



Robert Newlin Verplanck: Civil War Hero in Changing Times

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Robert Newlin (R.N.) Verplanck was born at Mount Gulian, Fishkill Landing (now Beacon), New York, on November 18, 1842. He was born into a family of extraordinary wealth, privilege, and social access. His was expected to be a world of “grand tours,” vast art and wine collections, and elegant teas and dinners given by the genteel ladies of the family. Interaction between the cosmopolitan worlds of politics, business, and high society in New York, Albany and Washington, D.C., was common for the Verplancks. As such, Robert faced high expectations. He was groomed to be a gentleman of the landed gentry, and was classically educated, of good character, and an heir to a famous family of Dutch, Huguenot, and Quaker predecessors prominent in the establishment of the Republic. Unfortunately, the Civil War destroyed the insulated world of high society into which Robert Newlin Verplanck was born. When he emerged from his decorated military service, although personally fulfilled, he apparently was never quite able meet his family’s expectations. Herein is a short biography of the man.

As we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the lives of noteworthy generals and the accounts of significant battles are often highlighted, leaving behind the stories of those who participated in unusual corners of that epic struggle. One such participant was Dutchess County’s own Robert Newlin (R.N.) Verplanck. This is a brief biography of his life, of his career as a Union soldier, and of the challenges he faced after the War.

An Obituary

“Was Officer in Negro Regiment

Robert N. Verplanck is dead at his home in Orange, N.J., at the age of sixty-five years. Mr. Verplanck was born in Fishkill, NY, the son of the late Samuel Verplanck. He was a graduate of Harvard University, and during the Civil War was a second lieutenant in the Sixth United States Regiment of Negro troops. Because of service at the battle of Petersburg he was promoted to a captaincy by President Lincoln in 1865.” (From the Harvard College Library, January 13, 1908 Obituary, News Clipping; no attribution as to which newspaper.)

Ancestry

Robert Newlin Verplanck (generally referred to as R. N. Verplanck) was a ninth-generation Verplanck, descended from Abraham Isaac Verplanck, who was born in Holland and sailed to New Amsterdam about 1638 as a merchant. In the 1680s, Abraham Isaac’s son Gulian (along with partners Francis Rombout and Stephanus Van Cortlandt) purchased a large tract of land in Dutchess County, known as the Rombout Patent. The Verplanck family prospered and owned a colonial-era mansion on Wall Street in Manhattan, along with other properties in the city. Over time, they also acquired significant holdings in Dutchess, Ulster, Delaware, Orange, and Albany Counties.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Verplancks were among the wealthiest and most important citizens in the new nation. Robert Newlin Verplanck’s great-great-grandfather, Samuel Verplanck (1739–1820), was a patriot leader who turned his home, Mount Gulian, over to the Continental Army, under which it became headquarters to patriot General Baron von Steuben in the post-Yorktown years of 1782 and 1783.

Robert's great-grandfather, Daniel Crommelin Verplanck (1762–1834), rose to great heights as an attorney, banker, president of Kings College (now Columbia University), and as a U.S. Congressman (1802–1809), representing Manhattan. Daniel Crommelin Verplanck was also later awarded a judgeship in Dutchess County, a post he held until he died in 1834.

Immediate Family and Boyhood

With first wife, Elizabeth Johnson, Daniel Crommelin Verplanck had only one child who lived past infancy - Gulian Crommelin Verplanck (1786–1870). Known as “Gil” and “G.C.” throughout his lifetime, he was Robert's grandfather, and likely the most famous of the Verplancks of any era. Residing mostly in Manhattan and summering in Fishkill Landing (Beacon), he was the family patriarch until his death in 1870 and was known as “*The Essential New Yorker*,” the title of a biography written about him in 1951. G.C. was a published writer on general philosophy, treatises about American nationalism, Shakespeare, and the ancient classics. He was also a New York State assemblyman and state senator, and a prominent U.S. Congressman representing New York City (1825–33). G.C. was also an unsuccessful candidate for Mayor of New York City (1834), and a founder of the New York branch of the Whig Party, opposing Andrew Jackson and his forces. G. C. Verplanck was very active in social causes such as prison reform, public education, and the development of public hospitals. However, regarding slavery, the flashpoint issue of his era, he was a “gradualist,” as he took the Whig position against slavery on moral and economic grounds, but believed that slavery was a decision constitutionally left up to the individual states.

R. N. Verplanck's father was William Samuel Verplanck, who was born in New York in 1812 and died in 1885. His mother was Anna Biddle Newlin (1813–83), a daughter of the wealthy Newlin family, who were close family friends and occasional business partners of the Verplancks. The Newlins were practicing members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, known to be strong abolitionists and pacifists.

William Samuel Verplanck earned a law degree from Columbia in 1832, but he was not attracted to practicing law, banking, or politics. Instead, he initially embarked on the path of a dilettante, purchasing pieces of expensive art for his father, becoming a wine collector, book collector, and brewer of beers. Eventually, in mid-life, he managed the Verplanck family estates and went into business on his own. Until then, he lived primarily on generous stipends from his famous father. With his wife Anna, he raised a large family and built a new family home in 1846–47, called New Place, located in Dutchess County near Old Castle Point Road, just north of Mount Gulian. Their family consisted of Robert (b. 1842), his older sisters Eliza (b.1838) and Mary (b. 1840); Daniel (b. 1845) died at age 9; Anna (b. 1846); Jeannette (b.1849); Gelyna (Lena) (b.1852); and William Edward (b. 1856).

Robert was born at Mount Gulian on November 18, 1842. As an adult, he stood five feet five-and-a-half inches, weighed 160 pounds, had brown hair, hazel eyes, and a light complexion, according to Union Army records. In the few extant photographs we have, he is shown sporting a full moustache. The only reference to Robert in James F. Brown's diary of life at Mount Gulian is that of his birth.

During Robert's era, the main purpose of secular education for wealthy boys was to prepare them to become citizens and gentlemen by developing their personal character, exposing them to a classical education, and teaching them spiritual and personal discipline. Robert was therefore enrolled in the elite Poughkeepsie Collegiate School (PCS), a private school located in a Parthenon-style Greek Revival building on McKeen's Hill (later known as College Hill).

The Poughkeepsie Collegiate School was founded in 1836 and opened in 1837 as a college preparatory school for wealthy boys. It was considered one of the finest schools in the Northeast and was an object of local pride. Robert was one of approximately 110 boarders, attending from 1855 until his graduation in 1859. The cost for attending during that time was \$240–\$270 per year, which included most classes, room, board, and certain items of uniform clothing. In order to supplement Robert’s meals, Mount Gulian employee James F. Brown’s wife, Julia, was intermittently hired as a personal cook for him while he attended the school.

Trustee Reports from the PCS in 1843 and 1844 clearly express the school’s emphasis on character development, morality, strict discipline, and deportment towards the instructional staff, but without corporal punishment, a unique attitude at the time. Regarding spiritual development, PCS was not run by a particular Christian denomination, but religious instruction and regular attendance at Sunday service was considered vital, if not mandatory, for the well-being of all the pupils’ character and soul.

The 1844 curriculum at PCS called for instruction in Greek and Latin literature, English, French and Spanish, mathematics, commercial knowledge, music, drawing, and painting. Geography, world and U.S. history, natural philosophy (the sciences), political economy (economics and political science), and civil polity (introduction to law and civics) were also taught. Physical activity in the form of gymnastic exercise was just getting an introduction into elite schools and colleges in the 1840s, in imitation of the ancient Greek and Roman dedication to the physique, martial arts, and physical courage.

Student at Harvard

Robert’s experiences and grades at the PCS are not known, but we do know that he was admitted to the freshman class at Harvard University “On Probation and on Condition” in August 1859. In order to obtain entrance to the university, one had to pass an entrance examination, “produce proper testimonials of a good moral character,” and give a bond of \$400.00 that showed the ability of the family to meet financial obligations.

The admission examination of Harvard in 1858–59 tested expertise in Latin, Greek, arithmetic, algebra and geometry, and ancient and world history. The examinations were administered to Robert in July 1859, and his first day of class was September 1, 1859.

During Robert’s four-year course of study, to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts, he would have covered the classics; the sciences (botany, chemistry, physics, astronomy, mineralogy, biology, anatomy and zoology); mathematics, including trigonometry and advanced analytical mechanics; French, Spanish, and German; modern literature, history and philosophy. At the time, A.B. degrees (our B.A. today) were generic, as all students at Harvard followed a core curriculum and did not “major” in specific disciplines. Students could, however, take numerous electives or attend lectures in the arts, music, religion, law, languages, and medicine. In addition to the academic curriculum, attendance at daily prayer services and Sunday service were mandatory.

A letter from Robert, written at Harvard to his sisters Jenny and Lena, states that he had “received letters from Grandfather (family patriarch G.C. Verplanck) and Annie (older sister Anna) both of which gave me good advice...Since then I have quieted down somewhat... I have no doubt about the matter and according to which I will try to act, although it is hard enough...” The matter in question was not further

elaborated, but the fact that Grandfather wrote to him suggests the issue might have impacted negatively on the family's good name if not addressed. The letter also apologized about his writing a previous letter to his mother, which was "very foolish as it was about nothing except the war."

Most interesting regarding Robert's career at Harvard is his poor disciplinary record, as suggested by his Grandfather's letter. Notations from the Faculty Records of the University, 1860–63, show a history of disciplinary actions taken against Robert for the following infractions: "Numerous and repeated absences from Prayer; Failure to pass a Chemical Physics examination; Copying an exercise at Examination; Absences on Sundays; Absences from Chapel Services; Smoking in public and not reporting to administrators after repeated warnings about smoking; Copying in Mathematics Examination." For one unknown infraction he was "Required to study on vacation and recite to an instructor approved by the President (of the University)." Despite all of these issues, R.N. Verplanck graduated with an A.B. from Harvard University in the spring of 1863. He then headed home to Fishkill Landing to make a fateful decision.

A Soldier at War

At the time of Robert's graduation from college, America was engulfed in the Civil War—on the battlefields, in Washington, D.C. and on the home front. 1863 was perhaps the most critical year in the entire history of the nation, as Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, and on March 3, 1863, signed the Enrollment Act of Conscription, beginning America's first national draft, which led to widespread protests and riots in Northern cities.

With the war going badly in the field, Lincoln was being urged by abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and by Radical Republican officers to allow blacks into the Army as soldiers. Finally, on May 22, 1863, Lincoln signed General Order 143, creating the Bureau of Colored Troops. The bureau created an entirely separate Army of black soldiers, led by white officers, to be called the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Eventually, over 180,000 black men and their white officers served in the USCT, including R.N. Verplanck.

July 1, 1863, was the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. Ironically, on precisely that day, according to the official enlistment records, Robert N. Verplanck, age 20, enlisted in Manhattan as a private with Company A, 22nd Regiment of the New York State Militia, for a thirty-day period. The record shows that on July 24th 1863, he mustered out of that same unit. One notation on a later Request-for-Pension document indicates that Robert then traveled to Washington, D.C., to try to enlist as an officer in the USCT.

Why did Robert make the fateful decision to volunteer with the Colored Troops? If drafted into the Army he could have easily bought his way out with a replacement, which was common practice at the time for a "swell." If he wanted to volunteer, he could have easily joined one of the many all-white New York units, in which at least seven other Verplancks were serving. Instead, he volunteered for service in the USCT, although it was common knowledge that any white officer of the USCT captured by Rebel forces could be summarily executed. Perhaps Verplanck joined because of abolitionist fervor, or as a demonstration against the Whig "gradualists" in his family. Perhaps it was because he thought he would be promoted quickly in the USCT, although as indicated in his letters, that was not to be the case.

In any event, sometime between late July and early September 1863, R. N. Verplanck traveled to the nation's capital and enrolled in "Casey's Board." Major General Silas Casey, the author of a book on infantry tactics and a former division commander in the Army of the Potomac, served as president of the Washington, D.C., Examining Board, in charge of selecting white officers for the USCT. With Thomas Webster of Philadelphia, abolitionist and chairman of that city's Supervisory Committee for Recruiting of Colored Regiments, they organized eleven all-black infantry regiments to be outfitted at Camp William Penn, near Philadelphia. By the end of 1863, the Examining Board for USCT officers had interviewed 1,051 candidates, approving only 560, enough to fully staff sixteen infantry regiments. R.N. Verplanck was one of those approved in September 1863, earning a commission as second lieutenant.

Verplanck then headed to Camp William Penn, which was a large encampment and recruiting grounds for the newly formed black army. According to Army records, R. N. Verplanck enlisted on September 15, and was formally attached to Company H of the 6th Infantry Regiment, USCT, as a second lieutenant, "for a term of three years or the duration of the war." His first letter home, one of a cache of 58 letters (now kept at the Adriance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie), is dated September 17, 1863, Philadelphia. In every letter home, he signs off as R. N. Verplanck.

Verplanck saw action with the 6th USCT in Virginia, but was transferred on November 23, 1864, to Company A, and later to Company G, of the 118th Infantry Regiment, USCT, where he was promoted to First Lieutenant. In January 1865, he was promoted to Headquarters Aide de Camp, serving directly under General Truman Seymour, 3rd Division, 6th Corps, Army of the Potomac. Under General Seymour he was promoted to Brevet Captain, a field promotion, for gallant service outside of Petersburg, Va., on April 4, 1865.

In his letters, R.N. wrote of aggressively seeking more duties, promotions, and direct engagement in battle action, and he did work his way up through the ranks, from raw recruit to brevet captain. He and his units saw action outside of Yorktown, Virginia; at Charles City Courthouse in December 1863; at New Kent Court House in March 1864; at City Point, Virginia, in May 1864; at the Siege of Petersburg in May 1864; at Baylor's Farm, Virginia in June 1864; again at Petersburg from August 1864 to January 1865; and during the Siege of Richmond in April 1865.

R. N. was never wounded or captured, but he was seriously ill a number of times. Army medical records show he was officially unable to perform his duties due to illness at five different times, ailing with rheumatic fever and two bouts of typhoid fever, as well as other unnamed sicknesses. On December 10, 1864, he was granted a long-sought leave of absence, for thirty days, most likely for the upcoming Christmas holiday. A letter from his sister Jeannie, dated Friday, 27 January (1865), addressed to "My Darling Rob" says, "When you have seated yourself quietly in the (train) cars, which is taking you faster and faster away from those who love you most, you can bring out my little letter and read it. Dear, dear Rob, you do not know what sorrow it is to part from [you], but maybe you think when you see us crying that we want you to stay. No, that is not it, for it is with pride I can say that I have one who is the dearest of all things in all the world, fighting for the Right and his Country...Oh, Rob, do take care of your health, you know that you are not entirely well yet, do not expose yourself more than is necessary... Write often and tell us how you are doing and how you like your new Regiment... Good bye dearest. May God bless and preserve you, Ever your loving sister, Jeannie."

R.N Verplanck's war letters home to his mother and sister reflect a vivacious personality, an honest reporter, and a sympathetic voice for the plight of blacks in the Army. In his first letter, he states, "The regiment is composed of as fine a set of men as I ever saw in my life and if we officers do our duty they can be made great soldiers... I talked with some of my company and found them to be quite well informed men and as happy as could be and I know I shall like them first rate." On November 26, 1863, Verplanck reports to his mother that his men have refused the half-pay given to black troops. "Our pay master is to come today but the men will not take any money as the monthly pay is only seven dollars instead of the thirteen as they expected. It does certainly seem hard that they should not get full pay when they were promised it by the men that enlisted them at the North and for a drafted man it is certainly harder yet. The men are all hard enough up for money but they consider it a matter of pride and are willing to let the money go. One of our men said that if he was not to be put on an equality [sic] with white troops he was willing to serve the government for nothing... I must say I admire their spirit."

It is not recorded of Robert if he and the other white officers of the 6th USCT refused their own pay, in sympathy with the black troops, as was done in the famous Massachusetts 54th. On April 22, 1864, referring to the pay issue being satisfied, he wrote, "The government has at last determined to give us our rights and I am as happy as a clam at high water."

R. N. Verplanck's letters are a treasure trove of insight, sly humor, and the intimate workings of an Army headquarters: the petty politics, the boring routines, the expectation of an upcoming campaign, and the rigors of camp life. As a witness to unfolding history, he writes of more than twenty Union generals and mentions Rebel generals Lee, Pickett, and Beauregard. In a letter dated January 18, 1864, he mentions a speech made by Frederick Douglass and on August 1, 1864, he writes of the panic that concluded the Massacre of the Crater, where surrendering black soldiers were surrounded, attacked, then murdered and physically mutilated by Rebel troops outside Petersburg. He writes of getting sick a number of times and having to go to a field hospital, of sending for and receiving French books for reading pleasure and blackberry syrup from home, and, of course, asking often about life back home. R.N. also writes home of his disappointments at not getting expected promotions, or being given leave home, and also of having a series of political arguments with a superior officer and his cronies, leading to an unexpected transfer to another unit. R. N. was apparently outspoken and independent as a soldier, as his earlier record at Harvard indicated.

The letters also clearly display an active wit and sense of fun. At times, he writes to his sister, making light fun of friends back home or teasing them about not taking their school lessons seriously, and so forth. He also writes an entire letter from the front to his dear dog, Dan, which is filled with irony and broad humor. In it, he apologizes to the dog for not having written sooner, considering that the dog took the time to write him first.

Most poignant are his letters describing black troops liberating slaves in near-Biblical scenes of jubilation and humility. His letters from April 1865 reflect the profound desolation and anger felt by the Army upon hearing the news of Lincoln's assassination by John Wilkes Booth. His calls in those letters for revenge against the South were not alone.

In addition to copies of his letters and official War Department and USCT records, Mount Gulian's collection contains a Civil War photo of R.N. Verplanck in uniform, and his promotion document to Brevet Captain from the War Department, signed by Secretary of War Stanton.

The Civil War ended in April 1865 but was tragically marred by the assassination of the President. According to Army documents, on June 12, 1865, R. N. Verplanck was formally released from his duties as aide de camp for Brigadier Gen. Seymour, most likely heading home to Fishkill Landing. On June 21, 1865, he formally applied for his discharge from the Army from Fishkill Landing. It was granted on July 7, 1865.

Postwar Life: The Long Aftermath

When Lincoln died, Andrew Carnegie, 30, was already wealthy. J. P. Morgan, 28, was an experienced international banker. John D. Rockefeller, 26, ran one of the country's most profitable oil refineries. None of them had fought in the Civil War. None of them would have thought of doing so. But the future was theirs.

When Lincoln died, Robert Newlin Verplanck was not yet 23. Raised to become a landed gentleman, with a classical education, he had volunteered to fight for the Union and freedom for the enslaved. But the future was not his—and yet he would live for another forty-three years in a world he could never quite master.

Despite the opportunities, through the extant records of his later life we find hints of sadness as the result of business failures, family squabbles over the division of vast fortunes, and the gradual loss of his health. We get the sense of a man who worked hard at a succession of careers but was mostly supported by his father. We also know that Robert raised a family and kept it intact during turbulent times, but not without marital tensions with his wife, the formidable Kate Brinckerhoff. Yet, there is also a clear sense that Robert maintained his sense of humor and perspective throughout his life, although towards the end there are indications that he turned rather cynical, perhaps not unnatural for one who has seen vast fortunes and opportunities slip through his fingers.

R. N. Verplanck apparently left New Place in Dutchess County and moved to New York City sometime in the latter part of 1865. There is good evidence that he lived in the city in a series of well appointed rented rooms, from 1865 until 1871. A letter written by him, to his sister Jenny, dated February 11, 1866, from New York, indicates he was involved in visiting a social circuit of old family friends. We also know he travelled to Europe at least once during that time.

From the 1903 edition of the *Report of the Secretary of the Class of 1863 of Harvard College* (an intermittent publication that noted the whereabouts of alumni) and from the family's oral tradition, we know that at some point during the postwar years, R.N. owned a half-share in a New Jersey oil refinery, a budding business sector at the time. According to the Class Secretary's Report: "He (Verplanck) narrates an instance of fortune's pranks, to show how narrowly he escaped the 'potentialities of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.' When he sold his oil refinery in 1872 to Standard Oil of New Jersey, his partner took cash, and he took one hundred shares in Standard Oil stock, which his father, badly advised, induced him to sell soon after. That stock in 1882 became twenty-four hundred shares, and is worth today [in 1903] \$1,680,000 and has paid \$700,000 in dividends."

In 1875, the *Report of the Secretary of the Class of 1863* authoritatively states of R. N. Verplanck that "since April 1, 1871, he lived on a farm at Fishkill Plains, Dutchess County, N.Y. having sold out his oil refinery, and had the management of all his father's farms, and was especially engaged in the production of milk." We know from later wills and real estate deed transactions that the farms mentioned here were

the Wilde Farm, East Fishkill; Mott Farm, East Fishkill; Vermilye Farm, East Fishkill; Prospect Farm, Fishkill Plains; New Place Farm, Fishkill Plains; and at Mount Gulian's farm, Fishkill Landing.

In addition to managing the farming operations for his father, R. N. Verplanck (according to his Class Secretary) "went into business in New York City on May 1, 1875 at No.80 Pearl Street, Manhattan." We know that Robert considered New Place, Fishkill Plains, as his permanent residence at this time, so the New York City address was most likely an office from which to assist his aging father's businesses. The class secretary's report of June 1888 refers to his "...being engaged in manufacturing in bonded warehouses there (New York City), from May, 1875." No records indicate the nature of Verplanck's manufacturing processes or the types of industries he served in New York, although we know the family had a successful brickworks in Beacon.

There are no specific income records for R.N. Verplanck between 1875 and 1885, but it seems that he was deriving income from his father. The estate records give a clear account of income payments to Robert from 1887 to 1902, apparently for his management of the farms. The amounts varied annually, averaging around \$1100 per year, with a high of \$1744 in 1896 and a low of \$406 in 1889. These records also show that Robert received an unspecified parcel of land, deeded to him in May 1887 by his father's Trust.

It is recorded that Robert borrowed money from his father, and later from his Trust, and also from a "Mrs. Newlin," (perhaps his mother's sister), to run the farms and engage in other business opportunities. By 1887, he had debts of \$35,000 in notes. This indebtedness became rather chronic, as Robert's debts on these loans and other mortgages were noted as mostly undiminished into the early 1900s. In fact, a judicial settlement of June 7, 1900, shows that remaining debts on eight bonds worth \$8000 were secured by mortgages held by him.

Family Life

On February 24, 1876, R. N. Verplanck married Katherine "Kate" Brinckerhoff, who had been born on February 24, 1857. Kate was the daughter of Matthew Van Benschoten Brinckerhoff of Fishkill Landing, and Mary Willis Franklin of New York. The Brinckerhoffs were a large, old-line Dutch colonial family with many farm holdings throughout Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

It is clear from the record that Kate was a very active participant in the family's economic life. Over the years it was Kate, and not Robert, who had title to many of the farm properties he managed, and it was Kate who was directly involved in most of their numerous real estate transactions. Exactly why Kate had title to their properties and not Robert is left to speculation.

Robert and Kate had five children, all of whom were born in Fishkill, and all of whom lived into adulthood. They were Gulian Crommelin Verplanck (b. December 9, 1876); Judith Crommelin Verplanck (b. April 14, 1878); Mary Brinckerhoff Verplanck (b. September 28, 1881); William Samuel Verplanck (b. May 20, 1884); and Robert Sinclair Verplanck (b. August 5, 1885).

The family stayed intact at least into the early 1900s, when Robert and Kate moved with their children to Orange, Essex County, New Jersey, for his retirement. The Class Secretary's Report of June 1903 reported that "(Robert) is now living at Orange, New Jersey, having his family, who are employed in New York and its vicinity, with him." Oldest son Gulian Crommelin Verplanck was at that time, along

with son William, employed by a Mr. Cromwell, a Harvard classmate of Robert's. Son Robert Sinclair Verplanck was then reportedly working in a "marine engine-shop." Daughter Judith Crommelin Verplanck went on to a career in teaching, working in the Yonkers Public Schools in the 1920's. Eldest daughter Mary Brinckerhoff Verplanck married James Kent.

Based on the oral tradition in the family, it was said that Robert and Kate had a somewhat stormy marriage, he being rather "laid back" and she being demanding and fussy, especially about business matters. These notions seem to be corroborated in the actual record.

Declining Years

In April, 1903, R.N. Verplanck and Kate began their quest to get a pension for his service in the Civil War, which at that time was not a guaranteed benefit. After medical examinations and numerous military and medical record reviews, a Pension of \$6.00 per month was granted in late 1904, later increased to \$12.00 per month in early 1907. An Accrued Pension Order was issued to Kate in July, 1908, but no amount was then specified.

On January 10, 1908, Robert Newlin Verplanck died of a sudden heart attack at home in Orange, N.J., age 65. The photograph accompanying the obituary shows a somewhat sad but rugged man, balding, with a drooping mustache, wearing a high collar and a proper necktie. The notice reported him to be in rather good health before his death and stated he "...took a keen interest in public affairs." Funeral services were held the following week in Trinity Episcopal Church, Fishkill, where he is buried.

From Robert's death in 1908 until Kate's passing, we get a picture of a feisty woman battling against all odds. Kate was involved in a number of real estate transactions after Robert's death and repeatedly petitioned the Pension Office, later the War Department, later the Veterans Administration, for an increase in her widow's pension. On June 9, 1930, she began to receive \$40 per month, the maximum amount for Civil War soldiers at the time. After 1930, her repeated requests for additional pension money were all denied. In 1934 she wrote to the Veterans Administration, "...but with the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) dying off, cannot the widows have more?" There is no reply in the record as to her request. In April 1935, Kate Verplanck moved to Norwich, Chenango County, New York. She died there on March 28, 1944.