

The 75th Anniversary of the Strawberry Festival of Canadice NY

A Brief History of the Canadice Strawberry Festival

By Mrs. Maud Van Duyne - The Livonia Gazette

17 June 1954



As many people in this vicinity may recall reading that the first strawberry festival of the Canadice Church was held on Saturday, June 28, 1879 and was sponsored by Mrs. Asher (Esther) Norton and George W. Sharpstein, both prominent members in Canadice Church.

It was held at Slout's resort at Canadice Lake and has been held every year since, except one as far as we know. It is unlikely that any persons who attended the first festival in 1879 will be present this year of 1954, but if there are such, we would be glad if they

would make it known that proper recognition may be given them.

Mr. Slout's place was well arranged for the accommodations of a large crowd with a spacious dining room and he always appeared very pleased that his place was honored in serving the festival for so many years. As the day drew near each year, he greeted his friends with the remark, "Are you coming down to the festival?" and seemed to do his best to assure everyone a good time.

It would be interesting if we might be granted a backward glance and see the crowd of 1879 as they appeared on that June day. The men were undoubtedly adorned with whiskers and mustaches, for in those days even young men wore a mustache, their clothing was much heavier than now and they wore fine leather boots. The ladies wore long hair, coiled high on the head, their dresses nearly touched the floor, their shoes the high-buttoned style.

In 1879 and for many years later the people drove to the festival with their horses and carriages or two seated buggies and I recall watching the people pass our house several teams at a time on their way to the lake.

One incident I remember was a man and his wife driving down the steep hill to the lake, the horse became frightened and ran away, throwing the lady from the buggy, breaking her arm, which was a painful experience for her.

In recalling residents of that time, these names came to mind, many of whom were regular church attendants, occupying almost every seat in the church at the Sunday service and most of these were usually present at the festival. In many cases one name represents several families. With only three exceptions, these were Canadice residents and in those three, the wife was from Canadice.

Adams, Alger, Allen, Anderson, Andrews, Armstrong, Baldwin, Barber, Beam, Becker, Blake, Branch, Bugh, Bush, Burch, Butler, Brown, Caskey, Clark, Colegrove, Coykendall, Crooks, Crossen, Dalley, Dalrymple,

Doolittle, Eldridge, Fenton, Francis, Francisco, Ganung, Hahn, Hartson, Haines, Hicks, Hoagland, Hoppough, Huff, Hyde, Ingraham, Jackman, Johnson, Kenyon, Kingsley, Knowles, Lamont, Landon, Leach, Lucas, Macumber, McCrossen, Noble, Norget, Norton, Nutt, Ogden, Owen, Partridge, Purcell, Putman, Ray, Richardson, Rix, Ross, Salter, Sanger, Seward, Sharpstein, Stark, Stevenson, Stillman, Stoddard, Struble, Swan, Swartz, Taque, Thayer, Thorpe, Tibbals, VanDorn, Waite, Wemett, Winch, Wright.

Today only a few of these names are represented in the residents and church attendants: Alger, Becker, Caskey, Hoagland, Hoppough, Johnson, Owen, Seward, Spencer, Swan, Wemett.

In the early days the crowd consisted mostly of home town people but even in the horse and buggy days it attracted acquaintances in surrounding towns who soon attended and seemed to enjoy mingling with Canadice friends.

As nearly as early attendants recall, the menu was fried chicken, baked beans, home-made biscuits and butter, pickles, cottage cheese, pie, cake, a large dish of strawberries and coffee. Early records reveal the price was 25 cents.

It was always a dinner affair and for many years was held on the last Saturday in June. In later years other days were appointed and one year was held on July 4, but the original days seemed best and the past few years it has been held on the last Saturday in June.

It has always meant a day of hard work to those most interested in its success, the people arriving early with their immense baskets of food, soon preparations were made, the long tables rapidly filled with hungry people, the tempting food quickly vanished, the process repeated until all were satisfied.

After the repast, the older people passed the time visiting, the younger people enjoyed boat rides across the lake as boats were provided for their use. At one time a small steam boat was on the lake and this also was greatly enjoyed.

But all pleasant and enjoyable days must draw to a close and about 5 pm the crowd began its homeward journey and the first strawberry festival ended successfully leaving such pleasant memories that it has been repeated yearly since, though undoubtedly no one in attendance in 1879 had a thought that it would continue for 75 years in this small country town.

For many years it was repeated in much the same manner and plan as at first. After a few years homemade ice cream was added as a special treat and proved so enjoyable that it is still served each year.

Also as entertainment the Hyde band (a home group) gave much pleasure to the crowd, which had grown much larger through the years and somewhat taxed the ingenuity of Mr. Slout in providing enjoyment for all. For many years Mr. Slout continued to entertain then as other picnic groups were established the festival was held at Wynoke cottage owned by Elwood Barringer and the cottage owned by Lewis Hoppough for some years. Then what seemed like a calamity hit the town and for a time proved disastrous to the festival. Much of the shoreline of the lake was sold to Rochester city, the picnic grounds were destroyed and it became necessary to secure a new site. So in 1916 the event was held at the William Cronin cottage at Honeoye Lake and for two years at the grove of Lucius Doolittle at Canadice Corners.

These arrangements were not satisfactory, the men of the church who for several years had planned it, grew discouraged and decided to give it up and for one year it was not held, then the Ladies' Aid society consisting

of most of the women of the church decided to make an effort in re-establishing the loved event of so many years. Plans were made to hold it at the church and after a few trials what at first seemed almost impossible began to improve and proved it to be a blessing in disguise for it has steadily grown and prospered until the present time. Though space was limited improvements have been made which otherwise we would not have had proving again the old saying "All's well that ends well".

Since the festival has been held at the church several changes have been made, perhaps the most important being the change from a daytime to an evening affair. This allows many who are employed in Rochester as well as the busy farmers to attend which many would be unable to do if it were still a daytime event. Also, the menu has been altered. I will not say improved. Potato salad, baked beans, cold meat, rolls vegetable plate, pickles, cake, but it still has the large dish of strawberries and coffee. Only once was it necessary to hold it without berries, they being such poor quality. This was very disappointing and since we have been very fortunate in securing excellent berries each year.

On a few occasions home talent plays were very entertaining as well as readings and musical selections, usually voluntarily contributed. However the past few years the band concerts by the Hemlock and Honeoye schools have been well received and very enjoyable.

Perhaps the change in price is the most important which, instead of 25 cents is now \$1.25 though many remark that is worth more and add a few cents or an extra dollar when purchasing their tickets.

So in 1954 as in 1879 those most interested will endeavor to make this a banner year as an anniversary event. Serving will begin at 4 pm and continue until all are served. A bazaar and parcel post sale will be conducted as in the past two years. Also some baked goods will be for sale. Through the 75 years of its existence, many workers have passed on, new helpers have filled the ranks, and continued the work which has brought joy and satisfaction to all engaged in it. Though, in recent years, a large number of those attending are from a distance, even from other states (for the past two years Mrs. Henry Shields, a Rochester lady in her nineties, has been the oldest person present), we try to make the occasion enjoyable for all, young and old alike, and this year we hope to see all our acquaintances of former years and many new friends, who are discovering what a Canadice strawberry festival really means.

We trust that the interest may increase each year and the work of the past may seem worthy of imitation to the workers of the future and that it may continue, at least until a century is reached.

Long live the Canadice strawberry festival!