



Richard Varick: A Forgotten Founding Father: Revolutionary War Soldier, Federalist Politician, and Mayor of New York

Paul Cushman

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The life of a prominent Dutch-American patriot.

Born in 1753 to a prominent Dutch-American family in Hackensack, New Jersey, Richard Varick became a lawyer, then a Patriot officer in the American Revolutionary War. Colonel Varick served with distinction as aide to generals Philip Schuyler and Benedict Arnold. Later, George Washington entrusted him with the editing of his wartime papers—forty-four volumes now housed in the Library of Congress.

In peacetime Varick helped initiate the new Federalist-oriented government of New York City, becoming its mayor from 1789–1801. Next he turned his energies to the accumulation of lucrative real estate, all the while furthering the development of Columbia University and the Society of the Cincinnati, and starting the entity that became Jersey City.

His personal passion was to help promulgate the Christian message, especially through the founding of the American Bible Society and the New York Sunday School Union. A highly respected, multitalented businessman and national hero, he was returned to Hackensack for burial in 1831.

“Few recognize ... Richard Varick, a lawyer, Revolutionary War officer, statesman, and philanthropist, who played a substantial role in the early history of New York. Dr. Cushman’s work promises to bring this interesting figure into the public view, where he finally gets the approbation and appreciation he deserves.”
— Jean Ashton, New-York Historical Society

“It is a fine study of what it is like to be a Federalist in New York City.” — Stanley Elkins, coauthor of *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788–1800*

“Paul Cushman brings forth the interesting and neglected career of Varick, a neglected New York Patriot.”
— John Steele Gordon, author of *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power*

“Varick’s career is an important one.” — Edwin G. Burrows, coauthor of *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*

Paul Cushman is a retired internal medicine physician. A graduate of Yale University (1951) and Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons (1955), he devoted his medical talents to the field of endocrinology as well as the clinical, pharmacological, and neuroscience aspects of substance abuse medicine. He served on the faculty of five medical schools, usually as full professor of medicine, pharmacology, and psychiatry. Since retirement his interests have included historical research on the achievements of several ancestors, including Paul Cushman, an Albany, New York potter (1767–1833); William Gilbert, a New York silversmith and civil servant (1746–1831); and now Richard Varick (1753–1831). An avid bridge player, he also enjoys travel and savoring the visual and performing arts with his wife of fifty years, with whom he lives in New York City.

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