



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

Jim Greenfield Town Historian 283-6384

If you happened to be driving on Snyders Lake Road in 1939 you might have seen a curious sight. A building, more precisely the old Bell Top School building, was moving across the road.

It all began in 1938 when area residents joined a five-township central school plan, envisioning three new central schools. Under this plan, Bell Top would become a central school. However the State Education Department decreed that the Bell Top location was unsuitable for a central North Greenbush school. Since no other location was suggested, a vote of Central School District #1 went ahead and named Bell Top as the new school site.

However, Defreestville residents said no. They wanted the building to be located within their hamlet, not out in the country. Now it was the State Board of Regents' turn to get into the act. They partially reversed State Education Department to the extent of approving a two room building and nothing more at the Bell Top site.

The school district thereupon sold the existing Bell Top School to neighbor Charles Reynolds for \$100 who moved the building across the road to his property to reconstruct it as a private residence. It took three months to move the building, during which time the children were transported to the Green School (in East Greenbush?). The site for the new building was prepared, but the money for construction was held up. School officials were in a quandary. It was costing \$6.45/day to transport the children - and for how long? The solution was to rent the old school house from Mr. Reynolds. According to the Knickerbocker News, Reynolds pondered the deal before accepting. It had cost him \$100 to buy the school, \$350 to move it and \$350 to build a new foundation, plus he had broken his leg when hit by a car during the move. However, Mr. Reynolds did his civic duty and became a schoolhouse landlord.

The story has a happy ending. The funding came through; the new Bell Top School was built and was dedicated on June 16, 1940. Present at the ceremonies was the oldest living graduate, Elmer H. Craver, 75, and the youngest pupil John W. Sliter, five.

So if you are traveling Snyders Lake Road, notice not only the "new" Bell Top, but glance across the road to the "old" school which is now, as Mr. Reynolds had planned a home.