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## History Happened Here: Vedder: A life of service

By Andrew Amelinckx

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GALLATIN — The phrase "history is written by the victors," attributed to Winston Churchill, often seems to hold true. But just as often history seems to focus on those with big personalities and stories that are larger than life. Just as important as these people and their oversized stories are those who lead quiet lives serving their communities.

One such man was the Rev. Herman Vedder.

Vedder served as the minister of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in Gallatin for 61 years, watching over his flock through a lifetime of service, conducting baptisms, marriages and funerals, among his other duties. He also served them in a time of immense change, witnessing the birth of a new nation and its near-sundering with the Civil War.

Born in Rotterdam, New York, Nov. 17, 1777, Vedder attended Union College in Schenectady, graduating in 1799.

Records from Union College indicate his name was spelled Harman, but was probably anglicized to Herman.

It's likely he was named for Harmen Albertise Vedder, an ancestor who was apparently the first of the family to arrive in New Netherlands, sometime between 1633 and 1657. A trader by profession, he settled in Albany.

The Rev. Vedder was part of the Dutch Reformed Church, which arrived in America with the Dutch settlers and was considered the established church of the New Netherlands.

The first formal congregation was established in New Amsterdam in 1628.

In Albany, a church had been built by 1650. The structure dominated the city's sky line and was situated in the city's main intersection. It also dominated the area as far as services went until around 1700.

The church had sent some pastors south to serve the small communities along the Hudson, but it wasn't until after 1720 that a formal congregation was established in what would be Columbia County.

Robert Livingston, the First Lord of the Manor, helped foot the bill for the area's first church.

The church that Vedder would eventually receive a calling to began in 1748 and grew under the direction of the Rev. Johannes C. Freyenmoet.

Educated in Holland, Freyenmoet came to the area in 1756 from New Jersey and was in charge of the churches in Kinderhook, Claverack, and the Livingston manor located in the southern part of the county.

First known as the Stissick church it would later be called the Greenbush church, but was popularly known as the Vedder church, a nod to the man who, beginning in 1803, would be associated with the church for more than half a century.

A year after Vedder's arrival, John Livingston, a descendent of the original Lord of the Manor, gave Vedder a life lease on a farm with the admonition that he "shall minister and preach the gospel in Greenbush Church," which he did. Vedder was married to Harriet Van Vranken and had eight children.

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Under Vedder's leadership the church grew and a new church building was erected. It was dedicated in 1824.

He also watched many of his parishioners grow, having baptized many who would be gray haired by the time he retired at 89-years-old.

Vedder was known for being kind, pious and calm — "preaching the Gospel, not only with his lips, but also beautifully with his life," according to one biographer.

"But I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord," he told a friend three weeks before his death at 96.

After his death the pulpit located within the chapel at Union College was dedicated to him.

A large monument was also erected in his memory located in the church grounds of the Vedder church where he had spent so many years ministering to its members.

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