

A RARITY RECOGNIZED: GEORGIANA MADONA MALVINA SUTHON

By the Editor, assisted by Jane Suthon Lovegrove and DeeDee Dibenedetto

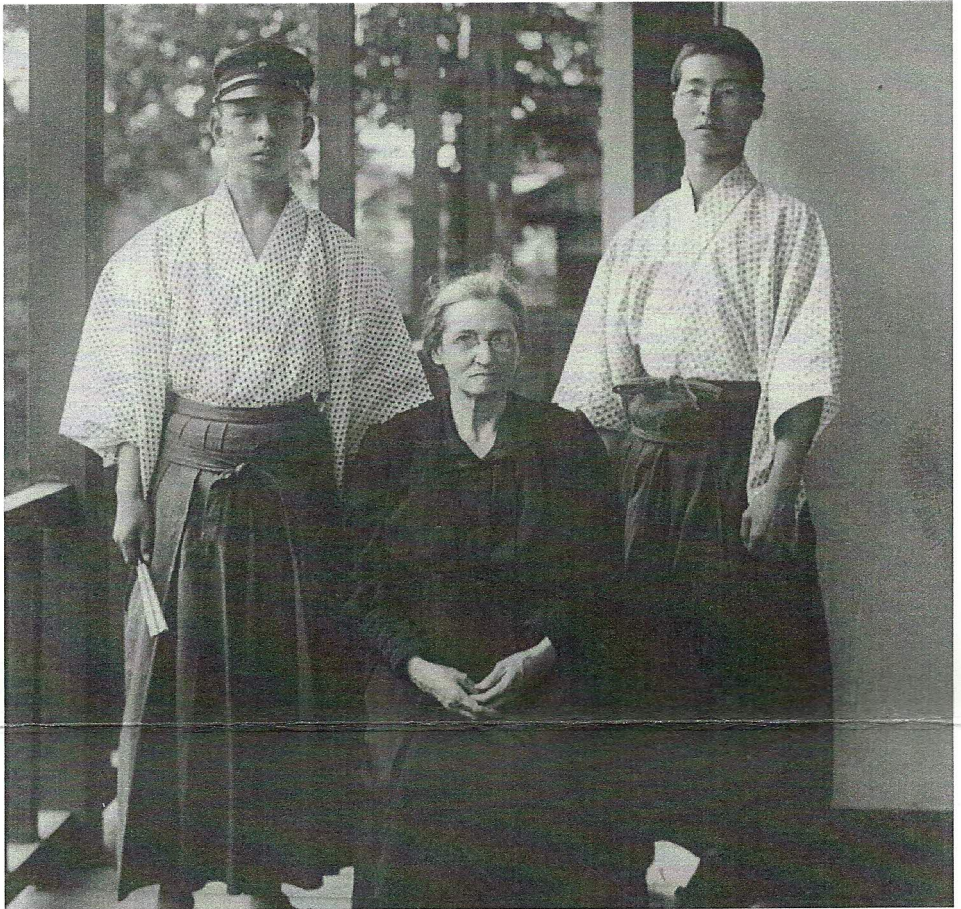
When Georgiana Suthon died in 1941, at her sister Fanny Suthon's home on East Main Street in Houma, she was retired after serving thirty-one years as an Episcopal missionary in Japan. Her burial took place in St. John's Historic Cemetery—in a large family plot established by her father Lucius Fane Suthon, Sr., a native of London, England.

Georgiana's father settled in Assumption Parish in 1839. His ship's captain, destined originally for Galveston, mistakenly ended his voyage in New Orleans, where Lucius Suthon came ashore. Well educated and able to speak and write both French and English, Suthon secured employment at first as a tutor. Among his pupils were Francis T. Nicholls and several members of the Pugh family of Woodlawn, near Napoleonville. In 1847, Suthon married Manette L. Blanchard, a Roman Catholic, and he began raising sugar cane and other crops in Assumption, St. Landry, and eventually Lafourche Parishes. The family resided in Thibodaux at the start of the Civil War in 1861.

Born in 1850, the family's second child of eight, Georgiana Suthon was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church in Plattenville, attended by a godfather, Adolphe Lovet, and godmother, Marguerite Serafine Blanchard. She became known as "Georgie" and eventually changed her affiliation to the Episcopal Church. The family moved to New Orleans in 1880, and Georgie attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

In April 1889, at the age of 39, Georgiana traveled with a fellow missionary, Rebecca Ford Heath of Kentucky, by steamer across the Pacific Ocean to Tokyo. She entered into missionary work in Tokyo at a time when Japan only recently had begun to allow Christians to enter the country. For many centuries, followers of Christ found Japan unwelcoming and dangerous. Georgiana learned the language and began teaching Bible to Japanese youth. She transferred to the northern Japan city of Aomori, the only white person there. Her eventual assignments were to Kanazawa, on the Sea of Japan, and then to Kyoto, where she worked with Bishop Henry St. George Tucker, who later became presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in America.

A life member both of the American Red



Georgiana Suthon and students c. 1930

Two photographs of Georgie Suthon show her as a determined, handsome woman, at different stages of life. A passport form indicated her height as five feet four inches. The earlier image depicts her not long after she entered into missionary work, and the later photo shows her with two of her Japanese students, their identities unknown and their futures uncertain. Japan soon tragically became involved with militarism and conquest.

(Sources: Houma, Thibodaux, and New Orleans newspapers; usgarchives.net, rootsweb.ancestry.com; 1860 U. S. Census, Thibodaux; Suthon family)

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