

What if it happened today?

08/24/22

I had an interesting conversation with a patron the other day about how some of the events we have exhibits on could never happen today. We talked about political correctness, updated laws and general attitudes and how things have changed. Let me give you some examples.

Adventure Town. For those of you who don't remember, there was a western town on the land leading to the Edgewood Resort, on the left, in the early 60's. This was a full replica built around Lake Geronimo with railroad tracks, rodeo shows, train robberies, hangings, and general mayhem. ***What if it happened today?*** Well, first off, it would now be a Cowboy and Native American show. I don't believe I saw any ethnicities except Caucasians so that would cause a protest of some sort. Even the "Indians" were just tanned Caucasians. There were guns all over the place! If we did that now, we would have to have metal detectors and TSA agents to screen everyone before they entered. The whole place would probably have to be surrounded by fence and the mood would be broken.

Round the House races. Round the house races were done 1936 to 1940 and were literally, car races around the town. They started at the school and went down Bolton Ave, right turn on to Church Street and all the way up to the top of the hill and right again at the hospital, follow Fuller to Market, around the Monticello and straight-out Market to Walton and back to the school. There were no barriers between the street and the spectators. The races were 50 laps for a total of 70 miles. Cars sped by at speeds up to 56 miles per hour. The drivers and pit crew wore cloth caps and coveralls. Various models of cars raced over the years, Ford V-8, Maserati, Austin, Bugatti, Willys, MG, Delage and Jaguar to name a few. The races stopped in 1940 as World War II started and gasoline was hard to get. ***What if it happened today?*** Its hard to determine where to start with why we couldn't do those races now. No barriers? Spectators standing in the street? No helmets, HANS devices or fireproof suits? NASCAR would have a field day administering fines for the course setup and safety infractions. Church Street is now part of Route 12, so no permissions would be granted to use that route since it now is a designated rescue vehicle route to the hospital. Think about the number of people who would come just to see the cars! So many factors to consider that would deter this activity now.

Marathon Boat Racing. Boat racing in the Thousand Islands began with Gold Cup racing in the early 1900's, then Regattas then Marathons. Club racing started with the Fishers Landing Racing Club in 1949 with local racing in Clayton, Fishers Landing, Alexandria Bay, Gananoque and Brockville. The Thousand Islands International Marathon was the next big racing event and ran from 1954 to 1972. This was stock outboard racing featuring Outboard Hydroplanes and Outboard Runabouts. There were 6 classes according to engine and hull size and drivers came from all over the Northeast and eventually from the Pacific Coast and Newfoundland, Canada. The course was 100 miles stretching between Alexandria Bay, Clayton and Brockville, Ontario. In 1956 Ogdensburg and Prescott, Ontario were added to the course. Safety equipment was minimal. Drivers wore helmets and foam rubber knee pads, they raced on their knees. Elbow pads were optional. The constant pounding of the boats on the water took a toll on the driver and some had to be lifted from their boats after the races. The increase of St Lawrence Seaway shipping traffic and popularity of bigger and faster boats, along with Jet Skis contributed to the end of this event. Safety became an issue. The last race was on a closed course in Alexandria Bay in 1972. ***What if it happened today?*** We have one of these racing boats in the museum and the thought of driving one is terrifying to me. There really is just a steering wheel and a motor with a platform to kneel on. In order for the boat to remain afloat, and not be swamped by waves, you have to drive it fast, so that the front

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angles out of the water and the motor and propeller speed you along. This could never happen with the volume of waves we have now. The racing would have to be coordinated with the ships passing and so many other restrictions just make having this event on the river impossible at this day and age. A new generation of racers re-established the Fishers Landing Racing Club and currently races on Crystal Lake in Redwood. They will be racing this year on September 6th in Crystal Lake. If you enjoy speedboat racing, take a drive over. It is exciting to watch.

These three events are just a few of the happenings around Alexandria Bay that are gone forever. We are happy to preserve the memories with video, audio and photo documentation here at Cornwall Brothers Store Museum.