

## Edna Eckerson Filer 1978

### A Letter Written to the Historical Society

*Edna Eckerson Filer was born in Monsey. On April 26, 1922 she married John Frederick Filer and moved to the house just north of the Goetschius house. Her husband had purchased it in 1921 from Steven S. Goetschius, an older brother of Lizzie's father-in-law, George. It had originally been a tenant house for the Hopper-Goetschius house and was built in 1790 according to Edna.*

*Edna was a life-long member of the Old Stone Church. She had fond memories of the socials that were held in the chapel across from the Church in the early 1900s attended by the Eckersons, Ehmers, Messingers, Schuchmans, Gildersleeve boys, Van den Heuvels, Ackermans, the Weiss boys, Van Kampens, and Conklins.*



In 1978 Edna wrote the following notes for us:

"At the time I moved to Upper Saddle River, it was mostly farming and dairy. Some men worked in New York City and commuted from Allendale via train. The homes were few and far between as compared with recent years. Ours had been built in 1790. It stood near the road as was the custom in early times. It had clapboard siding, a dirt floor cellar, and no furnace, just coal or wood burning stoves.

"There was an artesian well under the back porch which Mr. Goetschius had drilled about 40 feet deep. There was a handle pump connected to the pipes to pump water up. It was always cold and clear. Since we had no fireplace, we kept warm with a coal stove and another one that used only wood.

"Our house had the first telephone, a long box with a crank handle on the side. I remember John Hennion calling the Ramsey doctor the night his daughter Bernadette was born. The station was in Mrs. Donahue's home in Lower Saddle River. She manned it night and day. There were so few calls, she could do that.

"We had a cow for milk and making our own butter, chickens, two pigs, our own turkeys for the holiday roasts, and a large vegetable garden where the turnips, potatoes, cabbage, sweet corn, red raspberries, strawberries, black caps, and blackberries were raised. From the garden we canned corn, green and yellow beans, pickles, beets, and swiss chard. We made our own sauerkraut from the cabbages we raised. We cooked and baked and did the canning (in a wash boiler) on a kerosene stove.

"We blanched the corn on the ears, cut off and laid on clean muslin sheets in a small greenhouse to dry. This was put in muslin bags that our sugar came in and hung from a rafter in the attic. When wanted for a meal, a cup or more was put in cow's milk to cover it. The next day the milk had sunk into the corn and swelled it to its original size. With a lump of butter, some salt added and brought to simmer, it was delicious.

"We had our pigs which we slaughtered for fresh meat. We smoked the hams and bacon in a home built smokehouse. There were trout, suckers and eels in the brook which the men and boys caught for many a good meal. The men hunted for wild rabbits, pheasants, and deer. The boys caught skunks, ground hogs and raccoons and sold their pelts to a man from Paterson who had garments made of them.

"A delicious treat was making ice cream from clean snow mixed with cow cream, sugar and vanilla.

"My mother-in-law, sister-in-law and I pieced quilt tops from materials left over from making our own aprons, dresses, the girls' clothing, and my sons' shirts. We made our own bed sheets with unbleached muslin. Dish and hand towels came with the chicken grain in them. We bleached them in the sun and they came white and soft. Laundry was done with a wash board in a wooden tub on a bench on the back porch and rinsed in a second tub.

"We made our own soap from grease we saved at butchering time, some lye and water. This was cooked in a big pot over a hole in the ground, with wood sticks in the bottom of the hole. When the mixture thickened some it was ladled into bread pans to about one and one-half inches, left to harden and cut into cakes. We canned fruit in mason jars in the wash boiler. Made our own jelly and pickles. Had our own smoked bacon and hams and made homemade sausage, head cheese, liverwurst, and pigs foot jelly.

"I remember Freddy's blacksmith shop by the Old Stone Church minister's brook. There were a lot of door-to-door salesmen. There was a fish dealer and an ice man as well as Abram Forshay, the grocer in Saddle River, and bakers, a cruller man, then Widman and later, Dugan Bakery. A 5 and 10 man and a scissors grinder came by. There was also a man and his monkey who walked the road with a hurdy gurdy playing for coins or food. And there were gypsies to tell fortunes and beg for food.