

# HISTORIC RED HOOK

## Clara W. Losee

1917 - 1997

St. John's Reformed Church Cemetery, Upper Red Hook

*A small granite stone in the Losee plot, next to their large, dark grey granite monument on the hill close to the north-south access road*

Clara Rosella Weller was born in Franklin County, NY to Maude Kelly and Clement Weller. Clara's mother and five of her nine siblings died young. In her 20s, Clara traveled south and found an opportunity for employment in Dutchess County working as an assistant to Gordon Voorhis in his Voorhis-Tiebout soap dispenser factory. Gordon told his bachelor friend John Losee that he couldn't join him fishing one day and sent his secretary, instead. John and Clara were married in 1944. They lived for a time in a refurbished chicken coop on John's apple farm on Rockefeller Lane where they welcomed their first



two children, Johnny and Mary. A daughter, Martha would complete the set after the moved to the old Slam Bang Academy school house in Rock City in the early 1950s.

Clara was a homemaker and a member of the garden club, the Home Bureau, aided the Milan fire department, and led a troop of girl scouts, among other activities, but it would be local history that she is best remembered for. Thanks to her husband's Losee, Fraleigh, Curtis, Knickerbocker, Feller, Waldorf, and other local roots, she found an interest in family history. Additionally, her husband John was a science teacher for much of his life and was a member of the NYS Archaeological Society which allowed Clara to travel the country on many interesting educational vacations.

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Clara, with the help of her mother-in-law Rosalie Fraleigh Losee, made sure to label everything—photos, documents, and objects handed down through the generations were all paired with notes explaining their provenance.

After her children were grown and started families of their own, Clara and John became involved with other like-minded Red Hook citizens in the effort to preserve the Elmendorf and to establish a historical society. The Losees were both members of the bicentennial committee and John was the first president of the Egbert Benson Historical Society with Clara serving as Documents Committee Chairman in its first years. She and her friend Barbara “Bobby” Thompson became adept at researching deeds and tracing the lineage of real estate in Red Hook. Their exploits in delving into the past earned them the nickname “The Snoop Sisters” (also the title of a mystery TV show from the early 70s).

Clara and John, with Red Hook Town Historian Wint Aldrich, helped secure the work of surveyor Frank Teal from a chicken coop belonging to the widow of a surveyor who had inherited them, and saved those invaluable records from oblivion. Her efforts to preserve documents and other local history ephemera also resulted in the William S. Teator glass plate negatives entering Historic Red Hook’s archives, as well as countless photos and homegoods belonging to her husband’s ancestors that remain in family hands, today.