

History of Ferndale

My parents came to Ferndale, N.Y. the summer of 1930, and decided to remain because of the terrible Polio epidemic in NYC. This is just a brief collection of some personal thoughts and local history.

Ferndale was a hub of great activity because of the O. & W. Railroad. When the train from Weehawken arrived on Friday evenings, the hamlet came alive with horses and wagons (later on old taxis and roadsters) to take the tourists to the many hotels, boarding houses and bungalow colonies that dotted the area. There were many businesses on the hill, now still called Station Hill Road. The old railroad station is now the home of County Petroleum, owned by Bob Bank of Liberty. Across from it are the remains of the old pharmacy, which once housed a beautiful ice cream parlor, complete with: marble counter shiny chrome and glass fixtures and brick patio to sit and relax. The old steam laundry was a huge three-story building across from the pharmacy. It was there that a fleet of green trucks, vintage 1930's, would bring the towels and linens from the area hotels. Down the hill was the original Katz's Bakery. I can still remember the wonderful aroma from the ovens. In the summer there was a fresh produce store, Wolf's Meat and Poultry Market, owned by Mr. Bertram, Mr. Daynow's Barber Shop with its magical red and white barber's pole, and Steiger's Dairy, producing milk in real glass bottles with at least three inches of cream on top. A real treat was to use this on hot cereal in the winter or on strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries, which could be picked by the pail full. There was an abundance of apple orchards that always promised a bountiful harvest in the fall. Most of the youth activities

evolved around the one room schoolhouse at the top of Ferndale-Loomis Road. It stands as a two room summer cottage owned by a wonderful couple. Every summer they are busy tending to requests to tour the old school. The blackboards and original desks are gone, but the memories remain to the many students who attended, taught by the beloved Mary Manion. When it evolved into a two-room school, Mr. Nat Tanzman from Parksville, took on teaching duties.

There was a potbelly stove that glowed red in the winter with an abundance of apples and potatoes baking over the hot coals.

After the railroad closed and the tourist industry began to die, Ferndale like so many other hamlets seemed to wither and fade. The quickway changed the direction of tourists, and shopping to the new trend of malls, while main streets began to disappear. Many natives, however, managed to remain here and carve out their futures. My brothers, Alan and Paul came "home" after their time in the Armed Forces, Paul in the Army,

and Alan in the Marines. Paul probably had the best picture collection of Sullivan County from its prosperous "war years" (the 1940's) through the present. His pictures of Woodstock have appeared around the world. Paul passed away in the winter of 1996. Sullivan County Community College Field House has been named in Paul's honor. Alan went from the Marines to TV repair school. His success with Cablevision Industries is a testament to the American dream come true. He resides in Loomis with his wife, Sandra. His children remain natives. Sullivan County now awaits the opening of a performing arts center, Alan's next venture. After my stint in the Navy, I went to California for 32 years. I returned home yearly to visit family and friends. When I returned in 1985 for good, I began restoring the old Ryan house

(Con't on page 23)

