



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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North Greenbush-College Town?

Here's a quiz for you: What township in the three county area (Albany, Rensselaer, and Saratoga) can boast of having a community college? If you've read the title to this story you know the answer.

The southern part of Hudson Valley Community College is in our town.

I got the idea for this story after hearing about a conversation that took place at the recent opening of new Science Center at the College. One official asked another if they were standing in Troy or North Greenbush. Depending on where you were in the building, it may have been North Greenbush.

The College was founded in 1953 as the Hudson Valley Technical Institute in downtown Troy. The current name was officially changed in 1959. Already by that time the school was looking for a larger location to site a campus. 75 acres of Williams farm, which straddled the Troy-North Greenbush line was purchased and construction began.

Before the new campus officially opened, the school and the county weathered a contentious lawsuit brought by a group of Rensselaer County taxpayers who argued that the County should not have to pay half the cost of the campus construction if fewer than half the students were county residents. The County won that lawsuit, but the issue of tuition paid by non-county residents is still argued today.

There are some interesting historical tidbits regarding the Williams Farm. Its name goes

back to former State Senator John Williams. He owned and trained trotters and pacers on a track which is now part of the College campus. Local children would visit the farm to pet his white horse named Major. There were also circus events held several years on the northern part of the property. When Senator Williams and his siblings passed away St. Michael's Church was built on the site of the farm house which was torn down and another piece of North Greenbush history vanished.

Before the Williams family owned the property, it was part of the estate of Henry Burden, of Burden Iron Works fame. The house's history goes back even further, to Peter Defreest whose family may have built the house as early as 1791.

So even though the HVCC campus history goes back over 50 years, that portion of North Greenbush territorial history predates it by almost 200 years.