



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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THE FIGHTING FINKLE FAMILY

Recently I wrote about the anti-rent “wars” in Greenbush during the 1800’s. There were also anti-rent problems in Columbia County which ultimately lead to a death of Calvin Finkle in Greenbush.

There are similarities in the anti-rent troubles in both counties. In Rensselaer County, Stephen Van Rensselaer held perpetual leases on many of the farms while the Livingston family had the same arrangements in Columbia County. Van Rensselaer sold the rights to many of his leases to Colonel Walter Church who then tried to collect back rents.

In 1846 Charles Livingston was in the process of selling one of the farms in Taghkanic occupied by the Finkle family. After a court ruled against the Finkles, they refused to vacate the property and sheriff deputies attempted to evict them. Calvin Finkle tried to escape but when cornered by lawmen, he climbed an apple tree and remained there until dark. The legend is that over 100 shots were fired at Finkle but only one bullet lodged in his heel.

The Finkle brothers were finally captured, tried for resisting arrest and sentenced to three years, and four months imprisonment in the State Prison at Sing Sing.

After being released the brothers moved to the Greenbush area, leasing a farm from Colonel Church. However, Calvin’s troubles were far from over. By 1874, Finkle had been arrested

and jailed several times for failure to pay rent owed and cutting down and removing cherry trees from the property.

Matters came to a head in October 1874 when County Sheriff Seamon and Constable Hurlbut tried to serve a warrant on Calvin Finkle. A fight broke out and Finkle struck Hurlbut on his head several times with a heavy cane. The Constable managed to reach his gun and fatally shot Finkle.

An inquest was held at the Bloomingrove Hotel (adjacent to today's Park & Ride in Defreestville). The hearing cleared Hurlbut and all but the members of the Finkle family seemed to agree with the verdict.

Finkle's death signaled the end to the violence which accompanied the anti-rent wars in this area.