

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Vosburgh, Martin

1738–1801

Old Red Church Cemetery, Tivoli

Badly chipped and almost totally eroded red sandstone tablet next to his wife's smaller one, south of the church close to the road.

Martin Vosburgh was of Dutch heritage, the son of Jan Vosburgh and Cornelia Knickerbocker who christened him just over the county border in Linlithgo in July of 1738. His first wife, Hannah Ashley from Sheffield, Massachusetts was 19 years old when she died six months after they were married in 1764. She was initially buried in the Hoffman burial ground “on a sand bluff back of the hotel at Tivoli Landing” with Martin’s father’s family. Interments from this small collection of graves were removed and re-interred at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church some time after 1882.

Martin was married for the second time to Cornelia Gilbert (1740–1809) in 1766 and they had at least six children for whom baptismal records exist, Hannah (1777–1804) who married Arthur Roorbach, John (baptized in 1767 in Germantown as “Jan”), William (baptized in Red Hook in 1769), Martin (1771–1815), Ephraim (baptized 1780 in Germantown, may also have gone by Benjamin), and Jacob Vosburgh (1782–1854) who married Hannah Schoonmaker.

Ephraim Vosburgh’s 1780 baptism was sponsored at the Dutch Church by Ephraim Braser [BRAY-



“Hanger, ca. 1775 Made by Ephraim Brasher, New York. Lent by the Lattimer Family Collection. This nicer-than-average sword was owned by Ethan Allen. It has a British blade mounted in a gilded silver American hilt, made by Ephraim Brasher. Brasher, an early American silversmith, later became the first master of the United States mint in Philadelphia.” while on display at Fort Ticonderoga.

Child and Date		Parents	Witnesses
Cathrine	Aug 9, 1777	William ^{Jr} Gilbert	Martin Vosburgh
		Cathrine Gilbert	Cornelia Gilbert
Hannah	Nov 23	Martin Vosburgh	William Gilbert
		Cornelia Gilbert	Abthea Gilbert
Margriet	June 15	John Corry	The parents and witnesses
		Cathrina MacDonnell	
John	June 10	John Woodman	Nicholaes Hoffman
		Ann Silvester	Edy Silvester
Derrick Kessche	Sep. 14	Leendert Ten Broeck	Derrick H. Ten Broeck
		Geertie Schermehorn	Doreta Ten Broeck
Ephraim	Sep. 28	Ephraim Brasher	William Gilbert
		Arejaantie Gilbert	Margret Brasher

A page from record of baptisms for the Red Church, Tivoli 1774-1778.

zhur] and wife Ariaantje Gilbert, transplants from New York City having fled the occupation of the British during the Revolutionary war. Ariaantje and Cornelia Gilbert were sisters, making Ephraim (who's surname is most commonly written 'Brasher') Martin's brother-in-law.

There is a dog-head pommel sword known as a "hanger" (in the collection of the Lattimer Family on loan but not currently on display at Fort Ticonderoga) that is supposed to have belonged to Revolutionary war hero Ethan Allen. This fact would seem utterly unrelated to our subject, except that Martin was also involved in the Revolution, having fought with the 6th Dutchess militia, and that this particular sword's scabbard had silver bands around it inscribed with "Ethan Allen", "E. Brasher, Maker, N. York" and "Martin Vosburg, 1775". The scabbard was documented in the late 19th century, but was apparently lost in a fire from which only the sword was saved.

Brasher was a famous gold and silver smith of the era who created various pieces and is now most famous for the Brasher Doubloon—a rare gold coin. He was known to mount blades for Revolutionary War soldiers with decorative hilts. One of his pieces is in the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection at Yale on which

pommel is engraved “Petrus Winkoop junr”, made for Wynkoop, an ensign in the Ulster County militia.

Did “Martin Vosburgh 1775” mean that the sword was originally his? Vosburgh outlived Allen by more than a decade, so it seems odd that a sword possibly made for Vosburgh in 1775 would go to another man in his lifetime. Was this engraved long after the war for some other honorary reason? Did Vosburgh help fashion the piece? Did he work with his brother in law in the silversmithing trade? Did he help fund the work and so was listed like a donor? Our research could not clarify any of these questions and as Matthew Keagle, Ph.D., the curator of Fort Ticonderoga points out, “something doesn’t add up, and without the scabbard to actually see, there isn’t a lot more to go on.” An 1893 newspaper article about the sword’s provenance unfortunately sums it up: “Why this name appears, no one knows.”

Research and writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2025

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