

MAUSOLEUM OF WM. RICHARDSON DAVIE

In 1927 it was announced that descendants of William Richardson Davie were to gather at the cemetery of Old Waxhaw Presbyterian church (south of Van Wyck on Old Hickory road) for a special ceremony. Davie had died 107 years previously and been buried in the old section of the graveyard beside his wife and other family members.

Who was William Richardson Davie and what was the occasion? Davie is best known as a Revolutionary War hero and founder of the University of North Carolina. He was also governor of North Carolina and appointed by President John Adams as a special minister to France, replacing Patrick Henry. Davie also headed the surveying party that adjusted the North Carolina-South Carolina boundary line from Old North Corner northwestward to the Catawba River.

Born in Egremont, County Cumberland, England on June 22, 1756, when he was 4 years of age he came with his parents, Archibald and Mary Davie, to the area in which his mother's brother, the Rev. William Richardson, famed minister of the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian church, had settled.

Davie undoubtedly was first tutored at the Waxhaw Academy by his uncle, William Richardson. He is thought to have attended Queen's College in Charlotte, N. C. before going off to Princeton College in New Jersey in 1774. Several years later he studied law in the office of Judge Spruce McCay (or Macay) in Salisbury, N. C. Judge McCay was later to teach law to Andrew Jackson.

When the Revolutionary War turned to the South in 1779, Davie put down his books and rose from lieutenant to general in a two-year period. His military genius has never been doubted and it is said that young Andy Jackson, who was a courier for Davie at the age of 13, admired Davie more than any other man.

When the war was over, Davie settled in North Carolina and lived for many years in Halifax County before being elected governor of the state. As governor he saw to it that a state university would be built (1793)—the oldest state university in the United States.

In 1806 Davie was defeated in a congressional race by a man he considered inferior for the position. In disgust, Davie returned to South Carolina and spent the next 15 years constructing his home overlooking the famed spider lilies that blossom in the river and improving his plantation on the Chester County side of the Catawba River. In 1820 he was buried in Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Cemetery.

Preston Davie was a wealthy New York philanthropist and a collateral descendant of a namesake William R. Davie who provided an endowment fund that made possible the building of the large mausoleum as a memorial to the Davie family.

A large brick enclosure with iron gates, bearing the Davie coat of arms in copper, was constructed by Warren Mobley, a Charlotte contractor. The plot was designed by Martin E. Boyer, Jr. of Charlotte.

When the old graves were dug into the curious wondered what would be left. Everything had disintegrated but the outlines of the coffins were clearly seen. A single silver button from the Revolutionary War uniform of General Davie was found along with three pieces of board with the initials "W. R. D." made with copper head tacks. In the other graves a few pieces of pine, a piece of cloth, and a comb with several teeth missing were found.

In addition to the general's grave, the graves of two sons, and a granddaughter were moved to the new burial plot inside a handsome enclosure.