

MAUDE EMMA MINER 1880 - 1967

Maude Miner was born in 1880, the seventeenth child of James Rathbone Miner, in Leyden, Massachusetts. Leyden is located on the northern border with Vermont in Central/Western Massachusetts.

James Rathbone Miner died when Maude was only three years old. She graduated valedictorian of her class at nearby Greenfield High School at age 16 and then entered Smith College in Northampton, MA convinced that she needed to lead a life of service.

After graduating with honors from Smith, she taught mathematics at Hood College in Maryland starting in 1901 for three years and then attended Columbia University in New York City for graduate work. While at Columbia, she completed her dissertation on young girls swept up into prostitution and found her calling to service.

Upon graduating Columbia with the data, personal stories, and the connections made during her dissertation work, she was named the City's first female probation officer for the Magistrate's Court. She was positioned at the Night Court to see and deal with the ravages of sexual exploitation and prostitution of girls and women. Many were recent immigrants, some were rural girls lured to the city by false pretenses other were older women "enslaved" by cocaine or other addiction.

In her book, The Slavery of Prostitution-A Plea for Emancipation, published in 1916, Maude describes the conditions of the 3,000 or so girls and women she encountered at Night Court. Every night between 9pm and 3am, the judge would see 100-165 women brought in for prostitution. Many did not speak English. The young runaways would not tell the judge where they were from out of fear they would face the terrible wrath of their fathers. Often first time offenders, these very young girls would be put in jail with hardened criminals and addicts with no attempt at reforming them other than levying fines which would send them back out to the street.

She was a formidable speaker and writer who appealed to all sectors of society at the time. A deeply religious woman, she had the support of religious institutions as well as her partners in academia and the respect of probate judges, officials and police associations. Alongside her Night Court job, Maude began petitioning for women's shelters, opening one called Waverly House with her sister, Stella Miner. The concept was to take in girls in the middle of the night after Night Court to keep them from ending up in jail. Waverly House required fundraising to stay open. She met with many of the great philanthropists of the time including John Astor and John D. Rockefeller. With this support, she was also able to purchase and operate Hillcrest Farm (for girls) in Connecticut.

She made a call for "Sex Education" in public schools, as she discovered that most girls ending up in Night Court had little to no knowledge about their own bodies or sexual diseases. This is a brand new concept in 1910. She said "the schools must be depended on for it as parents often fail." She also promoted protective measures for girls including regulations at factories including development of a Public Employment Bureau with special attention to keeping women safe in their work environment. She also championed reduced work hours for women, promoted child labor laws, and petitioned for increasing lighting in public parks. She promoted using school buildings for recreation instead of pool halls and dance clubs. She established the Girls Protective League in 1910 which became popular throughout the country and was eventually called the Junior League. The purpose of the League is for girls to help other girls.

In 1924, after many years "in the trenches", and as an independent tour du force, she married Alexander Hadden who was a wealthy land owner (old NYC money). He was awed by Maude's determination and a great believer in her causes.

Her sister, Stella Miner, continued the work at Waverly House and Hillcrest Farm with Maude now in the background, and together with Alexander's wealth and connections started traveling the world. Together, they founded the "Institute of World Affairs" in Geneva, Switzerland. It was focused on what we would now call "grass roots" peace building. They started by bringing college students from around the world together to sit and discuss how to build a peaceful world. The Great War (WWI) caused them to move the Institute to New York City. Later, the Great Depression slowed their work but never stopped it.

The Institute of World Affairs affiliated itself with the League of Nations, and is still, in 2024, a vibrant organization, based in Vienna, Virginia. It offers education to prospective diplomats and staff of international organizations (NGO's).

After settling in Florida, Maude and Alexander began the Palm Beach Roundtable in 1932. Its mission is to bring in speakers from around the world to discuss current affairs and work toward the organization's mission of peace building.

Maude said about her Miner genealogy that, "existing genealogies record chiefly the exploits of family who send as soldiers and officers in battles and of those who were killed or wounded in the early wars. I read with greater satisfaction about ancestors who helped build this new country to make peace with the Indians along the Canadian border and later established the Medical School at Yale.... Mannasseh, my great grandfather's son, who was the first white boy in New London, acquired skill in several Indian dialects and frequently acted as arbiter and disputes with the red men".

Maude's work on peace building resulted in a nomination for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1962, near the end of her life. She died in 1967 in Palm Beach, Florida and is buried at Trinity Church Cemetery in New York City.

Her Miner/Minor genealogy is as follows:

Thomas
Ephraim
Charles
Christopher
Cyrus
James Rathbone
Maude Emma Miner

Sources:

History of Leyden, Massachusetts by William Tyler Arms

Saving Girls and the World by Linda Walls (a biography written fairly recently)

Wikipedia and articles on Nobel Peace Prize nominees

Maude's published books:

Slavery of Prostitution – A Plea for Emancipation

Quest for Peace – Personal and Political (autobiography)

High Horizons (book of poetry)

By Andrea Miner Woods
Warwick, Massachusetts