



# NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

Jim Greenfield Town Historian 283-6384

## North Greenbush in the Revolutionary War

When you think of our American War for Independence you don't think of action in what today is North Greenbush. We didn't have any great battles like Saratoga or Bennington, but there was action here and we are able to catch a glimpse of certain events by following the exploits of Captain Jacob Defreest who had a homestead near today's RPI Technology Park.

Defreest was one of the three brothers who settled this area in the 1700's. Born in 1736, Jacob was in his late 40's by the time of the Revolution and a prominent citizen of Greenbush. This was probably why he was selected as Captain of the local militia.

His first command was during the battles at Ft. Anne and Ft. Edward in the summer of 1777. These battles were early in the Saratoga campaign. His subsequent service was nearer to home where the enemy consisted of loyalists who were aiding the British. In May 1779, the New York "Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies" appointed Defreest organize a volunteer company of Rangers (Special Ops. Units of their times) to root out loyalist support.

One of the problems the Rangers faced was that British sympathizers were either not planting wheat or transporting the flour to British troops, leaving a severe shortage of food supplies in the Albany area. Defreest's job was to prevent the loyalists who were doing these things. His 50 man unit also investigated and apprehended robbers who were preying on citizens. Some of this action must have resulted in gun battles, for Defreest requested and received ammunition from General Ten Broeck.

There were several instances where Defreest was commanded to convey German mercenary prisoners of war to the Albany Jail. Other times "detainees" protested their innocence and were either put on probation or fined.

In September, the Commission discharged the Ranger unit. Either they had been completely successful their mission or too many innocent residents complained about being rousted out of their houses in the middle of the night. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle. However, for the rest of the War, Defreest could return to his farm and live out his life knowing he and his Rangers had done their part in pacifying this part of the county.