



**Sherry Butscher (1895-1983)**

From a tape mailed to Joan Fabris from the Butscher home in Mexico - 1977

*Born in 1895, Sherry Butscher was a teenager when his family moved to the DeBaun farm on the corner of Ackerson Lane and West Saddle River Road in the early 1900s. His father William developed Lake Road and Sherwood Road, where he later built a home.*

I promised friends that I would make a tape of my memories of Upper Saddle River. Let us go back to the year 1908 when I first knew there was such a place as Upper Saddle River. Living in Ridgewood for summer vacations, my friends and I rode our bicycles to Upper Saddle River to fish in the brook. We entered the area by the brook at the location where the Catholic Church now stands. We fished downstream, coming out of the brook at the area by the basket factory [Martin Smith's in Saddle River]. Sometimes we were lucky to hook a rainbow or two and many sunnies to take home for the cat. My father commuted to his New York office, but he was always interested in having a farm, looking towards retirement. We finally located at the farm in Upper Saddle River [the DeBaun-Ackerson home on the West Road across from Lake Road.]

The house and outbuildings were in good condition except for paint. To bring the house up to the standards of my mother, it required a great deal of work. My father was in the land developing business. He brought a crew to the house and within six months, the job was completed. We had a central heating and hot water plant installed, a complete bathroom, running hot and cold water. The water supply came from a 250-gallon water tank located on the second floor of the house. It was my job to keep it filled. We had no electric current so every evening after supper, we used the water pump in the kitchen to pump water up into this tank. We had a farmer who lived on the place to help out, and he occupied the little building that we remodeled just south of the main house.

This building was once a broom factory, as the story was told to us, and brooms were made here for the Union Army before and during the Civil War. I was the chauffer for the

family pleasure cars and truck. I drove my father daily to the Allendale station to catch the 7:40 for Jersey City. He returned on the 5:24. We had no telephone. We had made application for one but were turned down. There was no facility for phone service further north on the West Road than Eckert's Dairy Farm [in Saddle River]. The phone company would extend service to our house if we would pay for the installation costs for poles and wire at \$1300. They would also perform this service, extend poles to the New York State line if we would get ten people to install phones in their homes.

The task now faced us to get neighbors north and south of us interested in having a phone. It took us several months. We were only able to interest seven people. We got the wire and the phones by taking the extra phones at our house. One was installed at the large entrance hall of the house, a wall type instrument with a hand crank to run with a generator in the base of the unit. This generator gave off enough current to give a lighted signal to the operator at the central office.

The telephone exchange was located on Allendale Road. Two sisters were the operators for the Saddle River exchange. The operator came on the line with battery current supplied by a bank of batteries at her local office. One wire took care of all the phones. You knew whether the call was for you by a special combination of bell rings. When the phone rang, most people got up to hear what was said, regardless of who the call was for. It was only a matter of months after the first phones were installed when other folks applied for the two extra phones.

Now we had phones. The next needed item was electric power. We made many trips to Nyack to the Rockland Electric Power office to see about electric for the West Road. Like the phone company, they offered us the same deal. Get us ten families who will sign contracts for current on the West Road and we will run the line over the Church Road and north and south on the West Road. Again we canvassed the area, but few people were interested in this project. It was not until after the end of the First World War that power was supplied. It was only by threatening the power company that we got action. We threatened to go before the New Jersey Utilities if they failed to give us electricity since we had fifteen signed applications for power. That was on a Friday. On Monday morning a crew was digging holes and stringing lines on Church Road.

As farmers in the area and living at the northern end of the state, our produce when taken to market did not ring the same prices for us as the farmers that were located in the area of Fair Lawn [Saddle River Township] and further south. We were two or three weeks later with our crops. If you were willing to make a change and set out plants, let's say your tomato plants, earlier, then you could get the better prices. I remember one year I set out tomato plants the first two weeks of April. I was lucky. There was no frost and I was in the market about the same time as the farmers further south. The next year I set out 2,000 tomato plants early, again taking a chance on the weather. Some of my neighbors followed suit. We got a cold spell and the temperature dropped into the thirties. I lost more than half of my plants.

I also set out an orchard of apple and peach trees in the spring and, due to an exceptional winter with temperatures remaining below freezing for more than a month, many of these trees died. The moles, field mice and other small animals could not get through the frozen ground so they ate the roots of my trees. We set out 200 trees. When I returned from the War in 1919, I had 72 alive.

In 1915-1916 people on the West Road were complaining about the condition of the gravel road. The only good road in the Borough was the East Road, blacktopped from the Saddle River line to the New York State line. People wanted this same type of road on the west side of the river, especially those who drove horseless carriages.

The Borough owned a horse-drawn road scraper to keep the roads in fair condition. If you were selected by the mayor and council to hitch your team to this vehicle to work on the roads, you received \$5 a day. The scraper pushed the sand back on the roadbed but the traffic over the road soon pushed the sand to the edges of the road, leaving the sharp rocks exposed to go through the fabric tires we had in those days.

One always carried a good pump and extra tubes in good condition in case of a flat. Few people carried a spare tire because they were of the clincher type. You had to remove one side of the wheel to remove the punctured tube, replace it with another tube, pump it up, push back the tire on the wheel, and pump up the tire and get going again.

It was 1916 when the Mayor and Council invited the Freeholders to a special dinner meeting at Patty Burke's in Ho-Ho-Kus [where Ridgewood Nursing home is today on corner of Franklin Turnpike and Racetrack Road]. The meeting was to talk about the condition of the West Road and the Ramsey Road, now Lake Street. After the dinner, we drove the Freeholders over the West Road and then returned to the Borough Hall for further discussion.

The Freeholders kept their word and the road was completed at a fast pace. The roadbed had to be changed here and there to straighten the road and remove some of the bad curves. There was a bad "S" curve at the foot of the hill when going north towards the Church Road. We gave the land to straighten out this curve to the Borough, and the Borough turned it over to the County.

Between Church Road and Sparrowbush Road stood the old whipping tree. When the new road was built, this was removed to put in a wider roadbed. Many stories were told about this area, where the tree was and how slaves and other people were punished for their offenses by so many lashes of the cat of nine tails.

It was in the spring of 1917 that my mother caught a very bad cold and she visited Dr. Kiefer of Ramsey. The good doctor gave her a prescription, which was filled at Parvin's Drug Store. My mother took about half of this bottle of medicine and the cold was gone. Our neighbors on each side of us caught colds and my mother offered them this special cold remedy. After the bottle had traveled up and down the valley for various people who

had colds and they were cured, the druggist told the doctor how this one bottle had travelled through the valley.

Later that same year I was in the War in France. I was sent to a hospital in 1918. At this hospital in Navarres, when the hospital train arrived, the many doctors went through the cars looking at the tags at the foot of the beds. This same Dr. Kiefer came to my bed and stood there, repeating the name Butscher. He then walked up to the side of the bed and asked, "Son, do you come from Upper Saddle River." I said, "Yes, sir." He laughed and said, "Your mother cured the whole valley on one bottle of cough medicine." I was at the hospital for surgery and the good doctor told the nurses, "No one touches this kid until I return tomorrow morning." Five weeks later I was back with my outfit, returned to duty.

I returned from the War in July 1919 expecting to find a good crop of peaches to be picked, but instead was told of the bad weather and what had happened. The hired hand and his family had moved off the place. He had gone to work in a war plant in Connecticut. My uncle was working the place, not a farmer, but doing the best he could with the help of neighbors. I had never forgotten the song, "How You Going to Keep Them Down on the Farm After They've Seen Patee." With all the disappointments concerning my activity as a farmer, I gave up trying to be one and started looking for other fields of endeavor.

Now it was another election year and President Wilson was running for his second term. It was my first year to vote. In later years I was a member of the Republican County Committee. Mr. Herman T. Hopper held the position of Mayor of the Borough longer than any man connected with Upper Saddle River politics. It was not until after the First World War that people in the Borough became interested in politics. In those days, with the small Borough population, few people were active regarding any Borough positions. As long as the man was doing a good job and giving the necessary time to the position, people of the Borough were satisfied for him to have it.

It was only after city people started moving into the Borough that we had some hot elections for Mayor and Councilmen. The first talk of zoning started in the 1920s and meetings were held at the Borough Hall. The old timers won out and there was no zoning at that time. Then the Great Depression hit and some people gave up their city rented apartments and moved into places that they used as summer homes. Then zoning again came to life as some of the men in favor of it were elected to office in the Borough. After many town meetings regarding the subject, zoning was again defeated and nothing more was heard about it until 1950.

People were buying property and building homes in the Borough. Then December 7<sup>th</sup> and World War II put a stop to all building. Fifty some odd men answered the call to the colors and only a few who left were seriously injured. For the First World War, eight men were in the service. During the First World War the Borough also had the Home Guards who did the "Squads Right and Left" in front of the Green Schoolhouse, now the Borough Hall. This group of men established a company as authorized by the State for men not in service but of draft age. I never knew or heard much about this group after the

war. After the Armistice we all received an American Express money order from these gentlemen, the money that they paid as dues to their organization. This money was distributed to the eight of us in service. My \$10 check I received on Christmas Day 1918 and a few buddies and I got a little foolish on champagne.

New Jersey during the Second World War was one of the first states to get their Civil Defense set up at a fast pace. I was appointed Director by Mayor Tilley to set up a unit for Upper Saddle River. The trained nurses of the Borough set up an emergency hospital at the Borough Hall. They were Mrs. Norman Yeomans, Mrs. Dallas Taylor, Mrs. Atlee Carlough and Mrs. Anna Butscher. Mr. Arthur Hollands moved his radio equipment to the Green School, where we set up the local Civil Defense Headquarters.

The Fire Department was an offspring of the Civil Defense organization. Before that we bought fire protection from Saddle River for \$500 per year. Of the 20 some younger men including the Weiss brothers, the Van Kampen boys, the older Parker boys, some of the Kroner boys, and yours truly approached the Borough fathers to get permission to organize. At that time the town fathers felt we had ample fire protection so the idea was dropped.

After the Second World War, the Sportsmen's Club was formed to keep hunting and fishing just for residents of the Borough. Most towns south of us were closing this privilege to hunters and fishermen. We also followed suit. The state, learning of the club and the closing of rights to outsiders, cut off the supply of fish to the brooks and pheasants to the fields. The Club purchased trout and fish from a hatchery in Pennsylvania and pheasants from a farm in Wisconsin. The Lambert brothers raised the birds and set them out in the fields a few months before the season opened.

As the town grew and there were more people and homes, the Club was disbanded. The money in the treasury had to be used. Some wanted it distributed amongst the active members of the Club, while others had different ideas. At the final meeting of the Club, it was decided to use the funds to establish the Ambulance Corps.

I was active in all community organizations and a charter member of many. I was a charter member of the Lions Club, the American Legion, and a member of the Grange for many, many years and the Old Stone Church. I retired in 1961, moved to Florida on the West Coast for a year, but still maintained my house in Upper Saddle River until 1965. I had visited in Mexico for several years starting in 1957, and the climate was 100% better than anyplace I had ever been. So we retired to Mexico.

We had a celebrity in Upper Saddle River, Everet Pitt. Ev Pitt was invited to the Jack Paar Show as he had many friends who lived along the ridge of the Ramapos from Sloatsburgh to Ringwood. These people worked in the iron mines until they were closed after the First World War. Ev learned many of the folk songs of this area and was invited to appear on the Jack Paar show to sing these songs to the viewing audience. Ev was quite a guy. He was the best dry wall builder in Bergen County and built many a dry wall in Saddle River and Upper Saddle River and other towns in the area.

Thank you for listening. I am 80 years old and I hope you enjoyed what I had to say.