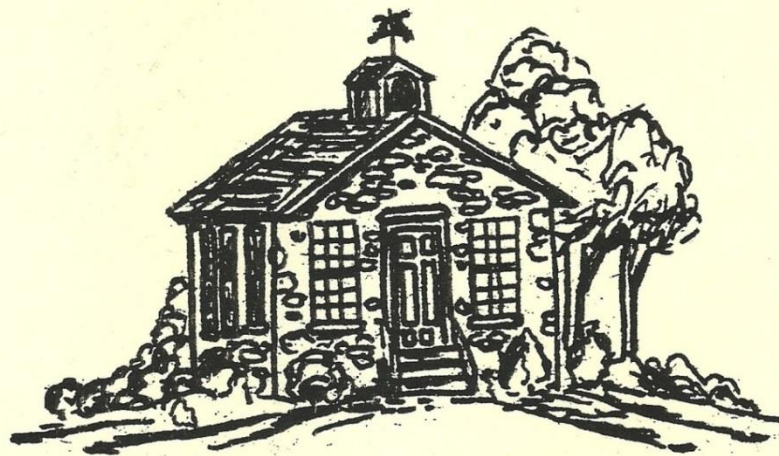




# SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MRS. GERTRUDE WALLWORK

*There  
Was a  
Time When .....*



*A book of interviews*



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## MRS. GERTRUDE WALLWORK

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. GERTRUDE WALLWORK**

*Mrs. Wallwork*



Interviewed by: Hope Corrigan  
Betsy Schade





# SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## MRS. GERTRUDE WALLWORK

### MRS. WALLWORK

INTVWR: When and where were you born?

MRS. WALLWORK.: I was born in Rockledge, which is in Montgomery County right on the edge of Philadelphia. Our backyard was the line between Philadelphia and Montgomery County.

INTVWR: What were some of your early memories?

MRS. WALLWORK: I lived with my grandmother and my grandfather, with my mother and father until I was ten years old. Mr. Wallwork lived three doors away and we used to play house together and we're still playing. I remember him walking along the hedge outside our yard pushing his little wheel barrow and his straw hat bobbing up and down along the hedge and he was taking the trash to the dump, because you didn't have trash collectors then, you took your trash to the dump, which was a hole in somebodies field.

INTVWR: How far away was the dump?

MRS. WALLWORK: Well there was a great big field behind us and it was in one of the hollows in that field. Of course, there weren't too many people so it didn't collect the amount of trash that is collected now.

INTVWR: What was your schooling like?

MRS. WALLWORK: I went to Rockledge School until I was in fifth grade and there were four rooms in that school, first and second grade in one room. I had a good teacher; I remember her very clearly, her name was Miss McCarty, she had real bright sharp eyes and she never had to punish anyone. When you did something wrong she just looked at you and her eyes got a surprised look, you know, and you behaved yourself. The third and fourth grade were in the next room and the fifth and sixth were in the third, the principal taught the seventh and eighth grade. We had to go outside to the bathroom. Next store to the school was a German family with an old nasty rooster and he used to peck at the children, I was scared to death of him, consequently, I didn't ask to go out except at recess. We had to go outside for water. There was a pump out in the school yard I used to get nose bleeds once in a while and the teacher would have to take me out to the pump, you know, to get the cold water to stop my nose bleed.

INTVWR: Did you have homework?

MRS. WALLWORK.: Oh yes, we had homework. I don't know if we had as much as you do or not, but we always had homework. You had to write spelling words, a certain number of times.

INTVWR: We were in a play for our project and in our play the schoolhouse gets smoky because the chimney got clogged up. Did that ever happen in your school?



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MRS. WALLWORK: I don't remember. We had fire drills, but I don't remember any real fires.

INTVWR: How was the school heated?

MRS. WALLWORK: There must have been a heating system in that school, but I was teaching out at Buckingham Friends School in 1935 to 1937. It was before they put the first addition on there and there were just two rooms. I was upstairs and we had a little stove and we had to start it in the morning and put the coal and wood on all day and keep it going or we would have been cold and that was in 1935.

INTVWR: Your school in Rockledge then was pretty advanced?

MRS. WALLWORK: Yes, considerably. It was four rooms, four big rooms. Then when I was five years old we moved across the county line into Philadelphia and I went to Fox Chase School. That had an old school building on the grounds that was used for the primary grades. We had a third grade teacher, no we had a third and fourth grade teacher, a fifth grade teacher who was my teacher, a sixth grade teacher and the principal had the seventh and eighth grades. He was the principal and he taught the two upper grades as well. So you know we had an awful lot of busy work. I can remember coming in after the afternoon recess and he would have all of these sentences up on the blackboard and our job was to put them into their grammatical terms. That was the way we spent the last part of the afternoon, because he was busy with other classes. So in high school, I didn't know too much grammar.

INTVWR: What was the high school?

MRS. WALLWORK: Well when I graduated from eighth grade I had to go into the Girls High School at 17th and Spring Garden Streets where we had to change trolley cars. I don't know how long it took me to get out to the 17th and Spring Garden Streets. It was too much for me, I was king of a weak little kid then. I just couldn't take it, so I only went down there for the first term from September to January and then we moved away and came back a year later and the Frankford High School had just opened and I went there and that was a brand new high school. That was elegant.

INTVWR: What were the punishments like?

MRS. WALLWORK: There were several. The teacher would take the boys out and paddle them good in the dressing room, slap their fingers with the ruler. My first grade teacher all she had to do was look at you with her sharp eyes. I remember when I was practice teaching in a fifth grade room. Miss Sproles, she used to live down here, was the teacher and her method was to rush down the isle and get hold of them and take them to the dressing room as fast as she could push them and give them a good talking to out there. Just the way she would pounce upon them and take them out was frightening. I don't think



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she would ever hit them, but just give them a good talking to. We were kept after school for punishment.

INTVWR: Did you ever have to stay after school?

MRS. WALLWORK: A few times. If you didn't finish your work you had to stay after school. I can remember Mr. Wallwork was in the same fifth grade as I was and he doddled over his arithmetic, he didn't like arithmetic and he was always staying after school to do it. One day I was kept after school and I was so annoyed at him, instead of doing his arithmetic he was drawing pictures. I said, "Why don't you get your work done and get out of here", but he would rather draw pictures.

INTVWR: Can you tell us a little bit about the Depression?

MRS. WALLWORK: Yes, not too much. I wasn't affected by it too much. We were married then and we lived down here on the River Road.

INTVWR: When did you get married?

MRS. WALLWORK: 1927. That's when we left Fox Chase and came to New Hope. Mr. Wallwork was a blacksmith at the Gothic Shop and they really didn't feel the effects of the depression until later. He was still working there so we got along alright. But my mother and father lost about everything they had, they were very much affected by it.

INTVWR: What did they do? What did your father do?

MRS. WALLWORK: My father was a builder, a carpenter, he built our house. I thought you might like to look at this. This is the house the way we bought it. That was in 1927. It was nothing but three stone walls. Everything else was gone; every scrap of wood was gone. There were weeds growing along the top of the stone wall. There was a tree in the cellar as high as the first floor window and it was close to where Mr. Wallwork worked and he thought this would be a nice place to live and we came up. I brought my father to look at it, and he said, "the walls are good, we can use the walls." We went home and drew the plans and he built it. This is what we have now.

INTVWR: Your father built this?

MRS. WALLWORK: My father built it. But you see the walls were standing from 1858. There is a date on the chimney, up in the attic, that the stone mason put on it when he built it. So the walls are quite old.

INTVWR: Do you have another picture there?

MRS. WALLWORK: This is the open end of that picture. It was built on the old foundation so there must have been a frame end on that open end. The house is built on the old foundation.





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INTVWR: But from the front?

MRS. WALLWORK: No, I'm sorry, I didn't bring that picture. You can see the original wall and there is a well in the front yard that wasn't there. The well was there, but we couldn't find it. It was covered up with brambles and old rotten boards and it's a wonder someone didn't fall in it, we finally found it and we built up the wall and made a nice well. We hear stories about it, they call it the witch's crevice. The old farmers who would be going by at night, with their team, said that when they got there the horses got very jittery, they called it the witch's crevice.

INTVWR: Did anything bad happen to you?

MRS. WALLWORK: Well our well went dry through time so we decided the witches went down the well. Maybe you would like to see this picture of me when I was about your age. I had pigtails with big bows. This is Mr. Wallwork in school.

INTYWR: And where is this taken?

MRS. WALLWORK: I guess in Rockledge, I don't know.

INTVWR: Was that a photographers studio or at your house?

MRS. WALLWORK: That was at a photographers. That was the kind of dress I wore. My mother made most of my dresses.

INTVWR: I could see a girl wearing that now.

MRS. WALLWORK: Well, fashions come back. If you keep your dresses long enough you can wear them again. Do you have something else?

INTVWR: What about World War I? Were you affected at all by that?

MRS. WALLWORK: I was in high school and we had that terrible flu epidemic.

INTVWR: Could you tell us a little about that?

MRS. WALLWORK: We were out of school for at least one term because everybody was catching the flu and people were dying. We didn't have any school that fall and I remember another friend and I used to take these long, long walks outdoors. I think probably that was the best thing we could have done, but it was a terrible thing. I have a cousin who lost both her mother and father when she was about three years old. Her mother and father died in the flu epidemic. All the boys were going off to war. Mr. Waliwork was just not quite old enough. He just escaped.

INTVWR: What about World War II?



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MRS. WALLWORK: You don't remember that either, do you? Well that was pretty bad too. That was between 1941 and 1945 wasn't it? We had left here in 1937 after my mother died, and we moved to Sumerton, just for a few years, where I took care of my father and brother. We came back about 1941. Gas rationing, we had to have little cards. I think I still have one of those little cards that you used. You could only get so much gas. I went to a training session for first aid. They had these practice trips where we drove in the dark, we would be picked up at our homes, we didn't know who would pick us up. We would travel in the dark to wherever we were supposed to go. We would practice our first aid. It was rather gruesome, there was no moon out and you would have to go along in the dark, hoping this would never really be true.

I also went to an air raid station on the Solebury School grounds. It was just a little building where we were on duty to report any airplane that we saw. There was some body there all the time. Any enemy plane or plane that wasn't supposed to be there would be seen.

INTVWR: Did you ever see any enemy plane?

MRS. WALLWORK: No. Then when Pearl Harbor came along that was a terrible thing. It made us all very depressed, in fact, it was not a happy time.

INTVWR: You were saying how much you lived through, your generation, the changes you've seen.

MRS. WALLWORK : When I was a little girl, we didn't even have a bathroom in our house. I remember getting my bath in a big tub in the kitchen where it was warm. My grand father put in a bathroom, he was one of the first to put in a bathroom. There was a heater in the cellar. It heated the part of the house where we were most of the time. I can remember the front parlor and the hall being ice cold and you had to go through there to get upstairs. I remember that you didn't go to the store very often, because the baker had a wagon drawn by a horse and the butcher had a wagon drawn by a horse. You would hear these horse drawn wagons coming up the road and men would be shouting, red ripe strawberries and you would go out and buy some strawberries. Some would be yelling, red ripe watermelon. They would buy a load of the stuff, then they would ride around the country and sell it. So we had a baker, a butcher, and they came around to sell all kinds of stuff. We didn't have any malls, we didn't have any shopping centers, you were lucky if you could walk to a grocery store. We always walked to school and we came home for lunch, except the youngsters that lived way out on the farm, they would bring their lunch.



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INTVWR: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

MRS. WALLWORK: I have one brother and he is fourteen years younger than I am, so he had two bossy mothers. His mother and his big sister. After he grew up it didn't matter.

INTVWR: How would you describe your mother and father?

MRS. WALLWORK: Well, they were very nice folks, very quiet. My father was a carpenter and he built our house. They did have an automobile, an old Maxwell. They didn't go out very much, they stayed at home most of the time.

INTVWR: Were they strict?

MRS. WALLWORK: One thing I always wanted was a bicycle and I wasn't allowed to, because I was a girl. I was very annoyed when my brother came along and got a bicycle, I reminded my mother that I wanted a bicycle.

INTVWR: In what other ways were boys treated differently than girls.

MRS. WALLWORK: You didn't get into rough play. You didn't get on baseball teams. You played house, you played with your friends. You learned to sew. I never did learn to cook until I was in high school. Mother did the cooking and I didn't go in the kitchen.

INTVWR: Were you responsible for chores at home?

MRS. WALLWORK: A few. I had a pretty easy life. I was an only child until I was fourteen. I can remember going to visit a large family that lived on our street. I loved to go up there because they were a big family and they had so much fun, pillow fights and water fights. I rode on Ted's bicycle, because I wasn't home and my mother didn't know what I was doing. I really almost cried when I had to go home, where there wasn't any activity like that.

INTVWR: How do you think children are different now?

MRS. WALLWORK: They can do a great many more things than we could do and go a great many more places. A picnic was a great event and we would go on the train. We would travel from Fox Chase and Wayne Junction. These were steam trains and it would take us maybe a good hour and a half, maybe two hours or more. We would go to Chalfont to a park called Forest Park or to Perkasio, to Menlo Park. It took us hours to get there.

INTVWR: Did the train take you to Menlo Park?



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MRS. WALLWORK: Yes. We had to switch in a place like Glenside or Wayne Junction to get on a track that went out there. It was a big day.

INTVWR: When you were a child did you have your own money or did you work?

MRS. WALLWORK: I didn't. Mr. Wallwork had chores and earned money. Not many of the children worked. May little things around the house or garden. I used to love the celery he banked in the winter time. They would bank it, they would build a troth and they would cut it and the celery would be put in there and covered with something to keep the dirt off it and then the dirt piled over that, so that it wouldn't freeze. Then they would go and dig out whatever they wanted, when they wanted it. They did beets and cabbage and celery, all the hardy vegetables. We didn't have freezers, we didn't even have refrigerators.

When I was a very little girl and lived at my grand mothers, the cellar was the coolest place. Hanging from the ceiling in the cellar was this wire cage, four foot like a cube enclosed in wire with shelves in it with a door. That is where you took your food to keep it cool. Where mice and insects couldn't get it because it was screened in. That was the nearest thing to a refrigerator that we had. When we came to New Hope before I got my refrigerator, I put my things in a bucket and put it down the well to keep them cool.

INTVWR: What was your favorite holiday?

MRS. WALLWORK: Christmas. My father always had a great big platform that took up half the living room. A great big tree and garden and he built a Christmas house, like a doll house. No electric trains.

INTVWR: Did you have a vacation or a holiday?

MRS. WALLWORK: Not many, just the big ones. I don't think we had a break in our school term. Later on we had two semesters, a fall and spring.

INTIJWR: Your father was a farmer too?

MRS. WALLWORK: He was a farmer when he married my mother, later on he became a carpenter and a builder. He used to have to walk miles and miles to work, we didn't have a car. It was hard living, we don't know what it was like, we don't experience that any more.

INTVWR: What do you think about women's liberation?



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MRS. WALLWORK: I'm all for it. I think I always was. I think I always resented being a girl because I couldn't do the things I wanted to do.

INTVWR: What year were you born?

MRS. WALLWORK: 1901.

INTVWR: Then you weren't really affected by not being able to vote?

MRS. WALLWORK: No. But I can remember the commotion about women voting

INTVWR: How did your mother feel about that?

MRS. WALLWORK: She was a very quiet person. I don't think it mattered very much. I'm not sure she even went to vote very often. But I did. You just assumed that the men would take care of voting and you didn't concern yourself with it. I resented the things that I couldn't do just because I was a women.

INTVWR: What were some of these things.

MRS. WALLWORK: A girl couldn't have a bicycle. Boys could go off on camping trips and do all kinds of things.

Here are pictures of the canal boats that were going when we came up here. Two coal barges and in the back the man is steering but look in the front of the boat that's the wash hanging on the line. There is a stove up on the deck to cook on. They lived on the coal barges from early spring to late fall when it was too cold to run them. The whole family was on there. The boys and girls didn't get to school when they were on the coal barges. They stopped running the barges in 1932.

INTVWR: Who was your favorite president?

MRS. WALLWORK: I don't think I had any. I remember hearing about President Taft but I don't remember him. I wasn't too interested in the presidents.

INTVWR: Did you get help from President Roosevelt's bills?

MRS. WALLWORK: As I told you, I was not in as bad shape as other people were. What he did was to set up the economy and financial situations so that the country could begin to come back. Before that happened, there were people who lost everything they had. I had an uncle who was so depressed he committed suicide, he just lost everything. Some of them just couldn't take it; to start all over again. There wasn't help from the government then.

INTVWR: What do you think caused the Depression?





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MRS. WALLWORK: I don't know. I do know that in the twenties, everyone thought everything was going to be wonderful forever. The twenties were a very gay time. It was after the first World War and everything was prosperous.

Here are some other pictures I brought. This is a freight board in the tie lock. This is a boat entering a lock in New Hope. This is one of the old boats and this is a boat building yard in Uhlerstown up the river, near Frenchtown.