



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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The Fonda Family in North Greenbush

When people hear the family name “Fonda”, they may remember the actors Peter or Henry Fonda. The name Jane Fonda conjures up the movie star and exercise queen. However, the Fonda family members were prominent settlers in this area.

Jellis Douw Fonda was born in the Netherlands and is first mentioned in the Rensselaerwyck records in 1651 when he requested permission to distill liquor in the “Green Bos”. I knew I liked this family!

In later generations, some Fondas settled in Schenectady and Albany. John Fonda, 1736-1818, is listed in a 1767 map showing early settlers in what was to become Greenbush.

Fonda leased 443 acres and became a tenant of the Van Rensselaer family who actually owned the land. His property spanned Snyders Lake Road about where the Pond Hill housing development is now. In fact, before Snyders (or Aeris) Lake Road was laid out, deeds referred to property as adjacent to the “Fonda Road”

This John Fonda was a Major in the Revolutionary War. His son, John Janse Fonda continued the family military tradition by serving as a Captain in the local militia in the early 1800’s. Not to be outdone, his son John was a Colonel in the militia while continuing to manage his vast farm property.

The Colonel’s two sons were interesting people and I’m told were competitors with each other. John Fonda was the first election inspector for the town in 1855; and from 1869-

71 he was town Justice of the Peace. Not to be outdone, his brother Matthew V.A. Fonda was Commissioner of the Highways in 1855; Town Supervisor from 1864-67 and County Sheriff in 1867.

The houses these brothers lived in still stand and are quite distinctive. John Fonda's house is "down in" off Bloomingrove Drive as you pass the cemetery and was built about 1865.

Matthew's house dating from about 1875 is on Washington Avenue Extension in Defreestville. It resembles the "Adams Family" house from the old TV series. One brother was trying to outdo the other no doubt.

As far as I can determine, the last male descendant in this line was Sanford Fonda who died in 1937.

The Fondas are buried in a family plot in Bloomingrove Cemetery. Marilyn Makkoo Woods, a female descendant of the Fondas, recently passed away and is buried with her ancestors.