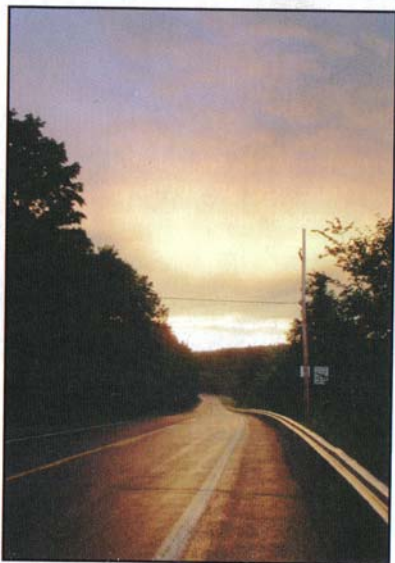


HUDSON VALLEY GUIDE

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Stormin' through the Stormville Airport Antique Show and Flea Market

by Traci Suppa

On any other Sunday morning, my "get up and go" would not have kicked in this early, but this was not a typical Sunday. This was another Stormville Flea Market weekend, when the proverbial "early bird" gets the best shot at the best merchandise and, of course, the choicest parking space. It was time for an adventure fit for the hardest of bargain shoppers.

Formally, it's called the Stormville Airport Antique Show and Flea Market, and it takes place at the eponymous airport on Route 216 in Stormville (Town of East Fishkill, Dutchess County). Frequent patrons like me simply (and lovingly) refer to it as "The Flea Market." The first such event debuted in 1970 with two dozen vendors. Today, with 600 booths, it's one of the region's largest antique shows and flea markets.

The license plates in the landing-strips-turned-parking-lot best tell the story of this event's widespread appeal: New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Vermont are all represented.

The airport is seemingly no longer used for its original purpose; the runways are merely dirt paths, surrounded by acres of grass that are freshly mowed before each market. There are no planes



The Stormville Flea Market features a variety of unique merchandise. Photo by Traci Suppa.

in sight, no control tower.

It's an offbeat venue for an offbeat event.

The Flea Market derives its quirk quotient from the vast array of merchandise available from several rows of booths, stalls, tables and the backs of trucks. Officially, 60 percent of the dealers are antiques vendors, while the other 40 percent offer "new" merchandise of every type imaginable.

I wish I had the day to stroll the aisles of antiques but, alas, we are carting an impatient 5-year-old in his wagon, and he wants to get to the Kettle Corn stand as soon as possible. I can only cast quick glances among the vintage housewares, Hummel figurines and all manner of collectibles, antique furniture and pleasing "junktiques," such as rust-laden tools, comic books and albums and the ubiquitous beer signs.

Once we're among the aisles of "new" merchandise, I can slow down as my son munches his freshly popped snack. On our right is a Tupperware dealer; on our left, a jewelry designer with some beautiful silver pieces. Further down the line, we see clothing, pillows

and linens, cosmetics, suitcases, silk flower arrangements and Betty Boop paraphernalia.

My husband notices a tool merchant with power drills and electric generators. We're in the market for a generator, but do we really want to buy an expensive piece of equipment like this off a folding table from a vendor we may never see again? We walk on.

Being from a neighboring town, it's not unusual for us to run into people we know at the Flea Market. Today, we happen upon my son's teacher and her husband. I ask her if she has a system for shopping the Flea Market. Does she come prepared with a list, as I tend to do? No, she leaves it to Fate.

"You just never know what you'll find here," she says, as she pushes her vertical shopping cart down dusty Aisle RW.

Today's catch is somewhat disappointing. The decorative garden stakes I saw in April, and planned to come back for, are no longer there; the vendor has moved on to his Halloween merchandise. All we have to show for rising early is some bubble bath, two pairs of sunglasses and duct tape.

Happily, I did score five vintage postcards of New York City (e.g. Ellis Island, circa 1940), and they will make their way into black frames on the wall in our front foyer.

We didn't stay long enough for lunch, but there was plenty of mouth-watering food. There is a typical assortment of "fair fare" – fried dough, sausage and peppers and curly fries, as well as taco

salads, chicken burritos, smoothies, Italian ices and lemonade. Although I didn't see it, I was told that a beer stand has been added recently, offering a place for the tired and thirsty to sit and keep guard over their loved ones' packages.

Generally, the first Flea Market of the season takes place the last weekend of April. The "can't-miss" Flea Market takes place Memorial Day weekend; rumor has it that this is the largest of the year. See the sidebar for this year's schedule.

When planning a trip to the Flea Market, remember to stop at the ATM. While some vendors accept plastic, checks are usually frowned upon, and cash is king. These events take place rain or shine, from dawn to dusk. There are no parking or admission charges. Pets are not allowed. Directions are available on the Web site, www.stormvilleairportfleamarket.com, or by calling (845) 221-6561.

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2006 SCHEDULE STORMVILLE AIRPORT ANTIQUE SHOW & FLEA MARKET

May 27 & 28: Memorial Day Weekend

July 1 & 2: Fourth of July Weekend

Aug. 6: "Summertime in the Country"

Sept. 2 & 3: Labor Day Weekend

Oct. 7 & 8: Columbus Day Weekend

Nov. 5: "Christmas in November"