



Egbert Benson HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK
P.O. Box 397 Red Hook N.Y. 12571-0397

SPRING 2011

President's Letter

By Barbara Bielenberg

A Historical Society is about preserving memories and so I would like to share with you a very personal and recent memory:

My husband passed away on March 10th. All three of our children agreed that his long and productive life should be celebrated at his beloved Elmendorph Inn with a showing of as many of his paintings and drawings as we could manage and a Quaker style gathering in the spacious South Room where friends and family could share their memories. On Saturday, April 9th, the room filled with new and old friends and family from as far away as Michigan, Ohio and Canada. I wrote this account on the following Monday:

“We were riding our foam plastic “noodles” up to the deep end of the Bard pool this morning when one of my classmates paddled up to me to say how much she enjoyed seeing my husband’s paintings and especially the beautiful drawings of the wounded soldiers. She went on to say that my children’s wonderful stories about their father moved her to tears. She was so sincere I began to feel a bit teary myself and was glad to get in the shower room where the tears wouldn’t show!

When I came out of the shower, she was talking to one of the girls who had seen the art work but couldn’t stay for the program, telling her Reid’s story about the altercation in Guinan’s store. She went on to say again how moved she was by the whole program beginning with the beautiful “shape note” singing and how extremely talented all my children were. Fortunately they left the locker room and I was able to dress without publicly shedding my tears of gratitude for such a splendid fulfillment of our hopes for the celebration of Bob’s life.”

Thanks to our dear children, daughters-in-law and grandchildren, Larry Thetford and the Friends of Elmendorph, Mary Kelly and the Elmendorph Spinners, (who provided Bob’s favorite apple pies, adorned with Ben & Jerry’s vanilla ice cream imported from Vermont by my granddaughters’ other grandmother) .Carol Annas, who brought her famous coconut cake (enjoyed at last fall’s Historical Society picnic at Montgomery Place) and oh so many other good friends who jumped in to help create such a powerfully beautiful tribute – one that will be long remembered by us all.

At our Annual Meeting in May your Historical Society will begin a new year led by younger and richly experienced new officers. It is a great gift to be able to lay down my leadership responsibilities knowing that they will be so ably taken up. Thank you for your understanding and encouragement and now I look forward to volunteering in support of our great new leaders.

Don’t Miss the Historical Society’s Annual Dinner on May 18, 2011. See page 5 for more information and reservation form.

“He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.”

By Wint Aldrich

Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* might have had Bob Bielenberg in mind when he paid this compliment to one of his journeying pilgrims. Bob, who died at 86 on March 10, demonstrated the essence of the humane, the public-spirited, the generous-hearted which we like to think is inherent in our American character but which sadly is all too rare. He was a peace-loving chevalier of worthy causes, helping to find ways successfully to achieve the goals without engaging in hostilities.

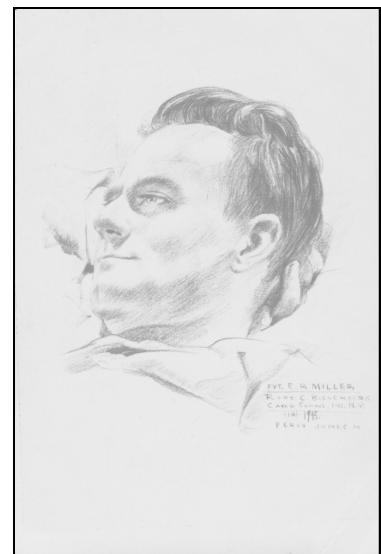
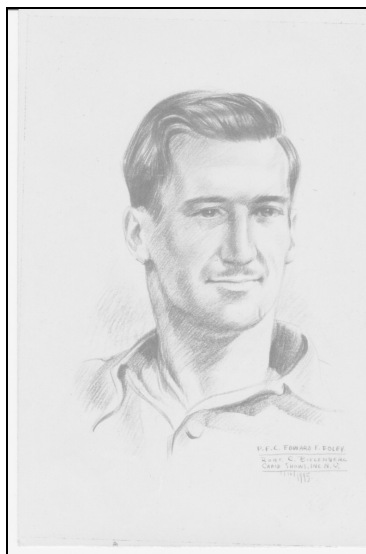
This gifted artist and lover of music and of nature and of his fellow man brought solace and pride to countless hospitalized veterans through the portrait drawings he made under the auspices of the U.S.O.; helped to create and operate an art center and community theatre in Garrison; served as a volunteer fireman; with his wife Barbara raised three wonderful, talented children; and with Pete Seeger and others instigated the Sloop Clearwater project and its commitment to environmental education and clean-up on the Hudson River.

Members of our community since 1974, Barbara (who helped to get the restoration, interpretation and promotion of Montgomery Place under way in the late 1980's) and Bob soon became committed stalwarts in the restoration of the Elmendorph Inn and the operation of our own historical society – and more generally in protecting and enhancing the quality of life and distinctive village character in Red Hook. The hours of volunteer labor without number that they each devoted to the Elmendorph over many years, the meticulous, authoritative scholarly work that they brought to this landmark project, and the exceptional period-appropriate objects with which they furnished and decorated the interior rooms, have all largely contributed to the restored building's acclaim and utility.

Inspired by a deep appreciation of aesthetics, of documentary history, and our heritage of material culture, architecture and land use – always based on sound knowledge – Bob and Barbara have nevertheless held to the view that the importance of these assets and values is not merely antiquarian but must be measured by their usefulness to the community today and tomorrow. This has been the hopeful, collaborative, forward-looking characteristic of a devoted couple who for sixty years formed a partnership without peer. We are all their grateful beneficiaries, and as we pay tribute to Bob we continue warmly to embrace Barbara as a paragon of this society.

Portrait drawings by Robert C. Bielenberg

at Percy Jones Hospital, Battle Creek Michigan in 1945 for Camp Shows Inc, New York City, New York



Taste of Chocolate: Red Hook's Past Pride and Current Passion

By Claudine and Christopher Klose

Like many former industrial buildings today, Red Hook's "Chocolate Factory" now houses a variety of 21st century ventures. But 100 years ago, the sprawling red brick building on Elizabeth Street was home only to Baker's chocolate.

Not *the* Baker's chocolate, the favorite ingredient of homemade desserts for generations of Americans. First made in 1780 by *Walter* H. Baker, in Dorchester, Massachusetts, that Baker's has long been a part of Kraft Foods.

Ours was by *William* H. Baker, no relation, and is long gone.

Why chocolate came to Red Hook at all remains a mystery, as we found while assembling the Historical Society's March program. Certainly proximity to good rail and river transport to and from New York City played a part, as did access to bountiful supplies of milk.

Equally plausible is the anecdotal explanation we prefer: that a wealthy, influential Red Hook resident who "really liked chocolate" simply made it happen.

The fact is that our W.H. Baker was a successful Winchester, Virginia grocer with an eye for expansion and a nose for opportunity. In the early 1890s, he spotted New York City, sniffed out chocolate, and entered into partnership with second-generation Manhattan chocolate maker Joseph Griffing to help launch the W.H. Baker Company.

Business boomed and by 1895, Griffing was off to Dutchess County at Baker's request to find larger facilities. Fortunately for Red Hook, he settled on and converted a grist mill located on the upper Saw Kill falls, in Annandale (along what is now Cedar Hill Road).

Soon the new operation reportedly was churning out a daily eight tons of chocolate, cocoa and cocoa butter. To satisfy a burgeoning consumer taste for chocolate candy, Baker also built the Hudson Valley Confectionery Company close by. Griffing was overseeing 41 employees, including five children under 16 and advertising, in 1898, in the Red Hook Journal for more "girls to work in the Chocolate Factory at Annandale." At the turn of the century, the Journal said "business there is increasing and more room is required."

With steam power rapidly replacing water power, Griffing expanded into the Village of Red Hook. In 1902, on a site served by the Central of New England Railroad-- the "Hucklebush Line" -- he built the Chocolate Factory we know today. Thanks to his foresight, as late as 1911 the Kingston Daily Freeman was able to write that "the Baker Chocolate Factory has broken ground for a new addition..."

But William Henry Baker died in 1915. The business went to his four sons, who sold out to the Walker Candy Company in 1924. In turn, it fell victim to the Depression in 1931. Chocolate making ceased in Red Hook, for the time being.

And what of Joseph Griffing? He left quite a mark. He married three times and had nine children, many of whose descendants remain in the area, among them Sue T. Crane, current Town Supervisor. He built the original Lyceum Theater, was president of the First National Bank, a charter member of the Red Hook Fire Company, and sponsor of the twenty-member Joseph Griffing Fire Company Band. In his later years, he operated a fruit farm in Red Hook. He died in 1939 and is buried in St. Paul's Lutheran cemetery.

And what of chocolate in Red Hook? For some of the best anywhere in the country, visit Taste Budd's Café, owned and operated at 40 West Market Street by Dan Budd, named one of America's top ten pastry chefs.



Early Red Hook Town Records

By Barbara Thompson, Archivist

Several years ago I was researching a local family and needed to find out when a particular man had died. So I went to the Town Hall and asked Margaret Doty, the Town Clerk, if I could look at the records. She went into a closet and brought out a big red book and asked when he had died. Well, I didn't know the exact time but thought it was around the early twentieth century. The book was NOT indexed and she had to open the pages one by one until I finally found him. I thanked her most happily and went home. But not having an index remained an itch.

The fact that the record book was not indexed bothered me a little but I gradually forgot and went about my business. Then when I started in on the genealogies of Red Hook families I remembered. Patsy Vogel, EBHS volunteer, contacted Sue Crane, Red Hook Town Supervisor, and then Sue McCann, Red Hook Town Clerk and I was given permission to come in, copy the early records and then index them.

Sue McCann and Clare Horst couldn't been more helpful, cheerful in hauling out the books and answering questions. I took my laptop, copied the records and then went home to do the Index.

Records are most interesting. Let's look at the one from 1882 to 1896. This is the first one that was required by the state. For a fact: there were 89 farmers listed, 42 in business, 22 worked for the railroad, and 21 were laborers. There were 14 carpenters and 13 stone masons. Coachmen came in at 11. Blacksmiths, physicians and clergy were 4 each. Ironworkers, manufacturers and teamsters were 2. There were 6 merchants, 8 clerks and boatman numbered 6.

Name popularity is about the same as it is today. John was foremost followed by William, James, Henry and Philip. But there were several biblical names such as Obadiah, Zachariah, Noah, and Amos. Plus a few oddities like Eliezer, Orange and Omne.

Women's names pretty much follow the same pattern as the men. Mary is the primary name, then Catherine, Margaret, Ann and surprisingly Sarah. But there was also Lavonia, Alida and one Orphelia.

I shouldn't be surprised by the number of Palatine names that were listed but I was. First the anglicized spelling followed by the German in parenthesis: Teator (Teeter), Moore (Mohr), Coon (Kuhn), Rifenburgh (Reiffenberger), Cookingham (Kuckenheim), Near (Neher), Simmons (Simon), Pitcher (Bitzer), Barringer (Berringer), Row (Rau), Traver (Treber), Siperly (Zipperly), Cole (Kohl/Kool), Lasher (Loescher), Feller (Felder), Holsapple (Holtzapple), Like (Lyke), and Stall (Stahl).

These books are a treasure trove for the genealogist. In the case of the death record the name of the parents of the deceased is given, the place of birth, the place of residence and how long he/she had been in Red Hook. Also given is the age of the deceased, martial status and cause of death. The marriage records also give the parents of the bride and groom, their ages, occupation of the groom and how many marriages they have had.

Here are a few other statistics. The number of Irish men and women who were born in Ireland come in at 31, those who were born here and had Irish parents list at 35. There is one deplorable fact. In those 16 years there were 133 deaths of children 12 and under.

There are two sets of the early town record books. The first one from 1882 to 1896 has births, marriages and deaths. The second set has deaths and births from 1896 to 1914 and marriages from 1896 to 1909. Two copies of the books were made, one for the Town Hall and one for the Red Hook Historical Society. So if you are searching for that Great Grandpa, come see us at the Archives Room. O.K.?

Doing your **FAMILY TREE**? Researching **YOUR PROPERTY**? Interested in **LOCAL MAPS**?
Come visit the EBHS Archives Room open **Tuesday 10AM-4PM or by appointment**
Please call or e-mail to let us know that you are coming 845-758-1920 (you may leave a message)

As a membership organization, our Society is dependent for its operation on the funds donated by its members. If you have not already paid your membership dues for 2011 and /or wish to make a donation to the Society, we request that you consider doing so. If your mailing label has 2011 after your name (or Life) you are up to date with your dues. Dues and donations are fully tax deductible. The membership form is on the last page of this newsletter.

EGBERT BENSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER

The ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EGBERT BENSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY will take place **Wednesday May 18, 2011**, at the Elmendorph Inn, 7562 North Broadway, Red Hook, NY. Dinner will be served at 7 P.M. followed by the meeting and the program speaker, **Red Hook Town Historian, J. Winthrop Aldrich who will speak on the history of the Astors.**

Please send your proxy or dinner reservation to: **Carol Annas, 51 Aspinwall Road, Red Hook, NY 12571** (845-758-8154). Please make your **check payable to Egbert Benson Historical Society**
All reservations must be received by May 6, 2011

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PROXY  
(For May 18, 2011)

I will **NOT** attend the ANNUAL MEETING of THE EGBERT BENSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY. In my absence, I hereby appoint the President, her deputy, or \_\_\_\_\_ to act as my proxy to vote on all matters that come before the membership on May 18, 2011.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
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DINNER RESERVATIONS

Buffet Menu

Herb Crusted Leg of Lamb

Kale Salad, Rice & Orzo w/zucchini, mushrooms & tomatoes, Homemade Baked Beans

Wilted Spinach Salad

Brownies with Homemade Coconut Ice Cream

\$20.00 Per Person

Wednesday May 18, 2011

6:30 P.M.

Dinner 7:00 P.M.

Name _____ Amount enclosed _____

Name _____

Please send your proxy or reservations to **Carol Annas, 51 Aspinwall Road, RED HOOK, NY 12571**. Please make all checks payable to: Egbert Benson Historical Society.

All reservations must be received by May 6, 2011 .



Egbert Benson

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RED HOOK

P.O. Box 397 Red Hook, N.Y. 12571-0397

MEMBERSHIP FORM 2011
The Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook
P.O. Box 397 Red Hook, New York, 12571

Name(s) (please print): _____

Mailing Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Telephone Number (with area code): _____

Dues: Please check: Individual \$15 _____

Family \$25 _____

Student (under 18) \$5 _____

Donation (indicate any company matches please) _____

Life \$200 (individual) _____

Sustaining \$100 _____

Contributing \$ 50 _____

Benefits of membership : Advance notice of monthly programs ~ The knowledge that you support the collection, preservation, and dissemination of the history of the Town of Red Hook .