



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

Jim Greenfield Town Historian 283-6384

Early Religious Life in North Greenbush

If you want to understand the history of North Greenbush, you have to know something about religion in this area.

Our earliest settlers were Dutch and most of them belonged to the Dutch Reformed denomination. They were not only the ministers, but also the first teachers in the schools. In the late 1700's as our town was being populated, settlers had to travel across the Hudson River to attend religious services.

In the winter, religious attendance was not easy. You couldn't hop in the SUV and cross the bridge to attend services at the "mother church"-the First Dutch Reformed in Albany. You had to take a boat or a cutter across the Hudson and hope the ice would hold if the river was frozen. Going to church was certainly an all day affair.

By the 1790's there were enough people in the Wynantskill area to hold worship services closer to home. Records show that parishioners held services in Col. Schuyler's building which would be near today's First and Madison Streets in Troy.

At this point, the congregation probably had a minister. Church records show that in 1793, 77 members of the First Reformed Church in Albany were (at their wishes) dismissed from membership and their minister was allowed to form a congregation (on the East side of the Hudson). This minister was the Rev. Jacobus Van Campen Romeyn.

An immediate problem arose because Romeyn was at that time the minister for the churches in Schodack and Greenbush. What today seems like a short distance was in the 1790's too far and entailed too many duties for one minister.

The solution was to "dissolve the bonds" between the Schodack and Greenbush churches. Henceforth Romeyn would be the minister for Greenbush and the new Dutch Reformed Church in Wynantskill.

There was one further problem: Where to build a parsonage? Conveniently, in 1794, Romeyn had purchased a farm in Bloomingrove (present day Defreestville). This was exactly half way between the churches in Greenbush and Wynantskill.

Today, just north of Stewarts, stands a beauty salon. Purportedly this is the old parsonage. It remained so until the two congregations split apart and the Bloomingrove Reformed Church was formed – but that is a story for another day. Comments? Call me at 283-6384.