



# NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

Jim Greenfield Town Historian 265-4254

## Veterans' Groups in North Greenbush

Over the years, North Greenbush supported the country's two major Veterans' groups-The Veterans of Foreign Wars and The American Legion. Each has an interesting history.

Nationally, the VFW came first and was formed in 1899 right after the Spanish-American War. Membership was limited to those who served in combat.

The American Legion came into existence in 1919 and was open to all Vets who served in the military. Nationally there are about 2 million vets in the American Legion and about 1 million in the VFW.

The Legion started in Wynantskill in 1946. Originally, they met at the old firehouse on Main Avenue on Church Street (now the EMS building). However, they wanted a building of their own and coincidentally land became available further down Main Avenue. Walter Vanderpool had just built the Highway Recreation Bowling Alley and there was extra unused land and what had been Bert Sharpe's farmhouse became available for

purchase. This became the Legion's new home in 1952.

However it soon became apparent that these cramped quarters wouldn't do. The solution came in 1958 when the farmhouse burned down. When it was replaced in 1960, the current foundation you see today was laid. The back room was added as a place for parties and receptions. A large front lounge was created in 1976 and a Blue Room was added in 1982 for members to use for recreation away from the general public.

The Legion Hall has become a beacon for community and social life for entire town. They are open for meals and drinks during the week, they sponsor a yearly golf tournament and they rent their space for private and community events.

The story of the local VFW is of equal interest. After World War II a group veterans decided to form a service group affiliated with the VFW. Spearheading this task were Town Clerk George Zepf, Postmaster Dominick Panichi and Raymond Hook ,who would be the first Post Commander)

Tradition warrants that the name of the post should honor a member who lost his life while serving in the military during a war.

North Greenbush had two men who met these qualifications: Raymond Geerholt who was taken prisoner on Corregidor in the Philippines and died in a prison camp and Harold Rehm who was killed in Saipan Island. That is how the organization became the Geerholt-Rehm VFW Post and obtained a national charter dated February 13,1960.

Organizational meetings were held at the Jack and Jill Restaurant on Main Avenue Wynantskill (currently in 2023 Eadilyn's Table). However, they desired their own facility where they could meet and have social functions.

Their wishes were granted when the Rehm family offered the VFW four acres of land on Hidley Road. By 1961 the members built their meeting place. It consisted of a kitchen, bar, and a room which was available for meetings or rented for public events.

The VFW held many events over the years which helped the community. They ran blood bank donor programs, conducted poppy sales, worked with police on various programs at local schools. They marched in town parades and placed wreaths at memorials for deceased veterans. They had a ladies auxiliary (as did the American Legion) which assisted in many of the functions.

This story on veterans' groups has a partially sad ending. In 2002 the VFW chapter gave up its charter and disbanded. Declining membership and inadequate facilities were the prime reasons. Some members joined the American Legion which is still functioning.

All is not lost. On Memorial Day, vets parade in Wynantskill and lay wreaths throughout town. The veterans are not forgotten.