The nativity scene at Boniface Circle was first erected in 1956.

While Scarsdale was just beginning its creche tradition in 1960, Hartsdale was experiencing controversy. A creche had been permitted on the grounds of the Hartsdale Junior High School since 1940. The School Board decided to ban the nativity scene.

“"The principle of the separation of church and state is violated by the presence of religious symbols on school grounds."" - Hartsdale Board of Education, 1960
In 1962 and 1963, the American Jewish Committee’s Scarsdale branch protested the Boniface Circle creche, arguing that it shouldn’t be on village property. In response the board studied the situation by consulting local clergymen, the American Jewish Committee, and others. They concluded that the creche should remain. Ten years later, in 1973, the issue reemerged when board member George Szabad abstained from voting on the creche. He expressed concern that the creche on public land violated the separation of church and state. He was joined in 1975 by trustee Jeanne Richman, who voted no instead of abstaining.
Things came to a head in 1976 when Scarsdale resident Leonard Rubin, a New York Civil Liberties Union attorney, sued the Village for the removal of the creche. Rubin sued along with plaintiffs from Mamaroneck and Larchmont, where other creches were also being challenged. Rubin received abusive calls after filing his suit. On December 4th, 1976, he received a bomb threat at his home. The suit was dismissed by the court for lack of jurisdiction. Beginning in 1976, the Village Board placed a sign next to the creche indicating it was put there by the Creche Committee. Leonard threatened another suit in 1977, but it does not appear to have been filed. The creche remained on display, but the controversy was just beginning.
In 1981 the Board, for the first time, denied the request to display the creche at Boniface Circle. The creche was instead displayed on private property nearby. Many in the community were upset by the decision. The following year the Trustees again voted 4-3 to deny the creche request. This time a second request was made by a group led by Kathleen S. McCreary. When their request was denied, McCreary, an attorney, indicated her intention to bring a lawsuit.
McCreary filed her suit in February, 1983. The case was heard by U.S. District Court Judge Charles E. Stewart, Jr. In December he ruled in favor of the Village, agreeing that permitting the creche “would contravene the establishment clause.” However, the Circuit Court ruled unanimously in June, 1984, that the Board had violated the 1st amendment rights of the Creche Committee. The ruling relied on the 1984 Supreme Court ruling Lynch v. Donnelly. In that case the high Court ruled 5-4 that the creche had “legitimate secular purposes” and its display on public land posed no threat of establishing a secular state. When the Village appealed the case to the Supreme Court, the Circuit Court decision was upheld 4-4, per curium, with Justice Powell, the 5th vote in Lynch v. Donnelly, not taking part while recovering from surgery.
Today, the Scarsdale Creche Committee continues to put the creche on display at Boniface Circle. It hasn’t been clean sailing the whole way. In 1991 Irving Sloan raised the issue again, arguing that the Board should consider other ways to keep the creche off of Village land. In 1992 the Board okayed the creche “under protest,” saying that they had no legal recourse to deny the request. By 1998 a menorah was also on display when both it and the creche were vandalized. The menorah was similarly vandalized in 1995, and in 1994 a swastika was scrawled at its base in Chase Park. More recently the creche has shared space with the Light the ‘Dale celebration. The exhibit was researched and created by Local History Librarian Dan Glauber.