

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Henry Davis

1757–1834

St. Paul's Lutheran cemetery, Red Hook

A rectangular marble tablet touching his wife's identical monument, marked with a Revolutionary War stick marker, next to his father in law John Smith toward the front and parking lot.

Revolutionary War Veteran, Hessian Jäger

Henry's son Frederick Wilhelm Davis' obituary states that his father was "born at Hesse-Cassel, Germany, and [he] was an officer in the Hessian Army, and fought under Lieutenant General Wilhelm von Knyphausen, at Monmouth NJ" in 1778. He is a Revolutionary War veteran—just for the other side.

Frederick was the youngest of Henry's eleven known children, being born in 1810. His obituary says he was a member of an "old family of Dutchess County" (probably referring to his mother's side) and "grew up in Red Hook" where he was "born, baptised and brought up in the Reformed Church".

Even if one finds it difficult to believe he was a Hessian soldier, Henry Davis being of German descent is not out of the realm of possibility. The mother of Henry Davis' many children was Annatchen Schmidt (later Anna Smith); as with many of our neighbors, she descended from Palatine German immigrants who arrived in the first decade of the 18th century. Anna's father Johannes Schmidt signed the 1775 Articles of Association, declaring that he would side with the American patriots, so it's hard to imagine that he would have approved of his daughter marrying an enemy, unless perhaps that enemy had literally jumped ship. A Davis family researcher followed a thread of family lore and found proof of something that supports this hypothesis.

After the Revolutionary War ended it took some time to evacuate enemy combatants now permitted to return home. "Cpl. Henrich Debus of Hubenrode" was 25 years old in 1783 when a corps of Jägers (German Hessian soldiers who fought for the British) was being moved through New York State in order to be shipped back home. A number of them boarded a boat that left Huntington, Long Island and sailed to McGowan's Pass a little way up Manhattan in order to then board a ship to cross the Atlantic. A researcher from the Johannes Scwalm Historical Association (associated with the "registry of Descendants of Hessian Troops") affirmed that "it is entirely possible that [Henry] did in fact "jump overboard" while crossing from Long Island to Manhattan, since he was reported as deserting on 28 May [1783] and the Corps entered McGowans Pass barracks on 30 May" without him.

A large number of men that made up the Hessian forces were conscripted or pressed into service in



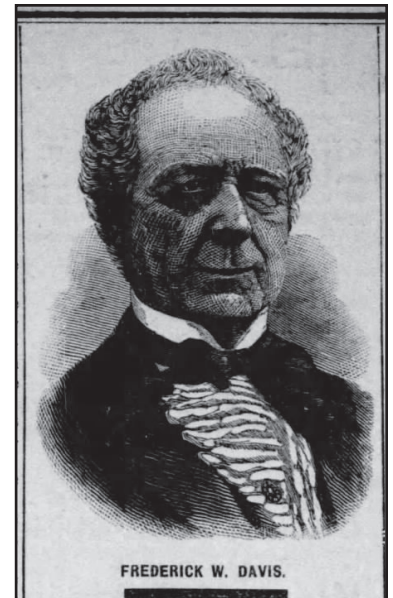
some way. It's possible that Henry was one of those, with little remaining back home to entice him to endure the long, dangerous trip back to Europe.

Besides Henry's son's obituary and the research of the Davis family, there is the fact that Henry Davis married Anna Schmidt, whose father was from Red Hook, and they had their first son, Johannes, baptised in the Dutch Reformed Church in 1788, well late enough for Henry to have established himself here. Of the 5 of 11 children for whom baptismal records could be located, none were sponsored by a Davis relative, as would be common if they were alive and/or local. A few of Henry's children lived into the 1880s where enumerated citizens' data include their parent's birth location in the census. In this recording, Charles Philip Davis' father was listed from "Germany" and Eliza Catherine Davis Bartlett's father was from "Hesse Castle".

There are many men named Henry Davis who participated in the Revolutionary War. One enlisted in Rhinebeck and fought in Henry Beekman Livingston's 4th Regiment of the Continental Line, but no information on him or his family could be located. If this was the same man, why wouldn't his son's obituary mention this service? This one may be the Henry Davis 1764–1836 buried in Poughkeepsie Rural cemetery.

There was an American Revolutionary War veteran named Henry Davis from New Jersey but who served in New York with a wife also named Ann who had a widow's pension, because, unlike Ann Smith who died before her husband in 1817, she lived into the 1840s. Another Henry B. Davis was from Rensselaer but served in Rhode Island. Another was born in Dutchess County in 1758 but removed to Pennsylvania to fight there and died in Ohio.

Per family lore, Henry was well-read, worked as a tailor, and was one of the first farmers to grow apricots in the area. Henrich Debus aka Henry Davis and Annatchen Schmidt aka Anna Smith had eleven children, Johnannes, 1788 who married Anna Cookingham, Zacharias, 1790–1791, Maria, 1792 who married John B. Latham, Jacob Isaac Heermance, 1794 who married Eliza Culver, Henrich, 1796 who married Julia Haight, Eliza Catherine, 1798 who married Dr. John F. Bartlett, Anna, 1800, Carl Philip, 1803–1807, Alexander, 1805 who married Sarah Pratt, Charles Philip (really, a second Carl), 1808 who married Rhoda Balis, and Frederick Wilhelm, 1810 who married Angeline Whitehead.



Poughkeepsie Journal,
6 Mar 1892

Research and writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2026

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