



Marker #22

Pioneer churches had more influence on town residents than the town government. The church was the sole social and religious element in the lives of the early settlers in Guilderland. The minister or pastor of a church was a counselor, an advisor, a coworker to its members. They consoled the grief at family loss and shared the joy of marriages and births.

The Dutch Reformed Church was the first church of any denomination in West Manor (Guilderland). Its influences were powerful factors in molding the lives of its members.

History records reveal that active settlement of the Guilderland area began in 1750 and church services were held then in a log meeting house near Osborne Corners. Records of births, deaths and marriages were recorded in Albany, Schenectady, or Coxsackie, wherever the travelling clergyman's church was located. On the ministry circuit, these early clergy travelled through dense woods alone to reach outlying members of a church that had no pastor. They became targets of Tories during the Revolution.

The exact founding date of the Dutch Reformed Church in Guilderland cannot be determined, according to historians. Permanent records of the church began in December of 1793, but it is thought to have been founded in 1767.

When the small prayer meeting house at the junction of Black Creek and the old Schoharie Road became too small to hold the congregation, plans were made to build a new church. Familiar Guilderland names made up the Consistory in the year of 1788. Those signing the Articles of Incorporation of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the Hellebergh were Abraham Wemple, Frederick Ocburger, Johannis Quackenbos, John Valk, Lawrence Schoolcraft, Johannis Settle and Jacob Onderkerk. It was signed in the presence of Barent Mynderse and Hendrick Apple.

In 1793, Rev. Harmanus Van Huysen accepted a call to be pastor of the Hellebergh, Salem and Jerusalem Reformed Churches and remained there for 31 years.

At that early Consistory meeting, it was ruled that all minutes should

be kept in English and that a trunk would be secured to keep all documents safe. It was a foresighted move. The trunk was found years later in the aging Severson Inn in Altamont, and the documents therein furnished much of the information for this series.

The restored blue and gold marker at the junction of routes 146 and 158 reminds us of a religious institution and its vital impact on the early settlers of this community.

(A more complete history of the Dutch Church of the Hellebergh can be found in Howell and Tenney, and articles written by the Rev. E.O. Moffett, also an article published in the 1931 Altamont Enterprise, "History of the Schenectady Classis.")