



Photo: 1934 -State of CT

Summary of Carey Trotting Park

Carey Trotting Park—historically referred to interchangeably as Carey's Lookout Park, the Carey Racetrack on Pratt Hill, or the Carey Trotting Park property on Pratt Street—was a localized venue used for horse racing and trotting in the late 19th century.

- **Activity and Costs (1880s):** During the summer of 1882, horse racing drew significant interest to the park. Local horse owners were charged a fee of \$2 per year to use the track. Notable local horses recorded hitting impressive trotting times there included Robert Noble's "Ginger" (2.40) and David Strong's "Highland Win" (2.34¼).
- **Discontinuation:** The track fell out of use relatively early and was formally discontinued as a racing facility.
- **Aviation Option (1927–1928):** In October 1927, amid rising local interest in aviation, the local American Legion secured an option on the Pratt Street property to convert it into a municipal landing field. Legionnaires spent their spare time digging out stones and leveling the terrain. However, in February 1928, Major Ladd of the Connecticut National Guard inspected the property and estimated it would cost at least \$5,000 to properly complete the airfield. Lacking

the funds and unable to secure a road connection from the Highland Lake Shores Development Company, the American Legion surrendered their option.

- **Modern Status:** The site eventually became part of a major 507-acre conservation acquisition known as the **Laurel Ridge Property**, sponsored by the Winchester Land Trust via a \$1,650,000 state grant awarded in July 2024. Because the historic racetrack offers a naturally flat and wide clearing, it is being integrated into the preservation area to serve as an accessible flat trail for individuals with limited mobility.

Historical Context and Namesakes

The Carey Family Framework

The track and its surrounding lands are tightly associated with the prominent local Carey family, who owned significant acreage stretching from Pratt Street/Pratt Hill down toward the eastern shores of Highland Lake. Two primary figures from the family tie directly into the landscape's development: Joseph Carey and Charles Carey.

Joseph Carey & the Land

Historical accounts note that the expansive land holding at the top of Pratt Street beyond the Burwell place was recognized locally as "Joe Carey's trotting park." Joseph Carey was a prominent local contractor who lived on Coe Street. His land holdings in the area were massive; in April 1927, he sold a 640-acre tract bordering the eastern shore of Highland Lake to the Highland Lake Development Company. This transaction effectively opened up that side of the lake for modern roads and summer cottage subdivisions.

Charles Carey & the Lakeside Accident

The name Carey is also etched into Winsted infrastructure history through Charles Carey, who was an active supervisor during the historic construction of the Highland Lake Lakeside Drive (Wakefield Boulevard).

In the late 1880s, the Town of Winchester was using a major bequest from a retired farmer named Harvey Wakefield to blast a road around the lake. The construction of the second section of the drive, which extended the road to Sucker Brook, was heavily delayed because dynamite had to be physically hauled by horse teams all the way from Worcester, Massachusetts.

While leading the dangerous work of blasting through the stubborn rocky ledges on the west shore of the lake's "Second Bay," Charles Carey was fatally injured. A stick of dynamite prematurely exploded while he was holding it in his hand. He was rushed to the nearby home of his sister, Mrs. Verschoyle, where he died shortly thereafter. A historical bronze tablet was later placed directly onto the face of the blasted ledge in Second Bay to commemorate the completion of the road he died helping to build.

Researched by Zachary Mans

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