



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

October 2020

The Franklin Arms Tea Room

Rediscovering the history of this popular 20th century Bloomfield eatery

By Richard Rockwell



I recently discovered this Franklin Arms Tea Room matchbook cover for sale on eBay. I was intrigued by the “Mexican Patio” and the fact that the restaurant is located at 460 Franklin Street, when we know the Franklin Arms as having been in the former Davis Homestead at 409 Franklin Street, where the Bloomfield Steak & Seafood House is today. (photo right)



The Franklin Arms in the 1970s. Photo from the collection of the late Frederick Branch.

That led me to investigate in town directories and newspaper archives. I discovered that the Franklin Arms Tea Room started in the Franklin Arms apartment building (pictured at left, hence the name “Franklin Arms”) at 200 Franklin Street (between Willard Avenue and Berkeley Place — across from the county vocational school). The Tea Room is listed at that address in the town directory from 1929 to 1933. It announced its move to a new, larger location at 460 Franklin Street on August 28, 1935 (where the Bloomfield College building with dorms and bookstore is today). See ad below right.




The restaurant is listed in town directories at that address until 1951. It is at this location where they had the “Mexican Patio” (which was a room, not literally a patio) “Where all decorations, glassware, dishes and furniture are authentically Mexican.”

The restaurant appears frequently in newspapers because many organizations such as the Rotary Club, Lions Club, Elks and the Chamber of Commerce held their regular meetings there. It was also a popular location for bridge parties and wedding receptions.

The first listing in the town directory at the 409 Franklin Street address was 1953 (I was hoping to find an announcement about its move, but couldn’t find one).

In 1954, an announcement in the newspaper stated that it was the Demmerts’ 27th year of business: “The Franklin Arms Tea Room in Franklin Street will be reopened for business on Tuesday, the Demmerts will have

The Franklin Arms Tea Room
Announces the Opening of Their New and Larger Location on
Wednesday, August 28th
For Luncheon at 11:30 A. M.
460 FRANKLIN STREET
(At the Junction of Broad Street)
BLOOMFIELD, N. J.

LUNCHEON	TEA	DINNER	SUPPER
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Special Accommodations for Bridge Parties, Banquets, Service Clubs

Home-Cooked Foods - Deliciously Served
Fresh Vegetables—Home-Made Pastries

Under Personal Management of
MR. AND MRS. CARL DEMMERT, Owners

returned from their annual two weeks vacation... The Arms is now starting their 27th year of business, under the original ownership and management.”

The last directory listing for The Franklin Arms at 409 Franklin Street was 1971. I doubt if the Demmerts were still proprietors in 1971, but I was not able to find any references one way or the other.

Editor’s Note: I was a child when 409 Franklin Street became “Fat Mary’s Booze & Bites” in 1976. Bloomfield residents found the name a tad distasteful, and it was subsequently changed to “Proud Mary’s Drinks & Bites.” It is now Bloomfield Steak & Seafood House.

If any readers have any information about what became of the Demmerts or any other facts, photos or anecdotes about The Franklin Arms Tea Room, please email info@hsob.org or snail mail the HSOB at PO Box 1074, Bloomfield, NJ 07003, ATTN: Newsletter Editor.



1930 advertisement—look at those prices!



From 1956: The January edition of Ford Times, published by the Ford Motor Company, pictures a painting of Bloomfield’s Historical Franklin Arms Tea Room on Franklin street. Under the heading “Famous Recipes of Famous Taverns,” the Franklin Arms won mention for its lemon pie. The painting is by Helen Fleming. Formally the Davis Homestead, the building was built in 1670 and was occupied by the Davis family until 1903. Carl and Marie Demmert manage the restaurant today.



This is the image used in The Franklin Arms Tea Room advertisements. It is hard to make out details because of the poor quality of the microfilm from years ago, but it looks like two women enjoying a cup of tea.



Who is buried in Bloomfield Cemetery?

If you haven't visited the historical Bloomfield Cemetery at 383 Belleville Avenue, it's a must-see. Open daily, the cemetery holds a tranquil beauty all its own, whether Autumn, Winter, Spring or Summer. Besides a place of quiet contemplation, the Cemetery is brimming with history.

The Word Search below is just an introduction to the many historically significant people interred in Bloomfield Cemetery. Plan a visit and check out their—and many other departed souls'—final resting place.

S E B J W T O A D S T E L O C Z Z G R J E S Y P W
 I T N X A B R P R Y K K T G F I G O C U J W A I C
 V E O O I M E O V Y H E C J S P Y Z A V O L L T H
 A B V K T A E F F D S X R U V F M Z I R F L R U A
 D U W Y Q S R S H N W N M M R A P Y O N I C Q B R
 N O T A O R S Y N G I D N A V O P B E A F O G M L
 O L M L S C F K W E A L N E W J K Z M B Q F Q A E
 S E C X I R H D N C W K K P K N Y B E T I H W R S
 K P V D K A A B S A L B Q N A Q A M X M C N S O W
 C R R K L J M A Y I B P E H A T E T G J S Q B S A
 A E V C R F M J N U Z R G G C R I J V V A R D O R
 J I J L L O X N T G L I I H I X F Z E E N W I P R
 R R X Z H M I P M S W F E A B N S N L U F Y E X E
 E B I T H C D G R D D L Z N F O J T H Z P R W L N
 D A X W H B Q H U A D W S W C D L A Z O H N K L E
 N H B O A W O L K E F V F C B P E D R U J A X D A
 A C L J T Q Y E R P C M F H D G K R H V P X V B T
 X S K M D R G B U O M W G R Z F Z H D A I P N V O
 E E W Q N A R F J O J H F E C K U V H L K E G F N
 L A U E S A L C A H C L I P E D L I W E I N N E J
 A G H J D S B O L U D L K C V Z O W D M B M R E E
 O L Y B M A D A M E H A R R I E T B C O O K E U H
 X E U N V Z U H Y V I C U R P U E K A A L Z M L A
 F R E N R U O B N A M I L L I S H P L O D N A R E
 Y C X C F H S V R H U O W U M G V E X Q C H T P V

Mildred Fairbanks Stone
 (The very first woman officer of a major U.S. life insurance company [Mutual Benefit]).

Alexander Jackson Davis
 (U.S. architect, known particularly for his association with the Gothic Revival style)

Madame Harriet B. Cooke
 (Headmistress of the prominent Bloomfield Female Seminary)

Charles Warren Eaton
 (U.S. artist best known for his tonalist landscapes)

Jennie Wilde Pilch
 (The first NJ woman to be appointed to the Special Joint Conference and first Chairman of the new Committee on Housing)

Henry Ludwig “Hank” Borowy
 (Professional Major League Baseball starting pitcher, who played for the NY Yankees, Chicago Cubs, Philadelphia Phillies, Pittsburgh Pirates & Detroit Tigers)

Randolph Silliman Bourne
 (Progressive writer & intellectual born in Bloomfield, spokesman for young radicals during World War I)

Thomas Cadmus
 (Businessman, Revolutionary War officer and community leader in early Bloomfield)

John Franklin Fort
 (33rd Governor of NJ)

Charles Tomlinson Griffes
 (U.S. composer for piano, chamber ensembles and voice)

Chabrier Peloubet
 (Moved his musical instrument workshop to Bloomfield in 1836; began building melodeons in about 1842 and cabinet organs around 1848)

James Newbegin Jarvie
 (Businessman & philanthropist; made a substantial contribution toward the renovation and rebuilding of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Bloomfield)

Roy Franklin Nichols
 (Pulitzer Prize-winning U.S. historian)

William Batchelder Bradbury
 (Composed the tune to “Jesus Loves Me” and many other popular hymns)



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD

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A Good Night's Sleep...

Growing up in Bloomfield in the 1940s had another benefit, at least in my area. You had room to wander. The remains of the Morris Canal were still around to play in and Oakes' Pond still afforded many attractions. True, you might get a "soaker" (a wet foot) once in a while, but that was all part of the game.

If you wanted to wander further, you could go down to the dam at the pond, climb through the fence and follow the Third River downstream. You would shortly pass the "Cow Lots"—the sleigh riding hill where the Oakes' cows once grazed. Then you were into the woods and passed the "eel hole"—a deeper hole in the river—and on down past where the tail-race of the mill came into the river. A bit further on was the Mt. Olivet Cemetery hill that still overlooks what little is left of that area. A little ways on was the dam for Davey's Pond. Just downstream a way was a swimming hole, sometimes known as "Best American Beach," but it sometimes had more colorful names. My brother, Ed, had been warned by my mother not to swim there as the water was dirty. On his next trip down, he threw a bottle of water purification pills into the hole and then dove in. So much for health hazards.

From the dam, the road led past a freshwater spring and onto the ruins of the old paper mill. We spent a lot of time climbing over the two big metal pipes that formed the tail-race. The mill itself was a pile of rubble. There was no sign of a fire and I wondered why or how it was destroyed. Much later, I figured out that if there is no demand for the product, there is no reason to need the mill.

The mill was about as far as we went. On the way back, you could check on any spots that you might have missed. Once back home, you could figure on getting a good night's sleep.

~John Gibson



The Oakes Mill and Oakes Pond as they appeared on a 1910 postcard.