



Naples Grape Festival History

As found in The Naples Historical Society Archives

The first Naples Agricultural Society was formed in **1857** and incorporated in **1860**. An annual fair was held usually in September “to compliment and consume” pies, puddings, pastries, jams & jellies. Farmers entered livestock, and fruits & vegetables for prizes.

The first Naples Grape Festival took place in 1872, the year Naples Memorial Town Hall was completed as a memorial to the 225 Naples boys who served with the Union Army. The first event held in Memorial Hall was the **1st Annual Naples Fair and Grape Festival**. The Naples Fair was a victim of WWII as were the grape events. In **1961**, the Village of Naples created the Naples Public Relations Commission to promote two local activities: the Naples Creek Rainbow Trout Derby and the **Naples Grape Festival**. Some famous people who were part of the festival in the 1960’s included Robert Kennedy, Paul Harvey and Emmett Kelly, Jr. The grape festival was discontinued in **1971** due to unruly crowds. After a 16-year absence the Naples Grape and Wine Festival was revived in **1988** by brothers Bill and Bob Vierhile. The event was brought back to herald the 100th anniversary of Widmer’s Wine Cellars and to serve as the start of the town of Naples’ bicentennial celebration. In **1989**, Naples Bicentennial year, the festival was made a two-day event featuring arts and crafts, music, and a grape pie contest.

The **grape pie contest** was a great attraction. Rochester food writers and editors judged the first contest. After the contest, the winning pies were auctioned piece by piece to benefit the Naples Library. There were thousands of pies baked throughout the village by people who all had “a secret recipe”. However, none of the top ten bakers entered the pie contest because they all thought they were number one!

In **1990** 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! The two organizations continue to benefit from the festival.

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.

We hope you enjoy the celebration of the grape harvest and the rich history of the Naples community.