



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

May 2020



“Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.”

—Winston Churchill

Memorial Day 2020 (May 25) proved to be an extraordinary holiday this year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual parade was canceled and the Memorial Day Wreath Dedication Ceremony was closed to the public. The event is available for viewing, however, on WBMA-TV’s website (www.wbmatv.com).

Since participation in events was not an option, the Bloomfield Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs Department requested that Bloomfield Boy Scout Troops help honor fallen veterans by hanging red, white and blue bows on every veteran street sign throughout town.

“The Boy Scouts usually place flags on veteran gravesites at Glendale Cemetery each year,” Michael Scurman, Director of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs (BPRCA), told *Bloomfield Patch*.

“With such uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, I thought it would be a nice way to keep them involved in our Memorial Day celebration.”

Each scout was asked to hang two or three bows, install an 18-inch

American flag at the base of their predetermined pole, take a photo of themselves saluting the sign and then post the photo to the BPRCA Facebook page.

One of the veteran street signs honored in this way was that of **Francis Xavier McDonald**, whose sign graces the corner of Park Place near Franklin Street.

McDonald was born in Kearny, NJ on June 23, 1917, and his mother’s name was Bridget. He lived at 73 Washington Street, Bloomfield, with his wife, Helen Goldie McDonald. He worked at the Clark Thread Company, located at 715 Broad Street.

McDonald enlisted on January 16, 1942 and served as a Seaman 2nd Class in the Navy on board the **U.S.S. Juneau**. He was killed in action on November 13, 1942, when the Juneau was sunk during the **Battle of Guadalcanal**, struck first by a Japanese destroyer and then by a submarine. McDonald was originally designated Missing in Action by the U.S. War Dept. and not reported Killed in Action until July 26, 1943. In total, 687 naval men, including the five famed Sullivan Brothers, were killed in action when the Juneau sunk.

The wreck of the U.S.S. Juneau was located on March 17, 2018. The cruiser rests 13,800 feet below the surface off the Solomon Islands in several large pieces.



Thank you to Lisa Cohn, Research Librarian at Bloomfield Public Library, for information on Francis Xavier McDonald.



Center School Second Grade Class 1947–1948. Bill Dodge is in the second row from the right, fourth seat from the front. If you have any information on any of the children pictured, please write to info@HSOB.org



Center School Kindergarten Class June 1946. Some of the kids in the photo are Bill Dodge, Gay Wells, Mimi Mansky, Betsy Fagan, Margaret Osterley, William Drew, Russel Llewelyn, Sharon Lackey, Donald Sewell and Caroline Polkinghorn. If you have any information on any of the children pictured, please write to info@HSOB.org.

Growing up Bloomfield

A Reverie of the 1940s...

March 14, 2020

Dear Editor,

I just received my first issue of *The New Town Crier* and already it is bringing back fond memories of Bloomfield. I am not a long term resident, though I spent my earliest years there. I was born at Mountainside Hospital in Glen Ridge in 1940 and came home to our house on Oak Street in Bloomfield where I lived for six or seven years. I went to the Center School from Kindergarten through Second Grade. Attached is a picture of my June 1946 Center School Kindergarten class all dressed up for a band performance. I think I played the triangle.

I can remember traveling around the neighborhood on my bike. I recall the Walnut Street Train Station pictured in *The New Town Crier*. If I'm not mistaken, there was a section of the Morris Canal adjacent to it and across the way was a box factory where they made cigar boxes, of all things.

My mother worked in the Bloomfield Public Library from about 1936 until I came along and my father worked at the Federal Shipbuilding & Drydock Co. in Kearney until it closed after the war.

I just wanted to let you know that I appreciate receiving a copy of *The New Town Crier* and look forward to the next edition, which will hopefully jog more memories.

March 30, 2020

After I sent my letter I spent some time going through your website, which I greatly enjoyed, and came across the name Polkinghorn as having contributed. I was quite surprised, as there is a Polkinghorn in the Kindergarten class photo I sent. Caroline Polkinghorn is in the front row second from the left.

Attached is another photo—my Second Grade class at the Center School. I am in the second row from the right, fourth seat from the front in the Second Grade photo.

April 30, 2020

My Mother had added a few names to my Kindergarten photo. The only person I recognize is Gay Wells (front row, second from right). She was a cute little red-head and my first “girlfriend” who lived down the block on Oak Street. I often wonder whatever happened to her.

Since it's a little hard to read the names here they are: Mimi Mansky, Betsy Fagan, Margaret Osterley, Wm. Drew, Russel Llewelyn, Sharon Lackey, Donald Sewell and Caroline Polkinghorn.

~Bill Dodge, Calverton, NY



Center School on Liberty Street. It was built in 1890 and burned down on October 6, 1979.



The cigar box factory on Beach Street next to the abandoned Morris Canal in the 1940s. Today it is Nye & Co. Auctioneers, Appraisers & Antiques and prior to that, it was Castleton Furniture & Design Center.



General Joseph Bloomfield

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OF BLOOMFIELD

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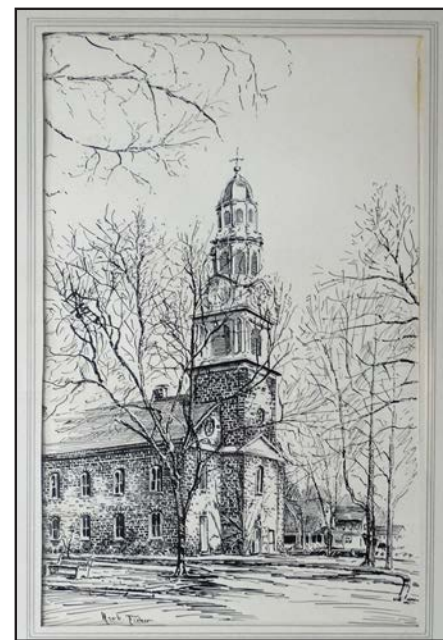
Nicholas D'Angelo, Layout

Cryptogram Whiz Kids

The answer to the Cryptogram in the March 2020 issue of *The New Town Crier* is "The Town Green of Bloomfield was purchased in 1797 for two hundred dollars. This is the same year construction of the Presbyterian Church on the Green was commenced."

Kudos to the following HSOB members who puzzled it out:

- Bruce Anderson
- Tina Caridad
- Eileen Pedalino
- Jane Bond
- Jean Kuras



The Old Church on the Green. Originally known as "The Presbyterian Society of Bloomfield," the congregation first met in 1794. It was so named in honor of General Joseph Bloomfield. The church was begun in 1797 and completed in 1819. In 1812, the newly formed Township of Bloomfield took its name from the new church. It is now known as The Bloomfield Presbyterian Church on the Green.

New Vintage Photo Collections

HSOB Board Trustee & webmaster Richard Rockwell digitized/enhanced 200+ slides taken by late town historian Fred Branch in the **1970s–1980s**. They are organized by category: **Bloomfield Center**, **Bloomfield Sites**, **Industry**, **Watsessing Center** and **Houses**, with homes sorted by street name and house #. Rockwell also added the **Reverend Phraner's Travels Abroad Collection**. Photographs taken on trips between 1908–1914 have been digitized/enhanced from original glass lantern slides. What did Cuba and Alaska look like to the adventurous Bloomfield tourist more than 100 years ago? Check out all photo galleries at www.HSOB.org.

The Welcome Mat

A cordial welcome is extended to the following **new** members of The Historical Society of Bloomfield. We hope to see you at our next meeting:

Raymond Caprio
West Orange, NJ

Bill Dodge
Calverton, NY

Manny & Ruth Marcel
Merrimack, NH

John F. Miller
Bloomfield

John Morey
Crofton, MD

Frank J. Valliere
Hollywood, FL