



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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Wynantskill Church Growing Pains Pt.2

In my last column I chronicled the problems the Wynantskill Reformed Church was experiencing by the 1830's. Because of a theological schism, a rival church calling themselves "The True Dutch Reformed Church" formed and drew away many members from the original church. Also, at least two other Protestant churches formed in the town. By 1841, the Wynantskill Church was down to 37 communicants.

Thus, not only had the membership decreased which affected the collection plate, but needed repairs had to be made. Could the church survive?

An important step was taken in the calling of Rev. Cornelius Gates in early 1841. One of his principal duties was to raise money to keep the church going. In addition to asking for increased giving from the church members, Rev. Gates reached out to other churches.

On May 1, 1841, he sent a letter to the Pastors of the Collegiate Churches in New York City. Gates "appealed to your sympathy and liberality in behalf of a feeble sister church either by taking up collections in your three churches or recommending our cause to the benevolence of your members." He proposed to come to their churches and personally plead for funds. The Collegiate Churches were the first Dutch Reformed Churches chartered by the English in 1696. Presumably they were wealthy enough to respond to Wynantskill's needs.

Records show that Rev. Gates did preach in New York City, and returned home with \$60. This may not sound like much, but in today's funds it is the equivalent of thousands of dollars. A few months later, he also made a successful trip to New Brunswick and obtained further funds.

By July 1842 the Wynantskill Reformed Church showed a balance of \$16.79. The crisis was over. Ironically, in October 1842, Rev. Gates stated his desire to separate and asked the Consistory to apply to the Classis for release. His entire ministry at Wynantskill lasted under two years. We don't know why he left but it is clear that his short ministry helped the Wynantskill Reformed Church stay afloat. The congregation still worships in its building on the corner of Church and Main while the "True Dutch Reformed Church" is long gone and all but forgotten.