

Outdoor Ice Skating by Bill Sauers

The opening of the outdoor skating rink on the Greece Town Campus should bring back memories of the "good old days" to many of us who have lived in the area for a half century or more. Back then there were many opportunities for outdoor ice skating, including public schools, community parking lots and natural ponds.

Residents of Greece were frequent visitors, until 1991, to the Maplewood Park pond. In fact, the building near the pond that is now City offices was specifically built with ice skating in mind. The Ontario Beach Park parking lot was another favorite spot for us as were the nearby ponds along the lake. A January 4, 1948 Democrat & Chronicle article talked about the thousands that crowded area skating rinks.

In the 1940s and 50s Barnard and Britton schools, and I am sure other schools, were also sites of public ice skating and they were true community endeavors. The DPW would roll down the snow and bring in an old voting booth as a shelter. The local volunteer fire department would flood the field. (No plastic liner or safety bumpers back then.) When the snow needed to be cleared off the ice, plenty of shovels were available for anyone who wanted to help clear the snow. In 1948 a group of volunteers from the Greece Youth Foundation cleared four acres of land on Britton Rd near Forgham Road for a rink with water supplied from Fleming Creek. It was on private property but was used by anyone who came by.

By the 1960s, the Town converted the lighted tennis courts at Carter Park into an ice rink in the winter and in 1975 built a shelter large enough to provide a place to change skates.

We all had ice skates back then, whether you were a good skater or not. New skates were always a great Christmas gift. If not a Christmas gift there was always Cooks Hardware who did a thriving business in used and new skates along with sharpening skates.

As indoor rinks opened and times changed, outdoor ice skating seemed to disappear around the early 1990s, albeit for a few artificially cooled rinks around the County. Maybe it was the changing climate or other activities to keep us occupied, but it seems kids don't own skates anymore. If the weather cooperates and more outdoor skating becomes available, things may change or maybe we just never will go back to the "good old days".



Barnard School 1950s

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!



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