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### SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – JUNE 2015

#### SEARCHING FOR MRS. LONG

School children in the “old days” before 1960 never got to know much about their teachers’ personal lives. We knew little about where they lived or about their backgrounds and families. It seemed as though there was some unwritten “don’t ask don’t tell” code that was unquestionably followed. This was true of one of our most outstanding and charismatic teachers, Salome Long.

My first acquaintance with Mrs. Long came on the first day of school in 1951 when my fellow students and I lined up in what is now the Helen I. Smith School (formerly Cambridge) parking lot to begin our new school year as fourth graders. There she was, a relatively tall, portly lady with greying hair pulled back in a bun and thick-heeled black shoes that reflected a bygone era. My first impression and one that was probably shared by my classmates was that she wasn’t someone who was to be trifled with. We all made it through fourth grade under this strict, organized and usually demanding teacher. Surprisingly, we liked her and tried to fulfill her expectations. It sometimes happens in life that as children we intersect with someone who will touch us – influence us in some undefinable way that would carry us into our adult years as we relate with others, make decisions and confront challenges. Mrs. Long was one such person.



It came as a surprise as we entered seventh grade in 1954 that Mrs. Long would be our seventh and eighth grade homeroom teacher. At that time, the upper grades were departmentalized, with Mr. Chiari teaching mathematics, Mrs. Peck – social studies, Mr. Bennet – science and Mrs. Long – English. We were older then and were more apt to fool around. We would fire an occasional spitball, put a thumbtack on a fellow student’s seat or shoot pea-sized pellets, available as the fruit of many area trees, through small plastic tubes. These “blowguns” were sold for five cents at Sam’s Candy Store, now Brother’s Pizzeria, on Fair Lawn Parkway. Still, Mrs. Long was up to the task; and discipline reigned supreme. Eileen (Adams) Robinson recalls that one of the girls came to class with make-up and lipstick. Mrs. Long immediately sent her to the girls’ room to clean it off, something that wouldn’t happen today. This writer will always remember that her daughter, Emily, visited our seventh and eighth grade classes with her son Dickey. Dickey would have been 4 years old at the time, and was amazingly dressed in shorts and short-sleeved shirts, very similar to the Dickey in our lower grade reading series, *Fun with Dick and Jane*. Emily, a very attractive lady in her twenties, was dressed rather conservatively. Mrs. Long’s love for her daughter and grandson was readily apparent, and it was easy to conclude that Dickey was the “apple of her eye.” To this day, one of my classmates, Jerry Baker, still thinks that she could see

the reflection of seated students on the inner lens of her eyeglasses as she wrote on the blackboard. It was a myth which she helped to perpetuate with the aid of great peripheral vision and a superior sense of hearing. She also placed her desk at the rear of the class as a further assurance against misbehavior. We were allowed to go out to lunch in those days, and one day I found myself by the river in the area of what is now the Otto C. Pehle Park. The land between the baseball field and the northern end of the park where the Bergen County Traction Company trolley once travelled was lower then. It was spring and hundreds of little newborn water snakes squirmed in the marsh grass. Inspiration struck! I picked up one of the nasty little creatures, put it in my pants' pocket and capped its escape route with my handkerchief. I was one of the first children to return from lunch and planted the snake in Mrs. Long's middle left desk drawer. The afternoon went by as I anticipated her opening the drawer and reacting. It never happened, and I assumed the obvious; she saw the snake and chose to ignore it, denying any satisfaction to the perpetrator. It was only months ago when I started to research Mrs. Long's childhood that I found she had grown up in the rattlesnake country of northeastern Pennsylvania. A small water snake was no "big deal." I would also note with some degree of irony that later in life I would become principal of this school. Only once do I remember a student getting the best of her. It was my buddy, Jerry Baker. Mrs. Long led us in prayer each day as part of our exercises. One morning, after the opening exercises, she admonished Jerry for having his eyes open during the prayer. "Jerry Baker, you had your eyes open!" Jerry will forever be remembered for his smart response. "Mrs. Long, I always pray with my eyes open." For a moment, she was speechless. There was no response and most of us inwardly laughed as I suspected Mrs. Long did also.

Along with English, Mrs. Long also taught us a good basic sense of morality. This was not done in a direct, dictatorial fashion but more through subtle everyday conversations and experiences. One day the comedian-quiz-show host Groucho Marx came up as an unrelated topic of conversation. Groucho had a way of getting flirtatious and slightly "raunchy" especially with attractive female contestants. Evidently, she had seen the show and was inflamed by Groucho's behavior. "If I were on that show, I'd slap him in the face." Most of us had seen the show and never realized that Groucho's behavior was borderline offensive. This and other similar exchanges were character builders. Through the years, I have never known even one of Mrs. Long's students to speak badly of her. Joyce (Kopp) McGowan recalls that "I really learned English; it served me well all through high school." Edward Kugler remembers that "She gave some of us cats. They had no tails (Manx cats), and I had the cat throughout my childhood." Lorraine Toepert, a student of Mrs. Long during the 1940s remembers that in the event that she, Mrs. Long, was late to class, the students were taught to conduct opening exercises, including the scripture reading. Barbara (Ure) Yarosz remembers her as being compassionate and pleasant. Her students learned many lessons which would serve them well through life. Do your best. Life is not to be squandered. What we do has consequences. Treat everyone respectfully. Make a contribution. Be honest, and ask what I can do today to be a little better tomorrow. We knew that Mrs. Long had a loving inner core and that character wasn't something made of "steel;" it was something to be built.

Tracing Mrs. Long's background proved difficult. Census reports were issued each decade, and information from the intervening years was not offered. Also, the census does not always provide exact information. For example, place of birth is listed by state and not by municipality. Some information

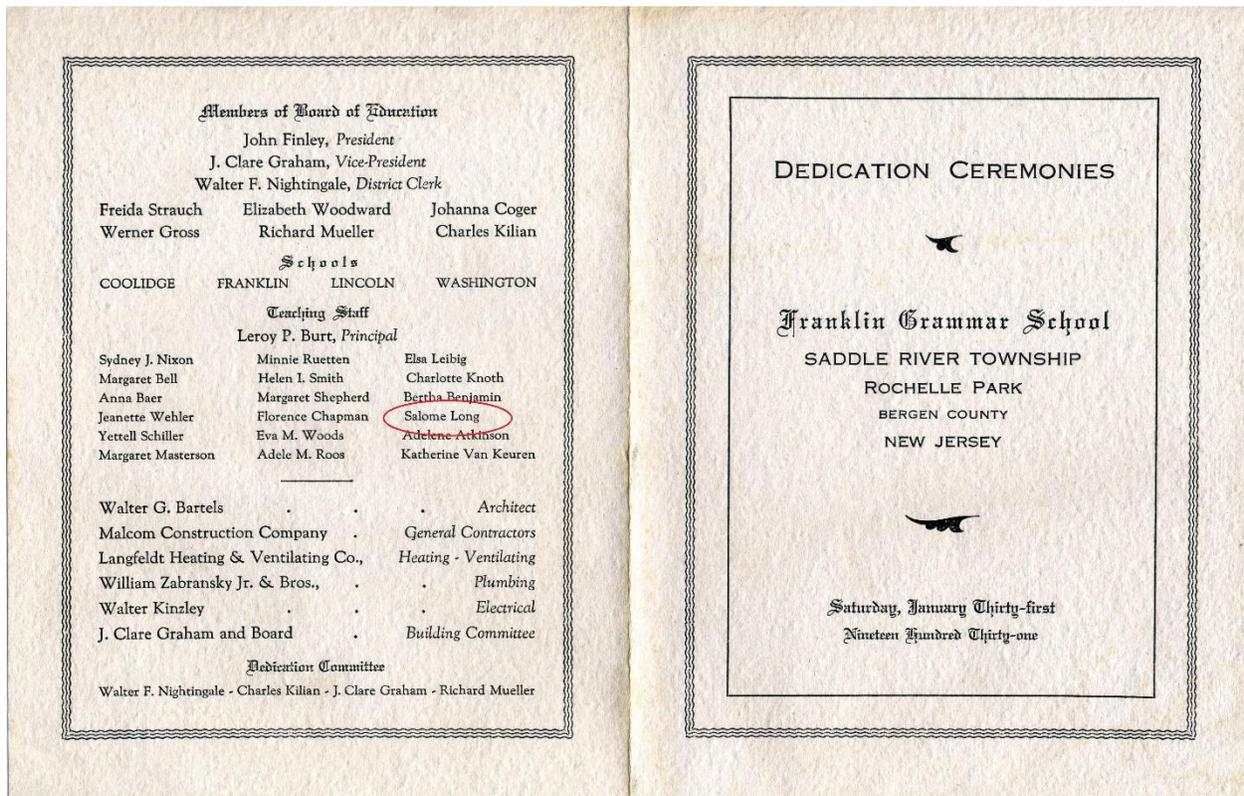
was contradictory. Voting records were also limited. As a result much information had to be drawn from local townships and their historians, not an easy task.

Salome Isabelle Hill was born on January 20, 1894, most probably in the Briar Creek section of Berwick, Pennsylvania. Part of Berwick is in Luzerne County while the remaining section is in Columbia County. Her father, Edward Hill, was born in Ireland around 1860 and immigrated to the United States in 1865. Her mother, Emily (no maiden surname found) was born in New York State around 1865. Edward's initial occupation was listed as "poultry" indicating that he raised chickens, ducks, or turkeys or some combination thereof. Evidently, Berwick in those early years grew with its timber industry and moved forward as area railroads developed for the transportation of coal. Other industries were started in the area, and the population grew accordingly. Berwick became the home of ACF (American Car and Foundry) which produced subway and railroad cars. Mr. Hill worked for ACF around the turn of the century. Parenthetically, ACF manufactured tanks during World War II. Berwick, with nearby towns of Hazleton and Weatherly were unique, an industrial oasis surrounded by mountains and forests.

For a glimpse of how Mrs. Long lived in the Berwick-Hazleton area, we need only to look in a reproduction Sears Roebuck & Co. Catalogue from the turn of the century. Her mother cooked on a wood or coal burning stove. Their house was functional. Light was probably provided by natural gas, fed by black pipes that ran through the walls or by kerosene lamps. There was no electric. Chamber pots in each bedroom and an outhouse provided for basic needs. There was probably no running water or plumbing before 1920. An open well and wood or metal pumps supplied the family's water. Furniture, usually Victorian, that we now see in antique shops today, was common. Washing clothes was done with a galvanized tub and a washboard. Irons were heated on the kitchen stove. In addition to chickens, which had less meat on them than those today, Mrs. Long's brothers probably took a .22 caliber rifle to school with them, hoping to shot squirrels or a rabbit which wind up on the dinner table. Trapping animals was also common. It was easier to skin a rabbit than preparing a chicken which involved plucking, a time consuming, messy experience. Also, chickens were used primary for their eggs. Vegetables were grown in the home garden. Barter between neighbors was a necessity. Much of the clothing that the family wore was homemade. The most common modes of transportation were walking and horseback riding. The roads to and from Mrs. Long's house were dirt until the 1920's. There must have been books in the house, probably classics, and a value for learning. Mrs. Long graduated from high school and college in a day when most girls and boys only completed eighth grade. This was Mrs. Long's childhood world.

The Hill family is listed as having lived in Hazleton on the 1910, 1920 and 1930 census. Hazleton was the larger town, and it might have been identified interchangeably with Berwick as Saddle River Township and Rochelle Park often were in the past. Salome Hill had two brothers, Noble W. who was born in 1889 and Stanley, who was born in 1891. She graduated from Berwick High School in 1912 and Bloomsburg State Teacher's College in 1914. College records have her listed as Isabelle Salome Hill. She married Albert F. Long who was five years her senior in Philadelphia in 1920. He was a high school teacher, and his father was a prominent doctor in the Hazleton - Weatherly area. The couple had one child, Emily, who was born in the 1920s.

Mrs. Long taught in Weatherly during the 1920's, most probably in the Charles Schwab School which had been given to the town by its financier's namesake. Charles Schwab had married a local Weatherly girl. The ten-room school was erected between 1901 and 1903. Mrs. Long began teaching at Franklin School in the 1930/1931 school year at a salary of \$1,500. The family must have moved to New Jersey in 1930 because they are listed on both Pennsylvania and New Jersey census reports for that year. She is listed among the teachers who attended Franklin's opening ceremony held on January 31, 1931. Daughter Emily had been married in the 1940's and had a son, Richard Baker in 1949. A second marriage was to Howard W. Green Jr., an advertising salesman from Oneonta, Pennsylvania. Emily gave birth to a daughter, Candice Lee in 1957 or 1958. Mrs. Long's husband Albert, had passed away in 1947, and in 1950 Howard and Emily bought a home at 54 Belvidere Road, Glen Rock. Mrs. Long lived with them. Howard's father, Howard Green Sr., lived a few blocks away.



The last time I saw Mrs. Long was during the summer of 1960. Summer vacation was almost over and my friend Richard Hoff and I were getting bored; our sophomore year at Lodi High School was before us. It was Rich's idea to visit Mrs. Long. I don't know how but for some reason he knew where she lived. Within minutes we were on our bikes travelling through the Radburn section of Fair Lawn headed for Belvidere Avenue in Glen Rock. Surprisingly, on our arrival, we found Mrs. Long and Emily in the home's driveway doing some yard work. Mrs. Long seemed pleased to see us, and after some introductory chatting with Rich doing most of the talking, she entered the house and returned with bottles of Coca-Cola. I was a little taken back, not foreseeing that our teacher would indulge in soft drinks, tea yes -

Coca-Cola – no. Shaded by maples and cooled by a soft breeze, it was a memorable visit, one that I'm glad I made.

The sad news spread quickly on November 27, 1960 that Mrs. Long, her granddaughter Candice Lee and her son-in-law's father, Howard Green, had perished in a fire during the morning of the day before. The seeming impossibility of what had happened was quickly accompanied by feelings of regret and sorrow throughout our township.

The following is a newspaper transcript of the article that appeared in the *Bergen Record* on November 27, 1960.

Former Hazleton and Weatherly school teacher died early today as she vainly tried to rescue her three-year-old granddaughter in a fire which swept a home at Glen Rock, N. J. The child's paternal grandfather also died in the flames. The body of Mrs. Salome Long, 65, a school teacher, was found next to the crib of Candice Green, 3, on the second floor after the early morning fire swept through a two-story frame dwelling at 54 Belvedere Road, Glen Rock. The two died of suffocation, police said. Also found dead on the second floor was Howard W. Green Sr., 56. He was burned to death, according to the authorities. The owners of the home, Mr. and Mrs. Howard W. Green Jr., were out at the time. Their older child, Richard Baker, 11, escaped from the burning house after two men passing by noticed the flames at 2:18 a. m., entered the house and woke the boy and his grandmother. Mrs. Long could have reached safety but instead rushed to the bedroom of her young granddaughter. Mrs. Green went into shock when she and her husband returned home to find the house on fire. She was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital, Paterson, where she was reported in fair condition. Police said the elder Green, who lived at 26 Kenmore Place, Glen Rock, was visiting for the night. Mrs. Long was the mother of Mrs. Green and lived with her daughter and son-in-law. The boy who escaped was a son of Mrs. Green by a previous marriage. Mrs. Long's daughter, Emily, the wife of Howard Green, Jr., is well known in the Weatherly area. Mrs. Long, the former Salome Hill, was graduated from Bloomsburg State Teachers College and was also well known here. She was a cousin of Wilson Barto, former Standard-Sentinel reporter, presently located at New Brunswick, N. J. She was the widow of Albert F. Long, who died in 1947. Mr. Long was the son of the late Dr. and Mrs. Wilson P. Long, Weatherly.

Additional information from the Associated Press stated somewhat strongly that the fire was caused by a cigarette that Howard Green, Sr. had somehow dropped on the floor. Two men, Lou Albini and Norman Taudy, returning from a bridge tournament in New York City saw the blaze in a second story window. The front door was unlocked, and they entered the house, rescuing Mrs. Long and Richard. I

would only imagine that the fire on the second floor was totally out of control and that Mrs. Long tried to run through it to save Candice Lee. It was an unparalleled act of love, courage and sacrifice, one that we would expect of our teacher.

The following article appeared in the *Fair Lawn Clarion*.

### Thirty Years Of love And Kindness

It is a wonderful tribute to the late Mrs. Salome Long that the community of Saddle Brook loved her enough to conduct the memorial services which are being held at Cambridge School on Sunday afternoon. During her 30 years of teaching Saddle Brook children Mrs. Long made many friends among the students themselves and the community at large.

The memorial services attest to many things about Mrs. Long. She must have been a person of broad vision and deep understanding for so many people to display the desire to eulogize her in this manner. But more than what we learn about Mrs. Long, the action of the PTAs and the students as well as the faculty members bespeaks chapters about them. Recognition of Mrs. Long's outstanding qualities by such a large segment of the town's population shows that she was working in an atmosphere where she was loved and appreciated.

Shortly after her tragic death the members of the Saddle Brook School Board adopted a resolution naming the new Elementary School on Floral Lane the Salome Long School. The highest honor which a community can bestow upon its teachers and its leaders is to name a school after them.

In the teacher's Valhalla, where we are sure Mrs. Long's kindly countenance is taking in the activities of those she left behind, there is a bit of a smile of appreciation for the great act of love with which the people of Saddle Brook are making sure that the memory of Mrs. Long will not fade away for a long time.

In honoring Mrs. Long, the School Board, the PTAs and the students are honoring themselves for they are displaying a keen appreciation of the love and spirit left behind by Mrs. Long. They were 30 rich, understanding, and full years for the people of Saddle Brook and for Mrs. Long.



As part of my search, I visited Belvidere Avenue to interview anyone who would remember the events of November 26, 1960. Only one, the present owner of the house, vaguely remembered that there had been a fire. The following quotation from Thornton Wilder's novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* would seem most fitting.

But even while she was talking, other thoughts were passing in the back of her mind. "Even now," she thought, "almost no one remembers Esteban and Pepita, but myself. Camila alone remembers her Uncle Pio and her son; this woman, her mother. But soon we shall die and all memory of those five will have left the earth, and we ourselves shall be loved for a while and forgotten. But the love will have been enough, all those impulses of love return to the love that made them. Even memory is not necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning."

We who remember will always love you Mrs. Long.

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