Ney, Peter Stewart [1]

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by George V. Taylor, 1991

d. 15 Nov. 1846

See also: Ney Myth [2]; Foard, Osborne Giles [3] (from the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*)

Peter Stewart Ney, schoolmaster who died near Salisbury, is believed by many to have been the Napoleonic marshal, Michel Ney, living in hiding to escape persecution. His gravestone at Third Creek Church, Rowan County [4], describes him as "a native of France . . . and soldier of the French Revolution . . . under . . . Napoleon Bonaparte" and sets his birth at 1769, the year Michel Ney was born.

At least three books, written by North Carolinians, argue that Peter Stewart Ney was Marshal Ney, but evidence gathered during the 1940s and 1950s by William Henry Hoyt [5] (1884–1957), of Greenwich, Conn., establishes that the conditions under which Marshal Ney was executed at Paris in 1815, and the verifications prepared at that time, made it impossible for the execution to have been simulated or another person substituted for the marshal. Since Marshal Ney died in 1815, the Peter Stewart Ney who lived until 1846 must have been a different person. Who was he?

According to testimony recorded by Hoyt, and also by those with whom he disagreed, Peter Stewart Ney said occasionally that he had been born in 1787 in Stirlingshire, Scotland, not far from the ruined castle of the Scottish hero, Sir James Graham, and that his mother's maiden name was Isabella Stewart. Following these clues, Hoyt discovered that on 3 February 1788, one John McNee and his wife, Isbal Stewart, baptized an infant named Peter at Fintry Parish, Stirlingshire, about three and a half miles from the Graham castle ruins. This seems confirmatory. But Hoyt was frustrated in his efforts to trace the subsequent life of Peter McNee so as to connect it with that of the Peter Stewart Ney who in March 1820 declared his intention to become a U.S. citizen, was employed in 1827 by Archibald DeBow Murphey [6], and later became a schoolmaster. In short, the early life of Peter Stewart Ney remains almost entirely unknown. He was not, however, the marshal.

References:

René Arnaud, "Mort et résurrection du Maréchal Ney,"*Annales politiques et littéraires* 106 (1935).

Legette Blythe, *Marshal Ney: A Dual Life* (1937).

William Henry Hoyt Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).[5]

Commandant H. Lanrezac, "Les légendes du Maréchal Ney,"*Bulletin de la Société des amis de la Sarre,* no. 8 (1932).

Nino Paul-Albert, *Histoire du cimétiére du Père de Lachaise* (1937).

J. Edward Smoot, *Marshal Ney before and after Execution*(1929).

South Atlantic Quarterly 59 (Summer 1960).

James A. Weston, *Historic Doubts as to the Execution of Marshal Ney*(1895).

Additional Resources:

"Peter Stuart Ney." Davidson College Archives & Special Collections. http://sites.davidson.edu/archives/encyclopedia/peter-stuart-ney [7] (accessed January 29, 2014).

Subjects:
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Origin - location:
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