NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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Field Days in Defreestville

The Defreestville Fire Department was formed in 1945. Three years later they began conducting "field days" celebrations . These events consisted of three or four days of games, dances, game parties, clam bakes, firemantic competitions and a parade through downtown Defreestville.

There were several reasons the field days were launched. They served the purpose of fund raising for the new fire department which at first, had no governmental appropriations. Also, a community event would attract new members to the organization and firemen could practice their skills.

The first field days celebrations in 1948 were four day events, 2 days in September and 2 days in November. They featured dancing and bingo all day, a parade starting on the streets of Rensselaer and ending at the old fire house on Route 4 and firefighting demonstrations. In later years, with one exception, the celebrations occurred in early July. The field days went "big time" in 1953 and 1954 when they sponsored the Mills Brothers 3 ring circus which was held on Williams

Road. Where the campus of LaSalle School now stands.

Competition between regional fire squads was a much awaited event each year. Trophies were given for the oldest and newest fire apparatus, most firemen in line, company coming the longest distance and the largest ladies auxiliaries in line. In individual and group competitions, Defreestville won 50 trophies in 1976. Perhaps the team's nickname "Defreestville Villains" helped. Later the name was changed to that of one of the fire chiefs "Sroka Saints."

The field days continued until 1981. Expenses for putting on the event every year grew, but more importantly, not enough firemen were willing to put in the considerable time to stage these events (especially on weekends). Defreestville continued to sponsor events like calendar drives and chicken barbecues but no more field days or parades.

Wouldn't you like to witness the fire department parade through Defreestville one more time?