



# The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

October 2018

## SAVE THE DATE

### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, October 23, 2018  
7:30 PM

### BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street  
Bloomfield, NJ

### The History of Bloomfield College: Celebrating 150 Years

*Presented by*

**Nicole Quinn, Director of Donor Relations  
& Campaign Manager,  
Institutional Advancement at  
Bloomfield College**

The HSOB will present “The History of Bloomfield College: Celebrating 150 Years.” Much has changed since Bloomfield College was established in Bloomfield Center in 1868 as the German Theological School of Newark, NJ. Join us to learn about the history, milestones and accomplishments of Bloomfield College in the past 150 years.



### Morris Canal Hike through Bloomfield

Sat., Nov. 3, 2018 10AM–4:30 PM

This three mile hike, conducted by Rich Rockwell and Ron Rice, will explore the path of the Morris Canal through Bloomfield using historic maps and photos. A bus ride is included for an additional two miles, stopping at the newly reclaimed section of the canal at Oak Tree Lane and additional sites where the canal is still intact, with a return to the starting point.

Space is limited. Reservations are required (MorrisCanal@gmail.co). \$5.00 donation requested to cover the cost of the bus and hand-outs. Rain date: Sun., Nov.4

## In Memoriam



### Past HSOB President Robertina “Ina” Campbell

*July 26, 1922–June 5, 2018*

Robertina Campbell (better known as “Ina”) passed away on June 5, 2018 at the Job Haines Home in Bloomfield. Born on July 26, 1922 and raised in Long Island, Campbell came to Bloomfield in 1969 to be reference librarian at Bloomfield College. Four years later, she became head reference librarian at the Bloomfield Public Library. Campbell was a graduate of Barnard College; she also received an M.A from Columbia University and an MLS from Pratt Institute. Campbell was Past President of the HSOB and the Bloomfield-Glen Ridge Branch of the American Association of University Women. She volunteered as a docent of the Montclair Historical Society and as a Friendly Visitor at Clara Maas Hospital, as well as enjoying membership in the Victorian Society and the Glen Ridge Women’s Club. Campbell is buried in Bloomfield Cemetery.

### Past HSOB President Mary Wilbert: 1930–2018

Mary Wilbert passed away on Feb. 2, 2018 at age 87. Wilbert was raised in Spring Lake Heights, NJ, earned her B.A. from Montclair State University and her M.A. from the University of Michigan. For a decade she was employed by Grace Lines ocean liners. She then taught English in New York City public schools until her retirement circa 1995. After years of residence in Bloomfield, she moved to Toms River, NJ. She was survived by six months by her devoted partner, Audrey Moore. Wilbert is buried in Riverside Cemetery in Toms River.



### Past HSOB Secretary Audrey Moore: 1925–2018

Audrey Moore, 92, passed away on Aug. 6, 2018. Born in London, England, Moore came to live in the U.S. in 1951. She settled in Bloomfield, moving to Toms River, NJ ten years ago. Moore worked as a paralegal for McCarter English in Newark, NJ, served as Secretary of the HSOB and was an active member of the Bloomfield Presbyterian Church on the Green. She is buried in Glendale Cemetery, Bloomfield.



*We were saddened to learn of the passing in recent months of these three good friends of the Historical Society. Ina and Mary were Past Presidents and Audrey served as Secretary for many years. How lucky we were that their journey through life brought them to us. They had a passion for history, were gracious and intelligent and brought a high level of dignity to their time with us.*

*Ina’s treasure was a dollhouse her father had had made for her when she was just a very young child. Each room was decorated and lit with a glowing light. When she was preparing to begin residency at Job Haines Home, she and I had lunch.*

*“You know, Jean, she said, “the dollhouse was going to the New York Historical Society, but I’ve changed my mind. I’d like our Historical Society to have it.” Needless to say, that was a memorable and most pleasant lunch for me.*

*Ina’s good and loyal friend, Liga Stam, recalls the holidays when Ina would invite her friends and their children to her home for Christmas Tea and then gather them around the decorated and lit-up dollhouse to ooh and ahh.*

*The dollhouse is now displayed in the HSOB Museum. We hope you come to see it and remember a faithful and generous friend. –Jean Kuras, HSOB President*

# Score One for Lore

## The mystery of Brookdale's former name, solved

By Chris Schopfer

“Brookdale” became the identity of northern Bloomfield in 1873, when citizens chose that name for its new Post Office.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, they superseded the community’s original English name, “Stonehouse Plains.” The word “Plains” no doubt had referred to the gentle slopes straddling the Third (Yantecaw) River and its tributaries, particularly Yantecaw Brook (formerly Stonehouse Brook). The origin of the term “Stonehouse,” however, has been the subject of competing theories, laid out in 1912 by James E Brooks in an essay entitled, “The Annals of Stone House Plains or Brookdale”:

*...deeds and patents mention Stonehouse Brook as early as 1696, and Stonehouse Plain in 1697.*

*The use of the name Stonehouse as early as 1696 would indicate that some one had built a stone house along the little brook that bears that name, some time before, and there is much evidence to indicate that such was the case. There is a story, however, to the effect that the so-called “stone house” was not a human habitation but an overhanging ledge of rock, used as shelter by early travellers both white and Indian. The location of this “house” was in the old quarry north of the Stone House Plains Dutch Church, and on the opposite side of Bellevue Avenue.*

*On the other hand there are those who believe that the “stone house” was not only built by human hands before 1696, but that it is still standing and in use. The house referred to stands near the south bank of Stone House Brook just across the Montclair boundary line and north of Bellevue Avenue...<sup>2</sup>*



*The old stone farmhouse, probably about 1912. Image from Bloomfield Old and New.*

Brooks traced the farmhouse back to 1818—an early date, but not close to 1696, when the name Stonehouse was used. If he attempted to search the title further, he would have met a formidable obstacle: the loss of Essex County’s Deed Book A to fire.<sup>3</sup> That volume contained the official copies of most deeds dating from 1688 to the 1790s. The lost records not only established legal rights to properties, but also held a trove of historical facts: places, names, dates, relationships, events, physical features, explanations—and quite possibly insight into the naming of Stonehouse Plains.

Some of Deed Book A’s lost facts can be reconstructed using other sources, such as road records, court cases, maps, later deeds or private documents. Fortunately, the identity of the original Stonehouse is among those reconstructible facts.

The deed to the Brookdale Reformed Church’s land on Bellevue Ave. proves that the Stonehouse was a geological formation, and not the farmhouse. The church, originally called the Reformed Church of Stonehouse Plains, was formally chartered in 1801, some six years after services were started there.<sup>4</sup> On Feb. 6, 1802, local farmer Abraham Garrabrant (ca. 1750-1805) and his wife “Ellener” (Eleanor, aka Margaret, nee Kingsland, ca. 1753-1806) essentially gifted to the church—sold for “the sum of one cent”—about an acre of land “...a few rods southerly of the great-Rock known by the name of the Stone-House, on the Southwest side of the Road along by the said Stone House...”<sup>5</sup>

*Excerpt from deed to Reformed Church land  
“a few Rods Southerly of the great Rock,  
known by the name of the Stone House”*

*occupy, within a few Rods Southerly of  
the great Rock known by the name of the  
Stone House, on the Southwest side of the  
Road along by the said Stone House*

The words “the great Rock” clearly indicate that the namesake was not a house in the modern sense. Furthermore, the Rock’s distance was about a hundred feet north of the church lot (about where the addresses 25-37 Bellevue Avenue are today). The farmhouse, on the other hand, was more than 600 feet to the northwest, “near the south bank of Stone House Brook just across the Montclair boundary line.”

Other evidence helps to confirm the Rock’s status as Stonehouse Plains’ namesake by contradicting the claim that the farmhouse existed by 1696. Brooks noted the early presence of Abraham Van Giesen (1666-1753) to support the farmhouse theory. Church records, however, suggest the Van Giesens moved there about 1704, at least eight years after the term “Stonehouse” was coined. While Abraham and his wife Fytje Andriessen (born 1671) plausibly were the first settlers of Stonehouse Plains, their children born prior to 1704 were baptized in Bergen County and those after 1704 in Essex County.<sup>6</sup> Abraham resigned his position as a church deacon in Hackensack on May 25, 1704.<sup>7</sup> If the house in the 1912 photograph belonged to one of Abraham’s sons, it was likely built about the 1720s, as their eldest son, Rynier, evidently married early in that decade and their second son, Andries, married in 1727.

Brooks mentioned a “Van Giesen house,” demolished in the 19th century, that more logically may have been the first permanent house in Brookdale. It was inscribed with initials matching Abraham’s and the date 1711 or 1714.<sup>8</sup> That inscription is consistent with not only the facts about when the Van Giesens relocated, but also with a practical aspect of building stone houses on the frontier: fieldstones were typically unearthed by years of clearing and plowing field, and not immediately plentiful enough to build a house.

Remarkably, a remnant of the timeworn farmhouse seems to have survived. From Brooks’ description, it can be pinpointed to 10 Woodmont Road in Montclair (see map illustration). The residence there features a stout, brown fieldstone entry that appears, in materials, form and orientation, to be a portion of the rear (western) wall of the farmhouse. By the early twentieth century, the property was held by the Montclair Land & Improvement Co.<sup>9</sup> It was taxed as land in 1930, perhaps indicating that the building was no longer viable, or at least abandoned.<sup>10</sup> In 1931, the present “frame dwelling” was purchased by Roswell Colt Woodruff (1889-1964).<sup>11</sup> An informal investigation by current owner Jacqueline Lipson has revealed no other ancient elements in the present building. Even if only the earthy doorway is original, it stands among the oldest man-made structures in the area—a visible conversation piece reminiscent of the region’s heritage.

The “great-Rock,” whose purpose as shelter would have become obsolete as homes of settlers began to dot the area, may not in fact have been “in the old quarry,” but rather the quarry itself. The oral tradition that the Rock was consumed to build the Reformed church and local houses suggests as much.<sup>12</sup> Being close to the brook, the quarry wasn’t likely a pit excavation, but rather a surface formation—as the Rock no doubt was. Few if any structures built after the early 19th century were made of locally quarried stone—another indication that the stone resource was not particularly large and was depleted quickly. Indeed, the earliest detailed map of that area, dated 1850, shows no hint of a quarry at the site.<sup>13</sup>

The “great-Rock or Stone-House” was a faint second-hand memory in 1912, but its obscure lore conjures an image of timelass value to early peoples. Was the term “Stonehouse” coined by natives or colonists? And how did the name come to represent the locality? The answers to these questions are probably lost to time. Indeed, the name “Stonehouse,” once a household word to Bloomfielders, has essentially disappeared from the modern lexicon, except along Stonehouse Road, a street shared by Bloomfield and Glen Ridge.

Oral traditions often distort history, but in this case, an antique deed corroborates the lore of the Great Rock of the Yantecaw plains as the eponymous Stonehouse. Analysis shows that the farmhouse, while too recent to have been the namesake, has nonetheless left a tangible reminder of its own historical significance. The stories of the defunct Rock and its neighboring farmhouse advance our understanding of early human habitation of Brookdale and afford a rare glimpse of the age when natives and pioneers roamed Stonehouse Plains. *Footnotes on following page.*



*Comparison of a Google map (left) and the corresponding section of a 1906 map of Montclair, rotated to closely match the orientation (top).*



*Google Street View of the doorway of the house at 10 Woodmont Rd, Montclair.*





*General Joseph Bloomfield*

### **THE NEW TOWN CRIER**

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF BLOOMFIELD

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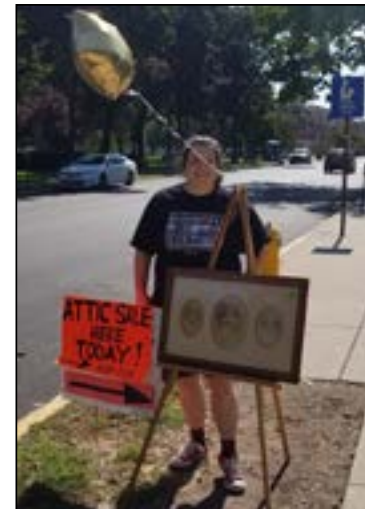
#### **NEWSLETTER STAFF**

Ava Caridad, *Editor*

Nicholas D'Angelo, *Layout*

## **Try to remember that kind of September...**

The HSOB looks fondly back at September of 2018, as it hosted a vintage baseball game (left) at the iconic Wright's Field on the 15th between the Bloomfield Buzzards & The Hoboken Nine. Hoboken beat the home team 20–6. On the 29th, the HSOB held an Attic Treasures sale to raise funds to support programs and Museum upkeep. The Museum is open every Wed. & Sat., so be sure to stop by.



## **Can you identify?**

### **Halloween Edition**

Where in Bloomfield are these Wild Boar's Head gargoyles? Many Bloomfielders have never seen them, but be advised, they have seen you. Oh yes, they patiently watch. And wait.

If you think you know, email the location with the words "Wild Boar" in the subject line, to [info@hsob.org](mailto:info@hsob.org).



#### **Footnotes from pages 2 and 3:**

<sup>1</sup>Folsom, Joseph F., ed., Bloomfield Old & New, An Historical Symposium by Several Authors, Centennial Historical Committee, Bloomfield, NJ, p. 162-167. / <sup>2</sup>Note 1, pp. 167-168.

<sup>3</sup>State of New Jersey, Department of State. "New Jersey State Archives Collection Guide." Accessed via <https://nj.gov/state/archives/guides/cesrd001.pdf>. "Volume A was destroyed in a fire." Deed Book B starts in 1728, but in fact contains few deeds recorded prior to 1790s.

<sup>4</sup>Brookdale Reformed Church (1936). History and Year Book commemorating the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Anniversary. Bloomfield, NJ: Brookdale Reformed Church. / <sup>5</sup>New Jersey Archives, Essex County Register of Deeds and Mortgages, Deed Book G, p. 351.

<sup>6</sup>Records of the Reformed Churches of Bergen and Acquackanonk, New Jersey.

<sup>7</sup>Genealogy.com. User Home Page Book: In Old New York: Abraham Reyniersse Van Giesen Family Group Sheet. Accessed 12 Mar 2018.

<sup>8</sup>Note 1, p. 170. / <sup>9</sup>Atlas of Essex County, A. H. Mueller & Co. Vol. J., 1906.

<sup>10</sup>Township of Montclair, New Jersey. Building Records: 10 Woodmont Rd.

<sup>11</sup>Information about Mr. Woodruff is from Ancestry.com, Bruce M. Giese Family Tree, Roswell Colt Woodruff page. / <sup>12</sup>Note 1, p. 168.

<sup>13</sup>Sidney, J. C. Map of Essex County, New Jersey (1850): with the names of property holders &c. Newark N.J.: H.A. Belding. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/2007627504](http://www.loc.gov/item/2007627504).