

SADDLE BROOK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – OCTOBER 2013

Here's a story that, as of now, has no ending. You are invited to assume the role of Hercule Poirot as I relate the following events related to a 1943 Studebaker pickup truck named George. The events are presented in an amazing chain of e-mails.

In Spring of 2009, Saddle Brook Free Public Library Director Alma Henderson developed a "Living History Wall" on the wall behind the library's circulation desk. The history wall consisted of red paper-sized bricks about the size of real bricks. The names and numbers of years living in Saddle Brook of our township's oldest residents was printed on each brick, one resident per brick. Patrons having lived in the township for many years registered at the circulation desk. For example, my brick read, "Jack Wasdyke – 68 Years." Mrs. Henderson, who has a deep interest in history and has always been supportive of our historical society's projects, was somewhat surprised to discover the wall filled with bricks, about 125 in one month of its inception. She posted and described the wall on Twitter and received the following e-mail in August, 2009.



I hope you can help us solve a puzzle. We've bought a car that dates from around 1943. It's an old American truck and was owned by John C. Pehle. See the photo's attached of the door, where you can see his name and address.

John C. Pehle
84 Pehle Ave
Rochelle Park

We're desperate to find out the history of this car and its former owner John C. Pehle. Can you help us? Or do you know someone who can tell us more? The car is in The Netherlands now. And is being restored. We're keeping all the old signs on the doors. Maybe a family member of John C. Pehle (or even himself if he's still alive) would be thrilled to see

some pictures of where his old car has ended up and to hear his car will drive once again!

Yours Sincerely,

Elle Rowbottom
Bennebroek
The Netherlands

In early September, Mrs. Henderson sent the following e-mail to Elle Rowbottom.

Dear Elle:

I was very happy to receive your email. It is amazing that you have a truck which once belonged to Mr. John Pehle. John Pehle is reportedly the son of Mr. Otto Pehle whose name has been given to the park in Saddle Brook, NJ. The family has lived here for years. Many persons from Dutch heritage settled here in the early years of our country and a few still reside here, such as Mr. Jack Wasdyke, our local historian. He will be in touch with you. I posted your email to him. He may be able to provide much more information to you concerning the Pehle family. Also, Pehle Avenue is a street in Saddle Brook, not Rochelle Park. However, at one time the towns shared the same post office which is physically in Rochelle Park, NJ. Both are small towns which reside side-by-side.

It is amazing that we just placed the tweets information on our website several days before receiving your email. It is amazing to know that it was accessed so far away.

Hope to pass on much more information on the Pehle's.

--

Alma J. Henderson

Mrs. Henderson also shared the information with me, and I, in turn, shared the information with Nancy Pehle Vandegrift, John's daughter, in order to unearth more information. I had become acquainted with Mrs. Vandegrift as I collected information about the Pehle family for our township history, *Saddle Brook: A Portrait of Our Past*. Mrs. Vandegrift in turn e-mailed Ellie Rowbottom.

Dear Elle, I would like to introduce myself to you and let you know how thrilled I was to hear about the truck. My name is Nancy Pehle Vandegrift, and my father was the **proud** owner of the studebaker truck you emailed the librarian in Saddle Brook, NJ about. The truck or "George" as my father lovingly called it was purchased new in about 1943 and had stayed with him until around 1985?? It was always painted blue gray, and having his name on the side made it really special in those days. My father was a local electrician in Saddle Brook, NJ (then with a PO of Rochelle Park, NJ), this was his office, it carried all his tools and supplies for the job. The truck was always garage kept until around 1963 when he purchased a new truck. It was retired from work in 1963, and

my father could not part with him, so he was taken to their summer home in Montague, NJ where it sat for many years, unattended to and finally given away. My question is how it got to Holland???? This is really a miracle and has brought back many special memories. I am anxiously waiting to hear from you and longing to see a picture of it. I am including an attachment of a picture of the truck and my Mother and Father. I am still looking for more pictures to forward to you, but you know it has been years and things like that get put away. I can't say ever forgotten...

Nancy Pehle Vandegrift

A response e-mail from Ellie Rowbottom provided more interesting information.

Dear Alma,

Wauw... we're so excited to receive an email from you! Indeed, Twitter and internet is amazing.

Knowing the history of the car makes it even more special as you could imagine. It's all rusty and old. But we'll take very good care of it. Wilco, our neighbor who bought the car wants to keep it like it is, with all its scars, history and wear and tear. But the body will be specially protected with a coating so it will stay like it is for years to come. He will be putting a monster of a motor in it. It will become a show/race car. He collects American old-timers and is also a drag racing driver. So he and his mechanics know what they're doing.

The car has been parked in a street where I used to work for years. It had been neglected. Such a shame. But it will receive good attention now that we have it like I said.

Soon I'll take some good pictures of the car and send them to you. And off course the finished product.

But what about all these coincidences?!

Saddle Brook and Rochelle Park was a Dutch settlement and now the car is in Holland. The car was parked for years where I used to work; and now I've moved here, the car moved as well to our neighbours. I'm looking for the history of the car and your Living History Wall.

It's very exciting!

To give you an idea where the car is now:

Bennebroek was the smallest township in Holland. Now it's merged with another village. It's very near the beach and Amsterdam.

Can't wait to hear from you and Mr. Jack Wasdyke!

Groetjes (that's greetings in Dutch) from Holland

Elle

The End of the Road! So, we still don't know how a 1943 Studebaker pickup truck made its way to the Netherlands. There was no known "Dutch" Connection since the first township Pehle, Ernest, emigrated from Germany prior to 1876. His name is listed on the Walker Map of 1876. While New Jersey was principally Dutch during its colonial period, the Dutch population had drastically diminished by 1900. I didn't know John but I did know his brother Otto C. He was completely Americanized and participated in every aspect of the township's social and political growth. He had no ties to the Netherlands.

As a final thought, I can only assume that John C. was a fine person. Anyone sentimental enough to name a truck George and keep it in sheltered storage after it was no longer productive, had to be a kind, nostalgic, compassionate person. As for George, you are our "King of the Road." May you ramble on forever. Happy motoring everyone!

Jack C. Wasdyke
Township Historian

