

# HISTORIC RED HOOK

## **Edward Ludlow Mooney**

March 25, 1813 - July 10, 1887

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

*A three-tiered rectangle with a chiseled cross lying atop, located left of the western-most cemetery road, just after the large Potts-Budd marker and before the large R. Martin stone on the eastern hillside of the road.*

## **Painter**

The bucolic and less frenzied pace of life in Red Hook appeals to urbanites choosing to live in the Hudson Valley rather than the City. Renowned painter and portraitist Edward Ludlow Mooney was no exception. "Some years ago he left his home in this city, and his fine studio," reported the *New-York Tribune* in his obituary of July 23, 1887, "preferring the charms of nature and the pursuits of art and literature in his beautiful home on the Hudson, opposite the Catskills." That picturesque home, formerly known as the Lyle House and St. Clare's House, was called Maple Hill and is in Upper Red Hook.

Mooney was famed for his portraits of such luminaries as President Martin Van Buren, a number of the mayors of New York, and in 1840 the Imam of Zanzibar who was an emissary to then-President Van Buren. Two of Mooney's portraits—one of his sister Anna Marie (Mooney) Pier and the other of his brother-in-law Benjamin Seymour Pier—are displayed in the South Room of the Elmendorph Inn, the home of Historic Red Hook in the Village of Red Hook. Mooney and his wife Laura, who predeceased him but is not buried in town, most likely became acquainted with Upper Red Hook because Mooney's sister Anna and another sister Mary Ann (Mooney) Rowley and Mary Ann's husband Judge John Rowley all resided in the hamlet, explains Roger M. Leonard in *Upper Red Hook: An American Crossroad*.

Mooney was born in New York City on March 25, 1813, and died July 10, 1887, according to his obituary in the *New York Tribune* of July 23, 1887, which states "At the age of sixteen, he showed a taste for art and two years later he attended the night school at the Academy of Design for one season." Mooney's career progressed when he became a pupil of portraitist Henry Inman, and Mooney won the first gold medal award from the National Academy, became an associate member, and eventually was an academician of the Academy.

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“His eulogy entered into Academy minutes took special note of his portraits of the New York mayors ordered for the City Hall collection, and of his large-scaled portrait of Governor William Seward in the Albany state capital,” according to the National Academy’s website, which continues, “Mooney executed approximately twenty portraits of faculty for Princeton University earning him a particular identification with that school.”

Mooney eventually withdrew from the fame of his career and became involved with the doings of the hamlet of Upper Red Hook, including the establishment of the Mountain View Academy (formerly the Red Hook Academy). “He had lost all taste for public life, he exhibited no more, and his younger ambition, he said, was a meteor whose flash was quite spent,” states his *New-York Tribune* obituary. His reputation as an artist was superseded only by his Christian nature and “pure and deep piety.”

Mooney’s daughter Ella Mooney, who lived with her father in his later years, established a scholarship in her father’s memory at the Academy and gave the organization her father’s gold palette award and a number of his paintings, states the Academy website. In addition, Ella funded a stained glass window in memory of her father upon his death in 1887 for the front of St. John’s Reformed Church, according to Leonard’s book.