

## The Center Square of Duanesburg

Some twenty miles west of Albany, on the "Great Western Turnpike" (Route 20), there is a place called the Center Square. It is located about one mile west of the four corners of Duanesburg. Here James Duane hoped to build a center for a large city in northern New York. He separated ten acres from his sizeable holdings for what he dreamed would become the center of the new city. In his lifetime, however, he only managed to build one structure in the square, Christ Episcopal Church, which still stands today. The Church was finished in the summer of 1793. In the year following the consecration of the church, Duane retired from public life. He returned to Duanesburg where he intended to build a mansion and pass his remaining years. The mansion, started in 1794, was to stand in the center of his vast land holdings and only a short distance from the church and the square. Only the cellar walls were completed at the time of Duane's death in 1796, never to be completed.

Duane's will left the ten acres that church sat on to the church and a rectory for Christ Church was built. In 1803, the Presbyterian Church was built nearby. It was built on a ten acre plot of ground donated by the Duane family and was called the "Yellow Church". It was so named because of the color and for distinction from the Episcopal Church which was painted white. Years later, the Presbyterian Church building was destroyed by fire.

James Duane's hope of turning the center square into a metropolis never materialized. He dreamed of schools and business being built and there is a rumor that he had hoped to persuade New York State to establish the state capital on the spot. This was not to be and Christ Church is the only vestige left of Duane's master plan.