



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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The Battle of Belltop School

My previous article discussed the proposed closing of the Bloomingrove School as a part of the trend toward school centralization.

In 1938, a “battle” erupted concerning building a new building on the Belltop School site on Snyders Lake Road. The East Greenbush School District had obtained funds from the federal Public Works Administration to build three new schools: a high school in East Greenbush, a school in Nassau and a school to replace the 1866 Belltop School in North Greenbush.

With the funding approved and a site chosen, the project should proceed right? Well no, that’s when the battle started. First the State Education Department said the Belltop location didn’t have enough land for a six room school. Since no other site was proposed the school district decided to go ahead with a smaller building on that site.

However Defreestville residents whose children would attend the school voted to insist the building be located on another property but within their hamlet. Ruling on an appeal, the State Board of Regents reversed the Education Department to the extent of approving a two room building and nothing more for the original Belltop site.

Local resident Charles Reynolds bought the building and moved the old school across the road to his property. Because of construction delays, students had to be bused to Green School three miles away which cost \$6.45 a day. The solution was to lease back the old school house for \$400 (Reynolds had only paid \$100 for the building) until construction was finished.

There was one more problem to overcome before the project could become a reality. A Defreestville group petitioned the school board to demand another district vote for selection of a new site located in Defreestville. The school board rejected the petition partially because there was a real danger that the Federal Government would pull the promised funds and the construction proceeded on the original site. The cornerstone was laid in January 1940 and the new Belltop School was dedicated in June.

Coda: The name Belltop comes from the school bell which was purchased when the old building was built in 1866. It’s still on site there today.