# NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

**Jim Greenfield    Town Historian  283-6384**

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY NORTH GREENBUSH

This month North Greenbush will celebrate its " Sesquicentennial  plus One". The Dutch were the original European settlers in this area.  The name Greenbush comes from the Dutch "Groenen  Bosh" or green pine wood which covered the land when they arrived in the 1600's.  Greenbush was one of the original townships when Rensselaer County was created in 1792.  On February 23, 1855 the town of Greenbush was divided into the townships of Clinton(now East Greenbush) and North Greenbush with what is currently  the City of Rensselaer retaining the name of Greenbush until 1897.  The village of Bath was part of North Greenbush until 1897 when it became part of the City of Rensselaer.

What was North Greenbush  like back in 1855 when it was formed?  Fortunately we have a snapshot of the town because in June 1855 New York State took a census of the inhabitants.

- There were 1812 inhabitants in 358 families throughout the town.

- The "old" family names of the first settlers such as Dearstyne, Sharpe, Van Alstyne, DeFreest and Van DenBerg are found throughout the census.

- Four people were 80 years of age or older, making them born before our country was founded.

- Most people were born in Rensselaer County. However there were 146 people born in Germany and 118 born in Ireland.  From neighboring counties, there were 40 born in Albany, 30 in Columbia and 28 in Dutchess.

- By far, most people were farmers. However in other occupations, 37 people listed themselves as mechanics; 12 as laborers; 8 as shoemakers and 8 as blacksmiths. Other interesting occupations were: boatmen (4); ferryman (3); tea merchant (1) and speculator (1) and one inhabitant who listed his occupation as "everything". There were only a few traditional professional occupations listed: 2 clergymen, 2 engineers, 1 doctor and one justice.

- When asked what material their house was built, 287 answered frame, 10 brick and 3 wood (possibly these were log houses).

- There were 7 people in three families who listed their color as black.

- Although this census didn't ask for personal wealth, it did request the value of the house. 269 residents valued their home at between $0-$1000; 22 listed their value at between $1001 and $2499 and 8 people said their house was worth over $2500. Five of those valued their house at $2500, one at $4000, one at $8,000 and one at $65,000. The most expensive house was owned by Paul Forbes, the tea merchant who occupied the old Van Rensselar Manor house on what is now the grounds of St. Anthony Seminary (Franciscans).

This then is a brief glimpse of North Greenbush at its founding. In future articles I hope to delve into other aspects of our history. One area I would like to explore is why East and North Greenbush were established as two not one town: family rivalries, political machinations or something else. If anyone has theories on this or other ideas for future columns, please contact Jim Greenfield at 283-6384 or nghistory@aol.com .