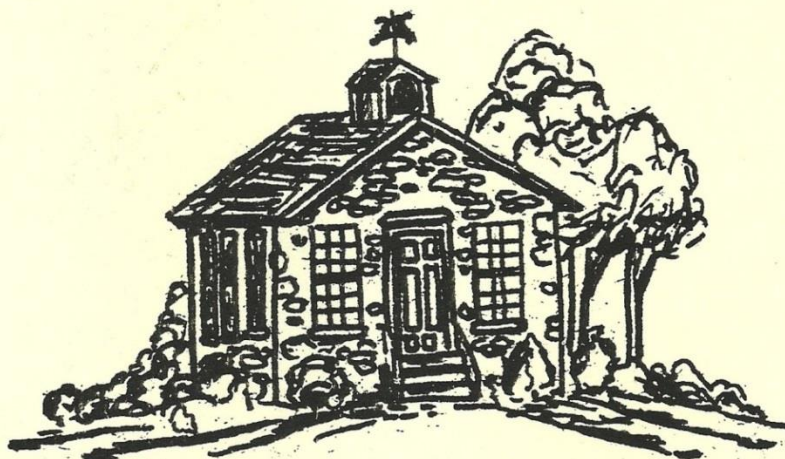




SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ESTHER GOSS

*There
Was a
Time When*



A book of interviews



SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ESTHER GOSS

This book is dedicated to the people who gave
of their time and knowledge.....so that
we might grow.

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These interviews were conducted simultaneously with an archaeological dig at the Solebury one-room school house by the fifth and sixth grade Social Studies Enrichment students of New Hope-Solebury Elementary School in the 1981—1982 school year.

We would like to thank the people who helped us with this book.

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Mrs Goss



Interviewed by: Tommy Nicholes
Jon Lehman
Derrick Blady



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Mrs. Goss

Intvwr.: When and where were you born?

Mrs. G.: I was born in Buckingham in 1891. I am 90 years old.

Intvwr.: What are some of your earliest memories?

Mrs. G.: Well, I have so many of them. Do you want to hear them all? I can remember the little girls I played with, we had several around me. One of them lived with my grandfather, he was a widower and he rented part of his house. She moved to California when she grew up but we would talk on the phone every two weeks. I finally realized she had not called me for a good while so I called her daughter to ask her if she was ill. Her daughter told me that her mother had a stroke and that she had passed away. She was so active and her voice was so young that I could not imagine her going, but she did.

Intvwr.: You had been friends with her since you were a little girl?

Mrs. G.: Yes, she was my - really my closest playmate because she lived so close to me.

Intvwr.: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mrs. G.: I had two sisters and three brothers. I had another sister but she died when she was young. I was the youngest child, the oldest was sixteen when I was born. They are all gone now.

Intvwr.: Where did you go to school?

Mrs. G.: I went to school in Buckingham. We didn't have the little one room schools, we had a big building with three wings in it. That is what we called the high school, which wasn't a high school then, but was equal to the high school, and then the grammar school and the primary school in one building. It's still standing, I think it's a church now.

Intvwr.: What was your schooling like?

Mrs. G.: Well, it is something that I love to think about. We had a teacher that had been there for years and years. We called her Miss Laura. She was wonderful, she was just like a mother to us. That is the reason I tried to be a mother to my pupils when I got to teaching.

Intvwr.: Where did you teach?

Mrs. G.: I taught in a little one room school, between Mechanicsville and Doylestown, on Mechanicsville Road. Now it's a residence. I had about 42 pupils in the one room, and we hadn't enough seats for them so we seated them in the windowsill, and that's where they sat! We had a wonderful principal. I don't know how she had so much knowledge in one head. When I graduated from school this



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principal asked me if I wanted to be a teacher. I said yes but we didn't have the money to send me to any further schooling, so she said ' Well, I'll teach you myself.

So the principal had a special class for me, and that's where I got the knowledge I had to teach. When she was through with me, I had to take the state examination, and I wasn't sure whether I was going to pass or not, but I did. Then I started teaching in the little one room school.

Intvwr.: What was your homework like? Did you have a lot?

Mrs. G.: Yes, we did. We had to, I guess. We liked it. I loved to go to school.

Intvwr.: Where there any little daily jobs that the students did?

Mrs. G.: Well, we didn't have so much of that because we had a regular janitor, you know, like you have in this school. But when I had my school, I had to do all the janitor work myself. I had to sweep and clean, We had no water in the school to drink, so we had to go down to the foot of the hill, to the little spring. The big boys would carry up the buckets of water. There were no individual glasses, and I thought, well, that's the first thing I'm going to see to, that each child has their own glass, Before that, they drank out of the dipper. We had so many children that had no fathers or mothers, they were put in foster homes and they were called Aid Society Children. I couldn't expect the people to give them glasses, so I brought in jelly glasses from home and gave each child a glass. They kept their glass at their seat.

Intvwr.: What kind of punishments were there in your school?

Mrs. G.: Well, I don't know. I didn't have any punishments. I think they whipped them.

Intvwr.: What did they do to get the punishments?

Mrs. G.: I remember one time, the teacher got into a terrible fuss with one of the big boys, he had her hair torn down and everything. It was terrible. Finally she called the principal, who was a woman, but just as good as a man. The principal took him into her room and I don't know what she did to him, but she settled him anyway.

Intvwr.: Where the boys treated differently from the girls?

Mrs. G.: Well, I don't remember much about that.

Intvwr.: What about when you were teaching, were they treated differently then??

Mrs. G.: No, I think they were all the same, really. I had one little girl who was very emotional and had quite a time with her, but I finally got her straightened out. I also had a little boy who was slightly retarded, when I first saw him he looked like a little old man, and I thought to myself how can I even dare to touch him. That went away as soon as I got to know him and for all these years I've wondered where he was and how he made out. He and another boy lived with a family in Spring Valley, which



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was near the school so they always went home for dinner. One day Harold was back in a short time. So I said, 'Harold, have you had your lunch already?' And he said 'No, I didn't, because they locked the door on me and wouldn't let me in.' I told him to sit down and I gave him a sandwich and some fruit that I had, and with that everyone of my children came up with a donation for him. They were wonderful.

Intvwr.: When and where were your parents born?

Mrs. G.: Well, My mother was German and she was born in Philadelphia. Her parents owned a store there. My father was born in Tinicum.

Intvwr.: What types of jobs did they do?

Mrs. G.: My father was a stone mason and a brick layer. He had a hundred men under him. He didn't do much of the work himself but he supervised the men. My mother didn't work, she had six children at home.

Intvwr.: How would you describe your father?

Mrs. G.: He was a very good man and I loved him so much. He was highly emotional, if anything disturbed him he got very upset. But my mother used to calm him down.

Intvwr.: How would you describe your mother?

Mrs. G.: Well, she was very calm.

Intvwr.: Did they take an active interest in your schooling?

Mrs. G.: Yes they did. My mother belonged to the PTA and she went to all of the meetings.

Intvwr.: Who do you think you are most like?

Mrs. G.: Well I think I aped my mother more than my father. He was so busy with his business and she was there all the time.

Intvwr.: Who do you think had a bigger influence on you?

Mrs. G.: Well, when I looked at my father's characteristics, I think I tried to copy him. Yet, I think my mother had more to do with me.

Intvwr.: Can you tell us something about World War I?

Mrs. G.: Well, I was married at that time, and my brother enlisted, I can remember feeling so woe-begone when he left. He was sent to France and he was shot up pretty well, In fact, I don't think he ever got over it. He was shot in the leg and his leg never healed. But he came home and he was married, and he had two boys.



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Both of my brother's boys were in World War II. One was in a concentration camp, he didn't have the life he wanted to live but he wasn't abused at all. Finally, he came home and he married. The other boy didn't get into any fighting, he was in the Phillipines.

Intvwr.: Back in World War I, did they have the draft?

Mrs. G.: Yes, they did. My husband was drafted, but he was refused because of his heart condition.

Intvwr.: During the Depression, could you feel your budget getting tight?

Mrs. G.: We didn't feel the Depression very much. We lived on a farm and we had all sorts of eats, a big asparagus bed and lots of eggs and chickens.

Intvwr.: What were your feelings about the wars?

Mrs. G.: Well, I think when World War I started, we really didn't know much about it. But when the Japs attacked us, you know, everyone was up in arms. And then we felt very bitter very bitter. Of course, then when they laid the bombs onto the Japs and they caused this devastation, I began to feel sorry for them.

Intvwr.: Was there a lot of controversy about it then, when it happened?

Mrs. G.: Yes there was. There really was. Some of the people were even sort of antagonistic toward Truman because they thought Truman was the one who did it. But I really think he did it for the best, because it settled everything so quickly. Many more lives of ours would have been lost if he hadn't done that. I'm beginning to appreciate him more than I did at that time. I was sort of bitter about it at that time.

Intvwr.: At the time the Atom Bomb was dropped, did the people of America realize what the long term affects of that bomb would be?

Mrs. G.: I don't think we did at that time, no. That's what made me feel so bitter because I wondered why he had to that, to go to those extremes, but I think he knew what he was doing.

Intvwr.: What type of things did people do to relax when you were growing up?

Mrs. G.: We had a Sunday school teacher who had an old barn and she would have a little party for us every Saturday night, she had a phonograph that we danced to. We had Sunday School picnics, we enjoyed those. We also read and we enjoyed ourselves.



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Intvwr.: Do you think children are different now? How?

Mrs. G.: Most are different. You have more things to take your time, you have more toys to play with and things like that. We didn't have those, but we were happy just the same.

Intvwr.: In general, do you agree with the way children are being raised?

Mrs. G.: Well, yes I do, in a way. I think sometimes they go to extremes but I realize you have to have your pleasures.

Intvwr.: Do you think mothers should stay at home or go out and work, to help support the family?

Mrs. G.: It is according to the needs of the children. I didn't myself, I stayed at home because we lived on a farm. At that time, my boys were little and I thought they needed me at home. I stayed at home and took care of them.

Intvwr.: What was the relationship between the different races?

Mrs. G.: Well, they were more lenient than they are now. I remember we had a colored family that lived near us. They had a beautiful home, he had built it himself and he was very much respected. He had a son who was a barber in Buckingham and everybody went to him, they liked him so much. There was a woods aside of our home and my brother and I used to go down and hunt for chestnuts. We would go across to this colored man's house, he had the sweetest old wife, we would go in and talk to her and she would give us milk and cookies. There was no rancor or anything, not like it is now.

Intvwr.: What do you think about the world situation today?

Mrs. G.: Well, it can be improved a lot, I think.

Intvwr.: President Reagan made a lot of promises about what he was going to do, especially with the senior citizens. Can you comment that?

Mrs. G.: I think he is losing ground a little bit. I think we started out thinking he was doing everything for our good but I'm afraid that people are losing a lot of confidence in him. I hope they're not but I'm afraid they are.

Intvwr.: Have you personally seen any of the affects from his programs?

Mrs. G.: I hate to say anything now because I voted for the man. I have a daughter-in-law who did the same thing and she is very much against him now. But I said 'Give the man a chance' because I realize that when you tackle something like



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that, you have to have a little time. I think he is trying to do all he can. He thinks all of these cuts will be to our advantage and I hate to think that they won't be.

Intvwr.: What is your favorite holiday?

Mrs. G.: Oh, I guess it would be Christmas,

Intvwr.: What was your Christmas celebration like when you were a child?

Mrs. G.: I had four doll babies. I can remember one Christmas I told my mother I needed a new doll baby. She said 'I don't think Santa Claus can bring you a new doll this year.' So the next Christmas morning my brother and I got up before daylight, to see what Santa Claus had brought us. There, underneath the tree, sat a dolly that my mother had fixed up for me. She had put a new head on Dolly and make all her clothes and even made her a new coat. I think that was the best Christmas I ever had.

Intvwr.: How were the dolls made?

Mrs. G.: The bodies of the dolls were stuffed and they had porcelain heads

Intvwr.: I remember a girl on the bus, she had a doll that had a glass head and glass feet. It was pretty weird! I guess it was an antique.

Intvwr.: When you were a child, did you have your own money?

Mrs. G.: No, we didn't. We had all the clothing and food that we needed but we never had any money.

Intvwr.: When you were a child, did you have house to house electric?

Mrs. G.: No, we didn't. I can remember when we were growing up we had natural gas. My mother had a gas stove. We didn't have electric until after I was married.

Intvwr.: What did the houses look like when you were growing up?

Mrs. G.: Well, my father built our house before I was born. It was a modern looking home but it did not have a bathroom. We had an 'outhouse.

Intvwr.: How old were you when cars came out?

Mrs. G.: I forget when the first car came out. I guess it must have been around 1920. We had a car when I was married, I was about 23. Little old Fords, they were.

Intvwr.: What did you use for transportation when you were young?

Mrs. G.: We used a horse and wagon.