

The Cemetery Next Door

**Get to know some of your late neighbors interred in
the little Methodist Episcopal Cemetery on Cherry St.**

HISTORIC

RED HOOK

June, 2019

Chanler/Aldrich Servants

In the cemetery three tall tombstones belonging to three servant women stand near the road, and that of a fourth stands almost at the very back. Three white women are buried in a plot purchased by the Chanler family of Rokeby, specifically as a resting place “...for much loved Rokeby servants who had died without relatives or another home place,” according to Chanler descendant and former Red Hook Town Historian, J. Winthrop Aldrich. The fourth, a black woman, is in the back.

Today, families having servants sounds problematic at best, but well into the 20th century it was typical for any family who had the funds to have at least one. These paid helpers often resided in the same dwelling as their employers; women to do the wash, make meals, care for children or elders, and men to work the grounds, do the driving, or manage the horses. Small families like the Losees of Upper Red Hook would have an Irish woman to help. Farm families would often take in local children from poor or large families to help with farmwork. The Chanlers were wealthy and could keep several servants in their mansion homes to help them with all manner of tasks, and their devotion to them lasted well after either party had passed on, giving a nice resting place for “...much loved Rokeby servants who had died without relatives or another home place. Every Easter my Grandmother would bring flowers from our greenhouse to decorate (the graves)...” said Aldrich. However, he wasn’t sure why they chose the Methodist ground.

Jane Cross

Born into slavery in Maryland in 1819, Jane Cross was a day-laborer at the Navy Yard in Washington DC before becoming employed by John Winthrop Chanler “...my great-grandfather Chanler,” said Aldrich,

“(whom he) hired to help care for his innumerable young children when he was first elected to Congress and lived in Washington. She lived and traveled with the family, ending up at Rokeby where she was loved by the orphans and where she died of a heart ailment in the 1880’s.”

In the 1880 federal census of Red Hook in the home of Armstrong Chanler (Rokeby), Jane’s age is recorded as 40 when it should be 60. She is one of 12 servants (including Mary Meroney), coachmen, and a tutor living with the family and only one of two black people—the other being Julia Carey, also of Maryland, age 36. The others hailed mostly from Ireland or England or were first-generation descendants of the same.

The Chanlers said that Jane “appreciated good manners” and was adept at smoothing out relations between rival servants. Jane died in Red Hook at 66 years of age on May 22nd, 1885, but the Chanlers claimed that she haunted Rokeby on the anniversary of her passing when she could be heard sweeping the floors. Her tombstone reads “Faithful unto Death.”



Jane Cross c. 1880. Photo from The Astor Orphans by Lately Thomas

Mary Ellen Dalton

In the 1920 census of Red Hook, Richard Aldrich was the head of household at Rokeby with only four servants, including Mary E. Dalton and Augusta Nord (see below). Known to the Chanlers as just ‘Ellen’, she was born in Washington DC to parents from Ireland and her job description was “House Keeper.” She was “austere, brusque in manner, unsentimental, yet warmly affectionate underneath.”¹ Ellen’s tombstone is engraved with “A native of Washington, D. C. who lived for thirty years at Rokeby, dying there in June, 1923.” It might have been erected some years after her death, because the following was reported in her obituary:

“Mary Ellen Dalton, who had been associated with the Aldrich family for thirty five years,

¹ Thomas, Lately. *The Astor Orphans: A Pride of Lions*. Washington Park Press, Ltd. Albany, NY 1999 p.314

died at the summer home of Mrs. Richard Aldrich at Barrytown last Sunday evening. Miss Dalton was a daughter of the late Thomas and Ellen Hickey Dalton, of Washington, D.C. She was in her sixty-second year and is survived by three sisters, Mrs. Josephine Millans and Mrs. Agnes Kinny of Kansas City and Mrs. Ida Tarlton of California. Her funeral services were held from the Methodist Episcopal church, Red Hook, Wednesday afternoon at two o'clock, the services being in charge of Rev. Mr. Spencer, pastor of the church. Interment was in the Aldrich burial plot in the M.E. cemetery at Red Hook."²

Mary Bevans Meroney

Born in November of 1832 (proudly during the reign of William IV) in England, Mary emigrated to the US, presumably with her parents, in 1835. She was the "head nurse" in the Chanler home for decades. In the 1880 census, it shows her and 11 of her co-workers with the so-called "Astor Orphans"; the head of household at the time being 17-year-old Armstrong Chanler. Her tombstone has no dates of birth or death (and misspells her surname "Merony"), but as she does not appear in the 1910 census at Rokeby, it can be assumed she may have died before then in her 70s.

*"Mary with her 'tread like an empress' and proud to have been born a subject of William IV, ruled the servant's hall. She had made the grand tour of Europe in the service of Governor and Mrs. Hamilton Fish, and her room was filled with keepsakes from every country she had visited. Nurses, housemaids, governesses, cooks, and footmen might come and go; Mary Meroney was immovable."*³



Mary Meroney, c. 1885.
Photo from The Astor Orphans
by Lately Thomas

Augusta W. Nord

Augusta was born c. 1849 and had emigrated from Sweden c. 1890. As mentioned above, she worked and lived at Rokeby at the same time as Ellen Dalton, though in 1920 the older woman's position was "Maid." Five years later, she was serving in the home of James and Amelia Galvin (relatives of the Galvins also buried in this cemetery), the direct neighbors of Aldrich family. Then, she was recorded as being 75 years old, she had been in the US 57 years, and was labeled an "alien." When a Jane Shepherd of Barrytown died in 1913, Augusta received \$50 from her estate, as did two Galvin women. In 1920 Mrs. Margaret Chanler Aldrich died and left Augusta \$500 and Mary Ellen Dalton (the higher-ranking "House Keeper") got \$1000. Augusta died in Rhinebeck on December 21st, 1927.

² Rhinebeck Gazette, Saturday, June 24th, 1922

³ The Astor Orphans P.23

One-Time Arsonist, Warren Miller

Warren C. Miller was born in 1879 to Reuben Miller and Mary Paulmier (daughter of James and Sophia, also buried in this cemetery) of Red Hook, and in the 1900 census he was enumerated in his parents' house on Prince Street as a 30 year-old "ice-man" (working to harvest ice). He married a woman named Olive on December 15th, 1908 in Red Hook and had two daughters, Dorothy and Margaret.

On Monday, June 25th, 1923, Miller (40) and two of his friends, Sylvester Holt (50) and Frank VanWagner (43) went out drinking. This would be a perfectly normal thing to do, had it not



been during prohibition. They drank a jug of hard cider (perhaps more) and became sufficiently inebriated as to be arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct.

On the same night, three barns owned by John Coon “just south of the school house” were burned to the ground. The structures and their contents were lost, including a team of horses and a Ford car. Shortly after fireman had finished trying to fight that blaze, another popped up—this time east of town at “the box factory connected with the chocolate factory, a large building filled with lumber.” Losses at both sites totaled “\$10,000, partly covered by insurance.”¹

Because the fires seemed suspect and there had been a number of them in recent weeks, the drunks were interviewed and Miller admitted to setting the Coon fires, helping the firefighters to put it out, then crossing town to set the Chocolate Factory (his former place of employment) ablaze as well. In his confession, Miller said “while he was under the influence of hard cider he wanted excitement so started the blaze in order to help the firemen extinguish them.”

Holt and VanWagner got 10 days for drunk and disorderly, and Miller faced four indictments, including two counts of arson in the second and third degrees and two counts of “unlawful entry of a building with intent to commit a felony.” He opted to be tried before a grand jury and was sentenced to a minimum of seven years, six months with a maximum of 15 years, six months, and sent to Sing Sing prison.

A year later, 90 Red Hook residents signed a petition asking the New York Supreme Court to let Miller out on probation because he was in poor health and he had a wife and children to provide for. Governor Alfred E. Smith commuted his sentence on February 15th, 1926 to two years and four months with time served and Miller was released. In 1930 he appears in the census with his wife and daughters as a 50-year-old laborer working odd jobs and living on Railroad Avenue in Red Hook.

He died August 23rd, 1941 at 62 years of age. A small metal marker (the kind provided by funeral homes when someone can’t afford a marker of their own) is pressed into the ground in front of John and Irene Curtis’ tombstone. There is no relation between these families, so it is thought that someone found it loose and did their best to secure it.

¹ Rhinebeck Gazette, June 23rd, 1923

Four Generations of Women

Four generations of women have been identified as being buried in this cemetery. That might not seem like much, except when the fact that there are only about 260 total known/identified burials is taken into account. From Hannah (born in 1790) to her great-granddaughter Laura (who died in 1946), that’s over 150 years of direct matrilineal descent in one place. Women in that time were daughters, then wives, then widows (or pending that, spinsters). They were often forgotten (as was Hannah’s maiden name) even as their husbands’ memories were preserved, however both the husbands and wives of this family have been obscured by time. Hopefully this little narrative will help rectify that omission in a small way.



Laura Kilmer O'Brien
Photo credit: Jannine DiFiore

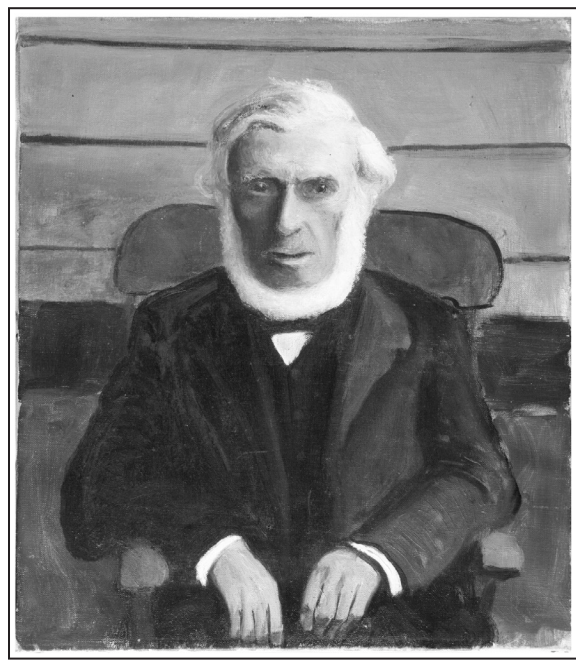
1. **Hannah** was born July 31st, 1790 and married laborer James Wainright from Dutchess County. In 1850, they were neighbors in Red Hook of the Pulvers, Bar-ringers, and Martins who are also buried in this cemetery. They had a daughter named Christina Wainright, born July 14th, 1818. Hannah died February 21st, 1858 at 67 years of age.
2. **Christina Wainright** married Henry Scism. They had a daughter named Catherine Margaret Scism, born 1834. They moved around a little, but resided for the most part in Red Hook. Chris-tina died October 16th, 1898.

3. **Margaret Scism** married David Kilmer c. 1860 and had a daughter named Laura Kilmer born June 1867. They lived most of their lives in the Town of Milan. She died in 1920.
4. **Laura Kilmer** married James O'Brien, a US citizen and worker in a woolen mill from Ireland. They lived in Stockport, Columbia County and had two daughters who left the area and who died long after. As of this writing, her burial appears to have been the last one in the cemetery.

Irish Immigrants, **Patrick Galvin & Sarah Corlett**

Patrick Galvin was born August 25th, 1825 in County Cork, Ireland. He married in Dutchess County on November 28th, 1859 Sarah Catherine Corlett (February 12th, 1837–July 24th, 1922), daughter of John Corlett and Ann Cottier of the village of Andreas, Lezayre parish, on the Isle of Man. Her parents, who are also buried in the family plot in this cemetery, migrated to the US in 1835, settling in Rhinebeck, but moving around a bit before coming back when Sarah was a teen. They had six children born between 1860 and 1874: Annie L., John, William P., James A., George E., and Francis H. Corlett.

*"The young couple moved to Red Hook where he was employed by William B. Astor at the family's estate "Rokeby", located in neighboring Barrytown in the Hudson River Valley. When the latter died in 1875, Patrick obtained a position as head gardener on the "Steen Valetje" estate of Franklin H. Delano, located directly south of Rokeby estate. Here he remained until the weakness of age required him to retire."*¹



Patrick Galvin painted by
Robert Winthrop Chanler, c. 1917
Image credit: Christopher J. Bach

The portrait of Patrick Galvin pictured here was painted by Robert Winthrop Chanler (1872-1930, one of the "Astor Orphans"). Patrick and Sarah's son George Edwin Galvin "became a life-long confidant of (Robert's brother) William Astor Chanler, traveling with him on both East Africa Expeditions in the 1890's and the 1898 Spanish-American War, among other adventures" according to Galvin descendant, Christopher J. Bach.

Patrick spent his entire career as a gardener at Rokeby and Steen Valetje. It was reported that he was still sharp right up until the end and could recall "many changes" in the area. If only someone had recorded them. Patrick died at his home in Barrytown on Sunday, November 23rd, 1919 at 95 years of age.

¹ Hamilton, Elsie Catherine. *Corlett Family in America*, Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Co. Inc., 1952, pg. 97-98

Horticulturalist, Alexander A. Gilson

Alexander Gilson was born in 1824 into slavery, a possession of Janet Livingston Montgomery of Montgomery Place until the abolition of slavery in New York State in 1827 (and the death of Mrs. Montgomery in 1828). As a free man, he became head gardener at Montgomery Place for about 50 years. He also bought land in Red Hook where he had a nursery business, and in Rhinebeck. He retired from business in 1885 and bought a home in Red Hook on the northwest corner of Church and Fraleigh streets and put up a large greenhouse. Another Montgomery Place employee, John Osterhoudt's son Henry, worked for Gilson for a while until the greenhouse and plants were sold. It was reported that he died

April 25th, 1889 at 65 years of age and left everything to his mother and sister who survived him. Neither he nor his sister ever married or had children. All three Gilsons are buried together in the cemetery.

During his long career as a gardener, he created two varietals of flowering plants—a begonia and an achyranthes. Frank B. Lown of Rhinebeck wrote in an 1897 letter to the journal *American Gardening* regarding...

*“...Aschyranthus Gilsonii, which you say was raised by a colored gardener. When I was a child I lived in Barrytown, in this county, and I well remember Alexander Gilson, who was then the gardener on what was known as the ‘Barton place’, a couple of miles north of where we lived. He was a colored man, but he very justly earned and received the cordial liking and respect of the entire community. He was an accomplished gardener, and died but a few years ago, and I am rejoiced to know that now the name of old ‘Alexander’—and no one knew him by aught else—has been perpetuated by the plant....”*¹

¹ *American Gardening*, 27 Mar 1897, NY Vol XVIII No.118.

Civil War Veteran, Horatio Schowerman

Also known as Horatio Sherman, this veteran of the Civil War lived to 95 years of age. He was interviewed for an article in the *Rhinebeck Gazette*, published on the 16th of August, 1920.

Born in 1840 to William Showerman and Eve Funk of Red Hook, Schowerman left home just after he was listed with his family in the 1850 census as a 10-year-old boy to make his own way in the world. He told the *Gazette* interviewer that he had not spent one day in school. “My people was poor and they had to pay schooling in that time...Poor people couldn’t go to school for nothing like they do now,” Schowerman said. He worked for Alvie Coon for 28 years and when he was interviewed at 86, he was gardening for Will Aucock, but said he was too feeble to walk himself home and had to have Will give him a ride. “My head pains me and I’ve got the rheumatiz in the worst way,” he admitted.

He married Catherine Redder who died March 3rd, 1914, at 83. After she was gone, Schowerman said that he wasn’t ashamed to make his own meals, living with his bachelor son George L. Sherman. In 1920 they are both enumerated on East Market Street in Red Hook as farm laborers. His other son James E. Sherman (who went by “Eddie”) was a rural letter carrier in New Jersey. He was struck by a train and killed in the summer of 1907 at 40. He had been a former constable in Rhinebeck.

Horatio Schowerman enlisted on August 3rd, 1864 while residing in Fishkill. He was 24 years old. He and Company F of the New York 150th infantry participated in Sherman’s March (no relation) to the sea, and mustered out after one year at the close of the war, on June 8th, 1865. The *Gazette* did not record any details of the march other than what he had to say about the marching and the food.

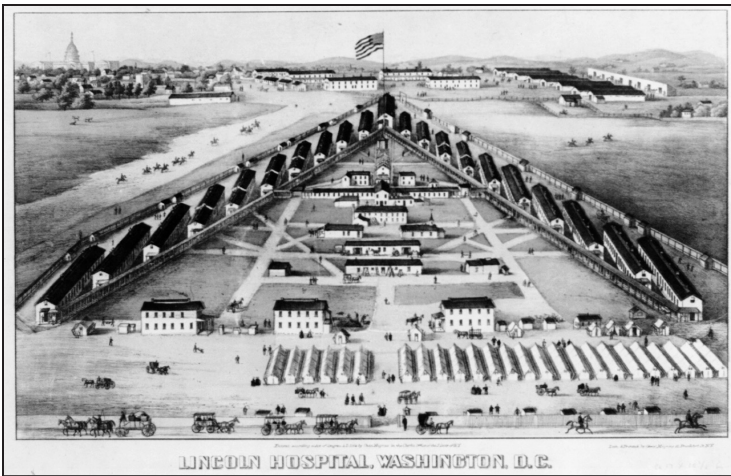
*“We drew seven days’ rations and we didn’t draw them again for sixty-seven days. We marched ninety miles for four weeks once without hardly a chance to get something to eat. And then when we cum hum (sic sic), we was there to Raleigh and they gave us eighteen days’ rations to make Richmond and we made Washington in eighteen days. We hoofed it every step from Raleigh to Washington!”*¹

It seems Schowerman left Red Hook in the fall of 1920 to live with son George in the Rondout section of Kingston across the river. He died in 1935 and is buried next to his wife, Catherine, and brother Allen Showerman who also served in the same company with Horatio in the Civil War.

¹ *Rhinebeck Gazette*, August 16th, 1920

Civil War Casualty, Stephen H. Paulmier

Stephen, son of James Paulmier and Sophia Brown, a 26 year old tinsmith, was drafted into the Union Army in June of 1863 with his brothers Thomas (a painter, married, age 31) and George (a saddler, age 22), all of Red Hook.



Magnus, Charles, Publisher. *Lincoln Hospital, Washington, DC* / lith. & printed by Chas. Magnus, 12 Frankfort St., NY United States, Washington DC, c. 1864

The 91st New York Infantry participated in Appomattox on April 9th, 1865¹. Stephen died a Private in Company A of the 91st on May 21st, 1865 at Lincoln General Hospital in Washington, DC. The cause of death was “Exh from G.S.W. (gunshot wound) recd. in action”

U.S., Burial Registers, Military Posts and National Cemeteries names his cause of death as Typhoid Fever. He was 28. He was buried in Washington, then exhumed in December and returned to Red Hook for burial in the family plot.

He almost made it. “The regiment was mustered out near Washington, July 3, 1865, having lost during its term of service 114 by death from wounds and 188 from other causes.”²

¹ Phisterer, Frederick. *New York in the War of the Rebellion*, 3rd ed. Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912.

² *The Union army: a history of military affairs in the loyal states, 1861-65*. Madison, WI: Federal Pub. Co., 1908. volume II.

49er, Daniel Newcomb

Born December 13th, 1806 in Pittstown, Rensselaer County, NY to Simon Newcomb and Sarah Follett, Daniel became part of the Benedict family (who have the tallest monument in the cemetery) when his daughter Mary Annette Newcomb married A.G. Benedict, Jr.

Daniel studied medicine with his father Simon, but after he married, he pursued farming instead. He married Mary A. Taff c. 1831 and practiced medicine at Buskirk’s Bridge in Rensselaer County, then left that for a time to venture out with other ‘49ers to California, returning to Albany with “moderate success” and becoming a merchant there.

His daughter Mary’s father-in-law removed his family to Red Hook in 1864 after his father A.G. Benedict Sr. died there, and Daniel and his wife followed soon after. Daniel became an ardent Methodist, befriending Bishop Newman and other ministers of the Red Hook Methodist Episcopal Church. His obituary paints quite a picture of him, stating that he had a...

“...consistent upright intelligent and reliable character and course of life. He spurned meannesses and deceits, there was a “Jacksonian” element in him, and when his “cane” was brought down, those who practiced deceit and fraud knew well to keep at a respectful distance.”¹

He died September 12th, 1895 at Lansingburg, NY, north of Troy where he had a residence.

¹ *Red Hook Journal*, September 20th, 1895

Miss Cordelia Jackson, School Marm

Miss Cordelia Jackson, born c. 1825, was remembered by Edmund Bassett in his “Reminiscences” as having taught at a “primary grade” school on West Market street on property belonging to John Curtis. Their house and the school was situated, according to Bassett, just to the west of the hotel, which formerly stood at the corner where the gas station is today. Her obituary states that she taught public school and “later conducted a private school for a number of years.”

In 1870, Miss Jackson (known as “Delia” to her friends) lived in John and Jane Curtis’ home with their family and in 1880 she was boarding with the Benedict family, all of whom are buried in this cemetery. A few years later, she went west to teach at the “Spencer Academy, an Indian Mission School



Delia on the porch at Rose Hill, the Fraleigh farm house, c. 1890. Photo credit: Sarah K. Hermans

Clifford, a 24-year-old single bank clerk, and her mother Regina C. Pulver, age 72. At one point, they lived at 201 West 117th St. in Manhattan. Cora retired somewhere between 1895 and 1915 from the New York City school system as a public school teacher. In 1880, Daniel was listed on West 131st St. as a store clerk with his wife keeping house and his son Clifford only four years old. Daniel died August 13th, 1881 and Cora outlived him by over 30 years, passing on January 26th, 1924.

Clifford P. Hunt was their only child. He made a name for himself as Vice President of the Chemical Bank & Trust Co. In 1934 he had been with the company 18 years. When he died childless in 1940 he gave over seven million in today's dollars to many different organizations and individuals, including \$2,000 (adjusted for inflation that's over \$36,000 today) for the upkeep of his parents' graves in the Red Hook Methodist Cemetery. The money was supposedly set up in a "trust fund to the county treasurer" though whatever became of it is anyone's guess.

Clifford had directed the funds to be used...

*"...for the maintenance and care of the Pulver plot in the Methodist Cemetery at Red Hook, Dutchess county, State of New York, in which my mother Cora Pulver Hunt, and my father, Daniel Clifford Hunt, are interred, particularly applying such income to the repair and preservation of any tombs, monuments, stones, fences, railings, or other erections or structures on or around said lot and to the planting and cultivation of trees, shrubs, flowers or plants in and about said lot."*¹

Though the area around it is disheveled and it could stand some cleaning, their tombstone is still standing today.

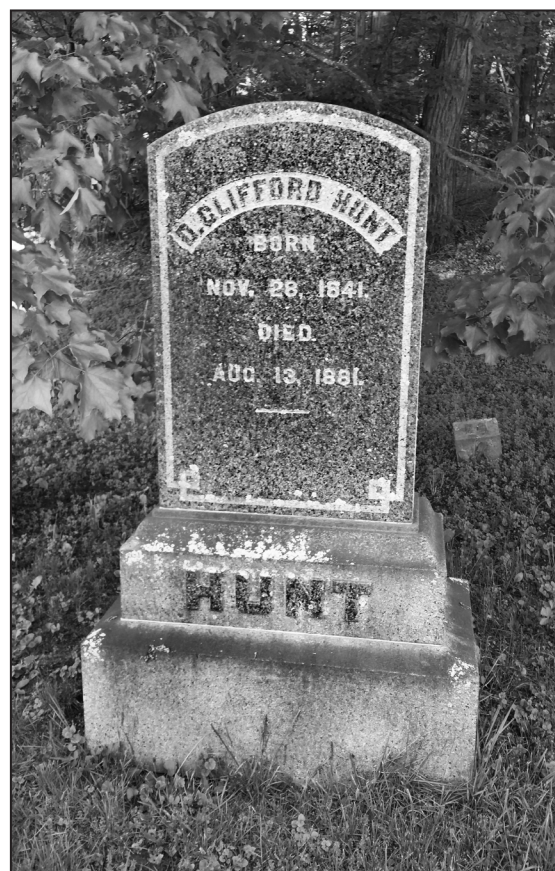
¹ Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle, February 15th, 1940

of (the) Choctaw Tribe" in Indian Territory. This is supposedly the place where "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" was first written and sung by a slave owned by the Choctaw who worked for the missionaries. She spent two years in what would become Oklahoma (1884–1886) before returning to Red Hook.

She died at the home of Herbert Jackson Curtis (1858–1924, son of John A. Curtis) in Red Hook at 80 years of age on March 17th, 1905.

The Gravesite Trust of D. Clifford Hunt & Cora Pulver

Daniel Clifford Hunt (born November 28th, 1841) married Cora Emeline Pulver (born September 26th, 1852) on July 7th, 1875 in Manhattan. She was the daughter of Cornelius Pulver and Catherine Regina Barringer (also buried in this cemetery). In 1870 she lived with her parents and brother Griffin in New York City. In 1900, she and D. Clifford resided with their son



Tombstone of D. Clifford Hunt (and wife Cora Pulver, engraved on the reverse).

Photo: Sarah K Hermans