

HISTORIC RED HOOK

St. Johns Reformed Church, Upper Red Hook

The Red Church on Route 9G in Tivoli was the first “Low Dutch Reformed Church” in Red Hook, built by 1766. Around 1788, a new Dutch Reformed congregation was formed to accommodate the growing population in Upper Red Hook, and a new church, called the “Church at the Road,” was built at the corner of the Old Post Road and what is now Starbarrack Road. It was officially named St. John’s Low Dutch Reformed Church when incorporated in 1799 and remained affiliated with the Red Church. The new church was built from stone quarried from the “Styler Barrick” (Dutch for the rocky hill northeast of the site). Almost as soon as it was built, the ground around it began to be used for burials. The first burial was 27-yr-old Eliza Wheeler, who died January 7, 1788.

By 1870, the stone church was in need of major repair and a committee decided to build a new church. Stone from the earlier church was to be used in the foundation and timber reused in the structure. A prominent local architect, J. A. Wood, was hired and he drew up designs for an elegant clapboard building topped by a colored slate roof and tall graceful steeple. As costs increased, there was a movement to substitute a low belfry for the tall steeple, but Wood threatened to resign if he couldn’t build the spire. Building began in 1871 and was completed in 1872 at a cost of \$13,000. After almost 100 years of weather and wind, the tall steeple was razed and replaced by a small modest spire in 1964.

In 1968, the Bathrick family, who owned property bordering the church, gifted a large strip of land just north of the church to be used to extend the cemetery. The church and its cemetery continue to anchor the Upper Red Hook community.