

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Nathan Beckwith

Born 1778 Died 1865

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

Pointed top marble tablet with star design, near large granite "BECKWITH", east of the church, West of large maple along the access road

The Beckwith family traces its lineage back to Charlemagne (as to many, many...many others) and to a noble who appears in the Domesday Book and fought under William the Conqueror in 1066. They believe this ancestor, Sir Hugh de Malebisse, is pictured with his fellow combatants in the Bayeux tapestry that depicts the Norman invasion of England. Their surname "Beckwith" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words beck (brook) and worth (estate), a particular piece of land in England inherited by a noble woman whose de Malebisse husband at their marriage in 1226 was contractually obligated to change his name too.



*Nathan Beckwith by portraitist Ammi Phillips.
Brooklyn Museum*

Nathan Beckwith was born in the 18th century in Stanford, Dutchess County, NY to Revolutionary War soldier Sylvanus Beckwith and his wife Amy Sutherland (whose family was of Scotch descent). Sylvanus came from Lyme, CT where his English family had settled.

Nathan set up his farm in 1807 in what was then Rhinebeck (now Guskie Road in Red Hook). He helped organize the Baptist Church in Red Hook and served as town supervisor (Democrat). Thanks to his family's wealth, he attended the Kinderhook Academy where he was classmates with future president, Martin Van Buren. Nathan became a civil engineer when he graduated, most notably surveying some of the path along which the Erie Railroad would later travel. When Britain invaded in 1812, he served as a lieutenant of cavalry, stationed at Brooklyn Heights. After the war, then Governor Tompkins awarded him a land grant in Herkimer County and

the rank of colonel. Col. Nathan Beckwith was named marshal for the visit of the Marquis de LaFayette when he visited Clermont as part of his tour of the U.S. in 1824.

Nathan married Betsey Gale (whose father and grandfather also fought in the Revolution) and they had Josiah Gale 1803-1871, Amy 1809-1824, Edward 1812-1821, Lewis C 1807-1871, Eliza Ann 1809-1843 who married Edwin Knickerbocker, Clarinda 1816-1864 who married William Capron, Annie S. born 1824-1901 who married George H. Clapp, George W. 1814-1881, and William S. 1820-1906. Dr. Josiah G. Beckwith removed to Connecticut and was a member of that state's legislature. William S. Beckwith focused on farming, but kept up his studies in the winter and evenings. He was Red Hook postmaster, assessor, and in 1884, the town supervisor. Eliza A. Beckwith married Edwin Knickerbocker and their daughter married Dr. John E. Losee. Many members of this family are also buried in this cemetery.

The Beckwith farm house on Guskie Road still stands. A recent, historically-minded renovation revealed the original brick oven hidden for decades under a wall in the kitchen.



*Betsey Gale Beckwith by portraitist Ammi Phillips.
Brooklyn Museum*

Research and writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2024

Sources:

Beckwith, Paul. *The Beckwiths*. J. Munsell's Sons Albany, N.Y. 1891 p. 154

Commemorative & Biographical Record of Dutchess County Chicago, J. H. Beers & co., 1897.

findagrave.com/memorial/95371877/nathan-sutherland-beckwith

Losee/Knickerbocker/Beckwith family history

Notices of marriages and deaths published in newspapers printed at Poughkeepsie, NY 1778-1825, p. 766