The Nassau Fair

The land east of the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail in this part of the Village of Nassau was once the site of the Nassau Fair, held annually from the mid-1890s to 1944. The Village, once a junction on the Albany-Boston stagecoach route, was the site of mills on the Valatie Kill in the late 1700s. By the 1850s it was a busy commercial center including hotels, stores, and fine homes, now part of a National Register Historic District. In the early 1890s, the Rensselaer County Agricultural and Liberal Arts Society, a group of prominent area businessmen and farmers, purchased land for a fairground here and established a southern Rensselaer County agricultural fair as an alternative to older, established county fairs held to the north.

Fun at the Fair

The Nassau Fair ran every summer. A single-admission ticket to the forty-acre fairground cost twenty-five cents, and children under ten were admitted for free. The fair included a carnival midway, commercial displays, agricultural exhibits, horse races, and live entertainment. The Albany-Hudson trolley line, which opened in 1900, ran past the fairgrounds and made it easy to travel to the fair.

Popularity and Demise

The Nassau Fair was the biggest annual event in southern Rensselaer County for many years. In 1922, thirty thousand people attended over three days. However, the event’s popularity waned during World War II, and the last fair ran in 1944. The Nassau Fair merged with the county fair in Schaghticoke, New York. Some Nassau fairground land became house lots, and racehorse training continued for a time. The grandstand and barns burned in the 1960s, and one original Nassau Fair building, now used as a church, survives today near the Nassau Post Office.