

## Collections Highlight: 1825 Red Hook Academy Sampler

By Claudine Klose, February 21, 2023

On February 22, we will be hosting historian Dr. Mark Boonshoft for an author talk on Zoom. His book, *Aristocratic Education and the Making of the American Republic*, examines the early history of private education in the newly established United States. To connect with his talk, we are featuring items and images about an early private school, The Red Hook Academy.

## Schoolgirl's Stitchery Offers a Glimpse into Red Hook Academy Education 200 Years Ago

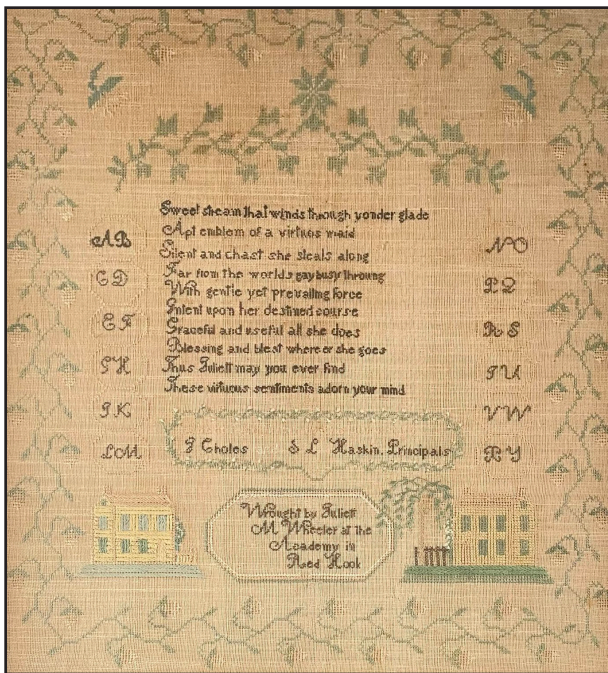
In the summer of 2014, then-Town Historian Wint Aldrich received a phone call from a Mrs. Juliet Moynihan of Houston, Texas, inquiring whether he knew anything about a Red Hook Academy. She had inherited from her grandmother a lovely sampler stitched by a “Juliatt Wheeler” at the “Academy in Red Hook.” Later that year, Juliet Moynihan generously donated the sampler to Historic Red Hook, bringing with it the remarkable story of how she had acquired it.



*Detail from Juliette Wheeler's 1825 needlework sampler, showing her representation of the Red Hook Academy.*

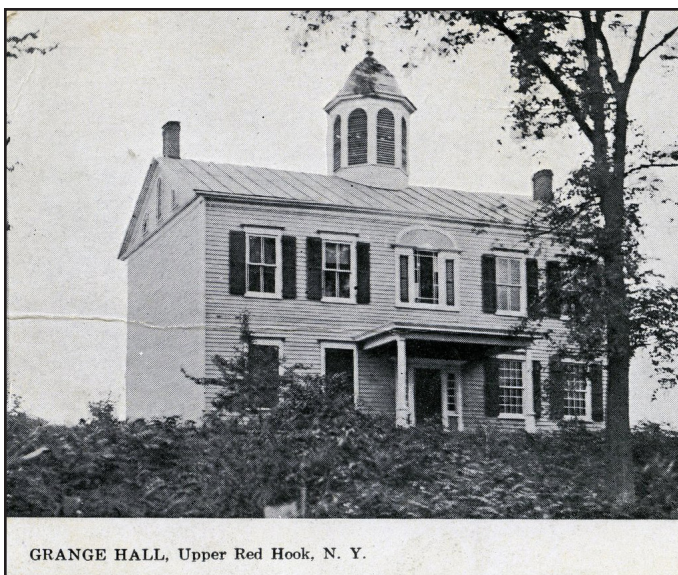
Juliet Moynihan's orphaned grandmother, Marie Jordan, had been raised by a foster mother, Ella M. Higbie, in Fairport, New York. Ella's parents were Nathan Higbie and Mary A. Wheeler. In Ella's old age, she had moved in with Marie Jordan and left her the Wheeler sampler. Juliet had been told that Mary Wheeler had made the sampler but noting that it bore the inscription "Wrought by Juliett M. Wheeler," she had searched for information on a Juliett Wheeler and found nothing. Fortunately, Historic Red Hook was able to identify Juliett (Juliette) as the older sister of Mary A. Wheeler.

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*Juliette Wheeler's needlework sampler, silk on natural linen, circa 1825.*





GRANGE HALL, Upper Red Hook, N. Y.

*Academy building, rebuilt in 1918 as the Grange Hall, replicating the original 1822 design.*

graduated, she attended the Genesee Wesleyan Academy in Lima, Livingston County, appearing on student lists there in 1833. She married Timothy Dwight Chamberlain, and their son attended the Amenia Seminary, also acquiring a classical education.

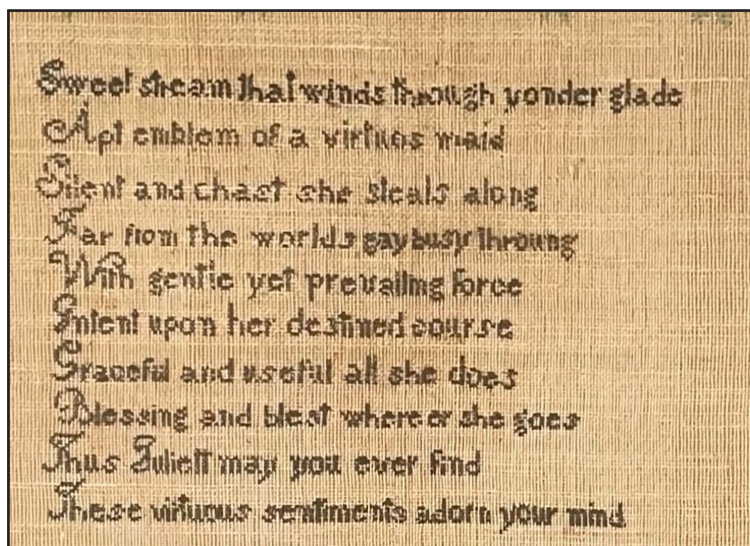
At some point, Juliette must have given the sampler to her sister Mary, who passed it down to her daughter Ella, who then gave it to Juliet Moynihan's grandmother Marie. Juliet Moynihan wonders if she was named after this Juliette.

The sampler, which dates from about 1825, has a strawberry vine border enclosing a central verse and, flanking the verse on each side, a vertical row of uppercase letters of the alphabet. Below the verse are the words "I Choles and SL Haskin, principals." To the left and right of Juliette's inscription are stitched images of the Academy, shown as an early Federal two-story yellow house with end chimneys and surrounded by lawn and trees.

So what was the Academy and what role did it play in the history of Red Hook's schools? A 1790 ad for a "new dwelling house and school-house" purchased by David Van Ness is evidence that a school existed as early as 1790 in what was then known only as Red Hook but that later became Upper Red Hook. In 1813, the year after the Town of Red Hook was founded, the town was divided into nine formal school districts, one of which, District #6, was located in Upper Red Hook. These nine public schools, however, only

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Juliette Maria Wheeler was born in 1806 to Cyrus Marsh Wheeler and Sarah Scott in the town of Amenia, Dutchess County. Cyrus Wheeler's grandfather, the Rev. Cyrus March, graduated from Yale University in 1739 and the tradition of a classical education was passed down in the family. Juliette likely attended the Red Hook Academy as a boarding student. After she



*Juliette's stitched verse: Sweet stream that winds through yonder glade / Apt emblem of a virtuos (sic) maid / Silent and chast (sic) she steals along / Far from the worlds gay busy throung (sic) / With gentle yet prevailing force / Intent upon her destined course / Graceful and useful all she does / Blessing and blest where er she goes / Thus Juliett may you ever find / These virtuous sentiments adorn your mind.*

went through the eighth grade. The Academy was established in 1822 as an option for those who wished to continue their studies beyond the eighth grade and could afford the tuition. It was launched with the support of Reverend Andrew Kittle of St. John's Dutch Reformed Church and 35 Red Hook families, including three Livingstons. Peter P. Fraleigh bought the land (where the Cornucopia Deli now stands) for \$100, and acting as trustee, conveyed it to the Academy. An elegant school building was built by Philip H. Clum of Clermont at a cost of \$1,900. (Clum later built an identical schoolhouse in Clermont on the west side of Route 9 that still stands today, identified by a roadside marker).

# POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL.

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**RED-HOOK ACADEMY.**

Parents who are desirous of educating their children, and the public in general, are respectfully informed that the Academy, at Upper Red Hook, Dutchess county, will be opened on the first Monday in December next. The Trustees have engaged L. C. Holcomb, a graduate of Yale College, and who has for some years, with much success, devoted himself to classical instruction.

Mr. Holcomb's principal attention will be directed to students acquiring a knowledge of the Sciences and Classics, and he will also superintend the department of Common English education, which will be conducted by a Lady, highly recommended, and well qualified as a female Teacher. The prices of tuition will be as low, if not lower, than that of any Academy in the state; and board may be obtained in respectable families from ten to sixteen shillings per week.

The local situation of the Academy, the remarkable healthiness of the village, together with the reputation and abilities of the principal, afford good ground to hope that this institution will flourish and prosper—and the trustees pledge themselves, that the strictest attention will be paid to the moral and literary improvement of the pupils.

Andrew N. Kittle,  
N. Hoffman,  
J. C. Elmendorph,  
John S. Livingston,  
Jacob Sheek,  
John Van Dusen,  
Reuben Rowley,  
Lewis Ring,  
Nathan Beckwith,  
N. Attendorph,  
John W. Wheeler,  
Philip Pi'cher

}

Trustees.

Upper Red Hook Village,  
October 22, 1822.

*Advertisement for the opening of the Red Hook Academy — Poughkeepsie Journal, Nov. 20, 1822 P. 3.*

The school was supported by subscriptions (supporters bought \$20 shares entitling them to one vote per share) and “placed under the direction of twelve trustees to be annually elected by the subscribers to the Academy.” It was eventually chartered by the State of New York. Tuition fees for an 11-week session were \$6.00-8.00 for boys and \$3.00-5.00 for girls. Out-of-towners paid \$50 to board at the home of the teacher, who was also the principal. Upper Red Hook's Dr. Gamaliel Wheeler was an early sponsor so perhaps Juliette lived with her relatives.

Original school documents describe the Academy's purpose: “...it is intended that reading, writing, arith-



# RED HOOK JOURNAL.

AN INDEPENDENT, FAMILY NEWSPAPER—DEVOTED TO HOME INTERESTS, LITERATURE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

Albert F. Miller,  
Owner & P. M.
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RED HOOK N. Y., FRIDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1868.

## UPPER RED HOOK ACADEMY.

The Fall Term of this Academy will commence on Monday, August 31st.

The course of instruction is thorough, and under a competent Teacher, affording a good opportunity for persons wishing to fit themselves as teachers.

SAMUEL NELSON, Pres't.  
THOMAS ELMENDORF, Sec'y.

*Announcement for Mountain View Academy opening – Red Hook Journal, Sept 18, 1868. (This clipping is from our Red Hook Newspapers Collection. You can explore this issue of the Red Hook Journal online.)*

finest and most select of its kind in the lower Hudson Valley.” The first teacher, Miss Snyder, was succeeded by Henry Gallup and Eliza Minerva Pitcher.

By 1879, a handsome new District #6 building had been built, and Eliza Minerva Pitcher switched to the public school. The Academy ceased in 1880, and the school building was converted to community use. In 1907 the Dutch Reformed Church acquired the property and later leased it to the Red Hook Grange. The building burned in 1917 and was rebuilt in 1918, but in 1954 the building was again destroyed by fire and never rebuilt.

The schoolhouse is long gone, but thanks to Juliet Moynihan’s generous donation, Historic Red Hook is able to preserve, piece together, and share another intriguing piece of Red Hook’s history.

metic, English grammar, surveying, navigation, geography, public speaking together with the Latin and Greek languages shall be taught and a scrupulous attention to the moral and religious habits of the students shall be observed.” The school started out with 45 students and reached a peak of 76, but enrollment was inconsistent, and the Academy closed in 1842.

In 1867 the school was reopened as the private “Mountain View Academy.” It had an initial enrollment of 20 students but quickly grew, drawing students from throughout New York and New England. A 1939 *Red Hook Advertiser* article, headlined “Red Hook Academy - A Trail Blazer in Higher Education,” described it as “a school known far and wide as the



*Mountain View Academy class, circa 1870. Left to right: Top Row: Emily Coon, Catherine “Katie” Vosburgh, Frank Coon, Philip “Phil” Fraleigh, Charles Tomkins, Abram Kerley. Middle Row: Ella Moore (Morrison), Alida Teator (Cotting), Professor Henry Gallup (in top hat), R. Dudley Kerley, Ellen Vosburgh (or Celia Schermerhorn), James E. “Ned” Kerley. Bottom Row: Hattie Moore, Fannie Vosburgh (Coon), Helen Knickerbocker, Charles W. “Bobby” Pitcher, Edwin K. Losee, Edwin “Eddie” Brown, Kittie Tanner, Eliza Minerva “Minnie” Pitcher (who succeeded Professor Gallup as teacher), Clara Platt (Blackwell), William S. Teator.*