

# HISTORIC RED HOOK

## Alexander A. Gilson

Born 1824 Died Apr 25, 1889

Red Hook Methodist Cemetery

*HRH ME Cemetery Map Location: 24 A, east side against the treeline, near large Benedict plot*

Alexander Gilson was born in 1824. He became head gardener at Montgomery Place for about 50 years. He also bought land in Rhinebeck and in Red Hook where he had a nursery business. He retired from business in 1885 when he became “disabled by paralysis” and bought a home in Red Hook on the northwest corner of Church and Fraleigh streets and put up a large greenhouse. Another Montgomery Place employee, John Osterhoudt’s son Henry, worked for Gilson for a while until the greenhouse and plants were sold. Gilson died on April 25, 1889, at 65 years of age and left everything to his mother and sister who survived him. Neither he nor his sister ever married or had children. All three Gilsons are buried together in the cemetery. During his long career as a gardener, he created two varieties of flowering plants—a begonia and an achyranthes. Frank B. Lown of Rhinebeck wrote in an 1897 letter to the American Gardening journal regarding:



*Begonia Gilsoni in The Florists' Manual  
by William Scott, 2nd Edition 1906, p. 34*

“Aschyranthus Gilsonii, which you say was raised by a colored gardener. When I was a child I lived in Barrytown, in this county, and I well remember Alexander Gilson, who was then the gardener on what was known as the ‘Barton place’, a couple of miles north of where we lived. He was a colored man, but he very justly earned and received the cordial liking and respect of the entire community. He was an accomplished gardener, and died but a few years ago, and I am rejoiced to know that now the name of old ‘Alexander’—and no one knew him by aught else—has been perpetuated by the plant...”

— American Gardening Magazine

March 27th, 1897, NY Vol XVIII No.118

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Research and Writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2021

Sources:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/43539147/alexander-a-gilson>

American Gardening. 27 Mar 1897, NY Vol XVIII No.118.

Death notices, Dutchess & Columbia County, New York: From Red Hook newspapers

Reminiscences of Some of the Highways and Byways of Red Hook, E. Bassett

*Red Hook Journal*, 3 May 1889