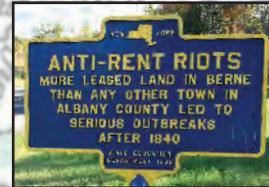




“Down with the Rent!”

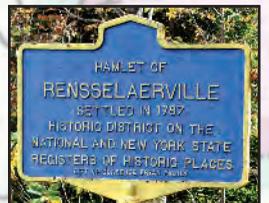
The Anti-Rent Rebellion of New York



Co. Rt. 157A, East Berne



Rt. 443 & Co. Rt. 1, Westerlo



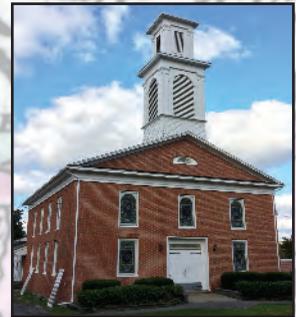
Rensselaerville



Rt. 146, Altamont

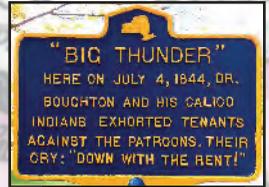


Rt. 212, Lake Hill



Lutheran Church
Rt. 443, Berne

Albany County



Rt. 16 Near Hoags Corners

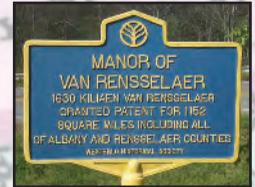


Co. Rt. 43, Alps



Co. Rt. 43, Alps

Rensselaer County



Rt. 85 & 143/443, Westerlo



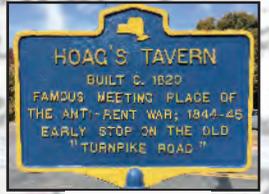
Hoag's Tavern, Hoags Corners



Rt. 443 Clarksville



Rt. 66, East Nassau



Rt. 66, East Nassau



Rt. 443 & Cass Hill Rd.



Hudson Jail, Hudson



Rt.22, Claverack

Columbia County

The Cast
Terri Leonino, George Ward, Greg Artzner,
John Roberts, Bill Spence, Greg Clarke,
Toby Stover, George Wilson

Schoharie County



Blenheim Bridge, Schoharie County

Delaware County



Dingle Hill, South of Andes

Old Songs, Inc.
37 S. Main St.
Voorheesville, NY 12186
518-765-2815
www.oldsongs.org
oldsongs@oldsongs.org
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GLOSSARY

1621 – The Dutch West India Company established patroonships along the Hudson River as a means of encouraging colonization.

Patroon/Landlord/Lord of the Manor – A person given land and granted full property rights and complete civil and military control of the people, who were granted the use of land, in return for rendering homage, loyalty, and usually military service or its equivalent to the landlord.

Leasehold Estates were land grants made by the Dutch and English colonial governments in the 17th & 18th centuries, incorporating about 2 million acres in 11 counties in New York State. Landlords included British descendents Livingston, Morris, and Jay, and Dutch descendants Van Rensselaer, Hardenberg, Verplanck, Van Cortlandt, and Schuyler.

Feudalism – A system for structuring society around relationships derived from the holding of land in exchange for service or labor. Feudalism was outlawed by New York State in 1782.

Rensselaerwyck – 726,000 acres originally owned by Kiliaen Van Rensselaer and passed down to his descendants. Stephen Van Rensselaer III became the lord of the manor in 1785. He decided to give the patriots of the Revolution homesteads without cost; only after the farms became productive after seven years would he ask for any compensation.

Incomplete Sale – A lease that sidestepped the issue of feudalism. The “purchase price” for the title to, and the use of the soil, was 10-14 bushels of winter wheat annually, four fat fowls, and one day’s service with team and wagon. The tenant was to pay all taxes, and was to use the land for agricultural purposes only. The patroon reserved to himself all wood, mineral, and water rights. The tenant could not sell the property, but only sell his contract of incomplete sale, with its terms unaltered.

Quarter Sale – If the tenants wished to sell their land, the landlord had the option of collecting 1/4th of the sale price or recovering full title to the property. Stephen III died in 1839 and divided his manor between his two sons, Stephen IV and William, expecting them to collect the \$400,000 in back rent, or pay it themselves.

“Declaration of Independence” – The declaration by tenant farmers written in Berne, NY on July 4, 1839 and presented to Stephen Van Rensselaer IV. Their premise - settling for back rents would only confirm their status as perpetual tenants, not change it.

Anti-Renter – A term applied to Tenant Farmers who organized Anti-Rent Associations, initiating a rent boycott, to resist evictions and prevent the sheriff's sales of farmers property. Disguised in calico cloth and masks to hide their identity, they became known as **Calico Indians**. In 1845, 200 hundred delegates met and formed the first anti-rent political convention in Berne, NY.

Tin Dinner Horn –The tin horn was used to call in the laborers from the fields, but it was adopted as the official “Indian” call to arms and after that, no one was to use the horn for any other purpose.

Writs – Eviction notices served by sheriffs or paid agents to recover back rent from tenant farmers.

Tavern – A community gathering place.

Distress sale – A sale to recover back rent.

Fourth of July Celebrations – Gala organizing events in 1844 and 1845 for anti-renters.

Down-Renter – One sympathetic to the anti-rent movement.

Up-Renter – One **not** sympathetic to the anti-rent movement.

SYNOPSIS

When the Anti-Rent Rebellion began, the tenants of Rensselaerwyck had lived on the land for forty years. They paid their rent and taxes to the Patroons every January first, but they didn’t own the land, mineral, water, or lumber rights. Their sons, daughters, and grandchildren lived on the farm their parents had built, and continued paying the rent at the manor house of Stephen Van Rensselaer III, a benevolent landlord who was very forgiving if they could not meet their rent payment. When he died in January 1839, his sons inherited Rensselaerwyck, and his will stated that they must pay his enormous debt of over \$400,000. The brothers decided to enforce the collection of all forgiven rent from more than 3,000 tenant farmers, by sending sheriffs into the Helderbergs to collect it. If the farmers refused to pay, they would be evicted. And so began the great struggle which is the topic of our program, *Down With the Rent!*

The words of Dr. Smith Boughton (Big Thunder)

“If a civilization such as ours (which professes respect for the individual man) is to endure, it obviously cannot become the monopoly of an elite. It must become so far as possible the common enterprise of all. The purpose of our society is not for the few of maximum strength and ambition to lead lives of ‘Byzantine glory’, but for all men to make the most of their common humanity. We are pledged to a general diffusion of culture, of independence, and self-respect and the means to a good life.”

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Calico and Tin Horns, Candace Christiansen, ©Text 1992, paintings by Thomas Locker ©1992.

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A select Bibliography of Anti-rent War Material in the New York State Library.

Thanks to the following folks who provided inspiration for this production:

Janet Haseley – Rensselaerville, Lou Ismay – Berne, George Ward, Dennis Sullivan, Paul Mercer.

CREDITS:

Director: Andy Spence

Script: ©2014 Andy Spence & George Ward

Costumes: Nancy Papish, Margaret Evans, Andy Spence

Masks by: Andy Spence

Backdrop: Andy Spence

Program Design: Bill Spence

Marketing: Dan Roesser

Administrative Assistant: Amy Atkins, Terri Lukačko

Technical Support: Peter Glenck, Margaret Evans

Sound Manager: Ian Hamelin

Guest musician: Paul Draper

New music by George Ward

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