



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

Jim Greenfield Town Historian 283-6384

A Glimpse at Snyders Lake History

In my files I have a clipping from the 1921 Troy Record which states “sheriff candidate Jack Williams and Russell M. Vandersee Town Clerk started a drive against all undesirables at Snyders Lake.” An internet entry talks about a night watchman who was brutally murdered as a young man at Snyders Lake and how his ghost takes out his anger on children that go to the lake. Also I’ve heard about Legs Diamond frequenting the old Snyders Lake Hotel in the 1920’s. Undesirables? Murderers? Gangsters? Is this how our Snyders Lake should be remembered?

Well, no, so let’s back up a bit in history. The lake was originally called Aries until the late 1800’s or early 1900’s. I haven’t been able to determine the origin of the name (other than it’s a Zodiac sign). The earliest reference I can find is from a 1790 land survey by John E. Van Alen for George Warner (son-in-law of the first Hidley in the area). Van Alen describes the land which extended from just west of Wyla Way to Camp Scully as “tolerably good soil and bounded on the North by Aries Lack”.

The lake area remained farmland until around the turn of the 20th century when development began and the name was changed to Snyder to honor the family who were prominent and early settlers of the vicinity. Herman Snyder came from Dutchess County to what is now North Greenbush in the early 1800’s. He and his family traveled up the Hudson River by sail boat, taking a week to make the voyage. I suspect we can trace the development of the lake from the sale of Snyder land to various individuals who established summer camps there. Please let me know if your deeds indicate purchase of land from a Snyder.

By the 1920’s, people had more leisure time for outings. Families would often take the trolley from Troy out to the lake for a day at the beach in the summer. There was a floating pavilion extending out into the lake which was used for dancing and dining. I have a newspaper ad from July 1937 announcing “Follow the crowd and swing with Al King and his Swingsters at the Crimson Pavilion, Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights.” The pavilion is long gone, as is the Snyders Lake Hotel and Paul’s Grove. The building known as the Excelsior House is still there and many residents remember the weekend entertainment featuring Buddy Randell and the Knickerbockers who performed there in the 1960’s and 1970’s.

So Snyders Lake is much more than the legendary hauntings, gangsters and murders. It is a year round residential community and a bit more sedate than the old days. But our town park is still the place to be on those hot summer days.

Lots more to be written about Snyders Lake. Please share your stories with me. Also, I’m working on a story about the Geerhold-Rehm VFW post. Can anyone give me information about its founding and the namesakes? (283-6384).