

SADDLE BROOK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – NOVEMBER 2014
THE CENTER

In my book, *Saddle Brook: A Portrait of Our Past*, I presented the story of the shopping mall that opened on Fair Lawn Parkway in 1951 and became immediately known as “The Center.” Prior to 1951, townspeople in the northern section shopped in Paterson, Hackensack and Passaic. The arrival of the Center reflected postwar population patterns, and residents in the northern section now had their own stores. The complex was developed by Ernest Infante, a significant contributor to our township’s growth. It included Sal’s Barber Shop at 190 Floral Lane (now Ray’s), Lennard’s Pharmacy at 485 Fair Lawn Parkway, Leo’s cleaners, Sam’s Candy Store at 489 Fair Lawn Parkway (now Brothers Pizzeria), Schaffer’s Department Store at 481 Fair Lawn Parkway, Goldsholl’s Hardware Store (now Hong Kong Chinese), and a Valley Fair supermarket (now CVS). The store next to Ray’s was first the home of a local newspaper, The News Dispatch in the 1950’s and the 1960’s. It was followed by the Brook Sports Shop and then by the Elisa Michelle Salon. In 1989 Christina’s Hair Studio opened. Christina (Tina), a pleasant and talented lady still operates the studio. Urban and Bove operated a delicatessen at 487 Fair Lawn Parkway. This was later leased by Joseph Gradski who afterwards opened a liquor store and then leased the IGA supermarket (previously Valley Fair) which is now our CVS. Joe served his country in World War II and saw action in the Battle of the Bulge. He was also a founder of the Interchange Bank (now TD Bank). He and his wife Alice presently reside in a senior center – nice people. The store proprietors became quickly accepted and integrated into the community. In a way, Schaffer’s Department store was an overstatement since it was probably twenty feet by thirty feet in size. Yet, it offered every type of clothing, much of which was compacted into a myriad of plastic tubs. Shoppers will always remember Sid and Mildred Schaffer for their kindness. Sid was also an early member of our ambulance corps. Area residents also had their own hardware store, and Bernie Goldsholl was the man to see if you wanted information on how to repair any home-related item. Bernie would go on to serve many years on our Township Council while his wife, Addie, would contribute many years on our Board of Education. Addie is now President of our Library Board. Sam Spreckman and his wife Marge opened a much-needed candy store. Sam had to put on a tough exterior because the 1950’s were the days of the “black motorcycle jackets,” and small groups of teenagers were apt to try to use his candy store as a hangout. This writer, as a teenager, worked for Sam; and some of his insights like, “Jackie, all of this, and I’ve got to go to hell yet too,” reflected his hidden sense of humor. The Lennards, Stanley and Martin, were also wonderful. They took a special interest in everyone, especially children, and always asked them about their progress in school and in college. More than one child went to Lennards with a minor cut or bruise and was treated with a band-aid at no charge. Jule’s Automotive Center at 487 Fair Lawn Parkway, next to the CVS parking lot, is now Todd’s Saddle Brook Automotive Center. The people who operated these enterprises were a surprisingly wonderful addition to our community. From them, a generation of young people learned many valuable lessons related to fairness, kindness, compassion, community service and the value of hard work; lessons that would serve them well throughout life.

The old and the new are often outstanding contrasts. As shoppers in the early 1950’s enjoyed their new center, the air was frequently filled with a heavy stench from the livestock on Midland Avenue.

Jack Wasdyke
Township Historian

PHOTOS



Alice and Joe Gradski



Bernie



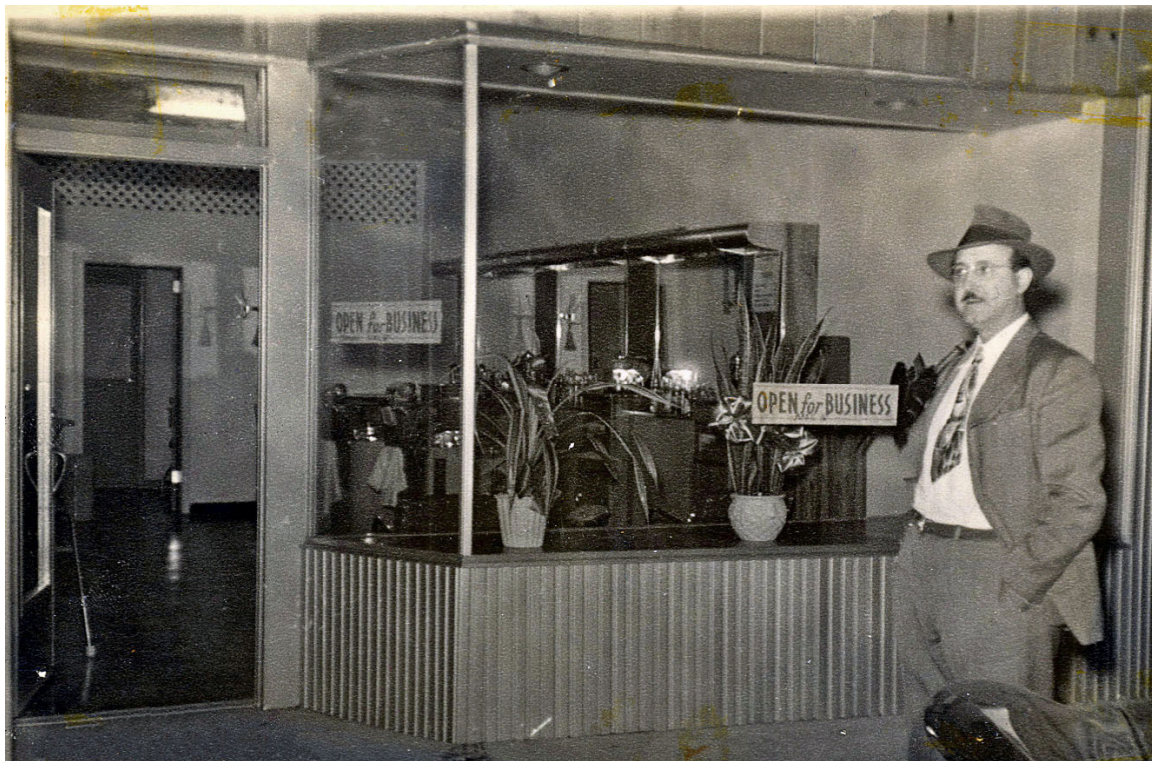
Christina's



Goldsholl Hardware



Lennards Prescriptions Stan, Mom, Marty



Sal's Barber Shop



Sam Spreckman (drawing by Jack Wasdyke)



Shaffer's Dept. Store