

From an interview with Ruth VanHaneghem Reybrouck, her daughter



Above: Gladys and Peter VanHaneghem

Gladys VanHaneghem was born on December 9, 1900. She was raised in Marion on a muck farm with many siblings. Life may have been a struggle at times, but she persevered. After graduating from school, she became a teacher.

Peter VanHaneghem would court Gladys by picking her up in his horse and buggy; eventually they were married and settled in Walworth, living in a house on Center Street across from the tennis courts by the Walworth Academy. Peter and Gladys had two children. The oldest was a son, Claire; Ruth was the younger child. When Ruth was five years old the family moved to the northeast corner of Walworth-Ontario and Walworth-Marion Roads.

Ruth tells of her parents' house which was next to her father's garage/workshop where Peter made his livelihood. There was a large garden in back of the house and a cherry orchard. Migrant

workers would tend to this and Gladys would make homemade hand-squeezed lemonade for the workers. Gladys would always be cooking and often have company.



Above: The VanHaneghem home, Walworth northeast four corners

Ruth and her friend, Molly Ebert Hill, attended the square dances at the firemen's hall on Penfield-Walworth Road and, when they returned home, her mother would always have molasses cookies and milk for them. Ruth remembers a time when one of her cheerleader team mates had never had a birthday party. Gladys planned a surprise party for the girl and even made paper cheerleaders to put at each girl's place setting for the party. Gladys was always going above and beyond for others.

Gladys was a sub clerk at the Walworth Post Office from April 1, 1947, through May 3, 1957. She was acting postmaster from May 3, 1957, to July 16, 1958, when she was promoted to Postmaster of Walworth. In 1964 Gladys was mentioned in a newspaper article about patron obligations. "Postmaster Gladys VanHaneghem emphasized that the Post Office wants to give good service and having a proper mail box expedites that service." She also interested a high school girl who used the improvement mat as a pattern and designed attractive posters for local store windows. The response was gratifying and she commented that, "In her part of the country, great havoc is wrought during the winter months and selection of spring as the pretty-up time was a wise one."



Above: Walworth Post Office: 1987. Last day at Walworth southeast four corners

Ruth repeated a story her mother told her. When Gladys was working at the Post Office prior to Christmas, a gentleman came in several days in a row looking for a package which was a gift. The package finally arrived and the Post Office was closed. Gladys opened the business so the gentleman could obtain the package in time for Christmas. While being postmaster Gladys received honorary recognition from the United States Postmaster General. When she retired from the Post Office on August 23, 1968, her successor was Etta Bavis.

Gladys belonged to the Walworth Second Baptist Church and was involved with the women's circle doing missionary work along with Bernie Nortier, Leona Bassage and others. She would perform in plays at the church and would eventually become the star of the play. Later in life Gladys and Peter moved to a smaller house on Walworth-Palmyra Road. She enjoyed shopping with Ruth and her granddaughter, Sandy. Gladys passed on September 16, 1976, but will be

remembered for being a humble, hospitable, generous, loving spirit to her family and others in the community and her dedication as the Walworth Postmaster.