The winters of 1938, ‘39, ‘40, ‘41 and ‘48 were highlighted with Ice Skating Championship races on Northville’s Little Lake. These events were sponsored by the Northville Chamber of Commerce. Thousands of spectators arrived in Northville to witness races by skaters that belonged to Ice Skating Clubs all over New York State. Our local businesses worked together to make these events successful as you will read in some of the articles that will be included in this newsletter.

Top of Water Street. Clarence Davison patrolling the streets as Northville expects nearly 2000 people to be arriving for the skating events. Note Cruikshank’s hardware store on the left where Allen and Palmer’s parking lot is today
In 1938 two toboggan slides were built. Doug Parker told, “The toboggan slides were near the north end of the Little Lake on the west side. Frozen snow and ice was used to create a fast ride. Each person brought their own toboggan. If you didn’t have your own toboggan it was easy to catch a ride with someone who had one. Early in the winter when there was only a little snow you could coast all the way across the little lake.”

Advertized in the 1938 program was a NEW SKI TOW. “Northville has installed a New Electric Ski Tow on their Ski Hill at the North end of the Little Lake and invite you to spend the week-ends Skiing and Riding on the Tow.”

In 1941 it was a real cold - 20 below zero during the skating events. A school bus was left running near the meet so the skaters could warm up between races.

There was also the little one room building at the foot of Water Street hill that had a pot belly wood stove in the middle of the room where skaters could get warm but it was too small to accommodate very many.

This little wooden building was also used by the local children and adults to rest and get warm. There were benches all round the walls where you could sit to put on your skates and warm up after sometimes being outside for hours.

The Skating rink was the largest in New York State. The rink was lined with trees to mark the perimeter of the rink. No one was supposed to go beyond the trees. In this picture you can see cars lined up along Water Street, also the little wooden shack where the pot belly stove was. Notice also the posts on the ice to mark off the racing track.
1948 was the last meet in Northville. In 1949 the meets were moved to Saratoga.
In 1940 a luncheon was served to the skaters and officials at the Central School Cafeteria by the Northville Garden Club.

Some of the racing events included 220, 440, 880 yards and one-mile races. There were several divisions: Men’s, Women’s, Juvenile boys and Juvenile girls under 14. Jr. Boys and Jr. Girls under 16. Intermediate boys and girls under 18, and a special class for “midgets” under 12. There was also a “Three Mile Special” that was eligible for senior skaters only.

Awards of trophies and medals were on display in the window of Cruikshanks hardware store. The cost of these prizes was donated by civic-minded individuals and firms in Gloversville and Northville. Trophies were given to winners in the senior, intermediate and junior events and in the three mile race. Gold, silver and bronze medals was awarded in all events.

Doug Parker was 23 years old in 1948. He told that he acted as Assistant Clerk of Course as he skated from the finish line to the announcer with results of the races to keep the crowd informed.

Notice how many local people participated in committees, providing food and shelter, contributions, etc. to make these events successful.

Meals were served the skaters at the central school cafeteria. A pancake dinner with all the trimmings was given by the Northville Chamber of Commerce to all visiting competing skaters and officials. The dinner was served by the women of the PTA. Mrs. Ralph Scheer was in charge of the kitchen and Miss Helen Mendenhall of the dinning room, assisted by high school students; Jeanne Ferguson, Audrey Carrino, Lucille Heath, Shirley Harrington, and Helen Williams.
One of Northville’s best skaters was Jack Darby. He competed in the Intermediate boys division in 1940. He also competed in NCS skating contests while in high school. Grant Morrison recalled that some of the skaters went on to qualify for the Olympics.

Our skating rink was used for skaters practicing for the Olympics. They said it was one of the best rinks in NYS. It was 470 feet long and 200 feet wide, one of the largest in Northern New York.

Credit needs to be given to the men who maintained the rink for the events and for the local adults and kids who skated there all winter. One time a tractor went through the ice. Roy Pearsall recalled that after it was pulled out, it was towed to Rhodes Garage on South Main Street and by the time it got there, it had frozen so the wheels wouldn’t turn.

Entertainment was provided evenings with Sally Young and Warren Johnson of Northville who were exceptional figure skaters. There was barrel jumping, by “Bunny” Sheffield an internationally known skater. He completed a jump over ten of Northville’s loveliest feminine residents.

“Pat” Boudreau from Schenectady performed on the ice with roller skates, And was famous for his ballet skating, and as a clown.

The Lake Placid Figure Skating Club also were part of the entertainment.