



The Town Crier.

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER—THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD
Editor: Marguerite Elliott Producer and Art Director: Frederick Branch



VOLUME I, NUMBER I

BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY

MARCH, 1969

Introduction

Let me introduce myself. I am THE TOWN CRIER, official newsletter for the Historical Society of Bloomfield. This is my first publication so I am very young and searching for new and interesting tales of Bloomfield's past history. My aim is to catch up to the three year "old" society which was organized to stimulate public interest in our heritage and the society is dedicated to advancing knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Bloomfield history.

As we mature you will be supplied with authentic absorbing articles and intriguing stories in capsule form; calendar jottings; listings of events and special Historical Tours.

HISTORICAL BLOOMFIELD HIGHLIGHTS

By William M. Litvany,
The Independent Press

The year 1969 marks the 159th year since the founding of the Town of Bloomfield. Through an act of the state legislature, the establishment of the municipality took place on March 23, 1812. The first town meeting was held at the home of Isaac Ward. Then, all of the qualified voters had a voice on the questions now decided by our Town Council.

The area of the original Township of Bloomfield was about 20½ square miles. It was bounded on the east, by the Passaic river; on the south, by the Townships of Newark and Orange; on the west, by the crest of First Mountain. The district included the present municipalities of Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Montclair, Nutley and Belleville, and a part of what are now the Forest Hill and Woodside sections of Newark. Eight years after the town's establishment, the population of Bloomfield was 3,085. Today, the estimated population is over 55,000 and has an area of 5.4 square miles.

Although Bloomfield had no separate existence until 1812, the name had been adopted some years earlier by the congre-

Historical Society Museum Opening on May 4th

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

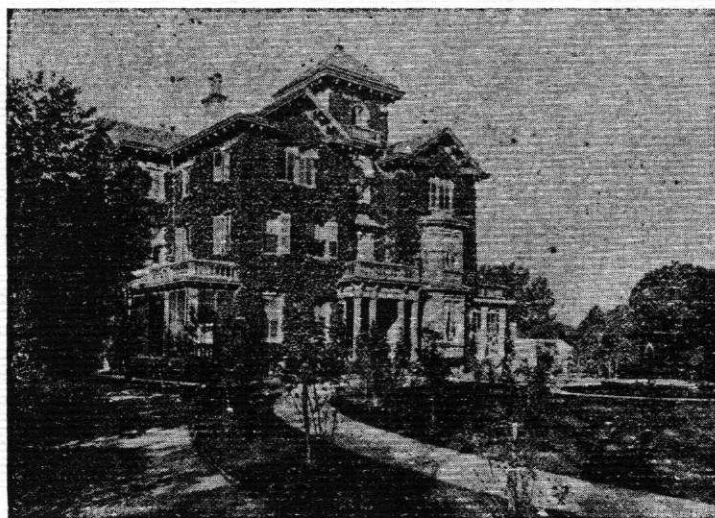
This space had been reserved for our President, Mrs. Peter Dorn's message to you. However, due to the sudden illness and death of her father at presstime her message will be forthcoming in the next issue. Our sympathy is twice fold as Mrs. Dorn lost her mother in January of this year.

Elaborate plans for the opening of the Historical Society's Museum on May 4 at 3 p.m. in the gallery of the Library are in progress. The Museum was started in 1960 as part of Bloomfield's 150th Anniversary celebration. The Museum Committee is cataloging and rearranging old and new exhibits. Mark your calendar today for this significant event.

Lost Landmarks—Number One

The Residence of David Oakes

Many citizens of Bloomfield will well remember this imposing residence which was built in 1853 in the Italian Villa Style by David Oakes. On the site of an earlier story-and-a-half house of stone and wood, it was enlarged to 17 rooms by the addition of a third floor in 1878. The walls were constructed of brick plastered with gray stucco; the porches and trim painted chocolate brown to match the sandstone foundation. It stood on Belleville Avenue just east of the bridge over the Morris Canal (now Kennedy Drive) until 1943, when it was torn down and the property sold. The site is now occupied by garden apartments. Although this photograph was made in 1902 for



publication in Stephen Morris Hulin's *Real and Ideal Bloomfield**, it could well have been taken 40 years later, so beautifully was the property maintained.

The house is believed to be the largest ever constructed in Bloomfield. Three full stories with attic, had a four story tower that commanded a magnificent view of woods, fields and houses in every direction. The kitchen and service areas were in a separate wing to the rear with servants bedrooms on the floor above. The four principal rooms on the ground floor were grouped symmetrically on either side of the wide stair hall. Large sliding or folding doors of highly polished walnut set in gracefully arched openings connected each room and the hall so that the entire floor could be used for entertaining in the grand manner.

—continued on page 2, col. 2

WANTED

Writers and contributors to THE TOWN CRIER. Send articles to the editor:

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gation of the Presbyterian Church. General Joseph Bloomfield, who was twice governor of the state, was honored by the church elders when they were in search of a name to replace that of Wardesson.



GENERAL JOSEPH BLOOMFIELD

THE TOWN CRIER

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NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WORKSHOP

Miss Betty Babicz, Supervising Library Assistant of the Bloomfield Public Library, and Mrs. Peter Dorn, President of the Historical Society attended a workshop at the N.J. Historical Society, Newark, N.J. February 14th. There was a panel discussion which consisted of the following: "Setting Up of A Library", "Acquisitions"; "Processing" and "Servicing". There are more than 2,000 historical societies in the United States, one-third of which have a library. It was stressed that more and more museums are housed in a room of the public library. This is fine, as they compliment one another. It was noted how important the museum can be to the Professional Researcher; Professor from local colleges; a person who comes for specific items and will want knowledge and books on the subject; Genealogist searching Town Records, Church Records and Tax Records, Local Newspaper Staff, College students, High School Students (future Historians of tomorrow). The businessman and a visitor who may be looking for dinner programs of days gone by.

Complete notes on this Workshop will be available in our new Museum.

WELCOME MAT

Mr. and Mrs. Morris Rubin and Miss Irene Brummerstedt are welcomed as new members of the Historical Society.

Yantacaw Pylon of Brookdale Park

Well into the Twentieth Century, two stone Pylons of Yantacaw Indian origin, stood on the hilly part of the Hyde farm which was to become part of Brookdale Park.

The late Sidney Hyde amassed a fine collection of Indian artifacts which he found over the years, in the soil of the land which had been a Garrabrant plantation, and before that, Van Giesen land. What has not been shared with museums is still

family treasure. Pictures of this collection will be in the new museum to be opened May 4. Prominent in the center of one picture is a large, light-colored Ceremonial Spearhead.

It was found on top of one of the Pylons by Sidney Hyde, who stood beside it and reaching up, felt around on the top and encountered this fine specimen, broken off at the place where it was narrowed to tie it to the shaft.

It is probable that it was at the time of the Vernal Equinox that the Indians would go to a pre-determined spot to observe the setting sun appear to sit upon the top of the Pylon which was, traditionally a promise that the sun would continue to serve the good interests of the Indians for another year. In addition, a red sky would indicate that the Gods were not pleased with the behaviour of mankind and a golden sky indicated that they were pleased.

The Pylon was thus used as late as the turn of the century when one Yantacaw was a squatter on the bend of the Stonehouse Brook where it turns to join the Third River. Many did not realize that he was an Indian returned from the west to finish his days on this spot. He acted as a general handyman and some called him the "Predicator"—others "Tee Pee Tom". He was the source of many stories of Stonehouse Plains, from before the Dutch settled there.

—Elizabeth Lockwood Coombs

YOUR TOWN

If you want to live in the kind of a town

Like the kind of a town you like,
You needn't slip your clothes in a grip

And start on a long, long hike.
For you'll only find what you left behind—

There's nothing that's really new
It isn't the town—it's you.

Real towns are not made of men
afraid

Least nobody else gets ahead.
When everybody works and nobody shirks

You can raise a town from the dead.
And if while you make your personal stake

Your neighbor may make one too,
You can make a town what you want it to be.

It isn't the town—it's you.

Author Unknown

Lost Landmarks

(continued)

Although all of the walls had been painted over in plain shades of buff, cream or grey in more recent years, some stencilled borders were uncovered during demolition which indicated that the original decoration had been much less restrained. Rosettes of deeply modelled ornamental plastering surrounded each lighting fixture and elaborate brackets and cornices were used throughout the house. Windows of stained and leaded glass lighted the halls and gave touches of brilliant color in skylights and other locations. These few remaining decorative elements gave a very good idea of the opulent appearance the house must have presented on its remodeling at the height of the Victorian Era.

A particularly attractive feature of the grounds was the fountain to be seen at the far right of the photograph. The sound of splashing water and the shade of the large old trees lining the street made this part of Belleville Avenue a delightfully cool oasis, even on the hottest summer days. The five-acre estate also included a greenhouse and sunken gardens with specimens of exotic trees and shrubs, some of which

Gas Lights in Bloomfield—1969

A paradox! A village in the center of Town using Gas lights in the 20th century. Yes, "Colonial Village". It is worth a "walking tour" to visit this village.

still remain. The drive in the foreground wound its way through a grove of pine trees to the side entrance of the house, then through the grounds to a carriage house and large barns situated at the edge of Oakes Pond, known at the turn of the century as "Little Lake George".

All of this, and the pond itself, is now gone.

A section of the cast-iron fence which enclosed the property, together with souvenirs of the house, has been presented to the Historical Society Museum. FWB



**Real and Ideal Bloomfield* is one of the best books ever printed on the subject. Published at the turn of the century, it contains many beautiful photographs which were taken shortly before the first automobile backfired into town and made so many changes in the unhurried life of a small village in Essex County. The Public Library has a copy of this book that may be borrowed (catalog number 974.934 H) and it should be on the list of required reading for every Bloomfield Historian.