



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Museum, 1863 School House

Town of Deerpark Historian, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746

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Religious Freedom

Religious freedom was important in the establishment of the early colonies. The Town of Deerpark's history includes different churches in each of the hamlets. Some of them date back to the 19th century reflecting the religious diversity in our community, just as the founding fathers of our nation planned, when adding the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The first settlers who came to this area in the late 1600s were sturdy, thrifty, liberty-loving and religious people. The reason for leaving their homes in Europe

was to seek religious freedom. Two French Huguenot families (Cuddeback and Gumaer) fled religious persecution after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes which had granted tolerance to Protestants in France. After its revocation, Huguenots had the choice of converting to Catholicism, spending life in prison or leaving the country. The Dutch families (Swartwout, Tyse and Jameson) settled in the New York Colony which believed in the Dutch Reformed Church policy of religious tolerance.



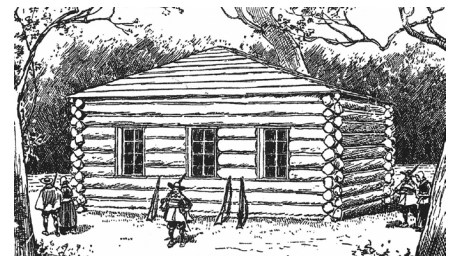
Freedom of Worship
Norman Rockwell

Only half of the inhabitants attracted to New York were Dutch. The other half were various people set adrift by post Reformation conflicts in Europe. The colony was a patchwork of religious diversity from its very beginning.

There was a deep religious faith in the families who settled

here even though no churches were built until the 1800s. Worship services were held in homes. Later on, for economic reasons, congregations in thinly settled communities met in schools or shared church buildings.

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Mackhackemeck Church

The early settlers brought their strong religious beliefs with them from Europe. In the early settlements, services were held in homes and as the congregation expanded, there was a strong need for services within a church.

In the early 1730s, it was agreed that the community was large enough for four congregations with one minister. The first church was called the Mackhackemeck Church completed in 1737. It was a simple building often thought of as a haystack church because of its shape. It is the only one located in New York. The rest of the churches were built in New Jersey: Minisink Church; Walpeck Church; and Smithfield Church. The four congregations shared one pastor, John Casparus

Fryenmuth who had completed his studies in Holland.

These churches were Dutch Reformed which was almost the universal belief of this area at the time of early settlement. Although New York became an English colony in 1664 the early services were held in Dutch as were the records of baptisms, marriages, deaths and other records. In time services were held in English. The church was burned to the ground during Brant's raid on July 21, 1779. It was rebuilt on the same property.

The cemetery connected with this original church is still open for visitors. (East Main Street, Port Jervis, NY)

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Rio United Methodist Church

As early as the 1850s religious services were held in the first Rio Schoolhouse. Ministers from Baptist and Methodist denominations held the services in the school.

When the new Quarry Hill School was built several taxpayers objected to its use for religious purposes. The congregation decided to build its own meeting house.



A committee raised \$300.00. It was not enough to build a church. The congregation renewed its efforts and additional funds were raised as well as pledges of free labor for those who could not give money. Mr. Patterson offered a lot and work began.

On September 11, 1880 the cornerstone was laid. A large gathering witnessed the important event. A tin box containing a Bible, copies of the Tri-State Union, the Port Jervis Union, the Christian Advocate, a large copper cent, a shiplaster, and a current magazine among other things was sealed and placed within the cornerstone.

Chestnut trees were cut to make seats, benches and pews. Other furnishings were purchased. Tusten Vail and Son finished the construction and A. M. Frank completed the plastering job.

The church was dedicated on January 18, 1881. Over one hundred people attended. Extra food had to be prepared for such a large crowd. With the offerings from that day the committee was able to pay the full contract price with fourteen cents to spare.

In 1913 the parsonage was built for \$1,600.00. The preacher's horse needed to be stabled, so a barn was built. In 1932/1933 a Community Hall was built by the Dunwald brothers. Other improvements occurred throughout the years; electric lighting, the belfry was added along with the bell, an electric organ was installed, an oil burning furnace improved heating and the sanctuary was remodeled,

In 1980 there was a 100th Anniversary celebration. The en-

tire community took part in sharing the occasion and the church history. The church had been a center of this small community for over one hundred years. It wasn't long after this celebration that the church closed (ca. 1982).

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Cahoonzie Baptist Church

Research has found little information about this church. There is a statement in old records "...on the east side of the road was an old church building, even then abandoned..." Old maps show a Baptist Church, but its history is hard to find.

The Port Jervis Baptist Church was organized in November 1838 and was incorporated on April 28, 1862. There is no evidence that any ministers from this church ever rode to Cahoonzie to hold services.

In 1881, Rutenber wrote in History of Orange County "Bushkill is in the west part of the town, in the neighborhood of the Baptist Church, as marked upon recent maps. This church was something of an offshoot from the Baptist Church of Port Jervis. It was, however, continued for only a few years."

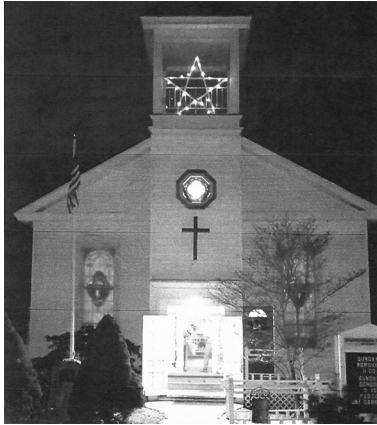
Maurice Patterson adds some information in his book *The Pioneers of Quarry Hill*, when he writes that Jeremiah, the Baptist, who joined the Port Jervis Baptist Church, soon was appointed a deacon in the newly organized Deerpark Baptist Church in Cahoonzie, a position he held until his death in 1891. So Jeremiah, a deacon and lay preacher at Ca-

hoonzie was a central figure of that church for many years.

Legend has it that there was a cemetery located on the property and it was there that Chief Cahoonshee was buried.

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Sparrowbush United Methodist Church



The June 2018 edition of the Deerpark Diary has the historical information about the Sparrowbush United Methodist Church. That was the year the church celebrated its 150th Anniversary with special programs and celebratory activities.

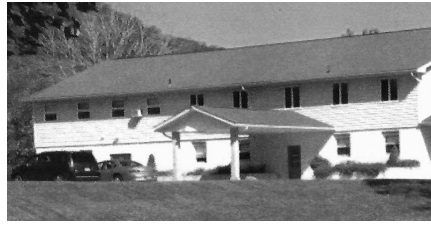
Copies of old newsletters are available at the Town of Deerpark Museum, 25 Grange Rd., Huguenot or online.

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Grace Community Church formerly Calvary Bible Church

Calvary Bible Church was formed in July, 1963 and incorporated in September of the same year. The small church had ser-

vices in a store front in Port Jervis for the next ten years.



In 1970 property on Route 209 in Deerpark was purchased and in 1973 the first services were held in the basement of the building. In 1978 the second story was completed and services were held in the new sanctuary.

A Christian School was formed in 1981, which eventually became a hybrid-school working with homeschooled families.

Calvary Bible Church served the community 52 years.

Today the Grace Community Church, a non denominational church, has services in this building having its official Port Jervis opening on July 8, 2018.

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Godeffroy Free Methodist Church

The Free Methodist Church was organized in 1860 in Pekin, in the western part of New York. It came about as a result of a disagreement between Pastor Benjamin Titus Roberts with the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Genesee Conference over the rental of pews and the unwillingness of the church to take a stand against slavery.

A Free Methodist congregation organized and met in the

Godeffroy School in 1884. There are notes in the Historian's Office records that the neighbors could hear the church members shouting out the glory hallelujahs with much joy.

As the Godeffroy congregation grew it became necessary to find a larger building to worship in. Adolph Godeffroy, a very wealthy man, donated land along present-day Route 209.

The church was built in 1896. Abiding by the teachings of their church there was no rental of family pews, help was given to freed slaves and the congregation followed the teachings of John Wesley to the letter.



The building was well constructed, serving the community until the 1950s. Today the building is a private home.

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Cuddebackville Reformed Church

During the 17th and 18th century religious services were held in the homes of the Peenpack Patent settlers. After the Deerpark Reformed Church was built by the Dutch settlers in 1737 on the site of the Machackemech Cemetery, a number of people would journey there to attend services.

Even before the Cuddebackville Church was built, there was an active Children's Sunday School. Church services were held in the Cuddebackville School built in 1813.

In the early 1850s Lewis Cuddeback gave land for a Reformed Church to be built on its present site with the stipulation that if at any time the denomination should be changed the land should revert to the Cuddeback heirs. In 1853, the building was erected by Martin Wheeler, a contractor, at the expense of \$3,300.00 of which amount \$2,233.00 was raised by subscription. The church was dedicated on November 26, 1853. The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Cuddebackville (its corporate name) executed a certificate of incorporation on that same date.

In the year 1856 the bell was installed in the belfry. It arrived on a canal boat being hung from its axle. When it came within a few miles of its destination, it was rung continually until it reached the village where it caused a great sensation. A few days later it was raised and the oldest man in the community, Peter Gumaer, was selected to ring the bell. According to a report from that time, "Its sound was melodious as it echoed clearly from mountain to mountain. It was truly a day of joy and gladness."

Over the years additional improvements were made. In 1855 \$750.00 was raised to purchase a parsonage. Lamps and carpet were added to the sanctuary as well as stone steps leading to the church. In 1900 the gallery was removed. Electric lights were installed in 1918. Other improve-

ments included fresh paint, two new stoves, repairs to the belfry and a new roof.



A church hall, complete with a kitchen and dining area, was erected in 1929. This facility was not only used for church functions, but also a community center for social gatherings, voting polls and civic meetings.

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Westbrookville United Methodist Church

Although this church is not situated in the Town of Deerpark, it served its residents of the Methodist faith.

The church was dedicated on December 17, 1891.

According to historical records the large bluestone landing in front of the main entrance was transported by a barge on the D & H Canal. The stone fell into the canal during the unloading operations and oxen had to rescue it for delivery to the church yard.

General renovations and stained glass windows were added in 1924.

After the 1955 flood the Ladies Aid Society with the assistance of the Basha Club instituted

a renovation program. The wooden basement floor was replaced with concrete and tile. Kitchen facilities were updated. A modern furnace room was constructed with the help of local residents of all religious faiths.

The sanctuary received an electronic organ; rich drapes and lectern scarves; wall-to-wall carpeting; comfortable cushions in the pews and a remodeled altar.



Since 2014, the building has been serving as the Westbrookville Community Church.

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Follow us on Face Book

Visit the new Town of Deerpark Museum Face Book page entitled:

"The Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum"

This is the replacement and extension of the old "Deerpark Museum" page.

The new page starts with November celebrating Native American Heritage Month.