

# OUT OF THE PAST

## Johnson's Drive-In, Route 5 in Athol Springs, 1957



Like many of the other old Route 5 restaurants that dotted Lake Shore Road in the 1940s and 50s, Johnson's at the "Circle" restaurant has since passed into the storied history of that stretch of the state road from the "Circle" to Camp Road. The Alhambra, The Circle Inn that became the Seacrest Supper Club, Wiess's

(Hoak's today), Arps, Montross's (McKenzie's today), Foits, Rooth's Sky Lite (Rodney's today) and Biggar's Custard Stand are a few good examples. Probably the only one remaining, although under new ownership, is the Red Top.

At that time, Johnson's was located on the southwest side of the traffic

circle and was just to the right of cars headed up St. Francis Drive towards Hamburg. The Sky-Way Drive-In Theater was on the northeast side of the circle. Today the Johnson's property is occupied by a used car business and the former Sky-Way lot is now taken up by a trucking

company. Of course, the "Circle" was removed about 10 years ago, well after the Route 5 reconstruction was completed. Today a traffic light controls the vehicle movement at what is a busy four-corner intersection.

The drive-in business was started by Lloyd Johnson in about 1947.

His son Richard also worked at the restaurant until he recalled into the service for the Korean War from 1951 to 1953. The Johnson family continued to run the business until 1959 when fears of the then planned reconstruction of Route 5 caused them to sell out. Don't confuse the Johnson Drive-In with the Howard Johnson's Restaurant that was located directly across the street on the north side of Route 5 for many years. That former Howard Johnson's is today home to the popular Peg's Place Restaurant.

Johnson's featured typical summer fare including hot dogs, hamburgers and french fries. It also was open each morning for breakfast. It offered curb service or you could eat inside. Many area residents also made it a habit to stop for the homemade frozen custard and ice cream. The facility also did draw a brisk lunch trade from the workers in the industrial factories located to the north along Route 5.

When the Johnson's left the business, they sold out to the Becker family of Rochester who owned the "Big Boy" franchise restaurants. They had successful restaurants in Buffalo, but for whatever reason, they never re-opened the former drive-in at the circle. It is believed that they tried to expand too fast and fell on hard financial times. When the drive-in building was torn down in 1972, it was owned by the Airways Corporation, the same firm that had owned the old Seacrest Supper Club. The Seacrest occupied the former Circle Inn property, just down the road from Johnson's. Today that location is taken up by a Tim Horton's Coffee shop just across the street from the Red Top.

*Photo - Historian files from the 1949 Lake Shore Fire Department Dedication Program.*

*This column is written each week by Hamburg Town Historian Jim Baker. Anyone wanting to submit photographs and/or materials can call the Dunn House in Hamburg on either Wednesday or Thursday between 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. at 646-5115.*

*Readers can also provide feedback by writing a Letter to the Editor and mailing it to The Sun, 141 Buffalo St., Hamburg, NY 14075.*

### WESTERN NEW YORK Health Expo "HEALTHY MIND & BODY" A BIG SUCCESS!

Metro Group Inc. (Source, Retailer, PennySavers, Newspapers) wishes to thank all the people from Western New York who attended, had booths, entertained, educated or participated in any fashion at their 3rd annual WNY Health Expo.

The weather cooperated, the lines of visitors were impressive and the benefits to Western New Yorkers were immeasurable -  
....people attended from Olean/Jamestown to Lockport/Ontario  
....over 100 bounce house entries - donations given to non profit WNY group  
....Red Cross Blood Mobile had 17 donors, 5 of whom were first time  
....Food Bank of WNY received 1,070 pounds of canned goods thanks to the attendees  
....Lots of winners - Congratulations to all winners of grand & door prizes, value was over \$2000 in giveaways:

- Diane Wind, Hamburg - \$250 gift certificate to Hook's Shoes
- Janice Krygier, Cheektowaga - \$150 gift certificate to Value Vision
- Marianne Dabek, Buffalo - \$100 gift certificate Zoladz Limousine
- Carol Ann Duffett, Hamburg - \$300 gift basket from Weight Watchers
- Cole Gould, Holland - \$275 gift certificate Zoladz Limousine service
- Melody Burow, Niagara Falls - \$51 gift bag and goodies from Daybreak TV
- Barbara Gawron, West Seneca - \$51 gift bag & goodies from Daybreak TV
- S. Stachewicz - \$60 4 pack Colden Tubing passes from Metro Group papers
- Rick Rudy - \$60 4 pack Colden Tubing passes from Metro Group papers
- S. Montie, Hamburg - \$45 blanket/first aid kit from N.Y.S. Epic
- Al Szczesniak, West Seneca - \$75 spa products from BeautiControl
- Joyce Learned, Niagara Falls - \$75 carry-on luggage from Passport Health
- Robin Scott, Hamburg - \$75 dental basket from WNY Dental Group
- Janice Law, Depew - \$50 manicure/beauty box from Southtowns Radiology
- Carla Morlock, Hamburg - \$50 basket of Tastefully Simple products
- Janine Soreika - \$50 gift basket from Union Medical Pharmacy
- Deb Augustyn, Hamburg - \$50 healthy chocolate gift basket from Alpha-2
- Duane Arnold, Jamestown - \$50 gift basket from Gowanda Rehabilitation
- Rita Lipiec, Cheektowaga - \$50 vaporizer from Dove Medical
- Julie Lindier, Buffalo - \$50 blood pressure monitor from Mobility Plus
- Judy Ward, Buffalo - \$55 life coaching session by Nancy Rizzo, cert. coach
- Duane Arnold, Jamestown - \$50 sunglasses from Value Vision
- Sue Lindell, Cheektowaga - \$50 Sunglasses from Value Vision
- Bob Brogan, Hamburg - \$50 book set from Volunteer Ministries
- April Gaines, Niagara Falls - \$50 gift basket from Fidelis Care
- Diane Bauer, Elma - \$30 Easter Gift Basket from Parkland Diagnostics

**THANK YOU WESTERN NEW YORK...Metro Group's next show is the Taste of Home Cooking & Trade Show, April 29. Watch this paper for details & updates.**

### The 7th Annual Breakfast with the Bunny



Presented by the Rotary Club of Hamburg  
**Saturday, March 27, 2010**  
Oakwood Manor, 2985 Lakeview Rd.  
(Across from the Hamburg Ice Arena)

**TWO SEATING TIMES AVAILABLE:**  
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM • 10:45 AM to 12:10 PM  
\$3.00 - Ages 2 to 10 • \$6 - Ages 11 and up

Call: 743-5388 for tickets and reservations  
*Presale tickets recommended due to limited seating.*  
Pancake Breakfast • Face Painting by the Hamburg YES students  
Chinese Auction with great gift baskets  
Photos with the Bunny (no charge with your own camera)  
Lisa.avery@huntralestate.com

### Village Sweet Shoppe

One Buffalo Street • Hamburg, NY 14075 • 697-0048  
Corner of Rt. 391 and Buffalo Street

### Easter Candy!

We have over 2,000 molds to choose from, chances are we have what you are looking for.

- Sponge Candy
- Hand Decorated Suckers
- Baskets
- 2 1/2 lb. Jawbreakers
- Whipped Peanut Butter Eggs

