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GLEN ROCK PIONEERS WATCHED TOWN GROW

The history of Glen Rock lies with a family named Hubschmitt.

In a town known for its high mobility, where families are transferred in and out and the men spend their days in New York, the Hubschmitt family traces its roots back to the 1894 incorporation of the borough and before. In an area where most of the houses have been built within the last couple of decades, family members have lived in the same old homesite on Rock Road since 1911, and before that, they lived in the farmhouse next door – where the library today stands.

And in the present home – in an old safe in the dining room, in desk drawers and boxes and depicted in pictures hanging on the walls – can be found the town's history. In the form of early ballots, old school budgets, yellowed newspaper clippings, programs, anniversaries, invitations, the past of the town is there.

Mabel and Lilly Hubschmitt live in the old, well-shaded home today while their brother George, an optometrist, lives in Wyckoff.

The three are the children of Fannie Courter Hubschmitt, who herself was brought up in the farmhouse on the corner of Maple Avenue and Rock Road, and Adolph Hubschmitt, one of the town's early mayors, as well as councilman, Board of Health member, tax assessor and district clerk.

Mabel and Lilly Hubschmitt describe an early town whose major roads – used by horses – were Cherry Lane, now Lincoln Avenue, and Paterson Road, renamed later to Maple Avenue, where much of the town's social life centered around a big hotel named the Garrabrant House on Paterson Road and where most of the farming families did their shopping in Paterson on Saturdays (Ridgewood was too expensive) and picked up their extra needs during the week at John Geils' grocery on Maple near Rodney Street.

“We would start for Paterson around noon on Saturdays,” says Mabel Hubschmitt, “and we'd take the surrey down Paterson Road, across

Wagaraw Bridge to River Street to lower Main Street, and there were the stores we'd go shopping in.

“Grandpa used to take his corn and beans and peas and limas to sell in Paterson and Mama would ride along with him and shell the lima beans along the way. If we were lucky, we'd be able to get a bag of hard white peppermints.

“The girls in the family worked in the silk mills in Paterson, Grandma and her daughters made buttonholes in the men's shirts for Manhattan Shirt. The mills were in the Riverside section of Paterson, and sometimes Grandpa would take the girls down and sometimes they walked.”

Cars began replacing the horse and wagons in 1912 and 1913, and the sisters remember the first horseless buggies to make the debut in Glen Rock.

“Louis Van Winkle's family had one of the first ones, a two-cylinder Brush, a sparkling red run-about with a lot of brass. The Cubberleys had a Rambler with a back door for the rear seats. The cars always had trouble getting up the hill on Paterson Road and we used to go running out, yelling ‘get yourselves a horse!’”

They remember when Smith-Singer put up its three-story building on the corner of Rock Road and Main Street in 1913 and began developing the town; how the jail was also housed on the first floor of that building and council meetings were held on the second floor; how youngsters called the development around Hamilton and Berkeley “Siberia” because it was so far out of the way, and how the municipal annex was originally a wholesale liquor building.

“My father built that building around 1910. It was used as a wholesale liquor store and that's why the windows are so high – it was certainly never planned for the use it has now. Then a man by the name of Ryan turned it into a grocery and later Kilroy came over here from Lyndhurst and bought him out. It became the annex in the fifties, when the present Kilroy's was built.”

They remember the Glen Rock Pharmacy, the first drugstore that had a small soda fountain, Kavner's, that had a sporting goods section and a bowling alley, the Glen Rock Shoe Store that repaired shoes but didn't sell them until

years later, and the huge fire of June 18, 1956, that destroyed the Leone Lumber and Supply Co., on the Erie Main Line.

The formal history of Glen Rock is now being compiled by George Hubschmitt, who hopes to have it completed for the town's 75th anniversary celebration this year.

And heading up the anniversary celebration itself, of course, is Mabel Hubschmitt, who retired from her career as schoolteacher in 1962 to become, in the words of one resident, "a fulltime worker for Glen Rock".