



# NEWSLETTER

## Ready-Made Red Hook



*Frank Coons built this house on North Broadway in 1926, a close match to the 1922 'Lancaster' catalog design, at right.*



On October 29, EBHS hosted a fascinating program on catalog houses. Olivia Klose and Christopher Brazee, from NYC's Landmarks Preservation Commission, designed the program around one of our archival holdings - a photo album of houses built by Frank W. Coons in the mid-20th century. Begun in 1932 by Frank's wife Edna, it accompanied her to Virginia, after Frank's death, and was returned to Red Hook in the 1990's.

Klose and Brazee traced the history of mail-order houses from their Colonial-era beginnings into the early 1900's when Sears, Roebuck and Co. and other catalog companies launched mail-order home divisions.

Mail-order houses included the plans, framing lumber, millwork, and interior fixtures and finishes, and sold as kits shipped by rail directly for assembly on site. Cost savings, both for Sears and the customer, from volume purchase of building materials, factory-cutting, and direct shipment were substantial. It was a huge innovation - the first instance of mass production in the building industry. Catalog houses were particularly well suited for the farmer, who often already owned the land they would be built upon and likely had construction experience.

Listed as a farmer in the 1920 census, Coons began his career as a builder in the 1920's, and through the 1950's built or modified 70 buildings in the area, including many in his hometown of Red Hook. Klose and Brazee were able to locate and photograph nearly all of his Red Hook houses. Many were near-perfect matches to Sears and Montgomery Ward models.

So did Frank Coons order his houses from catalogs? Although tempted to conclude so, our presenters cautioned that it wasn't possible without definitive identification, such as lumber stamped with company-coded assembly marks, shipping labels and receipts, or a catalog company's name on building permits and mortgage records.

Whether Coons relied on ready-made kits or built from catalog designs using local materials, we were reminded how valuable family treasures like the Coons album are to local history.

### 'Ye Olde Dutch Christmas'

#### Open House

Join us for good cheer!  
**Sunday, December 11, 1-4 PM**  
 Elmendorph Inn

# President's Letter

*Claudine Klose*

What with preparing for next year's Bicentennial celebration, undertaking an extensive review of the archives and developing monthly programs, it has been a busy fall. I am especially pleased to report that our 2012 Bicentennial calendar is a big hit, as is our Bicentennial website ([www.redhook200.org](http://www.redhook200.org)). Special thanks go to Kris Munn, of [www.redhooktoday.com](http://www.redhooktoday.com), for designing the site, and to independent television producer/editor Amy Murray for weaving together the first of our "Hooked on Red Hook" oral histories, now featured on our site.

To increase attendance and make it easier for people to come, we decided to switch our monthly programs from Wednesday evenings to weekend afternoons. Despite the snowstorm of October 29, our first such event "Ready-Made Red Hook" played to an almost full house. I was delighted not only because our daughter and her colleague were the presenters but also because it demonstrated how a very personal family keepsake – a photo album – can spark historic anecdote and insight among audience members. The show, nicely captured by John Vincent, is currently airing on PANDA-TV 23. I hope it inspires many of you to search your attics for similar treasures – and think of us during the Bicentennial year!

In November, Bard College creative writing professor, Tivoli resident and passionate kayaker Susan Fox Rogers shared her unique, water-level perspective of the Hudson River with a thoroughly engaged audience and read from her newly published book, "My Reach."

To welcome in Old Man Winter, please plan to join us at the Elmendorph Inn on Sunday, December 11, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. for a special "Ye Olde Dutch Christmas" Open House co-hosted by the Historical Society and the Friends of Elmendorph.

Because our two organization's missions are so compatible, it makes sense to collaborate whenever possible. Hence, this year's shared "Ye Olde Dutch Christmas." However, that the Historical Society and the Friends are two separate organizations, with differing memberships and dues structures is often confused. Joining one does not mean you've joined the other (or both!).

To clarify, the Friends owns and maintains the Elmendorph Inn and the Historical Society is a tenant within the building. Both are dedicated to Red Hook history – the Friends through owning and maintaining Red Hook's oldest inn, the Historical Society through preserving the papers, maps, photos, records and remembrances of generations of Red Hook families. Both sponsor popular programs: FOE's Tavern Nights and Silent Auction, for instance, and EBHS's monthly presentations of local historical interest.

So we look forward to seeing you on December 11. I have it on the best of advice that in addition to the Friends' traditional Open House of live music, mulled cider, cookies, fresh-baked bread, wooden shoes stuffed with hay, and a carrot for St. Nicholas's horse, Cornelius C. Elmendorph will be with us to share his memories of Red Hook in the days of Egbert Benson, when the snow fell deep and silent about the Elmendorph and the good people of Red Hook warmed themselves by the fire inside...

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**Doing your family tree? Researching your property? Interested in local maps?**  
 Visit the EBHS Archives Room, open Tuesdays 10AM-4PM, or by appointment at 845-758-1920 or [redhookhistory@gmail.com](mailto:redhookhistory@gmail.com). We are located on the 2nd floor of the Elmendorph Inn, 7562 North Broadway (Route 9), Red Hook, NY 12571

## Behind the Lens

**“Will” Teator, Farmer, Self-Taught Naturalist, Collector, Conchologist, Writer, Musician, Artist, Family Man, Friend, Neighbor and Bicentennial Photographer Extraordinaire!**



**Harvey Losee** (1867-1931), left, with his Upper Red Hook neighbors and friends **William Seward Teator** (1860-1930) and **Ned Kerley**, on an artifact hunt in the Catskills c. 1887.

Thanks to William S. (“Will”) Teator, our EBHS 2012 Red Hook Bicentennial calendar has been selling like hot cakes – quite a feat for someone who’s been dead for 80 years.

But one look at his cover portrait of Henry Brenzel shoeing Elmer Teator’s horse on a soft spring day in Upper Red Hook in May 1902 tells why. Like all great photographs, it rivets attention, excites interest: What is Henry’s three-year old son Raymond holding? Why is Elmer all dressed up? Where was he going?

Born on the family farm in Upper Red Hook on April 28, 1860, Teator early on exhibited the innate curiosity, keen eye and passion for detail that would distinguish him in many disciplines throughout his life (see “Red Hook’s Renaissance Man” Fall 2006 EBHS Newsletter at [www.redhookhistory.com](http://www.redhookhistory.com)).

A collector since boyhood of Indian relics, rocks and minerals and snails, fortunately sometime around 1900 Teator also caught the

photography bug. Invented in the 1820s, photography had remained a cumbersome, expensive pursuit until George Eastman transformed it into an affordable, mass phenomenon by the late 1880s.

Although the first line of roll film Eastman Kodak “Brownies” (“You press the button – we do the rest”) came out in 1900, Teator used a camera (maker and model unknown) that took “dry plate” glass negatives. And in June of 2005, Will’s distant relative, Martha Hermans, gave the Society an apple crate that had come down through the family..

In it were Will Teator’s images of the people and life he knew, loved and observed more than 100 years ago in and around Upper Red Hook – 287 “Eastman’s Dry Plates, the Standard Extremely Rapid Dry Plate for Out and In-Door Photography,” purchased from “HAHN, Kodaks & Optical Goods, Developing & Printing” in New York City.

Thanks to Patsy Vogel, who cataloged and scanned them, Will’s priceless gift to us and future generations is now safely digitized, and selected shots can be seen at [www.hrvh.org](http://www.hrvh.org).

### Mark Your Calendars!

#### Upcoming EBHS Programs at the Elmendorph Inn

**Sunday, Dec. 11, 1:00 – 4:00 PM:** ‘Ye Old Dutch Christmas’ with the Friends of Elmendorph, good cheer for all!

**Sunday, Jan. 22, 3:00 PM:** “White Wings and Black Ice: 200 Years of Ice Boating” with Brian Reid

**Sunday, February 12, 3:00 PM:** “Chocolate: Red Hook’s Sweet Success” with Chris and Claudine Klose

**Sunday, March 18, 3:00 PM:** “Welcome to Red Hook: Historic Hostelries, B&B’s and Boarding Houses” with Beth Pagano, Grand Dutchess proprietor

# Membership Form

**The Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook**

**P.O. Box 397 Red Hook, New York, 12571**

**[www.redhookhistory.com](http://www.redhookhistory.com), 845-758-1920**

Name(s) (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive my newsletter via e-mail rather than by regular mail.

Dues:  Individual \$15,  Family \$25,  Student (under 18) \$5,  Cotnributing \$50,

Sustaining \$100,  Life(Individual) \$200

Benefits of membership: Newsletter subscription ~ Advance notice of monthly programs ~  
Satisfaction that you help to support the collection, preservation and dissemination of the  
Town of Red Hook's rich history.

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Red Hook, N.Y. 12571

P.O. Box 397

Egbert Benson Historical Society of Red Hook

