

# Historic Little Falls

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**T**he story of the **Little Falls Laundry** is the story of a young man's dream. In the early 1900's **Nicholas Vander May** at the age of

## Once the PRIDE of Little Falls



18 was a huckster, selling fruits and vegetables from a horse and wagon to the middle class suburban Montclair and vicinity. As he made his bi-weekly rounds he was often asked by the ladies of the house if he knew of a good washer-woman. In



those days the homes had no automatic washers or dryers and these chores fell upon the lady of the household unless she was lucky enough to have a washer-woman on the household staff. Nick heard this request for a

washer-woman so many times he began to think that if he could go into the laundry business it would be a lot easier than doing the farming chores. Nick approached his father George with the idea, but his father rejected it, because the father felt the huckster business was going well and helped the family. Why give up a good thing?

Father George was a tailor by trade who came to this country from Holland in 1880, settled in Paterson and worked as a weaver in the Beattie's Mill. He married Julia Fylstra who also migrated to this country from Holland a year later. In 1900 the family moved to a farm on the Peckman River in Little Falls.

Time and time again Nick continued to pester his father about setting up a laundry business, only to be rejected over and over until one night his mother convinced her husband to allow Nick to try this new adventure along with his huckstering products on the three wagon routes. It is not documented, but no doubt Julia had a hand on the side in the washing business along with her other household chores. In addition to Nick, there were five other sons and five daughters. Needless to say Julia must have been a remarkable but busy woman. So perhaps Nick got his ambitions from his mother.



By horse and wagon in the first week **Nick brought home 40 baskets of wash** and returned them in the second week, at which time he collected 60 more loads of wash. A system was set up so that the laundry business was done in the early part of the week and the huckstering was done at the end of the week.

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The **League of Historical Societies of New Jersey** has awarded the **Little Falls Historical Society** *Third Place* in the 2006 Publication Award Program  
We **Graciously** Thank the **League** for awarding us this Honor .