

**MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF HENRY  
VAN SCHAACK: EMBRACING  
SELECTIONS FROM HIS  
CORRESPONDENCE DURING THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

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Memoirs of the Life of Henry Van Schaack: Embracing Selections from His Correspondence  
During the American Revolution by Henry Cruger Van Schaack

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MEMOIRS

OF THE LIFE OF

HENRY VAN SCHAACK.



MAJOR HARRY VAN SCHAACK.

1733-1823.

MEMOIRS  
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HENRY VAN SCHAAK

EMBRACING  
SELECTIONS FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE  
DURING THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

BY HIS NEPHEW  
HENRY CRUGER VAN SCHAAK

Author of the LIFE OF PETER VAN SCHAAK, LL.D.; HENRY CRUGER—the colleague of  
Edmund Burke; CAPTAIN MORRIS, OF THE ILLINOIS COUNTRY, etc., etc.

*Superanda fortuna ferendo*

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## PREFACE.

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History is indebted to biography for a large share of its choicest beauties, and of its enlivening, if not its most valuable, materials. Where the memoirs of an individual exhibit the type of a class, they become history itself, and are such in all but the name. Well-meant contributions of this description, to our biographical literature—at least to the extent of their interest and value—cannot fail, therefore, to be appreciated by those who take pleasure in historical researches.

Under no circumstances can the details of personal biography become more useful and important to the historian than in the elucidation of the motives, principles and conduct of the unsuccessful party in civil war. Fairly to judge of their characters and principles of action we should be made acquainted with the precise positions in which they stood; we should aim to occupy the points from which they viewed passing events; we should know their history; we should become familiar with all the details of their origin, their education, their associates, their habits and pursuits, and with the early as well as later influences to which they were subjected; and we should inquire particularly into the persecutions (or what they deemed such) experienced by them in their own persons, or in those of their connections and friends, at an early stage of the contest, as well as with the other excesses of those who, claiming to be the only true supporters of the cause of liberty, unfortunately often acted in direct contravention to its principles.

The author of this work is believed to have been the first individual in the United States who so far ventured to encounter hereditary prejudices as to publish the life of one who had been on the unsuccessful side in the American revolt. Without any pretensions to authorship, he felt himself constrained, on that occasion, by his situation (having come into possession of materials deemed interesting and valuable for historical purposes), and particularly by a sense of filial duty, to assume a responsibility not likely to be discharged by another. A sense of obligations similar in their character, though not so imperative, pointed to the preservation of the manuscripts incorporated into this work.

Although it is not claimed for the subject of this sketch that he was a very great man, it is asserted that he was a remarkable man, and an admirable specimen of that venerated class of noble-minded men known to us as "GENTLEMEN OF THE OLD SCHOOL." Although not highly educated, nor ever called into any very elevated public station, Henry Van Schaack was, for twenty-five years immediately antecedent to the revolution, in various official stations of respectability and usefulness, under the Crown or the Province. His associates, also, show him to have been a man of mark in his day; and although his life would not have been written for the mere purpose of elucidating character, and irrespective of its position as a revolutionary biography, it is submitted that our ante-revolutionary history cannot well be written without greater aids, than the historian now possesses, from biographies of the character presented in this work. As a revolutionary biography, it is doubted whether there are many instances in which, at this period, as full material for biographical sketches of American loyalists exists, as are to be found in this volume.

Mr. Van Schaack lived in eventful times, and passed through

popular convulsions and revolutions of the gravest character, with which he was more or less identified.

An actor in three different capacities—lieutenant, paymaster, and commissary—in the war by which the Canadas were subjected to the British crown; an Indian trader for ten years before and immediately after that event, extending his operations, at that early period, to Detroit and Michilimackinac; the unjust object of popular violence at the period of the Stamp Act; a loyalist in the Revolution and subjected to proscription, imprisonment, and exile, by reason of his political sentiments; a citizen of Massachusetts during Shay's rebellion, and active in quelling that alarming revolt, of which his immediate neighborhood was a prominent theatre; his career was not destitute of variety or incident. It was prolonged to a period of upwards of ninety years—1733 to 1823. What a world of history, written and unwritten, has been enacted during this period! Unless the author has greatly misjudged, the papers of Henry Van Schaack will form an interesting contribution to the memorials of that history.

H. C. VAN SCHAACK.\*

*Manlius, N. Y.*

\* Appendix A, page 221.