

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Ryer Hermance

Born Aug 7, 1749 Died Nov 1, 1804

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

Marble tablet behind the church in the old section, not far from the road with a Revolutionary War bronze marker to its left

Ryer Hermance was baptized in Rhinebeck to Gerret Heermanse and Gerretje Schermerhoren in August of 1749. Gerret was born in Kingston where the Heermans family had made their home for a few generations and Gerretje was from "The Manor Livingston" in Dutchess County when they were married at the Dutch Church in Kingston in 1748. His family had arrived in New Netherland just before the transition to English rule from the province of Drenthe in the northeast of the Netherlands.

Ryer married Maretje Swart in 1772 and they had many children including Garret 1774, Mally c. 1776, Neeltjen c.1779, Cornelius Ryer 1781, Catherine 1788, John Ryer 1792, Gerretje 1794, and Mary 1795. It's possible that Mally and Neeltjen did not survive to adulthood.

When American colonists banded together to fight the British for their right to self-rule, Ryer, who resided with his family in nearby Northeast Precinct (which at the time encompassed Northeast, Pine Plains, and Milan) served the patriotic cause in Col. Morris Graham's regiment of militia. He started as a private, but made his way to lieutenant in Captain John Clum's company of that regiment, fighting alongside friends, family, and neighbors, including his brother Andrew who is also buried in this cemetery.

Ryer and his brother both wagered their lives for a better future, a country governed by its citizens in which he and his fellow white landowners could be free of the oppressive yoke of the English crown. At the time of the American Revolution slavery was not only legal in New York State, but deemed acceptable in most of colonial society. The British, in a desperate effort to stymie their rebel colonist foes, proclaimed an offer of freedom to not only enslaved soldiers fighting with the American, but to any slaves held by rebels. Thousands fled on this promise, so many in fact that the British general who issued the proclamation found he had to send many of them back to their masters.

When Ryer Hermance and his family were recorded in the 1790 census of the Town of Northeast, Ryer



Pay Role of The Commissioned and Non Commissioned Officers and Privates of Capt John Clums
Company in Coll Morris Gramms Regiment of Militia Commanded by Maj^r Wynkoop
Going after Tories in G^d Manner of Livingston.

Commencing May 5th 1777. Ending May 10th 1777

James			Commencing	Ending	Months	Days	Monthly Pay	£	8	10
			May	May						
Commissioned	John Clum	Capt	5	10		6	40	3	4	6
	Ryer Hermance	Lieut ^t	5	10		6	27	2	3	0
Non Commissioned	Hearman Withbuck	Serj	5	10		6	8		12	9
	David Baringer	Do	5	10		6	8		12	9
	Gose Hermance	Do	5	10		6	8		12	9
	Phillip Cuch	Do	5	10		6	8		12	9
	Henderick Mower	Corpl	5	10		12	7	1	3	0
	Isaac Kool	Drum ^m	5	10		6	7		11	6
	Leason Tyler		5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Henderick Levy	Anthony Straut	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Wert Hermance	John Gilbert	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	John Selvestor	Phillip J Moor	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	John Servis	Andrew G. Hermance	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Path Hogan	Abm Tector	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Nicholas Hoffman	John Thomas	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Peter Pitcher	Wm D. Pitcher	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Levi Jones	James Adams	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Cornelius Schermerhorn	Cornelius Vele	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Couradt Baringer	Andrew Lyke	5	10		12	6 2/3	1	1	6
	Simon Kool		5	8		4	6 2/3		7	2
	Wilhalms Post		5	7		3	6 2/3		5	4
	Elias Kool		5	10		6	6 2/3		10	9
								£ 21	10	9
So finding the man Provvisions for								3	-	0
								£ 24	10	9

1777 July 1 Received from M^r Matthew Leontine
the above contents in full
John Klum

Revolutionary War payroll for Captain John Clum's company in 1777.

was shown to have owned three slaves. By the time he published his will in 1804, there were four of them listed in his household, Jude, Hannah, Sarah, and Philip. Ryer would die a few months after putting his bequests to paper at the age of 55. When he passed, Jude was to be given to his wife Maretje for as long as she was a widow, but if she remarried, Jude would go to her sons. Hannah and Sarah, referred to as 'girls' in the will, were given to Ryer's daughters Garretje and Catherine. Philip went to his sons John and Cornelius until Philip turned 20 in October of 1809, then he was to be manumitted "provided he procures the necessary certificates which may then be necessary to indemnify my heirs in case of the said Philip being chargeable to the town".

Though efforts were made by legislators following the Revolution to emancipate those held in New York, freedom for all enslaved people in the state did not come until 1827. Slavery was so endemic, acceptable, and deemed necessary in colonial society, that even some of our ancestors who risked their lives to free themselves from English tyranny found it difficult to free the people they themselves held in bondage.

Research and writing by Sarah K. Hermans, 2024

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