



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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Vandenburghs of North Greenbush

As you drive north on Route 4 toward Troy, North Greenbush Road becomes Vandenberg Avenue at the town line. The farms and homes of the "two brothers" Vandenberg are long gone but along this stretch of road in North Greenbush two Vandenberg houses remain.

The first house, diagonally across from the Little Red Schoolhouse is a white, Greek revival structure dating from about 1855 when Cornelius Vandenberg lived there. The second house just north, is a 1797 structure known today as the Country Grove, but more about that later.

The Vandenberg family were one of the first families who settled in this area. Land records from the 1680's indicate Vandenburgs lived in Albany and also owned land on the east side of the Hudson River. By the early 1700's, Vandenburgs settled along the two mile stretch south of Burden Pond up to the above mentioned houses.

It is difficult to sort out the many Vandenberg families who lived here. They had a penchant for naming sons for relatives in different families. There are several Garrits, Rutgers and Cornelius'. Sorting them out has been quite a challenge. However, starting from the clue of "1797" which is etched on the roof of the Country Grove, I have determined that Gerrit Vandenberg probably built the house for his new bride whom he married in 1797.

If this is true, we have a wonderful source which gives us a glimpse of Vandenberg life in the early 1800's. The builder Gerrit's son was Rutger and his son Gerrit married Martha Phillips Vandenberg who, in 1904 penned a reminiscence of stories her father-in-law Rutger remembered.

Rutger told her of the building of the house 20x23feet, with a lean-to of 12 feet. "All was plain and primitive", he recounted. Bricks for the house were made of clay from a stream near the woods on their land. Their living came from the field and woods of the property and their clothing came from the sheep. Like other Dutch families, they owned slaves who did much of the farm and house work.

Rutger recalled how he and a friend went to call on some girls, and when asked to take off his overcoat declined because he would then have been seen in only his shirt sleeves! As a boy watched the soldiers pass here during the War of 1812.

Martha, whose grandfather Phillips was part of the first English speaking family in the area, lamented the end of the era of the plain speaking Dutch. She contrasted them with the "restless and intolerant" New Englanders and praised the Dutch "with their neatness, their abundant tables, their neighborly kindness and sympathy – not wearing themselves out with undue energy, loving the soothing pipe with the spirit of contentment dwelling with them."

These Vandenburgs are gone. So too are the Vandenberg houses across the town line. Commercial development is encroaching on the two Vandenberg houses in North Greenbush. We may be left with only the road sign "Vandenberg Avenue" to commemorate the family which once was here.