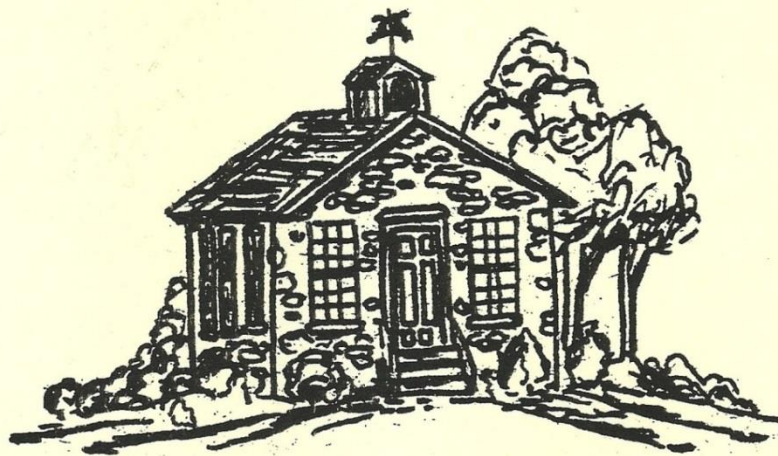




SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MR. ISAAC WALLWORK

*There
Was a
Time When*



A book of interviews



SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MR. ISAAC 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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INTERVIEWS

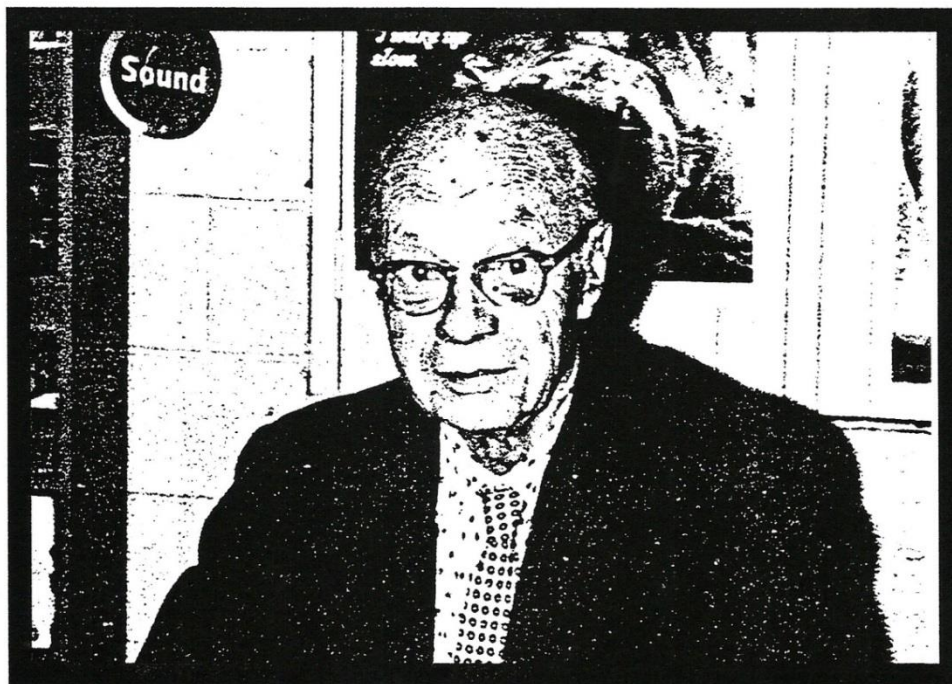
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Mr. Wallwork



Interviewed by: Eugene Takahashi
Doug Patridge
Andy Wilson



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Mr. Wallwork

Mr. W.: Are you interested in automobiles?

Intvwr.: Yes.

Mr. W.: Well, to the best of my knowledge the first automobile was made by a man by the name of Benz. Today the car is known as Mercedes-Benz and it is one of the best cars made. Benz made this by using a carriage that a horse would have pulled, put a motor on it and took it out on the road. Its top speed was 10 miles per hour. Nobody was very interested in something that went 10 miles per hour because a horse could do better than that. It made a lot of noise and it broke down, but Benz kept improving his car. Then other countries started making cars and they started making automobiles in this country. Now, when I was a boy going to school, which would have been in 1906, which was quite a while ago, you would hear one of these contraptions going down the street and the teacher would let us go to the window and watch it go by. Now, can you imagine the teacher letting you go to the window every time a car went by? You would be at the window all day. Well, they kept on improving automobiles and finally they started making trucks. White trucks and Mac. trucks which you have today were being made and they were chain driven. The same kind of chain you have on your bicycle but they were much bigger. They made a lot of noise as they came along the road and they didn't go too fast. As a boy, I can remember that if I was on my bicycle, I'd let the truck pass me and then I would peddle fast and grab a hold of the truck and get a free ride.

This country then started making bigger and better automobiles and they made what was known as the locomobile. They also made the Marmon and the Pierce-Arrow. Then the Packard came along. These were all big cars and they cost a lot of money in those days. It was only the wealthy that could afford them. Then a man by the name of Barney Oldfield came along and entered into an automobile race and won at an average of 60 miles per hour. A mile a minute. Can you imagine that? An automobile going a mile a minute? Everybody thought he was a hero for that. Well, today they go out there on those salt flats and, oh my goodness, they go hundreds of miles an hour.

Then a man by the name of Henry Ford came along. Old Henry Ford decided that he would make an automobile that the average man could afford. He made the Model T Ford. He also started the production line which none of the other companies had. He could turn out cars fast and he could turn them out cheap. You could buy a Model T Ford for a couple hundred dollars. The Model T Ford had a carriage with a stick and you used to have to crank them. They didn't have starters



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and batteries. You cranked them, and the crank was just below the radiator in front of the car. If you didn't have the sparks set just right the crank would kick and lots of people would have their arms broken. It really wasn't very unusual for this to happen when cranking up a car. All of the old cars in those days had to be cranked up because they didn't have self starters. You didn't have heaters in the cars either. You had to put on very warm clothing in the winter time when driving in these cars. They also didn't have windshield wipers. A big rod came down with a knob on it and you turned the knob and that worked the windshield wiper. You had to drive with one hand and work the windshield wiper with the other. Can you imagine doing that today? They didn't have a heater or windshield wiper and they had curtains on the sides instead of windows, which didn't keep out very much of the cold. The curtains were made out of isinglass, which was like a plastic. Well, Ford improved and improved on his cars and before you knew it, you had a lot of cars on the road. They brought in the battery and the self starters so that people didn't go breaking their arms any more cranking up their cars.

You also didn't have the gear shifts on the floor on the old Model T Fords. You had three pedals on the floor. Have you ever seen them? You could push the one pedal down and the car would go low and high. There was no in between. The middle pedal when pushed down with your right foot was reverse, and the pedal on the right hand side was your brake. So you did all the work with your feet. There was no gear shift for shifting it into first, second and third. Well, we have come a long way since I was a real small, little boy with the way automobiles are today and with airplanes.

Before World War I, they started making airplanes and they used some of them in the war for delivering mail. Lindbergh drove a plane and carried mail with him. That is how he first got started. After World War I was over, airplanes weren't too popular. Who wants an airplane? They then started to improve on them for more than just the mail. Commercial travel became more popular and, of course, today with these big jets flying all over the world at 700, 800 and 900 miles an hour, it is really terrific. I have lived through the age from 1900, the year in which I was born, until now, and this is 1982, so I will be 82 years old this year. I have seen tremendous changes in transportation over the years that I have lived.

Ships, submarines, airplanes and automobiles have all been improved upon during my lifetime. If I would have told my Mother and Father, who died some years ago, that they would put a man in a rocket and ship him to the moon, they would have thought I was crazy!!! They would never have believed it was possible to get a man on the moon. But they did!!!



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It's terrific, in my life seeing the transportation as it is today and remembering how it was when I was a boy. It is really something!

There have been some very ingenious men who thought up all the different improvements that were put into automobiles. It is really something. Of course, you have television, radio and all that communication today that I didn't have as a boy, and I never even thought of such a thing. It is truly unbelievable, and you fellows just take it for granted. You think these things just happened, but they didn't. It took a lot of thought, a lot of men and a lot of brains to think up these things. It also took a lot of work, and as you grow up you may get into the kind of work where you will use your head to think up new things.

Medical treatment was very different when I was a boy. I remember when the doctor would come he would have a satchel and viles of medicine. Mother would get two tumblers and fill them with water and put a coaster on the top of each one. The doctor would take his medicine and sprinkle a little bit of this and a little bit of that in each one of the tumblers. Then he would put a penny on one of the coasters. He would say to take a teaspoon of this medicine and then move the penny over and take a teaspoon of that medicine the next hour. I sometimes kind of wonder what he put in there. I don't know if it ever did any good, because they didn't know too much in those days.

They didn't have ether in those days to use in surgery. They used to hit a man over the head, I guess, and operate on him before he woke up. (laughter) I imagine that was done more than once. Also if an arm or a leg had to be cut off they might have to hold the man down while the doctor operated on him. They just didn't have the things that they have now. They didn't have the wonderful hospitals and the doctors that specialize in all kinds of things. It has just been a marvelous time I have lived through.

Intvwr.: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. W.: No, I didn't.

Intvwr.: Where were your parents born?

Mr. W.: My father was born in Philadelphia and my mother was born in Ardmore.

Intvwr.: What are some of your earliest memories?

Mr. W.: My mother and father were both deaf mutes. They went to school to learn how to speak and to learn sign language. As a boy, I could understand the sign language of my mother and father and their friends. I never used the sign language because of the fact that my mother and father both could read your lips. As long as you were looking at them, they could tell what you were saying by the motion of your lips, so I always just looked at my mother and father when I talked to them and



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in that way they were able to keep the ability to read lips. My mother would go into Philadelphia and tell the girls what she wanted. She could talk pretty well but, you know, if you never heard yourself you would never know what you were saying. It becomes very hard to be able to learn to talk if you cannot hear. You know, you learned to talk by imitation, but my parents had to learn to talk by trial and error. They would make a sound and they would be told if it was right or wrong. So my mother and father could talk very well.

Intvwr.: What was your schooling like?

Mr. W.: When I went to school in Rockledge, there were three teachers and a principal. Each teacher taught two grades and the principal taught seventh and eighth grades.

Intvwr.: The principal taught school?

Mr. W.: Yes, but then she probably only had about a half a dozen students. By the time they reached seventh or eighth grade, a lot of kids dropped out. We did not have a high school. We had to go to Cheltenham for high school, we didn't have all the equipment that you kids have today. I think it's terrific! We didn't have a play yard. We played in the field across the street. In fact, we didn't have indoor toilets. We had to go outside if we wanted to use the toilet. When you went out there in the winter, you didn't spend much time. It was cold. The kids today, I can't figure them out. Sometimes they will break up and destroy perfectly good toilets, We would never think of doing something like that because we would have been so happy not to have to go outside.

Intvwr.: What kind of games did you play?

Mr. W.: We played cops and bums. We would pick sides and then we would race all over. Our boundry was an area of about five miles and we would run all day. Our parents didn't drive us all over just because we didn't feel like walking. We also played ball. Baseball was practically the only thing that we played in a big game. We used nickel lockets for a baseball in those days. They didn't last very, long, but that was the only thing we could afford. We couldn't afford the type of baseballs used by the big leagues. They cost a dollar and a quarter. Most of us didn't have gloves but we managed to have fun. We also played peggy. Did you ever play peggy?

Intvwr.: No.

Mr. W.: We had a lot of fun playing peggy. it was an inexpensive game. All you needed was a broomstick, and we could always find a broomstick somewhere, we would saw one end off and use a hatchet to sharpen the other end down to a point like a pencil. Then you would set it down in the ground and hit it with the broomstick. It would bounce up in the air and you'd whack it while it was in the air.



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That was the peggy game. Where would you play peggy today? You'd bust a window somewhere, but we had lots of fields to choose from.

Intvwr.: What kind of work did you do after school?

Mr. W.: Our parents didn't shell money out, we earned our money cutting grass, running errands, doing anything anybody would give us a nickel to do. That was our spending money when we were kids.

I left school when I was 16. I went into the insurance business in Philadelphia as an office boy. Financially, my family needed me to go out and work. Then the war came along in 1917 and I got a job where they made wire wheels for airplanes and automobiles. When the war was over, the wire wheel business went out. They closed up the plant. I was always interested in drawing. I loved art in school. It was my best class. I got a position in an art studio in Philadelphia where we did illustrations for magazines. I wasn't too good at it. I didn't have a photographic mind. There were artists who could draw anything the boss asked for from memory. They retained everything. I decided the art studio wasn't for me. I couldn't compete.

Editor's Note:
Morgan Colt

Then I got an opportunity to do art metal blacksmithing in Centre Bridge with a Mr. Morgan Kulp who was having his house remodeled. Mr. Kulp was a member of the Kulp Firearms Company family although he wasn't involved in firearms. He was an artist and architect and did no blacksmithing himself. He designed things. When he asked me what I knew about blacksmithing, I told him I knew absolutely nothing. He replied that, maybe was exactly what he wanted and asked when I could start. I started two weeks later and worked with Mr. Hoppy, a retired blacksmith in New Hope from spring until fall. Then Mr. Kulp had a shop equipped for me on his property at Phillips Mill. As far as working was concerned, working for the Kulp's were some of the best years of my life. They were wonderful people. I worked there from 1923 to 1935. In the meantime, Mr. Kulp died from a heart attack and Mrs. Kuip was quite old. We worked right through the depression. We made things like garden furniture, and garden gates which went up to the big galleries in York and sold to the wealthy. Mrs. Kulp didn't want to carry on any longer.

I had a friend named Ed Fredericks, an electronic engineer. He decided to go into business for himself doing glass blowing and asked me how I'd like to learn the trade. I was very interested in learning something new. So, he and I fixed up his father-in-law's chicken coop. We put water and gas in it. He bought some glass, a tank of Oxygen and glass blower's burners and I started learning how to blow glass. This is precision work, not making novelties. The shop, made from a chicken coop, grew too small after he employed three other men. So his father-in-law built him a shop in Beth Ayres and we moved there. That place looked enormous after the chicken coop. From the four of us who were there, today the company has grown to



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employ 180 people. I retired in 1965, and the business had grown from me, the first employee to 180 people. That sums up my working days. I had a lot of. Different jobs.

Intvwr.: Is that company still around?

Mr. W.: Yes, very much so.

Intvwr.: What is the name of it?

Mr. W.: The Fredericks Company in Beth Ayres.

Intvwr.: Going back a few years when you were in school, how much homework did you have?

Mr. W.: We didn't have much homework. You see, when a teacher has two classes, she's teaching one class while the other class studies. So, there was plenty of time to do our studying in school. And we didn't have all these things that you kids have today. We had arithmetic spelling, geography, physiology and an art class. That was it. Today, goodness gracious, you have all kinds of different things to do, so that you don't have time to do your homework in school. You have to take it home to do it. We rarely took work home, since we had a chance to study while our teacher taught the other class.

STUDENT TAKES A PHOTOGRAPH

Mr. W.: Are there any more questions, or is this as far as we go?

Intvwr.: No, thank you. We've only asked a few questions, but you've done a good job covering everything.