



# The New Town Crier



Official Newsletter Of The Historical Society Of Bloomfield

Editor: Frederick Branch • Design: Mark Scurman

VOLUME TWO, NUMBER EIGHT

BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY, 07003

SEPTEMBER, 2003

**MEETING  
TUESDAY  
SEPT. 23<sup>RD</sup> 8PM  
AT OAKESIDE  
CULTURAL CENTER  
240 Belleville Ave.  
Bloomfield**

## AMERICAN HISTORY IN SONG

The Historical Society of Bloomfield will begin its 2003-2004 season with RICHARD RODEN, lecturer, singer and guitarist, at the Oakeside-Bloomfield Cultural Center, 240 Belleville Avenue at 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 23rd.

Mr. Roden best described his program: "With a blend of music and narrative the panoramas of American history is played out in a most interesting and enlightening



manner through the presentation of folk songs to mirror the events and temperament of the people who formed our nation. The songs will be presented live with guitar accompaniment."

A retired New Jersey teacher, member of the Actor's Equity and American Guild of Musical Artists, New York, graduate of Texas Christian University, Richard Roden has entertained audiences for four decades with this and other programs covering such disparate subjects as Stephen Foster and the Book of Kells.

Mr. Roden, besides his work in entertainment, music and history, was a varsity letterman at TCU and captained the tennis team at Fort Monmouth, and served as Captain in the United States Signal Corps.

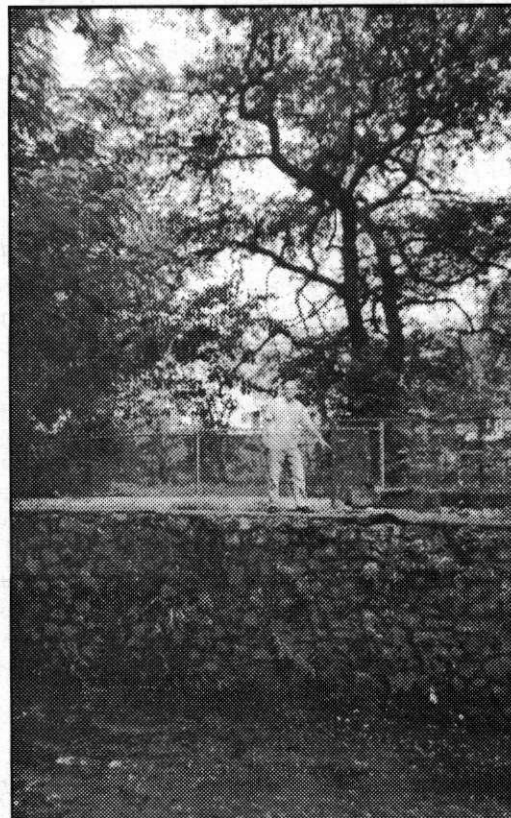
This program is free of charge and open to the public. Light refreshments will follow the program. Parking is available.

ILLUSTRATION BY AUDREY MOORE

## A Flood Named Floyd Remembering The Hurricane Floyd of 1999 The Worst Flood In Bloomfield Since 1903

by Joseph Testa

It all started on Thursday, September 16, 1999, which was a rainy day due to a hurricane coming up the East Coast. The entire area was soaked from several other hurricanes which had hit the weeks before. At about 5:00 p.m. I heard my neighbor, Joe, hammering on something by the entrance to his basement. When I went to check, he was at the bottom of his basement stairs with a slight amount of water in the area he was working. I asked what was wrong and he stated that he was going to make a hole in the concrete and place a small pump in the hole to pump out the water that was there. John, who is another neighbor from across the street, arrived. We were all working on the project when John exited the basement and stated that he didn't think the hole we were making was going to do any good. Joe and I exited the basement to see a wave of water rolling from the river towards the houses. Joe closed the basement door in hopes of stopping the water from entering. I ran next door to get my car keys to move my car to higher ground. As I did this, I also informed my daughter, Eilene, to move her car. Where we park our cars is about 50 ft. from the river. I pulled my car up the drive, which was higher ground. My daughter also attempted to move her car, but it was too late. My neighbor from the other side of the house asked if I would move her car. By the time I got the keys from her the entire area was flooded up to my knees. As I approached her car, which was in the same area as mine was prior to the storm, the alarm started to sound and the car moved slightly. The water was rising at a rapid pace and was now waist high. I looked into the car and saw the water over the front seats. I opened the door and reached in to find the car filled with water. A search was made for the hood release to open the hood. The alarm was then disconnected. My neighbor's car was only going to be moved if the force of water continued to move it. I waded back to my neighbor and stated that there was not much that could be done. She stated that she was just worried about someone getting hurt if the car moved. A tear was dripping down her cheek. She always said she loved that car. I then waded back to the rear to a two-car garage where I have a woodworking area with many power and hand tools. As I looked into the window I could see that the water was up over most of the power tools. I then opened the door to find everything that could float was. I attempted to place some items on higher shelves, but it was too late. I then came back to the house and looked into the basement window to find it filling up quickly. In a matter of several more minutes the basement was filled to the point where the water was exiting the basement through the foundation. At this time I knew that there was not a lot anyone could do. A check of the neighbors in the area of the flood was made to determine if they were alright. This was also



**Mr. Joseph Testa points to the mark on his fence post marking the height of the water pouring into his Jerome Place property from the Second River during the deluge. Since Mr. Testa is at least six-foot-tall, and the wall on which he is standing is close to twelve feet, with an additional three where he is pointing, that adds up to an awful lot of water.**

done throughout the night. As you waded from house to house you had to be careful crossing between them due to floating debris. All of the houses lost heat due to the furnaces being flooded, but most had lights. At approximately 3:00 a.m., the rain seemed to slow down and the water started to recede. By daylight on Friday, the water had almost disappeared. The only thing that was left in its place was destruction. All the items that were kept in the basements were either lost or damaged. Another check of the neighbors was made to again make sure they were alright. Not one of us had any sleep the night before, but we were all wide awake. I then walked to the garage where all my tools were. This is the time that I realized that everything in the garage was lost. Everything was soaked and still dripping. I went to the basement to find everything pushed against the front wall from the force of the water. Now it was time to clean up. Everything had to be removed from the basements and discarded because there wasn't too much left that was worth saving. The entire weekend was spent by all the neighbors removing the contents of their basements and garages. By Monday morning it looked like a disaster area. By Tuesday morning it was

(continued on pg. 2)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE SEPTEMBER, 2003

As I leave office after four years, I would like to express appreciation for all those who contribute to the life of the Society.

For the real backbone of the Society look at the list in this newsletter of Officers, Trustees and Chairpersons. They have pledged time and expertise. Mary Wilbert, Vice President, is Program Chair. Of the Trustees, Frederick Branch revived our newsletter, and, along with Mark Scurman and Patricia Post, publish *The New Town Crier*. Thanks to all who contribute articles. Patricia Cavanaugh, with Dorothy Johnson, bring us into the computer age. Harry Greenfield gave us many years of loyal service. Alan Slaughter keeps us apprised of preservation concerns, local and statewide.

Beyond these people, we value our good relationships with Don Carlo and the Reference staff of the Bloomfield Public Library; Barbara Vydro, Manager of the Bloomfield Cemetery; Paul Russo at Bloomfield College, and Kim Reilly, Director of Oakeside Bloomfield Cultural Center.

We appreciate the cooperation we have had from the Township's Mayors, Council, departments, and the Board of Education in getting items for the Museum, such as seats from the Royal Theatre. They helped with improvements on the Green in the past and arranged for repairs in the Museum. We share their desire for a revival of the best for Bloomfield.

In *Bloomfield Life*, *The Independent Press* and the newsletter you see about our projects around town, programs and exhibits, but there is ongoing preservation and research in the Museum. We are indebted to those who donate items and to volunteers, Jean Drew, Mary Fletcher, Pauline Garrity, Doris Klein, Richard Lamb, Walter Parshall, Mary Shaffner and Joseph Testa.

As we welcome the incoming Officers and Trustees, I hope more of you members and townspeople will join them as volunteers to keep the Society and Museum strong.

### PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Future Programs: November 25, March 23 and May 25, 2004.

—Ina Campbell

### ENJOY OUR MUSEUM

Located above the Children's Library at 90 Broad Street.

#### HOURS:

Wednesday from 2:00 to 4:30pm all year.

Saturday from 10:00am to 12:30pm September to mid-June and by appointment (973) 743-8844.

### MEMBERSHIP FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD

Dues: Individual \$7.00, Couple \$10.00

Student (under 18 years) \$5.00

Organization (non-profit) \$10.00

Organization (commercial) \$25.00

Please send check, payable to "The Historical Society of Bloomfield", along with your name, address, and telephone number to:

Membership Chairman

Historical Society of Bloomfield, 90 Broad Street,  
Bloomfield, New Jersey 07003

## ATTENTION

Follow your best intentions –

## PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES NOW

Continue to support the Society and remain on the mailing list for the Newsletter with notices of meetings. We thank all who have paid promptly – and are waiting to thank tardy payers!

## Scholarship Awards

This year's two Bloomfield High School recipients of the Society's Scholarship Awards are among the top 100 of their class, and showed a special interest in the study of history. They are Kathryn Levine, who will be going to Providence College, R.I., and Michael Dimasi, who has chosen to attend The College Of New Jersey. We wish them well in their future endeavors.

## HURRICANE FLOYD...

(continued from pg. 1)

declared a disaster area. In front of all the houses that had been flooded were all the contents that had been destroyed. The Township made special arrangements to have all the debris picked up. All the men assigned to pick up the debris were tired due to most of them being called out to work at the start of the hurricane and worked until all was cleaned up.

Little by little we

all realized that it was not over. Most of the furnaces had to be replaced due to water and mud damage. All the other household items that were kept in the basements had to be replaced. In front of each house for the next several weeks were discarded washing machines, clothes dryers, refrigerators and freezers, along with anything else that started to deteriorate due to rust. All the neighbors have since replaced most of the damaged items. We all still thank God that no one was injured or worse. As I look back I say to myself that it was just another several days in the past and look at everything now. Most is

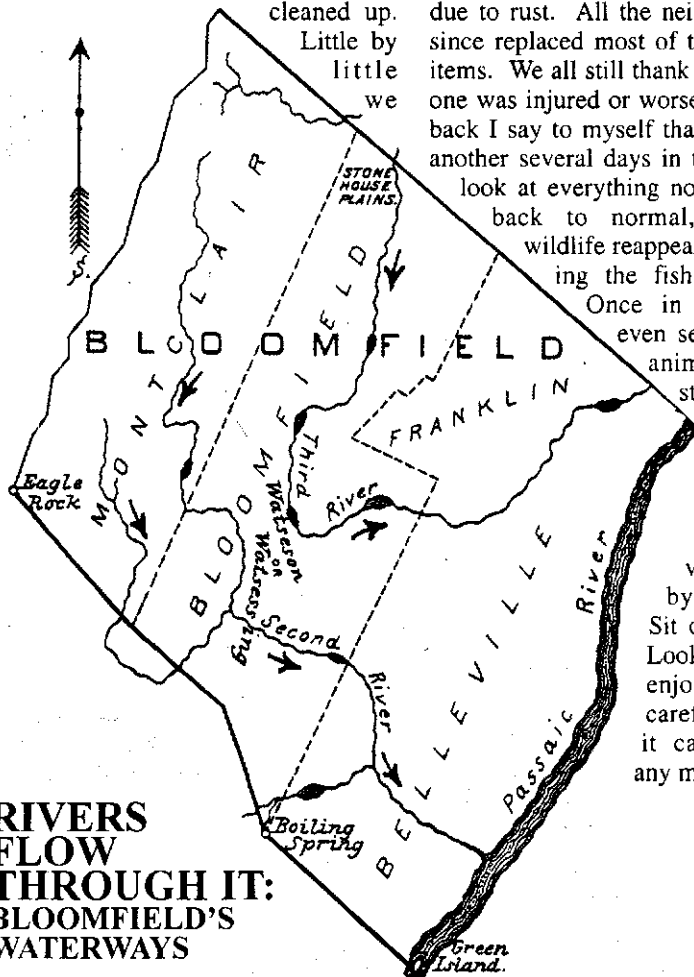
back to normal, with the wildlife reappearing, including the fish and birds.

Once in awhile we even see a bird or animal that is strange to the area. If

you ever

want peace and tranquility, visit the area by the river.

Sit on the wall. Look, listen and enjoy; but be careful because it can erupt at any minute.



## RIVERS FLOW THROUGH IT: BLOOMFIELD'S WATERWAYS

A map of the original Bloomfield Township published in 1884 shows the reason why this area has been the scene of many disastrous floods before the "big one" in 1999. (Glen Ridge was not yet a separate town and is not identified on the map).

The water from "Toney's Brook" comes down The Glen next to Bloomfield Avenue and joins Wigwam Brook in Watsessing Park to form the Second River. For many years there was Lake Watsessing (actually a mill pond) at this point, which covered the land now called Watsessing Park\*. The dam at Bloomfield Avenue was swept away by a flood and not rebuilt, but the land under it remains low and swampy and during excessively wet weather, the lake tries to reassert itself as a Bloomfield landmark.

Another problem is the Third River, rising in Upper Montclair (called "Stone House Plains" on the map) and entering the northern end of town at the Clifton border. Both of these streams hardly amount to more than a trickle during the summer months, but a sudden cloudburst in Montclair, Glen Ridge, or The Oranges, or anywhere else at a higher elevation than Bloomfield, can unleash millions of gallons of water, all heading right here.

There have been many memorable floods in the 19th century, and a notable deluge in 1903, when Mr. Eppley's merry-go-round in Glenwood Park was swept into the five corners, along with assorted chicken coops, backhouses, dead animals and other unpleasant debris.

The 1884 map is reprinted here with a few additions: the arrows show the direction of the flow of water from the heights of Upper Montclair to the Passaic River. With both Second and Third Rivers so close to each other in Bloomfield, is it any wonder that we were sitting ducks for Hurricane/Deluge "Floyd"?

\* Lake Watsessing can be seen on the 1856 map in the HSOB Museum. A photograph of a scene on Bloomfield Avenue at the Second River just after the 1903 flood will be printed in a future issue.



# THE RED DEVILS

## On The Court And On The Gridiron

by John Gibson, Jr.

If you walked up New St. towards Broad St. on an October Saturday morning in the late 1930's-early 40's and as you passed under the railroad bridge, you would hear the sound of running feet, the thuds of bodily contact and the cries of "Get Him!", all the sounds associated with a gridiron contest. You were at the home field of the "Red Devils." They played in a field at the back of the Dodd estate, appropriately named by them as Dodd Field.

There was no formal organization. It was just a group of neighborhood guys that formed their own ball club. Unlike today's teams, there was no official uniform, although the team's colors were red and white. Some players may have had helmets. Others had jerseys and perhaps football pants and some had just street clothes. If the clothes got dirty, not to worry. Rinso would make them clean again.

The names of the players over the years were Bill Frank, Buddy Hendershott, Ray Wade, Elly Yereance, Byron Phoebus, Bob Maddocks, Jack Horgan, "Mouse" Robbins, Eddie Carr, Frank Zeidler, Bill Murath and Paul Driscoll. Not all of them played at the same time.

They played six man football, four quarters. With the exception of one game, there aren't many records existing of how their games turned out but there is a wonderful hand-drawn, hand-lettered program for the "Red Devils" game against the "Wolverines." Byron Phoebus was kind enough to let me copy it. In the program, the physical characteristics of the "Red Devil" and "Wolverines" team members were laid out. Then each team member was critiqued on their strong points and weaknesses. There is a faded photo of a young Elly Yereance carrying the ball into a defensive line. Lastly, there is a review of the previous game played between the "Red

Devils" and the "Wolverines." The "Red Devils" were behind in the closing minutes when Elly Yereance scored making the score 25 to 24 in favor of the "Wolverines". Bob Maddocks kicked the extra point to tie the game and bring the contest to a close. There must have been other exciting games, but they are lost to memory.

Football season ended for the "Red Devils" when the weather turned cold, but it didn't stop them from playing basketball. The team entered Bloomfield Recreation's Intermediate Basketball League. It appears that the team was most active during the early 1940's. Not all of the players stayed on the basketball team. "Bud" Hendershott played with the rival "Falcons". The "Devils" picked up Dave Noltie, (?) Galbreath, Bogan Hossic and (?) Smith. Again, not all of these members played at the same time. Also, a coach was added: Pete Davis. The "Red Devils" benefited greatly from his guidance.

In the Intermediate League, the "Red Devils" provided stiff competition. They beat the Boys Club 27 to 18 with Maddocks, Frank and Yereance getting three or more goals apiece. One Sunday they traveled over to Harrison to take on the "Falcons" on

their home court. At the half, the "Red Devils" were down 21 to 12. During the third period, they managed to tie the score at 30 all. In the fourth period, they outscored their opponents 10 to 6 and won the game 40 to 36. Yereance, Galbreath and Phoebus were standouts for the "Devils."

For a time, the "Red Devils" were at the top of the League with eight straight wins. They made it nine straight by beating St. Mary's Casino 42 to 9. Bob Maddocks had 14 points. He helped with fine performances from Yereance, Seidler and Phoebus. However, by the end of the first half of League competition, the "Red Devils" were in second place but this was good enough to put them into championship competition. Their hopes were short-lived, however, when they were stopped by the "Titans" 32 to 24.

There is an interesting sidelight to this story. These games were played during the early years of WWII. The Bloomfield Recreation Department sponsored a "Cigarette Night". To get into the game, you had to bring in cigarettes which were donated to the people in the various armed forces. Imagine doing that today!

The saga of the "Red Devils" ended with their graduation from Bloomfield High. The war was on and, for most of the male graduates, it meant a stint in service. When hostilities ended, the players went their separate ways. Today, their names have disappeared from the Bloomfield scene and you would be hard pressed to find their football field. It's covered with houses.

### Acknowledgements

*My thanks to Byron "Red" Phoebus for letting me use his "Red Devils" scrapbook and for sharing his recollections of the team with me. I would also like to thank Dick Driscoll, Don Richter and Russ Henry for their assistance. All of them are former Bloomfield residents.*

### TELEPHONE CONNECTION

The Historical Society of Bloomfield Museum now has a direct line for outside calls. The number is: (973) 743-8844.

To speak to a "real" person, call when the museum is open—Wednesday 2-4:30 pm all year, and Saturday 10am-12:30pm from September to mid-June.

After hours there is an answering machine.

At all other times, a message will be taken by General Joseph Bloomfield, James Newbegin Jarvie, Abigail Baldwin Oakes, or whichever posthumous shade is available on the answering machine.

### FROM THE FILES: BLOOMFIELD LOOKING BACK



This is a view of Broad Street looking south as it crosses Bay Avenue, circa 1920. As you can see there was a service station on the corner ( just as today), and the building to the right was once part of the roundabout, the turning point for the trolley, as it went no further than Bay Avenue. The house behind the service station was owned by James Morris in the late 1800's.



General Joseph Bloomfield  
**THE NEW TOWN CRIER**  
 THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
 THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF  
 BLOOMFIELD  
 90 Broad Street  
 Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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## THE WELCOME MAT

A cordial welcome is extended to the following new members of The Historical Society of Bloomfield. We hope you will take note of our many activities and participate in any that you may choose.

**Walter W. Marshall**  
**Marion C. Marshall**  
 Whiting, New Jersey

**Alice J. Lewis**  
 Bloomfield, New Jersey

**Joseph J. Hearns**  
**Elizabeth A. Hearns**  
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**Agnes McLaughlan**  
 Whiting, New Jersey

**Theresa L. Babeu**  
 Bloomfield, New Jersey

## Letters To The Editor

## A Great Job

*Dear Fred Branch:*

Thank you for the New Town Crier newsletters. What a great job. The articles are great and the photos really add to everything.

*Steve Sears*  
 Bloomfield, NJ  
 SGSWrite.com

*Photographs and Industrial Giants*

## Provoking Reactions

*Dear Editor:*

After receiving the May 2003 issue of The Historical Society of Bloomfield's newsletter, I phoned Fred Branch, the editor, to congratulate him on another very good issue and to tell him that page three in particular made me think. Fred said that provoking reactions was what he intended. He wanted feedback. So here I am, sorting out a few thoughts.

Bloomfield has been my home base for over twenty years so I've had time to read about it and look around. I know that it has had a long, industrial past, and provided a home for various ethnic groups who sought jobs in its industries. There has been a clash of cultures and richness of diversity here.

But the juxtaposition of photos on page three showing Noll's farm in the nineteenth century and the 1931 photo of the Gen'l Electric Co. built on the Noll's dairy farm site depicts an

industrial change that ultimately makes me want to yawn, it is so ugly. The farm photograph shows a rambling dirt road with a white fence. The road and fence rise and turn slightly beyond the tree line. A surprise might be there just beyond the bend of the road which opens to the sky. The industrialization of Bloomfield by industrial giants destroyed this rural scene. In the 1931 photo we see G.E. and its parking lot, or field as it's called, on the Noll site. The photo shows straight, rectangular lines locking the viewer into a utilitarian order that offers no freedom of imagination or touch of beauty to lift the soul. What would it be like to be a worker here in 1931, to neatly park one's car and enter one of the factory huts for a day's work, year after year?

We are told that our genetic structure doesn't alone account for who we become. Our DNA interacts with our environment; environment nurtures us in subtle ways. If this is so than the degree to which our environment (never mind the brown fields) has been changed by industry must have important consequences. And, still on page three, a tiny insert tells us that in the 1912 Centennial Parade the firemen march carrying bunches of flowers. "When asked if the men would be willing to do the same today, the answer was an emphatic negative." What do you make of that?

*Mary Wilbert*

*We love mail! Send your letters to: Editor at The New Town Crier,  
 C/O The Historical Society Of Bloomfield, 90 Broad St. Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
 or e-mail us at bloomfhist@aol.com*



## A Quiet Vista

Looking down a country road at the turn-of-the-century? Close, but no cigar. The above was taken in 2000, not 1900, and the "road" is the abandoned right-of-way of the Newark and Watchung Railway, later known as the Orange Branch of the Erie. Through the 1950's, the 8:05 from The Oranges stopped here to discharge passengers at the station just behind this point of view. From the platform, commuters ascended a stairway to Arlington Avenue and Watsessing Center, their final destinations usually either the General Electric Company (employing 2,000 people) or the Lamp Division of the Westinghouse Corporation (employing 6,000 people), or other smaller places of business in the area. The last few cars of the long train blocked nearby Lawrence Street, and any employees hurrying to GE could count on being late once the gates went down.

The gates are now down for good, the tracks are gone, and the scene is pretty much what it must have been in 1856, before the iron horse disturbed the cows in the nearby Noll Dairy farm.

## Did You Know...

Belleville Avenue was once called Newton Road, after the new town of Belleville, established in 1839. It soon became one of the better residential areas of Bloomfield. Thomas Oakes owned property on both sides of the avenue and built several large houses there. One of these, the David Oakes home, is now occupied by the Bloomfield Cultural Commission as a Cultural Center.

Mayor George W. Peterson served only one term of office: from 1902 to 1903. He and his wife, Anna, are buried in Bloomfield Cemetery in a plot unmarked by any memorial.