



# NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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## A Farmer's life in the 1800's

I've always wanted to know more about what life was like in the 1800's in North Greenbush. Recently I obtained a work record book which had belonged to Garret Van Valkenburg, 1822-1896, who wrote a day- by- day record of his "doings" from 1856 until 1872.

The Van Valkenburgs were early Dutch settlers in New York. Garret's father Tunis came from Columbia County to Greenbush in 1816 and they lived, as far as I can tell where the shopping center across from Hudson Valley Community College is now located.

Garret was a farmer but also a "jack of all trades" as one needed to be in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was a carpenter, building various things in his shop. Mostly he farmed: haying, planting, plowing and harvesting various vegetables and other crops. He spends what seems like an inordinate time slaughtering pigs. He worked at a factory in Troy, which may have been the Burden Iron Works.

Although he owned his own farm, he spent many days working for neighbors and relatives. His wife was a Van den Burgh so there are many entries where he works at one of their family farms. Additionally, he worked for other prominent North Greenbush families including the Bloomingdales, the Defreests and the Phillips'.

He was a school teacher in 1864 and 1865 during the months of December through March (when there wasn't farming to do). He worked six days a week and was "at home" on Sundays-no mention of going to Church.

For pleasure, Garret hunted in the Adirondacks and in eastern Rensselaer County. He did some traveling. Garret met friends in Ohio, took a trip to Washington, D.C. and took in Mt. Vernon.

In addition to listing his daily activities he mentions deaths of local inhabitants and attending their funerals. On interesting entry is from Sunday April 15, 1865: "A. Lincoln died caused by shot in head." Eleven days later he writes: "At Albany to see dead President Lincoln's funeral train."

Van Valkenburg was seldom sick during the 16 years he kept the record book. One reason for his good health may be inferred from the wonderful entry on the last page-instructions for making strong beer! Perhaps I should print the recipe in a future article.