

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Alexander & Catherine Minkler

Alexander: Born 1814 Died 1891

Catherine: Born 1809 Died 1903

Old Red Church Cemetery, Tivoli

*Dark grey granite square pedestal monument near
Cooke line of obelisks, north of the church*

From Farmers to Red Hook Hotel Keepers

The Four Corners in Red Hook look much like they used to, except for the gas station's location. The Red Hook Hotel had been on that spot from the 1700s until a 1963 kitchen fire led to its demise when it was sold to and torn down by the Valley Oil Company and a gas station and convenience store were built instead. In the late 1800s Alexander Minkler (1814-1891) and his wife Catherine, ran the Red Hook Hotel which was owned by their son-in-law George Howard Ellsworth (8 Oct. 1805-8 April 1928) who was married to Catherine's daughter Leticia from her first marriage. Alexander and Catherine had a son named Jacob who moved to Oswego County when he was an adult. The Minklers themselves moved from the country life to the center of the village.

Alexander Minkler was born to Adam Minkler (1789-1840) and Elizabeth McGill Minkler (1790-1880); both of his parents are also buried in the cemetery grounds of the Old Red Church. He was christened Sandy Minchler (aka Alexander Minkler) at that church on 12 September 1814. Minkler and his wife Catherine M. (1809-1903) were listed in the 1850 and 1865 censuses as farmers; however by the 1880 census they had moved to the Red Hook Hotel and were listed as hotel keepers. Catherine was the widow of Zachariah Hoffman. Their daughter Leticia Hoffman who was born in 1830 married George Howard Ellsworth who owned the Red Hook Hotel where the Minkler worked.

Alexander Minkler's name shows up in the local papers for various reasons over the years. For example, a lawsuit described in the December 11, 1880, Poughkeepsie Eagle News reported on a trial determining whether or not the hotel was responsible for the death of a man named Steve Kipp. The question



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was whether Kipp being served alcohol at the hotel led to his death; the case was adjudicated against the hotel and for the plaintiff who was awarded \$400. Although the jury found for the plaintiff, Minkler testified that he had not served alcohol to Kipp. The defense attorney Gerome Williams said of the hotel, which Minkler had run for years, “a better, more careful, civil, well conducted hotel is not in the state of New York,” stated the paper.

Another lawsuit was brought against Minkler and Ellsworth, as reported in the Kingston Daily Freeman on February 24, 1880: “On Friday last the proper legal papers were served on Alexander Minkler and Howard Ellsworth, the proprietors of the hotel at Red Hook, notifying them that suit had been commenced against them for damages in the sum of \$3,000 by Catherine McCoy; for injuries sustained by her from her husband, John, when in a state of intoxication caused by liquor sold him by defendants.” Then, as now, the serving and over-consumption of alcohol sometimes led to tragic consequences.

Minkler and his dog, as well as other neighbors and their canines, were the victims of a seemingly cruel and senseless crime spree, as explained in the local press. Minkler’s dog was killed, reported in the July 12, 1889, Red Hook Journal: “Mr. Alex. Minkler mourns the loss of his pet dog, which he found dead on Friday last near the lumber yard, having been killed by someone. On Thursday morning a dog owned by Dr. H. L. Cookingham, was found dead in his owner’s yard, supposed to have been poisoned. We learn that other persons in this vicinity have also lost dogs lately, in a similar manner. The owners are anxiously looking for the guilty parties.” Hopefully the perpetrator was stopped and brought to justice.

Despite the negative situations mentioned in the news, Minkler was well respected by his fellow townspeople, having been elected to represent them. The Red Hook Journal of April 11, 1884, reported the following results: “A. H. Hoffman was chosen delegate from this district to the Congressional Convention at Po’keepsie, and Alex. Minkler, D. W. Wilbur, and John A. Fraleigh to the Assembly District Convention.” A few years later, there was concern in the town about his health, enough so, it was covered in the papers. Minkler “took ill on Friday last and is in critical condition” stated the Red Hook Journal on October 10, 1890, but then added he was improving as of October 31. He eventually passed away in the Village of Red Hook on April 16, 1891. His monument at the Old Red Church was cited in an ad in the Fishkill Journal and Red Hook Journal of April 24, 1893, as an example of the stellar work performed by the Poughkeepsie business which carved his headstone: “Monumental perfection can be seen in a large variety of styles at Graham’s yard, Catharine St.”

Minkler was survived by his wife Catherine. When she passed away in 1903, the Red Hook Journal reported that she was a greatly beloved, kind Christian lady and the oldest inhabitant of the village at the time, passing away at the hotel at the age of 95. Born in 1809, Catherine had first been married to Zachariah Hoffman in 1829 until his death in 1835. They were the parents of Leticia Hoffman, who married George Howard Ellsworth and subsequently bought the Red Hook Hotel. After Zachariah Hoffman’s death,

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Catherine married Alexander Minkler. Catherine had lived her whole life in Red Hook and for 34 years at the Red Hook Hotel, concluded the paper in its October 16, 1903, edition. An announcement that “The will of Catharine Minkler, late of the town of Red Hook, was offered for probate in the surrogate’s office Tuesday. There is \$1,200 real property and \$1,000 personal property. Letitia Ellsworth, daughter, is the executrix and sole legatee,” reported the Red Hook Journal on October 27, 1911.

Research by Sarah K. Hermans, writing by Thea Burgess, 2022
Sources (for both A. Minkler & G. Ellsworth entries):
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/88995875/alexander-minkler>
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Red Hook Journal, 24 Apr 1891
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1850 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co NY, Alexander Minkler
1865 NY State Census Red Hook, Dutchess Co NY, Alexander Minkler
1880 Federal Census, Red Hook, Dutchess Co NY, Alexander Minkler
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