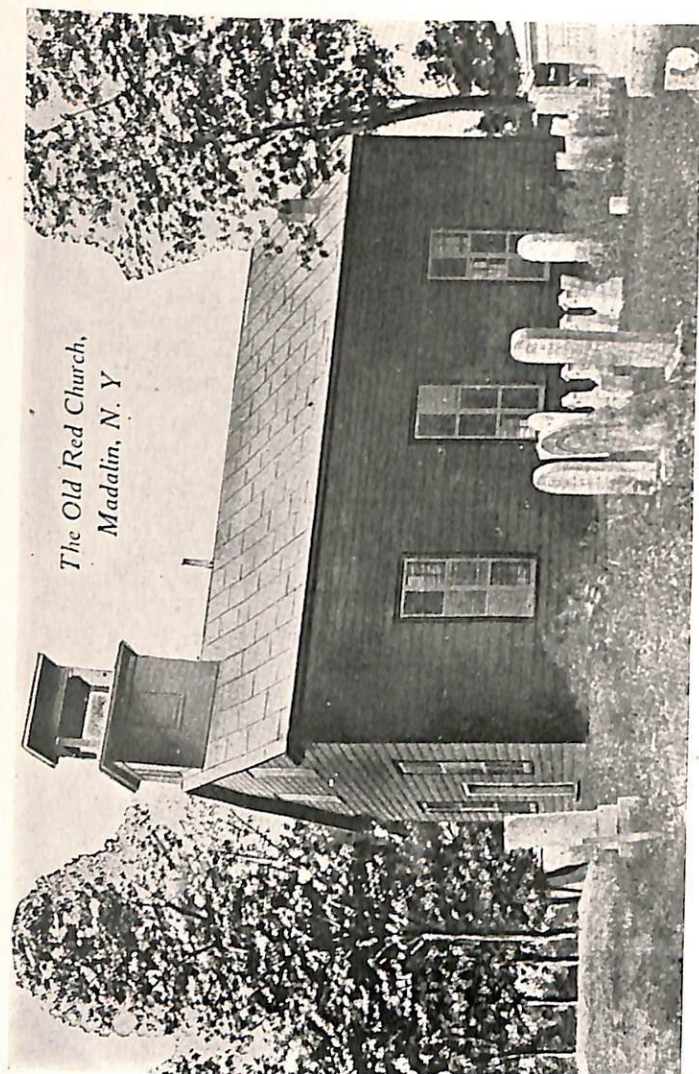


THE OLD RED CHURCH





The Old Red Church,  
Maddlin, N. Y.

# THE HISTORY OF THE OLD RED CHURCH

NEAR  
TIVOLI, N. Y.

1759—1921

By  
WALTER SCOTT  
TIVOLI, N. Y.

Author of "Threads of Moss," "Persons in Rhythm," (1914) and Editor  
of "Recollections and Writings of Thomas Jefferson Parker, 1812-1870."



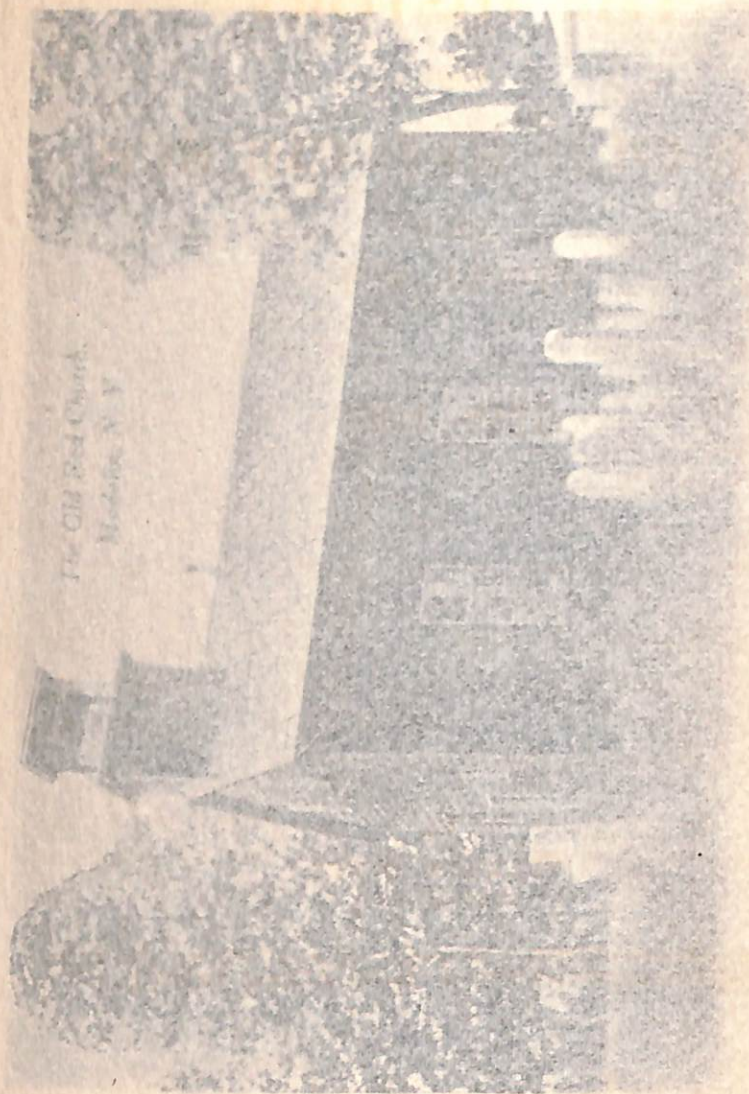
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## INTRODUCTION

In attempting to write this necessarily brief history of the Old Red Church, as it has long been familiarly known, the author was at once confronted with the almost insurmountable perplexity of securing sufficient data that would be of enough value and extent to warrant publication.

So entirely under a cloud at first seemed nearly all knowledge of the remote occurrences relating to this old time edifice, that all attempts at bringing to light any matters of real importance appeared at the beginning well-nigh futile, and had it not been for the many facts of unwritten as well as of written history that had been handed down to the author through a long unbroken line of many generations, the project would have quite certainly been abandoned.

However, it is significant to note that whatever has been obtained from the pages of local history pertaining to the Old Red Church, even though of little volume, is, nevertheless, very interesting and important as a part of this narrative.



In connection with this research, the author, happily, became familiarized with the early history of many of the primitive Dutch churches (the names of a few of which are incidentally introduced here) of the two neighboring counties of Dutchess and Columbia, and so far back does the construction or founding of these churches date that to mention in this narrative the neighboring churches of St. Pauls, 1818, the Baptist Church, 1842, the Methodist Church, 1843, and Trinity Church, 1855, all of Tivoli, and all of which, excepting Trinity, have long since either been demolished or abandoned, would be to write of churches as but of yesterday in comparison.

For example, in approximate correlation with the Old Red Church, in point of early construction, are the Low Dutch Church of Poughkeepsie, the High Dutch Church of Rhinebeck, the Low Dutch Church of Kinderhook, the Low Dutch Church of Clavarack, the Manor Church, the High Dutch Church of German-town, the Low Dutch Church of Upper Red Hook and the Lutheran Church of Clermont.

It is well established that the organization of these churches dates back to a very early period and one or more of them, in Columbia County, as far back as 1702. That they have all, without an exception, been

demolished many years ago is only too well authenticated, and with them went all except the memory of their high box-like pews, their slender "wine-glass pulpits," and their sounding boards suspended by ropes over the pulpit. Occasionally, in a little less fashionable church, and, perhaps, considerably more primitive, the lofty pulpit was reached by the minister each Sunday by means of a ladder.

As to the distinction between High Dutch and Low Dutch, it is interesting to recount that, in very early times, these churches were distinguished as "The High Dutchers" and "The Low Dutchers," "The High Dutchers" being the Palantines from the banks of the River, Rhine, Germany, while the "Low Dutchers" were strictly Hollanders.

Among this group of churches, especially alluded to, the Old Red Church stands out as one of the most prominent not only on account of the remote period of its erection but because of the remarkably wide range of interest manifested in it. A church well known as an ancient historical landmark, conspicuous in color and unique in story.



**PART I**

## The History of the Old Red Church

IT IS to be regretted that the exact date of the erection of the Old Red Church is somewhat obscured upon the records, but it is, nevertheless, perfectly safe to conclude that it was in 1759.

Upon this very important question, the author bases his conclusion partly from contradictory dates received and partly from unwritten history, but chiefly from well authenticated events intimately connected with the early history of the neighborhood in which the Old Red Church is located.

Taking, then, the above date, which the reader may be assured is quite conservative, as the nucleus of this narrative, it will at once be apparent that the Old Red Church was built many years before the Revolution and at a time when Washington was a young man of twenty-three, wearing the uniform of a Colonel in the British army; when General Wolfe was storming the heights of Quebec in 1759; when Lafayette was yet too young to be conscious of his own distinguished birth, when Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" was being



completed in 1759; when Gray's immortal "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard"\* was first attaining its marvelous popularity; and, except for "a fringe along the waterways, New York State was an untrodden wilderness."

In the center of a long stretch of moderately elevated ground, now incorporated cemetery grounds, extending north and south and sloping gently to the west the Old Red Church stands simple in design, strikingly primitive in color, and, many years ago, known as the fashionable Red Low Dutch Church, but now, after enduring at least 162 years, is universally recognized and honored by everyone not insensible to its true worth and importance, as the Old Red Church.

In order to emphasize, at this stage of this narrative, certain facts in local history, it is expedient that the author diverge a little from the immediate subject. This is quite essential when it is clearly understood how intimately the Old Red Church is linked with the happenings of the neighborhood in which it is situated and, therefore, to omit to recount the latter would be to render the story of the former incomplete.

In the first place, then, the old road did not run continuously as it does now for, after passing the cemetery

\* See Appendix.

from the south, it turned abruptly to the west and running through the Captain Klum estate, till it reached a certain famous old red inn,(a) it curved to the north and running through the valley and parallel with the adjacent creek, came out precisely at the point where the well known Hoffman mills stood.

This valley, through which the old road ran, terminates to the north in a point, or corner.

In 1751 the land owners of this vicinity conceived the idea of painting their buildings red, and consequently the mill, the old inn, alluded to, the church house, the church, and the school house, all in contiguity, were also painted the same color. This, of course, created a number of red buildings situated either within this valley, or point of land, or in such close proximity to it, as to give rise to the name Red Point or Red Corner or Red "Hoek"—"hoek" being the Dutch for hook and "hook" being the Dutch for corner, and, therefore, undoubtedly this is the origin of the name of Red Hook about which there has been such a great amount of speculation, and which explodes all other theories that have yet been advanced concerning the genesis of the name of this town.

During the Revolution, a detachment of British soldiers marched along this old road on their way to

a See Appendix.



join General Burgoyne, after having encamped for a short time on what is now part of the Red Church Cemetery grounds.

The old red inn was reputed to be a famous rallying point of patriotism and one of the conspicuous figures, at these patriotic gatherings, was Captain John I. Klum, a participant in the battles of White Plains and Saratoga in the latter of which he was severely wounded. Captain Klum's body reposes in the old grave yard directly west of the church.

The old church house, which must have been built at about the same time as the church, stood along what is now known as the north entrance to the cemetery.

The little red school house was built somewhere near what is now designated as the south entrance to the cemetery but presumably well toward the west end of the driveway.

In those distant days, church and schoolhouse were built at the same time and whoever did the preaching did the teaching.

"There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,  
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.  
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,  
The village master taught his little school."

What is now known and reverently called the "old graveyard" consists of about one acre of ground including that upon which the church stands. This ground was given by a Mr. Zachariah Hoffman and was originally enclosed on all sides by a high stone wall and remained so until the cemetery grounds were enlarged when the walls were gradually removed. The outlines of the "old grave yard" are still quite discernible as there are certain trees and other marks that indicate the original boundaries.

In this old burial ground are many old monuments of free stone—one bearing the date 1768<sup>1</sup>. There is one slab, however, not free stone, the lettering on which is not very legible, that has plainly cut into it the date 1770<sup>2</sup>. It has been asserted by antiquarians that there are, in this old yard, gravestones that once bore dates earlier than 1768, but these stones are so deformed and wasted by time that the lettering is unreadable. If what *is asserted* is true, and there is every reason to think it is, then, this old yard is the oldest one in this section of the country.

The entire cemetery today comprises an area of considerable extent and was incorporated in its entirety May 28th, 1917. Here lie gallant soldiers of the Florida War, of the Revolutionary War, of the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.



War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the World's War.

In the midst of all this hallowed ground, like a venerable watch-tower, a perpetual memorial, abides the Old Red Church—a community church, built by general subscription and dedicated a few years after its erection, it is, therefore, a sacred possession resting upon sacred soil.

“Take off thy shoes from off thy feet  
The place thou standest is holy ground.”

## PART II



The  
Holy Bible  
Containing the  
Old and New Testaments  
Translated out of the  
Original Tongues  
and with the  
Former Translations  
Diligently Compared and Revised  
By His Majesty's Special Command.

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*Appointed to be read in Churches*  
seal of  
Oxford.

Printed at the Clarendon Press  
By Wm. Jackson and Wm. Dawson, Printers to the  
University and sold at the Oxford Bible  
Warehouse in Paternoster Row, London, 1795.  
Cum Privilegio.

IN introducing the second part of this narrative, it is deemed not inappropriate to give first place to the foregoing inscription taken from the first page of an old Bible formerly used in the services of the Old Red Church.

This old Bible is still in existence and, though not in possession of the author, may be seen at any time. The old, old Dutch Bible unfortunately cannot be traced though it is known to have been printed in the Dutch language and bound substantially in board covers which, when closed, were held in place by heavy clasps.

The handsome altar cloths, the silver communion service, and the tall brass candlesticks have all been partially traced but as yet not definitely located. These precious relics were certainly not removed except for the commendable purpose of keeping them from being wantonly desecrated or destroyed, yet as no further concern seems to have been evinced in them except that of self-constituted proprietorship, their whereabouts now is somewhat vague.

The old bell too has its place in this history and, though cracked and otherwise broken, dismantled,



decrepit, and neglected, it shall not be forgotten. Many amusing stories have been advanced as to how the bell became cracked and yet the simple fact is that the sexton, climbing up in the belfry one frosty morning, attempted to ring the bell with a hammer, the bell rope having been broken, and the unnatural concussions produced the fracture.

When the church was remodeled, the old tower was taken down and the bell, of course, was taken down with it. No satisfactory attempt has been made to repair the bell and, perhaps, it is best not to "Molest its ancient solitary reign."

The interior of the church, as it was first designed, though old fashioned, must have been of a style and beauty far to exceed the interior of the present one.

The ceiling instead of being flat, as it now is, was arched or dome shaped, painted a sky blue and dotted with stars. The pews were painted white and the pulpit, which was an elevated affair of the conventional "wine-glass shape," was also painted white and was reached by a pretty winding stair. Over the pulpit was suspended a large shell-like-fashioned sounding board, decorated in blue and adorned with stars to harmonize with the ceiling and other arrangements.

The following is an interesting extract from local history received through the courtesy of the *Rhinebeck Gazette*: "About a mile northeast of Tivoli, years ago, stood the Old Red Dutch Church, belonging to the Dutch Reformed Society. It was some time since taken down, and another structure, of more modern architecture, erected in its stead. The old church was built many years ago, though the absence of records leaves the date somewhat a matter of conjecture.

The house was a curiosity in its way. It had a steeple, situated about the center of the roof, and which was surmounted by a rooster. When the sexton rang the bell he stood in the center of the church. A raised floor extended along each side of the body of the house, on which were square pews, provided with an ornamental railing on top, so high that when a person was seated nothing of him was visible except his head. These were intended for the use of the families of the landed proprietors. The common people occupied the slips in the body of the church. The elders and leading members sat in the side pews on either side of the pulpit. This was in keeping with the other arrangements, and over it was suspended the sounding board, then reckoned an essential thing in the construction of a church.



When this church was modernized, it was in a good state of preservation, all that could be said against it being, it was "not in fashion." Several prominent citizens plead that it might be permitted to stand, but without avail."

The Old Red Church had many eminent men as preachers. Among the number were Rev. Valentine R. Fox and Rev. John Rudy both of whom also officiated at the Reformed High Dutch Church of Rhinebeck; Rev. Andrew N. Kittle who also preached in the Reformed Low Dutch Church of Upper Red Hook; Dr. Augustus Wackerhagen and Rev. Wm. B. Askam of the Lutheran Church, Clermont; Rev. Henry Anthon and Rev. John McCarty of St. Pauls, Tivoli, and Dominie Romaine.

A large Sunday school was for a long time maintained and great interest was manifested in it. As far as known one marriage took place in the Old Red Church and it was that of the Rev. John McCarty to a Miss Cornelia Grier.

When the old church house, previously mentioned, was constructed, Dominie Fox, it seems, was the first minister to make it his residence and he was followed presumably by Dominie Rudy. This continued until a union was formed, 1794, between "the Upper Red

Hook Church and the Old Red Church and it was then that the Red Hook Church was called the New Dutch Church and the Old Red Church was known as the Lower Red Hook Dutch Church."

## CONCLUSION

### *Noted Revolutionary Churches*

The old Fairfax Church, famous because of its having been the church Washington attended; the old North Church, noted because of its being associated with the famous "midnight ride of Paul Revere"; the old South Church of Boston, the council house of the patriots of Massachusetts, who, within its walls, successfully planned to obstruct the obnoxious measures of King George; Saint John's Church of Richmond, Virginia, noted because it was in this church that Patrick Henry, in 1775, made his famous speech ending with the words, "Give me liberty or give me death."

The Old Red Church has not, like these, distinguished fame;

But still it has, for aye, like these enduring name.

The Old Red Church the less, mayhap, by some degrees;

Yet, happ'ly, contemporaneous with all these.



## APPENDIX

- \* Written in 1751.
- a Belonging to the Capt. Klum estate.
- 1. Name obliterated but date plainly visible.
- 2 ———s Banks. Name on stone partly gone.



