

Dateline: March 25, 1969
Source: The Bergen Record

MEMORY TURNS TO RUSTIC ORIGINS Glen Rock Marks Revolt of 1894

All through August, the farmers had been hauling barrels full of Hackensack muskmelons and crates of corn to the markets in New York.

That was 1894, the year Glen Rock was incorporated. This year [1969], the borough marks its 75th anniversary.

Sunday through Friday, they would set out soon after supper, forming a kind of wagon train. Each night, a different farmer would serve as leader. He would make sure that everyone's toll was paid on the turnpikes and that everyone made it onto the ferry in Weehawken. The others would try to catch a few hours sleep, especially on the way back.

The Hackensack muskmelon, a variety that has long since vanished from seed catalogues, commanded quite a price in 1894 – sometimes as much as \$2 a barrel. And Glen Rock farmers – the section was called that years before it was incorporated – were well known for their melons.

Smaller farmers, who didn't have enough produce to sell to justify the trip to New York, trucked their vegetables to Paterson. They sold their produce right from the wagon on Main Street down by the Passaic River.

Life was unhurried here, but in the Ridgewood section, wealthier folk from New York were moving in, encouraged by easy rail transportation to the city. These wealthier sorts were building mansions with sweeping drives and greenhouses and servants. And one thing they wanted was better schools.

Glen Rock at that time lay in two separate townships – Ridgewood and Saddle River, but Glen Rock children went to Ridgewood Township schools.

Ridgewood announced that it was going to replace all schools in the district with a single school. The new school would be built on Beech Street (now Cottage Place) near Franklin Avenue and would cost \$50,000.

The Glen Rock farmers didn't think much of that idea. They felt that their one-room schoolhouse, District School 44, on the corner of Ackerman Avenue and Rock Road, was more than ample for their children. They decided to secede and form their own borough.

Earlier that year, the state legislature had passed the so-called "Borough Act of 1894", which allowed settlements to break away from older townships and incorporate easily. The farmers decided to make their move.

Andrew Van Dien Snyder, John J. Storms, John Vanderbeck, Garret Hopper and Richard T. Snyder formed a committee to petition Ridgewood and Saddle River Townships to allow them to form their own borough. Many of these men had been active in politics in their respective townships

A referendum was held among the residents and the plan to incorporate was overwhelmingly approved. Only two persons voted against the move, Henry E. Mead, and Peter G. Hopper, but both actually approved the idea. They voted no because they were afraid that a unanimous vote might be illegal.

It was fall now, and the children were gathering chestnuts. The woods in the area were once filled with chestnut trees. And each family would gather a bushel or two for use through the winter.

The farmers, in turn, were gathering the potatoes, turnips and other roots and cabbages into their cellars. The shelves were lined with mason jars filled with more perishable vegetables by busy farm wives. The butcher came down twice a week from Paterson with his wagon filled. Once a week the grocer came by with a cargo of dried currants, raisins, flour and sugar.

Few of the farms had ice boxes. Cellars with dirt floors and stone walls and no furnace stayed cool most of the year. Ice cream was a once-a-year treat, a Fourth of July special.

The gypsies, returning from their yearly journey upstate to Paterson, would camp each spring and fall at the end of Egan's Lane. Worried farmers then slept with one ear cocked toward the chicken coop.

The borough was incorporated Sept. 14 and on Oct. 2 the first election of borough officials was held. Richard T. Snyder was elected mayor. D. J. Marinus, J. A. Ackerman, Garret T. Hopper, J. H. Terhune, Alfred De Baun and Henry Demarest were elected to the first Borough Council. If one were male, over 21, owned property or paid the \$1 poll tax, he could have voted that Tuesday.

The next morning four commuters waited for the 6:47 into New York. They stood outside on a gravel strip on either side of the tracks.