

When I was six years old, my family moved from New York City to Tivoli in Dutchess County. My father and two of his brothers had operated a wholesale butter, cheese and egg business in The Old Market Street with their place located at 100th Street between 1st Avenue and The East River. My father was told by his doctor to move from this environment since the dampness would surely shorten his life. The doctor advised moving out into the country where father could "breathe the fresh air and get the goodness of the sunshine."

The following reminiscence of growing up in Tivoli during World War I and the years immediately following was written by Walter George Wilken. Born in New York City in 1910, Mr. Wilken came to Tivoli with his German immigrant parents, Herman and Augusta Wilken, during the First World War. The farm he describes in this piece was located on what was then called "Wall Street," now "North Road," about a mile north of the Village center. Mr. Wilken graduated from the old Red Hook High School and was a partner at Wilken Brothers GLF at 65 East Market Street. He died at his home in 1986 and is buried in St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery.

The entire farm was ash-covered with blasting powder and treated with as many ashes as possible. At that time World War I was in progress and one had to have a permit to buy the blasting powder. After much questioning to prove the powder was to be used for ash-soiling and not to blow up the town, the permit was granted. And so the blasting began. In the meantime, the neighborhood had a huge pile of coal ashes to be disposed of as we were obliged to take the ashes off their hands and wagon load after another. After a few years, the land really began to get in good condition.

During this time of ash preparation, we had to also pay attention to the dwelling house. There was no central heat, no plumbing, no electricity but there was a "little white house" in the back yard. Quite a come-down from city comforts! Finally a telephone was installed and, it seemed the whole town was on our own party line. When the phone bells rang three long rings and three short rings we knew it was our call. The tiny switchboard was located over the Old Drug store and provided over by a female voice. This voice was replaced after school and until 9 P.M. by The Methodist Minister's son. After 9 P.M. the board went down until the next morning but, one could call neighbors on the party line.