



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

MAY 2009

MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2009
8:00 PM

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER
84 Broad Street, Bloomfield

Phil Jaeger

A Postcard History of Bloomfield Avenue

Phil Jaeger, local historian and author, will present a slide lecture program entitled "Along Yesterday's Bloomfield Avenue" on Tuesday, May 26th at the Civic Center. The program will be preceded by a brief business meeting.

The journey along Bloomfield Avenue of yesteryear will begin in Newark and head west through Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Montclair, Verona, Caldwell, West Caldwell and Fairfield. This historic retrospective will include a look at railroads, parks, canals, trolleys, and factories and offer a glimpse into a vastly different Essex County.

Jaeger, a resident of Cedar Grove, is a retired math teacher and computer science teacher. He is a trustee of the Passaic County Historical Society and the author of *Montclair; A Postcard Guide to Its Past*, and *Cedar Grove*, both in the "Images of America" series published by Arcadia.

Please join us for the outstanding and exciting program. Bring a friend!



A "Special' #29 Bloomfield" streetcar in a snapshot dated 1937.

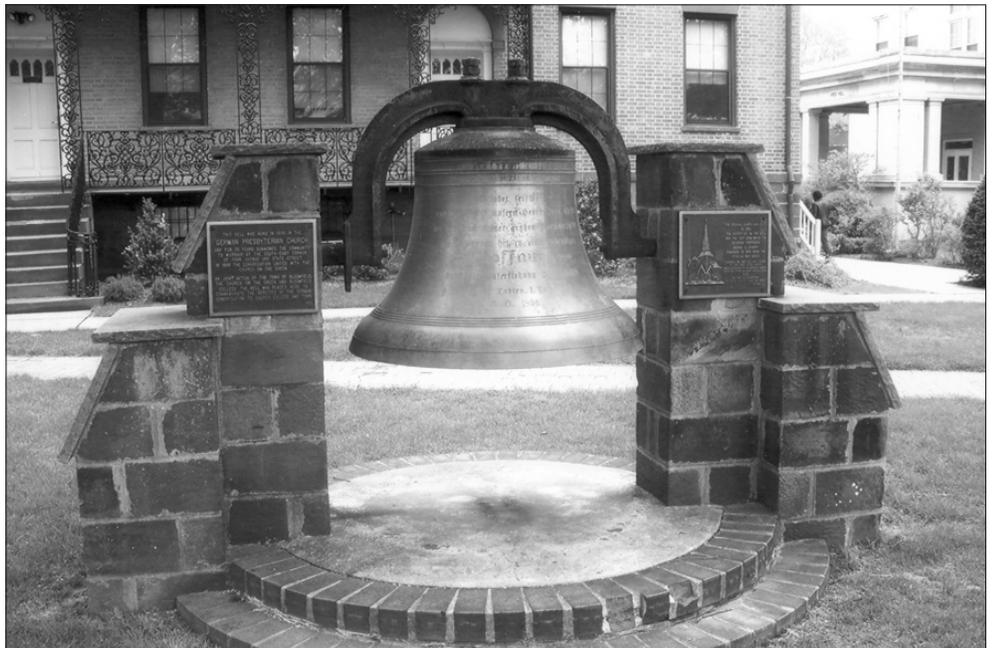


How To Join The HSOB

The Society welcomes anyone who has an interest in local history and who want to know more about it. Anyone who wants to contribute to this newsletter is more than welcome to submit a manuscript to this Newsletter. Our address is:

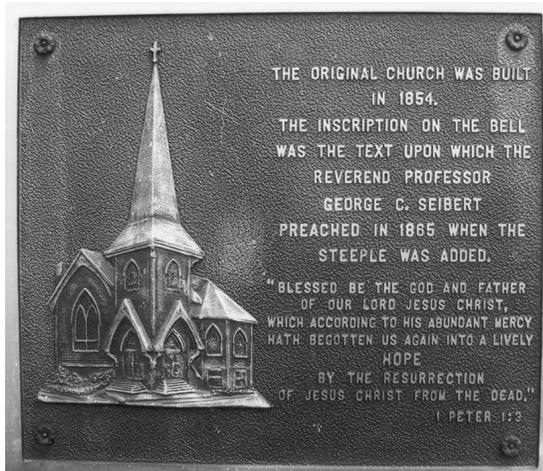
Historical Society of Bloomfield Museum
c/o Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield 07003

The Bell Monument on the Green



The demolition of the old Park Avenue Presbyterian Church in 1972 left its old bell homeless. Rather than allowing this last remnant of their beloved building to be scrapped, the remaining members of the Congregation searched for a permanent resting place for this century-old relic.

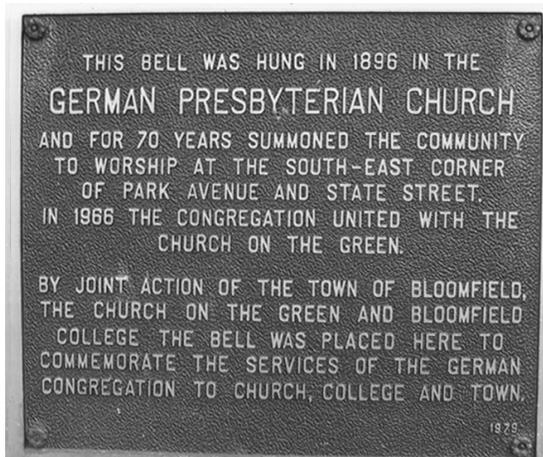
The merger of the German Presbyterian Church on Park Ave. at State St. with the First Presbyterian Church on the Green brought a little known problem to Pastor Dr. Merle Irwin of the merged congregation.. The Park Ave. congregation brought their steeple bell with them and wished to have it placed in the steeple of the Church on the Green. The rest of the congregation was happy with the bell that was already in the steeple and did not want it displaced. Dr. Irwin wrestled with this problem for years but couldn't come up with a solution that would satisfy either group. He finally asked his friend, Councilman Joe Barry, to see if he could come up with a location for the bell.



After asking around and discussing it with Dr. Irwin, Barry brought the idea of locating the bell on the South Green in front of Seibert Hall to Mayor John Kinder and the rest of the Town Council. They wanted to know what it would look like before approving it.

Barry then spoke to his friend Felix Rospond, PE, owner of Rospond Associates, a Bloomfield engineering firm. Rospond spoke to Levon Khachadourian, AIA, a Bloomfield architect, who agreed to donate the design of the monument. Rospond donated the engineering. Barry returned to the Mayor and Council with an architectural rendering of the monument and they approved of the project and it's location.

Dr. Irwin had some of the brown stone needed for the project. The balance of it came from the old coal yard scale house on Bloomfield Ave. and Pine St. in Montclair. The Montclair Housing Authority had demolished it and authority chairman Louis Racioppi allowed Barry to take what was needed. Barry got the required red brick blocks donated by GAF Corp of



(continued on page 2)

The Bell Monument (continued from page 1)

Linden through his friend plant manager, Arnold Schwartz. All the donated material was stored in Barry's back yard pending the start of the project. It still needed a few more things before it could proceed.

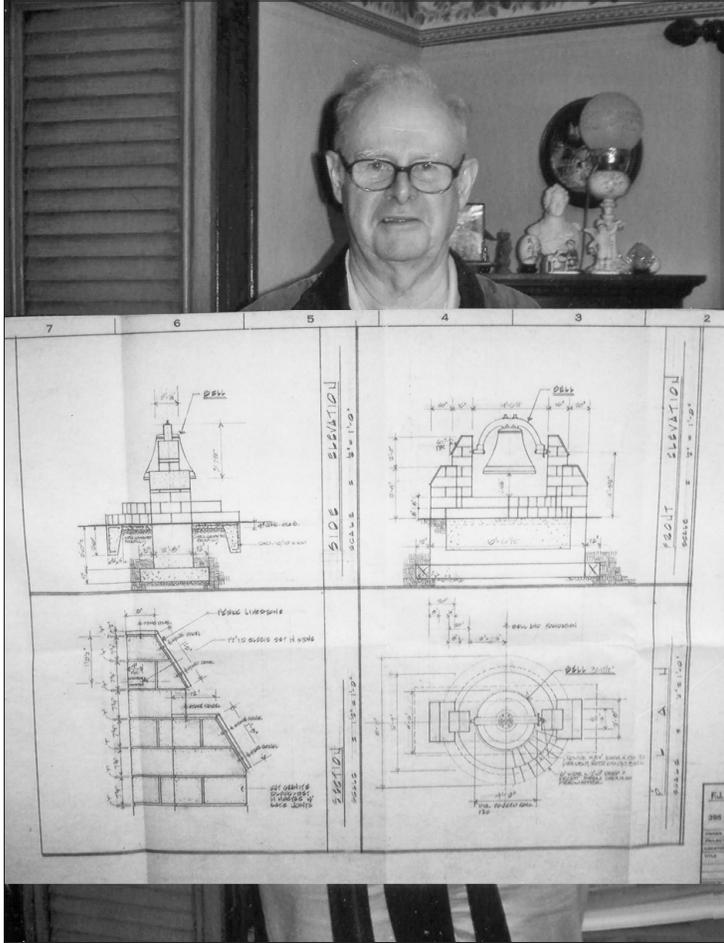
Barry went back to the Mayor and Council who approved a public works laborer to work with the stone-mason. They also agreed to

provide the concrete for the foundation and for public works assistance in excavating the foundation, transporting the bell and setting it in place when the masonry was completed.

The Church on the Green provided the funds to pay Angelo DiGeorgio, the stone-mason. The church also provided the bronze plaques. The work proceeded in late August and was completed in early October 1979.

The dedication of the monument was held on November 4th, 1979, attended by Pastor Dr. Merle Irwin, Bloomfield College President Dr. Merle Allshouse, Mayor John Kinder, Councilman Joe Barry, Town Engineer Sam Deneka, and several members of the Park Ave. congregation including Mrs. Stevenson and Mr. August Reiber. A very pleased Mayor Kinder noted, "It really looks like the rendering we approved."

Thus the bell that for seventy years called to worship members of the Park Avenue German Presbyterian Church now rests in front of Seibert Hall of Bloomfield College, which was once the German Theological Seminary.



HSOB Vice President, Joe Barry holds the original architect's blueprint for the brownstone monument for the bell.



The architect's color rendering of the completed appearance of the monument was framed and now hangs in the Barry living room on Elm Street.



Dedication of Park Avenue Church Bell Memorial (November 4, 1979). Pictured from left to right: Dr. Allshouse, Mrs. Stephenson, Mayor Kinder, Dr. Irwin, Councilman Joseph Barry and August Reiber.

A Brief Biography of the Bloomfield Children's Library

by Michael Matakya

The Wardesson Library Company, which existed as early as 1795, is accredited as the township's first literary organization. In 1797, General Joseph Bloomfield, the namesake of our town, "generously bequeathed unto them" some 100 volumes, many of the original prints are still preserved today in the special collections of the Bloomfield Public Library.

In 1838, the Young Men's Lyceum emerged as the leading literary organization in town. At the time, it was headed by Principal William R. McDonald, and founded by young individuals whose names helped characterize the township of Bloomfield, including Dr. Joseph Smith Dodd, Isaac D. Dodd, Joseph A. Davis, Chabrier Peloubet, and Robert L. Cooke. As an academy and discussion forum on various academic subjects from religious discussions to scientific lectures, it soon became the first local institution resembling a town library, and some 250 books were transferred unto them from the old Wardesson Company. In fact, from 1840 to until the 1870s, the Lyceum practically served as Bloomfield's Town Hall.

In 1865, the Young Men's Literary Union emerged as the successor of the Lyceum, and was itself succeeded by the Eucleian Society in 1867. Up until the mid-1870s, it achieved ideals of serving the public with the aim of providing superior literary taste for the townsfolk of Bloomfield. It was headed by its leading members whose names would resonate in the history of our town: David Garrabrant, Frederick Crane, William Baldwin, Edward Oakes, and, perhaps most significantly in regards to the history of the town's library, James N. Jarvie.

By 1871, a plan had been ushered forth to re-establish an official municipal library.

Three years later, the vision became a reality with the official chartering of The Bloomfield Library Association. It was said to have been roomy and attractive, capable of accommodating many in its spacious audience chambers. Sadly, the Library Association disbanded ingloriously in 1886 after excessive financial mismanagement and subsequent failure of proper maintenance of their brick building which was located near the corner of Broad and Liberty Streets

In the December of that same year, a small group of men met in the home of Frederick H. Pilch for the purpose of establishing official library service for the Watsessing area and Franklin School area in East Orange. Within a week of the meeting, the Watsessing Free Public Library was formally incorporated under New Jersey State Law. The library, housed in Van Giesen's convenience store, was deemed officially open to the public in the January of 1887. By 1900, a lot was purchased on Dodd Street to accommodate the nearly 4000 volumes of books, but the venture was interrupted when in 1902, James N. Jarvie (by this time a very wealthy Bloomfield businessman) provided some \$5000 towards a library at Westminster Church.

The result was the establishment of the Jarvie Memorial Library commemorating his parents. While reading and research services were free, there was a hefty price tag of \$1.00 for borrowing privileges. Within 20 years however, the library was rapidly expanding and required a larger building to properly house all of its volumes. In November 1923, the voters of Bloomfield accepted the municipal tax to fund the new building along with Jarvie's subsequent magnanimous contribution of \$60,000. The following year, the newly appointed Board of

Trustees committed the tax revenue along with some \$23,000 from the Jarvie fund towards the construction of the new building. Its architect was John F. Capen, who designed the colonial-style brick edifice on the site of what was then the Bloomfield Female Seminary of Madam Cooke. In the March of 1927, the Free Public Library of Bloomfield was officially opened to the public. In 1967, the newer edifice of the Adult Library was completed and made open to the public, and in November, the Jarvie building subsequently housed the Bloomfield Children's Library.

Today, the Bloomfield Children's Library currently houses more than 40,000 volumes. The entire facility (the Adult Library included) has in store more than 150,000 volumes including an impressive non-print collection of DVDs, video cassettes, and various audio material. Gian Hasija, who has served our library since 2004, is currently the Chief Administrative Director and oversees both libraries.

Researching and books has never been easier thanks to the advent of new technologies. In addition to the ease and speed with which books within the library can be found, profound vision has taken the library abroad; in July of 2008, an executive board decision was made to incorporate the Public Libraries of Bloomfield into the Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS), an online inter-loan coordination that not only allows users to access library materials via the internet, but also grants them the opportunity of easily viewing resources from other libraries within the BCCLS partnership. The wealth of knowledge to be provided by this high-tech prospect seems near limitless, and only time will tell what other bounties the future has in store.

Rosenfeld's Button Store

by Dolores Dalzell

Buttons and trims aren't high on ladies shopping lists today, but in the 1940's and 50's the shop of Mr. David J. Rosenfeld was quite crowded on Saturday mornings. When his daughter continued operating the store with her husband after her father's death, business was not nearly so brisk, but there was a loyal following that appreciated their old-fashioned consideration of customers needs. I remember going there for only one button and being impressed by the amount of time and effort that Mr. Rosenfeld made to either find a matching replacement or another button very similar in appearance, with no quick replacement for all of their other buttons on the garment. And these were only 10-, 25-, or 35-cent buttons!

I went there often enough to know that Mrs. Rosenfeld cared for the many stray cats that settled behind the store ... how many shopkeepers would bother to do that, or would take so much of their time to save their customers from spending more than ten cents?

Rosenfeld's Button Store at 74 Washington Street is no longer there; the burnt-out shell of their small shop was demolished a couple

of years ago. After the death Mr. Rosenfeld, the business was sold by his daughter, Mrs. Helene Kammerman, and she and her husband moved from Cedar Grove to Franklin, New Jersey. Mr. Rosenfeld had two other daughters, Joan and Jane, who used to help out in the store.

Mrs. Kammerman, who had been living in Howell, New Jersey, died at age 89 on January 22, 2008. With her goes another citizen of the Old Bloomfield that is fast becoming part of the past. It was and is a good town and home to many wonderful people.

Far from being an abandoned business area, Bloomfield Center was a lively spot in the 1950's. It was crowded with shoppers on Monday and Friday nights; local people who had walked out to visit the Public Library, do their shopping in Lipton's, Woolworth's and Kresge's 5 and 10, Center Drugs, Moran's and then go down to Washington Street for a soda at Wessel's, followed by a walk home.



General Joseph Bloomfield

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

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SCHWARTZ DRUG STORE

The old building on the north-east corner of Washington Street and Bloomfield Avenue was photographed just before its demolition in the late 1940's. It had probably been built around 1870 and was at one time, the home of Samuel Moore's fish market (see page 56 of "Images of America: Bloomfield" for a view of this store after gas lighting had been introduced in Bloomfield around 1878).

The second floor had been rented to a series of occupants over the years. In 1912, Henry Vollmer, distinguished Bloomfield photographer, had his studio there, and from his windows, photographed several views of 1912 Centennial activities which are preserved in the HSOB archives. At the time of this photograph, Dr. Vincent P. Connolly had his dentist office at that location.

Also long gone is the brick building on the other side of Washington Street, a glimpse of which is at the left side of the photo. Kramer's Hardware Store occupied these premises from 1930 until they moved to 601 Bloomfield Avenue, just before the building was replaced by Kresge's 5&10. The second floor was the home of various small businesses, including the VanGroffsky Employment Agency.

The screening of this photo for reproduction has prevented us from reading what was on sale for pennies. They were: Barbasol Shave Cream at 29¢, Bayer Aspirin at 19¢, fine combs for 19¢, epsom salts for 18¢, and Bay Rum for 39¢. (The store also stocked a large supply of booze.)

Just behind the Ballentine Beer billboard is the gabled roof of the Garrett residence. During the 1930's, the owner, Mr. Charles Garrett, operated an awning manufacturing operation in his home at 36 Washington Street; demolished along with the Schwartz building.

Because there was no town ordinance prohibiting the owners of poultry from allowing their livestock to perambulate wherever they chose, Mr. Garrett's backyard of chickens frequently walked along his sidewalk and often into the street. Since none of them seem to have met untimely deaths, it is possible that they learned to look both ways before crossing.

Until a statute specifically forbidding the keeping of livestock on private property was in force, there was another flock kept at the site of dried-up Lock Number Ten on Montgomery Street. Another more recent exception to this rule was the small coop at 225 Belleville Avenue, where Mrs. David Oakes II had a small flock of hens that kept her supplied with fresh eggs. It was completely encircled by the Parkway exit to Kennedy Drive at the Erie Railroad embankment (extended through the Oakes property in 1871) and nobody seemed to notice this violation of law.

Horsefeathers of History

Once in a while, some "historic facts" are given to the editor of this publication that are more than slightly wide of the mark. Here are a few that have surfaced over the past few years:

"The Oakes Mill made silk cloth."

The Oakes factory manufactured woolen cloth for soldiers' uniforms of four US wars: Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War One and World War Two. It seems unlikely that these men fought in silk uniforms, and the official name of the family-owned operation was the "Oakes Woolen and Worsted Manufacturing Company."

"George Washington marched his army up Bloomfield Avenue on his retreat to Morristown after visiting the Cadmus house on Ashland Avenue."

Bloomfield Avenue (originally the Newark and Pompton Turnpike) was a toll road constructed by Israel Crane in the early 1800's, bypassing the original road, which followed an old Native American trail that began on Mount Prospect Place in Newark, followed Franklin Street to Broad Street, Bloomfield, then turned west on Park Avenue, where it began its zig-zag climb over First Mountain into what is now Verona. (Washington died in December of 1799 before the Turnpike was built.)

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.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Conta
Bloomfield, NJ
Don and Audrey Gregg
Morris Plains, NJ
Jerry and Eileen Larking
Bloomfield, NJ
Nicole Mitola,
Upper Montclair, NJ
John A. Moran,
Florida
Patricia Nicosia,
Bloomfield, NJ
Laurie Roemmele-Roberts
and Family,
Bloomfield, NJ
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E-MAIL THE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD AT:
BlomfHist@aol.com
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