

THE LIFE & TIMES ON RAILROAD AVENUE IN

SAXTON , PA.

Our Playgrounds

The Knob, The Pines
and

The Brick Yard Hill)

by

ELI EICHELBERGER WITH THE

COORABORATION OF

R. RICHARD EICHELBERGER

And

ROBERT A.EICHELBERGER

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One advantage of being raised in Saxton was that it was a small Town surrounded by hills and mountains, and it offered unlimited areas for play and exploration. As kids, we were certainly not restricted in our leisure time activities. The nearest unofficial playground to our home was the Knob. The Knob was a hill overlooking Stonerstown, the River, the Furnace, and part of Saxton. Here we could roam to our heart's delight and imagine we were "kings of the road."

Many maple trees grew on the side of the Knob and they were the source of "sap" for making maple syrup. Mr. Dan Brumbaugh lived on the east side of the Knob and owned a section of land there. Every spring he would bore holes in the nearby maple trees, hammer in a wooden drain, and hang a bucket on it to catch the fresh maple sap. We found this to be a wonderful source of supply for thirsty kids as we cautiously drank as much sap from the buckets as we could hold. I presume that Dan Brumbaugh often wondered why some trees were more productive than others. We never revealed the secret to him.

The Knob was also the location of an annual Easter Egg Hunt. With the aid of the local parents, the Boy Scouts,

and the village officials, including Mr. Baily, the Mayor, the Easter eggs would be carefully hidden under scrub pines, behind rocks and in tree limbs prior to the official Easter Egg Hunt. There was a prize for the kid who collected the most eggs. Everybody was kept behind a rope barrier at the foot of the Knob until Mr. Bailey would cry out, "Ready for the egg hunt!" and would shoot a revolver "boom," the race was on.

The Pines was another favorite hangout for the Eichelberger boys and their companions. The Pines were located to the north of the Town at the foot of a mountain. It was an ideal place for playing Cowboys and Indians and for building forts and lookouts. We built a log house from pine trees which was our pride and Joy. We also built a "lookout" on the top of one of the highest pine trees in the area. From this vantage point we could spot any approaching rival groups. Then we could alert the other members of our gang. We protected our fort with our fists, our "bee-bee" rifles, and generally kept control of our special area. Other "gangs" would often try to dislodge us from our strong-hold, including the Church Street Gang, the Stonerstown Snipe-Pickers, and the Frog Hollow Gang. It was lucky that somebody was not hurt in these weekly encounters.

Brick Yard Hill was a large hill located directly behind the Saxton brick yard, which at one time was a flourishing local industry. Here one had a clear view overlooking the town of Saxton and even East Saxton. This

was a favorite gathering place for us. One night to engender some local excitement, we built a cross and covered it with rags soaked in kerosene. Then it was lighted. We beat a hasty retreat from the area.

From the town, it looked like a return of the "K.K.K." with the familiar burning of the cross. However, a little private investigation by Dad and several of the town's people, soon found the culprits were none other than the Eichelberger boys and some of their pals. We were grounded for awhile after that episode.

Sunday Rock was a famous rock on the top of a nearby mountain overlooking the entire valley of our town of Saxton and surrounding areas. This got its name from the many people who would hike up the trail leading to the mountain top on a Sunday afternoon to enjoy the view from this splendid vantage point. We would often hike up the mountain, taking along a basket of food for a Sunday outing. The mountain still remains as it was in our boyhood days and Sunday Rock still stands as a fine place to get a panoramic view of our town of Saxton. It was a grand place to raise kids, and it probably still enjoys that same reputation today.