



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.