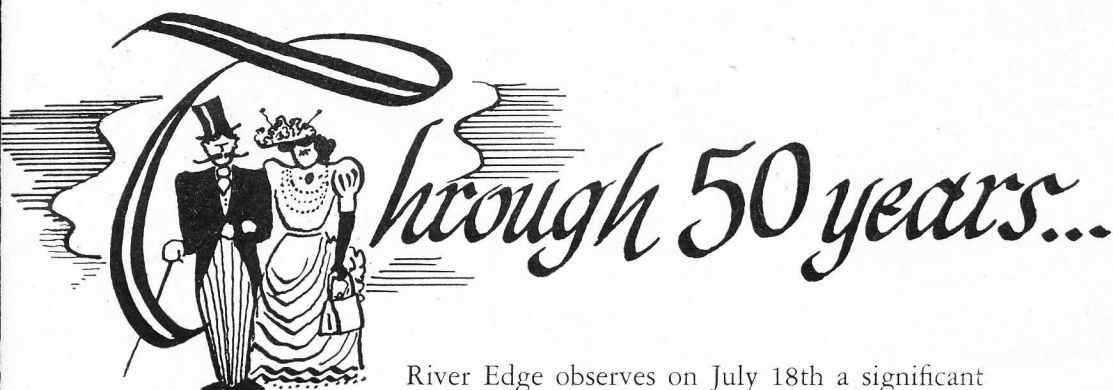


# 50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of the Borough of RIVER EDGE





*Through 50 years...*

River Edge observes on July 18th a significant milestone in its history – its incorporation as a borough fifty years ago.

We pause at this time not only in celebration of this event but to revive memories of a past that is rich in American traditions. It is with pardonable pride that we recall River Edge's place during the days of the Revolutionary War.

As we pass our 50th milestone, all of us may take deep pride in the great progress which has been made by our borough. Throughout the years each succeeding governing body successfully has maintained the high standards which have made River Edge an ideal community.

We take pride in the progress of our borough, its efficient municipal services and its excellent school system.

With a continuation of the same community spirit which always has been an integral part of our borough, River Edge shall continue to grow and prosper. To that end all of us pledge our humble efforts.

*Martin J. Fuhr*

MAYOR

1894

RIVER EDGE, NEW JERSEY

1944



# Early history of River Edge

By FRANCIS C. KOEHLER

In observing the 50th anniversary of the Borough of River Edge as a municipal corporation, and tracing the changes which have taken place during the half century of its existence as a municipal corporation, we should be mindful of the fact that the area comprising the borough has a rich historical background dating to the settlement of New Amsterdam itself, 300 years ago.

In Colonial days the village of River Edge first known as *Demarest Landing* and then as *Old Bridge* and the village of North Hackensack, first known as New Bridge and then as Cherry Hill lay in the township of New Barbadoes created in 1693 and the highway running thru these two villages was called *Steenraapi* or *Stoney Road* and later *The Stone Arabia Road*.

The Demarest, Voorhis and Zabriskie families were the pioneer settlers. The site of David Demarests' Mill on the Hackensack River became known as *Demarest Landing* and later when the bridge was constructed it became known as *Old Bridge*. This was one of the great shipping points in early colonial days. Iron from the Ringwood Mines was carted to Demarest Landing for shipment to New York and thence to London long before the Revolution. About 1743 another bridge was constructed about two miles down the river and was called the *New Bridge*. Here John Zabriskie built his home and mill, and New Bridge became a well known shipping point until the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1766 one of the colonies' famous Latin Schools was conducted here by the Rev. Stephanus Van Voorhees and Francis Barber both Princeton graduates. The only stage to Jersey City in the Hackensack area ran from New Bridge twice a week.

The New Bridge became famous during the War for Independence. It was the focal point of the Hudson River campaigns. Here on November 19, 1776 Washington led his ragged troops across the bridge to safety

in Hackensack, while General Greene held the pursuing Hessians under Cornwallis in check by destroying part of the bridge; in 1777 Colonel Aaron Burr fought his first engagement here; in 1778 Cornwallis was encamped here with 5000 men, artillery, cavalry and infantry; in the summer of 1780 six divisions of the Continental army under the personal command of General Washington lay in camp between Hackensack and Oradell with General Headquarters in the Steuben House; in 1781 the French Army under the Count de Rochambeau crossed the New Bridge into Hackensack on its way to Yorktown.

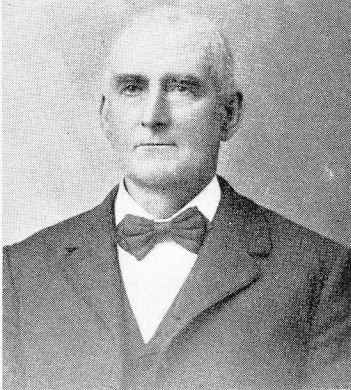
In 1871 several townships were created out of the great township of New Barbadoes created in 1683, among them being Midland Township which embraced the present villages of Oradell and New Milford, west of the Hackensack River, River Edge, North Hackensack, Maywood, Rochelle Park and Paramus. In 1894 twenty-eight localities dissatisfied with the township administration of their affairs took advantage of an Act of the Legislature known as the "Borough Act" to set up local governments of their own. Two of these localities, River Edge and Cherry Hill (now North Hackensack) separated by one and one-half miles of farmland, became an incorporated municipality known as Riverside Borough. The total population numbered 150 persons, fifty of whom resided in the Cherry Hill area and 100 in River Edge area.



*Kinderkamack Road as it appeared in 1890. Rose Benedict is out for a ride with her pony Jack.*







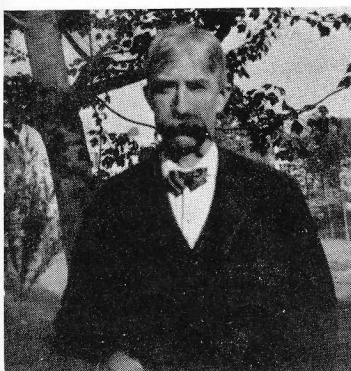
NICHOLAS R. VOORHIS,  
member first Council



NATHANIEL BOARD ZABRISKIE,  
member first Council



FREDERICK CRUM,  
member first Council



JAMES D. CHRISTIE,  
member first Council

# *Politics* **in the Gay 90's**

Politics was strictly a masculine sport in River Edge during the Gay Nineties. It had to be that way for many an argument around the cracker barrel or at the polls led to fistic duels. Candidates for office did little in the way of speech-making. The voters preferred to hear their political issues transformed into songs rendered by the community glee club. If anyone felt oratorically inclined at one of these political songfests he could hold forth until someone arose to out-talk him. Torchlight parades were popular on election eves.

Speaking of politics reminds us that it was not until November 4, 1930 that the name River Edge officially was adopted even though residents used this name for many years. Prior to 1930 the borough actually was known as Riverside. This presented some difficulty and confusion because there was a borough by the same name in Hunterdon County, N. J. Mail and telephone calls intended for Riverside, Hunterdon County, were being received here as late as 1930. The voters that year approved the change in name by the overwhelming count of 523 to 97.



JOHN R. VOORHIS,  
first Assessor



J. D. HOLDRUM,  
first Tax Collector



*Steuben House, home of John Zabriskie, Jr. Remodeled 1751. Washington's Headquarters in 1780. Now headquarters of Bergen County Historical Society.*

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## **Washington** WAS HERE! ★ ★ ★ ★

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★ No history of River Edge is complete without mention of the part it played in the Revolutionary War. On Brower Hill, the present site of J. Pell Zabriskie's homestead, was located the Revolutionary war earthworks. Sometimes these fortifications were held by the British and sometimes by the Americans according to the fortunes of war. The Steuben house, now a famous historical site, shared much the same fate. Erected in 1757 by John and Peter Zabriskie it was originally used as a gristmill. Since the brothers were Tory sympathizers, the estate was confiscated and deeded to Baron von Steuben in 1783. He later sold it back to the Zabriskies. In 1926 the house was taken over by the State. It was recently restored by the WPA under sponsorship of the New Jersey Historic Sites Commission and turned over to the Bergen County Historical Society as a public museum.

When Washington's army retreated from Fort Lee, the General rode his horse to the brow of Brower Hill where he watched a straggling column of his men plodding wearily through the rain and mud along the road from New Bridge, down Rondehook road toward the Green in Hackensack.

Grim reminders of the war still are being unearthed. Musket balls frequently are turned up by plows on the Zabriskie estate.

A part of the boundary line between River Edge Borough and Hackensack is Zabriskie's Pond. During the Revolutionary war there stood a grist mill on the south bank. The British, while pursuing General Washington's Army, were tempted by the appetizing aroma of freshly baked bread, and stopped to demand some. Dame Christie, their unwilling hostess, readily acceded to their demands. Never did bread take so long to bake and cool sufficiently to be cut and eaten. The British received their feast and resumed their pursuit, but with much less hope of catching their quarry, who had taken advantage of the two hour delay.

Just over the hill on Howland Avenue is a culvert which for many years bore the gruesome name of 'Spook'. The place, supposedly haunted by the ghosts of a number of soldiers who died from poisoned cider given them by the neighbors, was seldom passed after nightfall.

These are but a few Revolutionary tales that make River Edge truly an historical spot.



*Looking west on River Edge Road many years ago.*

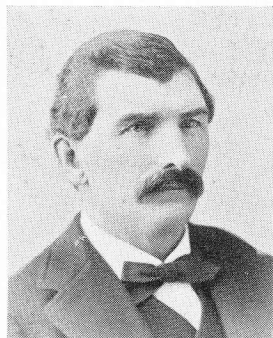




JOHN G. WEBB, 1894-1897

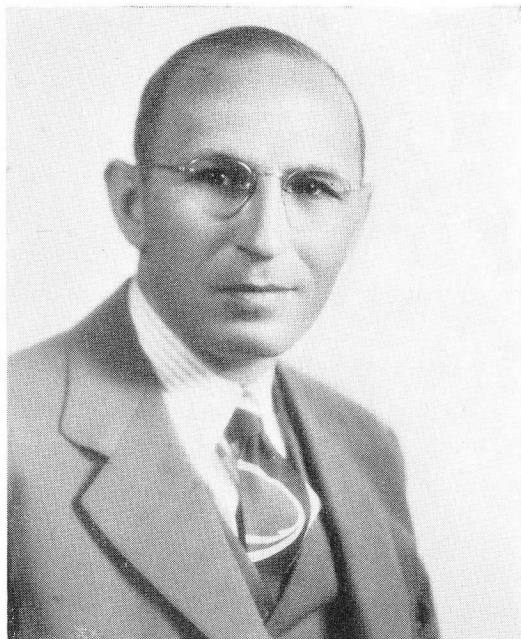


J. A. BROHEL,  
1897-1899 ; 1904-1912



D. A. ZABRISKIE, 1899-1900

★  
PARADE  
OF  
MAYORS  
1894 - 1944  
★



MARTIN J. FERBER, 1938-



A. Z. BOGERT, 1912-1929



ELMER HOWELL, 1930-1931

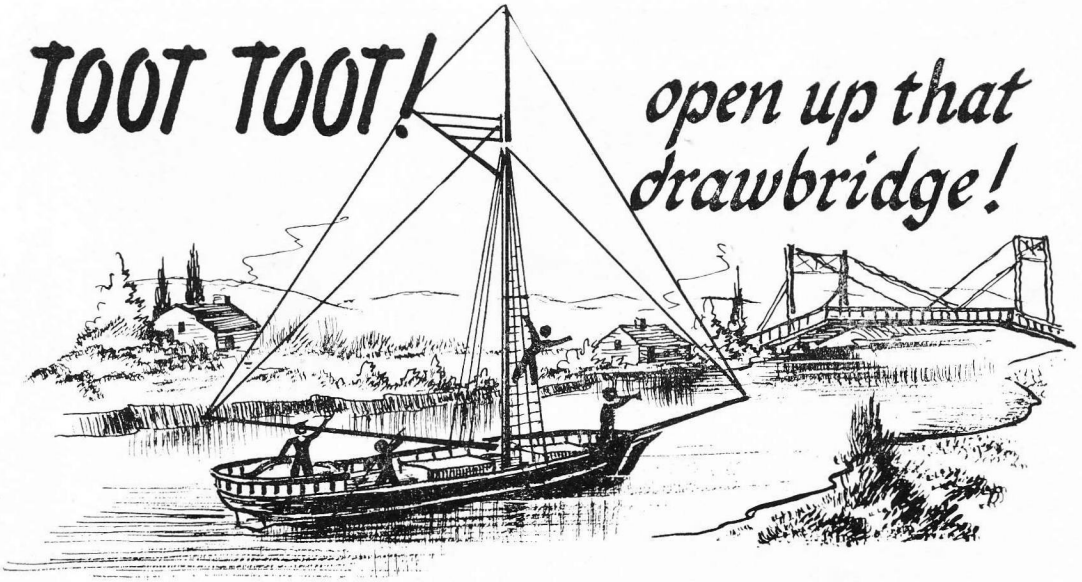


J. PELL ZABRISKIE,  
1931-1938



# TOOT TOOT!

# *open up that drawbridge!*



The Hackensack River which winds its way through River Edge, was used by the early settlers as a chief means of transportation for both passengers and freight. During the winter when ice coated the river there was no traffic, but by April 1 tug boats began to appear towing large scows heavily laden with merchandise for the stores located nearby. Docks where they could discharge and take on cargoes were conveniently located on the banks. Barrels of lime, lumber, bricks from the Little Ferry brick yards, coal and manure from the city stables were some of the cargoes. The continued tooting of the tug's whistle was the signal for the bridge tender to summon his helpers and set about the task of opening the drawbridge.

One of the tugs that plied these waters was the "Wesley Stoney" owned and operated by Captain Anderson Zabriskie and Captain Henry Lozier, both residents of Cherry Hill. Quite often a scow would be abandoned by the tug at New Bridge as the river above there was too narrow and winding to make towing possible. The scow's crew then waited for the incoming tide then poled the scow and its load to its proper dock. It took expert handling of the sweep used as a rudder and the poles to prevent the unwieldy craft from going aground on the mud banks at the sharp bends.

There were two schooners which also made the river trips, the "Jimmy Dunbar" and the "Jennie Z.". The "Jennie Z." was owned by Captain Zabriskie and named for his youngest daughter. When these boats came

up the river under sail, a dismal tooting of a long tin horn warned the bridge tender, also the juvenile population of their approach. If their destination was above New Bridge, they too had to be propelled by poling. It was an exciting event for the small fry to sit on the bank and watch the passing of boats and the thrilling process of tying the scows up to the dock.

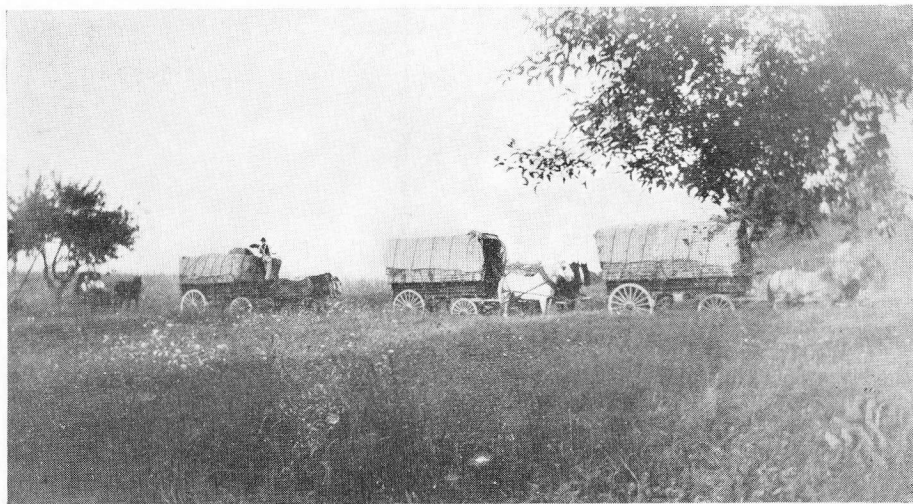
In 1876 The Hackensack Water Company erected a small pumping station on the bank of the river a short distance above the Steuben House. A reservoir was built on top of Brower hill on land purchased from John Bogert, into which the water was pumped to supply Hackensack. As the whole town was on the Main Street level, the force of gravity was amply strong.

Owing to the tide, the water proved brackish, so the pump was abandoned and another site chosen at New Milford, where a dam was built and the nucleus formed for the present large utility company.

The type of soil along the riverbank near the site of the disposal plant was found to be suitable for making coarse pottery used for kitchen utensils. A kiln operating there did a thriving business. At the present time a modern glass and plastics plant is in operation a short distance south, near the old Lozier dock. Thus does history repeat itself.



*Produce from J. Pell Zabriskie's farm being trucked to market in covered wagons.*



# THE 3 R's OF YESTERYEAR

In tracing the history of education in River Edge we must go from the modern Roosevelt school to a one room, ungraded school which specialized in mathematics and penmanship. This school was

started in 1882. In 1890 the school was graded and another teacher was added.

The residents of that section then known as Cherry Hill received their education in 1893 in another district. After Cherry Hill and River Edge became one borough, in 1894, tuition was paid to the Township of Barbadoes (Hackensack), for the Cherry Hill pupils who attended Fairmount School.

A site was procured for a school at Cherry Hill in 1900. Miss Caroline Welantz was the first principal of this school, erected in 1901. Several years later pupils of the seventh and eighth grade transferred from school No. 1 and No. 2 in Hackensack, and were accommodated in the old Municipal Building now used only as a fire house.

Roosevelt school was completed and ready for occupation in 1919. The Junior High School was built west of Roosevelt School, in 1929. This provided a gymnasium, manual training and domestic science rooms and a cafeteria. The grades included the Freshman year of High School, the 9th grade.

Roosevelt school now has an enrollment of 644 pupils. This school is presided over by Dr. H. A. Davis, Supervising Principal, and a staff of 23 teachers.

*Today's 3 R's are taught in modern Roosevelt School.*



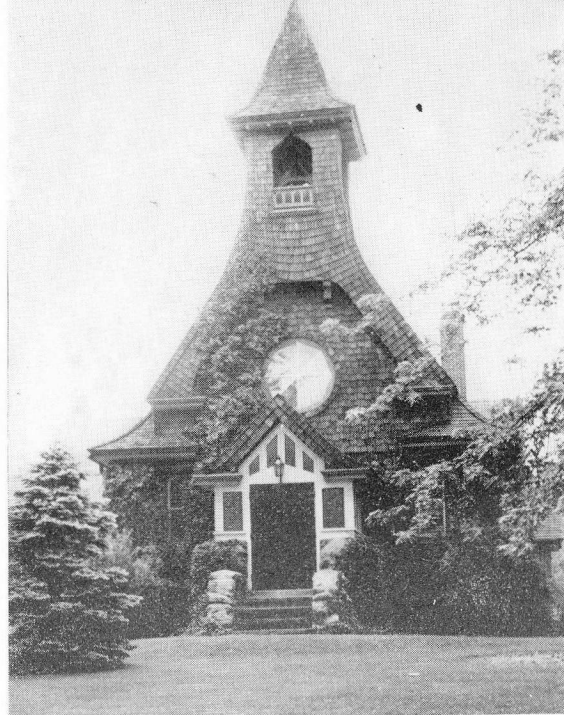
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## *The history of the Congregational Church dates back to 1899 . . .*

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THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH was erected in 1899 from the stones that once were a part of the Brown Stone Tavern, erected in 1719. A one-story structure of rough brown stone and massive oak timbers, hand-trimmed from the original trees, this historic building once served as headquarters for General George Washington and his staff. The solid iron backed fire place, brought from Holland, was illustrated with a picture of David's victory over Goliath. This plate was removed years later during a time when the building was deserted. At the entrance to the building was a stone bearing the crude inscription:

ANO	1719
AR	MIR

The second line represented the initials of the builder, Albert Riker and his wife.

The property upon which the tavern stood was bought by William Williams in 1789. His grandson and namesake granted the building and a portion of the ground to the community for a church in 1897. Stones from the old tavern were built into the walls and buttresses of the church. The River Edge Chapel Association was formed in 1895 for the purpose of building a permanent church. J. D. Holdrum was president of this Association. Other trustees included: Joseph A. Brohel, secretary; A. Z. Bogert, treasurer; William Martin and J. V. Vanderbeek.

Williams donated \$1,000 to the church building fund. After the organization of the church, his wife made a gift of another \$1,000 which cleared off all indebtedness.

The present church building was erected in 1899. The Parish House was built in 1921 and in 1930 and again in 1931, the Parish House was extended, buildings remodeled and the organ installed. The Ladies Auxiliary played a prominent part in furnishing the church. Mrs. Joseph A. Brohel was president of the Auxiliary during those early years. Through their efforts oak pews were installed, carpets were purchased, electric lights were installed and the building was decorated and painted.





## CHERRY HILL REFORMED

*is the town's Oldest Church*

IN 1875 several of the leading families of New Bridge and Cherry Hill organized the Cherry Hill Reformed Church. A plot of ground at the southwest corner of Main and Elizabeth Streets was donated by John A. Zabriskie of Hackensack and stones for the foundation were given by the Lozier family from the old stone house nearly opposite the church site. A bronze bell for the steeple was donated by Andrew C. Zabriskie of New York who had considerable property holdings in this vicinity. The building was erected and dedicated in 1876, with Rev. Wood as pastor. A large part of the congregation came from River Edge and New Bridge.

Among the active organizers of the church were members of the Zabriskie family, John C., and his wife Sarah Jane and their son Nathaniel B. and his wife Emma. Nathaniel B. Zabriskie was a member of the first consistory and remained in office until his death. His son, J. Pell Zabriskie, succeeded him. Another son Jesse F. Zabriskie was treasurer for a number of years.

On a midsummer night in 1892 the building was struck by lightning and burned to the ground despite the heroic efforts of a bucket brigade, which drew water from a neighboring well.

In 1895 the church building was again damaged by a tornado that swooped down upon Cherry Hill on July 13, moving the church eighteen inches off its foundation. Several beams from adjacent buildings were driven through the side walls. The congregation was reminded of the Biblical saying "Whom the Lord Loveth He Chasteneth."

After the death of Nathaniel B. Zabriskie in 1911, his widow gave to the church a beautiful memorial chancel window. Another Zabriskie memorial is the fine Skinner organ given after the death of their mother Emma L. Zabriskie in 1929.

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★   ★   ★

# Lutheran Church formed in 1920

★   ★   ★

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The Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church was started by a few interested people on September 19, 1920. Among those who attended the first service were: Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Whittaker, H. J. Whittaker, Mrs. J. Rumpf, the Misses Edith, Elsie and Gertrude Rumpf, J. Rumpf, Albert C. Ernst, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Tillack, and H. Klinger. Superintendent Zinzermeister officiated.

In January, 1921, the Congregation was organized with fifty members and a full council of twelve men. The congregation was incorporated in July of that same year.

In April property was purchased at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and River Edge Road. Less than three years after the date of the first service, held in the old school house, ground was broken on the chosen site. The church still stands on this same site.

David P. Longacre acted as supply Pastor from June, 1921 until December, 1921 when Rev. O. Becker was accepted as permanent Pastor. He served until his resignation, June, 1923, and H. S. Knabenschue supplied until June 1, 1924, when Rev. C. S. Schmidling assumed charge as Pastor.

William Frank and George C. Schwab are the only two "active charter members" remaining. They were elected to the Council in 1921, and are now serving their 23rd year.





*This house on Hackensack Avenue collapsed like an accordion.*

## *How that wind blew on July*

*Gil Jones didn't recognize his home after the wind had stopped blowing.*



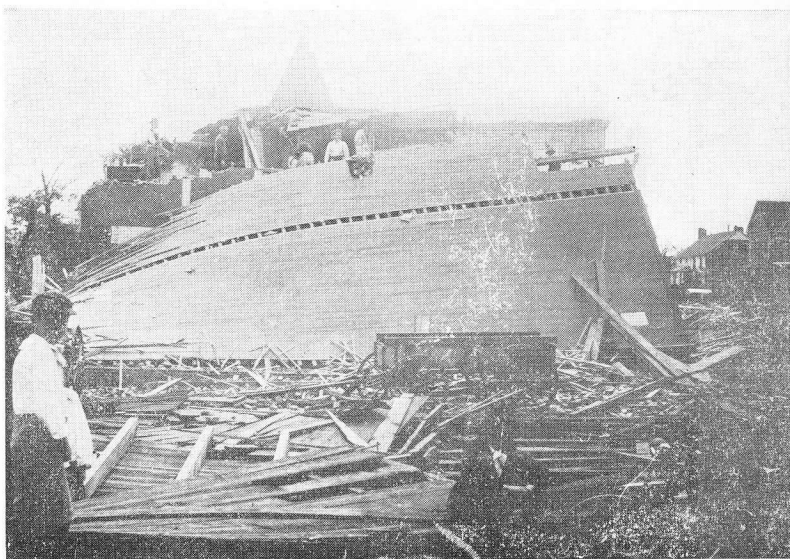


*The storm played strange tricks with the Vanderbeck homestead.*



*Dance floor from Friedman's Hotel was left standing at 45 degree angle. Gus Friedman was blown 225 feet and killed instantly.*

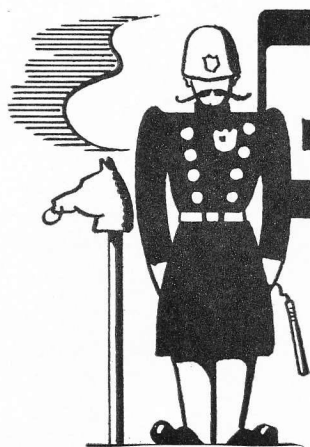
**13, 1895!**



*Curiosity seekers and souvenir hunters came on their cycles from miles around to see the damage.*







# G-MEN of 50 years ago...

Law and order didn't come to River Edge until after the borough's incorporation in 1894. At least that marked the first year that anyone was specifically charged with the responsibility of preserving peace in the old home town. To Voorhis Vanderbeck, Henry Becker, Charles Webber and Paul Blankenhorn go the honor of being the first borough marshals. Except for a wandering tramp knocking at a back door and asking for a cup of coffee, there was little excitement to warrant the attention of the four marshals. Many interesting yarns are told about the peace officers of 50 years ago, but the tallest story is about the time that Becker and Webber investigated a burglary and after searching long and hard for clues discovered the lock had been broken on the back door. "I'll bet the robbers got in this way," said Charlie, pointing to the bent lock. Another tale concerns one Marshal who was angry because he was told no legal evidence existed when he shot a stray dog and buried him. He got around this legal red tape by burying the dogs with their tails protruding from the grave.

The first volunteer police force was not organized until 1924 during the administration of A. Z. Bogert. A retired New York City Police Captain, Anthony F. Vachris, was named Chief. The first paid police officer was Harry Kohlman who was appointed in 1928. Charles Phillips became the second paid patrolman two years later and in 1931 Charles Naprstek, the present Police Chief, was named to the force. The first Police Court was established when Mayor Brohel appointed Francis C. Koehler as Recorder.

The ranks of the present force have been depleted somewhat by the enlistment in the naval sea-bees of Patrolman Daniel E. Earle, Jr. and

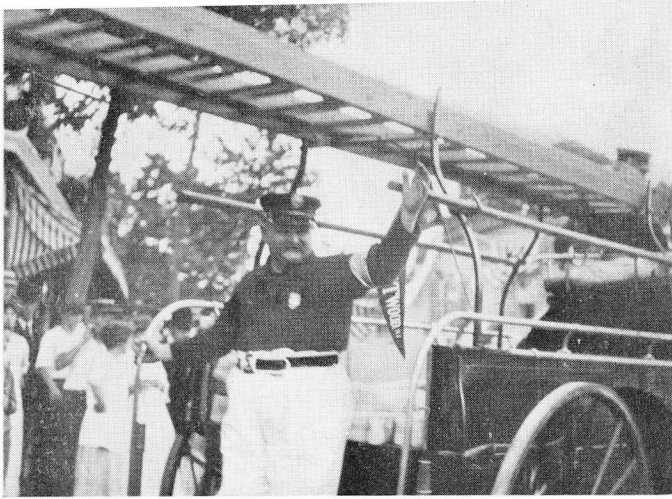
Everett Crandall. The Department now consists of the Chief, Sergeant Chester R. Whittaker, Patrolman Thomas McEwan, Officer Job Hayes and fourteen special officers. Limited manpower is, however, more than offset by excellent modern equipment, including two-way radio police cars.



### POLICE DEPARTMENT, INCLUDING VOLUNTEERS, IN 1926

*(top row) left to right: R. Trost, C. Phillips, H. A. Schnaars; (center row) left to right: H. Kohlman, C. Naprstek, H. Paxton, W. Naprstek, H. Andrese, B. Mahon, C. Beck; (bottom row) left to right: A. Gilardi, J. Thompson, R. Struble, W. G. Rock, Chief A. Vachris, T. Hochemier, P. Sapanara and G. De Martini.*





## Bucket Brigade formed after big fire in 1900

*Chief Frank Hoeffert waves from the rear of a horse-drawn hook and ladder wagon.*

A spectacular blaze which destroyed the Railroad Station led to the organization of River Edge's first volunteer Fire Department.

Town residents stood helplessly by that night in January, 1900 as flames devoured the station. Not a single piece of fire fighting equipment was available – not even buckets for the brigade. The men folks decided it was time to do something about this problem. About 25 held a meeting at Bogert's Hall a few weeks later and organized a Fire Department. They didn't have to wait long to go into action. Lightning set fire to the Gabber homestead and the newly-formed "smoke-eaters" rushed to the scene with their newly acquired rubber buckets and pick poles.

It was not until the fall of 1903 that the department was able to purchase equipment. Approximately \$1,000 was realized from a fair held at Bogert's Hall. The firemen used this money to purchase a hand-drawn jumper from the Oradell Fire Department and a few lengths of hose. The jumper is now an antique display at Fire House No. 1.

The hose reel was kept at Holdrum's barn, now the Dietz residence. The first fire house was in the Log Cabin. H. H. Halla was foreman and Charles Blankenhorn was assistant foreman. A piece of railroad track hung from a bracket was used as an alarm. To report a fire and summon the volunteers one had to bang the dangling piece of track with a heavy sledge hammer which was chained to the bracket.

Fire Co. No. 2 was organized in 1904 at a meeting held in the First Reformed Church. About one year later members of this company were called upon to fight a blaze at Buchsetch's Hotel. A wagon on which hose could be carried was bought in 1905 and E. M. Crandall, then a member

of Co. No. 2, loaned his horses to draw the wagon whenever the alarm was sounded. This wagon was kept in Zabriskie's barn until 1909 when the firemen sponsored a carnival to build a new firehouse, now Jim's Grill.

In 1908 a four wheel wagon was acquired for \$650 and the firemen bought hose, ladders and other equipment from their own funds. The wagon was housed in the present No. 1 firehouse and John Phillip's horses were used to draw it to fires.

The year 1913 saw the fire department making progress. It was placed under municipal control and more equipment was purchased. The first motorized equipment, however, was not bought until 1927. It had a chemical tank with 200 feet of hose and about 500 feet of regulation hose. Three years later the first modern pumper and ladder truck was purchased. It is still in use at No. 1 firehouse. In 1939 the second pumper truck was acquired for Co. 2 and is still being used. The present firehouse in the lower end of the borough (known as North Hackensack) was built in 1940. The present fire alarm system, centralizing all calls to police headquarters, was installed two years ago.

When the danger of air raids seemed imminent in 1942 the River Edge Fire Auxiliary was organized to assist the regular department. The auxiliary members train weekly with a trailer pumper received from the federal government.

*Fully equipped hook and ladder truck of today.*



*Combination hook and ladder and hose cart of yesteryear.*

