

Colonel Richard Varick

The town of Varick was formed from the town of Romulus by act passed by the New York State Legislature on February 6, 1830. The town was named in honor of Richard Varick. It is the youngest town in Seneca County. It comprises lots 43 to 63 inclusive, with the north part of lot 69 of the original Military Tract Township of Romulus., and with lots 58 to 84 inclusive of the West Cayuga Reservation lying on the west side of Cayuga Lake and east of the Reservation Road (Route 414).

The Richard Varick for whom the town was named was born in 12752 at Hackensack, NJ, of Dutch parentage. Richard Varick had received his college education at Kings College (now Columbia University) in New York City. He graduated prior to the commencement of the Revolutionary War and followed the profession of a lawyer. Soon after the breaking out of hostilities with Britain, Varick tendered his services and was appointed Military Secretary to Major General Philip Schuyler, who then commanded the Northern Army.

In February 1776, Congress appointed him Deputy Commissary General, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and Varick then joined the Northern Army. In that capacity, Varick was present at the battles of Stillwater and Saratoga. Following this he was stationed at West Point and performed the duties of Inspector General and Aid-de Camp of the troops of that post and vicinity. Later he became a member of General Washington's military family and acted as his Recording Secretary until the close of the Revolutionary War. That he possessed the confidence and esteem of Washington in the highest degree is shown in the following letter:

Mount Vernon, VA, January 1, 1784

Dear Sir:

From the moment I left the city of New York until my arrival at this place, I have been so much occupied by a variety of concerns, that I could not find a moment's leisure to acknowledge the receipt of your favors of the 4th and 7th ultimo.

The public and other papers which were committed to your charge, and the books in which they have been recorded under your inspection, having come safe to hand, I take this first opportunity of signifying my entire approbation of the manner in which you have executed the important duties of Recording Secretary, and the satisfaction in having my papers so properly arranged and so correctly recorded; and beg you will accept my thanks for the care and attention which you have given to this business. I am fully convinced that neither the present age nor posterity will consider the time and labor which have been employed in accomplishing it unprofitably spent.

I pray you will be persuaded, that I shall take pleasure in asserting you on every occasion the sense I entertain of the fidelity, skill and indefatigable industry manifested by you in the performance of your public duties, and the sincere regard and esteem with which I am, dear sir your most and obedient and affectionate servant,

George Washington

Shortly before the final disbandment of the American army, many of the officers then at the cantonment on the banks of the Hudson met at Newburgh, in May and June 1783, and formed an association of which Colonel Varick was a member, which they named the Society of the Cincinnati, electing George Washington their first President, and providing for auxiliary state societies. Colonel Varick was chosen President of the New York State Society of the Cincinnati, July 4, 1806, and held this position until his death, quarter of a century later. This patriotic society was formed to promote cordial friendship, unit and good feeling, and to commemorate by frequent reunion the great struggle by which American independence was achieved, as well as to extend aid to its members when needed. The society is perpetuated by succession from father to son of its membership.

After the evacuation of New York City by the British troops, November 25, 1783, and the restoration of the Civil Government of this state, Colonel Varick was appointed Recorder of that city, a high judicial position, which he held about five years. In 1787 and 1788, he served in the Assembly, and in both years was Speaker. On May 14, 1789, he was appointed Attorney-General of the state, but resigned September 29th. He was one of the editors of the revision of the laws of New York from 1778 to 1789, known as the Jones & Varick Revision. After resigning the office of Attorney-General, he was appointed Mayor of New York City, and served in that capacity for twelve years, the longest period the office has been held by any Mayor since the Revolution. Upon his retirement as Mayor, he devoted the remainder of his life to the promotion of benevolent and religious enterprises. He was one of the founders of the American Bible Society, serving as its first Treasurer, and upon the resignation of the Hon. John Jay, he was unanimously chosen its President.

In person, Colonel Varick was over six feet tall, erect and well proportioned, and a splendid specimen of robust manhood. His wife was a member of the Dey family of New Jersey. (Some of the Deys were early settlers in what is today town of Varick. The first Supervisor elected in Varick was Anthony Dey. Anthony Dey was the oldest son of Dr. Philip Dey, and was born near Patterson, NJ on February 6, 1781. He came to the town of Romulus in 1806 and established a tannery on Military Lot No. 49. The old Varick Post Office which was established November 19, 1832, was on the site of this tannery. In the fall of 1832, Mr. Dey removed to Seneca Falls, where he engaged in the milling business. He died there November 14, 1851 at age 70.) Colonel Varick died July 30, 1831 at age 79. He left a widow, with whom he had lived in wedlock for nearly a half-century, but no children.

[This information was taken from two sources. The main source was a typed manuscript found in a scrapbook in the Seneca County Historian's office. This manuscript is simply noted as "C.H. May 1956." The other source is pp 501-02 of *Portrait and Biographical Record of Seneca and Schuyler Counties New York* (New York, Chapman Publishing Co., 1895).]