

## Milestone Years - Part 2

By Karen Ferguson, Town of Kirkwood Historian

Last month I discussed the Milestone Years for the Industrial Park and surrounding areas, specifically the industrial and commercial development that occurred in the Five-Mile Point area, the highway system that boosted the industrial development, and the housing boom. This article will continue to highlight the domino effect in development that occurred from the late 1950s to mid 1960s.

When the Binghamton State Hospital decided to sell the farm land, they donated an 8-acre tract of land to the Town of Kirkwood at the intersection of Routes 11 and 17 with the stipulation that it had to be used for recreational purposes. This property was originally owned by Ebenezer Park who sold the land to the State Hospital, so it is fitting that it be reverted back to the Town. The Dedication Ceremony of the Park was on June 11, 1960 and it was full of pomp and circumstance. The ceremony began with a parade with bands from both the Windsor School and Susquehanna Valley School participating. Joyce Rittle was crowned Queen of Kirkwood for the day out of 14 finalists. She, as well as 2 "Ladies in Waiting" rode in convertibles. The Little League Ball Team also walked in the parade. The parade route went from the Five-Mile Point Fire Station to the Park. Upon arrival, the ceremony began with an Invocation by Rev. Harold Stenzhorn from the Langdon Christian Church. Supervisor Frank Beam officiated with several other honorees in attendance and participating. An official "Name-the-Park" contest was held and the winner was announced. There were over 100 names submitted and the Town Board selected "Kirkwood Valley Park" which was entered by two different kids: a 6-year old girl named Margaret McClure and an 11-year-old boy named Rodney VanWinkle. Both winners were presented with a bicycle. Following the dedication a Little League Game was played and refreshments were served.

Another option for recreational activity happened in 1961 with the building of Sunset Lanes bowling alley on Route 11. They continue to operate today.

Government during this time adapted to the anticipated housing and economic boom. Over a period of several years, a Planning and Zoning Board was created and an updated Zoning Ordinance was adopted along with a new Town Zoning Map. In 1963, a former town garage space was converted into a new Town Hall and included a meeting space for community activities and also a kitchen. (This Town Hall is where the post office is located now).

About this same time, a multi-million apartment complex called Kirkwood Manor Apartments was constructed along Route 11 in the Five Mile Point area. The first phase of construction included 60 apartment units with anticipation to eventually build 220. This complex is now known as Anthros Apartments.

Schools & churches also had to adapt to the housing & baby boom. Windsor expanded the high school and built two new elementary schools. Floyd Bell opened first in 1957 while CR Weeks began construction in 1963. Susquehanna Valley also expanded in the Kirkwood area and opened Cedarhurst in 1958. St. Mary's Church in Kirkwood attendance grew to about 500 members and built a new church building on its existing property and demolished the old one in 1968.

In 1967, the State Police built a new headquarters on Route 11, one mile south of Five Mile Point. The 3200 square foot, one-story building was devoted to office space on the ground floor. The basement housed a squad room, locker rooms, storage rooms and showers. A 3-car garage was proposed to be built behind the building. This headquarters was located where Progressive Dental is now.

This is just a snapshot of how quickly the Town of Kirkwood changed and developed in the late 1950s to mid-1960s, making Five Mile Point the new epicenter of activity.