SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MRS. HIBBARD

There Was a Time When.....

A book of interviews

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MRS. HIBBARD

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. Hibbard

Interviewed by: Lora Grandrath,
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Aaron Lipson,
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MRS. HIBBARD

Mrs. Hibbard

Intvwr. : When and where were you born?

Mrs. H. : I was born in 1893 in Hilltown,. Bucks County. When I was three years old we moved to a farm in Fountainville. This is where I grew up. My father's farm had about 65 acres.

Intvwr. : That is a lot of land.

Mrs. H. : No, now a days they want 300 or 400 acres for a farm. I guess that is because they have such big tractors, they can farm more land now. My father farmed with horses, it took more time but it was a lot of fun. We had four horses, I can remember riding a horse out to the field and walking back home so my father could use the horse.

Intvwr. : Were you born at home or in a hospital?

Mrs. H. : Oh, I was born at home! They didn't have babies in the hospital then. But I don't really remember much about being born, The first I can remember is when we moved to Fountainville. Around the time that we moved my baby brother Claude caught pneumonia. Well you know in those days if you caught pneumonia, you just died, they couldn't do anything for you. I can remember my uncle lifting me up to look in the baby's casket.

Intvwr. : Can you tell me something about your family?

Mrs. H. : My mother had eight children but she lost that little baby. I had three sisters, two are still living and one of them is even older than I am. I also had three brothers.

Intvwr. : Where did you go to school?

Mrs. H. : I went to school in a one room schoolhouse in Plumstead Township. We walked to school except when it was rainy or snowy, then my father would drive us to school in the carriage.

Intvwr. : What was your favorite subject?

Mrs. H. : I liked English, Math, Spelling and Geography. I didn't care too much for History, but I had to do it.

Intvwr. : What was your schooling like?

Mrs. H. : We had to be at school by eight o'clock. I liked school I only had two different teachers from first to eighth grade. Years ago the schools were set up from first to eighth grade and then high school was from ninth grade to twelfth grade. What is it now, do you go from first to sixth and then to Junior High?

Intvwr. : Yes.

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Mrs. H.: I bet you are looking forward to going to junior high.

Intvwr.: Yes, we are.

Mrs. H.: We had good teachers and we respected them. Of course the boys got out of hand once in a while. If we were bad, we had to stand in the corner but I don't think I ever had to do it. I was naughty once and it wasn't a very nice thing to do. The little girl who sat in front of me was very bashful, one day when she was wearing a blouse that buttoned down the back, I decided to play a trick on her. I started to unbutton her blouse. Well the little girl started crying and Miss Maggie, our teacher, said 'Eva, why are you crying?'. Eva said 'She is unbuttoning my blouse.' Well Miss Maggie came down to my seat and pulled me out of my chair and shook me so hard my curls were bouncing all over. I was very embarrassed, Miss Maggie's brother and sister were there waiting to pick her up and they saw the whole thing. I think that was the worst thing I ever did.

Intvwr.: What kinds of games did you play?

Mrs. H.: Oh, we used to play baseball, red-rover – red rover, tag, pussy wants a corner, hide and go seek and jump rope. I think baseball was the best thing. Sometimes when we didn't have our work done we weren't allowed to go out and play. I also used that punishment when I taught.

Intvwr.: Did you carry your lunch to school?

Mrs. H.: Yes, Do you get your meals here?

Intvwr.: We can buy our lunch here or we can carry it with us..

Mrs. H.: Well.,we carried our lunch or we wouldn't have had anything to eat, I always sat with someone at lunch and if she had something I liked and I had something she liked we would trade,

Intvwr.: What were some of the daily jobs you had to do?

Mrs. H.: We would sweep off the porch and we would ask the teacher if we could clean the boards. If we liked the teacher, we would sweep but if we didn't like her, we wouldn't offer.

Intvwr.: How was the school heated?

Mrs. H.: We had a big pot bellied stove in the middle of the room. Of course, it was very cold and some of the children would come to school and their hands would be so cold, they would sit by the stove and warm their hands. When I was teaching we also had a stove in the room but it was bigger and it sat in the corner As a teacher I would have to feed the stove with coal and bank it for the night. The big boys would take the ashes out. On the weekend the neighbors would come in and bank the fire.

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Intvwr.: How do you bank a fire?

Mrs. H.: Well, you would rake the ashes out and then you would put in a lot of coal and let it burn up a bit before you. closed the draft. Then you would put the draft on just a little bit, just enough to keep the fire going all night.

Intvwr.: Where girls treated differently than boys?

Mrs. H.: No, I don't think so. Some children used to complain about the teachers having pets but I don't remember any of my teachers having pets. Of course, I think if you were a teacher and you had children that didn't give you any trouble you would feel kinder towards them, don't you? Or if you had a child in the class that didn't obey, you might not like them as much, but of course you would never tell them that. But I do think the boys caused a little more trouble than the girls. (laughter)

Intvwr.: What kinds of jobs did the adults have while you were growing up?

Mrs. H.: Most of the people around where I grew up were farmers.

Intvwr.: In general, how do you feel about the way children are being raised today?

Mrs. H.: Well, everything is so different. Things seem to be so much more permissive. People have so many more things. You know, we didn't even have radio but we did have a Victrola. We got a telephone when I was about four but we weren't on it like kids today, like my grandchildren. (laughter) When the farmers wanted to get a telephone they had to pay for the telephone poles that were used to carry the wires up to the house.

Intvwr.: How did World War I affect you?

Mrs. H.: My husband was an officer in the war. He had a diploma from Drexel in Engineering and he had a good job in New York but when the war came he had to go. He was in France and the fighting was pretty bad there and it was pretty tough. While he was away, I got the flu that everyone else had, that was pretty bad.

Intvwr.: Can you tell us something about the flu epidemic?

Mrs. H.: My sister-in-law died from the flu, She was pregnant and her baby was due shortly when she got the flu. My mother was taking care of her for a while then she had to go home so I went to help her. Well, then I caught it and ran a very high fever. It went through the whole family and then my sister-in-law died. I was also very worried about my husband who was in desperate fighting in France. When the doctor came to see me, he couldn't understand why I wasn't getting better. Well I could have told him! But I got over it.

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Intvwr. Did you hear from your husband often?

Mrs. H.: Yes I heard from him but it was hard because he was in the trenches. He was very close to his men. They were from Philadelphia, in the 79th division. The Germans gassed them and that is an awful thing. The whole company was sickened from it. They wanted to put my husband in the hospital but he wouldn't leave his men. He stayed right there with them. The gas affected his lymph glands and that was the cause of his death later on in life. Well because he stayed with his men, France gave him the highest honor that they had, the Croix de Guerre. He was so proud of it.

My husband's boss was also very proud of him. Then my first son was born he had a little Croix de Guerre made for him. My son Walter, who is a retired Colonel, still has it. After the war was over my husband went back to his job as an engineer. One night some of his friends came to dinner and they told him that the army needed officers badly because they were going to make the army bigger. They told him that because he had a diploma that he could go back into the service at any level he wanted. This pleased my husband, so he re-enlisted as a first lieutenant.

We packed up and sailed for the. Philipines, it took us 32 days. By that time I had an eight month old baby. We stayed in the Philippines for two years. All of the houses were built on stilts because there were so many ants. I had four servants and it cost me thirty dollars a month, can you imagine? White women weren't supposed to do anything because of the heat. I never cooked a meal in all that time.

Intvwr.: How many children did you have?

Mrs. H.: I had three boys but my second son died about five years ago. He was in World War II and the Korean War.

Intvwr.: What were the prices like when you were a child?

Mrs. H.: Oh goodness, for a penny you could buy a lot of candy. Sugar was about three cents a pound, meat was a lot cheaper and bread was a few cents a loaf.

Intvwr.: Was five cents a lot of money to you?

Mrs. H.: You bet it was! You know we didn't get spending money. Do you all get spending money?

Intvwrs.: Yes

Mrs. H.: You have to work for it, don't you?

Intvwrs.: Yes and No. (laughter)

Mrs. H.: If we got five cents that was a lot of money. We could buy a big dish of ice cream. Now you can't.

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Intvwr.: Did you go to the movies?

Mrs. H.: We didn't have movies until I was about 17. Then they were the quiet movies. Did you ever hear of quiet movies?

Intvwrs.: Yes.

Mrs. H.: Sometimes they show those movies now, just for fun.

Intvwr.: Were you affected by the depression at all?

Mrs. H.: No, It didn't affect the army. After my husband re-enlisted in the army we were there until he retired. We were in Hawaii just before Pearl Harbor.

During the depression they took the men off the streets of New York to build dams. I think they should do the same today and take the men off the streets and find some work for them.

Intvwrs.: Who was your favorite president?

Mrs. H.: Oh, my favorite president? Oh, I don't know, I think when I was growing up a president was a man you looked up to and honored but then when I got older I wasn't sure. I liked a number of them. I liked Cooledge and Eisenhower and I thought Roosevelt, both Roosevelt's were very good.

Intvwr.: How long did you teach and did you enjoy it?

Mrs. H.: I taught for 7 years and I enjoyed it. I stopped teaching when my sister-in-law died. My brother had three children and one of them was an infant and he didn't know which way to turn for help. I decided that since my husband was in France, I could give up teaching and take care of the children and my brother. So I kept house for my brother and took care of his children until my husband came back from the war. That was in 1919.