

Memories of Chester, Herman Radmacher Series, the Disappearance of Crystal Lake Video Transcription

Here's a picture of Crystal Lake when you could actually swim in it which my folks did. This is a picture of how it looked in 1905, and it was sent to a Mr. Daniel Howell in Morristown, N.J. with a 1 cent stamp (he laughs). Many people used to swim in that lake. It had grown over pretty much because the railroad used to run right alongside of this. When Serbe owned the property, and Walt wanted to sell for the development where they built the church, the Catholic Church [St. Lawrence] and all that, they kept bothering him. Well, the lake had grown mostly in, but he blew up the dam (laughs) so there was no lake. Because they kept saying they couldn't do anything there because water being too close, and all that stuff. But when he did that, Crystal Lake disappeared, the water disappeared, and they let him build the development.

That's why the townhouses would be almost where the lake is, because that used to come out onto Oakdale Road. The railroad ran along there.

Arnold Nichols bought the entire railroad bed along there and sold it off in pieces to different people. It went behind our house on Main Street, but my father had leased it through the railroad, Jersey Central. All the telephone wires, at that point in time, used to go behind our house. I can remember one storm, when I was a little kid, in fact, it was when they took the wires from behind the houses and moved them to the street. Back alongside the railroad were all the telegraph lines, and those poles were short. So, actually, when they all came down, my father couldn't get back to where his trucks were. But in later years, Nichols sold off the different lots to different people and they had a right of way. The water company laid a water line in that right of way. But that's another story.