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By Anthony P. Musso

Community was home to quarry workers *Stoneco boasted homes, store, school*

Stoneco was a community that existed in the late 19th century for workers at a Poughkeepsie quarry on the former estate of New York governor and U.S. Vice President George Clinton.

The site, situated west of Sheafe Road and adjacent to the Hudson River, boasted 40 structures, which included single-family homes, boardinghouses, a general store, a schoolhouse and a post office.

The estate's mansion, built by Clinton in 1804 and lived in by subsequent owners after his death in 1812, burned to the ground in 1874.

During the late 1880s, New York Central and Hudson River Railroad acquired the property to extract building stone. Quarrying began there in 1880 to provide building stone for bridgework over the Quassaick Creek between Newburgh and New Windsor.

The operation later included crushed stone, used for ballast to form the track bed upon which railroad ties are laid.

"Around 1890 they realized that crushed stone had a greater importance than building stone and a stone crushing plant was constructed at the site," said author John DiDomizio, whose grandfather worked at Stoneco and whose father was born there. "They also started to build housing for the workers that they were going to need."

While the earliest workers there were Irish and Slavic, Italian immigrants began to enter the workforce in large numbers by the end of the century.

The population at Stoneco peaked around 1910, when about 350 people lived there.

"Typical quarters would include a boardinghouse boss (who also worked in the quarry), his wife and children and six to eight boarders," DiDomizio said. "Stoneco got its name in 1891 when a post office was established there."

Social activists recognized the isolation of the community and attempted to help Americanize immigrant workers.

"Between 1900 and 1910, when Italian immigration grew to great levels, activists wanted to help get them into American society," DiDomizio said. "It became a great social cause."

"Sarah Wool Moore wanted to improve Italian immigrants' educational standing so in 1902 she wrote a textbook to help them learn English in an illustrated fashion," he said.

Moore introduced adult classes for workers at Stoneco in 1907. Typically, youngsters living in the community attended school during the day and adults took classes three nights a week.

“My grandmother, Helen Farrell, was born in 1894 and taught primary school at Stoneco when she was 18 years old,” said Barb Montross.

“I have photos that show her standing with 30 primary students and contracts that indicate she was paid \$12 a week,” Montross added.

During the 1930s, the quarry was rebuilt into a more modern facility and employee housing was discontinued and demolished.

Many of the workers relocated into the Village of Wappingers Falls.

Following the railroad's ownership, four other companies operated the quarry through 1997, when Tilcon, its present owner, purchased it.