



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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Too Many Defreest Males?

This title highlights the problem faced by many early patriarchs: which son inherits the farm and what happens to the other sons?

An example of this is the property of Martin Defreest (1724-1802). When he died, the farm went to his eldest son Peter. However, Martin had five other sons. What happened to them? David, the second oldest son had land of his own. He ran a tavern/hotel in Defreestville. Daniel, the youngest son eventually had a farm, but not from lands of his father or brothers.

The other three sons moved and interestingly changed their name from Defreest to Deforest which was the original last name when the family came here. Philip and William settled in Albany County by 1790, then later to Montgomery and Cayuga Counties respectively. Their brother Jacob moved to Schenectady County.

Once they decided to leave Rensselaer County, what factors determined where they would go? First, where was there available land? Philip and William found property in Bethlehem and Berne

which were sparsely populated in the early 1800's. This was the same situation in Montgomery County for Philip and Schenectady County for Jacob. Philip and Jacob's descendants remained there, but William and his family went to Cayuga County in the Finger Lakes, probably to take up land owned by Rensselaer County Defreests.

Another factor in moving was friends and family. For example Philip's grandmother was a Winne and there were several families in Bethlehem where he first settled.

A third factor was religion. These Deforests were all members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Records for these locations list many Deforest baptisms and marriages. William and his sons were elders of their church in Cayuga County. Ironically, one of their first pastors was a Defreest who was born in Rensselaer County. There were probably no "hard feelings" against father Martin. The records show many of these Deforests named their children and grandchildren Martin.

To prove that "what goes around comes around", a Deforest family resettled in Albany 100 years after their ancestors left.