

John L. Shoub in Revolutionary-Era Woodstock:

An Intriguing Figure in Local History

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An intriguing figure associated with early Woodstock history is John L. Shoub, a man remembered locally as a former Hessian soldier in the American Revolution. He is buried in the Riseley Family Ground on Route 212 near Apple Rock. The intrigue starts with two different inscriptions on his gravestone. His gravestone inscription, as recorded in *Gravestone Inscriptions of Ulster County, NY, 1927*, reads, "Shoub, John, d. October 2, 1808 aged 74 yrs - "Quartermaster & Paymaster of the Hessian Army. He died an Honorable Freemason." In *Old Gravestones of Ulster County, 1931* his gravestone inscription reads, "Shoub, John L., b. May 3, 1744, d. Oct. 2, 1808, 64 years. He was a Quarter and Paymaster in the Heshia Artillary, and he died an Honorable Freemason."

Although these inscriptions provide valuable clues, much about Shoub's life remains uncertain. No surviving record has yet been found that clearly identifies his birthplace, military unit, original German name, or the circumstances that brought him to Woodstock. His surname may have been anglicized after his arrival in America. "John" may originally have been Johann or Johannes, while "Shoub" may have been Schaub, Schaab, Schoub, or another German variation. Such name changes were common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century records, especially when German-speaking immigrants encountered English-speaking clerks, ministers, census takers, and local officials. The description of Shoub as connected to the "Heshia Artillary" places him within the broader story of the German auxiliary troops who fought for Britain during the American Revolution. Britain hired approximately 30,000 German-speaking soldiers from several German states to fight in North America.

Shoub may not have been an ordinary soldier. A quartermaster was responsible for supplies, transportation, provisions, clothing, and camp organization. A paymaster handled payroll and financial records. These positions required literacy, discipline, and trust. If Shoub had been born in 1734 or 1744, he would be older than many soldiers who served in the field. This does not prove that he held officer or staff rank, but it suggests that he may have served in an administrative or logistical capacity, possibly connected with artillery or supply operations.

Why Shoub remained in America after the Revolution is unknown, but his choice would not have been unusual. Thousands of German soldiers did not return to Europe after the war. Some had been prisoners of war and became familiar with American communities while working on farms or living among German-speaking settlers. Others saw greater opportunity in North America than in the rigid social and economic systems they had left behind. Land, employment, religious freedom, and the chance for a new life made America attractive to many former soldiers. Historians differ on the exact number who stayed but estimates commonly

range from about 5,000 to 6,000 men, or roughly a quarter of the surviving German troops.

Woodstock and the Hudson Valley offered several possible reasons for Shoub's settlement. During the Revolution, the Hudson River corridor was strategically important. Troops, supplies, prisoners, and military personnel moved through the region between New York City, Albany, and the state's interior. A man connected with quartermaster or paymaster duties could have traveled through the Hudson Valley as part of military logistics. After the war, the Catskill region offered opportunities for farming, tenancy, and settlement. German-speaking communities already existed in parts of New York, making it easier for former Hessians to adapt to American life.

A local Woodstock source provides one of the most important references to Shoub's presence in the area. In an April 1939 article in the *Publications of the Historical Society of Woodstock*, Mrs. Lila James Roney wrote: "We are often asked what we know about the abandoned cemetery near the Apple Monument on the Woodstock Bearsville Road with gravestones of the Hessian soldiers.' So far as we know, but one Hessian soldier was buried there; and history reveals nothing about him except that he leased land somewhere in the neighborhood of Mink Hollow. The little cemetery belonged to the Riseley's and is very useful in giving early data on their family."

This passage is significant because it connects Shoub to the Riseley family and to tenancy near Mink Hollow. His burial in the Riseley Family Ground suggests that he had a meaningful connection to the Riseley family, whether through friendship, employment, tenancy, neighborhood ties, or another relationship not yet documented. Since no direct family record has yet been identified, the precise nature of that connection remains unknown.

The inscription's statement that Shoub died "an Honorable Freemason" adds another layer to his story. Freemasonry was an important fraternal and social institution in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It provided networks of trust, sociability, moral identity, and mutual recognition that could cross national, religious, and political boundaries. In early America, Masonic lodges were associated with men of standing in local communities.

If Shoub was a Mason, this affiliation may have helped him build social connections in the postwar Hudson Valley and integrate into American community life despite his possible service with British-allied forces.

John L. Shoub's story remains partly hidden behind fragmentary evidence: a gravestone, local memory, cemetery records, and a short historical society article. Yet these fragments are meaningful. They place him within the larger history of the American Revolution as an international conflict that brought German soldiers, British officers, American rebels, Loyalists, Indigenous nations, French allies, and civilians into contact with each other. They also show how the aftermath of war reshaped the colonies. Some men who came to America as enemies or auxiliaries eventually became neighbors, tenants, farmers, craftsmen, husbands, and respected members of their towns.

Important questions remain. What was Shoub's original German name? Which German state did he come from? Did he serve in the Hessian artillery, and if so, in what unit? Was he captured, discharged, or did he voluntarily remain in America after the war? How did he become connected to Woodstock, Mink Hollow, and the Riseley family? Future research in Hessian military rolls, land leases, Ulster County records, Masonic lodge records, church registers, and variant surname spellings may provide answers. For now, John L. Shoub stands as an intriguing figure in Woodstock's Revolutionary-era history.

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