

Memorial Day heralds the unofficial start of summer and memories of parades past and present come to mind. It was once said “a bunch of people coming down the street is a mob, but put a band in front and you’ve got a parade.” As a salute to all the folks who work to bring the public a parade, here’s our Memorial Day tribute.

All About Nassau

People, Buildings and Memories

BY KURT VINCENT

PARADING AROUND NASSAU



Above, Margaret Harder and Alice Huestead pose beside their decorated carriage prior to a floral parade at the Nassau Fair in the 1890s. To the left, The Nassau Cornet Band circa 1900. Sitting on the drum is Civil War vet Sam Lennon and Tom James kneeling with the coronet. Below in the 1919 July 4th parade Capallano's Band is headed down Chatham Street marching past Lynd Brothers Nassau Pharmacy on the corner of Albany Avenue.



The old saying goes “everyone loves a parade.” At least here in Nassau that seems to be true. Many parades and public celebrations have been recorded over the years, both by participants and spectators. Perhaps the most famous were the floral parades back in the heyday of the Nassau Fair from about 1890 through the early 1900s. Once common civic events, now only the Pasadena, California “Rose Bowl Parade” remains as one of the few modern day examples of using flowers to decorate floats. In Nassau, it was much more than floats – bicycles, baby carriages, horse and oxen teams were all entry categories – and with big cash prizes. As much as \$50 dollars could be earned if you were judged best. That’s almost \$1,300 in our 2014 dollars!

In September 1905 the Troy Evening News wrote: “In spite of the threatening weather thousands of people flocked yesterday afternoon to witness the beautiful floral parade. This parade is a distinct feature of the Nassau Fair and is well worth going a long way to see.” Included in the parade was a maypole display made up of six girls holding garlanded ribbons attached to a pole held by a young man – all on bicycles and Mrs. Elmer Kittle’s steam launch “Mabelle” mounted on wheels. The display pillow white clouds of steam as it passed by thrilling on-lookers.

In 1919 the Village of Nassau celebrated the 100th anniversary of incorporation by honoring Nassau’s men who had served in World War One. In addition to a parade, a thanksgiving church service, luncheon for the veterans, athletic field day, evening band concert and fireworks were held. The day was started by a cannon salute fired by Village President A.O. Kosegarten atop what is now Nassau School hill. That cannon is now in the collection of Mr. Russell Decker.



This 1964 photo shows members of the Nassau Hose Company Ladies Auxiliary on parade in Rensselaer. Attempts to name all of the participants have been unsuccessful, however carrying the banner, left is - Jean Winters Montross and to the right Ann Bennett.

While Nassau is small in geographic size - less than one square mile overall, parade organizers have used great imagination in planning their route over the years. Between the war years parades often marched up the length of Church Street to the village limits, made a “U-turn” reversing direction and proceeded back down Church Street usually ending at the fair grounds. As the age of automobiles took hold, starting locations that could accommodate participant’s cars became important. For many years the Memorial Day parade formed in the parking lot of Sutherland School marching down the hill. After that St. Mary’s Church lot became both the start and end of the parade offering some onlookers double the opportunity to watch the procession.

After World War II parades took place mainly on Memorial Day and for significant anniversaries. Volunteers Donald Chandler and James Hyland often organized the events and coordinated parade routes, participants and activities afterward. For any small child in the 1960s a highlight of the parade was the appearance of an Army tank lumbering down the street. Unfortunately village and state road departments did not agree and soon ended that after pavement repairs caused concerns. From little league openings and Halloween costume parades to county, town and village anniversaries parades were and continue to be part of Nassau’s small town charm.

If you would like to share your Nassau stories and/or pictures contact us at info@nassau12123.com. We would love to include your material in a future edition.

Jim Hyland taking a “test drive” in the Army tank used in a Memorial Day parade. Jim’s connections at the Watervliet Arsenal made it possible some years to get the tank a day early and show it off to neighborhood kids. Damage to road pavement while turning was cited as why the tank was no longer welcome in Nassau.

Every celebration needs a queen and Nassau’s 1966 Home Town Day was no exception. From left to right Queen Lenora Kahnle, Carol Rausch, obscured Sandra Flemings, Arlene Lansley, Donna Hotaling and driver James Barker. Also saluted were Nassau’s two oldest residents at the time Edger Rowe 93 and Mrs. Cora Bliss 92. (Courtesy of Norman Rowe.)

