



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

October 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS



WALKING TOUR OF BLOOMFIELD CEMETERY

Saturday, October 17, 2015 at 1:30 PM

Bloomfield Cemetery Gatehouse, 383 Belleville Ave. (street parking)

(Rain Date: Sunday, October 18, 2015 at 1:30 PM)

Free. No reservations necessary. Wear comfortable shoes.

Co-sponsored by HSOB and the Glen Ridge Historical Society.

Photo by Tina Caridad

BOOK SIGNING: "Bloomfield through Time" by Richard Rockwell

Saturday, October 24, 2015 at 1:00PM – 2:00 PM

Watchung Booksellers, 54 Fairfield St., Montclair, NJ

Explore Bloomfield's past through richly detailed photographs digitally repaired and enhanced from original negatives of Bloomfield scenes 100 years ago. The photos tell the story of a town that went from farms and water-powered-mills to industrial to mostly residential somewhere between urban and suburban. See how the town was shaped by transportation starting with the Morris Canal, then electric trolleys and railroads and then the Garden State Parkway.



HISTORICAL MEETING:

The Administration of Mayor John Kinder: 1972-1987

Tuesday, October 27, 2015 at 7:30 PM

Bloomfield Civic Center, 84 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ

Former Bloomfield Councilman Joseph Wojak will discuss the programs and policies, successes and disappointments of Kinder's administration.

Free to the public. Refreshments will be served.

MORRIS CANAL HIKE THROUGH BLOOMFIELD

Saturday, November 10, 2015 ~ 10:00AM – 2:30 PM ~ Cost: \$5

A three mile hike following the path of the Morris Canal through Bloomfield and bus ride to additional sites where the canal is still intact. Space is limited. Reservations are required, email MorrisCanal@gmail.com. Co-sponsored by HSOB, the Bloomfield Morris Canal Greenway Committee and the Bloomfield Recreation Department.



*Tour guide
Rich Rockwell*

Riding the bus in Bloomfield...

Modern Bus Lines

New Jersey Transit, which includes most of Bloomfield's bus lines (DeCamp is private), was founded on July 17, 1979, an offspring of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), mandated by the state government to address many then-pressing transportation issues. It was the result of the New Jersey Public Transportation Act of 1979 to "acquire, operate and contract for transportation services in the public interest."

Prior to that, NJDOT was established in 1966 as the first state transportation agency in the United States. It has been responsible for maintaining and operating the State's highway and public road system, planning and developing transportation policy and assisting with rail, freight and intermodal transportation issues.

Prior to 1948, most public transportation in New Jersey was provided by the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey, a utility company that also operated the Public Service Railway Division. In 1948, the Public Service Corp. was divided into two entities: the Public Service Electric & Gas Company, which inherited the utility operations, and the Public Service Coordinated Transportation Company (PSCT), which inherited transit operations. PSCT provided service throughout New Jersey, originally using trolleys and then transitioning to trolley buses and buses.

Early 20th Century Bus Lines

Before the PSCT, DOT and New Jersey Transit got involved, and before everyone had a car, how the heck did people get around town? Before buses there were trolleys, jitneys, horses, bicycles and a lot of walking.

In early 1921, two Bloomfield brothers—Robert (Bob) and Walter Johnson Jr. (Walt)—noted that the growing population in the Brookdale section of town needed bus transportation and they decided to provide it. Their father, Walter J. Johnson, worked six 10-hour days a week at Lauter Piano Company in Newark and



Walter Johnson, Jr. sits proudly in one of the three buses he and his brother Bob operated between Bloomfield and Newark. The slippery rattan seats, duck board floors and open-window "air-conditioning" were standard equipment on public transportation of the time. The bars on the windows were a safety feature designed to prevent curious sightseers from losing their heads through contact with a passing vehicle. Photo courtesy of Joseph Barry.

lived in a house in "the country"—which is now 123 Sadler Road in Brookdale. The commute to downtown Newark would be considered a very difficult one today. The elder Mr. Johnson walked down Center St. in Nutley to the end of the trolley line on Washington Ave. on the Nutley-Belleville border and then took the trolley to downtown Newark. It wasn't too bad in the spring and fall, but it was a harsh commute in the heat of summer and the cold wind and snow of winter.

There was no public transport in Brookdale, which, at that time, consisted of farms, woods and swamps. People had to either use a horse and wagon or walk to get around shopping, to Sacred Heart Church & School and to Brookdale School.

Bob and Walt Johnson purchased a bus and started a bus line that ran from Alexander Ave. near the Clifton border; along Broad St. to Bloomfield Center; down Franklin St. to Belmont Ave. in Belleville; along

Belmont Ave. to Bloomfield Ave.; down Bloomfield Ave. to Broadway and Broad St. in Newark; then down Broad St. to Lincoln Park, Newark.

The venture was a success. They bought two more buses and ran the line for three years. They sold the buses and business to PSCT in March of 1924, which ran it as the #30 line. (For more on the remarkable Johnson Family in Bloomfield, see *The New Town Crier*, May 2007 edition, at www.HSOB.org)

There was also Harry Fornoff's Bus Service, which ran the Bloomfield Safety Bus 495 and the earlier Newark & Bloomfield 495 up and down Bloomfield Ave. Like the Johnson brothers, Harry Fornoff sold the buses to the New Jersey PSCT in 1924.

John Weidle of Pennsylvania notes, "My mother's father, Robert Fornoff, is standing near the front wheel of the [Bloomfield Safety Bus in the photo below]. Do you recognize the location where the photo of the bus was shot? I looked at images of churches on the web in the area, but I don't remember finding the location."

The HSOB has been trying to determine the location of the church in the background. Board members agree it doesn't look like any church, past or present, located in Bloomfield, NJ.

With some minor differences, it resembles the First Presbyterian Church of Caldwell, NJ, located

at 326 Bloomfield Avenue. However, having examined the photo, church officials determined that it's not their building.

The street is quite wide and looks like a main drag. It's fairly logical to assume that the church may be on Bloomfield Avenue as that was the 495's route. We appeal to our readers: can anyone identify this church? ***Let us know!***

Robert Lee Fornoff stands in front of the Bloomfield Safety Bus #495. The bus was probably built in 1922 and had a seating capacity of 21. Photo courtesy of John Weidle.



This photo of the Newark & Bloomfield Bus #495 was taken sometime between 1919 and 1924. The bus was probably built in 1919 and had a seating capacity of 18. Owner Harry Fornoff (center) employed his brother Robert Lee Fornoff (left) and his father (right) as drivers. Photo courtesy of John Weidle.





General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD

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The Welcome Mat

A cordial welcome is extended to the following **new** HSOB members. We hope to see you at our next meeting:

Robert H. Barth Mark D. Hauser
Somerville, NJ *Bloomfield*

Pat Corcoran Benjamin &
West Orange, NJ Kathryn
de la Fuente
Bloomfield

Ice Skating in Watsessing Park: Request from a Museum patron...

A recent visitor to the HSOB Museum seeks information and/or photos of ice skating in Watsessing Park from days gone by. Can any of our members help? If you have any photos or memories you'd like to share, please contact the editor at HSOB1812@gmail.com or call 973-743-8844. Or mail information to: HSOB-Attention: Editor, PO Box 1074, Bloomfield, NJ 07003-1074.

Editor's note: My mother, along with her brother and two sisters, used to ice skate in Watsessing Park. They lived at 75 Berkeley Avenue, not far from the Halcyon Park gatehouse. They moved there with their parents from Newark after the beginning of



WWII, when lucrative factory war jobs for both parents enabled the family to purchase a nice house in a beautiful neighborhood.

My mother said that every child would bring a potato to the frozen pond in Watsessing Park on winter evenings. There would be a bonfire, and the kids would put their potatoes in the flames to roast while they proceeded to skate. When they came off the ice, the potatoes would be roasted and "very tasty" as the skins would have naturally protected the insides from dirt and charring. This was fast food, 1940s-style.

My mother, Doris (Gasser) Caridad passed away in 2006, and her sister Charlotte (Gasser) Cole passed away in 1974. Her brother Chuck Gasser and sister Janet (Gasser) Wagner are still with us.

Anagram Whiz Kids

And the winners of our Presidential Anagrams puzzle from the May 2015 issue are:

Tina Caridad Anne Carlino
Dorothy Johnson Jean Kuras

The answers to the puzzle are:

1. The MAJOR OFFSET the HENS = Thomas Jefferson
2. His REVOLVER CLANGED in the night = Grover Cleveland
3. The FLORID RAM fell ILL under the ELM = Millard Fillmore
4. The NASTY RUGS cost LESS = Ulysses S. Grant
5. WITHDRAW to the MOAT or I'll FLAIL you = William Howard Taft
6. The VARMINT BEAR chased the NUN = Martin Van Buren
7. That ROYAL is wearing a CRAZY HAT = Zachary Taylor
8. OH! He BETRAYS the HERD by selling their FUR = Rutherford B. Hayes
9. I caught LICE at the VOLCANO DIG = Calvin Coolidge
10. That INFERNAL PICKER won't get out of my fields = Franklin Pierce