

Dateline: September 28, 1969

Source: The Sunday News, Glen Rock 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue

## QUICK HISTORY OF GLEN ROCK

You had to consider the children, they said.

If the youngsters had to walk to the new schoolhouse that was proposed, they would face a daily peril of traffic. Not only that, but the heavy snows in the winter would be too much for the younger children, and the dry, dusty roads of the spring and fall wouldn't be much better.

And, to top it off, that new schoolhouse was estimated at \$50,000. Too much money. Something had to be done.

And what was done – the solution to the problem – was the creation of a new little borough named Glen Rock.

It was 75 years ago that Ridgewood proposed a new regional school for \$50,000 and the Ackermans, the Snyders, the Hubschmitts and Hoppers and Demarests, all the farming families of the little Dutch settlement south of Ridgewood, rebelled. The heavy traffic they feared was from horses and buggies and the streets along which their children would walk were not much more than dirt lanes.

So they decided to spin off, as it were, to incorporate and become a town separate from Ridgewood. Then came the additional news that Ridgewood was also planning to incorporate and was going to include Glen Rock within its boundaries. It became a question as to who could get to Hackensack with the necessary papers first.

The old, time-honored story has it that the founding fathers of the town worked by lantern, far into the night, going from house to house and asking residents to choose their town – Glen Rock or Ridgewood to the north, and Glen Rock or Fair Lawn to the south. The story accounts for the borough's zig-zag boundary line – if the resident decided to try his luck with the new town, the surveyors took their tape around the back of the house; otherwise the tape went in front and excluded the house from the new town's limits.

Glen Rock surveyors reached Hackensack just a few hours before the men from Ridgewood, the story goes, and the farming community of 600 was a town in its own right.

Next came the first town-wide election, to formally approve the incorporation. Eighty-two votes were cast in that first election, with 80 in favor of the incorporation and two against – the two who voted no did so because it was feared that a unanimous election might not be legal.

Three weeks later a second election was held, this time to elect the town's first mayor. Sixty-seven voters went down to the greenhouse on the Snyder farm – where the Sunoco station now stands on Maple Avenue – and cast their votes for Richard T. Snyder as first mayor. Thus began the chain of 19 mayors, the latest of whom is the present Mayor Allan B. Murray, who had served the town since 1962.

The whole process of incorporation and election had set the new little borough back some \$122.85.

The newly elected mayor and his council quickly got to work and passed the first town ordinance. That first ordinance set a bicycle speed limit of eight miles an hour, ruled that bikes were never to be used on sidewalks and that all reckless riding or racing on any streets was prohibited. Failure to obey would result in a \$5 fine.

A school issue had been what had gotten the town started, and schools remained an issue. The one-room, red brick schoolhouse near the intersection of what we now call Ackerman Avenue and Rock Road had held 75 youngsters before the 1894 incorporation; by 1898, some 92 youngsters were crowded into the one room and the borough had to add a second teacher to its payroll.

In 1899, the town spent \$600 and bought the Maple Avenue land now occupied by Central School and built School No. One at a cost of \$3,400.

The turn of the century arrived and with it began the years of development, the years that saw the little town grow up and push out and develop a personality of its own. Today one of the traits that characterizes Glen Rock the most is a feeling of community togetherness; a trait that first became evident with the Firemen's Fair of 1910.

School No. 1 – a wooden building that preceded today's Central School on Maple Avenue – was being expanded, and residents feared that the fire prevention methods then in use were not quite good enough – those methods then being a bucket brigade. So a Firemen's Fair was held in the new building. It was the biggest thing ever to hit the borough, and for three nights running the ladies of the town served roast chicken and baked ham for 35 cents a plate – except for Sunday when roast beef was served for half a dollar.

The fair netted \$1,150 which enabled the town to buy a horse-drawn fire card, complete with hose and chemicals.

By 1920 the little Dutch community had grown from its original population of 600 persons to about 4,000; a housing developer by the name of Smith-Singer was busy putting up houses in the far outer reaches of town – down Doremus Avenue and up around Berkeley and Hamilton; macadam was being slapped down on the dusty, track-rutted lanes and commuters were beginning to make the daily trip in to New York.

The 4,000 persons of 1920 needed more services than the 600 farmers present at the town's birth. Police protection was now required and every day Chief James Houlihan hopped on his bicycle to make the rounds of the burgeoning borough.

The fire department had just become motorized and an alarm system installed – no longer did residents who spotted a fire have to run out and bang away on the metal rim of a railroad tire to summon help.

The 4,000 wanted books, and in 1922 a library got under way, tucked in the rear of a store building on Main Street. The post office came into being in 1923, the same year that the first bank opened its doors, and in 1929 the town built itself a new municipal building in which to house the various departments.

As Smith-Singer continued its developing 50 years ago, and the schools went up and the pavements went down, the town became more and more of a commuting town.

"Glen Rock last year enjoyed the most rapid growth and development of any town in the State of New Jersey," read one advertisement for a 1925 auction of land on Norwood Avenue. "Glen Rock is on the direct line of the future growth of the Fort Lee-Fort Washington Bridge and to the Vehicular Tunnel now nearing completion," the ad went on.

"Glen Rock," it boasted, "is within ten minutes of the very center of the City of Paterson, where one may find the finest theaters, shops and hotels. The running time to New York is only 30 minutes, considerably less time that it requires to go from Wall Street in New York City to 72<sup>nd</sup> Street on the subway."

The commuter of today could well wish for the good old days – 30 minutes to Manhattan.

As Smith-Singer began subdividing land and putting up houses during the teens and twenties, more and more children came into the borough. The population was spreading westward, out by the Rock, and walking to School No. 1 during the winter months was too difficult for the younger children. So in 1915, School No. 2 went up – what we today call Richard E. Byrd School.

Construction of the new Central School began in 1926 and in 1929 that building became the borough's first Junior High School. Today's Junior High was built in 1939 on Harristown Road, and those schools served the town adequately until 1954.

A new wave of construction hit the town in its eastern, Prospect Street section in the early 50s, and again the population began bursting its schoolhouse seams. In 1954 the Clara Coleman School was built, followed by the Alexander Hamilton School in 1958. The Senior High was formed in 1956 and the high school plant had a major addition in 1963.

Today the 1,728 acres of somewhat swampy farmland that was home for 600 residents living in 95 homes in 1894 have given way to a town of two square miles, with 13,500 residents living in 3,642 homes. The little district that in 1894 had a total property value of \$200,000 now is valued at close to \$109 million.

The one-man police force equipped with bike has been supplemented by a force of 23 men, with five cars. The pay is better, too – that original police chief made \$800 and next year patrolmen first class will be making \$10,000.

The fire department that so proudly boasted its first horse-drawn cart back in 1910 now has 38 volunteer firemen, and a diesel-powered 70-foot aerial platform with a 1,250 gallon pump, described as the most technologically advanced piece of fire fighting equipment available today.

Lastly, the school population that numbered 75 in 1894 and provoked the Glen Rock secession from Ridgewood, today numbers over 3,000 students. And – irony of ironies – the latest report submitted to the current Board of Education recommends reorganization, possibly with Ridgewood.