

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Maria "Minnie" Elmendorf Pitcher Scudder

1858-1883

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

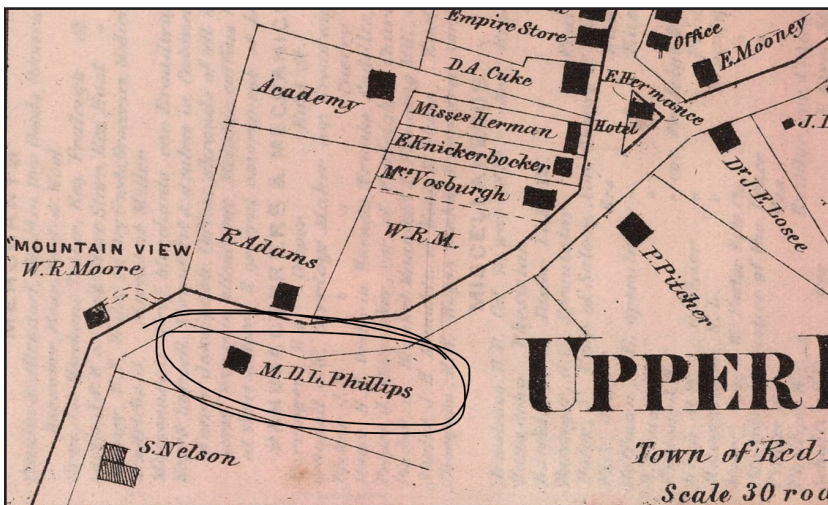
A short, small marble stone to the left of the large Pitcher granite memorial, close to the church.

Minnie's tiny gravestone bears a striking epitaph that tells us she was the:

"Wife of / Rev. E.C. Scudder Jr. / Aged 24 years / Arrived at Madras from America / Dec. 30, 1882 / Died at Arni, India. / June 21, 1883. / A Wife - A Mother - A Missionary / and a Saint within one year."

A 1946 recording of gravestones in the Vellore New Cemetery in Allapuram near Thorappadi in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where Madras (now Chennai) is, lists the identical inscription on a stone in its grounds. This cemetery also holds Minnie's husband and his second wife's graves. Were her remains sent home to New York? Or does the stone in Upper Red Hook serve only as a cenotaph to honor someone who rests thousands of miles from here?

In June of 1882 Minnie Pitcher, daughter of William and Margaret Phillips Pitcher, (who baptised her in 1859 at St. John's in Upper Red Hook) married Rev. Ezekiel Carman Scudder, Jr. His father, Reformed Church missionary E.C. Scudder, Sr., returned to the U.S. from India due to illness and came to St. John's church in Upper Red Hook in 1877 bringing his wife and children with him.



Beers, Frederick W. "Tivoli, Madalin. Annandale. Barrytown. Upper Red Hook," 1867.

Following the death of her father, Minnie was living in Red Hook with her mother and grandfather Marquis de Lafayette Phillips when E.C. Jr. fell in love with her, but he couldn't marry her until he finished his education. He graduated from Rutgers in 1879 and neighboring New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1882 then promptly married Minnie in Poughkeepsie where her family had moved just before 1880 following the death of her grandfather.



Rev. Ezekiel C. Scudder Jr. from Roger Leonard's *Upper Red Hook: An American Crossroad* p.116

Shortly after marriage, E.C. Jr. departed with his new bride for his birthplace. The Red Hook Journal reported in September that "Messrs. Mead & Teator, of Upper Red Hook, are making a top buggy for Rev. Scudder, missionary to India, which is to do service in the city of Madras. It is expected to be followed with an order of a dozen more. Truly buggy manufacturing for foreign trade is not ruined by American tariff protection." The couple planned to take up the family business of mission work begun by Scudder's grandfather in 1818, but God had other plans for Minnie. The news of her death took two months to reach Upper Red Hook. It had been said that the couple were learning the language and getting ready to begin their missionary work when she died suddenly. No cause was given.

Her epitaph indicates that before she died, she gave birth to a child, however, no record could be found to prove this. Her husband remarried, but his US Consular registration application from 1919 specifically does not list children from either marriage. If there was a baby as

the tombstone indicates, it probably passed away before or shortly after its mother did.

Minnie had six siblings, Jane M. and Alice W. who died young, Cassie, Carrie B., Edward W., and Rev. Phillip W. Pitcher. Phillip also did missionary work and is buried in China. Rev. E.C. Scudder, Jr.'s family is filled with 19th and 20th century Reformed church ministers and missionaries to India. The Scudders focused on medicine as part of their mission and the Christian Medical College in Vellore, founded by Ezekiel's first cousin, Dr. Ida Scudder, is still considered one of the best medical colleges in that country. He remained overseas after Minnie's death until 1900, returned briefly to the U.S., traveled the Middle East and Europe, then returned to India where he died in 1919.

Research and writing by Sarah K. Hermans

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