

HISTORIC RED HOOK

George A. Elwood

1840 – 1910

St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery

Mason symbol. South-centerish, near southern path/border of new section

While it may remain a mystery as to why the Right Worthy George A. Elwood and his wife Elizabeth (Steinert) of New York City are buried in the Village of Red Hook, it is certain that the Masons were important to George Elwood and he to them. A memorial to him, which dominates the monuments surrounding it, testifies to the connection.

The large, roughhewn stone has two parts—one third is rough natural stone juxtaposed with the majority a smooth surface hewn from the rock and engraved with the name ELWOOD and the Masonic symbol of a builder's square and a compass framing the letter G (either for the Great Architect of the Universe or for geometry). At the bottom states it was erected to his memory by the Benevolent Lodge #28 of the Free and Accepted Masons of New York City in appreciation of many years of faithful service. It seems fitting that the stone seems to symbolize the origins of the Masons themselves: according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the Freemasons began as members of guilds of stonemasons and cathedral builders; they evolved into a fraternal order devoted to philanthropy, states the website of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York, based at the very address that held the funeral ceremony of George A. Elwood. (That location is also the site of the Chancellor Robert R. Livingston Masonic Library of the Grand Lodge, named for Chancellor Livingston, a Mason himself, and familiar to us due to his estate at Clermont.)

Close by the large stone are the small and simple tombstones of George and of Elizabeth. George was born in 1840 and died in 1910; his wife Elizabeth, whose parents were from Germany, was born in 1841, and she predeceased George in 1901. According to U.S. Census records, beginning with the 1880 report, the Elwoods had two daughters who lived to adulthood: Annie Maud born 1874 and Grace Steinert born in 1877; both were baptized at the 13th Street Presbyterian Church in New York City in the years following each of their births. Another daughter Ida was born in 1869 and baptized at the same church in 1870, but she does not appear in the 1880 census, probably indicating she passed away. George worked as a clerk in a wholesale business according to the 1880 census, and in the 1900

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census, he was described as a druggist. He and Elizabeth were noted as the parents of five children, two who were still living, the sisters Anna and Grace. Anna was not described as having an occupation; perhaps she stepped into the role of running the household when her mother passed away and until her marriage; Grace was a clerk until her marriage.

Anna married Martin Shufeldt in Manhattan on June 26, 1905. Grace married J. Hamilton Rough (an accountant in sporting goods and who was about six years older than she) in Manhattan on July 24, 1909. It was at Grace and her husband's home in East Orange, NJ, that George Elwood passed away the following year, according to the *Newark Evening Star* of January 13, 1910:

NEW YORK MAN DIED ON VISIT IN EAST ORANGE [NJ] George A. Elwood, of New York, died yesterday at the residence, 126 Greenwood Avenue, East Orange, where he was visiting, in his 69th year. He was prominent in Masonic affairs and will be buried with Masonic services. The funeral will take place tomorrow night at the grand lodge room of old Masonic Hall, Sixth avenue and Twenty-third street, New York. Mr. Elwood was a member of Benevolent Lodge No 28; Monitor Lodge No 528; Greenwich Lodge No 467; F and A M, and Masonic Veterans.

➤ Newark Evening Star 13 Jan 1910

The monument further emphasizes his importance to the Masons. Buried next to the Elwoods are Charles E. Elwood, George's younger brother employed as a bookkeeper and who was also a Mason denoted by the symbol on his marker and described as a "worthy president" of the Butchers' and Marketmen's M. B. Association of 796 6th Ave NYC, according the *New York Herald* of July 8, 1883, when he died at 37; Charles's wife Sarah Howell Elwood who died in 1912; and George and Charles's mother Matilda Ann Elwood who was born August 26, 1818, and died August 17, 1863. There is also a tombstone for Little Georgie aged nine months with no other inscription. The family patriarch John Elwood is not buried in Red Hook. It seems that Matilda's husband John died before he was 40 and before 1860 because he is listed in New York City's Ward 15 in 1850 as a cartman when George was 10, but in 1860 George is listed as the head of the household and working as a clerk and his mother is listed as a seamstress. Three other Elwood siblings are noted then: Charles at 14, William at 11, and Josephine at 8.

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Matilda's burial in 1863 seems to be the earliest Red Hook interment, about five years after her husband John's death. Perhaps she had family around Red Hook; perhaps like many others, the Elwoods were summer boarders in the area. We're not sure why a family so tied to New York City is buried here, but we do know that there was a connection to Red Hook. That link is evidenced by the Elwood monument standing out on St. Paul's grounds.