

Anti-Rent War in Duanesburg

For over 50 years, the Duane family, heirs of James Duane, held the rights to the property in Duanesburg. The tenant farmers were required to pay rent for the lands they farmed. This often meant they needed yearly to give the Duane family a certain number of bushels of grain and/or a certain number of livestock in order to stay on their farms. By 1858, these people were becoming increasingly angry over the rent they had to pay to keep these farms and that after years, they still did not own the property they farmed. This feeling was not just a Duanesburg phenomena—many residents of towns in upstate New York were reluctant to continue paying rent. The farmers in Duanesburg moved against their landlords by forming an Anti-Rent Association. It was not long before the Duanes gave into the demands, abolished the old rents, and retired from the landlord role. The tenants in Duanesburg were late in coming to the Anti-Rent movement and that was due to the fact that the Duanes had been fair to the farmers. In nearby Albany County, the rebellion came earlier, and was more violent. By the time of the Anti-Rent wars, Duanesburg held over one-third of the total improved acreage in the county and it was because of the ample agricultural productivity that the total valuation of real and personal property was over one million dollars. The actions of the Duane family allowed the farmers to finally own the property they farmed.