



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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Wynantskill Schools

I recently got a call from a woman from Long Island wanting to know about the “Union Free School District” in Wynantskill. I checked the internet and found a tongue in cheek answer that a union free school district was one where no union representation was allowed. This is not at all what it means. Before we get into that, let’s explore the history of Wynantskill schools.

The first schools were held in private homes in Wynantskill, perhaps in the First Reformed Church. We know that the earliest school teachers were ministers who taught the classes. In 1849, the Church leased land to school district #70(sic) “to be used for as long as needed for that purpose”.

Some time after 1849 a school building was built on land located on Church Street above where the Fire House now stands. The first teachers were single women: Delia Koon, age 19 in 1855 and Betsy Wood, age 21 in 1865.

I have a picture from around 1880 with 35 students standing in front of the school. Mr. van Buren was the schoolmaster, whose identifying marks included a “flowing mustache and derby hat.” In 1904 the school moved to a new building located on the present site of the town offices. In 1929 a hall and more rooms were added giving five classrooms, running water, bathrooms for 175 pupils.

The school continued to grow and an annex was built in 1945. In February 1950 a fire destroyed all but the annex. The school was rebuilt into the building seen today on Main Avenue and continued to be the Wynantskill School until the 1960’s when Gardner Dickinson School (named after a long serving school principal and a president of the board of education) was constructed on East Avenue.

Getting back to Union Free School: In 1978 Wynantskill voted to change from a Common School District. The residents wanted a larger school board, the opportunity for more transportation state aide and to prevent them from ever being absorbed into the Troy School system.

Currently the School has approximately 379 students in grades K through 8 and parents can send their children to the following high schools: Tamarac, Troy, Columbia, Averill Park or Tech Valley High. Quite an expansion from that one room school house! Jim Greenfield 283-6384.