

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Hendrick Benner, Jr.

September 10th, 1758–June 3rd, 1817

St. John's Reformed Church cemetery, Upper Red Hook

This gravestone is no longer extant, perhaps eroded past legibility, broken and subsumed, or removed long ago. Hendrick and his wife's markers were recorded in Old Gravestones of Dutchess County in a survey done in August of 1914: "Benner, Esq.; Hendrick d. 1817, June 3, a. 58 y. 9m.; Catherine Pitcher, his wife, d.1802, Feb. 13. A. 39-5-8." We will instead visit his son of the same name. Henry's handsome marble tablet gravestone is in the first row next to the western side of the church.

Like many other local men who participated in the Revolutionary War, Hendrick Benner was of Palatine descent—of a family that arrived in the colonies from what would become Germany in a wave of migration at the beginning of the 18th century.

Hendrick's lineage is, as with the Palatines, typically confusing. His parents, Hendrick Benner and Catherine Pezer (Pitcher), baptized him in the Dutch Reformed church in 1758. He married another Catherine Pitcher and they baptized their own son Hendrick Benner in 1783.

Hendrick Jr. and Catherine had at least eight children, Catherine who married Garret Cuck, Hendrick who married Annatje Moore and went by "Henry", Maria who married John Knickerbocker, Elizabeth who married Cyrus Burnap, Anna who married Jacob W. Ten Broeck, Christina who married Samuel Nelson, Adam who died young, and Margaret. These families would remain local and intermarry for a few generations and many locals are among their descendants.

Before the Revolutionary war began, committees had formed in the colonies in response to "intolerable acts", and violence erupting in Massachusetts. In New York in 1775, the Provincial Congress drafted Articles of Association which asked the "Freeman, Freeholders, and Inhabitants" of New York that would sign them to agree to getting Britain to reconcile with America through boycotts of British goods, and align themselves with the patriot cause, as they were resolved "to never become Slaves" to British oppression. Many in our area did sign, but if someone was unsure or against the idea, their names were recorded as "those not signing". Hendrick Benner, Jun. signed at Rhinebeck (which then encompassed Red Hook) along with other members of the Benner/Bender family.



Hendrick Benner Jr's son's tombstone

New-York, April 29, 1775.

A General Association, agreed to, and subscribed by the Freeholders, Freemen, and Inhabitants of the City and County of New-York.

PERSUADED, that the Salvation of the Rights and Liberties of America, depends, under GOD, on the firm Union of its Inhabitants, in a vigorous Prosecution of the Measures necessary for its Safety; and convinced of the Necessity of preventing the Anarchy and Confusion, which attend a Dissolution of the Powers of Government; We, the Freemen, Freeholders, and Inhabitants, of the City and County of New-York, being greatly alarmed at the avowed Design of the Ministry, to raise a Revenue in America; and, shocked, by the bloody Scene, now acting in the Massachusetts-Bay, DO, in the most solemn Manner resolve, never to become Slaves; and do associate under all the Ties of Religion, Honour, and Love to our Country, to adopt and endeavour to carry into Execution, whatever Measures may be recommended by the Continental Congress; or resolved upon by our Provincial Convention, for the Purpose of preserving our Constitution, and opposing the Execution of the several arbitrary, and oppressive Acts of the British Parliament; until a Reconciliation between Great-Britain and America, on Constitutional Principles, (which we most ardently Desire) can be obtained: And that we will, in all Things follow the Advice of our General Committee, respecting the Purposes aforesaid, the Preservation of Peace and good Order, and the Safety of Individuals, and private Property.

Dated in New-York, April and May, 1775.

New Paltz Historic Documents, Articles of Association, 1775, Historic Huguenot Street, "New York Heritage Digital Collections" nyheritage.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16694coll153/id/9273/

Though they were determined to "never become slaves," we know that, as with most land-owning families in our area at the time, the Benners owned slaves themselves. In 1801, both a "Hendrick Benner" and presumably his son "Henry Benner" were recorded as owning one child born on or after July 4th, 1799 because "an act for the gradual abolition of slavery" had been enacted in New York that ordered any children born to slaves from that day forward to be "free on certain conditions". Once male children turned 28 and females 25 they would be legally free. Anyone born before then was reclassified as an indentured servant—literal baby steps toward full manumission that would come in 1827. A "Henry Benner" in 1800 and "Hendrick Benner" in 1810 are recorded in the Rhinebeck census (with family groups that fit the demographic of Hendrick Jr.'s) as owning slaves, nine in 1800 and 11 in 1810.

Our subject, Hendrick Jr.'s father died in 1778 and was (as far as we can tell) not referred to as "junior". Revolutionary era records consistently record a "Jr." suffix to our subject's name, so we may assume that this is the one to whom they refer. During the Revolutionary War Hendrick Benner Jr. was a private with the 6th Dutchess Militia under Col. Morris Graham and Col. Roswell Hopkins. After the war the government authorized land bounty rights as compensation for soldier's service. Hendrick Jr. was awarded these rights for his service, but it is unknown if he received land, or profit from the sale of land, for them. He died of dropsy in 1817 and left his farm to his son Henry and money to his wife and daughters.

Research and writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2025

Sources:

10,000 Vital Records of Eastern New York, 1777-1834 p. 250, p. 181.

1800 Federal Census, Rhinebeck, Dutchess Co NY - Henry Benner.

1810 Federal Census, Rhinebeck, Dutchess Co NY - Hendrick Benner.

Dutch Reformed Church Records in Selected States, 1639-1989 New York Red Hook Congregation of Roode Hoek (Red Hook).

Dutch Reformed Church Records in Selected States, 1639-1989 Upper Red Hook Volumes I, Red Church, 1766-1812 and Volume II, St John's Reformed Church, 1788-1807.
[findagrave.com/memorial/40900666/hendrick-benner](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/40900666/hendrick-benner).
[findagrave.com/memorial/47987663/henry-benner](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47987663/henry-benner).
 New York Historic Manuscripts. Rhinebeck Associates P 81.
 New York in the Revolution as a Colony and a State. V1 P.247, V1 P.144.
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Old Gravestones of Dutchess County. P. 277.
 Palatine German Immigration to Ireland and U.S., Hank Z Jones collection, 1654-1878 - Vol 1 page 55.
 Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783 (Folder 116).
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 Will of Hendrick Benner Written 3 sept 1816, probate June 1817 Dutchess County Page 192.