



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

MAY 2008

MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2008
8:00 PM
BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER
84 Broad Street, Bloomfield

***“They gave the nation
the devotion of the
patriot soldier.”***

Come join us for the May Meeting of the Historical Society, when we will welcome members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 711, Bloomfield.

John Mooney and guests have graciously accepted our invitation to join us for an evening of autobiographical talks about their experiences in the United States Military.

The Historical Society plans to add the voices of these men to our collection of recorded oral histories. The meeting will present us with the opportunity to begin that project.

Members of The Society and the public are invited to attend an evening with these brave men and worthy patriots.

When We Moved To Bloomfield

By Barbara Rudy



When Barbara referred to the unfinished sidewalks they encountered on moving day in 1949, she was not exaggerating. She has provided many interesting family photographs to accompany this article: the one printed above shows the planks, mud, and unfinished sidewalks exactly as described.

In March of 1949, my parents and sister moved to Bloomfield from Hoboken. My mother picked Bloomfield because of the schools (she studied reports from the State Board of Education in Trenton to pick the right town) and the train to New York (for my dad). They moved to 116 Davey Street, the first court built in Forest Hill Manor, before the sidewalks were finished. On move-in day, they had to carry their belongings on planks laid across the mud to get from the parking lot to the building. Nine months later, I was born. My family happily lived in a two-bedroom apartment in Forest Hill Manor until 1960 when we moved to 181 Belleville Avenue. A few years later we moved to 153 Belleville Avenue, a historic house on the corner of Forest Drive.*

Living at Forest Hill Manor was a great experience for us. Even though the rest of the town thought the apartments were “tacky”, and the people who lived in them were simply ‘transients’ (actual quotes from the Letters to the Editor of the Independent Press), the families that were there in the 1950’s were wonderful. In the summer evenings, the parents would sit outside and the kids would play kick ball or catch fireflies. No one had air conditioning, so being inside was not too appealing (until the mosquitoes got busy). During the day we would inflate our 4-inch deep pools or play in the sprinklers. The Good Humor man could be counted on to show up right on schedule. Halloween was awesome; we needed wagons to carry our bags of candy! And our Girl Scout Troop always sold the most cookies because the population density was so much more than anywhere else in town. In the winter we built ice forts or hiked up to the break in the fence in the Forest Hill Field Club and went sledding on the golf course. Anytime you needed someone to play with, you just went outside. There were SO many kids in that garden apartment complex that there was always someone to play with.

My sister and I attended Fairview School until Forest Glen School was opened in the fall of 1958. Fairview had been overcrowded and run-down, and Forest Glen was new and modern and we thought we were the luckiest kids around! Then I spent three years in South Junior High and three years at the High School. I can honestly say that the education I received in the

(Continued on page 2)

*We mourn the recent loss
of*

JOHN SHOFFNER

and

HARRY GREENFIELD

*who, for many years,
were members and friends.*

Tenderly, may time heal our sorrow

Gently, may friends ease our pain

Softly, may peace replace heartache

*May we find all our memories a
constant source of comfort*

*And may our warmest memories
remain.*

*Our deepest sympathies to
Mary and Dorothy.*

Barbara Rudy (continued from page 1)

Bloomfield Schools was exceptional. From the day I started Kindergarten in 1955, to the day I graduated in June of 1968, I felt that education was a priority in Bloomfield. I had many remarkable teachers – Mildred Zahn, Althea Bruns Rhodes (later Pakvin), James Anderson in Fairview and Forest Glen, Miss Lilley, Mr. Hatt, Mr. Molinaro, and Mr. White in South Junior, and Miss Moon, Mrs. Grabo, Miss Kelley, Bill Workinger, and Ray Hartman in the High School. These are just a FEW of the names I remember. When I got to college, I realized even more how superior my educational experience had been in Bloomfield. I especially appreciated the English, Latin, math, and music lessons I had taken. Oddly enough, one class that I found very useful was the South Junior High Library Science classes taught by the librarian.

We walked to and from school every day and came home for lunch while we were at Fairview and Forest Glen. That gave us about 10 minutes at home to eat, so my mother would have our lunch on the table as we walked in. We could literally ‘eat and run’ back to school. When we went to Fairview, we always made time to spend a few pennies at ‘Jennies’ (a great rhyme), which was located on Orchard Street, next to the railroad tracks. Even a 6 year old knew that Jennie Baylis was a classic icon of an earlier time!

There are so many memories I have of events during my childhood. The most vivid would have to be the Bloomfield Sesquicentennial in 1962 (that’s 150 years for those of you who missed it!). The town was totally ‘in sync’. Each elementary school performed the same program, and we all learned the same songs. When we all got to High School, it was fun to reminisce and break into the song “Bloomfield, USA” which I can still sing perfectly! Trees were planted

SIEM’S AND MORAN’S



Two Broad Street landmarks (now gone) mentioned in Barbara reminiscence are shown above as the Brownie Troop of which her sister, Debbie, was a member, marched past on Memorial Day of 1956.

on the Green for each school and we ALL learned the history of Bloomfield, much of which I can recite even now, close to 50 years later.

I remember many Memorial Day Parades which used to start at Watsessing Park and end at the High School. As a young child, I had to watch with envy as my sister marched with the Brownies and I sat on the ledge of a window at the National Newark and Essex Bank building at Broad Street and Bloomfield Avenue while my dad snapped pictures of her in her uniform. Then, later, I took twirling lessons on Saturday morning at the Civic Center (50 cents for 10 lessons) and got to march in the parade in my white blouse and red shorts! Suddenly, I was a High School student marching with the band. Then, later, as an adult, dressed in an official blue blazer, I sat across from Sacred Heart Church on the Green and played with the Bloomfield Civic Band, which at that time was conducted by the wonderful musician and director, Ray Hartman.

Fourth of July at Foley Field – what a great night that always was! The whole family would walk to the fireworks. In comparison to the displays we see now, it was pretty tame, but we thought it was outstanding! Before there was a pool or park at Foley Field there was just ‘space’ next to the football field. I always wondered why it was not being used, as we couldn’t even walk across it to shorten our trip. And football games were always big events. As a high school student and as a member of the Marching Band, I can remember Thanksgiving Day games when end zone bleachers had to be put up. They would tell us that a crowd of 10,000 was expected!

Anyone who grew up in Bloomfield in the 50’s and early 60’s will remember Bloomfield Center: Woolworth’s and Kresge’s and Grant’s, Moran’s, Lipton’s, and, of course, Siem’s. All places to go to on a Saturday BEFORE the movies. The Royal and Center Theatres gave us a choice. We could head to the theatre with candy or donuts hidden under our jackets. We would usually walk downtown by ourselves in the afternoon, and then call a parent when the show was over and someone would pick us up. We were not that old, but we certainly felt grown up to be allowed to spend the day without parents’ supervision. And at Christmas, we would take the money we had saved and shop for gifts. I remember going from store to store looking for the perfect items for my parents. There were almost too many choices!

I have been living in Montclair since 1975. This is a great town also, but the feeling of history is not at all what it is in Bloomfield, at least not for me. Growing up in Bloomfield I was taught to appreciate the “150 years” and to understand where the

town had been and what it had developed into. The history of the town was taught to us in a way that made it interesting and fascinating. I always enjoyed looking at the historic parts of Bloomfield and imagining the past. The books and articles that have been published about the town’s history are a wonderful way for all of us to view the past and appreciate it. Someday perhaps school children will learn about Bloomfield during the ‘Mid Century’ years, when so many changes happened to the town and the country.

**The Stafford House build before 1865.*

WATSESSING PARK SKATING RINK



Left to right, the people on the photo are Debbie, Mrs. Rudy and Barbara Rudy. The date is February of 1955.

Back when winter was winter and not an extension of a brisk autumn and early spring, the Town of Bloomfield flooded Watsessing Park between the Lackawanna Railroad embankment (shown in the background) and Glenwood Avenue for the annual outdoor sport of ice-skating, popular in Bloomfield since the 18th century and before. With the first wintry blasts in late December or early January, the water quickly froze to a depth of at least six inches and the white flag with the red ball went up.

For the comfort of the skaters who braved the icy blasts that whipped across The Park from the north-west, a small wooden shack was assembled each year. It contained a pot-bellied stove to warm frost-bitten fingers and had a place to sit down other than on the ice. A recent visitor to the HSOB Museum felt particularly nostalgic about this shack and hoped that we had a photo of it on file. As with so many other relatively unimportant buildings in Bloomfield (and even some of the more important ones) nobody seems to have wasted a snap of the Kodak on this modest little building. However, with the discovery of this shot by Mr. Rudy, there is still hope.

Last Ride on a Steam Train

By Frederick Branch

Back in the mid-1940's, the Erie Railroad operated some of their oldest and shabbiest equipment during non-rush hours. This writer once bought a ticket to Hoboken for 44 cents round trip (a ferry ride to New York City was five cents) that left the old Orchard Street station around 1:30 PM on a sultry summer afternoon. It was driven by a steam locomotive and consisted of a tender that carried soft coal and a couple of dingy coaches; hard seats covered with scratchy green plush under a layer of black cinders and soot. After the antiquated ensemble lurched out of the North Arlington Station, passed through "the cut" and headed across the Meadows, the fireman must have piled on extra coal for the straight run through the bulrushes, because the size of the cinders blowing through the open windows reached almost golf-ball size (well, marbles, anyway).

It was my first and last experience of what train travel in the early days must have been like. The cars rocked back and forth (and sideways) in an alarming manner, and the coaches bounced along the roadbed until the trip felt like the roller-coaster ride at Olympic Park in Irvington. Of course, we made it safely to Jersey City and back to Bloomfield or I would not be writing about it, but neither the opportunity nor the desire for another ride ever arose again. And now, 60 years later, the rails are torn up, the station torn down, and the New York and Greenwood Lake Railway has passed into history.

When the 1853 Oakes residence at 249 Belleville Avenue was demolished in October-December of 1943, many family papers and books were abandoned by the last residents, George and Madeline (Perry) Oakes. They had grown tired of rattling around in a 17-room house that was drafty and difficult to heat, expensive to maintain, and cluttered with family heirlooms that had lost their meaning to two elderly people. Among the things they left behind in the attic was a box of correspondence* between Sarah Elizabeth Oakes Van Liew and her husband, Cornelius. Along with the century-old letters there was a note from Sarah to her husband, asking him to hitch up the horse and take her and their daughter to Newark on a shopping trip, with this closing remark: "We will not go 'by the cars'." Although she was referring to the Newark and Bloomfield line, Mrs. Van Liew may have wanted to avoid similar green plush seats, marble-sized cinders, soot, and an extremely rough ride.

**Later returned to Mrs. David Oakes II.*



Although west rather than eastbound, this vintage 1940's engine, made by the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Eddystone, Pennsylvania, belches out a plume of smoke and cinders that must have ruined many a line of freshly-washed clothes along the Erie right-of-way. The wooden king-post bridge at Williamson Avenue was the last of this type of bridge that existed on the Erie Railroad. It was replaced by a new concrete structure about 20 years ago, putting an end to calls to The Bloomfield Fire Department from nearby residents when the wooden flooring and died-out timbers of this old structure sent up a second plume of smoke shortly after the train had passed. Photo made about 1940 by John Briggs of East Orange. Given to the HSOB Museum by Mark Schmitt and John Drenan.



Shown at the Reference Desk of the HSOB Museum as he explores the mysteries of the Internet is Michael Mateyka, who has written about his discovery of the many resources and interesting information available at the Museum. Michael, who had just joined the staff of the museum, has written a well-researched article about the Newark and Bloomfield Railroad, which will soon appear in these pages.

New Museum Volunteer ... and Author

By Michael Joseph Mateyka

As a lifelong resident of the town of Bloomfield, New Jersey, I once believed that I knew much there was to know about my town from a current perspective; it was not surprising that my discovery of the Historical Society of Bloomfield was entirely an accident.

Upon rummaging through a series of papers in the Municipal Clerk's Office as part of my volunteer duties, I happened to stumble upon a newsletter that immediately caught my interest. Upon inquiring about the source of the paper, I subsequently received word of the Historical Society of Bloomfield. Prior to this, I had never heard of such a Society. As a History Major from Gettysburg College, famed for its turning point in the Civil War, I jumped at the opportunity to see what was in store. What lay in wonder was this little-known treasure.

The HSOB is truly a little historic gem, located on the second floor of the Bloomfield Children's Library. Despite its seemingly unassuming location, it stands as the finest tribute to American history and culture strictly from the perspective of Bloomfield, New Jersey. If there was ever anything to know about our town, from its colonization in 1666 until the present day, the HSOB Museum is the first place to look. Shelf after shelf of directories, history books, and other literature dedicated and centralized on Bloomfield, New Jersey are a banquet for the hungry mind.

But what makes the Museum truly special, however, is its wealth of knowledge about our town and its surrounding environs apart from external sources. This material is of paramount importance to anyone both young and old to learn its local history through extensive archival collections, surviving historical documents, personal memoirs, and manuscripts, many of which are unique to this museum.

But the real story of Bloomfield can be told without words; a glance around the museum is a journey through time. A feast for the eyes of a time long past awaits the inquisitive visitor. There is an impressive collection of numerous antiquities and surviving artifacts: an original map of the Bloomfield Municipality from the Civil War Era, attire from residents of past centuries, paintings and artwork attesting to talents and creativity of Bloomfield residents, architectural relics surviving as a testament to Old World craftsmanship and artistry, and even the tower bell from the very first schoolhouse in Bloomfield (give it a ring; it still works). It is indeed one of the few museums in New Jersey to host such a display.

I would highly recommend a visit to this small but worthwhile museum, dedicated to the preservation of our cherished history. If there's one thing I've learned here, it's that there is so much more to learn about what we thought we already knew.



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD
90 Broad Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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☞ THE WELCOME MAT ☞

A cordial welcome is extended to the following new members of The Historical Society of Bloomfield. We hope you will take note of our many activities and participate in any that you may choose.

Adriana O'Toole, Montclair, NJ
Barbara Rudy, Montclair, NJ

— ATTENTION —
Please Pay Your Dues Now

To continue to support the Society and remain on the mailing list for the Newsletter, dues must be received by June first. We thank all who have paid promptly and are waiting to thank tardy payers.

Please Note: This notice does not apply to Lifetime Members.

E-MAIL THE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD AT:
BloompHist@aol.com
OR CALL US AT: 973-743-8844

Farewell

You know them well. You saw them both at the head table of Historical Society meetings for many years. They are lovely, lively, intelligent, confident and charming. They can do many things well: act as President, act as Secretary and Treasurer, spot and admire the best of the past, and grasp a new idea.

These two good friends decided last year to leave Bloomfield and make Ocean County their new home. On this bittersweet occasion, let me take advantage of this opportunity to share more about Mary Wilbert and Audrey Moore.

Born and raised in England, Audrey came to the United States in 1951 and, except for a brief period, lived in Bloomfield for the next 56 years. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration at Montclair State College in 1983 and was employed as a paralegal by McCarter and English, attorneys in Newark, until 1981.

A native of the New Jersey shore area, Mary attended Montclair State College for undergraduate work and earned her Master's Degree at the University of Michigan. A teacher of High School English, her 31-year career included four teaching years in Avon, New Jersey. For a period of time, she traveled extensively to the Caribbean and South America while working for the now extinct Grace Line. From Manhattan, Mary moved back to New Jersey in 1979 to live in Bloomfield where her friend Audrey resided. She continued to teach in Manhattan, commuting to the city until 1991.

Audrey and Mary both joined the Historical Society in 1980. Audrey served as Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, and, most recently Recording Secretary. Mary used her talents as Acting President and Vice President.

Audrey and Mary were at their best with us, softening that line, strengthening this, seeing our successes and problems in different lights and from different angles. We wish them all the best in their future life. They will be greatly missed.

— Jean Kuras
President

Portrait of Grace Louise Shaw

by Charles Warren Eaton

Although Charles Warren Eaton (1857–1937) never married, he did share his home on Monroe Place with his sister, Charlotte Eaton Shaw (1848–1927) and her daughter, Grace Louise Shaw.



Charcoal and pastel on paper, 24 x 28 inches. Date unknown (possibly 1885).

ABRAHAM CADMUS HOUSE



A photograph of the Abraham Cadmus house at 70 Montgomery Street as it appeared in 1967. It was researched and described by the late Herbert Fisher in an *Independent Press* article published on May 25, 1961. It was built of local sandstone before the American Revolution and was owned by Abraham Henry Cadmus in the 1850's. It has been demolished and replaced by a modern building. Another Cadmus house at 92 Montgomery Street, also built in the 1700's, was bulldozed a couple of years ago. Thus does Bloomfield's historic heritage gradually disappear.