

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Maria Livingston de Peyster

1852 - 1857

St. Paul's and Trinity Parish, Tivoli

Two monuments near the de Peyster vault; one sarcophagus style with an urn on top and another with a child sculpture on top.

Beloved Daughter

We often quote William Shakespeare as allusions to people or events. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena says of her rival Hermia, "And though she be but little, she is fierce" (Act III, Scene 2, Line 337), which in our times would be a compliment, not the slur Helena intended. The de Peyster monument to their daughter is full of praise and grief. When Maria Livingston de Peyster, the daughter of Gen. John Watts de Peyster and Estelle Livingston de Peyster, died at age five of a fever in 1857, her father turned to the Bard for the inscription on her memorial: "So wise, so young, they say, did ne'er live long." Her monument also reads:

In Memory of
MARIA LIVINGSTON de PEYSTER,
youngest daughter and child of
John Watts and Estelle
de Peyster.
Born 7th July, 1852,
Died 24th September, 1857.

In *Local Memorials Relating to the de Peyster and Watts and Affiliated Families, Connected With Red Hook Township, Dutchess Co., S.N.Y.*, written by Gen. de Peyster under his pen name of Anchor and published in 1881, Maria's father describes the monument, as "a very handsome sarcophagus in Italian marble" and states of its inscription to Maria, "The first, on the obverse, is a record of one of the most remarkable children that ever gladdened the hearts of parents: she realized the hackneyed truism of Shakespeare, so often quoted and too often misapplied." Gen. John Watts de Peyster saw his daughter as one who Shakespeare would have said, yes, his words about a child so wise and so young would fit little Maria.