

Butler's Lakeland Fair

From the early to late 1950's, area residents had the pleasure of looking forward to the annual VFW Lakeland Fair. Sponsored by the George P. Siek VFW Post 8096, the fair ran for six days and featured different events each day. It was held in the borough parking lot on Carey Avenue and usually included a carnival with rides, games, and shows. Events often included a talent show, a Scout Night and parade, a baby photo contest, handicraft exhibit and contest, first aid demonstrations, a concert by the Bloomingdale Cornet Band, and usually concluded with a town-wide block dance.

Silver Dollar Soap Box Derby

One of the main events of the fair was the Silver Dollar Soap Box Derby. Held on a 1,000 yard section of High Street, the race was open to boys aged 8 to 14 from Butler, Bloomingdale, and Kinnelon. In 1950, the winner received a new bicycle, eight silver dollars and had his name engraved on a large trophy provided by the First National Bank of Butler. The second place winner received eight silver dollars and the third place winner received five silver dollars. As a consolation prize, the slowest finisher also received five silver dollars. The race ceased when the fairs ended in the early 1960's, but it was revived in 1969 by the Butler Police Athletic League.

Queen of the Lakes

The highlight of the fair was the Queen of the Lakes Beauty Pageant. Area lakes would conduct contests and the winner from each lake would compete at Butler's Lakeland Fair for the title. The winner of that event would then go on to compete in the VFW Miss New Jersey Contest. Between fifteen and twenty area lakes usually participated; Glen Wild Lake, Stonybrook, Valley Spring Lake, Bubbling Spring Lake, Sun Tan Lake, and Cold Spring Lake were frequent competitors. The contest drew large crowds; it's estimated that about 4,000 spectators witnessed the 1954 event. In 1955 the winner received between three hundred and four hundred dollars in prizes donated by local merchants and a guest appearance on the Steve Allen TV show. Second and third place finishers also received trophies and prizes.



Source: *Paterson News Aug. 9, 1950, Paterson News Aug. 7, 1951, Paterson News Aug. 11, 1952, Paterson News Aug. 14, 1954*

