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SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – AUGUST 2015

TRANSITION: OUR GROCERS

It came as an unexpected bit of unwanted news when I read the article *Bankruptcy May Signal End for A&P* which appeared in the Bergen Record on July 21. A&P was the pioneer in the grocery business having had its beginning in 1859. Our first A&P opened on Market Street around 1960 and moved to Mayhill Avenue in the 1990's in order to expand its size and offerings. Over the years, the Montvale, New Jersey Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company has struggled against competitors, especially Shoprite which is owned by the Wakefern Corporation. Other newcomers, specialty stores such as Trader Joe's and Whole Foods have drawn A&P's customers.



A&P on Mayhill Street - 2015

Before the 1960's, the A&P in Rochelle Park on Rochelle Avenue and the A&P on Broadway, Fair Lawn (now Lucille Roberts' salons) served Saddle River Township (Saddle Brook) customers. By 1950, these small compact stores succumbed to Shoprite in Rochelle Park, The Grand Union on the corner of Plaza Road and Broadway in Fair Lawn and the Valley Fair which opened in our Fair Lawn Parkway "Center" during the 1950's. The Valley Fair changed hands several times and is now our CVS.



Broadway, Fair Lawn - Circa 1938

I'll never forget the aromas, sights and sounds of the A&P's in the 1940's. The pleasant but intrusive coffee aroma, the sound emanating from Eight O'Clock Coffee beans being ground at the end of check-out counters, the sweet smell of baked goods and the sight of occasionally creaking wooden floors that served as pathways through the store have become lasting memories. The small array of baked goods was enticing although my mother, along with most homemakers of that day, baked their own. I remember especially Mom's refrigerator cakes which consisted of graham crackers and chocolate or vanilla pudding layered and frozen in ice cube trays. Her pineapple upside-down cake remains unsurpassed to this day. In the 1940's, there were less meat display cases but there was always a white-aproned butcher on hand for special needs. The quality of meat was much better than one can find in today's supermarkets. Ground meat wasn't recycled in blood baths, and the steaks were so tender that you could cut them with the edge of your fork.

There were also many small grocery stores in Saddle Brook before the 1950's. These included Manzo's at 335 Midland Avenue and DeGondea's at 336 President Street. Some, like Kapusta's, Ralicki's, Olko's and Cebula's offered Polish foods reflecting the population in that part of town. On Saddle River Road, there were Mund's at 269; and Hoban's, now Riccardo's Pizzeria. Pfister's was located at the northeast corners of Central Avenue and Harrison Avenue. These were home front stores and all had fascinating histories, especially Mund's which is now an international enterprise. Finally, there was Megan's Market, located on Market Street, which was closer in size and offerings to the modern supermarkets which would follow it.



Mund's General Store - Est. 1920

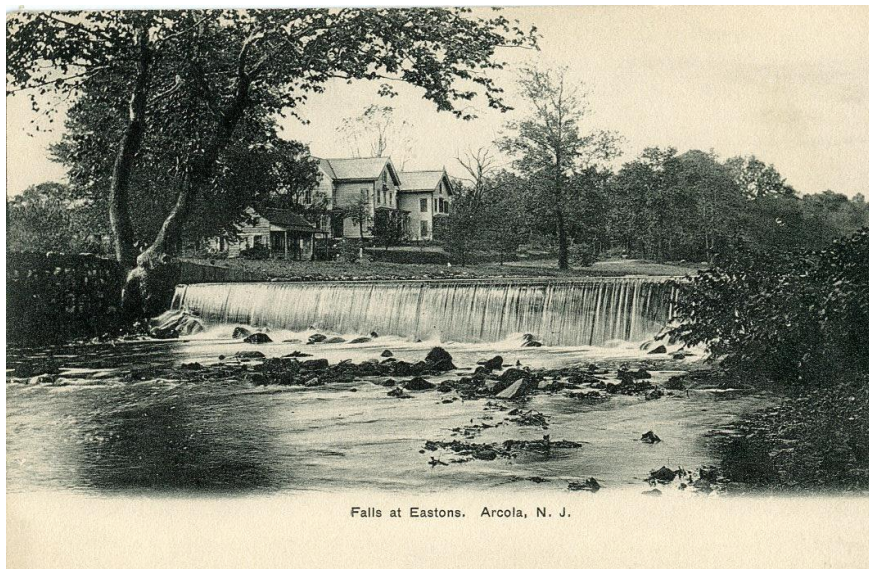


Next to Red barn. Formerly Nichol's General Store - 1890

The oldest stores frequented by present Saddle Brook's turn of the century residents were Nichol's at 194 Saddle River Road and Terhune's on Saddle River Road across from Easton's tower where a picket fence now stands between the older and newer homes. Both were established before 1900; and, as a matter of interest, Terhune's even sold coffins. For those readers who are interested in the stories behind these older businesses, break down and purchase a \$15.00 copy of the award winning *Saddle Brook: A Portrait of Our Past*. If shipping is needed, telephone (201) 587-2900 for information.

I would like to thank Peter Lundell for providing several of the accompanying photographs.

Township Historian: Jack Wasdyke



Terhune's General Store - Circa 1880