



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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On Memorial Day we traditionally honor our American Veterans. In this article I would like to spotlight one of our earliest Vets. – David M. DeFreest, a soldier in the Revolutionary War.

Born in 1757, DeFreest served in the Albany County Militia, in his kinsman Captain Jacob DeFreest's Company under the command of Colonel Stephen J. Schuyler's Regiment. At that time Rensselaer was still part of Albany County. His unit marched from Greenbush to Stillwater and he served at Fort Ann and Fort Edward and was in the battle of Wood Creek. During this battle, DeFreest was standing next to Colonel Henry K. VanRensselaer who was wounded by a bullet in the thigh. He helped carry the Colonel off the field of battle and eventually assisted bringing him back to his home in Greenbush. Later in the War he "did duty" in the Mohawk Valley. He estimated his total service was over two years.

However the most interesting part of the David M. DeFreest story began when he applied for a pension. In June 1832, Congress passed a law allowing all Revolutionary War veterans (including Militia members) to apply for pensions. DeFreest did so the next month. He was 75 by this time and most of his fellow soldiers who could substantiate the claim listed in his declaration were dead. Moreover, the Government seems to have questioned whether he was who he said he was. Their records indicated that the man who listed the above service record was David M. DeForrest, not DeFreest.

Complicating matters was the fact that DeFreest died in 1835. Lest you think that bureaucracy is a modern day invention, his widow had to submit further paperwork to continue the pension. She had to obtain letters from her brother-in law and son, swearing that some members of the family did indeed go by the name of DeForrest, but that her husband was David M. DeFreest. Furthermore, she had to prove that she had been married to DeFreest. In the days before social security cards or driver licenses, one had to make do by submitting letters to support a claim, or in Rachel DeFreest's case, she had to rip the birth/marriage page out of her family Bible and send it to Washington as proof. By the way, the family Bible page had her listed as marrying David DeForrest, but evidently the Government relented because she received her widow's pension.

So hats off to North Greenbush's Memorial Day veteran who fought to obtain our independence and also conquered the government bureaucracy to receive his family's pension.