

New Egypt Flea MARKET

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Market' Features Almost Anything

By ELIZABETH LOVELL
PLUMSTED TOWNSHIP

Would you believe a box of McCarthy buttons for 50 cents, or 100 needles for a dime, or half price on Herman's Hermits?

The New Egypt Auction and Farmer's Market offers bargains like these to scores of shoppers each Sunday and Wednesday. Colonel Esler "Les" Heller, general manager of the market, says, "We have merchandise of every description and the buyer has the advantage of purchasing directly from the owner."

Prudent shoppers sometimes enjoy the privilege of haggling prices, and the advantage of this type of bargaining can make marketing much more interesting as well as rewarding.

Colonel Heller started the sale on its present site in 1959, when the old New Egypt market sold its property and closed after 26 years of operation. Because of his concern for some of the area farmers who needed an outlet for their wares, he opened "with just a few merchants selling cabbage and apples."

Following almost a decade of slow expansion, New Egypt has suddenly begun to blossom into one of the area's fastest-growing flea markets, those popular hunting grounds for antique buffs and just plain bargain seekers. Produce still appears on some of the stands, but the majority of merchants offer an unlimited variety of items, ranging from "soup to nuts." If you're lucky, you might even locate a kitchensink on the grounds.

Browsing patrons can usually find antique furniture and glassware, jewelry, cosmetics, records, stamps and coins for the collector, new and used clothing, old magazines, and newspapers, book and all kinds of "dignified junk."

The stand operators now number more than 100 and "on some occasions there are 125 or more," according to Heller. They are usually quite friendly and come from all walks. Their salad bowl mixture of male and female, black and white, middle class and poor, physically healthy and handicapped, plus a variety of personality ingredients, could probably serve as the perfect illustration of harmonious integration.

The spicy competition of the ordinary business world doesn't

seem to exist among these people.

"They must have this type of thing in their blood," Colonel Heller believes, and perhaps this helps to create a common bond. For some of the merchants this business is a livelihood—their bread and butter. Others enjoy the role of "part-time businessman" as a hobby. Still others simply clean out an attic or garage and rent a stand, with hopes of turning their "junk" into a few dollars. "One man's trash is another man's treasure," could rightfully reign as the motto for the flea market trade.

Colonel Heller promises, "You can find plenty of bargains here." Recently a young fisherman displayed several two-dollar artificial lures he bought for 15 cents each. Not long ago, one happy couple walked away with a set of automobile seat covers, purchased for 20 cents. They fit their car, even if they did turn out to be seconds, or perhaps thirds, or would you believe

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fourths? Anyway, can you beat 20 cents? On another occasion, a new Herb Alpert stereo LP album went for 50 cents.

On one less typical but more exciting day, a "medicine man" bedecked in Indian headdress displayed bottles of snake oil. He advertised, "This can cure miseries of all kinds," and to assist in his demonstration, a snake dangled from around his neck. At one point during his feverish sales pitch, he placed the head of his serpent partner into his mouth, and thus attracted the undivided attention of the curious crowd.

"This oil can be used internally and externally for any ailment," he professed, and after several unusual antics, he took a swig from one of the bottles, and offered his product for sale.

Occasionally a lady fortune teller sets up her stand, and shoppers looking for some soothsaying can have their palms read or their handwriting analyzed.

An auction takes place on the premises each Wednesday at 1 p.m. and "Any seller may auction his own goods."

The New Egypt market offers "opportunities for enterprising merchants", and Colonel Heller invites interested parties to "Bring anything you have to sell or swap." On Sunday, the business hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and rent for stand operators is \$3; on Wednesday the hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the fee is \$2.

Located approximately 25 miles from Tom's River, the New Egypt Farmer's Market is on Route 537, two miles west of Route 539 and two miles east of Old Central Hotel, Route 528.