

HISTORIC RED HOOK

William Nott Otis

1838–1912

Sarah Louise Sweet

1841–1928

Old Red Church Cemetery, Tivoli

Large dark grey granite square column with “O” capitals and urn atop it on the south side of the only Y-intersection of the access road.

Brothers William and Charles Otis are both buried in this cemetery and have impressive granite monuments. See the separate entry for more information about Charles. William Nott Otis was born in Chester, Massachusetts, the son of Quartus Otis and Eunice Palmer.

William married Sarah Louise Sweet, sister of his brother Charles’ wife, Linnie. They had three children, two of which lived to adulthood, Willis E. Otis who married Grace Feroe and Margaret “Maggie” Otis who married Amasa Rockefeller. Their younger brother Watson D. Otis, named for his uncle, died in infancy.

William served in the Civil War in Company B of the 34th Massachusetts Infantry from 1862 to 1865 before removing to Dutchess County some time before 1875.

Like his uncle Watson, William worked in construction for the New York Central Railroad in Tivoli. Watson D. Otis, son of Quartus’ brother Holmes Otis, was probably the reason that his nephews William and Charles came from Massachusetts to live in Tivoli. He was president of the Village of Tivoli for many years and held a high position with the NYCRR. His specialty was construction and wrecking. If a train wrecked he was responsible for clearing the tracks. He had a Victorian home on Montgomery Street in Tivoli that he called “The Maples”. Watson died in 1932 after having a stroke and his second wife Maud died six years later. His only child with his first wife, Margaret, Caroline “Carrie” Otis married Frederick Ellsworth, who was also a president of Tivoli.

William Otis’ nephew Charles Jr. met with a terrible accident while working on the rails at 18 years of age that turned him into a one-legged druggist, but repeated accidents would not cause his uncle to stray as far. In 1883 William, aboard a “wrecking train”, had his arm broken when it “smashed into the rear of a freight train near Staatsburg”. In 1888 William’s foot was crushed while at work when a “derrick gave way while hoisting a large stone”. This seems to have put him a bit off the rails, as he was reported to own a pineapple plantation in Florida where he and Sarah spent the winters around the turn of the century.





After the couple moved to Rye with their daughter Margaret's family, William appeared to not be able to leave trains fully alone as he was recorded in the 1910 census at 70 years of age in the occupation of night watchman for railroad construction.

William passed in 1912 and Sarah followed 16 years later. They share their plot with their son Willis, his wife Grace, their daughter Mildred Otis Martin, Grace's sister Maud Feroe, her father William E. Feroe.

Research and Writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2025

Sources (for William and his brother Charles):

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- 1880 Federal Census, Tivoli - Watson D Otis.
- 1880 Federal Census, Tivoli - William N Otis.
- 1892 New York State Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co, NY - Charles Otis.
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- 1900 Federal Census, Tivoli, Red Hook, Dutchess Co, NY - Charles M Otis.
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