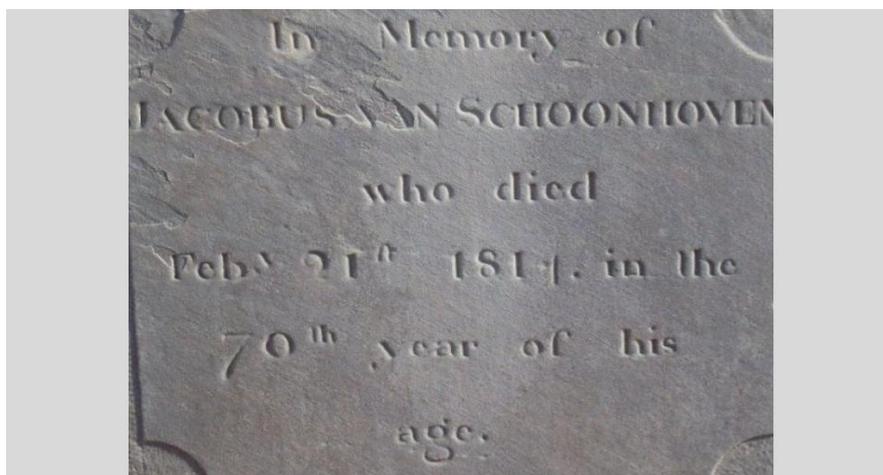


This Week in Saratoga County History – Founder’s Day in Waterford

Submitted by Russ VanDervoort, April 16, 2020

Russ VanDervoort is the Waterford Town Historian. He has two published books, a third in production, instrumental in the publishing of the Arcadia book Images of Waterford, and a guest lecturer and educator for many museums, libraries, and other educational groups. He can be reached at russvandervoort@gmail.com



April 16th is acknowledged as Founder’s Day in the Town of Waterford and Jacobus Van Schoonhoven is recognized as the founder. The Waterford area, then known as the “*The Ford at Halfmoon Point*” was in the Town of Halfmoon. The first patent for the area, then in Albany County, was given in 1687 to Anthony Van Schaick and know as Halfmoon. Van Schoonhoven and family, along with others are credited with being the first permanent, European settlers. (Jacobus was *born in Waterford in 1744*, his father’s name was Guert. Why isn’t Guert a founder and Jacobus a 1st born son?)

In 1664, it is believed, that Bartel Vrooman became the first non-native European to settle, albeit, not permanently at Halfmoon Point. Bartel arrived from Fort Orange to establish a beaver hunting community. He later moved on to Saratoga and ultimately to Schenectady where he perished in the Massacre of 1690.

In 1764 Jacobus was married to Elizabeth Clute. Since he was a man of great prominence in Albany and Saratoga, on October 20th, 1775 at age 31 in Halfmoon, (Waterford) New York Jacobus was commissioned to form and become colonel of the 12th Albany County Militia Regiment, also known as Van Schoonhoven’s Regiment of Militia to reinforce Horatio Gates’ Continental Army during the Saratoga campaign, finishing his service in 1777 with a resounding victory.

Once at home he led a standard life until 9 years later in 1786 when he was elected to the New York State Assembly, serving until 1791 thereafter he became a judge of the court of common pleas. In 1793 he won an election to become a New York state senator from Saratoga County, serving in that position until 1805.

When Waterford became a town in 1816, Jacobus became its second Supervisor. He was a farm produce merchant and dealer for the rest of his life until he died at age 70 in Waterford. He was buried in the Van Schoonhoven Cemetery, now on the property of Momentive, formally the GE on routes 4 & 32 in Waterford.