



NEWSLETTER

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GREENBURGH LOCAL HISTORY

by Frank S. Jazzo, Town Historian

SPRAIN ROAD AND THE LOWER SPRAIN BROOK VALLEY

Recently, I asked Edith DeCecca, who lives on Sprain Road in Greenburgh, less than a mile south of its intersection with Ashford Avenue and Ardsley Road, if she and her neighbors get their mail delivered by the Scarsdale Post Office. She said that she has for many years, but added that she can remember that back in the 1940s their address was "R.F.D. #1, White Plains," which stood for "Rural Free Delivery." The American Heritage College Dictionary defines "rural" as "Of, or relating to, or characteristic of the country." Also "Of or relating to farming; agricultural."

That fits in with my memories of the countryside along Sprain Road both north and south of the easterly end of Ashford Avenue during the 1940s. I was a kid growing up in the Village of Ardsley then and didn't reach my teens until later in the 1940s when Milton Berle made many people stay home on Tuesday evenings to watch his antics on television on the Texaco Star Theater. Of course, we didn't have a television set yet, but once in a while Ralph Arone's family would invite us over to watch the new invention, and Ralph enjoyed showing it off to visitors.



The farmhouse under construction

Sprain Road & Lower Sprain Brook Valley (cont'd)

In those days, my family lived in an apartment building close to Ardsley's business section, which didn't spread too far from the intersection of Ashford Avenue and Saw Mill River Road. At that age, the Village was the center of my universe and, to me, the Sprain Brook Valley was the farm country, with the Holscher and Spano farms to the south of Ashford Avenue and the Frischmann farm extending up to Underhill Road to the north.

I didn't think too much about municipal boundaries then, and probably didn't even know that most of that farmland was in unincorporated Greenburgh. The Ardsley School District extended east of Sprain Road, just as it does today, and children from that area attended our Ardsley school on Ashford Avenue near the Municipal Building.



The farmhouse completed



Edith Holscher sitting behind the egg stand, waiting for customers to buy fresh eggs at the roadside by the farms on Sprain Road - 1941.

Edith DeCecca was a member of the Holscher family and grew up on the chicken farm of her parents, John and Minnie, and delivered eggs and spring chickens as far away as Scarsdale and Bronxville. Two of her uncles, George and Charlie, worked the original Holscher farm which adjoined her parents'. Her grandmother Margaret, as a widow with ten children, had relocated the family from Yonkers in 1910 and started the farm in the Sprain Brook Valley.

The Ardsley Middle School with access off Ashford Avenue presently occupies much of what was originally the Holscher farm. Even though it wasn't an easy life, Edith seems to have fond memories of the farm, considered herself an Ardsley resident, and still remembers how good those spring chickens tasted. She also remembers the large number of Indian arrowheads that were found when the land in the valley was cultivated.

SPOTLIGHT



EDITH HOLSCHER

Edith Holscher DeCecca, Ardsley High School graduate, class of 1945. Attended Traphagen School of Fashion. A fine artist, Edith has continued to pursue an art career. She created a set of note cards in watercolor—scenes of Ardsley that are currently on sale by the Ardsley Historical Society.

A member of the Ardsley Historical Society, Edith was on its Board of Directors. Her family farmed the land on Sprain Road and also had a chicken and egg business.

PICTURE OF THE PAST

McDowell Park ice skating rink was located adjacent to the current parking lot. The lot was flooded with several inches of water by the Fire Department. This photo below was taken by William Duke in January, 1957. The lot was frequented by families who brought hot chocolate, blankets, and other comfort items. There was no admission fee.



The Ardsley Historical Society Newsletter is published three times each year. The Society was established in 1982 and is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, and disseminate the history of Ardsley to members and to the public.

Archives are open to the public on Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon, or by appointment, at 9 American Legion Drive. Our phone number is 693-6027. Subscription to the Newsletter is included in membership dues, which are:

Individual:	\$ 12.00
Family:	15.00
Senior Citizen:	10.00
Student	8.00
Sponsor:	35.00
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All articles, queries, and replies should be addressed to the editor, Mary Lichtenberg. Although every attempt is made to maintain historical accuracy in the Newsletter, the editor and the Society assume no responsibility for errors. The editor also reserves the right to edit where necessary.

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