

Erickson remembers a lively

by Donna Heath

When Elsie Rasmussen Erickson moved to Rock Creek with her family in 1914, she was just 11 years old. She remembers that she and her sisters came with their mother on the train.

They moved to the area from Bloomington, which at that time was called Oxboro-Heath, and their farm was in the vicinity of 98th and Penn Ave. South.

"We could walk to the Presbyterian Church, and the city hall was also located here," she said.

Moving to Rock Creek was a change for them. In Bloomington her family could easily make the trip to Minneapolis in a day with horses. They settled on the 60-acre farm her father had bought, and later he acquired 20 more acres, enough in those days to support his family.

"Rock Creek was a busy, bustling community at that time. There were three grocery stores, a hardware store, post office, creamery, potato warehouse and even a bank," Erickson said.

At 87, she is probably one of the oldest early residents to still make their home in Rock Creek. Good friends and neighbors and fond memories have kept her from having any desire to move away. She makes her home with her son, Charles. Her daughter, Darlene lives in the State of Virginia.

Never bored, the spritely lady is always doing something for someone. She embroiders, paints on fabric, does tatting, plays cards, knits and crochets.

"She's knit mittens for four generations of my family,"



LONGTIME ROCK CREEK RESIDENT Elsie Erickson remembers the old days, when Rock Creek boasted banks, bars and other businesses

her friend, Emma Lindstrom said.

Elsie admits that she always has something going on her needles. She was working on a

black scarf with lime green and purple stripes for one of Emma's sons.

"It will match his snowmobile suit," she said, as

in quantity. She's known for her wonderful memories and her tremendous talent with yarn and knitting needles.

she completed the final rows.

While her older sisters and brothers helped in the barn when they were young, Elsie was learning to knit and

Rock Creek

crochet from her mother.

"Mother used to knit all the stockings and mittens for our family, and we would help. In those days, everything was made of wool yarn. Today, good wool yarn is so expensive that I prefer to knit with washable acrylic yarns."

Her daughter makes trips to New Zealand and brings back soft wool yarn which is a pleasure to use.

Erickson recalls that during World War I, Mrs. A.P. Erickson invited girls to come to her home after school to knit for the servicemen.

"We all knitted squares that were assembled into afghans. My sister, Clara, knitted a flag for the center, and she also made a pillow. The afghans were then sent to the soldiers through the Red Cross."

She and her sister made sweaters and socks for the military and were so accomplished at their craft that they never used a pattern.

"I can just look at a picture of something that is knitted and know how to make it. I do have to follow a pattern if I'm crocheting though," she said.

Tatting is another craft that is making a comeback. Elsie learned to tat from Shirley Petersen's mother, who was a classmate of hers.

"During recess at school, the girls often did handiwork rather than playing games. When Nettie offered to teach me to tat, I jumped at the chance. I thought that was fun."

As a young woman, she worked in a Rock Creek

grocery store. Later, she and Charles bought the store and had living quarters in the same building.

"We really had a good business. Farmers would haul their milk into the creamery with horses and stop to do their business here before they went home," she said "We even had a butcher shop, and there were two barber shops."

Rock Creek didn't have a tavern until the bank vacated a building, and it was remodeled into the local pub. Just about anything anyone could want could be found in Rock Creek. It was a friendly community, where people enjoyed shopping and visiting with their neighbors.

Erickson remembers when trains went through town so often that if someone got a letter from the city on the morning train, they could write an answer, send their reply back on the afternoon train, and the person in Minneapolis or St. Paul would have it the very next day.

"Sometimes I believe that when the trains stopped coming through regularly it was the beginning of the end for small towns like Rock Creek. It's too bad," she said, shaking her head.

Elsie is happy that Art Schultz has captured the good old days of Rock Creek in his book "Rock Creek Begin'gs."

"It was and still is a good place to live. The people are the greatest," she said as she put down her knitting and started making lunch.