies and fresh-baked treats straight from the wood-fired beehive oven, courtesy of Tivoli Bakery’s Mike Gonnella. Also, partnering with SunCommon, we hosted a very creative gingerbread house competition, featuring among entries, a solar and wind-powered replica of a 19th Century Hudson River boat and a solar-powered Montgomery Place farm stand.

Talking About History

Taking advantage of Red Hook’s bounty of talented scholars and authors, we presented several interesting talks on topics of local historical interest.

January 13 - “Gender, Religion, and Rural Life: Reconsidering Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker on the Land,” Sally Dwyer-McNulty, Historic Red Hook board member and Marist College history professor, recounted the history of Catholic Worker farms in New York State from the 1930s through the 1970s, focusing on Rose Hill in Tivoli.

February 10 – Acclaimed architectural photographer Pieter Estersohn discussed his most recent book, *Life Along the Hudson: The Historic Country Estates of the Livingston Family*.

March 10 - "A People's History: Oral Histories and Inclusion" – Susan Merriam, Bard College Associate Professor of Art History and Historic Red Hook board member, revealed how oral histories, especially narratives by everyday people, enrich and expand the historical record.

June 7 – As part of Dutchess County's History Tavern Trail, Red Hook Town historian and Historic Red Hook board member Emily Majer regaled visitors with a talk-and-walk about "Utopian Visions and Institutional Altruism: Shaping the Tivoli Ethos."

Recording History Today... for Tomorrow

One of Historic Red Hook's principal goals is to identify, record and present personal histories. The feature attraction of this year's Annual Meeting, on October 4, was Seth Kramer's "A Red Hook Family Dynasty" documentary of former Town Supervisor Sue Crane and her family's legacy of community service to Red Hook. <https://historicredhook.org/videos/>

Making Local History Accessible

Above all, Historic Red Hook collects, preserves and makes accessible the material illuminating Red Hook's unfolding stories. In 2019 a revitalized Collections Committee assessed several projects and developed a collections development policy. Also, through the New York Heritage website we made available Volume 1 of Red Hook's Town Board minutes (1813-1868) in both handwritten and transcribed form <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/historic-red-hook>. And we had Christ Church's earliest Parish Register (1854-1928) transcribed by local historian Arthur Kelly and published by the New York Genealogical Society.

Interesting additions to Historic Red Hook's archives included:

- A digital collection of mid-20th century images and memorabilia of the Red Hook Fire Department donated by Kathy Helsley on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Red Hook Fire Department;
- Early 20th century images of Cherry Street donated by Mary Tselikis to include in the History Happening local neighborhood exhibit;
- 19th century documents, deeds and maps, donated by Wint Aldrich, that relate to The Pynes, a former Livingston property in Tivoli;
- The Ronald L. Losee collection, donated by Sarah Hermans, including late 19th and early 20th century personal and business records relating to the Losee and Teator families, and
- The Alexander Gilson Quilt expressly created by the Red Hook Quilters for the exhibit depicting scenes from Gilson's life.

Spreading the Word

On March 6, Claudine Klose and Bill Jeffway, Dutchess County Historical Society executive director, were the invited guest speakers at the Northern Dutchess Alliance's annual breakfast at the Beekman Arms. Also, in recognition of our widening outreach for local history, Historic Red Hook was chosen as one of three finalists for Dutchess Tourism's 2019 History Awards of Distinction.

In 2019, we invested in a focused social media effort that greatly increased our visibility and online engagement, more than doubling our online community to over 2,400 followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. In addition, we upgraded our website and continued to distribute our monthly E-Bulletin of upcoming events and interesting news items to more than 450 subscribers.

Financial Highlights

The Elmendorph Green Campaign

With the incentive of a \$160,000 matching challenge from a generous longtime supporter, Historic Red Hook ended the year with more than \$116,000 raised for the Elmendorph Green campaign, resulting in: construction of the Green itself, installation of a bluestone sidewalk, creation of a new parking lot, upgraded fencing, new flooring in the StoryStudio, and an expanded, continuing social media presence that generated large numbers of new visitors to Historic Red Hook.

Grants

We received \$3,000 in grants in 2019, including \$2,000 from the Sidney Stern Memorial Trust for video production and \$1,000 from the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area to help sponsor the History Happening Festival.

Operating Revenue

Other fundraising activities included our January 26 Soup Night, attended by more than 100 devotees of homemade soup and soul-stirring music by Duality (locals Jay Trappe and Jack Dipietro); our packed-house March 3 Chili Night, with music by Maggie Rothwell, and, on November 18, our major fund raiser, the Annual Celebration and Auction (featuring for the first time, live bidding via Facebook).

The Elmendorph Inn was also featured in an upcoming Netflix film, "All Things Seen and Heard," to be released in the fall of 2020, which brought in some very welcome, unanticipated income.

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