

The Rev. William⁸ Waterbury Scudder I, Begins His Missionary Career with His First Wife:
A Story that Portrays Uncommon Dedication and Sacrifice

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WILLIAM W. SCUDDER WITH HIS WIFE CATHERINE

By graduating from Princeton in 1841, and from the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1844, and being licensed by the Presbytery of Elizabeth in 1845, and being ordained by the Church of Elizabeth, New Jersey on July 14, 1846,¹ William⁸ Waterbury Scudder had prepared himself to follow in his father's footsteps to serve as a missionary to India. With his parents far across the ocean in India, William⁸'s educational opportunities in America and his upbringing through his youth and young adulthood had been made possible by his generous step grandfather, Samuel⁶ Downer of Westfield, New Jersey, and his grandmother Ruth⁶ (Tuttle) (Waterbury) Downer.

William⁸ had been blessed to have his parents and siblings return to New Jersey in 1842 on furlough from their missionary work in India due to his father's poor health.² Given his zeal and work ethic, Dr. John⁷ Scudder, medical missionary pioneer, had found it difficult to concentrate on his rest and recovery. During his furlough, 1842–1846, he had preached to over 100,000 children and youth on the eastern seaboard, encouraging them to commit to Christ and in some cases to missionary work. Next, Dr. Scudder had preached throughout the Midwest. Although he had been away from home a lot on tours when all of the family were in America, it was a time for consolidating the family rapport and its commitment to service. William⁸'s brothers were also on the path to become doctors and/or ministers with missionary service in India as their objective.³

¹ Princeton, *Record of the Class of '41, The Semi-centennial Anniversary Reunion*, Tuesday, June 9th, 1891, 49.

² "The Rev. William Waterbury Scudder I: His Family Heritage and Youth in India and America," *Scudder Family Historical & Biographical Journal*, Scudder Association Foundation, volume 7, no. 1, (Summer 2025): 6–10, 13–14, <https://scudder.org/the-rev-william8-waterbury-scudder-i-his-family-heritage-and-youth-in-india-and-america/>.

³ Dorothy Jealous Scudder, *A Thousand Years in Thy Sight*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1984), 53.

When he returned on furlough in 1842, Dr. John⁷ Scudder I had been away from America since the fall of 1819 when he and his wife, Harriet⁷ (Waterbury) Scudder, had sailed to India with their toddler, Maria⁸ Catherine Scudder. In 1819, Dr. John⁷ Scudder was called as the first medical missionary from America to serve a foreign mission for the newly organized ABCFM, American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions.⁴ In late 1846, Dr. Scudder was recovered sufficiently to return to service in India.

There were several family milestones in 1846. The Reverend William⁸ Waterbury Scudder, having completed his training and received ordination, had found himself a wife, the lovely Catherine Eunice Hastings, who was willing to become his missionary wife to serve in India. They were married on 24 September 1846. Two months later, newlyweds William⁸ and Catherine Scudder, embarked on a sailing ship from Boston, Massachusetts on November 18, 1846, together with William⁸'s parents Dr. John⁷ and Harriet⁷ (Waterbury) Scudder and her youngest sisters-in-law Harriet⁸ and Louisa⁸ Scudder. Catherine⁷ committed to live out her life in India and Ceylon.

Catherine⁷ Eunice Hastings (*Thomas⁶, Dr. Seth⁵, Hopestill⁴, Dr. Thomas³ III, Dr. Thomas² II, Thomas¹*), was of early New England stock like many other early missionaries for the ABCFM. Catherine⁷'s immigrant ancestor, Thomas¹ Hastings, immigrated to Watertown, Massachusetts in 1634.⁵ Subsequent generations of Catherine⁷'s family also lived in Connecticut and New York. Catherine was born on 22 August 1825, the daughter of Thomas⁶ Hastings (1784–1872), the well-known musician and composer of hymn tunes whose biographies refer to his creating a hymnal and composing music for about 100 hymns, his most well-known composition being the tune for "Rock of Ages." One short biography quotes "Thomas Hastings devoted his life to the improvement of church music, and 'whatever true reforms were made in the spirit of praise during the first half of the present century were largely accomplished by and through him,' 'His early labors as editor and compiler of musical works were invaluable to the church at large,' and he was

⁴ "A Story 200 Years in the Making. In Appreciation for a Unique Life of Service: Love and Strength of Character Motivated Dr. John Scudder to Labor in India," *Scudder Family Historical & Biographical Journal*, volume 1, no. 1, (April 2019): <https://scudder.org/200-years-in-the-making/> and Susan Swanson, "The Missionary Scudder Family," *Scudder Family Historical & Biographical Journal*, volume 3, no. 1, (Winter 2021), <https://scudder.org/the-missionary-scudder-family-1819-1970-the-progenitors-dr-john-and-harriet-waterbury-scudder/>. And Jack Gillmar, "The Haystack Monument," volume 3, no. 1, (Winter 2021): <https://scudder.org/the-haystack-monument/>.

⁵ Thomas Hastings in Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration*, v. 3, G-H, 235, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2496/records/2151>.

the author of many beautiful hymns.”⁶ Another brief summary of the career of Thomas⁶ Hastings refers to his founding the periodical *Musical Magazine*, his serving as a choir master in New York City, and his life’s dedication to “the improvement of church music” both as composer and director of choirs.⁷ That source also praised his kind and gentle and serene temperament along with his disciplined work and religious and musical study habits and claimed that Catherine⁷’s mother was Mary Seymour whose character was described as refined and saintly in nature. By the way the Scudder family refers to Catherine⁷, aka Katherine (Hastings) Scudder was of like temperament.

No account was found about how Catherine⁷ Hastings and William⁸ W. Scudder met but it is not difficult to imagine that Dr. John⁷ Scudder was aware of the prolific work of the hymnist, Thomas Hastings, and that Thomas⁶ Hastings must have heard of Dr. John⁷’s missionary work in India and of his numerous preaching tours in America, 1842–1846, that received attention in the newspapers.

When the Scudder family arrived again in India, they were met by Dr. John⁷ and Harriet (Waterbury) Scudder’s oldest son, Henry⁸ and his wife Frances (Lewis), aka Fanny, “bearing the sad news” of the death of their little two-year-old son, Dr. Scudder’s first grandchild and namesake, John⁹ Scudder who died 27 February 1847 in Madras, Tamil Nādu, India. “Old Mother India was not content with the toil she had levied on Dr. John⁷’s children. She was claiming the second generation as well.”⁸ That was a sobering introduction to Catherine⁷ (Hastings) Scudder’s new life.

William⁸ and Catherine (Kate) were assigned to Ceylon, where he had been raised, so they were separated from William⁸’s parents who were at Madras until April when Dr. John⁷ was reassigned to Madura to treat a cholera epidemic.⁹ Madura was 300 miles southwest. As D. V. Scudder writes:

Dr. and Mrs. Scudder, Harriet and Louisa were nearly two weeks on the way to the old city, traveling by easy stages in their palankeens. The hot season was upon them and the land lay parched and dry. The hard cracked earth looked as

⁶ See “Thomas Hastings, Mus. D. No. 40,” *North America, Family Histories, 1500–2000*, 109–111, https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61157/records/1525892?tid=&pid=&queryId=0606c086-efe5-4ac0-8321-f23b65769c63&_phsrc=NtY1&_phstart=successSource. See also Lydia Nelson Hasting Buckingham, *The Hastings Memorial: a genealogical account of the descendants of Thomas Hastings of Watertown, Mass. from 1634 to 1864*, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/195296/?offset=7#page=1&viewer=picture&o=info&n=0&q=>.

⁷ Thomas Hastings, WikiTree, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Hastings-4891>,

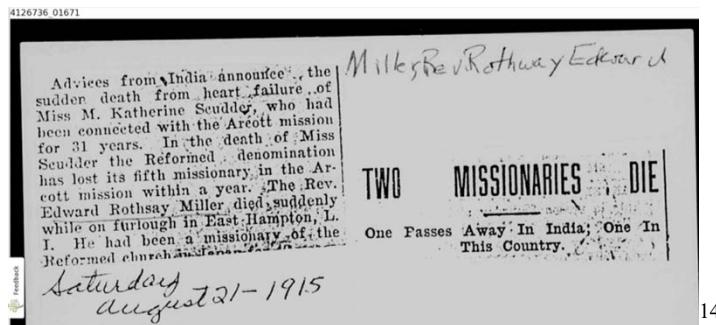
⁸ A Thousand Years, 56.

⁹ A Thousand Years, 56.

though it never could bear crops. The cocoanut and palmyra trees to which they had been accustomed near the seashore gave place to stony barren hills. From these hills swept a wind like the blast from a furnace, drying the skin until their faces seemed to crack if they said a word. The dust which accompanied the wind penetrated their eyes, their hair, their mouths. Even cholera-stricken Madura was a relief. There they could bathe, could stand on the cool stone floor of a bathroom and throw jugful after jugful of cool water over themselves and watch it trickle out through a hole in the corner.¹⁰

Meanwhile, on 4 May 1847, Dr. John⁷ and Harriet Scudder again became grandparents. Henry⁸'s daughter, Harriet⁹ Waterbury Scudder, was born at Madras and was named for her grandmother. Dr. John⁷ and Harriet Scudder must then have just gone to Madura so likely missed out on being present for the happy occasion. Fortunately, little Harriet⁹ Waterbury Scudder survived and became a mother of five children in Ohio with her husband, Leroy Lansing Janes.¹¹

While at Ceylon, William⁸ and Catherine (Kate) were blessed with the birth of their little daughter, Mary⁹ Catherine Scudder, born 16 June 1848,¹² also known as "Kitty," who later served as a missionary to India for 31 years. *A Thousand Years in Thy Sight* refers to her differently, as Katherine Hastings Scudder, but the 1880 U.S. Federal Census¹³ and her 1915 mission obituary refer to her as Catherine Scudder and M. Katherine Scudder, respectively.



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¹⁰ Scudder, *A Thousand Years*, 56–57.

¹¹ 1880 U.S. Federal Census, "United States, Census, 1880", *FamilySearch*

(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MNQP-DTG> : Tue Jan 14 14:06:48 UTC 2025), Entry for L. L. Janis and Harrett Janis, 1880. Inaccurately indexed as Janis, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/sources/K8HK-6VR>, instead of Janes.

¹² Thomas Hastings, Mus. D. No. 40," 111,

¹³ "United States, Census, 1880", *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MFCN-YF4> : Sat Jan 18 19:34:53 UTC 2025), Entry for William W. Scudder and Frances Scudder, 1880, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/sources/M7J8-3F4>.

¹⁴ How Katherine⁹'s name was spelled in M. Katherine Scudder, Michigan, Obituary Index Cards, 1890–2003, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-6QD7->

In 1849, William⁸ took Kate and Kitty from Ceylon to Madura to visit his parents. On the way home, the unthinkable happened and his wife Catherine died of cholera. She “was buried on a bleak, sandy stretch of beach at Ammapatam in a grove of mango trees.”¹⁵ William⁸ was left to sorrowfully carry on his mission work alone in Ceylon with little Kitty.

In 1849, William⁸ parents were reassigned to serve at Madras. In the Hastings family, Kate’s brother, the Reverend Thomas Samuel Hastings, became a minister at West Presbyterian Church of New York City. (Twenty-five years later was inaugurated at his alma mater, the Union Theological Seminary, New York as Professor of Sacred Rhetoric.)¹⁶ Kate’s sister, Mary Seymour Hastings, married the Reverend Daniel Bond who was Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Peerskill, New York, who died in office at age twenty-five of typhoid fever, three years after Kate’s death in Ceylon in 1849.

In 1849, two more devastating losses for the Scudder family soon followed Kate’s death. William⁸’s brother Samuel⁸ Downer Scudder died in a drowning accident at New Brunswick, New Jersey where Samuel⁸ was attending divinity school in preparation to return to India. Samuel⁸ Downer Scudder was named for their step grandfather Samuel⁶ Downer,¹⁷ who had helped to raise William⁸. Four days after William⁸’s brother Samuel⁸ drowned, and before they knew about it, William⁸’s mother Harriet⁷ suddenly died at Madras. D. V. Scudder writes:

This year, 1849, which had started out so unhappily for the Scudders, was to bring even greater sadness before it ended. On the fourteenth of November, Mrs. Scudder was stricken with severe cramps followed by extreme exhaustion. At first her husband was not worried; he did what he could to relieve the pain, which finally became so intense that she could not bear to be touched; even the weight of a grasshopper was a burden and she prayed for a quick release. As she was dying, her

[R1M?view=index&personArk=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AQ2TS-KRLG&action=view&cc=2215693&lang=en&groupId=](https://www.arkdigital.com/R1M?view=index&personArk=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AQ2TS-KRLG&action=view&cc=2215693&lang=en&groupId=)

¹⁵ Scudder, *A Thousand Years*, 91.

¹⁶ Union Theological Seminary, New York, *The Inaugural Services of Thomas S. Hastings, D.D.*, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb38e390317134fef4df566/t/5f35b1a0cd8eba74edf98a87/1597354401386/Hastings%2C+Thomas+Samuel%2C+The+Inauguration+of+the+Rev.+Thomas+S.+Hastings.pdf>.

¹⁷ “The Rev. William Waterbury Scudder I: His Family Heritage and Youth in India and America,” *Scudder Family Historical & Biographical Journal*, <https://scudder.org/the-rev-william8-waterbury-scudder-i-his-family-heritage-and-youth-in-india-and-america/>.

youngest daughter, distracted with grief, cried, weeping, ‘What shall I do? What shall I do?’

‘Read the twenty-ninth psalm and do accordingly,’ was the mother’s reply.

She retained consciousness practically to the end, sending messages to each of her children and relatives. For William she said, ‘Tell him I shall soon meet his beloved Kate.’

On the evening of November 18th, with her husband sitting by her head, her two daughters and Henry and his wife standing by her beside, she opened her eyes and said with peculiar energy, ‘Glorious heaven! Glorious salvation!’ Those were her last words and as her husband wrote, ‘She sweetly fell asleep in Jesus.’¹⁸

What none of these mourners knew at the time, was that Harriet⁷ would soon also meet her son Samuel⁸ Downer Scudder who had preceded her in death just four days before.

For the curious, what benediction testimony was Harriet⁷ leaving with her daughter Louisa to always remember and do?

Psalm 29

- 1 Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.
- 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD *is* upon many waters.
- 4 The voice of the LORD *is* powerful; the voice of the LORD *is* full of majesty.
- 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.
- 6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.
- 7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.
- 8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory.
- 10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.
- 11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

Harriet⁷ (Waterbury) Scudder knew these truths for herself, having had her faith “tried by fire” on many occasions, especially on the night when her faith in her God and her constant prayers to Him and His responding help tamed the wild tigers and elephants surrounding her and her two-year-old son John⁸, when the coolies hired to bear their conveyance had become fearful and

¹⁸ Scudder, A Thousand Years, 91.

abandoned mother and son for a long night in the jungle alone.¹⁹ The legacy of faith, commitment, resilience, dedication and sacrifice that Harriet⁷ left with her children still inspires her posterity and many others two hundred years later, perhaps none more so than William⁸ who would need these very qualities at that very time in his life.

To William⁸'s distress, a few months after his wife Catherine's death, he heard that the natives were making a shrine of her grave and making pilgrimages to it and leaving offerings. This he could not condone, so one night he quietly "went alone to her grave and, with the utmost secrecy, exhumed her body and placed it in a blanket which he then carried a mile up the beach to a waiting boat. He sailed quietly back to Madras and laid her to rest beside his mother, recently buried in the little Church of Scotland cemetery."²⁰

As D. V. Scudder continues, "For two years William carried on alone in Ceylon with the help of his little sister, Louisa⁸. Although Louisa⁸ was only a child herself [age 12 in 1849], she became a second mother to his baby."²¹

In 1851, William⁸ returned to America with his toddler Kitty where she was entrusted in the care of her Hastings grandparents.

While in America, William⁸ and his brother Joseph⁸ "met with the members of the Reformed Church Board to draw up plans for the new mission at Arcot."²²

Another benefit of this trip home to America, was that William⁸ found a lovely person to marry whose family was also favorable to mission work, Elizabeth Oliver Knight, also known as Lizzie. They married at Newark, New Jersey on 29 September 1852.²³

Lizzie Knight was well suited to help William⁸ with his assignment to return to India to join with his brother Henry⁸ in opening and developing the new Arcot mission. Lizzie was from a family of devoted Christians having siblings who were involved either in the ministry or in medicine, and some of whom would also serve foreign missions as the succeeding article about Lizzie will reveal. D. V. Scudder relates family feelings about the beginnings of the Arcot mission:

¹⁹ "If Harriet Scudder's Faith Could Tame Wild Tigers and Elephants in an Indian Jungle..." *Scudder Family Historical and Biographical Journal*, volume 2, no. 1, (Spring 2020), <https://scudder.org/if-harriet-scudders-faith-could-tame-wild-tigers/>.

²⁰ Scudder, A Thousand Years, 92.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ "New Jersey, Marriages, 1678–1985," *FamilySearch*, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FZRQ-3BV> : 22 July 2021), Elizabeth O. Knight in entry for William W. Scudder, 1852, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FZRQ-3BV>.

Old Dr. Scudder was delighted at the Board's decision to form a new mission. But Henry's pleasure was marred by the lack of any provision for the father to join his sons; he sent a half-humorous protest to the former, saying:

'What may we not hope of good to the mission cause, from the spectacle of a whole mission conducted of one family, with the father at the head—a beautiful sight to men and angels. It must by God's grace be done... You will have to come dear Father, in order to keep your sons in order.'

On the contrary, Mr. Winslow, one of old Dr. John's earliest associates, wanted the Scudders divided. He disapproved of the policy of sending near relatives to the same field. 'Scatter them,' he urged the Board, 'that they may either correct the deficiencies of others or be themselves corrected. There may be too much of a good thing in one place.'²⁴

Interesting words, considering that Rev. Miron Winslow was technically himself a relative twice of the Scudder family through his first two marriages. Winslow became an *uncle* to Dr. John⁷ Scudder I's sons by his second marriage to Catherine⁷ (Waterbury) (Carman) Winslow sister of their mother Harriet⁷ (Waterbury) Scudder.²⁵ Dr. John⁷ attended the official event to establish the Arcot Mission held at Vellore in 1853, but he continued to serve in Madras. Dr. John⁷ wrote:

This mission consists of three brothers, Henry M. Scudder, William W. Scudder and Joseph Scudder. We are clergymen of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, an old and honored branch of the Presbyterian body, which in earliest days of American History planted the standards of pure faith upon the new continent. We are Missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a society which, looking upon the world as its field, has sent forth preachers and teachers to almost every land. We are constituted a separate mission in 1853, under the name of the American Arcot Mission.²⁶

William⁸'s second wife Lizzie's mission at Arcot was short lived, for she died a year later.

²⁴ D. V. Scudder, *A Thousand Years*, 92-93.

²⁵ Two articles in *Scudder Family Historical & Biographical Journal*, Scudder Association Foundation, volume 1, no. 2, (June 2019), "Did Dr. John Scudder Know He Had Two Scudder Missionary Cousins with Him Aboard the *Indus*, 1819?" <https://scudder.org/did-dr-john-know/> and "Harriet Wadsworth (Lathrop Winslow: The Third 'Scudder' Cousin on the *Indus*," <https://scudder.org/harriet-wadsworth/>.

²⁶ Jubilee Commemoration 1853–1903 Vellore; India, Jan. 8th, 9th, 10th, 1905, (American Arcot Mission, 1903), Part 1, 1, (<https://archive.org/details/jubileecommemor00missgoog/page/n22/mode/2up>).