



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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Geerholt-Rehm VFW

As you travel down Hidley Road, there is a building on the north side which is now abandoned but until recently was the home of North Greenbush's Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The Post was named for two World War II Veterans. Corporal Raymond E. Geerholt was born in Stephentown January 13, 1919. He graduated from Averill Park Central School and worked with his father as a carpenter. The family lived in the house at the top of the hill going south on Geiser Road.

Geerholt was drafted in 1941 and was assigned to Company B, 803d Engineers, U.S. Army. When the War began, he was stationed in the Philippines and was captured by the Japanese. He was one of the prisoners who made the Bataan Death March across the island to a P.O.W camp. Later he was shipped to a P.O.W camp in China and he died in Camp Hoten Mukden in Manchuria. There is a gravesite in his memory in Hawaii.

Staff Sergeant Harold M. Rehm was born at the Rehm homestead on Hidley Road in 1921. His army records list his occupation as "automobile serviceman". He enlisted in the Army in October 1940 and also saw overseas action in the Pacific. He was killed in combat during a final Japanese "kamikaze" attack on the Island of Saipan on July 9, 1944. His is buried in Poestenkill.

In 1959, a few North Greenbush veterans decided to form a VFW post. Dominic Panichi, Raymond Hook, Bill Trainor, George Zepf and Jimmie Schillinger met at Panichi's Atlantic Gas Station on Main Avenue in Wynantskill.

The original VFW charter is dated February 13, 1960 and contains 127 names. Formal meetings were held monthly at George Zepf's Jack and Jill Restaurant and later at the Wynantskill School.

As they formed, the veterans began to seek land for a permanent home. The Rehm family offered them four acres of land from their property on Hidley Road. Through the efforts of Gordon Banker, President of Union National Bank branch of Wynantskill, a mortgage was obtained. Much of the work was done by members and by 1961 the VFW had their building.

Over the years the Post held blood drives, sponsored senior citizen programs, served as a polling place and members were a fixture at the Memorial Day parades where they placed memorials for deceased veterans.

However times change, and as the membership decreased it was decided to close the chapter. In 2002 the Post returned their Charter and the doors closed. Today it sits as a vacant building on Hidley Road. Perhaps some community use could be found for the former Post.

I have copies of early VFW membership lists, if interested, call me at 283-6384.