



Naples Grape Festival History

To understand the Naples Grape Festival's future, we need to understand its past!

The first Naples Grape Festival was described as an agricultural fair dating back to **1874**, the year in which the Naples Memorial Town Hall was completed to honor our Civil War dead. Grapes were first grown in Naples in **1848**, and the first wine cellar in Naples was the Naples Valley Wine Company... established in **1854**. In the **1940's** the Naples Grape Festival fell victim to the onset of World War II as did the area's overall grape production.

In **1961**, the Naples Grape Festival (NGF) was reintroduced and operated by the Naples Historical Society drawing nearly 5,000 people. By 1964, Naples Grape Festival drew crowds of 60,000 people including famous visitors such as Paul Harvey and Robert Kennedy. It included a parade to mark the beginning of the festivities and could last up to 3 hours. However, it was cancelled in **1971** due to unruly crowds. In **1989**, to celebrate Naples' Bicentennial, Bob and Bill Vierhile recreated and operated a two-day event featuring arts and crafts, music and a grape pie contest.

The Naples Grape Festival benefited the Naples community by giving to two vital organizations... the Naples Historical Society and the Naples Rotary Club. The Naples Historical Society is all about preserving the rich history of Naples while the Naples Rotary Club is all about creating a bright future for our community!

In **2007**, a trademark for the name Naples Grape Festival was filed with New York State.

In **2009**, a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) was established identifying The Naples Grape and Arts Festival to be owned solely by the Naples Rotary Club and has been in force ever since.

This year - **2022**, the Naples Grape and Arts Festival LLC has been formalized and restructured to provide transparency, accountability, collaboration and above all a positive direction for festival events. The LLC's goal is to create and implement community-centric festivals that provide a monetary and in-kind benefit to the Naples community.

Naples Grape Festival 2022 is once again a celebration of the grape harvest and the rich history of the Naples community.

SALUTE TO GRAPE

Popularity of Village Festival Points Up a National Trend

By OTTO E. STURM
United Press International

NAPLES, N.Y. (UPI) — Take a village of 1,200 population. Add 40,000 visitors. Throw in a parade, a carnival, exhibits and, in this election year, some politicians. Top it off with dancing in the streets and fireworks, and what have you got?

A Festival.

Also, added evidence that Americans are becoming more Festival-minded all the time.

This village, nestled in a picturesque valley in western New York, is typical of a slogan that's ringing louder around the country:

"The Festival's the thing."
Two years ago, the annual Naples Grape Festival attracted 15,000 visitors. Last year, 25,000 came.

This year, 40,000 persons from all parts of the state and from as far away as Ohio were on hand to help celebrate the harvest of the grape on which the wine-rich area's economy is based.

FINE WEATHER and the breathtaking scenery of this "American Rhineland" about 40 miles south of the city of Rochester abetted the Festival in luring the huge turnout.

Rolling, vineyard-clad hills with a backdrop of forestland, resplendent in flaming autumn foliage, overlook the blue waters of Lake Canandaigua, westernmost of New York's famous Finger Lakes.

These spectacular lakes, ranging up to 40 miles long and four miles wide, stretch north and south across the state between Syracuse and Rochester like the fingers of a giant hand.

Naples is four miles south of the Canandaigua lakehead and it was here in 1882 that a young Swiss emigrant, John Jacob Widmer, discovered that the soil and climate closely matched those of the great wine-producing areas of Europe.

Local News

Grape Festival history

Don Braun offered this photo after reading last week's story about the Grape Festival. That's Peter Savage, Don Braun and Jim LeFevre (left to right) waiting for the parade at the very first Grape Festival in 1961. Braun says he remembers LeFevre being involved, but he doesn't remember him attending the first organizational meeting which was held in the basement at John Vierhile's house on Main Street and attended by 27 people, including Bob Vierhile. "I think Jim and Bob Vierhile both had the idea - a lot of people had the idea - but it was those 27 people in the basement that night that really got it off the ground." Braun said the group that night also decided to hold a trout derby. "That was Bud Keith's baby," Braun said. "He was part of the effort that brought the trout back to Naples Creek so he was really excited about holding a derby."

