



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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Wynantskill's Building Boom

It might be hard to believe, but Wynantskill used to be sleepy little hamlet until the early 1920's. The principal buildings were located along Main Avenue at the corner of West Sand Lake Road or Wynantskill Corners as it was called.

There was the First Reformed Church, a blacksmith shop, several milk parlors, Ketchum's general store, the Odd Fellows building (where the first firehouse was) and the Quentin Hotel (later Houser's store).

Mr. Gillette, proprietor of the Quentin, was quoted as saying "Wynantskill will never amount to anything until it has a few first class funerals."

This puzzled me until I received an old newspaper ad from Joan Madden. It mentioned that a real estate firm, N.P. Dodge & Co. had purchased and sold the Koon farm "on the West side of the Creek", and were now selling lots from the Hidley farm "on the east side of the Creek". Both Koon and Hidley had recently died and were from two of the old Wynantskill families. This must have been the first class funerals Gillette anticipated.

By today's standards, the real estate ad seems like a bargain. Most lots sold for \$89 to \$289, depending on the size. Highway lots were a bit more expensive: \$499 to \$619. Lot sizes were generally 50 by 125 feet.

The low payments were the biggest sales pitch: \$1 down and then \$1 a week. No interest payments for two years and Dodge Co. would pay the taxes for two years. Can't beat that!

The developments were called Fairfax and Belmont (I think the ad meant Bellmead). Those two names are current day Wynantskill street names, along with Dodge Street.

My research indicates that Dodge only sold lots and did not actually build houses. I suspect at least a few were Sears-Roebuck mail order homes.

Sears had a big business in these homes which coincides with the Wynantskill building boom. Houses could be purchased anywhere from \$900 to \$2800 with all the modern conveniences such as central heating, electricity and indoor plumbing. Sears used pre-cut timber and fitted pieces and even provided the nails for easy construction.

As I drive through these sections of Wynantskill I've spotted what I think are several "Sears's type" houses. If you live in or know of any of these houses, please give me a call at 283-6384.