



## PUNKIN DUSTER FINDS THE WOODCHUCK BOROUGH

### A Centennial Review of Bergen County Borough Fever 1894-95

It seemed that a new house was going up every day on a new street in some new borough. Bergen County experienced a 38.5% increase in population between 1890 and 1895, going from 47,226 to 65,415 residents. Farms were slowly fading as the mainstay of the economy. The Federal Census of 1900 would be the last of its kind to classify a majority (59.8%) of Bergen County's population as Rural. And there was no stopping the train.

The so-called “old settlers” or Punkin Dusters (farmers for the most part) opposed boroughites out of fear of rising taxation for improvements that exclusively benefited commuter villages.

By 1894, the ancient system of townships had served Jersey-men well for two centuries, providing a civic framework for an agrarian age with its devotion to the land, to interfamilial politics and to self-government by rural neighborhoods. At annual township meetings and elections, held the second

Tuesday in March, citizens would congregate to “discuss their common wants, propose the remedies, and appoint agents to give them effect.” Local affairs were managed by a five-member township committee, a township clerk, tax assessors and collectors, commissioners of tax appeals, highway surveyors and overseers, overseers of the poor, school committeemen, a judge of elections and a con-

stable. Township government maintained pounds for stray animals, paid bounties for destruction of predatory wildlife, supported the indigenous poor, educated poor children and seasonally maintained roads. Taxes were light, expectations were low and government services few and far between. Under this neighborly system, a farmer “worked out” his road tax “at his personal convenience, by ploughing a ditch along the highway and throwing the dirt to the centre, where it was ‘worked’ by passing vehicles. This operation was repeated annually, the dirt being washed back to the sides with every recurring spell of soft weather.”<sup>1</sup> Education was largely a matter of personal initiative and private expense with little quality control. Two freeholders were chosen from



Kipp-Cadmus, BCHS collections

each township to form a county administrative council known as the Board of Chosen Freeholders.<sup>2</sup> Building and maintaining jails, poor-houses, court-houses and bridges was the business of the County.

Farmers initially regarded the railroad as a smooth track to city markets, providing cheap, reliable, all-weather transportation that saved horseflesh. These same railroads, however, by transporting the new fuel, coal, gave rise to the modern factory system. Manufacturing was no longer necessarily dispersed throughout the countryside according to the availability of natural water power, but could thrive in cities amidst a pool of cheap immigrant labor; the railroad carted raw materials and finished goods in a national marketplace. Though demand for farm products grew apace with the urban manufacturing population, the expanding network of railroads now brought the distant Western prairies, well suited to mechanized agriculture on vast tracts of land, into fatal competition with Atlantic seaboard farms.

The rails also began to carry urban refugees who came “in search of health, quiet and unadulterated rural felicity” where their families might dwell apart from the increasing squalor and pollution of smokestack cities. Well, not quite “unadulterated rural felicity!” For, while fleeing from the concentrated life of the industrial city, commuters had no intention of adopting country manners - their stake in the land was limited to building plots on quiet streets where they might sleep soundly in unlocked, pattern-book houses, all within easy walk or drive of the railroad station. In its retrospective on “The Vanished Year” of 1893, *The Hackensack Republican* observed how “these new-comers want everything ‘up to date,’ and so far as the environment will admit, they create in their suburban homes the comforts and convenience essential to city dwellings.” They developed no attachment to bumpkin townships where public business moved in fits-and-starts as the agricultural calendar dictated. A large part of the native population naturally resented and resisted these newcomers whom they regarded as squatters and carpet-baggers. The 1776-1876 Atlas of Bergen County, New Jersey, compiled by A. H. Walker, illustrates the embryonic stages of railroad suburbanization. Speaking in the year of the American Centennial about Rutherford Park, perhaps the first successful railroad suburb in Bergen County, Walker recorded the cultural divide between old settler and commuter and the sparking friction between past and future:

Fifty years ago [that is, about 1825] this township was occupied by farmers and gardeners, principally of the Holland Dutch stock, who plodded on from year to year, taking their truck to market in their wagons frequently over night, and reducing their expenses by such return loads as they could get for the country stores, etc. The old inhabitants were peculiarly jealous of strangers, and it was with great difficulty that they could be persuaded to part with any of their land. This feature held sway over them long after the building of the New York and Paterson Railroad, which was one of the first railroads in the country; and it is only within about twenty years that any serious inroads have been made on the domains of this peculiar people. Possessing one of the most desirous and attractive districts for the suburban residences of New Yorkers, they refused to use their land for improvements, and continued to plant and plod on as aforesaid, while other localities, far less attractive, were being built up and making the land-holders wealthy. There was not even a village in the whole township.

Schools became a sore spot with Punkin Dusters and Commuters. The boundaries of a large majority of Bergen County school districts were set in 1873, when the effects of railroads were only first being felt, and over the next fifteen years the school population increased by 35% without corresponding adjustments in district boundaries. The boundaries of school districts did not legally have to correspond with township boundaries. The opening of new roads and avenues made it more convenient for a great many children to attend school in an adjacent district, and, hence, numerous applicants sought a change of boundaries. Longtime residents, fearing school improvements would augment their taxes, used this excuse to seek a change in district lines. Many rural schools employed but one or two teachers and were badly overcrowded; again, some residents, not wishing to pay for additional teachers, asked to be relieved of a portion of their territory, thereby reducing their school population. According to *The Bergen Democrat* of April 26, 1889, “much of the new element to the school census comes from the city, and these parents object to their children walking so far, and therefore ask for a division of the district.” In March 1889, a bitter dispute over construction of a new school, fought between residents on the west bank of the Hackensack

River in the Cherry Hill section of River Edge and their neighbors in the New Bridge section on the east side of the river, was finally settled by division of the school district and erection of two schools. This case, dragged into the courts, indicated the need for a mechanism by which the boundaries of school districts might be amicably redrawn according to pressing needs.

Unfortunately, in such matters, there was often more heat than light. After the Borough of Ridgefield incorporated on May 25, 1892, its citizens wanted to use the old school house for a town hall and to erect a \$10,000 modern school building in its stead; but first they wanted their municipal and school district lines to coincide, which required including a portion of the neighboring Fairview School District. Fairviewers sent a strong remonstrance to County Superintendent Terhune. Finally, the State Superintendent of Schools visited Bergen County in March 1893 and personally approved the requested change despite local protests. At the same time, a new school district was established at Palisade (Cliffside?) Park and Northvale was separated from Norwood.

The new school district of Eastwood, only a year old in March 1893, already boasted “a pretty new school house” equipped with “an organ, library, flag, and so forth.” The boundary lines between Eastwood and River Vale had been drawn because District Clerk Holdrum, who promised to move the old school “off the public road, where it always stood, and nearer the centre of population” was deliberately left in the old River Vale School District for that purpose. One year later, Holdrum’s promise remained unfulfilled and a majority of the school’s patrons harped relentlessly for a change. Storm clouds also gathered to the west. When the old settlers or Punkin Dusters of Park Ridge decided in March 1893 “that all school meetings in this place shall be held at such hours as shall debar from participation that portion of the population doing business in New York,” *The Hackensack Republican* offered a timely warning that “those who inaugurated this system may not always be in the majority.”

Equally ominous for the old ways of doing things, the 1876 Atlas described station-stops along the new Hackensack Extension of the New Jersey & New York Rail-

road through Washington Township - namely, Kinderkamack, Westwood, Hillsdale, Pascack, Park Ridge and Montvale - by noting that “it is but fair to state that the boundary lines between the different villages are not established by law, and that two places may sometimes claim portions of the same territory.” Without success, Freeholder John Van Bussum argued in 1893 that the new line between Lodi and Bergen Townships be located further south, since the boundary as drawn (running from the railroad west to the Saddle River along what is now Passaic Avenue) inconveniently divided 300 acres on the Polifly road purchased for development as part of Hasbrouck Heights by the Boston Land and Improvement Company. Having gained sufficient numbers by 1893 to challenge Punkin Dusters at the polls, the Commuters of Bergen County led a political revolution in Home Rule that finally toppled the *ancien régime*. The old settlers did not go quietly and even succeeded in turning their opponents’ weapons to their own advantage: in pre-emptive strikes, rural communities quickly and quietly incorporated under the borough act to escape the suburbanites’ expensive taste for public improvements.

The fault line ran directly through Tenafly, a railroad suburb that was home to 1,500 residents. On January 26, 1893, a public meeting of property owners clamored for independence. As expressed in the pages of *The Tenafly Record*, public sentiment strongly favored borough incorporation though “its advocates were surprised to see so strong an opposition from merchants and mechanics.”<sup>3</sup> To put the matter to a legal test, a petition seeking a special election on the borough question, filed with Judge James Van Valen on February 16, 1893, was signed by forty-one property owners representing \$102,000 in assessable property. Stephen G. Clark led the boroughites, assisted by James E. Butler, Benjamin F. Pond, Garret DeMott, F. L. Culver, Dr. J. J. Haring and Dr. Lansing. Ex-Judge Garretson of Jersey City, backed by William Parcells and David Westervelt, opposed the scheme and were granted a special hearing on February 25th. An election on borough incorporation, scheduled by Judge Van Valen for March 11th, was postponed due to a suit against the proceedings filed with the State Supreme Court. *The Hackensack Republican* summarized the opposition thus:

It is said that the borough government is opposed because it will give the town improvements which many people do not deem necessary and will add to the burden of taxes. These represent the class who do not want macadamized roads or sidewalks or street lights. Mud roads, mud walks and darkness were good enough for their grandfathers and are good enough for them.

Tenaflly had its own fire department, supported by private subscription. The Hackensack Water Company installed a system of hydrants, supplying them with water for a term of three years at no cost to residents. The grace-period was due to expire and yet no method of using public funds to meet the expense could be found. In March 1893, Palisades Township voted \$200 each for the Tenaflly and Peetzburgh fire departments over the protest of many citizens "that the entire township cannot be taxed for anything that is only to benefit certain communities." Yet, the road to forming new municipalities with rational boundaries was dark and uncertain. On April 17, 1893, Judge James Van Valen declined to order a special election to consolidate Old and New Carlstadt into a single municipality on the grounds that the petitioners included territory lying outside their original boundaries.

The legal outcome at the Tenaflly polls was favorable to borough advocates and a referendum, held January 23,

1894, successfully concluded a year-long campaign to have Tenaflly secede from Palisades Township. On the eve of the vote, F. L. Culver, the moving spirit behind Tenaflly's independence movement, was confident, stating: "I have no doubt the election will result in Home rule for Tenaflly." Opponents T. L. McIntyre and J. H. Zabriskie feared tax increases while principal F. S. Manghan and druggist F. G. Remer, both proponents, thought that progress would only come through secession. Dr. J. J. Haring switched to favoring independence, claiming that, while Tenaflly occupied only one-fifth of Palisades Township, it paid one half of the taxes. Echoing the cry of boroughism, he foresaw that, under borough government, "these taxes will be spent within our own limits." The election was "an exciting one" as both sides worked hard to persuade voters of the best course to take. On election day, 272 out of 290 eligible voters went to the polls, narrowly favoring the change by vote of 137 to 130 (five ballots being rejected).

1 "Bergen County Roads," *New York Evening Post*, January 26, 1894, reprinted in *The Bergen Democrat* of February 2, 1894

2 Despite misguided attempts to change it due largely to political sensitivities about being called "free loaders," the title of Chosen Freeholder is a true Jerseyism, used nowhere else in the United States, and a verbal relict of one of the oldest extant forms of local self-government in the world.

3 *The Hackensack Republican*, March 2, 1893



## Part Two



School districts embracing the old river and railroad hamlets of Oradell and New Milford, River Edge, Cherry Hill and New Bridge spanned the Hackensack River, thereby crossing township lines. In February 1893, citizens of New Milford and Peetzburgh, situated on opposite sides of the river, fought over division of Oradell School District No. 29. Peetzburgh, a suburban tract developed by Gustav Peetz and settled mainly by German immigrants, was ready for a school of its own. Oradell and New Milford residents were miffed however when Peetzburgh demanded all of the school district lying within Palisade Township and thus captured the Hackensack Water Works, the district's largest tax ratable, by a bare majority vote at a public meeting.<sup>1</sup> In March 1893, Peetzburgh took another step toward Home Rule by forming one of the separate new road districts in Palisade Township, enabling it to spend its road tax to overcome mud roads that were hub-deep in some places and impassable to loaded vehicles.

Peetzburgh was left "the big fish in the little pond" of Palisade Township when Tenaflly, its largest village, seceded in January 1894. As resentments simmered, fracture lines began to radiate outward from the new borough. On February 9, 1894, The Bergen Democrat reported that "Cresskill is beginning to sound the note of revolt against Peetzburgh domination, and the village will probably follow the example of Tenaflly and leave the Dutch 'to flock by itself.'"<sup>2</sup> Sixteen Cresskill property owners (representing \$26,250 in valuation) applied for a borough referendum and departed Palisade Township on May 8, 1894. Almost immediately, the "more progressive residents" of Closter expressed their interest in "a form of government which will build up the place."

The boundaries of School District No. 61, Ridgewood, were considerably enlarged in March 1894 by addition of territory from the Midland Park and Ridgewood Grove Districts. In about a year's time, the Grove District was to be entirely abolished as Ridgewood ab-

sorbed that portion lying within Ridgewood Township and the Fairlawn School District absorbed that portion lying in Saddle River Township. Ridgewood planned to concentrate the consolidated district's scholars in a central, three-story, brick school house to be built on Beech Street (now Cottage Place) and Franklin Avenue.

The cost of road improvements also threatened to rupture the old townships through sectional discontent. Beginning about 1890, macadamized roads gained in favor throughout eastern Bergen County as the suburban townships of Englewood, Ridgefield and Palisade divided their territories into road districts, each district raising its own fund and thereby macadamizing the greater part of its highways.<sup>3</sup> Townships in central and western Bergen County lagged far behind their eastern neighbors in this regard and so eagerly sought the County Freeholders, acting under the new state road law, to adopt certain leading highways as county roads and to bond the county for macadamizing them. This scheme was defeated by complaint of the eastern sections but the controversy hastened a general desire for macadamized roads. The total amount of road money raised by direct levy and bonding from 1890 to 1893 inclusive amounted to \$651,535. The amount of bonded indebtedness directly for macadam included in that sum was \$302,000, divided as follows: Hackensack, \$60,000; Orvil, \$30,000; Ridgewood, \$50,000; Rutherford, \$50,000; Saddle River, \$90,000; Union, \$42,000. Figures show that Bergen county raised \$686,500 for roads in four years by direct tax and bonding, and an additional \$80,000 was expended on public highways by private parties (most notably, by Theodore A. Havemeyer of Mountainside Farms in Mahwah and Judge W. W. Phelps of Teaneck).

Expenditure of road moneys was a source of discord in Boiling Springs Township where, in December 1893, sixteen residents called a public meeting to "cut loose from Carlton Hill" by incorporating a borough. These separatists believed that "Carlton Hill receives 1/2 the

road appropriations whilst it paid 1/3.” Carlton Hill<sup>4</sup> possessed a school, a post office and other advantages of its own and residents’ opposition to the borough scheme was encouraged by merchants in the City of Passaic, on the west side of the river, who wanted to control the trade of the hill district. Consequently, a counter offer proposed formation of a borough to include Carlton Hill, Passaic Park and Wallington on the river front in Bergen County; others suggested that Carlton Hill form a borough by itself. The township resisted subdivision, however, and the proposed new borough, to be called East Rutherford, extended between the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers, bounded south by the Erie Railroad and north by the Paterson Plank Road. When voters of Boiling Springs Township, “anxious to attain the dignity of a borough and stand on an equal footing with Rutherford,”<sup>5</sup> approved incorporation of East Rutherford on March 6, 1894 by vote of 240 to 37, “serenaders marched through town headed with drums and fish horns and the night was made hideous.”

Beginning in October 1893, Midland Township was exercised by a proposal to complete the work of macadamizing its remaining twenty-two miles of dirt roads by bonding for \$75,000. Four years earlier, the Midland Township Committee had discarded the old haphazard system of road maintenance and adopted a plan of raising the sum of \$5,000 per annum by taxation to macadamize. Some taxpayers preferred to bond the township while others wanted to double the annual appropriation. Washington Township also began to talk of bonding while Franklin Township remained indifferent, offering “the excuse of natural gravel roads.”<sup>6</sup>

In February 1894, the Midland Township Committee abandoned the proposal to bond for \$75,000, returning to their original plan of raising \$50,000 to macadamize only the main highways. With reduction in the proposed mileage to be worked, engineer Leslie Menger attempted “to give each section of the township a fair proportion of the outlay.” Under this plan, annual payments over twenty years averaged about \$4,000. There was no pleasing everyone and this compromise proved short-lived. The Maywood section resented the exclusion of Maywood Avenue north of Essex Street. *The Hackensack Republican* flatly stated that “the propo-

sition to bond Midland township for the purpose of macadamizing about fifteen miles of public highways does not meet the approval of certain citizens of New Milford and Oradell, for the reason as we are informed, that the schedule of roads to be worked does not recognize the two communities to the satisfaction of all the inhabitants, and the dissatisfied ones seek relief from what they believe will be onerous taxation by moving for incorporation as a borough.”<sup>7</sup> According to the dissenters’ calculations, the area within their proposed municipal limits “pays about \$2,400 road tax and gets about \$600 worth of road work, which is unsatisfactory to those who are moving for a borough; they point out that the borough will include the Hackensack Water Works, paying tax on a large assessment, which will make the general tax levy comparatively light.” But some taxpayers within the proposed borough limits regarded incorporation “as a thing hedged about by mysteries” and feared its hidden costs. And what about a name? C. H. Storms suggested combining the last syllables of Oradell and New Milford but could not decide whether it should be spelled Delford or Dellford. Finally, on February 23, 1894, a petition with the requisite number of signatures was presented to Judge James M. Van Valen, Presiding Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and signed by him. Almost half (\$15,000) of the taxable property represented on the Delford petition (\$31,000) came from inclusion of the Oradell Land Improvement Company under the signatures of Elmer Blauvelt, president, and James C. Blauvelt, secretary.

On March 1, 1894, *The Hackensack Republican* observed that the macadamization question in Midland Township “appears to have produced a peculiar effect upon those residents who live along the River Road section.<sup>8</sup> This includes all the principal villages: Cherry Hill, New Milford, River Edge, Oradell.” The reporter explained that a “contest” had been going on for years “between the River Road and Paramus people for prestige in control of township affairs, with the advantage generally in favor of Paramus.” Property owners along Kinderkamack Road opposed bonding and instead favored doubling the annual road tax for five years to achieve the same benefit without indebtedness. As New Milford and Oradell jointly sought borough incorporation, some of their neighbors to the south began agitating a similar movement to incorporate a borough

out of parts of Fairmount, Cherry Hill, River Edge and New Bridge. Residents of Fairmount strongly opposed joining with River Edge and Cherry Hill, fearing higher taxes. Such fears did not dampen the enthusiasm of other communities and the *Republican* averred “the chief reason why Delford, Westwood, Hillsdale and Park Ridge want to become boroughs is that they may avoid what is feared will be heavy macadam tax.” Unfortunately, it remained to be seen whether incorporation implied “a determination on the part of boroughites not to improve roads in their own limits.”<sup>9</sup>

On March 5, 1894 in the Oradell Lecture Room, voters of Oradell and New Milford voted (89 to 29) in favor of combining their villages into the borough of Delford. To settle the score and retrieve tax revenues on the Water Company property from Peetzburgh, this portion of Palisade Township lying east of the Hackensack River was included within Delford’s limits and, for that reason, the legitimacy of Delford’s birth was immediately called into question: Judge Van Valen held that there was no provision in the law sanctioning the formation of a borough from parts of more than one township. Delford, therefore, appeared to be stillborn until the State legislature revived its existence.

Whether the controversy of the moment dealt with schools or roads, suburban communities demanded exclusive management of their own revenues and resources. The so-called “old settlers” or Punkin Dusters (farmers for the most part) opposed boroughites out of fear of rising taxation for improvements that exclusively benefited commuter villages. Some feared such new financial devices as “bonding” with its connotations of borrowing against the future and living in debt. The divide was politicized as Commuters identified with the Republican party and many farmers clung to Jeffersonian-Jacksonian Democracy. The rush toward boroughization gained a new head of steam in April 1894 as the Legislature debated an act permitting the consolidation of two villages by popular referendum. On April 26th, the *Republican* announced “legislation is under way that will remove existing obstacles to forming the borough of Delford upon the original lines, and it is believed that this will soon be carried through.” The consequences of casting special legislation under guise of a general law soon became patent. The Supplement

to the Borough Act, enacted May 9, 1894, not only provided for the formation of a borough from parts of two or more townships, but it actually encouraged such civic cobbling by entitling composite municipalities to a representative on the County Board of Chosen Freeholders.<sup>10</sup> Hungry partisans now helped themselves to slices of neighboring townships to form boroughs that guaranteed another Freeholder for their party and, by this means, Republicans and Democrats contested control of Bergen County government. On June 14, 1894, The Hackensack Republican noted that “borough mania continues to spread in Bergen County and the possibilities are that it will not be checked in some time.” Boroughitis was “assuming the force of rivalry between communities to determine which shall be the big fish and swallow its smaller neighbor, the contest not tending toward a survival of the fittest, however, so much as demonstrating which community has the smartest leaders.”

Political ambition enflamed Borough Fever in other ways. According to *The Paterson Guardian*, “the most potent cause for the change of government is the increased number of public offices created.” The Guardian calculated that, within the span of only six weeks, attempts were made to incorporate “not less than 30 municipalities” from twelve out of the sixteen townships of Bergen County. Since each new borough would have at least eleven offices to fill, this created “220 additional posts for the bosses to hitch their followers to.” Counting new Freeholders from each municipality and a host of minor appointive positions, the Guardian’s mathematician came up with a “list of 250 servants of the people necessary to guide the affairs of these woodchuck boroughs, not including school trustees that each municipality will have to elect when the new school law goes into effect after July 1.” The Bergen Index was even more expansive in its estimates on June 30, 1894: “Counting the boroughs already organized and those in prospect, Bergen county will have at least 300 more public office holders at the close of 1894 than she had at the beginning of the year.”

There was no stopping the commuter train. In late April, citizens of Westwood filed a petition with Judge Van Valen seeking a borough referendum. On April 26th, *The Hackensack Republican* noted how West-

wood boroughites had “carried their scheme through very quietly with the reported purpose of heading off Hillsdale and avoiding opposition that often follows agitation.” It was “a feeling of dissatisfaction for a long period” that prompted Westwoodians: since “they paid a large proportion of the taxes levied, they wanted the management and use of their own funds.” The borough election was held at Odd Fellows Hall, Westwood, on May 8th. In response, Hillsdale became “restless under the prestige gained by Westwood, and it is expected that some of its residents will apply to the legislature for a city charter.”<sup>11</sup>

On April 5, 1894, the *Republican* counted Fort Lee and Leonia among the communities seeking independence. An election in the last week of April to decide borough incorporation for Coytesville was defeated, 69 to 58. There was “much excitement over the matter and charges were made that illegal voters were run in from the [Susquehanna] tunnel.” On June 4, 1894, the borough movement in Shadyside was “ploughed under by a majority of 32 [votes].”

On April 13th, Park Ridge commuters filed papers for an election on the question of borough incorporation. This attempt “revealed considerable opposition on account of the boundaries.” Montvale, part of the school district, was excluded from the limits of the proposed borough. The contest at Park Ridge was to be hard fought as the “old settlers object to a borough and will marshal their forces, while Justice [William B.] Smith is marshalling the boroughites.” Naturally, opponents believed that Justice Smith “would not refuse the title of mayor.” And so Park Ridge became “a camp where Punkin-Duster and Commuter brandish weapons at each other, jangling dreadful armor with all the din of horrid conflict.”<sup>12</sup> The new comers, called Commuters, had always been worsted in battles at the polls until March, “when with the aid of the women, they carried the school election against the old-time natives, or Punkin-Dusters.” Having tasted victory, the Commuters started a borough movement. On May 14, 1894, voters at Forresters Hall in Park Ridge chose borough incorporation by a vote of 95 to 49. Punkin Dusters were startled by the two-to-one victory. On May 25th, a local reporter for *The Bergen Democrat* observed that “Woodcliff is left out of the borough

limits [of Park Ridge] and, we understand, the people are glad of it.” But Washington Township had cracked asunder and everyone was out to grab the spoils. Over in Eastwood, posted notices announcing a borough referendum were suddenly torn down when a change in the proposed boundary lines was quietly made in the third week of May so as to include a part of Harrington Township and thereby gain a Freeholder. Eastwood’s boundaries were the artwork of Edward C. Sarson, the rural Democratic boss. On May 31, 1894, *The Hackensack Republican* criticized this blatantly political concoction, reporting: “There is an idea abroad that the township lines have been run in zig-zag circuitousness to take in and exclude voters for partisan purposes: in other words, merely to meet the wishes of the Democratic clique that is hungry for office and sees no other method of gratifying its desires.” The *Bergen Index* elaborated further:

A very peculiar feature of the Eastwood contest is the survey on which the dividing line for the new borough has been drawn. One has been taken to include the Midvale school house in the borough limits, but turns and angles, like an Ionian key, cut out the residences of colored people, so that only white people occupy the proposed borough. This boundary was defined by Edward Sarson, the Democratic boss. John J. Bogert, a Republican, who has negro tenants, to get even with the opposite party, has made arrangements to move the “n\*\*\*\*r” tenement to another corner of his lot. This will enable his tenants to be voters. A large tenement will also be built by Farmer Bogert, as a color line protest against the Democrats.

The Eastwood election succeeded by vote of 56 to 23 but it was a noisy affair. Eastwood’s twelve Republicans put up a fight and outsiders joined the fray. The gerrymandered new borough “excluded the house of John Heck and also several other staunch Republicans” who lived in the neighborhood. Heck, an active worker in Methodist societies, “threatened three hotelkeepers with a revocation of their licenses if they dared to vote for incorporation.” On complaint of Blauvelt Post, Heck was arrested.

Republicans had worked hard to secure a majority of the Board of Chosen Freeholders by electing a Repub-



lican, Jacob Van Buskirk, from the new Borough of Delford. Eastwood's birth was therefore most timely; simply put, the guaranteed Democrat from Eastwood balanced the Republican from Delford "so that when the Freeholders meet in July they will be stronger by two votes, but the party standing will be the same."<sup>13</sup>

Seeking to equalize educational opportunities among poorer or richer, rural or suburban school districts, the Township School Law, enacted May 25, 1894, provided for consolidation of all school districts within any township into a single consolidated district to be managed by a nine-member Board of Education. Each city, borough and incorporated town was to become a district unto itself. County Superintendents would apportion State school money to each consolidated district as follows: a sum equal to \$200 for each full-time teacher; one-half of the remainder of the school moneys belonging to the county on the basis of the aggregate attendance of all children registered in a school district according to report of the State Superintendent; and the balance on the basis of the last public school census. This new system of apportionment replaced the payment of flat fees per teacher (\$275) and per child (\$375). The editor of *The Hackensack Republican* thought: "Some schools will fare well under this division while others will not do so well." Starting June 1894, Bergen County received \$60,172.56 in State school money. Apportionment under the new school law allowed \$270 per child to each district having less than 30 children, \$310 per child to each district having 30 to 44 children, and \$370 per child to each district having 45 or more children. Some wealthier suburban districts, however, circumvented the purpose of the law by using the amended Borough Act to incorporate separate municipalities and school districts.

Maywood was another booming suburban community agitated by the need for its own modern school house. On February 5, 1894, about 80 citizens met at the Spring Valley school house and voted to accept several lots offered by Gustav Peetz on Maywood Avenue and to move the school of District No. 28 (known as the Spring Valley School) to that location. Edgar D. Howland led the rural opposition, arguing that "the proposed location was far from the centre of population, on one side of the district, and would compel

some of the children to travel a great distance." After two tied ballots, school trustees approved moving the school by majority of a single vote. Spring Valley residents refused to accept this outcome and joined residents of Maywood in petitioning for a division of the district. The new boundary line was set in the center of the (Spring Valley) road leading from Fairmount to Spring Valley. Being "troubled over the school matter," Maywood residents petitioned for a borough of their own encompassing that portion of Midland Township lately laid out and built up as Maywood Park by Gustav Peetz. Borough promoters won the special election at the Maywood Clubhouse on June 29, 1894 with ease; it was openly stated that the new township school law "prompted this election."

Summoned by their school trustees and the village board of Carlstadt, about 130 residents attended a public meeting on June 1, 1894, to consider the question of incorporation. Professor John Oehler denounced the proposed consolidation of all the school districts in each township and the centralization of their respective indebtedness and obligations by reciting a litany of reasons to seek "Home Rule":

Possibly the outside trustees might object to and decide against German being taught in the Carlstadt schools. Perhaps it may be objected that Carlstadt paid the principal more than the other principals received. Mediocrity would take the place of excellence. To unite in a joint scheme where other schools were deep in debt would be a financial disaster to Carlstadt.

In closing, Professor Oehler urged that they separate their school district from the remainder of the township and thereby secure the expenditure of local taxation at home. "This," he loudly protested, "was not a selfish movement but a question of expediency." On June 27, 1894, polls opened at the Carlstadt schools where 173 voted in favor of incorporation with 29 opposed. John Oehler, Carlstadt's champion of boroughism, was so absorbed in his thoughts on election day that he reportedly startled a waiter in a local restaurant by ordering "a plate of borough."

Carlstadt's independence movement troubled and inspired its neighbors. The people of Little Ferry sud-

denly felt their desire for a borough and, according to *The Bergen Democrat*, “there seems to be no end of the craze in Bergen County.” Proponents in Little Ferry wanted to include the brickyards east of Sand Hill, running the boundary down to the Hackensack River and then to Bellman’s Creek, to a point near the Moonachie road, thereby adding “part of the swamp” in New Barbadoes to their section of Lodi Township in order to secure the coveted Freeholder. They argued “that Little Ferry would have control of taxes raised in this section, where as heretofore Carlstadt has taken the bulk of the funds raised.” When the new borough was formed, there would be nothing left of Lodi township but Lodi village and the Risers. Since Lodi was talking borough, Lodi Township would finally be reduced to the Risers and the editor concluded that “the swamp angels will have nobody to fight but themselves.” Lemuel Lozier made the necessary survey with the understanding that he should follow the boundaries of the school district; he completed his work by August 1st. When the Little Ferry petition had nearly enough signatures, the people of Moonachie were reportedly anxious to join. The application was presented to Judge Van Valen on September 4th and the election for incorporation of the Borough of Little Ferry, encompassing 1.62 square miles, was held September 18, 1894, at Louis Bausbeck’s (formerly Charles Marshall’s) Hotel. The borough question carried by vote of 70 to 2.

According to the *Democrat* of June 19, 1894, borough fever also struck Woodridge, “but the intention is not to form an independent government.” Citizens of Woodridge apparently hoped “to annex jointly with New Carlstadt and become part of the borough just created which would make it one of the largest in the county.” New Carlstadt comprised that portion of the present Borough of Carlstadt lying northeast of Division Avenue and northwest of the Hackensack Road (Terrace Avenue). Borough advocates were also hard at work in Hasbrouck Heights where, according to report in *The Bergen Democrat* on June 22, 1894: “The new school law is at the bottom of it: some hold that this law obliges the township generally to assume the bonded indebtedness now existing upon districts, notably in the villages of Lodi and Little Ferry, while the home school house has little if any debt at all. The argument is gaining ground.”

Loss of territory to the boroughs of Tenafly, Cresskill and Delford ignited a feeding frenzy over the carcass of Palisade township. Schraalenburgh wanted to become a borough, an act that would require including a part of Bergen Fields. Instinctively, the latter community “hustled itself” and on June 8, 1894, filed petition with Judge Van Valen praying for incorporation of the Borough of Bergenfield, thereby precluding any loss of territory to Schraalenburgh. An overwhelming majority (83 to 1) approved borough government for Bergenfield on Monday, June 25, 1894. Ex-Senator Cornelius S. Cooper, the prime mover behind the Schraalenburgh initiative, was now forced to look westward in his search for suitable boundaries. Cooper proposed incorporation of the Borough of Kensington (“thus obliterating another good old native name”), encompassing what is now Dumont but extending westward to the Hackensack River, taking in the Peetzburgh and River Edge (or Old Bridge) sections of what is now New Milford, south to Henley Avenue. By including parts of Harrington and Palisade Townships, Kensington promoters tried to gain the much coveted Freeholder.<sup>14</sup> In the election held at Andrew Stroh’s meat market in Schraalenburgh on June 29, 1894, the proposed Borough of Kensington went down to defeat at the hands of Peetzburghers who wanted a borough of their own, the question losing 65 ayes to 73 nays.

On June 16, 1894, *The Bergen Index* reported that Cherry Hill and River Edge had also taken the necessary steps to form a borough which, upon incorporation, would be known as Riverside. It claimed that “the contention here is not the matter of electing a freeholder, but the school question.” *The Republican* described the chain reaction:

River Edge is in labor over the important question [of borough incorporation]. Not so much because River Edge wants to be a borough as for the reason that Peetzburgh is holding meetings and squabbling over a borough proposition that includes a part of River Edge. If there is one thing River Edge is thrown into convulsions over it is the thought of having a part of its territory included in a municipality the controlling power of which lies east of the river. Therefore River Edge is awake, its leaders are doing some deep and quick

thinking, keeping one eye and a half on the situation in Peetzburgh; and as an outcome we may expect to hear that River Edge will become a borough, electing Squire Webb mayor.

This morning papers have been prepared, and by tonight they will be signed, to form a borough out of River Edge and Cherry Hill, to be known as the borough of Riverside. The boundary will be: North by Delford borough line, east by Hackensack river, south by brook dividing New Barbadoes and Midland townships, west by the course of same brook. It was desired to take in a portion of Palisade Township, east of the river, but Kensington borough had already engulfed that section. Riverside will have water on three sides, and may be known as the marine borough of Bergen, with a navy and fleet collector, port warden, naval officer and all other dignitaries.

Citizens of River Edge and Cherry Hill voted at Bogert's Hall, River Edge, on Friday, June 29, 1894. According to the Index, "the vote was very light, but very emphatic, 37 favoring the change, to three voting in favor of the old system." The Borough of Riverside was born.

On June 26, 1894, voters of Hasbrouck Heights were called to Pioneer Hall by some of the leading citizens of the town "to discuss the advisability of cutting adrift from the wicked outside world which according to their geographical knowledge includes Lodi and Little Ferry." *The Hackensack Republican* thought that "the farmers were particularly hostile to the borough movement, claiming they were the heaviest taxpayers and had not been consulted in reference to issuing the call." Henry Lemmermann, president of the Mattson rubber works, was elected chairman of the meeting. Having recently relocated his company from New York to Hasbrouck Heights, he was quick to point out that Hasbrouck

Heights paid 40% of the taxes raised in Lodi Township, but only 27% of that amount was returned to the town in benefits. Boroughites proposed inclusion of portions of Bergen and Lodi Townships to gain representation on the Board of Freeholders. Public meetings on the borough question at Hasbrouck Heights were soon "characterized by bitter personalities" and fights over the boundaries. In reaction, sentiment against incorporation grew.

1 The Bergen Democrat, March 3, 1893

2 In this instance, Dutch should be read Deutsch, meaning Germans, as in the case of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

3 The macadam road was named in 1815 for John Loudon McAdam, surveyor general of the Bristol road district. He first introduced the construction of a hard-surfaced road by cementing compacted layers of gravel with a mixture of stone dust and water.

4 Carlton Hill lies between Wallington and Rutherford, overlooking the Passaic River.

5 The Bergen Democrat, March 30, 1894

6 "Bergen County Roads," New York Evening Post, January 26, 1894, reprinted in *The Bergen County Democrat* of February 2, 1894

7 "Another Borough Movement," *The Hackensack Republican*, February 22, 1894

8 The "River Road" referred to is Kinderkamack Road, running along the river

9 "The Boroughs are Coming," *The Hackensack Republican*, April 26, 1894

10 1894 Laws of New Jersey, Chapter CLXXVI

11 The Bergen Democrat, April 27, 1894

12 *The Hackensack Republican*, January 17, 1895

13 "Bergen's Boroughs," *The Bergen Index*, June 7, 1894

14 The Kensington Company of Schraalenburgh was incorporated in March 1893. Henry and Emily MacNamara and C. B. Schuyler were local shareholders.



## Part Three



In June 1894, *The Paterson Guardian* correctly noted that “Bergen is the isolated representative of New Jersey’s 21 counties that has gone into the wholesale borough business, and the lawyers look upon it as a good thing.” The editor of *The Bergen Index* thought that the sixteen townships of Bergen County had been “visited by an epidemic which there is no resisting. It attacks a village first as a murmuring complaint; in the latter stages of the attack the case is hopeless, and inevitably results in amputating the affected part from its township connection. Sometimes an eruption of embryo officials mark the disease through its course, at other times a selfish antipathy to being taxed for other people is observed.” In either case, the election of a mayor and other municipal functionaries generally had “a soothing effect”. But over the span of seventeen months, Bergen County townships were “Boroughized” to death.

About the first of July 1894, the Leonia Improvement Society authorized a committee to hire “a good speaker opposed to boroughism.” Though the Punkin Dusters of Leonia were reportedly well satisfied with the status quo, even they would tolerate incorporation of a new borough rather than submit to an alteration of the boundaries of School District #6 in Ridgefield Township.<sup>1</sup> On July 6th, ex-Senator Cornelius S. Cooper renewed his application for a new borough; this time dropping the name of Kensington in favor of the old name of Schraalenburgh.<sup>2</sup> He also changed the proposed boundaries to exclude Peetzburgh, thereby eliminating certain “kickers” who had defeated the previous attempt. Judge Van Valen initially declined to grant Cooper’s petition “on the ground of the indefiniteness of the boundary lines.”

The borough referendum at Hasbrouck Heights on July 31, 1894, was described as “a high old time” that “excited the entire town.” According to *The Bergen Democrat*, “a Presidential canvass could not have more thoroughly arouse the citizens of Hasbrouck Heights, especially its voting population.” Meetings held prior

to the vote “were not of the enthusiastic nature, for the people seemed pretty evenly divided and the discussions were animated; feeling has run high, and it showed itself, too, on election day.” Both sides were confident of success and debate continued into the polling booths. Here as elsewhere, “the discourse went so far as to become bitterly personal, and charges and countercharges flew through the air.” To add fuel to the fire, a circular was distributed on election day, promoting “Home Rule” and expressing “the belief that its people know what its needs are better than Lodi and Little Ferry.” When the polls finally closed, Pioneer Hall was crowded with citizens anxious to hear the results. The final vote, announced “amid wild applause,” stood: 72 votes for the borough and 60 against it. The losers threatened to contest the outcome on the ground that it violated the Ballot Reform Act.

On July 31, 1894, about thirty residents of Woodcliff met and appointed a committee to decide upon the boundaries of yet another new borough. Their intention was to take in part of Orvil township, thereby securing a Freeholder. Walter Stanton and Warner W. Westervelt were the prime movers. On August 1st, Ridgefield Park held a public meeting to consider changing from an incorporated village to a borough; the Democrat’s local reporter believed that “the new school law has much to do with the agitation for a change.”

“A mild form” of borough fever was detected in Montvale, where agitators drew lines to include a portion of neighboring Orvil Township, thereby securing one of that township’s six school houses and gaining the right to elect its own Freeholder. On August 13, 1894, Judge James Van Valen scheduled the Montvale election for August 30th at the public house of John A. L. Blauvelt. There was “little or no opposition” and it was thought the vote would be “about all one way.” Stunned with being “out generalled by the Montvalians,” citizens of Park Ridge suddenly felt “lonely in consequence” of the fact that they had not been foresighted enough

to include some portion of a neighboring township within their corporate limits and thus gain Freeholder representation for themselves. Mayor Wield of Park Ridge took office and, on August 10th, the Park Ridge Borough Council initiated steps to annex a portion of Montvale, calling for an election on the question to be held September 13th. Unfortunately, the timely acceptance of Montvale's petition by Judge James Van Valen and the order for its borough referendum outflanked the Park Ridge land-grabbers. Ironically, boroughite Justice Smith of Park Ridge objected to Montvale's independence movement, but to no avail. It was even said that some discontented landowners in Park Ridge wanted to secede from that borough by a change of its boundaries, but the prevailing wisdom held that the Park Ridge referendum had been legal and therefore the unhappy parties would either have to abide by the consequences of the referendum or move away.

Residents of Midland Park had been "quietly at work for the formation of a borough," hoping to take a slice of Ridgewood Township and thereby gain a Freeholder. On August 17, 1894, *The Bergen Democrat* noted that borough talk was "still to the front" with every promise of success, although a petition had circulated that objected "to calling the borough Midland Park." *The Hackensack Republican* reported completion of the preliminary steps with the observation that: "in population it is a more suitable movement than almost any borough enterprise entered into this year." This was not another political scheme "merely to avoid the working of roads" since its boundaries, where marked by highways, ran to the center of the road. Incorporation of Midland Park was approved 112 to 30 on September 4, 1894.

An independence movement, headed by Abram Godwin Munn (a member of the New York Cotton Exchange) and his grandson, Rogers Godwin Munn, was "in active operation" at Bogota where a meeting of property owners was held September 20th to advance the cause of borough incorporation. Bogota boroughites briefly toyed with the idea of including a portion of the meadow belonging to New Barbadoes Township, on the west side of the river, in order to secure representation on the Board of Chosen Freeholders. Although this proposition was quickly abandoned, a

second idea - to run Ridgewood Park within the lines of Bogota - was seriously considered; it was thought that "the Parkites may not relish being absorbed, but that doesn't count." In the first week of October 1894, an application for borough incorporation was filed. As matters stood, there were only 250 men, women and children within the proposed limits of the Borough of Bogota. The referendum was held at the Bogota Water & Light Company on November 14th.

A meeting was held August 23, 1894, at the Grove School-house in Ridgewood "to make a preliminary move for forming the borough of South Ridgewood." According to the *Republican*, Hohokus Creek would become the east line of this "woodchuck municipality," which would extend west to Rock Avenue, north to Grove Street, and south into Saddle River Township, taking in Fairlawn and Cherry Lane. The name was soon changed, however, to Glen Rock. Residents of Ridgewood, interested in the proposed borough of South Ridgewood, claimed that "their application was filed in time to prevent liability for the \$47,000 school house." To the north, a proposal to form a borough of Undercliff (Hohokus) was initiated for the same reason. Judge Van Valen ordered an election to decide incorporation of the Borough of Glen Rock, comprising 3.25 square miles, to be held at Andrew V. D. Snyder's greenhouses, near Ridgewood, on September 12, 1894. The borough was approved, 80 to 2.

On August 9, 1894, K. M. Hart appeared before Judge James Van Valen on behalf of borough advocates in Woodcliff (formerly Pascack) and secured a referendum for August 28, 1894, to decide upon incorporation of a borough, encompassing 3.75 square miles, to be held at the former hotel of Peter J. Wortendyke on Old Pascack Road. Woodcliff was described as "one of the smallest villages in Bergen County," consisting of a depot on the New Jersey & New York Railroad, a grocery store and "not more than 60 voters." There was little opposition, voters approving creation the County's sixteenth borough, 46 to 16. Walter Stanton, a millionaire banker, was prominently mentioned as a candidate to be Woodcliff's first mayor. In mapping their boundaries, Woodcliff and Montvale had included a dozen voters from Orvil Township and, by so doing, added another two Freeholders to the County Board. Within

the space of only three months, dismemberment of the old Township of Washington left only the neighboring towns of Hillsdale, Etna and Old Hook within its limits and residents of Hillsdale now wanted to “join the procession” toward borough government.

With the formation of Schraalenburgh Borough, Peetzburgh and those portions of New Bridge and River Edge lying east of the Hackensack River were all that remained of Palisade Township. On August 17, 1894, the Peetzburgh correspondent for *The Bergen Democrat* noted that agitation for a borough had been renewed and “it begins to look as though Peetzburgh will in the near future become a municipality.” The population of the town was “almost equal to that of the Borough of Delford.” The remainder of the township to the south, however, only comprised a dozen or so farm families.

The question of annexing Windsor to the Borough of Carlstadt was narrowly approved at the polls on September 4th.<sup>3</sup> It was necessary in this case for borough residents and for those of the territory to be annexed to vote in separate ballot boxes. The vote of Windsor approved annexation, 13 to 11; Carlstadt voters approved the question 77 to 1. This action placed the electric-railway car shops and power house within the Borough’s limits and consequently deprived Bergen Township of a valuable tax ratable.

On August 28, 1894, *The Bergen Index* stated that Fairview wanted to become a borough “because its polling place has been removed to Edgewater.” Rumors circulated that Leonia residents intended to form a borough including Nordhoff.

Rivervale was “talking borough” by the first of September, as was Waldwick. On September 4th, L. R. Van Wagoner presided over a meeting at the Manor House in Hillsdale where borough incorporation was discussed and the necessary steps initiated. It was thought that Hillsdale taxpayers were “strongly in favor” of independence. A petition seeking incorporation of a Borough of Etna (later Emerson) circulated in the second week of September. Tucked into the Hillsdale column of *The Bergen Democrat* on September 14, 1894, was news that G. H. Hering had completed a map of the proposed borough of [Old] Tappan. Residents of Old

Tappan reportedly had become “alarmed at the proposal of River Vale to take their school-house, along with a strip of Harrington township into the proposed borough of River Vale.”<sup>4</sup> The Old Tappanites outflanked the River Vale boroughites by submitting a petition for their own incorporation. At this point, a question was raised as to the legality of Eastwood’s creation, since it contained only \$94,000 in real estate valuation, short of the \$100,000 required by the enabling legislation.

On September 6th, *The Hackensack Republican* reported that the movements to create the boroughs of Undercliff and East Ridgewood out of parts of Ridgewood, Orvil and Washington Townships had “temporarily balked” and consequently two additional Freeholders had died aborning. If these schemes had succeeded, then Ridgewood township would have been reduced to Ridgewood village and old Bob Lewis’s Spikertown. In response, some of Ridgewood’s citizens determined “to check the crazy borough rush” by calling a meeting for September 4, 1894, to promote incorporation under the Winton Village Act. The movement was led by Milton T. Richardson, editor of several trade journals including the *Boot & Shoe Weekly*; Dr. E. F. Hanks, Postmaster J. F. Crane and Joseph F. Carrigan. The necessary papers were completed by lawyer William M. Johnson of Hackensack and submitted to Judge Van Valen the following morning. It was felt that residents would “be found almost or quite unanimous in favor of this movement as not less than 130 taxpayers, representing \$380,000 of valuation in the village territory” signed the petition. The total valuation was about one million dollars and the law required taxpayers representing only one-fifth of that amount to sign. It was felt that village incorporation would “save the populous portion of the original township from dismemberment by absorption in woodchuck boroughs.” Republicans felt that the loss of their Freeholder from Ridgewood Township would amount to nothing since “it is pretty safe to believe that the creation of freeholders under the baby borough act will be changed next winter.” On September 22, 1894, *The Bergen Index* concluded that the people of Orvil and Saddle River Townships were “attempting to overcome the objectionable features of the new school law by resolving themselves into boroughs, following the old school district lines.” This, concluded the *Index*, was “an expensive solution, but possibly an

effective one.” At the Ridgewood election on November 15, 1894, 277 voted for village incorporation and 62 against; consequently, the *Republican* correspondent remarked that “to all intents and purposes Ridgewood township is obliterated.”

On September 16, 1894, State Senator Winton, editor of *The Bergen Democrat*, informed his readership that a bill would be introduced at the regular session of the Legislature in January next “to amend, if not to wipe out of existence altogether, the present Borough act.” Bergen County, he noted, was “about the only county in the State which affords a full and fair exemplification of the mischief which has followed the practical workings under the borough system.” He mused how some boroughs barely possessed enough population “to fill the numerous offices which pertain to the borough organizations which are within the township limits.” He thought the “Borough craze” might be regarded as a “roaring farce, if not for the fact that these numerous municipal organizations, each with a dozen office holders, is bound to prove a very expensive luxury in the near future unless abandoned.” The various County Boards of Election, Assessors and Chosen Freeholders had grown to “undreamed of proportions” with taxpayers paying the freight and lawyers reaping the profits. The Board of Chosen Freeholders had increased from sixteen to twenty-five members and its expenses were expected to rise proportionately. Senator Winton believed that the size of this Board needed to be restricted without delay by an act of the Legislature to either five or seven members, thus assuring a large savings and more efficient service. Quoting from an article in the *Evening Post*, Winton agreed that “Home Rule” would unnecessarily inflate the costs of government.

With changes in the air, the Etna correspondent for *The Bergen Democrat* speculated, on September 28, 1894, that “consideration of the borough question will resume next month, provided the legislature does not knock out the entire borough system.” Two weeks later, however, the same reporter thought that the movement in Etna had fallen “dormant.” On September 28th, the Ridgely Park Town Hall proved inadequate to accommodate the crowd of taxpayers. A majority favored continuance of the present village government but boroughites engaged them in hot debate and the meet-

ing finally broke up without reaching any conclusion. While Hohokus was “not borough crazy,” its neighbors in Allendale and Upper Saddle River were busy helping themselves to slices of Hohokus Township in order to gain Freeholders by crossing township lines.

Owing to the multiplication of boroughs, the number of election districts in Bergen County rose in one year from twenty-nine to forty-three. Boards of Election were required to organize their respective districts by October 9, 1894 and then to proceed with a house-to-house canvass to register the names of all legal voters. On October 1, 1894, the meeting of the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders was attended by three new Freeholders: Elmer E. Williams (R) for Hasbrouck Heights, Garret M. Ackerman (D) for Woodcliff, and Garret F. Hering (D) for Montvale. Under advice of counsel, Andrew V. D. Snyder, Freeholder from Ridgewood Township, announced his resignation since he had been nominated as Freeholder candidate from the new Borough of Glen Rock. With twenty-three Chosen Freeholders in attendance, the Board’s membership at this meeting was the largest since repeal of the law which years before gave each township two representatives. New Freeholders from Glen Rock, Little Ferry, Midland Park and Montvale were expected to attend the November session.

By the middle of October, Allendale had been stricken by borough fever which *The Bergen Democrat* thought “will probably result fatally.”<sup>5</sup> A week later, the borough question was being “favorably agitated” in Ramsey. The borough movement at Leonia seemed to have “fallen through” since the exploratory committee “could not agree on boundaries.” Election for incorporation of the Borough of Old Tappan was held at the Old Tappan School House (formerly School District No. 19) on October 16, 1894.

Borough sentiment in Wood-Ridge reached unstoppable proportions and, on October 29, 1894, Judge James Van Valen ordered an election on the question to be held at the Wood-Ridge Fire House on Tuesday, November 15, 1894. According to their original petition, the boundaries of Wood-Ridge extended south to the center line of Division Avenue, thereby including New Carlstadt. On November 2, 1894, the *Democrat*

correspondent thought that the borough movement at Hillsdale appeared “to be dead sent at any rate.” Despite strong opposition, however, the borough question at Ridgefield Park was “not quite dead” and advocates held private meetings to further a change.

On November 8, the *Republican* surmised that the new Borough of Upper Saddle River would be “strongly Democratic” as only sixteen Republicans could be found within its limits. In trying to implement the school-district consolidation act, County Superintendent Terhune had found Orvil to be “the most aggressive and uncivil township in the county” whose residents would not listen to any requests made by their new Board of Education and where “harsh and threatening language...not a little of it slanderous and malicious in character” dominated meetings. According to rumor, Orvil citizens had even conspired to waylay and assault the County Superintendent if he attended a certain meeting. Terhune dryly reported to the State Superintendent that “it was openly asserted that if I dared to come into the township, my eyes would be pulled out. This looked like cruelty to animals.” Four of the six school houses of Orvil Township had been taken by the new boroughs of Montvale, Allendale, Saddle River and Upper Saddle River, leaving only the schools at Waldwick and Hohokus under township control.<sup>6</sup>

The Borough of Bogota was approved by voters on November 14, 1894 after “an energetic campaign of several weeks in which Abram G. Munn, who is to be the first mayor, won a signal victory.” The move toward independence was opposed by Judge Bogart and Major William P. DeGraw. When the votes were finally counted, the boroughites prevailed 38 to 19. Word of victory sparked “a happy jubilation at the house of Mr. Munn, where the boroughites assembled in force and celebrated enthusiastically, tooting the water works whistle, blowing horns, and otherwise manifesting their delight.”<sup>7</sup> Munn promised the crowd “that he would give them a model borough - better roads, police protection, lights, etc., and that the taxes would be kept down to the lowest possible percentage, as he had no desire to pay a higher tax rate than anybody else.” He also announced his plans to build two more cottages and more stone roads at once. On November 15th, the proposed Borough of Wood-Ridge was defeated by a majority of

eight votes. The special election to form the Borough of Allendale from about three square miles taken from the Townships of Orvil, Hohokus and Franklin, was held in Archer Hall on November 18th. The referendum to create Saddle River Borough, comprehending 2,200 acres in Orvil township, was approved by voters at Saddle River Hall on November 19th, 56 to 6. The election here was “extremely quiet, no solicitation being made for or against.” On November 20th, voters entered John Walther’s wheelwright shop and approved incorporation of the Borough of Upper Saddle River (containing 2,374 acres, including a slice of Hohokus Township), 46 to 4. Rumors now circulated that the Paramus valley portion of Orvil Township was about to form a borough. On November 21, 1894, citizens of Leonia, by vote of 64 to 9, expressed disapproval of their borough incorporation movement. Palisade Park, adjoining Leonia to the south, planned its own referendum in the near future, submitting an application for a borough whose proposed northern boundary would be the Hackensack and Fort Lee Road. Cornelius Christie of Leonia quickly revived the borough movement in his community to forestall this invasion from the south and suggested new boundaries to eliminate most of the opposition. The election at Palisades Park was scheduled for December 4th.

As in Leonia and Wood-Ridge, borough advocates at Edgewater refused to accept defeat and revived their efforts to form a borough under the name of Undercliff, despite the fact that a railroad station and post office along the Erie Railroad, situated between Ridgewood and Hohokus, was already known as Undercliff. The new boundaries abandoned the \$9,000 school house at Edgewater on the hill and instead included the brick school house under the hill at Fort Lee. On December 5th, the election was held at Edgewater, resulting in a majority of 65 in favor of incorporation. This new borough comprised all of the district under the Palisades from the southerly line of the Dupont property at Edgewater to the northerly line of the lands of the Fort Lee Park & Steamboat Company.

Bringing its readers “Up To Date” on November 22, 1894, The Bergen Democrat counted thirty-four active or successful borough movements: Tenafly, Delford, East Rutherford, Riverside, Eastwood, Park Ridge,



Westwood, Maywood, Hasbrouck Heights, Bergenfield, Schraalenburgh, Glen Rock, Cresskill, Woodcliff, Midland Park, Old Tappan, Montvale, Little Ferry, Carlstadt, Saddle River, Upper Saddle River, Allendale, Bogota, Leonia, Woodridge, Englewood Cliffs, Lodi, Palisades Park, Wallington, Undercliff, Fairview, Teaneck, Ridgewood Village and Englewood. Furthermore, the borough question was being agitated at Highwood, Fairlawn, Garfield and New Bridge.

Twenty-seven Chosen Freeholders met at Hackensack on December 3, 1894, their number now augmented by the appearance of John D. Miesegeas from the Borough of Little Ferry. Fourteen Democratic Freeholders barely outnumbered the thirteen Republicans.

On December 5th, the Borough of Woodridge separated from Bergen Township by vote of 56 to 40. Non-residents supposedly took an active part in this hotly contested fray and wagons were sent to bring voters to the polls. Boroughites lost a previous election by only eight votes and Wood-Ridge's borough lines were consequently redrawn to exclude New Carlstadt; a second election order then brought success. In a quirk that survives to the present day, the northwest boundary of Wood-Ridge ran along "the center of the public road known as the River road leading from Lodi to Passaic Bridge" (that is, Saddle River Avenue\Lodi Road) southwest to the Bergen Short Cut Railroad, thereby excluding a tiny fragment of Bergen Township, bounded by the grounds of Felician College in Hasbrouck Heights, Saddle River Avenue and the Saddle River, which now forms one of the isolated parts of South Hackensack. As noted by The Bergen Index on September 15th, Lodi's proposed borough limits also excluded a small parcel of Lodi Township containing about 600 acres, "occupied by a half a dozen farmers," tucked between the Boroughs of Lodi and Hasbrouck Heights.

Residents of the New Village of Carlstadt (having eluded Wood-Ridge's grasp), applied to the Carlstadt Borough Council on December 20, 1894 for annexation; separate elections needed to be scheduled in both places to determine the question. On December 21, 1894, citizens of Lodi village voted at McGrath's Hall, to form

a borough: out of 181 votes cast, 163 favored incorporation and 10 opposed it. Wallington (named for pioneer settler Jacob Walling) was thought "likely to follow suit." Mayors Shafer of Rutherford, McKenzie of East Rutherford and Oehler of Carlstadt, assisted by other leaders of boroughism, addressed a public meeting at Wallington on Saturday evening, December 29th; on Monday, December 31, 1894, the vote to incorporate passed 94 to 14.

Commenting upon "The Girdle of the Year" on December 27, 1894, *The Hackensack Republican* spoke of the closing year's hard-fought contest among urban, suburban and rural interests:

The new school law and the borough craze - two features of political policy inextricably interwoven by the failure of divergent opinions to assimilate - have created an unusual degree of discord in several townships; but this is only an illustration in miniature of greater conflicts for supremacy in the highest branches of government. "Whatever is - is best," and in the end our politicians will reach their level, if not through their own wisdom, then by force of the popular will. Meantime our schools are making excellent advancement, keeping well in the position they long since assumed at the head of New Jersey's educational department, in face of the complication of studies that tend to clog the minds of youth.

1 The southern boundary of School District #6 ran along what is now Central Blvd in Palisades Park.

2 From the Dutch, Schraalenburgh literally means "thin or narrow hill" or "the little ridge" and describes a hill between two valleys. Anyone driving Schraalenburgh Road, especially through Haworth, can easily see the accuracy of this description.

3 The Windsor section probably comprised the area west of Lincoln Street, including Orchard Street, Garden Street, Industrial Road and Interstate Place.

4 The Bergen Index, October 6, 1894

5 The Bergen Democrat, October 12, 1894

6 The Waldwick district had bonded for \$5,000 and contracted to have a new school built only days before the new Consolidation act took effect.

7 The Hackensack Republican, Nov. 15, 1894



## Part Four



According to report of *The Hackensack Republican* on December 20, 1894, the city dwellers of Englewood, accustomed as they were to macadamized roads, municipal water supply, sewers and street lights, had not yet been carried away by the borough craze. Any proposed dismemberment of their township by boroughization, however, would “probably compel them, against their wishes, to incorporate.” A week later, the *Republican* intimated that a considerable number of people - especially in Englewood - would be surprised to learn that an application to incorporate a Borough of Teaneck had recently been submitted to Judge Van Valen. This surreptitious, preemptive strike was said to be “wholly protective in its character, being forced upon the movers by the objectionable features of the ‘woodchuck’ borough craze.” The W. W. Phelps Estate, comprising the most valuable part of the territory embraced within the limits of this proposed borough, had contributed substantially over the years to public road work within its borders, to which cause the surrounding neighborhoods had persistently refused to contribute. These same selfish communities now intended to hold fast within their municipal limits “as much as possible of this estate and adjacent properties, which, though remote from such communities, is near enough for purposes of taxation.” Out of self-preservation, Teaneck decided to head off the competition.<sup>1</sup> As originally demarcated, the Borough of Teaneck would be “much larger geographically” and possess “more population (over 300)” than several other new boroughs. The signers of the Teaneck petition represented \$141,425 of the \$246,925 assessed valuation of property embraced within its proposed boundaries.<sup>2</sup>

From a sense of what the *Republican* idealized as “‘Township Pride’ - a desire to maintain, unbroken, the lines of the original, simon-pure old township,” Englewood residents were determined to resist centrifugal stresses and to sustain their accustomed hegemony over surrounding rural neighborhoods. But new rumors of political revolution wafted into town.<sup>3</sup> Bare-

ly awakened to secession from the west, Englewood suddenly found itself fighting on its eastern front: Cliff Dwellers had moved stealthfully to form a borough of Englewood Cliffs out of that portion of Englewood Township fronting the Hudson River, running west about a half mile from the edge of the Palisades, from the Ridgefield Township line north to the Palisade Township line, and including about 125 acres of Palisade Township on their northern border in order to qualify for representation on the County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The same leading citizens of Englewood who were anxious to hold Teaneck within their orbit now did everything in their power to stifle the borough of Englewood Cliffs.

The town of Englewood was disadvantaged in the race for municipal independence because its territory exceeded the legal limits of four-square miles and a population of 5,000, as set by the General Incorporation by Election Act of 1878. Its civic leaders compensated with a novel legal strategy. At a public meeting in the Lyceum on December 29, 1894, E. B. Convers, president of the Englewood Improvement Association, alluded to the unpleasant discovery that “rural communities on our outskirts, resolving themselves into borough governments” intended to “deprive us of a portion of our territory.” Without warning, “like a thunder-bolt from a clear sky,” he and his fellow townsfolk had learned “that the Palisades were about to be taken from us” by formation of Englewood Cliffs, the vote for incorporation there being scheduled for January 4th. To the west, residents of Teaneck had initiated “a scheme for a borough that would control all our drainage system [that is, the Overpeck Canal],” thereby imperiling the health of the community. He persuaded his fellow villagers to seek formation of a town coextensive with the entire township (using the so-called Short Act of April 24, 1888) under the legal opinion, proffered by George R. Dutton, that such a special-chartered town government would supersede not only the government of the former township but also of all boroughs within

its limits.<sup>4</sup>

The Englewood Improvement Association thus formed a Committee of Seven to advance incorporation of the Town of Englewood under the Short Act and “also to take such further action as may be desirable in their judgment to preserve the unity of Englewood township.”<sup>5</sup> Rising to the occasion, Samuel M. Riker, an energetic member of the Committee, gathered ninety-nine signatures from Englewood property owners in a single day and applied that very evening to the Englewood Township Committee, seeking a special election. Accommodatingly, the Township Committee published notice of an election to be held February 5, 1895, the earliest possible date since the ordinance had to “stand over” for one week. To frustrate the “Cliff Dwellers,” promoters of the Town of Englewood also sought an injunction from the State Supreme Court on a writ of certiorari, contending “that none of the persons who signed the application for the Borough of Englewood Cliffs had made the necessary affidavit of ownership of property, and it may well be that although their names are on the tax list as freeholders they may not be freeholders now.” It was a long shot, but a hearing on the matter was scheduled for February 5th. Citizens of Englewood Cliffs curtly responded that Englewood wanted to retain their section “only for purposes of taxation.” They submitted figures showing that, despite paying many thousands of dollars in taxes for improvements, they received not a dollar’s worth of benefits, whereas Englewood village acquired good streets, lights, water, sewers, police and other public amenities. In retaliation, promoters of Englewood Cliffs contested the Englewood proceedings in the State Supreme Court. At the scheduled public referendum on January 4, 1895, incorporation of the Borough of Englewood Cliffs was approved, 24 to 1.

On January 3, 1895, The Bergen Index reported that residents of Highwood and Nordhoff were also considering separation from Englewood.<sup>6</sup> Within the week, nine-tenths of Nordhoff’s taxpayers signed a petition favoring an independent borough.<sup>7</sup> At Teaneck’s borough referendum, held January 14, 1895, in the office of William Bennett on Teaneck Road, 46 out of 53 voters favored incorporation. When Englewood citizens also certioraried that outcome to the State Supreme Court,

The Hackensack Republican coolly warned that “Englewood village cannot ‘hold up’ with physical force those who desire to escape her onerous taxation for centralization, but she can do the next thing possible, which is to give the lawyers an opportunity to earn fees.” Its editor encouraged the Legislature to “take such action that the anti-disintegrants will be satisfied to furl their banners and let their neighbors depart in peace.”<sup>8</sup> And that is exactly what happened: objections to Teaneck’s independence quickly evaporated when the promoters of “greater Englewood” looked at the matter “through different glasses” and agreed to submit to the departure of Teaneck - not as a borough but as a new township - admitting that the Teaneck section was strictly a rural community where the interests of property owners were not in accord with those of a thickly settled city such as Englewood.

Bogota and Leonia now lost ground as “the people along Teaneck road were desirous of being part of the new township [of Teaneck] rather than in the boroughs of Leonia and Bogota with which some of them are now connected, and they were gratified” with their inclusion.<sup>9</sup> Papers were quickly prepared and submitted to the Legislature. The new Township of Teaneck encompassed about seven square miles, taking in what was then known as Road Districts Nos. 4 and 5, embracing portions of the Township of Englewood as well as portions of the Boroughs of Leonia and Bogota lying in the adjacent Township of Ridgefield.<sup>10</sup> The editor of the *Republican* concluded that “this arrangement appears to be a very sensible one, and it will relieve Englewood of much territory that would have been a source of concern under the [town] government it proposes to establish.” Assemblyman David D. Zabriskie put the bill creating Teaneck Township through the Assembly on February 18, 1895; Senator Henry Winton pushed it through the State Senate on the following day and Governor George Werts signed it into law at once.<sup>11</sup>

Delford Borough experienced a growth spurt, aggregating the properties of Richard Van Wagener, Herman Bartsch, J. D. Newkirk and Garret D. Demarest in the Flatts section, east of the river. On Tuesday, January 15, 1895, Cliffside Park voted to become a borough, the project being carried 81 to 13.

## Until the Boroughing is Done

In January 1895, County Superintendent John Terhune provided State Superintendent Poland with a preliminary assessment of the effects of the new School Consolidation act upon Bergen County. Pilloried but unfazed, he revisited the battleground where Punkin Duster and Commuter had contested for Home Rule:

“The claim is made by many that the tendency of the time is for small local governments. This is one reason for the formation of boroughs, so as to obtain control of the schools. Another reason is that township government distributes unequally and unjustly the taxes for roads and other improvements. The bulk of the revenue from the rural sections in many instances is applied to the larger villages for water, light, sewerage, etc., from which these agricultural sections receive no benefit.”

“But, the most plausible reason for this borough craze is the clause in the law making the township assume the indebtedness. So few understand this section, and it being so easily misrepresented or misinterpreted, that the people look upon it suspiciously and denounce it as an imposition. Those who understand it and attempt to explain it are looked upon as cranks and impostors.”

“Another objection cited by one of my most enthusiastic Boards of Education is inconvenience. The territory of some townships is so large that members reside five or six miles apart, and it is expensive and laborious to convene them as often as the cause requires.”

The County Superintendent noted that the forty-three school districts existing in Bergen County prior to July 1, 1894, had accumulated a total indebtedness of \$305,570. This large sum, including every township except Franklin, made it obvious “why boroughs are formed in every direction.” He felt these boroughs should never have been allowed to form separate and distinct school districts “unless containing a school enumeration of at least 500 children.” The borough craze, in his estimation, had been used to circumvent the intent of the Consolidation act with chilling effect upon civil liberties of a sizable minority who opposed boroughization:

“The idea of allowing a bare majority the power to accept or reject a few that have dared to oppose the new fad, and for this simple expression of their rights to cut them from all school facilities is radically wrong and gross injustice. There is no defense for the injured, but they must meekly accept the situation. It is inconsistent with liberty, a term so dear to us all”.

Superintendent Terhune felt that the situation could only be remedied by repealing the law or by making school-district lines coincide with township lines, except in such cases where the school population truly warranted formation of an independent municipality. He also recommended that Boards of Education be given “absolute power to order assessed a sum not in excess of one-fourth per cent on the total taxable valuation of the district for current expenses.” In cases where new buildings or additional land had to be acquired, then consent of a majority of the legal voters or of the township committee or borough council should be required. Lastly, he confided that any adjustment of finances and of the school census in such rapidly changing circumstances would be “a difficult problem.” Since borough lines did not correspond with original district lines, assessors confronted a “much entangled predicament.” Furthermore, untangling the mess could not even begin “until the boroughing is done.” He clearly felt overwhelmed, concluding: “I would not attempt to estimate, let alone approximate, the changes caused by the boroughs. It is simply inconceivable.”

As duly noted by Superintendent Terhune, those left without the necessary school facilities of their own by intrusion of new municipal boundaries now had to scramble. On February 14, 1895, the *Republican* reported that Riverside Borough, having no school house in the Cherry Hill section, moved to annex the adjacent Fairmount tract in New Barbadoes Township - which lay outside of the Hackensack Improvement Commission limits - thereby absorbing New Barbadoes School District No. 4 and the Cherry Hill school house on Johnson Avenue. If annexation failed, then Riverside Borough would sooner or later be forced to erect another school of its own. The residents of Fairmount, however, immediately sought union with the city of Hackensack, desiring to “open the way for macadam, sewers, lights, and all other improvements necessary to

enhance the value of property located so convenient to a large town and possessing such fine natural advantages." Accordingly, thirty-nine Fairmount residents and property owners presented a petition to the Hackensack Improvement Commission on February 8, 1895, requesting annexation. Milton Demarest, Commission counsel, was instructed to prepare an act for presentation to the Legislature, embodying the purposes of the petitioners. Fairmount was annexed to Hackensack by the Legislature on March 5, 1895, adding sixty-four voters to the town.<sup>12</sup>

Would the season for boroughing and annexation soon end? On February 14, 1895, *The Hackensack Republican* observed how: "The groundhog could not see his shadow, but the woodchuck borough sees the shadow of legislation that it doesn't like." To make borough movements more representative of the desires of the population and generally more difficult to succeed, State Senator Johnson of Hackensack proposed a supplement to the Borough Act requiring that "no election for the formation of any borough government shall hereafter be ordered unless the petition for that purpose shall be signed by persons owning at least one-half of the taxable real estate in the limits of the proposed borough..." Moreover, where a proposed borough embraced parts of more than one township, the petition had to include signatures of "persons owning at least one-half in value of such real estate in the limits of said proposed borough in each of the townships." Previous enabling legislation had required only one-tenth of the taxable value to be represented on the petition. Senator Johnson's bill became law on February 18, 1895.<sup>13</sup>

With the arrival of Republican William J. Wilson of Allendale, Bergen County's latest Freeholder, the County Board was again tied, the twenty-eight Freeholders being evenly divided along party lines. As promised, State Senator Winton (D) introduced a bill providing that, as of June 1st, third-class counties should have a Board of Chosen Freeholders composed of nine members. In response, The Englewood Press suggested that the number of Freeholders should represent the previous townships of the County without regard to boroughs formed by their subdivision. The Tenafly Record agreed that "the ridiculously large and ever-increasing Board of Freeholders should be permanently reduced

to a sensible, working number" and accordingly recommended either "the division of a county into Freeholder districts based on population, or have a Freeholder from each of the fifteen townships of this county." It recognized, however, that "with the present numerous municipalities in the county, each a separate election district, such further divisions may not be practicable." Assemblyman David Zabriskie responded by introducing a bill that confined the number of Freeholders to the number of townships existing before the borough movement forced their dismemberment. On the same track, State Senator William M. Johnson (R) proposed that henceforth borough voters would choose a Freeholder at the annual election in the township wherein the majority of said voters resided. In case of doubt or dispute as to which old township encompassed the residence of a majority of legal voters in the new composite borough, the interested borough council or township committee could apply to the President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for final adjudication of the matter. In other words, for purposes of Freeholder elections, boroughs would simply be considered election districts within a township. Senator Johnson's bill was enacted into law on February 25, 1895.<sup>14</sup> Under its provisions, all Freeholders elected by boroughs formed out of parts of two or more townships would go out of office on the second Wednesday of May 1895.

The Englewood Township Committee published notice of its proposed borough election to be held March 5, 1895. With local elections traditionally held the second Tuesday in March, rural and suburban politicians were seen "hugging store and bar-room stoves, devising ways and means to continue their hold upon the petty offices."

In accordance with provisions of Senator Johnson's bill, the terms of the borough Freeholders expired on May 8, 1895, thereby relieving the congested condition of the meeting room. On May 9, 1895, incorporation of the Palisade section of Englewood Township into a borough, named Englewood Cliffs, was again approved by its residents, 34 to 1. Addition of a borough clerk, a marshal and a Board of Health to the fourteen elective officers of the new borough made a total of twenty-one borough officials or agents. By head count, the Borough of Englewood Cliffs had only forty-seven

voters, of which thirty-five had participated in the recent election.<sup>15</sup> Looking askance at its small neighbor, Tenafly, boasting a population of over 1,500 residents, squawked about deserving a Chosen Freeholder of its own.

## A Much Entangled Predicament

The consequences of rapid-fire boroughing reverberated through school halls. In September 1895, the Boards of Education of Washington Township and Eastwood Borough failed to agree to a secession of part of Eastwood to Washington Township for school purposes. Twice the respective Boards had considered the question and both times the Eastwood Board unanimously declined. Abram C. Holdrum, the principal agitator for secession from the borough, collected signatures representing \$30,000 in taxable real estate on a petition to make known the wishes of the residents in his section. The Eastwood Board had already given up that part of its territory lying east of the Hackensack River to the Borough of Old Tappan for school purposes.

In March 1896, residents of Riverside Borough were incensed when the County and State Superintendents ordered students residing in that portion of the former River Edge school district lying east of the Hackensack River (now part of New Milford) to attend the River Edge School, seeing how they had been left by the borough craze without school facilities. The Riverside Board of Education unanimously objected to the addition of this territory on the grounds of inadequate compensation and a petition protesting against admission of part of Palisade Township to the borough school district was forwarded to the State Board of Education on March 31, 1896. Therein, they cited the fact that the children from Palisade Township had been forced upon them at a cost of \$11 per year for each pupil, whereas it cost \$19 per child to conduct the River Edge School.

Meanwhile, officers of Palisade Township decided to bring suit against the Hackensack Water Company for the amount claimed on bonded indebtedness for construction of the Peetzburgh school. At the time the school property was purchased and the building erected, much of the Water Company's property was

within the school district and subject to taxation for interest on the bonded indebtedness and for payment of bonds as they became due. Subsequently, the Company's property had been included within the limits of the new Borough of Delford and the Water Company declined to pay taxes to Palisade Township.

The Paramus school also became a bone of contention between Orvil Township and Ridgewood Village, since the building had been erected and maintained by Orvil Township until enactment of the new consolidated school law by which Ridgewood absorbed the Paramus School District. Orvil Township still assisted with its maintenance but was compelled to pay tuition for pupils who, living in that neighborhood, naturally continued to attend their local school.

In February 1896, the Legislature annexed a portion of Lodi Township to New Barbadoes so as to place Polifly Road as far south as the Lodi Branch Railroad within the boundaries of the Hackensack Improvement Commission.<sup>16</sup> Scuttlebutt had it that the "chief purpose [of the annexation] is, as appears on the surface, to secure improvement of Polifly road." By further act of the legislature, the Township of New Barbadoes became coterminous in boundaries with the city of Hackensack and the New Barbadoes Township Committee was abolished in favor of government by the Hackensack Improvement Board of Commissioners.

## Always Room for One More

On March 9, 1896, application was made to the court for formation of yet another borough; this one, to be known as North Arlington, taking in the southern portion of Union Township. On Monday, March 26, 1896, borough advocates won the election in North Arlington with 46 votes in favor and none opposed. The new borough adjoined the northern limits of Kearney Township, the Belleville Turnpike and Saw Mill Creek forming the boundary between Hudson and Bergen Counties. The new borough contained about 400 inhabitants within about two square miles of territory. Politically, the population was about evenly divided but the first election of borough officials was to be a non-partisan affair.

## ...And One Less

In March 1896, with approach of the spring election, Eastwood Democrats quarreled and “a hot fight was the result.”<sup>17</sup> Boss Edward Sarson’s faction was shut out of the borough government as Thomas J. Post, John G. Knoner and Samuel D. Durie won the regular Democratic nominations for Councilmen. The Republicans, previously an ignored minority, “took advantage of the fool business among the Democrats and gained a councilman as the result.” The Bergen County Democrat flatly stated that “if the Democrats are jackasses enough to raise a quarrel and brush against each other at every election, the sooner they are put down the better.” In retaliation for his ouster, Sarson garnered signatures from his Democratic friends and resident Republicans, totaling nearly two-thirds of the eligible voters, on a petition requesting designation of a time and place for holding an election to decide whether or not Eastwood’s borough incorporation should be continued. Republicans were especially “anxious to get back into the township.” On March 26, 1896, Eastwood voters went to the polls in John Lachmund’s Hall at River Vale: 9 Republicans and 23 Democrats voted to continue borough incorporation, but the victorious opposition counted 13 Republicans and 34 Democrats. The Democrat protested that the electoral outcome in favor of abolishing the Democratic borough of Eastwood included “one who made a mistake in the ballot he meant to vote and a number of purchased votes.” Its editor lamented the loss:

“This section by so recklessly throwing away the advantages it possessed in a local government of its own has received a setback from which it will not soon recover. Eastwood borough has in the two years of its existence made a record of which anyone except a political buccaneer might feel proud. The borough has no debt, all claims being paid up to date, with a cash balance of \$56 in the hands of collector and treasurer, with [\$] 26 uncollected taxes of 1895 and with \$300 license money coming in during April and December. There would have been available for road purposes between \$600 and \$700 for the year ‘96 without raising the tax rate a penny. The school has been a matter of especial pride and satisfaction to all interested during the year. Will a stepmother, with extra charges of its own, do as well by

it as its own mother?”

A Special Election was held in the Old Tappan School House on April 23, 1896 “to vote for or against annexing to the said borough of Old Tappan a part of the territory of Harrington township adjacent to said borough...” extending west to the Hackensack River. This was the portion of the borough of Eastwood which had been taken from Harrington Township. Feelings against the proposed return of the western section of Eastwood to Washington Township were reportedly “running high and threats are made of contesting the election in the courts.”

At Trenton, the Borough Committee finished its deliberations and introduced a bill into the Assembly which provided for repeal of the Borough Acts of 1882, 1890, 1891 and all supplements thereto. Under provisions of the Incorporation by State Act of March 26, 1896: “No borough or village shall hereafter be incorporated in this state except by special act of the legislature, and every borough or village so incorporated shall be governed by the general laws of this state relating to boroughs or villages respectively.”<sup>18</sup> Henceforth, neighborhood politics and popular referenda would no longer determine “Home Rule.” The creative power over municipal entities now passed into the corridors and chambers of the State House in Trenton, the gaslit domain of machinating politicians. For the time being, woodchuck boroughing came to a standstill.

<sup>1</sup> The proposed boundaries of the Borough of Teaneck began at the southwest corner of Englewood Township at the Anderson Street bridge, then ran north along the Hackensack River to a point 300 feet north (at a right angle) from the center of West Englewood Avenue; it thence ran east (keeping 300 feet north of and parallel with West Englewood Avenue) to the center of Teaneck Road; thence south to the center of West Englewood Avenue; thence east on a line (following substantially the same course as the center line of West Englewood Avenue) to the center of Lafayette Avenue; thence south along the center of Lafayette Avenue to a point 300 feet north of Railroad Avenue; thence west to the Northern Railroad, continuing south along the railroad to the dividing line between Englewood and Ridgefield Townships, and then following the township line south and east to the place of beginning.

<sup>2</sup> Signers of the Teaneck petition included Aymar Embury, Charles Kuntze, Charles A. Canavello, the Estate of William Walter Phelps by its executors and trustees, Frank S. DeRonde, John M. Robinson, Sheffield Phelps, A. C. Coe, John J. Phelps, Sophie C. Henderson and George Blanck.

3 The Hackensack Republican, January 10, 1895

4 The Incorporation by Election Act of April 24, 1888, introduced by Assemblyman E. Frank Short (D - Hudson), provided that the inhabitants of any town or borough or of any township having a special charter, or of any township which has or hereafter may have a population exceeding six thousand inhabitants, may become a body politic and corporate, as a Town whenever a majority of the voters decided to do so at a special election. The township committee, borough council or other governing body was empowered to set the time and place for such a special election upon the petition of at least fifty residents. The act was later ruled unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court.

5 The Committee included: William Bennett, Donald Mackay, Samuel M. Riker, R. H. Rodchester and Joseph H. Tillotson. Abram Tallman and Joseph W. Stagg were subsequently added, increasing their number to Nine.

6 Highwood Station and Post Office were situated on the Northern Railroad at the intersection of Ivy Lane and Hudson Avenue, near Englewood's northern border with Tenafly. Nordhoff was a station-stop on the Northern Railroad at the southern end of Englewood, adjacent to Leonia. Nordhoff Place, between Route 4 and Cedar Lane, today marks the spot.

7 A station on the Northern Railroad was named for Charles Nordhoff who, in his day, was considered "one of the brightest lights in journalism." He was a resident of Alpine where he owned a handsome cottage upon the Palisades, adjoining Sweeting Miles' property. Nordhoff was "an enthusiastic believer in the future of Bergen county" and served as one of William Walter Phelps' advisers. He last worked as the Washington correspondent for the New York Herald until ill health forced his retirement. Charles Nordhoff died in California in July 1901. See "news notes," The Bergen County Democrat, July 19, 1901.

8 The Hackensack Republican, January 17, 1895

9 The Hackensack Republican, January 24, 1895

10 The boundary survey began at the Hackensack River in the center of (Old) New Bridge Road and ran east along New Bridge Road on the division line between Palisade and Englewood Townships to the western boundary of Bergenfield, then continued east along the township division line. On the east, the boundary was to be a line running 2,500 feet east of Teaneck Road from Ivy Lane south to a point 800 feet south of Railroad (now Forest) Avenue where the line turned east and ran parallel with (and 800 feet south of) Railroad (Forest) Avenue to a point 200 feet west of Overpeck Canal (alongside what is now Overpeck Avenue in Engle-

wood). To exclude drainage works considered necessary to the City of Englewood, the Teaneck line stayed 200 feet away from the Overpeck Canal, running south to the center of Cedar Lane and turning southeast along the center of that road to the center of the canal and creek, before continuing south to the line of Ridgefield Park. The division line here between Ridgefield Park and Teaneck was the southern boundary line of the farms of Cornelius Van Valen and Jasper Westervelt (hence Jasper Avenue). From this demarkation, the new township line proceeded west until it reached the east line of the Borough of Bogota, running 150 feet east of Queen Anne Road, then north to the Hackensack and Fort Lee Road. The boundary ran west along this road to the division line between the farms of John Degraw on the east (hence Degraw Avenue) and lands of George Foster and Ralph Bogert to the west (in Bogota), but it cut across lands of Albert Z. Bogert and Peter P. Bogert. The township line then turned west along the dividing line between Peter P. Bogert's land on the south and the Estate of William Walter Phelps and Jacob Terhune's farm on the north, running to the Hackensack River.

11 Laws of New Jersey 1895, Ch. XXXVII

12 Laws of New Jersey 1895, Ch. LXXXVIII, "A Further Supplement to an act entitled 'An act to incorporate the Hackensack Improvement Commission,' approved April 1st, 1868."

13 Laws of New Jersey 1895, Ch. XXII, "An Act concerning the formation of borough governments."

14 Laws of New Jersey 1895, Ch.β XLIV, "A Supplement to an act, entitled 'An act for the formation of borough governments, approved April 5th, 1878,' which supplement was approved May 9th, 1894, and is Chapter CLXXVI of the Laws of 1894."

15 On June 11, 1895, the baby borough of Englewood Cliffs was officially born by election of William O. Allison, Mayor; Rev. Artemas Dean, William Conner, Alfred E. Sage and Capt. C. W. Van Wagoner, Councilmen; John G. Ropes, Assessor; Benjamin P. Westervelt, Collector; William Braund, W. C. Lester and Robert Morrison, Commissioners of Appeal; Edward Guntz, Poormaster; and Louis Kimble, Pound Keeper.

16 According to Senate 303, the annexed portion began in the south line of Essex Street and on the east line of Lodi Borough and followed the borough line south to the Lodi Railroad, thence east along the Lodi Railroad to the line of the N. J. & N. Y. Railroad, thence north about 2,000 feet, thence east to the township line.

17 The Bergen County Democrat, March 13, 1896

18 Laws of New Jersey 1896, p. 285