



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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SAVING THE DEFREEST HOUSE

Our hamlet of Defreestville got its name from the Defreest family who were one of the earliest settlers in this area. David Defreest leased the land from the Van Rensselaer Patroons in the early 1700's and built the frame portion of the house. His son Phillip built the larger addition to what is now the current house was built at the time of his marriage in the 1740's. It is known as the Philip Defreest house.

The main portion of the house is a gambrel-roof structure, one and a half stories high, of brick laid up in Flemish bond. The homestead is a rare surviving example of 18th century Dutch architecture of the region. The Defreest family owned the house and land until it was sold to the Elijah Jordan family in 1905 who operated a farm on the property.

The Jordan family made several renovations to the old house. They laid a new floor, installed electricity, hot water heat and an indoor bathroom.

By the time Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute (R.P.I) bought the farm and the house in 1969, it had been abandoned for several years. Vandals, having stripped the inside of pipes and the heating plant. There also was a fire which caused extensive damage.

R.P.I spent money stabilizing the house but didn't have plans for its use. They approached the Town of North Greenbush and the Greenbush Historical Society. They would give the building to them and move it to property

on US Route 4 . Also they successfully worked to place the house on the National Register of Historic Places. However both the Town and the Historical Society didn't have the funds to proceed it and feared the building was too fragile to move. It looked like the Defreest House was doomed.

But then a miracle occurred. R.P.I. Trustee C. Sheldon Roberts and especially his wife Pat provided the funds to preserve and restore the house. Today the building has become the Administrative Center for the R.P.I Tech Park.

There is also an amendment to this story. The Roberts family also provided funds to restore the adjacent 1840 Defreest Dutch barn (one of the last surviving in New York) which now is used for meetings and social events. It has been named "Pat's Barn.

