

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Mary H. Chase

8 Oct 1788–22 Jan 1863, Tivoli

St. Paul's and Trinity Parish, Tivoli

Small, eroded tablet close to and south of the Hall vault.

Mary Chase's home was at the end of the street near what was the "lower dock" in Tivoli. After her death, Giles Cooke (see the Old Red Church Cemetery for more about him) recalled that before the train tracks were laid, Mary's front lawn ended with the bank of the Hudson River. Her home was also the private school from which she taught generations of local children.

Cooke wasn't sure if she was from Tivoli or Massachusetts, but the 1850 and 1860 census of Red Hook says she was born in New York. He wrote that Mary's step-mother (presumably Elizabeth Bourne, 1775–1826) was a tyrant and made homelife "unpleasant" for Mary. He said she left home at 10 (yes, 10) years of age "to escape her tyranny" and began to teach infants. A child teaching babies sounds bonkers, but this would have been 1798; Childhood was yet to be redefined as a time to play, learn and grow, only. Children younger than 10 worked in fields, mills, and factories everywhere when Mary was a child. Cooke said she taught for 61 years, having semi-retired only two years before her death in 1863.

Mary was wed c.1815 to Gardner Chase (1782–1831) and they had only one child, their son, Theodore Livingston Chase (1824–1898). Gardner was (as his tombstone states) a native of Paris, Maine. Giles Cooke said Mary had to support herself and her husband on her teacher's salary, but if he knew why that was, he chose not to print it. Theodore would have been seven years old when his father died. Something encouraged him to find his fortune elsewhere, and he ended up in Philadelphia. Theodore married a woman named Catherine and they had one child, Theodore L. Chase, Jr. who had two children, Theodore Livingston Chase, III (1893) and Janice Livingston Chase (1918) who may have left descendants.

In regards to Mary Chase's teaching ability, Cooke had nothing but good things to say. She had a "commanding presence" and rather than punish students, she was kind, but firm, and insistent that her students learned what they must. He also thought that "teachers of to-day" (1863) didn't not hold a candle to her abilities. She kept the class size under 13

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students at a time which she taught for six hours a day, Monday through Friday, from her home in Tivoli with a few short exceptions. Each student was charged \$12 a year paid quarterly and the rate never changed over the 61 years she taught.

It seems she instructed many children of the wealthy landed gentry of the east bank of the Hudson River, including children of Edward L. Livingston, Robert L. Livingston, John S. Livingston, Gilbert Livingston, Robert Tillotson, and J.W. DePeyster.

Giles Cooke visited with Mary often, and in her later years he was concerned that she shouldn't live alone, but reported that John D. Livingston came to visit her every day, and he and her friend Miss Amanda Lasher were with her when she died. As she left this world "her mind...wandered to the old schoolroom and she was once more engaged with her pupils and their lessons." Amanda, who gave Cooke information about Mary for his article, told him that Mary was a "dear lady" and "a blessed example and a faithful teacher."