



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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The Defreest House on Jordan Road

I will never be able to sort out all of the Defreests in North Greenbush. There are 169 Defreests buried in the Bloominggrove Cemetery in Defreestville. The one this article will focus on lived in a still standing house on Jordan Road. This was David Defreest. Just to complicate things he was also know as David Deforrest.

David Defreest was born in 1747 and died in 1815. He was called “dicken” David”, a Dutch term, loosely translated as “chubby”. Contemporaries probably called him this so as not to confuse him with his grandfather David who presumably was not so “dicken”.

There is some uncertainty as to when David’s house on Jordan Road was built. Typically the house has been dated to 1765 based on a cast iron fireback found in the house with that date.

Additionally, there is a 1767 map of the Rensselaer Manor (today’s Albany and Rensselaer Counties) which shows a David Defreest house, but it is located on the wrong side of the road. There are several theories for this. The mapmaker may have got the location wrong or perhaps this was the location of “grandfather” David Defreest’s home.

What’s interesting is that modern technology has been able to pinpoint the date the house was constructed through a method called dendrochronolgy or “tree dating. Basically, this science can date the time when tree rings were formed, in many types of wood, to the exact calendar year. Five samples taken from the first floor joists of the house point to a date of 1771.

Although this is circumstantial, “dicken David” married in 1770 and may have built the house for his bride and future family. David didn’t live here his entire life. In 1789 he purchased land on the Wynantskill, near today’s Burden Pond and operated a gristmill there by 1791-92. The property was the subject of a famous court case “Corning v. Troy Iron and Nail Factory” but that’s a future story. This was about the time his son Lucas married and became owner of the Jordan Road property which remained in the Defreest family until 1900.

So if you’re driving down Jordan Road, look for the Dutch Bond brick Defreest homestead with a historical marker out in front- it’s also on the National Register of Historic Places.