

William Richardson Davie Epitaph

Brief history by William Lee Anderson III.

Over William Richardson Davie's grave is the elegant epitaph written by Judge William Gaston (Robinson 1957, 396–397):



William Richardson Davie
by John VanderLyn
in Paris, France, 1800.

In this grave are deposited the remains of
WILLIAM R. DAVIE,
The Soldier, Jurist, Statesman, and Patriot
In the Glorious War for
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.
He fought among the foremost of the Brave,
As an advocate of the Bar,
He was diligent, sagacious, zealous,
Incorruptibly Honest, of Commanding Eloquence.
In the Legislative Hall,
He had no superior in enlarged vision
And Profound plans of Policy.
Single in his ends, varied in his means, indefatigable
In his exertions,
Representing his Nation in an important Embassy,
He evinced his characteristic devotion to her interests
And manifested a peculiar fitness for Diplomacy.
Polished in manners, firm in action,
Candid without imprudence, Wise above Deceit,
A true lover of his Country,
Always preferring the People's good to the People's favour,
Though he disdained to fawn for office,
He filled most of the stations to which ambition
might aspire,
And declining no Public Trust,
Ennobled whatever he accepted
By true Dignity and Talent
Which he brought into the discharge of its functions.
— A Great Man in an age of Great Men. —
In life he was admired and beloved by the virtuous
and the Wise.
In death, he has silenced calumny and caused envy to
mourn.
He was born in Edinburg 1756,
And died in South Carolina in 1820.

William Richardson Davie was born in Scotland in 1756. At an early age, he moved to America and was raised by his aunt and her husband, Reverend William Richardson, minister of Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church and Providence Presbyterian Church. After graduating from Nassau College in New Jersey, Davie returned home and became active in resisting the British Army invasion of South Carolina. On 20 June 1779, he participated in the battle at Stono River near Charles Town, South Carolina. In early 1780, he used a part of his inheritance to equip a cavalry unit of partisans. He was promoted to colonel. His unit was active throughout the summer. On 26 September, he led the American forces in the Battle of Charlotte (Anderson 2008). During 12–21 October, his

unit followed Cornwallis's retreat from Charlotte (Anderson 2011). In December 1780, Major General Nathanael Greene appointed Davie the Commissary Office of the Continental Army Southern Department. Davie remained on the general's staff for the duration of the Revolutionary War. After the war, Davie entered North Carolina politics. He was a member of the original Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina. He investigated and promoted the Chapel Hill site. The university was established in 1786. As a Federalist, he supported ratification of the United States Constitution. In 1798, he was elected North Carolina Governor. However, he did not complete his term because in 1799, President John Adams appointed Davie one of three special envoys to France to negotiate an end to the *XYZ Affair* with Napoleon Bonaparte. Negotiations achieved Adams' aim of avoiding war with France, but the successful news did not reach America in time to help reelect Adams who lost to Thomas Jefferson in 1800. Davie retired to his *Tivoli* estate on the west side of Land's Ford in South Carolina. He died in 1820 and was buried in the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church cemetery. In 1927, his remains were moved to an enclosed gravesite. A newspaper article entitled "Remains of Davie Family Taken Up" reported "There was found a lone silver button, the badge of an officer in the Revolutionary War, and three pieces of board, containing the initials "W.R.D." made with copper head tacks. These were found in the grave of General Davie." (M. M. Boyer 2008).

Beginning in 1927, noted Charlotte architect Martin Evans Boyer Jr. designed the present-day enclosed gravesite and described the design in an architectural journal (M. E. Boyer 1929).



Enclosed gravesite of William Richardson Davie

Two years later, Martin Evans Boyer Jr. was commissioned to disassemble, transport, and reassemble the old United States Mint from downtown Charlotte to its present-day location (M. E. Boyer 1931).

Sources

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