



## NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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### Rustic Drive-In Theater

I recently was asked for information about the Rustic Drive-In, which I was told, had been located at 247 West Sand Lake Road Rte. 150 outside of Wynantskill. Not being from this area back then, I decided to investigate.

It was located diagonally across the road from what is now 4 Paws Veterinary Clinic. You would drive in past the concession stand and park your car facing the big screen. There was a speaker you could attach to your window (watch out for the bugs!)

The grand opening was Sunday August 6, 1950. The first movie shown was "Fighter Squadron" starring Edward O'Brien and Robert Stack followed by "Angels in the Sky" with the Bowery Boys. Admission was 50 cents and children under 12 got in free.

A woman told me that her parents would bring her to the movies and she watched the first show, but had to lay down in the back seat and close her eyes because the second feature would have "adult content". Couples used the drive-in for date nights. Perhaps this resulted in the increase in baby boomer births.

Not everyone paid to get in. Some people sneaked in from the back of the screen where the Troy Riding and Driving Stables were located. Others used the old Quell Garage and Junkyard down the road to watch the movies.

Elmer Rowe operated the drive-in and used promotions to increase the attendance and meet growing operational expenses. In April 1955 he added cartoon shows and offered free lollipops!

By 1960 the popularity of drive-ins faded. Families began to stay home and watch television. Since drive-in movies could only begin at twilight, people opted to visit "mega theaters" in Albany and Troy which showed movies during the day. In 1960, Elmer Rowe had difficulty in finding people to staff the concession stand and it was burglarized that year.

The final season was 1964. On July 30 a storm with very high winds took down the drive-in screen. Newspaper reports said there was no estimate on how long it would take to erect a replacement.

However Elmer Rowe had had enough, the Rustic Drive-In closed.

With modern streaming service available on televisions, i-pads and phones, the drive-in era seems like ancient history. But old timers like me remember the thrills going to summertime movies.