



Photo of the family of John Heck (farthest right), daughter Louise third from left.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MEMOIR OF M. LOUISE HECK

Permission to reprint the following memoir of Louise Heck has been generously granted by her niece, Wendy Heck Mayser, to whom it was dedicated on September 15, 1975. Sections not relevant to Emerson history, including certain family information, have been omitted here. Otherwise, the memoir appears essentially as it was written by Ms. Heck, with some slight formatting changes and occasional explanatory notes that appear in brackets. The photos that accompany the memoir (with the exception of the old school building on Old Hook Road) are from the Heck family album, also generously provided by Ms. Mayser. Captions have been added.

Martha Louise Heck, known as Louise, was one of five children of John Heck. She was born in 1886 and died in 1977, just two years after finishing the memoir. Her grandparents, Daniel and Christina Heck, settled in what was then Washington Township in 1862 (although she states, contrary to other sources, that they arrived in 1869). The Hecks purchased the 63 acre Lozier farm, which was originally owned by Jacob DeBaun, one of the Emerson area's original settlers.

It was situated at the southeast corner of Main Street and Old Hook Road, and it was sold out of the Heck family in 1967. Today it is the site of the Shop Rite shopping center.

The Hecks were one of the most prominent of the German-American families that populated the Emerson area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time, the land that would be incorporated as Etna in 1903 (later renamed Emerson), was part of greater Washington Township. In 1851 the first German-American to come to the area, Joseph Dimmick, settled with his family on the north side of Old Hook Road, opposite what would become the Heck farm. Not long thereafter other German families followed, including the Hecks. They would become the dominant ethnic group in the community, supplanting the Jersey Dutch and preceding the Italian-Americans, who were moving to Etna/Emerson in larger numbers after 1900.

When the Hecks first arrived here, the community was still predominately rural and agricultural; most of the newcomers were supporting themselves in the traditional way, by farming. But with the appearance of the railroad in 1869, the Pascack Valley began to change. As land values increased, many of the old Jersey Dutch families sold off land to real estate interests, who subdivided the properties into residential lots. As the population rose, so did the demand for products and services, which opened up new opportunities to make a living. Some completely abandoned the farming life; others, like the Hecks, who established a successful home painting business, continued to make a living off the land, but supplemented it by other means.

In many ways, the family of John Heck was straddling two different periods in local history. Although farmers, and serious ones at that, they were not struggling at a subsistence level, as many of the Jersey Dutch had. Even their home reflected this dual status: constructed in what has been referred to as the folk Victorian style, it combined elements of a practical old time farmhouse with such Victorian features as a front porch, bay window and steep gable-roofed dormers. Like many middle class families of their era, the Hecks still looked back to the self-sufficient virtues of a simple farming life, while simultaneously aspiring to a more affluent lifestyle, with all the social prestige and modern conveniences that came with it.

Louise Heck's long life enabled her to witness and experience the great changes that towns like Emerson were undergoing in the twentieth century. By the time she wrote her memoir in 1975, Emerson's days as a farming community were long gone (minus the exception of the Old Hook Farm, which remains today). We are fortunate, then, that Louise took the time and effort to record, with impressive detail, what it was like to live here before modern suburbia took hold – when children walked on unpaved roads to one-room schoolhouses and returned home to do their farm chores. Reading this memoir is like walking those roads again with her, and reliving a time that has long vanished. We are grateful to her niece, Wendy, for sharing this record and to Louise herself, for capturing in words this important chapter in our community's history.

THE MEMOIR OF M. LOUISE HECK

“... I have delved deeply in the past, and gathered together all I can remember of my Grandparents and Parents, and the life we lived on the old Homestead since I was born there in 1886 ...”



Photo of Louise Heck in her beloved flower garden on the family farm, circa 1931.

DANIEL HECK FAMILY

DANIEL HECK deserted from Kaiser Wilhelm's Army in Germany. In 1854 he came to America on the KUHN family passport (William Kuhn has that passport) with other German friends, their boat taking six weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean to New York. He was born August 28, 1828 and died August, 1916.

Daniel Heck married CHRISTINA KUHN (12//6/1824 – 4/17/1900) who had 4 brothers and 2 sisters:

JOHN (Closter) 3 daughters and 1 son

JUSTUS (Flatts) 3 children by 1st wife – Emma, Kate and Henry

5 sons by 2nd wife: George, William, Jesse, Dan & Fred
George married Ethel Bradshaw – 2 children – Edna and Charles
William married May Heck – 2 children – William and Arthur

ADAM (Etna) 2 children – Christina and Kate

ABBY (Norwood) 2 children

CATHERINE (1835-1945) married Wm. Blauvelt; 1 daughter Gertrude

Gertrude married Mr. Parsells; 3 children – Jesse, Ida & Garret

FREDERICKA (Etna) married Mr. Fredericks; 3 children – Kate, Bill, Amelia

After their marriage, Daniel & Christina Heck went to Albany, N.Y., where he operated a Butcher Shop for several years; they had 3 sons and 1 daughter: Henry, John, George and Susan.

HENRY (1856-1945) married ELIZABETH MAURER (1859-1959); 1 son and 7 daughters:

Daniel, Elizabeth, Adella, Bertha, Helen & Clara (twins), Ruth and Mathilda.

JOHN (3/3/59 – 3/5/1948) married MARGARET MAURER (6/30/1856 – 6/23/1950) 2

daughters and 3 sons: Lizzie May [often known as May], Martha Louise, Henry D, George D, and John Arthur [usually known as Arthur].

GEORGE DANIEL (1861 – 1927) married Mayona Sprague and had 1 daughter Orrella – married Cornelius White, and had 2 daughters, Jane & Barbara

SUSAN HECK – died in infancy.

MOTHER’S FAMILY [Family of Margaret Maurer Heck]:

JOHN MAURER (1821 – 1919) [Father of Margaret] married Catherine Schroeder [Mother of Margaret] and had 1 son and six daughters:

MARY E. (1848 – 1904) married John Vogel – Henry and Andrew

CATHERINE (1849 – 1894) married Ferdinand Doerries – Erwin, May, Bertha, Calvin and Lulu

MARTHA (1851) married Emil Snyder, who was killed kicked by a horse

Married John Hoffman – Walter and Edward

JOHN (1853 – 1932)

MARGARET (6/30/56 – 6/23/50) Married John Heck

ELIZABETH (1858 – 1959) married Henry Heck

LOUISA (1862 – 1933)

In 1869 Daniel and Christina Heck moved to Kinderkamack, N.J. [Howard Durie, in his *Background History of the Borough of Emerson*, lists this date as 1862] and bought a 63-acre farm from Mr. Lozier, of Oradell, consisting of an old house, barn, several small buildings, pasture land, woods, meadows and some large fields of tillable land.

The town was called Kinderkamack until the Railroad built a station there and called it “Etna” because they said Kinderkamack was too long a name to use on the time-table. Mail was constantly being mis-sent [*sic*] to Aetna, N.Y. , and in 1909 the name was officially changed to Emerson, as it is known today.

His boys went to a school on Old Hook Road, where the Westwood Laundry now stands [now the site of a residential complex]. Children from Westwood, Eastwood (later changed to Rivervale), Kinderkamack and a part of Oradell had to come here, as it was the only school

around. Those who wanted higher education went to the Closter Academy, which was the equivalent of our High School.

Meantime, the HECK family operated the farm. Grandpa built the house we all remember with the help of his boys, Durie Brickell (a mason) and Abby Kuhn (a carpenter). All the beams were put together with wooden pegs.

After finishing at the Closter Academy, the oldest son, HENRY, went to Berea College, to study for the ministry in the German Methodist Church.

JOHN HECK built up a painting business with his father, known throughout Bergen County as D. Heck & Son, and also continued farming.

GEORGE DANIEL went to Prince Bay, Staten Island, N.Y. as an apprentice with S.S. White Dental Co.; later he became a patent inventor for this firm.



1880 photo of the Heck family in their parlor: sitting are Daniel Heck on the left and his wife, Christina, on the right. Standing, in the back, from left to right, sons Henry, George and John.

CHURCH:

Mother and Father were married June 26, 1882 by Rev. Charles Reuss, Pastor of the German Methodist Church in Tappan, [New York]. My earliest recollection was a long ride every Sunday morning in a horse-drawn wagon to that Church. The organ was played by Mrs. Snyder, sister of Aunt Martha's first husband, and how those people could sing. The services were in German, but as we sing some of the old hymns now in English I can recall those same songs being sung then. The Conference changed the Ministers every few years. I can recall at least 4 different Ministers

who were there. Because people moved away, or changed to English churches, services in this building were discontinued in the 1920s.

About 1888 Pastor Andrews of the Hillsdale Methodist Church visited our family many times urging them to worship with them in Hillsdale, but Grandpa and Grandma went every Sunday morning to the German Church in Tappan. Father and Mother with us children drove to the Hillsdale Church until around 1906 or 1907, when we joined the Westwood Reformed Church, where Pastor E. Ward Decker had just been called to fill the vacancy caused by the sudden death of their Pastor David Talmadge.

The second Sunday in June each year was Children's Day, at which time a simple program was given with as many children taking part as possible. As near Christmas Eve as possible each year a Christmas program was planned, after which each child received an orange and a small box of hard candy. A picnic for all ages was held in the woods in mid-summer. Swings were put up; tables, chairs and benches were brought from the Church; each family supplied food for their family; big pots of lemonade were made; there were some bottles of soft drinks and ice cream. Everyone got a plate of ice cream free, and the rest was sold. The men and boys played baseball, or horse shoes; potato [sack] races and other relay games were provided with prizes for the winners (ice cream cone or candy); the children had their games, and the women mostly had a chance to sit and chat with each other.

Prayer meetings were held each mid-week in the church, or in homes.

In our home we always had morning and evening Bible reading, Prayer and songs. We always asked God's blessing on our meals; were taken regularly to Sunday School and Church, and were taught to memorize Golden Texts and other Bible verses. We were made to obey our parents and respect all older folks, and were always punished in some way when we were naughty, and we were many times. We will always thank God for our Godly Parents and Grandparents.



Photo of the Westwood Reformed Church, circa 1933.

BIRTHDAYS: Mother always baked a special birthday cake for each one. Father always wanted a Molasses Cake; our Grandparents usually asked for one of Mother's famous "apple kuchen"; we children often got cup cakes with lovely icings and a candle on top to blow out. We always got some little gift – a hair ribbon, hankie, thimble, comb and brush, or story book, and when we reached our tenth birthday we were given a Testament with colored pictures.

CHRISTMAS: A tree was cut down from the woods, brought to the house, and nailed firmly to a wooden base, which was covered with a piece of green cloth; the tree was trimmed with strings of popcorn, which we made, small candles were pinched on the branches, and we had a few store ornaments which were carefully saved from year to year. Christmas morning there was some gift under the tree for each one. After singing a Christmas carol, Bible reading and Prayer, we opened what "Santa" had brought for us. May and I usually found a doll of some kind; often it was a rag doll Mother had made and dressed. When we grew older I remember a beautiful one with a sweet china head, and Mother made clothes for it to make it prettier. Later on we had dolls that went to sleep and said "Mama" if we squeezed it in the right place. The boys and men got a belt, tie, shirt, knife – something quite simple. Mother and Grandma got a pair of mittens each had knitted for the other, or a few yards of material for a dress. Sugar and salt came in muslin bags; feed for the animals came in bags of heavier material; these were all carefully washed and the writing bleached out, and made into undershirts for us; the heavier material was made into dish towels.

We exchanged Birthday and Christmas gifts with Uncle Harry and his family, Uncle George and his family, and with Mother's Father and Mother and Aunt Louisa and Uncle John, who were living at home. We were always very excited as our folks packed the boxes sent to the above mentioned families, but were even more excited when their packages were received. However, no packages were opened until Christmas morning.



The Heck home, as it appeared from the Old Hook Road entrance, 1934.

We knew of 3 Doctors – Dr. Zabriskie in Westwood, Dr. Leach in Park Ridge, and Dr. Lightning in Old Tappan. They came to the house with a satchel of medicines for \$2; if you went to the office it was \$1. We had to go to the drug store for some medicines. We had home remedies for most ailments – Herbs, Aconite or Quinine for fevers, Vaseline & Castor Oil. I can't remember a Hospital until the one in Hackensack was built.

When the new house was finished, the old house was moved down next to the Granary. One room downstairs was what was called the SHOP. It was used to store paints, oils, turpentine, and all sorts of paraphernalia for the painting business. There was also a carpenter's table, which was usually filled with nails, screws, hammer, saw, a vise, and all the tools needed for "Mr. Fix-it." The south end of this building was partitioned off and housed our two-seated carriage with the fringe on top. The upper floor had two rooms where our hired men slept. They milked the cows, fed them and the horses, cleaned up the stables, cut wood, worked in the fields, and did everything they were told to do.

The GRANARY was built up on four stone pillars; the upper part was enclosed and contained bins for corn and grain, a machine to separate the corn from the cobs; these cobs were used in the stoves to start the fire. Another machine ground the corn into sizes to feed the chickens. Underneath was open on all sides; here mowing machine, reaper, plows, harrows, large two-wheeled hay rake and lumber wagon were kept.

As near the front as possible, so he could get it quickly, Father's "gig" (sometimes called a "sulky"), a two-wheeled, one seat vehicle drawn by one horse, was also kept; it was like the vehicle the jockeys use in horse races.

Next to the Granary was the CHICKEN-HOUSE, part of which was enclosed where the chickens roosted at night on poles extended horizontally across the building; nests for egg laying were placed on the floor. It also had a high-wired part outside where the chickens got their exercise scratching in the dirt during the day, and where they were fed and given fresh pans of water a couple times a day. After school we had to gather the eggs, and feed and water the chickens. Every so often the older folks "white-washed" the inside, to keep it clean and get rid of the "lice".

Next to that was the PIG-PEN, which also had a closed-in part where the pigs were fed in a trough on the floor, and where they came in at night. The building also had an outside run for the pigs.

The pigs were fattened up from early spring until early fall; then were slaughtered, hung up for several hours to drain the blood out. Grandpa then cut them up in usable portions. The caseins, stomach, liver, heart, kidneys and tongue were cleaned well and used in various ways. He made country sausage and head-cheese, and stuffed the meat in the caseins and stomach. The fat was cut in small cubes and carefully fried out; the liquid was drained into glass jars and crocks, and used as needed as lard. The little cubes left after the lard was drained off were called "Greebin"; these were heated and used as meat for a meal. All these various kinds of pork products were stored in our cold attic. After a certain time, Grandpa smoked the hams, bacon and sausage in a brick building, south of the house. Poles were extended across the width of the building, and

various pieces of meat were securely tied to them. Below on the ground, he built a fire, replenishing it from time to time to keep a smoldering fire for days until the meat above was properly smoked through. It was then again put in the attic and used as needed.

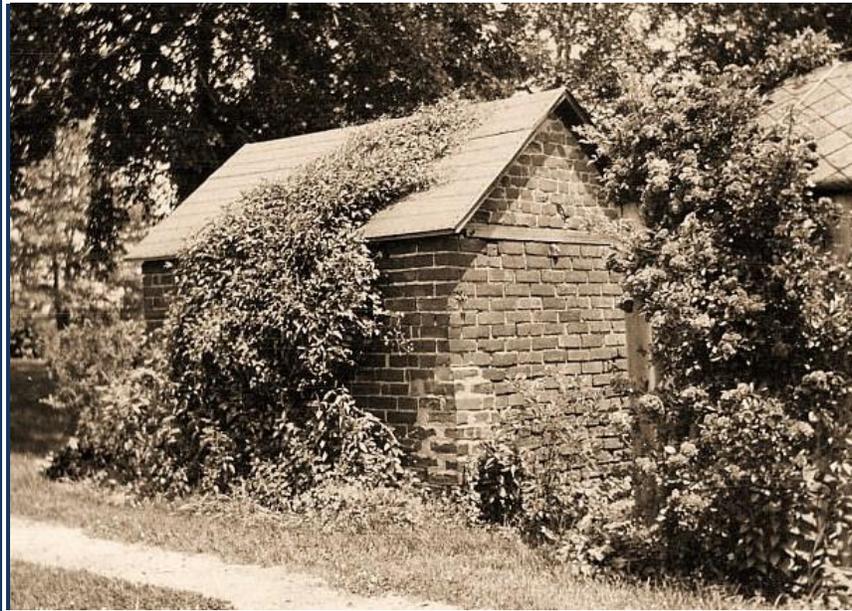


Photo of exterior of Heck family smokehouse, 1941.

Nearby was the WOODSHED. Trees were cut down in the woods in winter, brought here, sawed into proper lengths, split to size needed for the stoves. Here also was the coal-bin; coal was used in living room and kitchen.

The BARN was some 100 yards west of these other buildings; in the center was a large open space, where wagons and machinery were used from time to time. It had large double doors opening out both back and front. On the north side were bins for oats, grain, corn, etc. for feeding the horses and chickens. Here also was a machine for cutting corn-stalks into small pieces to feed the cows. (I shall always remember that machine, for, when I was a small child I was watching the men cut the stalks, and, as they were stuck, not coming out as they should have been, I put my hand in to help them down, and, with the machine going, I almost lost 4 fingers on my right hand. I owe it to Father that the Doctor didn't amputate them. Father quickly stuck my hand in Radway's Ready Relief to sterilize them; then took me in the horse and wagon to old Dr. Zabriskie in Westwood. What they did there I don't remember, but, thanks to Father I still have all five fingers, though scars can still be seen on 3 of them).

On the extreme north side of this building, partitioned off from the rest, was where Grandpa's Phaeton (a light 4-wheeled horse-drawn wagon seating 2 people) and big Market Wagon were kept. Here also various small farm tools were kept – shovels, spades, hoes, hand rakes, pitch-forks, etc. We had 4 or 5 horses used for pulling all the various wagons, plows, harrows, mowing

machine, etc. These various machines were used to prepare the ground for planting fields of wheat, rye, oats, buckwheat and grass in the fall, and for planting fields of corn and potatoes in the spring; also for pulling the lumber wagon to and from the woods (sometimes on runners to go over the snow) to get logs and leaves to spread in the cow stable and cover places in the garden in late fall and winter. This lumber wagon was also used (after thorough cleaning and lined with hay) for sleigh-ride parties in winter. Of course, we were dressed warm, had all kinds of blankets, with hot bricks at our feet, and jingle bells on the horses.

To the south of the Horse-Stable was the COW-STABLE, partly enclosed with stalls for 4 or 5 cows. They were fed in their separate stalls and left there through the night. From early spring until late fall the cows were put out in a big pasture lot to eat grass. In winter they were kept in the large outside stable, in the center of which (under cover) was a big rack, 4 or 5 ft. up from the ground; this rack held corn-stalks and hay for the cows to munch on between their regular feedings. When the cows had calves, if they weren't kept to raise as cows, they were sold to a Butcher in Westwood, and often exchanged for various cuts of beef or lamb.

Below the cow-stable was another shed, closed on 3 sides and open to the east; here more wagons, sleighs, dump-cart and other machinery were kept. Above was another enclosed part where excess hay was stored.

Periodically all the stables were cleaned out, and the manure was spread in the garden and over the fields. Fertilizers and lime were bought at the Westwood Feed Store.

In June hay-making began; also grain was harvested and stored in the Barn. A field of grass would be mowed one day, left to dry in the sun one day, and raked up and put in heaps the next day; then, if weather permitted and showers hadn't come to retard the progress, the big hay-wagon came along. One man (sometimes 2 if neighbors helped) on the wagon to place the hay evenly over the wagon, while 2 men on the ground threw the hay up on the wagon. When the load was wide enough and high enough, it was driven into the barn, where 2 men threw the hay from the wagon up into the loft over the horse-stalls, and 2 men placed it there properly. This procedure was repeated until the whole field of hay was safely stored away. Sometimes a load of hay was sold right from the field. Field after field was harvested in this manner, including wheat, rye and oats.

When the men worked at these tasks, Mother made large pails of lemonade with ginger in it, which we children took to whatever place the men were, to refresh them in hot weather. We did this also when the men were hoeing corn or potatoes.

During the very busy times, several neighbors were hired as extra help; at such times we had to give them all breakfast and dinner, and Mother prepared such big meals for them:

Breakfast – Oatmeal, bacon or ham and eggs, bread, butter & coffee.

Dinner – Meat (often chicken because we always had plenty) dumplings, potatoes, vegetables, coleslaw or lettuce, cucumbers or tomatoes, coffee, bread and butter, and usually pie for dessert

We girls had to help Mother prepare these meals (vacation from school), and wash and dry all those dishes and pots & pans (No dishwashers in those days). The boys had to work in the fields.



Louise Heck's nephew, David, on top of a haystack on the Heck farm, date of photo uncertain.

In the fall of the year, Mr. Storms would come with his big “threshing” machine, which was put in the center of the barn; men would be in the loft above where the grain was harvested in the summer, and feed it into the machine below; the grain would flow out on the side into the waiting receptacles below; the straw was thrown on a big heap in back of the barn. This often took several days, depending on how much wheat, rye and oats we had; during this time, too, neighbors were hired to help, and again we had to feed them breakfast and dinner each day. When the threshing machine left, the men put the straw away again – some was sold, some put in stacks outside, and some in the loft above. Oats was fed to the horses; some straw was used in the chicken houses, dog coops, and stables.

The grain was taken to Bogert's Mill in Harrington Park and ground into flour (wheat and rye) from which Mother made all our bread, coffee cake, cakes, pies, etc. (I forgot the pancakes, waffles, biscuits and corn bread). Usually she baked enough on Saturday to last us for the week (No additives or preservatives). Yeast cakes and baking soda and powder were bought at the grocery store in Westwood.

We had a large kitchen stove for cooking, baking and heating that room, but it was seldom kept over-night. Each morning paper and chips were put in to start the fire; then small pieces of wood were added until it got going good, when larger pieces were constantly added. The ashes had to be taken out every few days, and thrown in the holes in the driveways, but wood ashes were spread around in the garden. In summer, to keep the house as cool as possible, we had a smaller range in an outside kitchen, fed with wood.

In the sitting room we had quite an elaborate looking stove, fed by coal, and kept going all night during winter. In summer this stove was taken down and stored some place. The coal was brought up by the hired men from the wood-shed in a “scuttle”. Here, too, the ashes had to be taken out regularly. Sometimes we children had the chore of picking up the boxes of chips and small wood for the stoves.

Between the barn and the house we had a large small vegetable garden, enclosed by a white picket fence, with a small gate near the house and a large gate near the barn. There were two long arbors of purple Concord grapes in this garden, a small bush of Red Grapes, also Currant and Gooseberry bushes. Mother and Grandma planted the vegetables in the spring and summer – beets, carrots, onions, radishes, parsley, leek, cucumbers, beans, peas, spinach, etc. Celery, melons, cabbage, turnips, pumpkins and squash were planted out in the fields, also pole lima beans. We had an asparagus bed, blackberries, red and yellow raspberries, blackcaps, strawberries and elderberries – all out in the fields.



Margaret Heck, Louise’s mother, in the family’s vegetable garden, year unknown.

We children had to help everywhere; weeding was our bug-bear. When the vegetables were ready to use we helped gather them in, tied some in bunches and got them ready to be put in the market wagon for sale the next day. Grandpa and Grandma took them twice a week in summer to customers in Tenafly, Cresskill and Englewood. When they were through selling there, they took what they couldn’t sell to a Butcher on Palisade Avenue in Englewood and exchanged them (when they could) for a steak or piece of beef or lamb, which made a change for our table; otherwise, we lived on chicken, pork products and eggs.

Grandma was sick for a long time in 1899 until she went home to be with the Lord on April 17, 1900. When she could no longer go with Grandpa to market, we children had to take turns going with him.

One of the hired men milked the cows, brought the milk to the house in old-fashioned pails with a strainer spout. Mother strained the milk into pans on shelves in our milk-cellar, where it was dark and cool. At certain times, she separated the cream from the top of the pans with a "skimmer". Some cream was used on the table for some things; the rest was put in a churn and made into butter; the buttermilk was given to any of us who liked it (I didn't) and the rest was fed to the chickens and pigs. Mother made pot cheese from the skimmed milk when it became sour. Nothing went to waste. What we didn't use, went to the chickens, pigs, dogs and cats.

TREES: Lots of shade from Maples, Walnut, Oak and Elm trees.

Nuts: Hickory, Walnut and Chestnut

Apples: Early sweet red, Sour Bough, Pound Sweet, Fall Pippins, Winter Pippins, Gravensteins, Greening, Northern Spies, Russets, Baldwins, and some without names. No spraying.

Cherries: Black Oxhearts, Red Oxhearts, White, Red Sour and Wild Black

Peaches: Albertas and small White

Pears: Bartlett, Russet and Kiefer

Plum: Red and Purple

WATER: We had a large cistern in back of the house which caught the rain water that fell on the front and back tin roofs of the house. This was used in the house from a pump in the kitchen for washing dishes, clothes and baths.

For washing clothes, we had a sweet old colored [*sic*] woman, Betsy Thompson, come every Monday to do the washing, with Mother's supervision. A scrubbing board was put in one tub of hot water, and Kirkman's yellow Soap to get the dirt out. Some clothes were so dirty they had to be put in a boiler on the kitchen range and then put in the first tub for scrubbing. The second tub was for rinsing the clothes: a square of bluing paper was put in the third tub for bleaching. Long lines of nice clean wash were seen each week at our house.

At the foot of the hill below the woodshed was a driven well fed by springs; it was enclosed above, with a pulley at the top through which a chain was attached to a wooden bucket to draw the water to the surface. The hired men brought this water to the house in tin pails, and was used exclusively for drinking and cooking.

At the foot of the hill, below the paint-shop, was another well fed by springs. This was operated by a long horizontal pole, at the top of which another pole was placed in a swivel; at the tip end of this pole a wooden bucket was attached. Here the men filled a wooden trough with water for the cows and horses. This too was good for us drink.

Sometimes, when we had a summer drought, when the cistern was dry because of lack of rain from the roofs, Grandpa would put a large wooden barrel on some kind of wooden sleigh, to which a horse was hitched, and go down to the brook running through a swamp we owned on the

north side of Old Hook Road, fill the barrel with water from that brook, pail after pail and bring it up to the house to be used sparingly for everything but drinking and cooking.

About 1917-1918 Arthur dug a trench from the back of our house to what is now Main Street (near the north side of David's house) where pipes were laid and hooked up to the street water, and modern plumbing was then put in our kitchen and the room above it was made into a bathroom. The plumbing work was done by Irving Demarest's father.



Collecting water from spring-fed well on Heck Farm, year of photo unknown.

As children, we worked at everything necessary for living on a farm.

In the house, we had kerosine oil lamps; kerosine was bought at Van Emburg & Bogert's Grocery Store in Westwood, on the corner where the People's Trust Company now stands. We girls took turns filling the lamps and cleaning the chimneys every day. The wicks were trimmed every day, but taken out and washed every Saturday. We swept the house with a broom and dust-pan (no vacuum cleaners then); we dusted, kept things picked up and in place, made beds, emptied and cleaned the bed-chambers; there was a bowl, basin and slop-jar in every bedroom, which had to be cleaned every day. We had no inside plumbing in the house those days, but had to go to an outside "John" behind the smoke-house when nature called. That wasn't too bad in summer (except when someone else was there, and we had to wait), but in winter it was awful.

When the horse and carriage was used at night, a lantern was lit and fastened beneath the middle of the wagon. The carriage with the fringe on top and Grandpa's Phaeton had kerosine lamps on each side.

We usually had two dogs – one tied beside the garden gate near the house, and the other down near the barn. They were never allowed to run loose. When they barked someone looked to see the reason; sometimes it was only a stray animal, but sometimes it was people and we had to find out if it was “friend or foe”. Quite a number of tramps would come around for food. I never knew Mother to run anyone away but we were careful not to let them in the house. An old peddler “Gilbert” came around about 3 or 4 times a year, with a big pack on his back. When he opened it up to show his things, we were quite excited; Mother and Grandmother always bought something from him – usually a nice piece of material for a dress. After a while, when he came around, he would stay over-night in one of [the] bedrooms, and after breakfast, join us in our morning devotions before he left. He was respected and liked by all our neighbors.

We always had numerous cats and kittens to catch mice and rats at the barn; they did not come in the house, but were fed scraps from our table, and given milk and water at the house.

Outside, from early spring until late autumn, we had to plant corn, 3 kernels to each hill, and potatoes; hoe and weed them, pick a crate of strawberries before we went to school. In the fall we had to pick up and sort potatoes according to size, and husk corn. The boys climbed the trees to pick the fruit, and did many of the same chores as we girls.

When I was quite small, maybe 4 or 5 years old, I remember Mother having City boarders in the summer months. I distinctly remember a Lena Will, because she was so nice to me. From the story handed down through the family, a Mr. McGowan, another boarder, fell in love with my Lena, and she with him, but her cousin, another boarder, Lena Barkeley, wouldn't hear of the affair, and she whisked Lena Will away quickly, and that was the end of that romance. Later we learned my Cinderella Lena died of a broken heart.

Another summer a Mr. and Mrs. Wetmore and their son Frank boarded with us. Mr. Wetmore went to business in New York every day, and she lolled around on the porch, the lawn and in a hammock under the trees, while Frank and I got into all sorts of scrapes, but I was the one to be punished for them.

During our childhood years, Uncle Henry, who was then a Pastor of the German Methodist Church in Hartford, Conn., Lawrence, Mass., and Philadelphia, Pa., successively, often came to visit his Father and Mother and our family at the Homestead. About 1895, to get his family out of the hot city during school vacations, he and Aunt Lizzie came to stay with us from just before 4th of July until Labor Day.

We had six bedrooms upstairs; Grandma and Grandpa had one; Father and Mother with crib for George or Arthur had another; Uncle Harry and Aunt Lizzie had the large front room with two double beds and a cradle or crib; Dan had a cot in the hall; May and I with Bessie and Della slept in another room in a double bed crosswise; Aunt Tillie, a Church friend of theirs, came with them to help take care of the children, had the last bed-room. Often it was too hot to sleep, and many of us brought our pillows downstairs and tried to sleep on the parlor floor.

You can imagine what good times we had when everything went smoothly, but when sickness, scrapping and quarrelling occurred, it was awful.

Linda Reis, (a neighbor girl) [Linda was the daughter of William and Carolina Reis, also German immigrants who lived farther east, on the north side of Old Hook Road] came up several days a week to help Mother clean and do the chores. May and I had our regular chores, but the summer was hot and long, and stormy weather interfered with everything and everybody.

This went on every summer until Uncle Henry moved to Rochester, N.Y.

To add to the crowd, Uncle George, Aunt Mayona and Orrella, from Staten Island, were squeezed in somewhere for the 4th of July week-end. Uncle George always brought fireworks, torpedoes, and candy; also his camera to take pictures. See picture [below] of a typical 4th of July gathering on our front lawn, with one or two children added each year.



July 4th, 1895 gathering of the extended Heck family, John Heck standing with branch in hand, to the right.

We had a flag pole on the front lawn and the biggest flag possible in those days. It was always put up on all holidays. Some years later it was struck by lightning twice and eventually taken down. Dan, working with the Atlas Portland Cement Company, came out week-ends, and somehow we built a tennis court on that part of the lawn. We played quite a good deal and loved the game and it gave us exercise. Later, when Dan was transferred to Chicago, Ill., the court was abandoned.

We all went to the swimming hole down in the brook whenever we could, and the men caught many fish and eels in that brook. Mother and Father with other friends occasionally went crabbing at Alpine on the Hudson River.

SCHOOL: We went to the same school on Old hook Road that Father and his brothers did. Miss Jeanette Romaine, from Hackensack, was the teacher of all grades in one big room. She came by train from Hackensack to Etna every day. Everyone walked to and from school, but on stormy days, those of us who went east from the school were fortunate because Mr. Bogert would come with his big feed wagon and take all going our way, dropping us off at our gates.

School opened each morning at 9 A.M. with a gospel or patriotic song, with the teacher playing the organ, Bible reading and all reciting The Lord's Prayer. We had a 15-minute recess at 10 A.M. and an hour for lunch (12 to 1), which we brought from home and ate under the lovely maple trees in good weather, at our desks inside when the weather was bad.

There was a pump in the center of the playground. We played all sorts of games after eating our lunch. In winter we went sleigh-riding down the cemetery hill on to the pond; also much skating, but we had to be careful of some open spaces where springs rose the water to the surface at the first sign of a thaw.

Mother made most of our clothes; we had 2 or 3 dresses for school and a Sunday dress; we wore aprons over our dresses to school; had long hair combed back into one or two braids and tied with ribbons, and bangs in front; we had high-buttoned shoes; when stormy we had to wear rubbers, and in winter leggings, buttoned up the side to the knees (no zippers then). We wore knitted hoods, mittens, sweaters and heavy coats.

During the school year we had Flag-raising every day, special Thanksgiving, Christmas, Arbor Day (planting a young tree each year), and Decoration Day programs in the afternoon, to which our parents were invited; various pupils recited poetry, or readings; all sang the songs appropriate to the season of the year.

Our lessons were many and hard; we studied some in school while other classes were reciting, but most studying was done after supper had been cleared away, at the kitchen table with oil lamps. We had tests every 2 months, and report cards were sent home to our parents every month; in June we had our final examination, and those with a mark of 70 were promoted to the next grade or graduated.

The last few years Mrs. Knowner, from Rivervale, taught the lower grades in a little room to the west of the main building.

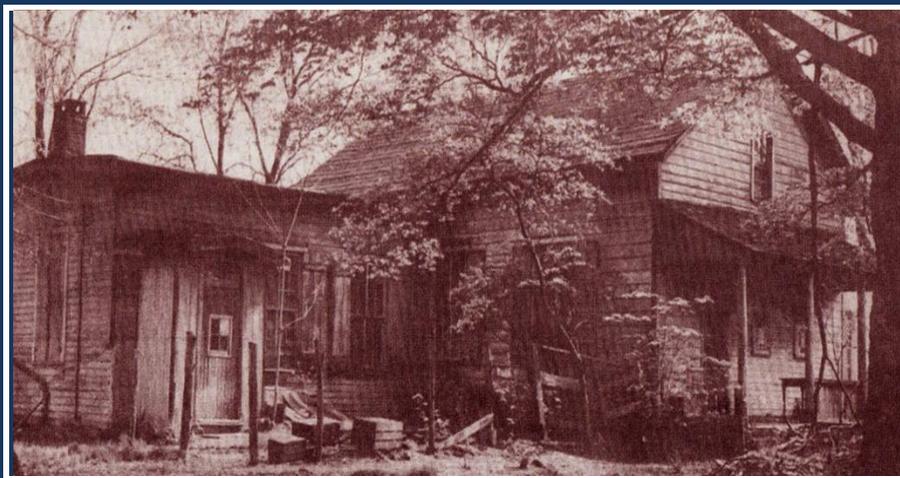
There was no discriminatory segregation of pupils in those days. In 1898 we had a great influx of Italians in Etna, and quite a few children with almost unpronounceable names came to school; we also had a Turkish family and a Colored [*sic*] family. All were assimilated into the school system without any difficulty.

In June, 1899 we had the first Graduation Exercises in Block's Hall [now the Emerson Hotel] in Etna. Only four girls passed the examination and were graduated that year. We each had to recite

a piece; there was a fan drill skit with all the girls in the school taking part, some patriotic songs, a speech by Mr. Terhune, the Bergen County School Superintendent, after which he presented diplomas to the graduates.

Miss Romaine resigned at that time, and Mr. John Alfred Ackerman, who lived in Etna, and had been teaching in the Oradell School for a number of years, became the new teacher; he taught in the same building for one year, while the new school building was being built on Linwood Avenue in Etna.

The old school building stood idle for several years, then sold to a private party, who changed it into livable quarters; this property was later sold to the Westwood Laundry. When the building was demolished, the Marek family, living at 650 Old Hook Road, took all the lumber from the building and built a new building from it, which now stands behind their house, and owned by Mr. Bruce Marek. [There is some discrepancy among sources as to exactly what happened to the old school building; some note that the building was moved in its entirety to the Marek property, rather than demolished and used for building materials, as Louise Heck states here.]



Picture of the old school building on Old Hook Road, which Louise Heck attended. At the time of the photo, the building was no longer in use and reflects the lack of maintenance.

George and Arthur went to the new school on Linwood Avenue for one year, then went to Rivervale for another year, but returned to the Linwood Avenue School for graduation.

In the fall of 1899 I went to the Hackensack High School – the only High School in this part of the County. I took a 2-yr. Commercial Course and was graduated in June, 1901. During September and October and in May and June each year I rode my bicycle to Hackensack; the rest of the months of the school year I commuted on the Erie R.R. from Westwood station, paying \$4.75 for the monthly commutation ticket, and was given the other 25 cents for spending money.

We took our lunch from home, eating it in the Gymnasium. Our Graduation Exercises were held in the First Reformed Church on the Green in Hackensack.

May studied dressmaking with Tillie Haring in Westwood, and later with Mrs. Blauvelt on Essex Street, Hackensack.

GERMAN SUNDAY SCHOOL. Most of our neighbors were German; some went to their respective churches Sunday mornings, but about 1901 or 1902 some of them got together and started an afternoon Sunday School from 3 to 4 P.M. It was held in a little house on the eastern tip of our property. The men built long benches from lumber furnished by the Hecks; a few chairs were donated for the teachers and a table and chair for the Superintendent. About 30 or 40 children came from Etna, Rivervale, Harrington Park, Haworth and the Flatts. Sometimes a Pastor visited us. We also had Children's Day and Christmas programs, and summer picnics were held in our woods or on the grounds around the house we met in on Sundays. Each child was given a little card in English (by this time all the children were attending English speaking schools) with a colored picture of the lesson for the next Sunday, and a Golden Text to be memorized.

Each year I have been in touch with several pupils who attended that little afternoon Sunday School, at Christmas and Birthdays, and many times we have talked about that little Sunday School. Now, all but one of those friends have gone home to be with the Lord, and to my surprise that one this last Christmas wrote that she still has a bunch of those little cards which she takes great pleasure in showing to her Grandchildren, telling them the lesson stories, and how much they meant in molding her life.

A tragic thing happened when an epidemic of Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever broke out in the neighborhood; one girl died, and several families had one or more sick; George had Scarlet Fever, but recovered. This caused the closing down of these afternoon Sunday School sessions, and it was difficult to resume the School.

During our childhood years, Father had been elected Tax Collector for Washington Township, which at that time took in [what is today] Hillsdale, Rivervale, Emerson and Washington Township; he traveled the length and breadth of the Township in his "horse and gig" collecting bills. Some people came to our house to pay their bills, and if Father wasn't home Mother took their money and receipted their bills. He was interested in politics throughout Bergen County.

In 1905-1906 he was elected Assemblyman from Bergen County, and was in Trenton most of the week during fall, winter and early spring. For many years after that he had various positions in the State House there.

[On] June 14, 1907 Father and five other men met to form the First National Bank of Westwood, and on July 5, 1907 they were elected as Bank Directors. Some years later Father was made a Vice President. January 8, 1946 Father resigned as Director and Vice President, and George was elected to take his place as Director.

SOME PHOTOS FROM THE HECK FAMILY ALBUM



Photo of the Heck farm, with corn stalks in foreground, date unknown.



Louise's Uncle George on the Heck farm, showing baby pig to his daughter, Orrella.



Photo of barn and outbuildings on Heck farm in winter, date uncertain.



Photo of outbuildings on Heck farm in summer, date uncertain.



Photo of Louise's grandmother, Christina Kuhn Heck, taken on the Fourth of July, 1898.



Extended family gathering of the Hecks, celebrating Labor Day, 1918. Louise is sitting on the bench, farthest to the right; her father, John Heck, is standing in the back row, to the left of the man holding the flag.



Photo of back of Heck house, looking across field, date uncertain.



Large flower garden at back of Heck home, June, 1941.



1918 photo of Louise's sister-in-law, Mabel Heck, holding hay bundles.



Photo, date unknown, of Louise's parents and aunt and uncle. From the left, Aunt Lizzie, Uncle Henry, father John and mother Margaret. Lizzie and Margaret were sisters who married the Heck brothers, Henry and John.



Horse and buggy at back of Heck home, date of photo uncertain.



Photo of Heck home, circa 1960s, not long before it was torn down.



1890 studio photo of the Heck children – from left to right, Lizzie May, Henry and Louise.



1890s photo of Old Hook Road, looking east, present site of Pascack Valley Hospital on the left.

