



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

Jim Greenfield Town Historian 283-6384

The St. Jude's Horse Show

During a summer weekend in 1958, over 13,000 people attended an event in Wynantskill. We think we have traffic problems today. Can you imagine a crowd of that size investing Wynantskill?

The event was the St. Jude's horse show which ran from 1953 until 1965. Its conception parallels the founding and early growth of the St. Jude parish and school. The parish was formally created on July 5, 1952 when the Albany Diocese purchased a 3 acre plot of land at Brookside and Dana Avenues. After worshiping in a large tent for a year, the church celebrated its first Mass in their new building on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1953.

Father Thomas P. Tooher was the first pastor and was the guiding light for the horse show. A horseman himself, Father Tooher and other church members saw the horse show as a way to raise money for the new church and school.

In 1953, the horse show was a one day affair. Newspaper ads called it "a day of fun for the entire family" with dinners served, refreshments, booths and pony rides with admission only \$1.00. By 1960, the show had expanded to four days. The majority of the show was in an open arena. There were bleachers for the fans and also box seats for rent.

The competition consisted of several events including hunter, jumper, pleasure horse and a western division to name a few. Prizes were awarded, including a "governor's trophy".

In order to stage this large event, the entire parish had to be involved. Leo Chamberlin was the first chairman followed by Howard Carberry and later Con Culkin. Work would begin early each year to prepare for the summer event. There were grounds crews, cafeteria a snack bar workers, tickets, and a program committee and many others.

One of the biggest tasks was building the horse stalls. Because so many horse people attended, sometimes they would rent a stall for the horse and sleep in the adjoining one. Local residents often took in out-of-towners.

Father Tooher left St. Jude's in 1965 and the horse show ended. Probably even more important than the money the show generated was that it brought the parish together and gave it an identity which is still evident. Your recollections? Call me at 283-6384.