

HISTORIC RED HOOK

The Old Red Church, Tivoli

Located in the Northwestern part of Red Hook in the village of Tivoli is the oldest known church in what is now Red Hook, the Red Church. Church records suggest it was established in 1766 although a plaque over the door of the church reads 1751. The church and the accompanying cemetery were built on land donated by Zacharias Hoffman, a large landowner and wealthy merchant.

The Red Church was a Dutch Reformed Church, and at the time of its inception the Red Church's ministers, or dominies, served many of the surrounding churches and not just one. The first minister at the Red Church was Johannes Casparus Fryenmoet who presided at the dedication in October of 1766 and was a good minister. He also served churches in Claverack, Kinderhook and Livingston Manor until 1770 when he moved north. He was replaced by a series of other "traveling" ministers. Many of the early members of the church had names recognizable even today: Hoffman, Livingston, Vosburgh, Heermance, Knickerbacker, Ham and Elmendorph, just to name a few.

During the Revolution it is said that the British camped on the grounds of the Red Church prior to burning Hoffman's Mill just north of the church on the White Clay Kill and then finally burning Clermont the home of Chancellor Livingston, one of the authors of the Declaration of Independence. It is a miracle that the church itself was spared.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, the Red Church struggled to keep its membership. Other churches, specifically St. John's in Upper Red Hook, were formed and prospered and began to pull the congregation away. The Red Church could not afford a regular minister. Finally in 1840, the Red Church, which had tried to keep its doors open, finally closed its doors to any kind of regular worship.

In modern times the church is maintained by a board of trustees and is only opened for special events.