

# TOWN OF GUILDERLAND



## HISTORIC MARKERS

Alice C. Begley  
*Town Historian*

# **HISTORIC MARKERS**

in the

## **Town of Guilderland**

Albany County, New York

\* \* \*

By ALICE C. BEGLEY

Town Historian

1994

Copyright 1994 by the Town of Guilderland

Anne T. Rose, Supervisor

Members of the Town Board

Constance Fennessey

Richard Murray

Timothy Sheehan

William Aylward

Published by *The Altamont Enterprise*

at Altamont, N.Y. 1994

*Published and printed with private funds*

*Proceeds to benefit Schoolcraft Cultural Center*

To bring together in a publication the historic deeds, events and people noted on the Town of Guilderland historic markers has been a task of personal commitment and pleasure. For the joy of students of history and the ease of historic researchers, I trust this booklet will aid in their search for the richness of Guilderland's heritage and enhance a sense of pride for the community in which they live.

Historical writings can be achieved only with research from previously written accounts or first-hand reported knowledge of events and facts. I am indebted to Guilderland's past historians, Arthur B. Gregg, William Brinkman, Roger Keenholts and Fred Abele. Mr. Gregg's "Old Hellebergh" was invaluable in searching out the earliest history of the town. A special thanks to the reference librarians at the Guilderland Public Library, the librarians of the Albany Public Library and the Documents and Manuscripts Section of the New York State Library, senior citizens of Guilderland who delved into their personal family 'archives,' Joan Robinson for her valuable comments, and to Jim Gardner and Bryce Butler at the Altamont Enterprise for their editorial assistance.

Alice Begley  
*Town Historian*

The spelling *Hellebergh*, used by the historian Arthur Gregg, will be used in this booklet unless it is part of a quotation.

## Foreword

One of my fondest childhood memories involves pulling off the side of the road during a Sunday drive in order to read the text of a state historic marker. Those iron tablets with their terse, abbreviated text, were a springboard for the imagination. "Near here . . ." and the mind leapt to visualize those people and events of long ago.

New York State began erecting historic markers in 1925 as a project sponsored by the commission to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the American Revolution. The original cost was two dollars per marker. The marker program proved so popular that it was continued under the auspices of the State Education Department until 1959. By then the ubiquitous blue and gold tablets were one of the most characteristic features on the landscape of New York State. As a program to bring historical information to the public, few have been as successful. Generations of adults and children have had their historical consciousness raised by reference to some strategically-placed historic marker.

Over two thousand state historic markers have been erected since the program began in the 1920s. Local historical societies and local government historians deluged the State Historian's Office with the forms used to propose a marker. The original records of the hundreds of markers requested and erected over the past six decades are still a part of the active files of the Office of State History. They contain bibliographic references and other research data supporting marker texts, names of persons or organizations applying for markers, dignitaries who attended dedications, and small maps identifying the proposed location of each marker.

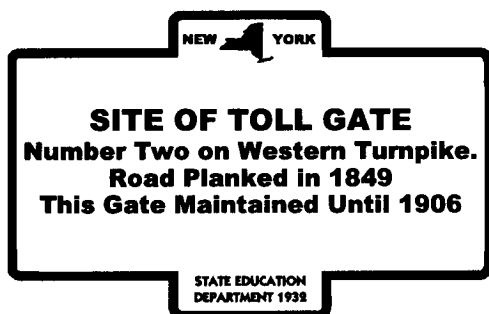
We do not know how many of the markers survive. Over the years many of the markers have been lost, destroyed or removed. A state-wide survey was conducted in 1949. Since then sample inventories suggest that in some counties as few as fifty percent of the markers originally erected still remain in place. As this work shows, the town of Guilderland is more fortunate in this regard than some others.

I am honored to contribute a foreword to this effort by Guilderland Town Historian Alice Begley. Her work is one of over two thousand historical books, pamphlets, and brochures published this year by New York's officially-appointed town and village historians. Her research reveals the cross-section of local history that has been monumented with historic markers, and the enduring interest in the marker program. My congratulations to her and to *The Altamont Enterprise* for this contribution to the preservation of their community's past.

Joseph F. Meany, Jr., Ph.D.  
Acting State Historian



*This historic marker stands  
in front of Guilderland Town Hall  
on Western Turnpike (Route 20).*



### **Marker #1**

The marker is gone, and perhaps few Guilderland residents today remember the significance of the iron talisman of Guilderland's past.

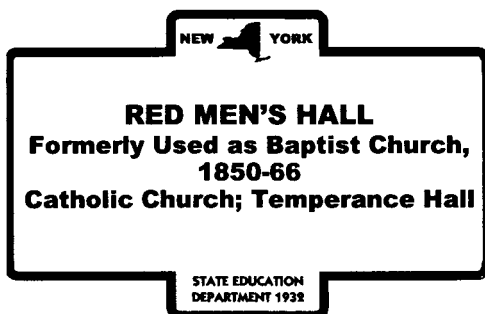
The Great Western Turnpike, incorporated March 15, 1799, was opened during a momentous period in history. The country was draped in mourning for its beloved George Washington, and the thriving little glass manufactory and hamlet of Hamilton (now Guilderland) had the honor of being the first village named after Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton.

The 52 miles of road from Albany to Cherry Valley cost \$167,388.93, was financed by private investors, and completed in 1804. The toll gate on Western Avenue in Guilderland was the second gate, the first being at Winthrop Avenue in the city. For each 10 miles it cost 12-1/2 cents for every wagon with two horses or 25 cents for a coach. It cost 3 cents to drive a pig on the road. No tolls were collected from persons going to or from church, to the election polls, to training or muster duty, to jury duty or for a physician or mid-wife.

The toll gate historic marker once stood on Route 20 on the site of the old Turnpike Drive-In theater of the 1940s and '60s, where the Highwood Village condominium complex stands today.

The covered wagons and coaches have disappeared. Drove of cattle are no longer herded up the Turnpike; the emigrants, the taverns and inns that served them and the wolves that once lurked by the roadside are no longer visible. In the 1940s the road was still a two-lane highway. Now, a four-lane highway hosts 18-wheel trailers, trucks, school buses, rushing tourists and business men. And we who use the Turnpike daily for our living give little thought to its intriguing history.

*(Research information from the writings of Historian Arthur Gregg and a series "The Great Western Turnpike" published in The Turnpike Record in 1957).*



## **Marker #2**

The marker reads "Redmen's Hall," but older Guilderland residents remember it as Redmen's Wigwam. Those older residents also remember the large one-story frame structure that was once the hub of Guilderland community social activities.

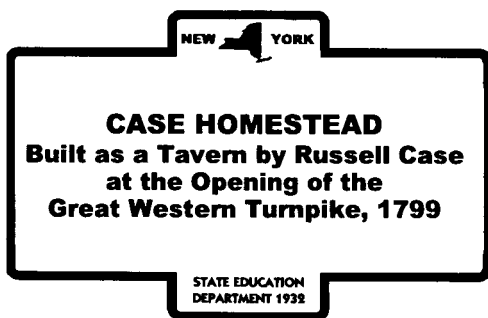
Redmen's Wigwam was a Baptist Church in 1875 and was then purchased by a temperance society, The Good Templars. The Templars used the building for their own meetings and rented it out to community organizations. The Redmen, a fraternal organization, and their auxiliary, the Pocohantas, met in the sturdy building. Older senior citizens in town may remember the ceremonial Indian garb used for Redmen's functions.

In the World War II era, women of Guilderland met in the Wigwam to roll bandages and make clothes for refugees; townspeople voted for their selected officials; and local organizations held their annual Christmas parties in the aging building.

In the early 1950s, Redmen's Hall was condemned for public assembly. The tiny piece of land went on county rolls for back taxes. Guilderland records show 1966 taxes were \$28.69. The Wigwam stood as a ghostly derelict for several years until it was destroyed by fire.

The historic marker stands near the highway on the south side of Route 20 about 1/4 mile east of Willow Street in Guilderland, conserving a place in local history for Redmen's Wigwam and remembering its better times.





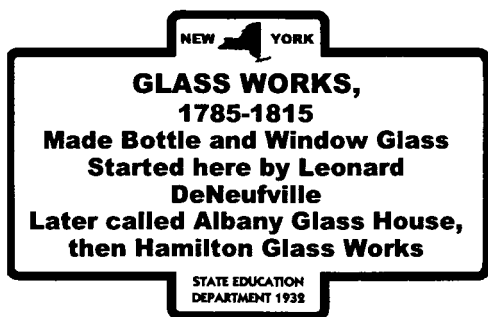
### **Marker #3**

The old Case Homestead was one of the 50 or more taverns erected when the Great Western Turnpike opened in 1789. The Case family first built a tavern where the State University stands today, but moved west on the Turnpike to accommodate the increased flow of journeymen travelling on the new road.

Farmers from Cherry Valley would herd their cattle down the Turnpike for market in Albany. Since the walking herd took one hour to go four miles, Guilderland's section of the new road was crowded with animals on many days for long hours.

The farmers used the Case Tavern and Inn for overnight stays. One history record states that as many as 100 men would sleep in the main room of the Case Tavern. In Roscoe's *The History of Schoharie*, the author writes that the Case Tavern served "all you can eat for one shilling," and the specialty of the house was whole roast pig. The homestead burned in early 1950.

A blue and gold historic marker still stands today at the site of the old Case Tavern, in front of the M & M Motel close by the Western Turnpike Golf Course entrance. It is a reminder of Guilderland's earlier years.



#### Marker #4

Before the Great Western Turnpike was a reality and just a stone's throw off the dirt road that preceded it, near the narrow Hungerkill Valley stood the Glass House. Until a few decades ago, Guilderland school children were enchanted by field trips to the area, where a plow might have unearthed discarded pieces of blue and amber glass to be retrieved as souvenirs. The original glass house was built along what is now Foundry Road in the Town of Guilderland.

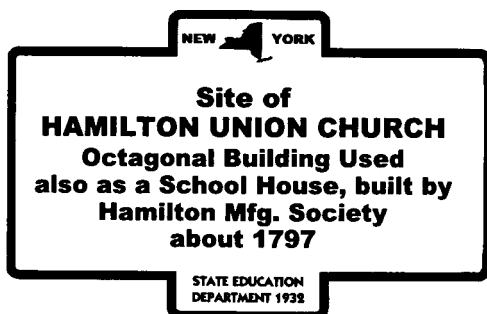
Dutchman Leonard DeNeufville came from Holland and invested his future in the land that supplied huge quantities of sand, plenty of wood for his furnace, potash, and water power from the Hungerkill for his glass works eight miles west of Albany. When the city of Albany celebrated the adoption of the Federal Constitution with a parade, a float carried glass makers and the tools of their trade, such as globes and blue glass bottles from the Glass House.

In 1802, the subsequent owner of the Glass Works, Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, named Lawrence Schoolcraft as his superintendent. In 1813, Hamilton (Guilderland) village contained 56 houses occupied by the laborers in the glass works employ. At the time, they were manufacturing 500,000 feet of window glass a year. Guilderland's noted hometown boy, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, lived in one of those village houses with his father, who taught him the art of glassmaking. Both father and son became nationally known for their expertise in that field. In his later literary career, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft wrote:

"Place once renowned for furnaces that threw  
Their rolling volumes to the amber skies,  
Where reeking glassmen their bright fabrics blew  
'Neath roofs that shamed the piny hills for size"

— *Helderbergia*.

The Guilderland Town Highway Department has replaced the old blue and gold marker with a new one denoting the site of the glass works. It stands on Foundry Road south of Route 20. A lone specimen of a half-pint blue glass bottle reading "Albany Glass House" rests in the New York State Museum, a silent sentinel of the ancient factory and Guilderland history.

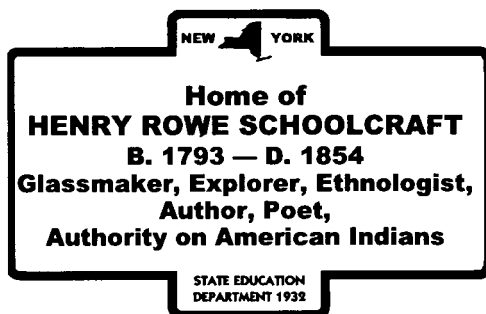


### **Marker #5**

On a hillock overlooking the junction of an Indian trail and a rutted dirt road, the Hamilton Union Church had its beginning. The Indian trail became the old Schoharie Road, which wound its way from the Widow Truax Tavern on Kings Road, through the Pine Bush to a hollow just east of the church's proposed site. The dirt road was soon to become the Great Western Turnpike.

The first meeting to establish the Hamilton Union Church was held in 1812 in an octagonal building that stood above a ravine and stream east of the Batterman and Schoolcraft taverns. The land was donated by George Batterman. Elder John Schoolcraft was named clerk and trustee. The first Presbyterian minister known to have preached in Guilderland (then known as Hamilton) was the Reverend Bethuel Dodd. The educational school held in the eight-sided structure was a preparatory academy for boys, noted for its superior academics.

The formal establishment of the Hamilton Union Church took place in 1824. A date of destruction of the octagonal church-school to make way for a new presbytery is not recorded. Times and community progress have given a new look over the years to the first Presbyterian Church built in the Town of Guilderland, and its significance in Guilderland's history is evident.



### Marker #6

Literary acclaim came to Guilderland's own Henry Rowe Schoolcraft in his later years, after he became an explorer, a scientist, and an ethnologist. He wrote of covered wagons loaded with western products travelling on the Great Western Turnpike that would stop for the night in one of Guilderland's taverns or inns.

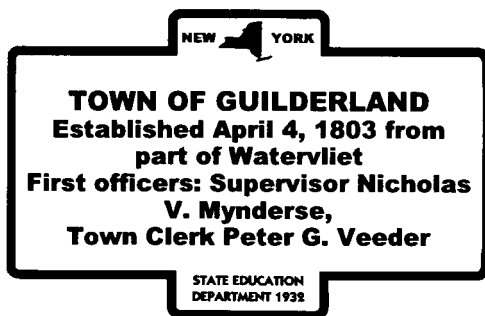
In the streets, Schoolcraft wrote, might be heard all the dialects of the Germans, the Low Dutch, the Erse and Gaelic of the Irish and Scotch as well as the genuine Yankee.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was one of the earliest important writers on the American Indian. He married a Chippewa Indian woman. His most important discovery was Lake Itasca, the source of the Mississippi River. Among the books he wrote was *The Myth of Hiawatha*, which Henry Wadsworth Longfellow used for his *Song of Hiawatha*. Schoolcraft's published poems, *Heldebergia*, are inspiring with his childhood remembrances of Guilderland.

The Schoolcraft family name in Guilderland is legend. School children learn of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. They learn of his father, Lawrence Schoolcraft, who was superintendent of the Hamilton Glass Works and a local militia man in Albany's 3rd Regiment of the Continental Army. They learn of John Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe's uncle, one of the first justices of the peace in Guilderland, and they read about John L. Schoolcraft, who built the historic "gingerbread" Schoolcraft mansion on the corner of Schoolcraft Street and the Western Turnpike.

A blue and gold historic marker sits in front of an unassuming frame house on Willow Street in Guilderland to remind us of this valuable town legend.

"Hills, groves and streams, that bound my native land,  
Ye court the pleasing homage of my hand  
And, like a dream of paradise and light,  
Fill my soul with rapture as I write.  
Heights far more lofty, streams immensely long,  
Deep in the west, invite a nobler song;  
But ah to me, more sweet the scenes expand  
Where Norma's cliffs, and Helder's ramparts stand."  
— *Iosco, or the Vale of Norma*, by H. R. Schoolcraft.



### Marker #7

In 1932, the New York State Education Department erected a marker at Osborne Corners in Guilderland Center to designate when the Township of Guilderland was organized. The first town meeting was held April 5, 1803, near the same site at the Appel Inn. Today, a new green and white historical marker graces the lawn outside the new Town Hall that was built on Route 20 at McCormacks Corners in 1972. A large addition was added to the present Town Hall and dedicated in 1989.

Many changes have taken place since the first meeting. After the initial meetings at Appel Inn, town business was conducted in the homes of various town officials.

In April of 1814, the town meeting was held at the home of Joel Morgan. William McKown was elected supervisor, Andrew Ostrander was town clerk, and John Schoolcraft, Cornelius Waldron and James LaGrange were assessors. Among the ordinances adopted at that meeting were:

- Any person killing a wolf in town would be rewarded \$25.00;
- No male horse could run at large above the age of one year old, under fine of \$12.50;
- Cattle were not to run at large between the first of November and the first of April;
- The commissioner of schools was to be entitled to \$1 per day;
- Lawful fences were to be 4 1/2 feet high.

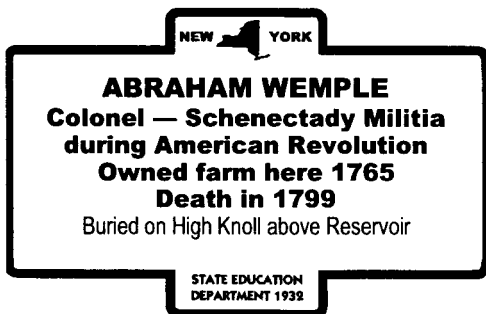
At the same meeting, the highway commissioner estimated that the expense to repair all bridges and roads would be \$60.

As the population of the town grew, meetings were moved to public buildings. Town meetings were held in a hall upstairs over a garage in Guilderland Center across from the Cobblestone School. In the 1950s, when John Feldman was supervisor, town business was conducted in a room adjacent to the former Well's Service Station on Route 20 east of Master Cleaners. The service station has since burned. By 1957, the former schoolhouse on Willow Street (now the State Troopers' barracks) had come into use for town meetings. The old schoolhouse remained the

seat of town government until 1971, when the new town hall was built. That new structure was considerably enlarged and remodeled in 1988.

In 1959, an official coat-of-arms was adopted from the Province of Gelderland in Holland to commemorate the many Guilderland founding fathers who originated from that country. A needlepoint tapestry of the coat-of-arms hangs in the office of the supervisor at the new Town Hall.

Town meetings of yesteryear were concerned with wild wolves running loose in town, lawful neighbor fences and repairs to roads and bridges. Town planning, zoning and environmental concerns are complex issues that trouble town officials today. Though almost two centuries removed the objective is the same, the shaping of a community. The historic marker in front of the Town Hall of 1994 salutes all those, past and present, who have contributed to that goal.



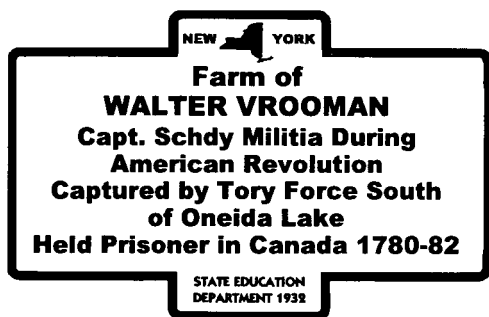
### Marker #8

Before the Watervliet Reservoir was built, the banks of the Normanskill and Bozenkill waters harbored meadows of rich farm land in the Town of Guilderland. Colonel Abraham Wemple, Revolutionary War soldier, owned one of the productive farms.

Wemple's house was built in 1760 out of over-sized bricks made of clay from the banks of the waters bordering his acreage. The approach to Wemple land was on the Western Turnpike between Sharps Corners and Fullers Station or from a road near the Dutch Cemetery at Osborn Corners.

Colonel Wemple was called a great leader by one historian for his command of the regiment recruited from Schenectady, the 2nd Albany County Militia. Wemple was reported to have been at the Battle of Saratoga, the Massacre at Cobus Kill (Cobleskill) and Cherry Valley. When Mohawk Indian chief Joseph Brant, a British ally, led an attack in the Mohawk Valley, Colonel Wemple reported the scene to his commanding officer, General Abraham TenBroeck: "Such a scean (sic) as we beheld since we left the river, passing dead bodies of men and children most cruelly murdered, is not possible to describe."

Wemple returned to his farm in Guilderland after the war, and upon his death, was buried on a high hill overlooking his land. The Wemple house (in later years owned by Frederick Woodrich) was torn down and the farm lands were flooded to make way for the Watervliet Reservoir. The brown gravestone that once marked Abraham Wemple's resting place can no longer be found. But the blue and gold historic marker, by the side of the road on the Great Western Turnpike one half mile west of the railroad bridge, reserves a place in history for this Guilderland soldier.



### **Marker #9**

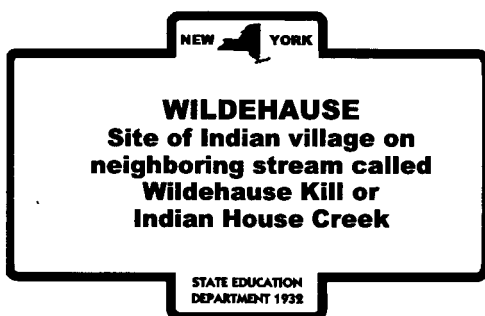
The day Captain "Wouter" Vrooman returned home from the war, there was great rejoicing of the neighbors in farmhouses in Guilderland. For two long years, Captain Walter J. Vrooman had been held prisoner in a foreign dungeon.

Vrooman's wife, Jacomyntje, and their children, the Dominie from Schenectady who had married them, members of his command, and his grizzled old veteran friend and neighbor, Colonel Abraham Wemple, all gathered to give the returning soldier a warm welcome.

After successfully holding the Fort at Johns Town, Captain Vrooman and his detachment were overpowered and captured by a large band of Tories and Indians on October 23, 1780 in a place called Canaghshioraga. An Indian warrior claimed Vrooman as his prisoner and marched him north, where he was incarcerated in a prison near the rapids of the St. Lawrence River above Montreal. Captain Vrooman was released at the end of the Revolutionary War.

The blue and gold historic marker that previously stood on NYS Route 158 south is missing. We hereby note this Revolutionary soldier's place in Guilderland's history.





### **Marker #10**

Little has been recorded in local history annals of a small Indian village on the banks of Wildehouse Kill just north of Route 20 at Dunnsville. In 1820, a few Indians were still living in huts on the banks near the old Shaver farm. On the former Willard Tygert farm adjacent to the creek, Indian relics were once found.

In 1824, a bridge was built over Wildehouse Kill to accommodate the increasing flow of wagon traffic. The commissioner of highways then recorded the total expense of the bridge as \$23.78 1/2. Nicholas Van Patten was paid \$6.28 for 74 feet of lumber, \$3 was expended for stone for the bridge, the rest of the expense was for labor including \$1.25 for liquor for the workmen.

The Guilderland Town Highway Department has installed a new green and white marker to replace the old weathered sign that marked the Indian village. The new sign records the creek as Wildehausen (houses), the old one read Wildehouse (house). Both mean Indian House(s) on Wild Creek. The marker is a record of the town's earliest beginnings.

*"True! Memory whispers that there was a mood  
In our beginning here, plain truth to speak,  
When we were poor indeed, in houses, land and food,  
And lived like Indians eating of caheek or kanchies hard!"*

*—Helderbergia, H. R. Schoolcraft*



### **Marker #11**

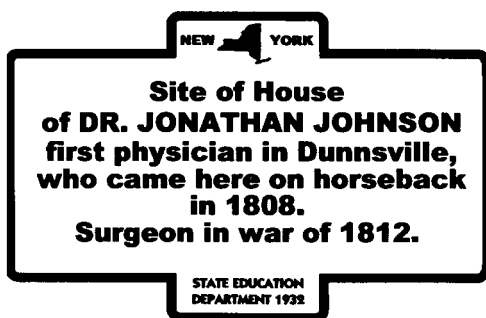
The two-story white building at the corner of Dunnsville Road and the Western Turnpike in Dunnsville is referred to by Guilderland residents today as the "old Grange." Some residents remember the turkey dinners served there, though it hasn't been used for Gifford Grange 1549 meetings in many years.

Prior to the Grange occupancy, the aged building was a tavern and inn run by John E. Winne. Winne died in 1823 and is buried 150 feet west of the former hostelry. William Brinkman's small history of Dunnsville notes that the school meeting of the Dunnsville District 2, Town of Guilderland, was held at John Winne's Inn on the 11th day of May, 1816.

Peter Waggoner was elected moderator and a new schoolmaster was chosen, David Pratt. Pratt agreed to teach in the Town of Guilderland's Dunnsville school across the road from the inn, at the rate of \$14 a quarter plus board, lodging and washing. By 1835, 84 children attended the school and the teacher's annual wages went up to \$145. Included in school expenses for the year was \$20 for five cords of wood and 87-1/2 cents for cleaning the schoolhouse.

Records are vague on the entire history of John Winne's Tavern and Inn; numerous names appear in reference to ownership. Christopher Dunn kept a tavern there but no dates are given, and a hotel was operated by William Wagner in the same building at one time. Ernest Rau is the present owner and the building is used as a district voting place.

The blue and gold historic marker west of John Winne's Inn does not begin to tell the interesting history of the place. We are grateful to the faithful clerk whose detailed records provide us with a glimpse of the beginnings of Guilderland's school system.



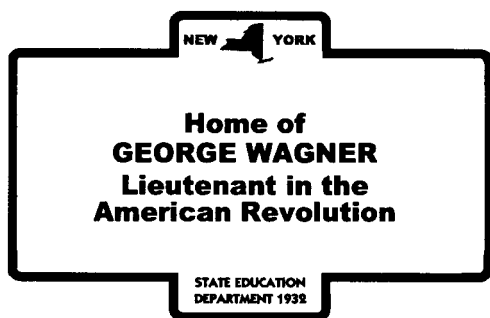
### **Marker #12**

On the bar back of the old Severson Inn Tavern, one of the customer debts reads: "Mr. Jonathan Johnson (the doctor from Dunnsville) To Liquor 25 cts." We know not whether the liquor was for a patient or to fortify the kindly doctor for a cold night's solitary ride ministering to the sick of Dunnsville.

Beyond this purchase record and the meager details on the historical sign, little is known of this early pioneer physician, though his contribution to the colonial adventure is evidenced by the blue and gold historic marker on Route 20 in the quiet hamlet of Dunnsville.

*"The history of a nation is not in parliaments or battlefields, but in what people say to each other on fair days and high days, and in how they farm, and quarrel, and go on pilgrimage."*

Wm. Butler Yeats



### **Marker #13**

You have to look sharp on the winding curve of Route 397 on its southbound turn off the Western Turnpike, but George Wagner's blue and gold marker is there by the farm land he once tilled.

You have to look sharp in history records as well to find a small mention of him, but it is there. George Wagner's appointment to the rank of ensign by Governor William Tryon in 1773 is duly noted.

"By his Excellency William Tryon, Esquire and Captain General and Governor in Chief over the Province of New York and the territories depending thereon in America:

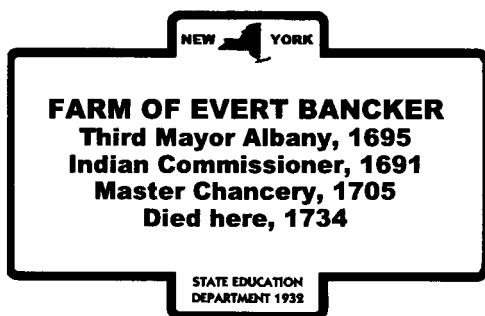
"To George Waganer (Wagner) — Gentleman of the County of Albany, Greeting."

The official document goes on to inform Wagner that he has been appointed ensign of Captain Jacob VanAernam's company of foot in the First Battalion in the Regiment of Militia of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck proper.

George Wagner was born about 1745, according to an aged record book kept by his descendants. He was an elder in the Dutch Church of Guilderland, married and had seven children.

This Revolutionary soldier and his soldier brother, Captain John Wagner, are buried in the family cemetery close by the historic sign that bears his name. Their gravestone markers, made of common brown field stone and unscripted, remain standing.

It takes no more than the brief governor's dispatch in the history records to inform us of George Wagner's valuable contribution to the American cause during the Revolutionary War. It takes the small blue and gold marker to keep his contribution in mind.



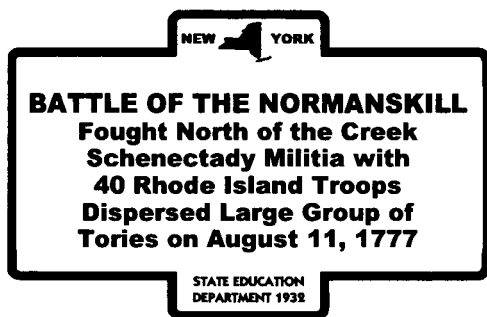
### **Marker #14**

Evert Bancker was the third mayor of the City of Albany serving from Oct. 15, 1695 to September 28, 1696. Born January 24, 1619 in Albany (then Beverwyck) the son of one of Schenectady's earliest settlers, he became a merchant of prominence in the colonies.

Bancker was a justice of the peace, served as Indian commissioner for seven years and served a second term as mayor from 1707 to 1709. He resided in a town house on Yoncker Street, now called State Street, during his tenure as mayor. History notes that Mayor Bancker would paddle a canoe up the Normanskill to reach his country place in Guilderland rather than take a path through the forest travelled by Indian trappers.

He was married to Elizabeth Abeel; they had five sons. Sons William and Johannes settled in Albany County as farmers. Bancker died in 1734 in Guilderland, leaving a large estate mostly invested in land.

On Route 146, a half-mile south of the Western Turnpike, a blue and gold historic marker graces the lawn of the lovely old Bancker farm house. It is a tribute to a man who spent many years in the public service of a new, emerging government. The farm was subsequently owned by James Howenstein, great-grandfather of the present owner, James Brust.



### Marker #15

"On a gentle rise of earth hard by Route 146, which cuts towards Altamont from the Western Turnpike, lies a hallowed plot of land. Beyond the Vale of Tawasentha and labelled by a blue and gold historic marker is the site of the Battle of the Normanskill, a skirmish of the Revolutionary War, small in size, great in importance" wrote former Guilderland historian Arthur Gregg.

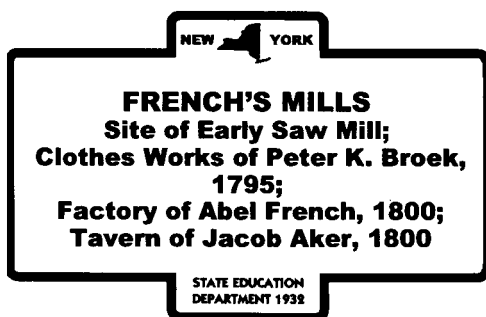
The battle, won by the hard-pressed colonists over the Tories, lifted the sinking morale of the colonists. The victory on the banks of the Normanskill set the stage for the British defeat at Saratoga five weeks later.

On August 11, 1777, a band of 300 Tories and Indians descended upon this spot at the base of the Hellebergs, planning to burn Schenectady and then Albany. When word of the imminent attack spread among the colonists, Lt. Col. Joseph Schermerhorn gathered 100 men to meet the enemy.

The small band of colonists routed the onslaught, resulting in only one casualty. The greatly-feared Tory leader and suspected Burgoyne spy David Springer was killed.

When news reached Albany of the successful Normanskill Battle with many Tories imprisoned, the colonists rejoiced and renewed their vigor for the fray and the eventual successful capture of General Burgoyne at Saratoga.

And once, in the days that history  
retains,  
When Revolution's echoes waked  
the woods,  
And men were patriots called, or  
tories bad,  
There had been deep life struggles,  
social throes,  
And treacherous excitements  
foul and mad,  
Though which, heaven willing,  
freedom balked its foes.  
— From *Helderbergia*, by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft.



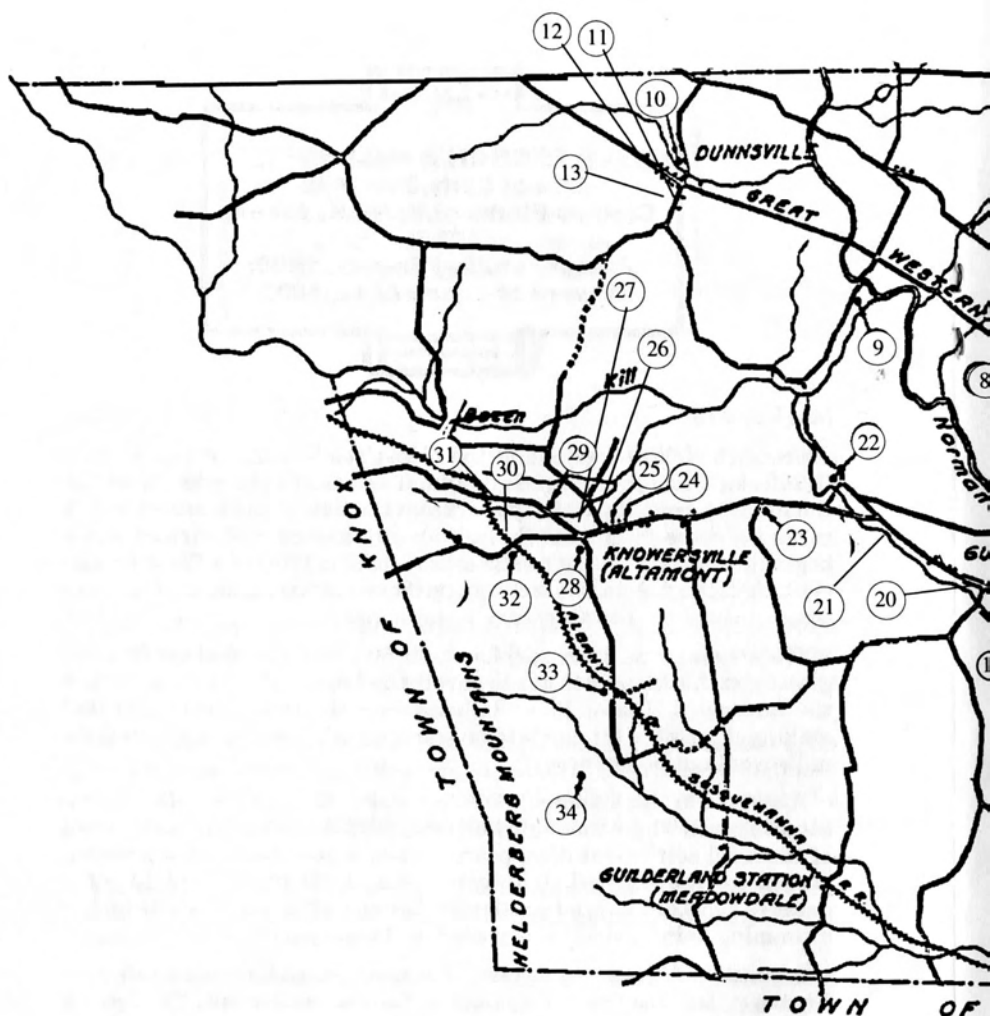
### **Marker #16**

French's Hollow was one of the oldest settlements in the Town of Guilderland and the site of Guilderland's earliest industries. Noted for the mills operated by water power from the falls of the Normanskill, it takes its name from Abel French whose knitting mill thrived in the beginning of the 1800s. Already established in 1795 was Peter Broek's clothing factory. A button factory, a grist mill, and employee housing all congregated near the necessary water supply.

These industries flourished for about 50 years. Guilderland Center's growth, at that time, was due in part to the proximity of the mills. When the Saratoga & Hudson River Railroad arrived through the area in 1865 making it possible for goods to be transported from distant towns, the mills went out of business.

A covered bridge spanned the Normanskill at French's Hollow on the same location where the sealed-off bridge is today. The last visible signs of the aged settlement disappeared when a new dam and a pumping station for the Watervliet Reservoir were built in 1915. Until a few decades ago, Guilderland youth used the abandoned mill site as an "ole swimming hole," until it was posted as dangerous.

A weathered blue and gold historic marker once informed travellers on French's Mill Road of the pioneer industrial settlement. Though the settlement has long since disappeared, the marker, restored by the town highway department, will once again mark the place of Guilderland's earliest industrial enterprise.



## Key to M

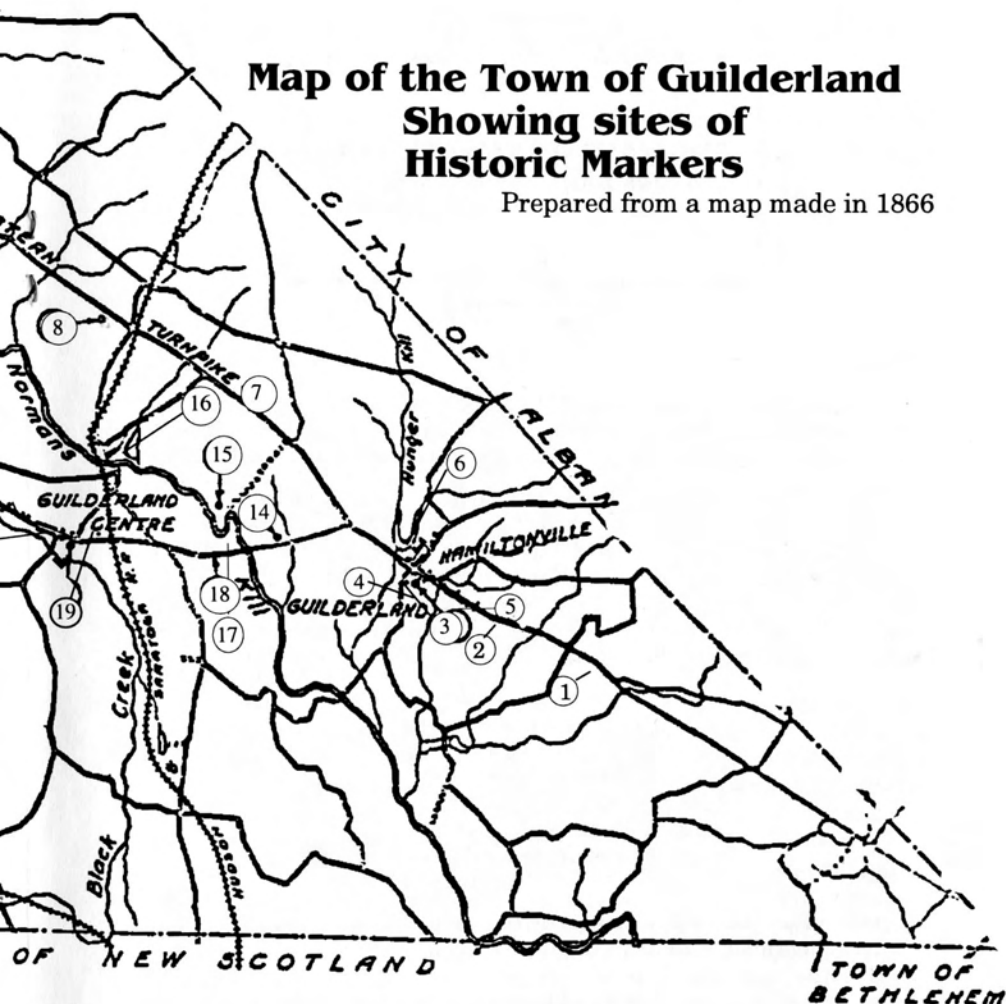
- #1 Toll Gate on Western Turnpike (missing)
- #2 Red Man's Hall
- #3 The Case house
- #4 The Glass house
- #5 Hamilton Union Church
- #6 H.R. Schoolcraft house
- #7 Town of Guilderland formed  
(sign moved to present  
Town Hall from Osborne Corners)
- #8 Farm of Col. Abraham Wemple
- #9 Farm of Capt. Walter Vrooman
- #10 Wildehouse Kill  
and Indian camp site
- #11 First Inn and Store

- #12 Dr. Jonathan Johnson
- #13 Farm of George W. Johnson
- #14 Farm of Mayor E. Johnson
- #15 Battle of the North
- #16 French's Mill
- #17 Vale of Tawasent
- #18 The Palatine Road
- #19 The Freeman House
- #20 Nicholas Mynderse  
(Mynderse-Fredrick)
- #21 Apple Inn (first  
town of Guilderland)
- #22 Site of First Dutch
- #23 Site of St. James



# Map of the Town of Guilderland Showing sites of Historic Markers

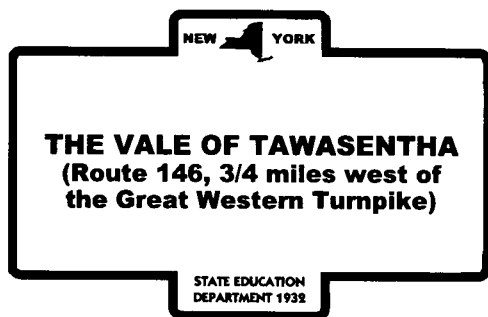
Prepared from a map made in 1866



## Key to Map

John Johnson  
 George Wagner  
 Mayor Evert Bancker  
 the Normanskill  
 (Mill)  
 wasantha (sign missing.)  
 line Road  
 nan House  
 Mynderse House  
 e-Frederick House)  
 (first meeting,  
 Guilderland)  
 st Dutch Church  
 James Lutheran Church

- #24 Inn of Jacob Crounse
- #25 The Benjamin Knowler House
- #26 Home of Dr. Frederick Crounse
- #27 Old Plank Road
- #28 Homestead of the Seversons
- #29 Farm of Capt. John Groot
- #30 Old Hellebergh,  
land of bitter conflict (sign missing)
- #31 Altamont incorporated (sign missing)
- #32 The Way Side Inn (Severson's)
- #33 Farm of Jacob VanAernam
- #34& #35 Brithplace of Crounse Family  
in America. (Another sign, denoting the  
Farm of Frederick Crounse, is missing)



### Marker #17

Tawasentha, meaning Hill of the Dead, was the Indian name for Normanskill. The Vale of Tawasentha is the Valley of the Normanskill, the birthplace of Guilderland's famous son, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow paid tribute to Schoolcraft and his knowledge of the Redman, his life and his legends. He used Schoolcraft's voluminous writings on Indian life for his poem, *Song of Hiawatha*. Longfellow wrote that his own Indian stories were drawn chiefly from the "valuable writings of Mr. Schoolcraft, to whom the literary world is greatly indebted for his indefatigable zeal in rescuing from oblivion so much of the legendary lore of the Indians."

In the vale of Tawasentha  
In the green and silent valley  
By the pleasant water-courses  
Dwelt the singer Nawadsha.  
There he sang of Hiawatha  
Sang the song of Hiawatha  
Sang his wondrous birth and being.  
— Longfellow

Those of us who live in or nearby the Vale of Tawasentha give little modern day thought to its beauty or its legendary history. The historic marker that once stood stoically in the "green and silent valley" is no more. As the Indians who walked the lush trails of Tawasentha and the wagons that burdened over the rutted pioneer road bringing new life to the valley, it is gone. But "the Vale of Tawasentha" lives forever in the written word.

"By Belgic voices christened Norman's Kill,

But called by him (the Indian) in affluence of words The Tawasentha."

— Heldebergia



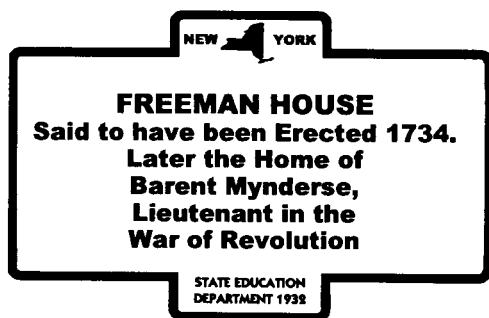
### **Marker #18**

In 1712 the Palatines, earliest European settlers in the Schoharie Valley, travelled over rough and rutty ox-trails that had once been Indian footpaths through Guilderland to reach their new promised land. For these Palatine pioneers, Schoharie was the end of a long, weary journey from along the Rhine in the Palatinate of Germany. These immigrants had been harassed by French armies crossing and recrossing their lands, by unbearable taxes and by persecution because of their religion. After first seeking refuge in Holland and then England, they crossed the Atlantic in the crowded holds of small ships and landed in America to begin their trek through the Mohawk Valley, where they had been promised land in Schoharie.

The Palatine Road historic marker, on Route 146 north of the Guilderland Center Industrial Park bridge, designates a spur of the old Schoharie Road that reached from Albany through the Pine Bush to Willow Street in Guilderland, thence across the Western Turnpike to Foundry Road and the Normanskill Creek, to Guilderland Center and the Black Creek and through Altamont and Knox to Schoharie.

There is great historical connection between the peoples of the Schoharie Valley and Guilderland. Among the early English settlers of Schoharie was James Calcraft, soldier of Queen Anne and veteran of the war in Flanders. At the request of the Palatine settlers, Calcraft set up an English school to teach the German immigrants and their children the language of their new country. Calcraft's name was Americanized to Schoolcraft. Guilderland residents will recognize him as the grandfather of John and Lawrence Schoolcraft, owner of the Schoolcraft Tavern and Supervisor of the Glass Works respectively, and as the great-grandfather of John L. Schoolcraft, Congressman, banker and owner of the Schoolcraft Mansion and of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, poet, author and explorer. Lawrence Schoolcraft's name is etched in the stone of Schoharie's Old Stone Fort.

The historic marker denotes the Indian footpath that became the old Schoharie Road on which the German Palatine refugees travelled in their search for freedom and a promised land. It also illustrates the richness of Guilderland's history. Later travelling Palatine refugees arrived in Guilderland and chose to stay in the shadow of the "clear mountain" named Hellebergh to build their farms and lives.



### **Marker #19**

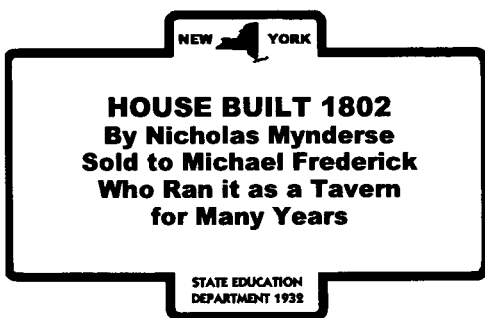
On the bend of Route 146 past French's Hollow Road and before the Helderberg Reformed Church in Guilderland Center, sits the barn-red Freeman House. It is said to be the oldest frame house in the Town of Guilderland and was built by Robert Freeman. The house was enlarged in 1755. No historical data has been found on Freeman.

In 1788, the Freeman House became the property of Barent Mynderse, a Lieutenant in the 3rd Albany Militia during the Revolutionary War. Mynderse was one of two officers who interceded for several of his neighbors when they were captured and jailed as Tories at the Battle of the Normanskill. The neighbor men were released when the respected Lieutenant Mynderse vouched for their loyalty to the American cause.

Most prisoners, after a battle, were made to sign an "allegiance" document and swear that they "would not comfort, aid or assist any of the enemies of the United States and to make known all persons coming from the enemy who secrete themselves in the woods during the continuance of the present War with Great Britain."

Mynderse apparently detected a glimmer of patriotism in his captured neighbors, Anthony Winne and Jacob Mann, for later government records reveal the two men were listed as soldiers in the 3rd Regiment of the Militia.

Like Barent Mynderse, such were the men of Guilderland who fought for their freedom. The Freeman house hugs the side of the road in Guilderland Center proudly displaying the history it holds. The historic marker close by is a talisman to its historic value.



### **Marker #20**

For over 190 years the Mynderse -Frederick House has stood as a bastion against time and the elements, a symbol of the strength and tenacity of the generations of Guilderland residents who lived in the era when it was built.

Nicholas Mynderse built his 15 room house on the old Schoharie Turnpike in 1802. A year later, when the Town of Guilderland became incorporated, Mynderse was appointed the first supervisor.

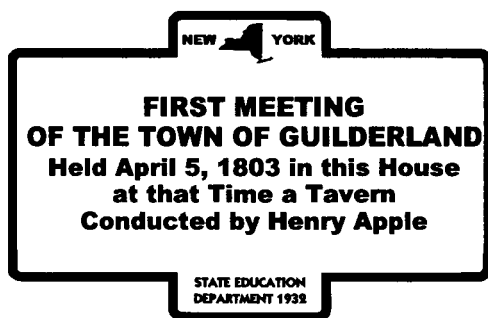
Mynderse sold the house to Michael Fredericks, who operated a tavern and inn there. The tap room in the cellar was where the innkeeper served cider pressed from the fruits of his orchard. A rude cloth-covered table served as a bar, and behind it shelves were lined with stoneware jugs and glass bottles reported to have been made at the Hamilton Glass Works.

A stairway led from the tap room to the parlor upstairs where the ladies took their refreshments. Across from the parlor was the ballroom with a large fireplace. There was also a fireplace in the tap room and in the second floor bedrooms.

A banner carried by the Wide-Awakes, a pre-Republican party in Guilderland, was found in the taproom in a state of disintegration. A replica of the banner is displayed in the historic mansion.

Today, the Mynderse-Frederick House has come to a fitting and appropriate use. Under the direction of the late town historian Roger Keenholts, the rooms of the old house were refurbished to conjure up a vivid picture of life in the town nearly 200 years ago. A small museum on the second floor is maintained by the Guilderland Historical Society, whose members hold their monthly meetings in the house. Area Daughters of the American Revolution Chapters, Tawasentha, Old Hellebergh and Gansevoort, hold occasional meetings there also. The house is open for a Christmas Greens Show decorated by the Guilderland Garden Club. Visitors are invited to sample hot cider and refreshments.

The historic Mynderse-Frederick House now houses the history of Guilderland, its artifacts and ledgers of old. A blue and gold marker on the lawn of the aged house reminds town residents of its important historical value.



### Marker #21

Hendrick Apple's apple toddy made him locally famous in the late 1700s. His toddy and the inn he served it from are noted in the tales of Guilderland's most distinguished son, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. The ancient inn and landmark also became historically noteworthy when the first Guilderland Town Meeting was held there on April 5, 1803.

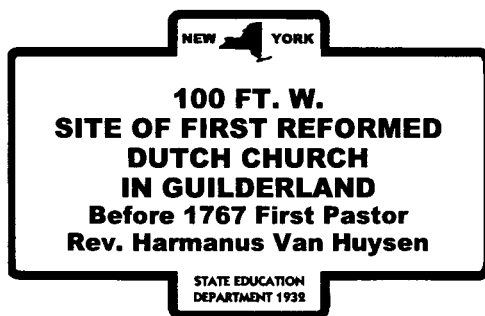
By an act of legislation on Feb. 26, 1803, the Town of Guilderland was formed apart from the Town of Watervliet and the following town officials were named: Nicholas V. Mynderse, supervisor; Peter G. Veeder, town clerk; Frederick Crounse, highway commissioner; Walter Vrooman, overseer of highways.

The first Board of Commissioners of Excise were Peter VanPatten, Evert VanAernam and John Schoolcraft. Schoolcraft was also named county justice of the peace. One of the first acts the new Tax Department did was to issue a license for the George Severson Inn. The regulations stipulated that "no unlawful games permitted, nor any gaming table or shuffle board be kept within the same (inn), or within any out-house, yard or garden belonging thereunto."

The Appel Inn with its six-pillared loggia sits on 36 acres of land at Osborn Corners in Guilderland Center. (Appel is the original spelling; it is believed that tavern-owner Hendrick Apple preferred to Americanize his name). The original house was one room deep and three across. There was no kitchen; cooking was done in an out-building. The present day living and dining room still feature an immense, brick-hearthed, limestone fireplace. Historic Black Creek winds about the back of the inn.

Hendrick Apple came to Osborne Corners as a young man and built the rugged structure he occupied with his family. He served in the Albany County Militia. Hendrick Apple now rests in the old Dutch Cemetery across the road from his house. He would approve that the inn still provides bed and breakfast for today's travellers on the road once called Schoharie Road. However, Hendrick's recipe for his famous toddy remains with him.

A faded blue and gold historic marker stands on Route 146 at the front entrance gate to the Appel Inn to remind one of its historic significance.



## **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.

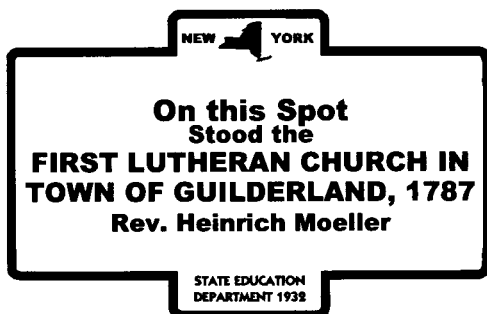
At that early Consistory meeting, it was ruled that all minutes should

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.")





### Marker #23

Though there is earlier reference in history records of Lutheran services being performed in scattered areas in the Helleberghs, it was not until after the Revolutionary War that the First Lutheran Church was erected. Previous to the War, as early as 1734, services such as baptisms, weddings and funerals were accommodated in private homes when a Lutheran minister, Dominie Berkenmyer, happened to be travelling in the vicinity on his way to Schoharie.

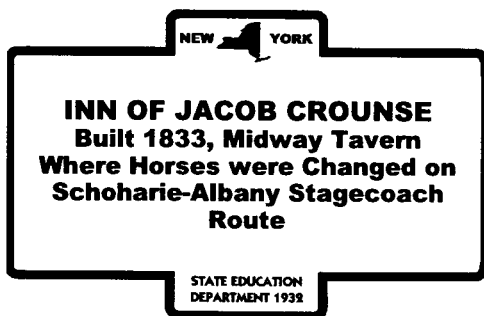
Lutherans secured a grant of land from the patroon, Stephen VanRensselaer, near where Fairview Cemetery stands today. There is no record of the first structure, but letters found in an old trunk in the Severson Inn confirm that the newly organized St. James Evangelical Church of the Hellebergh was started under the leadership of the Reverend Heinrich Moeller. Reverend Moeller referred to the Helleberghs as the "perfect wilderness." The church was, at times, referred to as St. Jacobus', the German name for James.

On August 3, 1788 a first communion was held. It marked the opening of the first Lutheran edifice between Albany and Schoharie. After Rev. Moeller left to take his final pastorate in Sharon, New York, the Guilderland Lutheran Church saw a number of pastors, including one who was in trouble with the Albany Committee of Conspiracies during the Revolution.

In 1806, when the church was in need of repairs and the congregation had no money, they asked for help and were given it by the Dutch Reformed Church, their neighbor down the road.

In 1818, the Reverend Lot Merkel, at a salary of \$300 per year, preached his sermons alternately in German and English. He was succeeded by the Reverend Adam Crounse, who remained 10 years at St. James. He was the uncle of Dr. Frederick Crounse, Altamont's first doctor.

The old church was abandoned to make way for two new churches, St. Mark's of Guilderland Center and St. John's of Knowersville (Altamont). A few of its early parishioners rest in Fairview Cemetery near the site of the old church. The tired, worn-looking historic marker at the fork of Weaver and Hawes Road on Route 146 reflects the age of the church it represents.



### **Marker #24**

"After 30 years of wandering Jacob Crounse came home," wrote former Guilderland historian Arthur Gregg. Jacob Crounse had opened inns in Rhinebeck N. Y. and in Sharon, N. Y., but the pull to the Hellebergh area was strong in the Crounse family. At 50 years of age, Jacob Crounse returned to the land of his birth in the shadow of the mountains, to open another inn down the road from where his son, Frederick, had recently started a medical practice.

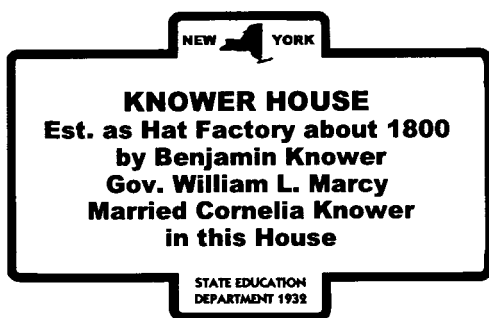
In his lifetime, Jacob served five years as a captain in Rowley's Regiment in Schoharie. He was an active member in the beginnings of the Lutheran church movement. Jacob had two wives and a total of 14 children. Three of his sons became doctors.

Jacob's inn, where the stagecoaches relayed their horses, was built on a foundation of bluestone dragged from Howe's Caves by teams of horses. The lumber for the inn was cut from the Hellebergh forests.

Jacob Crounse became commissioner of schools in Guilderland in 1838 and superintendent from 1844 to 1845. The next history annals note that Jacob, a Whig, drove a successful campaign and beat his Democratic son, Christopher, for justice of the peace. He was postmaster when Altamont was called Knowersville.

In his waning years, "Yaup" Crounse, as he was affectionately called by townspeople, went to live with his son Dr. Frederick. He made coffins in the building behind his son's office and sold them for \$15. He died in Clarksville at 94 years of age.

Jacob Crounse was a man large in physical stature and personal commitment. Pioneer, father, churchman, businessman, politician and community leader, Jacob Crounse was a symbol of grit and fortitude in the infant days of Guilderland. The blue and gold marker on Route 146 east of Altamont, in front of Jacob's Inn, recalls for us this heritage.



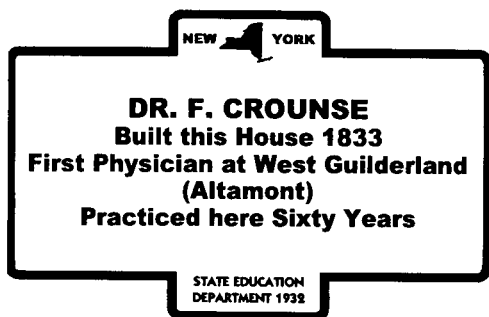
### **Marker #25**

Benjamin Knowler, creator of Knowler Hats in the early days of Guilderland's history, began his business life as a hatter and a mechanic, and through his personal integrity and community service soon became a bank president, and then secretary of the Treasury of New York State.

Knowler built a mansion on property that had once been owned by Patroon Stephen VanRensselaer. His fashionable hats were water-proofed by a "secret process" of immersion in the Bozenkill Creek behind the Knowler place, and sold in Knowler's Store at the corner of Hudson Avenue and Broadway in Albany N.Y. Knowler became active in the management of the Mechanic and Farmer's Bank from 1817 to 1834 and was named state treasurer in 1824. Upon his death in 1840, the West Guilderland Post Office was designated Knowlersville and remained so for 47 years.

The Knowler House was the scene of a noted wedding when Cornelia, Knowler's eldest daughter, married soon-to-be Governor William L. Marcy.

A blue and gold marker stands on Route 146 just outside the village of Altamont reminding residents of this historic site.



### **Marker #26**

The late historian Arthur Gregg called Frederick Crounse a "dear old country doctor." History records note that Dr. Crounse was born Feb. 3, 1807 in the Loonenburgh Tavern in Schoharie owned by his father, Jacob, who later built an inn and tavern in Guilderland. Frederick, after graduating from Fairfield Medical College, Herkimer County, in 1830, set up his medical practice near Black Creek in Voorheesville.

Later, Dr. Crounse built a house on the corner of Gun Club Road and Route 146 outside the village of Altamont. The good Dr. Crounse could be seen daily, riding his horse or sometimes riding in a leather gig on his way to administer to an ailing town resident or to deliver a new one. Farmers plowed the roads open for his arrival when, at times, winter ice would cause his horse to fall under him.

Dr. Crounse was a local leader of the anti-rent wars, which made him a political opponent of his next-door neighbor, Benjamin Knower. The noted doctor was the featured speaker at 4th of July celebrations in Guilderland.

The blue and gold marker on the corner of Gun Club Road and Route 146 recalls for us the picture of a country doctor who would leave his mount tied by the side of the road to trek by snowshoe down a long country lane to treat a patient, and perhaps take supper with the family after his visit. Dr. Frederick Crounse, Altamont's first physician, was such a man.



### **Marker #27**

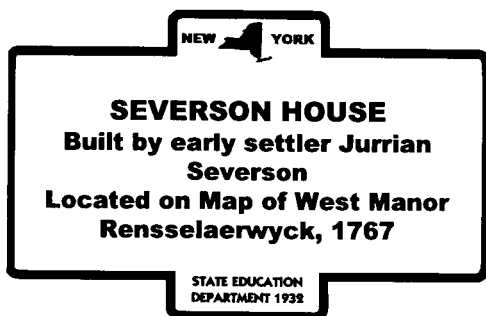
The Schoharie and Albany Plank Road constructed in 1849 followed the old road from Schoharie through Gallupville along King's Creek to Shingletown, but when it got to Knowersville (Altamont) it took a new turn on its way to the Western Turnpike. That change of direction meant bad news for several of Altamont's hostelrys when stage coach travel bypassed their doors.

The plank road was a marked improvement over the dirt road that preceded it. However, 17 years later, the Susquehanna railroad lined through the Town of Guilderland in 1863, cutting down traffic on the Plank Road until it was abandoned in 1867.

The lone historic marker on the corner of Main Street and Brandle Road in Altamont is a reminder of the changes in transportation modes in the history of Guilderland.

*"A people without history is like the wind upon the Buffalo grass."*

Indian legend



### **Marker #28**

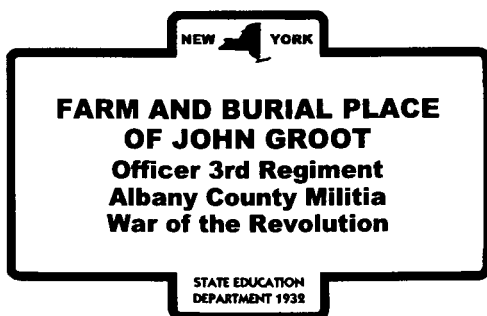
The earliest of settlers, Jurrian Severson, came north from the Catskills about 1745 to build a home in West Manor on the Rensselaerwyck estate. He was among the few early Dutch or German people to emigrate to the Helleberghs and call it home.

These first pioneers spoke their native tongue. Few could read or write and there were no schools available for their children. A lack of doctors in these outlying, sparsely inhabited regions caused the sick to be treated by homemade remedies and those who died were buried by a family member on their own property. One such ancient cemetery lies across the road from where Jurrian Severson built his house during the War of the Revolution.

Jurrian (George) Severson, eldest child of Danish-born Claas Sivers and Amatje Van Patten, was born in 1700. As a young man he married Elizabeth Groot of Schenectady, and began a long line of descendants in the Altamont area.

Young pioneers like the Seversons, whose houses were crude wooden structures and who used primitive utensils made of wood, eked out a living and paved the way for future generations to enjoy the beauty of living under the escarpment of the Hellebergh Mountains.

The aged Severson burial plot has several rows of marble headstones marking the resting places of Altamont's first permanent settlers. The blue and gold historic marker by the side of the road confirms their place in history.



### **Marker #29**

It has been written that the spring of 1781 may well be counted as the darkest time of the Revolution. In Guilderland's own local militia occurred disloyalty and treason.

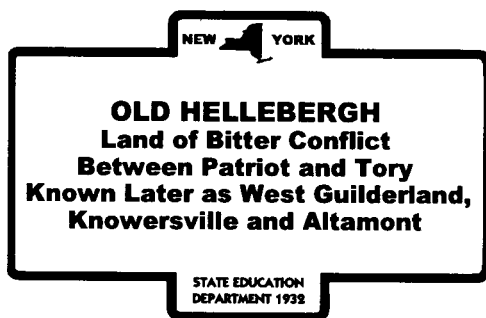
On June 14, 1781, John Groot appeared before the Albany County Board of Conspiracies with one Edward McGurkey. McGurkey, Groot informed the board, had tried to enlist him in the service of the King of Great Britain. McGurkey confessed to his dealings as a traitor and was jailed.

By the fall of 1781, 80 to 100 families of the most "notoriously disaffected" were arrested, brought to Albany and placed under surveillance.

John Groot, a patriot, is credited with helping to banish the Tories who actively opposed the Colonist cause. A blue and gold marker on Route 397 north of Altamont sets a place for him in the annals of history.

*"Without a sense of history no man can truly understand the present."*

Winston Churchill



### **Marker #30**

Neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother, Patriot against Tory, the lands of West Guilderland were “nests of robbers and hatcheries of treasonable design” (Gregg). More dangerous than the King’s Army was the presence of the enemy within the local boundaries of the community, as these furnished information and supplies to the enemy.

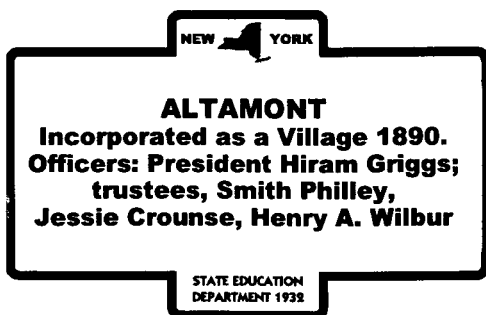
When the Revolutionary War looked its bleakest for the Continental Army, the Tories were overt, but as the tide changed many of those faithful to the British Crown tried to climb aboard the Patriot bandwagon. Several Tories even tried to join the local militia in order to be on the winning side.

But the Committee of Correspondence and Safety, set up early in the war years to draft and equip troops and to detect and imprison disaffected Tory spies, recorded in the minutes of their May 2, 1777 meeting: “This Committee having received information that a number of disaffected Persons skulk in and about the Helleburgh and by various insidious means induce many misguided inhabitants to enter into Combinations against the Liberties and Independence of the United States....”

Men from Guilderland in the Third Albany Regiment were empowered to detect suspected Tories and bring them to “Gaol (jail) of Albany County to defeat the proceedings of such Tories.” Serving in the Albany Regiment under the command of Colonel Phillip Schuyler to help the cause of freedom and to defeat the Tories were familiar Altamont names: Capt. Jacob VanAernam; Capt. John Groot; Lt. Levi VanAuken; Ensign John VanAernam; Private Michael Berkley; Sgt. Philip Crounse; Ensign Frederick Crounse; Pvt. John W. VanAernam; Pvt. Evert VanAernam; Pvt. Wm. VanAernam; Pvt. Henry VanAuken; Pvt. Peter Westfall; Pvt. John Severse; Pvt. John VanAernam Jr.; Pvt. Peter Lowenstein; Pvt. Claas Sives.

The blue and gold marker honoring the men from Altamont who served their country has disappeared from the corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue. The names, however, are permanently etched in the Guilderland landscape.





### Marker #31

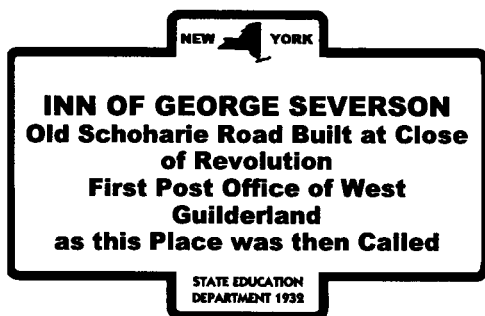
Previous to the Revolutionary War, about 1740, three original settler families, the Seversons, the Van Aernams and the Crounses, chose land at the base of the Helleberghs to start their new life. A familiar village tale tells of German shoemaker Frederick Crounse, who travelled on a trek from Rhinebeck-on-the-Hudson to Schoharie Valley with his family. When they reached a beautiful area close to the Hellebergh Mountains, Mrs. Crounse, weary from travel by land and sea, refused to go another step. They built a house and remained on the land that is today Altamont.

Following the Revolutionary War, a small settlement arose east of the present Altamont village line and was known as West Guilderland. The year 1829 saw a post office established in George Severson's Wayside Tavern. In 1863, the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad (later the O&HRR) was constructed, bringing transportation to the tiny town with 10 trains daily to Albany and swelling the population of the new community. The town burgeoned into a resort area where people from Albany came out for the fresh air and to dine at the Kushaqua Inn on the road leading up the hill from the village.

Altamont has had seven different names; Manor of Rensselaerwyck, Helleberg, West Manor, West Guilderland, Knowersville, Knowers and finally Altamont. In 1887, Mrs. Lucy Cassidy, a wealthy resident who thought "Altamont" (meaning high mountain) was more befitting of the place than Knowersville, and used her influence with President Grover Cleveland. He ordered the post office to change its name to Altamont.

On May 20, 1890 in the Hall of the Union Hotel, Attorney Hiram Griggs led a meeting to incorporate the village. Altamont became the first and only municipal unit within the town of Guilderland. It established its own government, police court, judges, and water and sanitation department. Griggs was elected village mayor.

The charming old homes in the village of Altamont reflect the era of the golden years past. The blue and gold marker donating the incorporation of the place where the Seversons, VanAernams and Crounse families settled is no longer on Route 146 by the firehouse. Its whereabouts is a mystery. Perhaps one day the marker will be rediscovered to take its historical place in an historical town.



### **Marker #32**

In the attic of George Severson's "Wayside Inn" numerous legal papers and documents were found many years after the inn master had died. These papers and documents sketched a portrait of innkeeper Severson and the community about him.

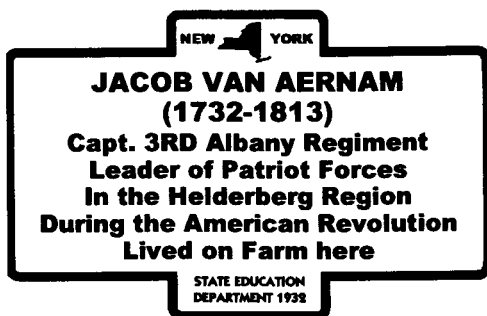
George Severson was the great-grandson of Jurrian Severson, one of the first three permanent settlers in Altamont. The innkeeper inherited the inn from his father, who had paid rent to patroon Stephen Van Rensselaer.

In the mid 19th Century, as the anti-rent war eventually broke the hold of the patroonships, Steven Van Rensselaer's heirs allowed George Stevenson to buy his land and inn. The Severson family then legally owned the farm.

The Wayside Inn was built when the Revolutionary War ended. A ledger found yields a picture of George Severson's life and the community. The papers tell of "drovers" who came up from Schoharie with their lunches in cheese boxes. They washed their lunch down with George Severson's cider or bitters while their hogs and sheep herded in the yard outside. The stage line used the old tavern as a relay point, and the famous Indian fighter Tim Murphy was a frequent guest at the inn. Inventory lists of goods at the inn included candle molds, foot warmers, wash stands, beaver hats and ladies' bonnets, spinning wheels and looms.

As many things are wont to do in the path of progress, when the new Plank Road took the place of the old Schoharie Road, cutting off stage coaches and travellers from going past the Innkeeper's door, the Wayside Inn closed. Ironically, several years later, a railroad was constructed alongside the old Wayside Inn but it did not reopen, even though the relatively new Plank Road was abandoned.

The aged ledgers show that George Severson was an innkeeper, a merchant, a churchman, a postmaster and a town tax assessor. The blue and gold marker at the corner of Altamont Boulevard and Helderberg Avenue, the site of George Severson's Wayside Inn, was damaged by modern-day motor equipment. When replaced, it will again remind passers-by that George Severson and his hostelry are an integral part of this community's history.



### **Marker #33**

Jacob VanAernam has been called Guilderland's outstanding patriot figure during the Revolutionary War. His ancestors came from the province of Gelderland, Holland (after which Guilderland is named) to New York. Jacob, born in 1732, emigrated to the Helleberghs and married Catherine Bancker, the granddaughter of Evert Bancker, 3rd mayor of the city of Albany.

VanAernam served in the militia in 1767 under the command of Lieutenant John M. Veeder and Ensign Gerret Bancker of the Colony of Rensselaerwyck. He was promoted to captain under Colonel Philip Schuyler's command.

When the Committee of Conspiracies in Albany became aware of increased Tory activities, "robberies and cruelties exercised on peaceable and defenceless inhabitants residing in the Helleberghs," a company of rangers was organized. Captain VanAernam was given the responsibility for the safety of the inhabitants and put in charge of bringing the "robbers of freedom" to justice. Rangers discovered Tories or persons carrying on traitorous acts and brought them to VanAernam, who delivered them before a board to be examined. One suspected Tory spy, Jacob Schell, actually surrendered himself to the captain at the VanAernam farm. He was jailed in Albany, subsequently tried, convicted and hanged.

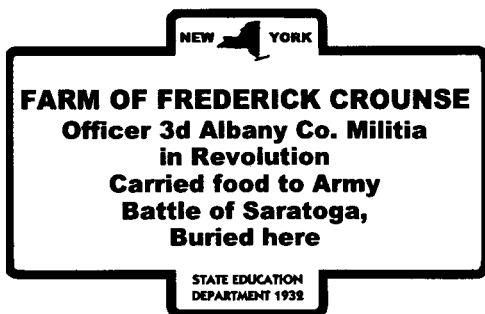
In a letter to his commanding officer dated July 20, 1780, Capt. VanAernam requested military backup for one of the Revolutionary War's local skirmishes. "I am just now informed... that the Enemys Party is one hundred man strong at Pasick (Basic) Creek but could not say what spot; we are about thirty men and will lodge near Capt. Dietz this nite and we will proceed after them. Possible could we be Reinforced by your troops tomorrow morning, Your humble servant, Capt. Jacob Van Aernam." History records reveal that the following year, Capt. Dietz was taken prisoner and his family of eight murdered by the Tories.

VanAernam had a slave named Sam, who saved his owner from an accosting band of Tories while the two were working side by side in the VanAernam peach orchard. Sam and two other VanAernam slaves were bequeathed to his children.

Jacob VanAernam was considered a wealthy man. The deed of his

large landholding and indenture, signed by VanAernam and Stephen Van Rensselaer in 1779, reads that he would pay a yearly rent to the Patroon of "18 bushels of good, clean merchantable wheat, and four fat fowls... and perform one day's service with a carriage and horse...."

A colorful patriot and leading citizen of the pioneer days of Guilderland was Jacob VanAernam. Two historic markers honor him. One marker on Route 156, the Altamont to Voorheesville Road, marks the site of the VanAernam home and farm., A newer marker on Brandle Road near the railroad tracks marks his burial place. They remind us of the conflicts and trials during the days when Guilderland was young and of the men and women who lived during those times.



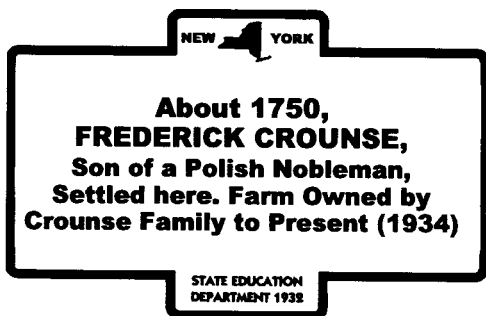
### **Marker #34**

The Crounse family of Guilderland was one of the three earliest pioneer families to settle near the escarpment of the Helleberghs. At seven years of age, Frederick Crounse Jr. came to America from Germany with his father. In his adult life, he acquired approximately 600 acres of land near the mountains where he had lived his boyhood. He also became an expert in the art of weaving and was known widely for his craft. He married Anna Weber.

In 1767, Frederick Crounse Jr. is recorded as an ensign in the militia under the company of Lieutenant John M. Veeder. During the Revolutionary War, when troops under General Gates were fighting Burgoyne at Saratoga, the farmers and tenants of Stephen VanRensselaer were asked by the patroon to give as much grain and provisions for the American Army as they could spare. History records reveal that patriotic Frederick Crounse Jr. and several of his neighboring farmers emptied their barns and food barrels and delivered them to the troops in Saratoga. They were later rewarded by Patroon VanRensselaer by having their yearly land rental forever waived.

Frederick Crounse Jr. was the son of the first Frederick Crounse to settle in Guilderland and the grandfather of Dr. Frederick Crounse, the first physician in town (named on another marker in this series).

The historic marker bearing the above title inscription is no longer visible in its designated place on Route 156, 1 mile south of Altamont. The Crounse family is designated in history annals as pioneering settlers, patriotic military servers and community activists in early Guilderland.



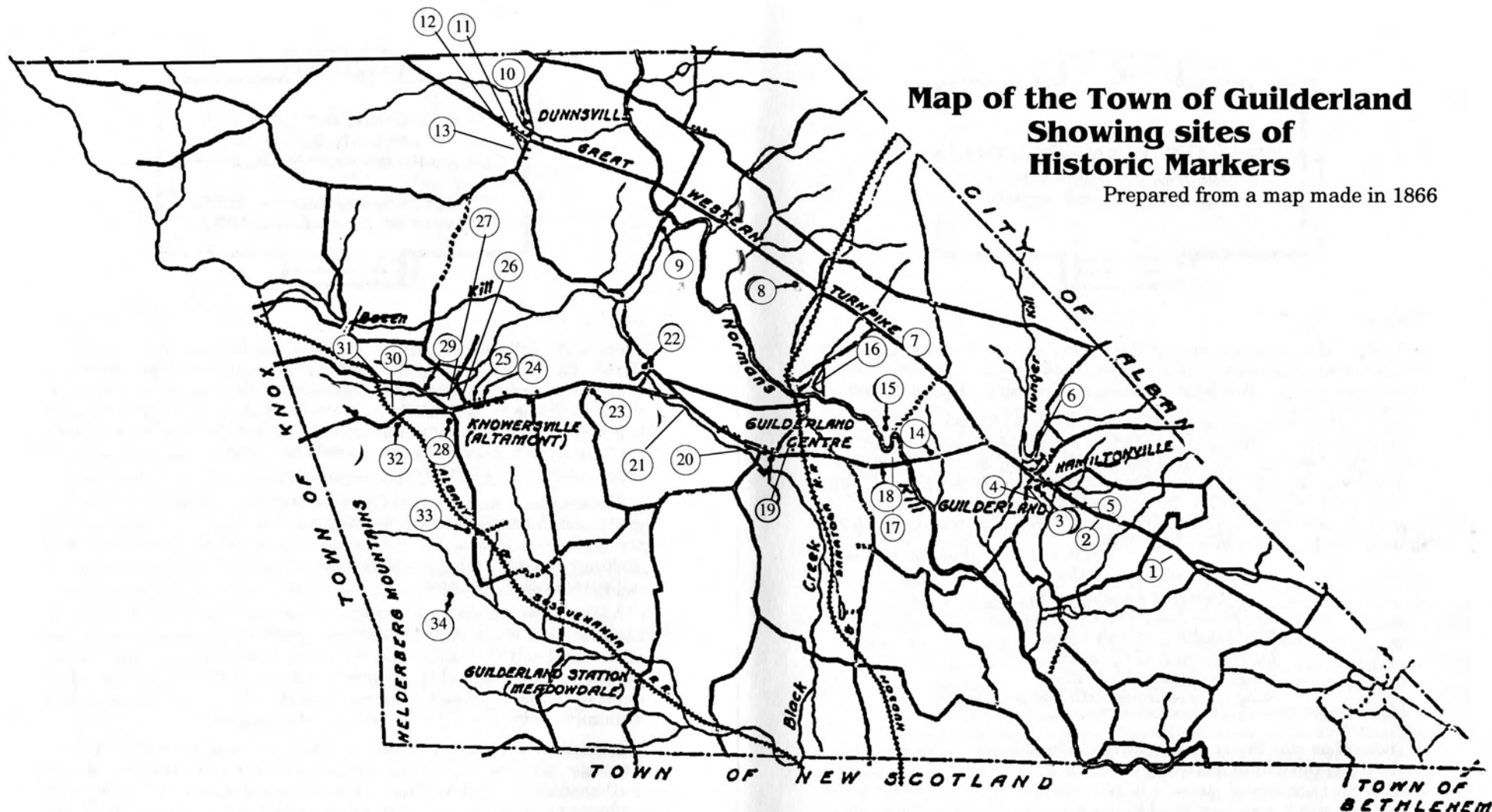
### **Marker #35**

The many generations of the Crouse family in Guilderland had their beginnings from a Polish nobleman named Krownsky who fled to Germany for political reasons. After several generations in Germany, one member of the family, Frederick Crouse, born in 1714, came to America.

In the early 1750s, Frederick, a shoemaker, journeyed with his wife and seven-year-old son to the colonies across the Atlantic Ocean. On their route, they stopped in Rhinebeck-on-the-Hudson before continuing their pilgrimage to Schoharie seeking a Palatine settlement. They settled instead on a farm at the foot of the Hellebergh Mountains near the Jacob VanAernam lands. There, Frederick Crouse built a house for his family of hemlock bark and sod.

This earliest of Guilderland's pioneers is buried at the foot of the same mountains, on the land where he struggled to eke out a living for his kin. His simple gravestone reads "Frederick Crouse, Ap. 9, 1777, ae 63."

The Crouse family tree lists well over 600 names. The blue and gold historic marker on Route 156, south of Altamont, pays tribute to generations of a pioneer family whose contribution to the new American colony was to pave the way in the wilderness of the Helleberghs for future generations to enjoy.



### Key to Map

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| #1 Toll Gate on Western Turnpike (missing)   | #12 Dr. Jonathan Johnson                                  | #24 Inn of Jacob Crounse  |
| #2 Red Man's Hall  | #13 Farm of George Wagner                                 | #25 The Benjamin Knower House   |
| #3 The Case house  | #14 Farm of Mayor Evert Bancker                           | #26 Home of Dr. Frederick Crounse   |
| #4 The Glass house   | #15 Battle of the Normanskill                             | #27 Old Plank Road  |
| #5 Hamilton Union Church   | #16 French's Mill   | #28 Homestead of the Seversons  |
| #6 H.R. Schoolcraft house  | #17 Vale of Tawasentha (sign missing.)                    | #29 Farm of Capt. John Groot  |
| #7 Town of Guilderland formed<br>(sign moved to present<br>Town Hall from Osborne Corners) | #18 The Palatine Road                                     | #30 Old Hellebergh,<br>land of bitter conflict (sign missing)   |
| #8 Farm of Col. Abraham Wemple   | #19 The Freeman House                                     | #31 Altamont incorporated (sign missing)  |
| #9 Farm of Capt. Walter Vrooman  | #20 Nicholas Mynderse House<br>(Mynderse-Frederick House) | #32 The Way Side Inn (Severson's)   |
| #10 Wildehaue Kill<br>and Indian camp site   | #21 Apple Inn (first meeting,<br>town of Guilderland)     | #33 Farm of Jacob VanAernam   |
| #11 First Inn and Store  | #22 Site of First Dutch Church                            | #34 & #35 Brithplace of Crounse Family<br>in America. (Another sign, denoting the<br>Farm of Frederick Crounse, is missing) |
|  | #23 Site of St. James Lutheran Church                     |   |