



The New Town Crier



Official Newsletter Of The Historical Society Of Bloomfield

Editor: Fredrick Branch

Design: Mark Scurman

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BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY, 07003

MAY, 2001

Presidential Message

On behalf of the membership, I have three "thank you" messages.

Thanks are due to Barbara Vydro and Fred Branch for the *New Town Crier*, a revival of the *Town Crier* which started in 1969. It is great to have a newsletter which will again tell of programs, new projects, and interesting facts from our town's past.

Our thanks are also due to Fred Branch, Jean Kuras, and Mark Scurman, the authors of the Arcadia Publisher's book, *Bloomfield*. They chose the historic pictures and wrote the captions after much research. This book is an important addition to the recorded history of the town.

As Lucy Sant Ambrogio becomes our Curator Emeritus, this last "thank you" must cover almost 20 years of appreciation for all her volunteer years. She completed the Museum Certificate Program at Seton Hall University, researched local history and genealogy of local families, and graciously shared her knowledge with all. She was honored at a luncheon on March 22, 2001, where she received citations from Assemblywoman Marion Crecco, from Mayor John Crecco, and from the Historical Society of Bloomfield.

Ina Campbell, President

Cemetery Gate House Restoration



The gatehouse of Bloomfield Cemetery, now close to its century-mark, has just undergone extensive repairs and redecoration. A joint effort of several of our leading citizens of 1909, it replaced an 1875 structure by the noted American architect Alexander Jackson Davis, who is buried nearby.

by Barbara Vydro

I first became aware of the deterioration of the exterior of our office building when in 1998 one of the crew presented a section of mortar that he found at the front door. Upon investigation we discovered that it had dropped from the tower—not good! I reported it to David Allen, President of the Board, and George Webster, Chairman of the Grounds Committee, and we all agreed that something major had to be done.

Going through our records, I began by contacting the company that re-pointed the building during the 70's and

found they were "out of business." After a great deal of investigation, one contractor was highly recommended—but, they only worked on church restorations. I took a chance and called Imhoff Restorations and spoke with David Imhoff (in the process of retiring) and explained what while we are not a church, we are a cemetery that has been here for 200+ years and will continue to be here in perpetuity! His son Scott (now President) came to give me some advice as to possible contractors. One look and I knew he was "hooked." His first comment was that "it was a jewel of a building that had not been treated kindly" (now I knew why the 70's company was out of business).

He explained that Imhoff was booked solid and they couldn't get to it until summer of 1999. He agreed to send a crew to make the tower safe—they took out two arms-length of mortar sections! At the June 1999 Annual Meeting of the Board of Managers the contract to restore the exterior of the building from roof-to-base-ment was unanimously approved.

The work began in July 1999 and was completed in November 1999. It included a total inspection and repair of the slate roof, new copper flashings, coated-copper capping of the granite gables, rebuilding the crickets around the base of the tower, practically rebuilding the tower (a good wind would have done substantial damage), removing the "neon red" mortar from the building and the gate columns (at one point I had ten jackhammers in various sections of the building all operating at once, with me inside—talk about an "Excedrin headache") and replacing it with mortar that matched the original color which was found behind the "neon." This work was completed with a triple acid wash that revealed the true beauty of this "jewel."

We are extremely fortunate to have a Board of Managers who accept the responsibility to keep our cemetery—grounds and buildings—in the best possible condition and the means to accomplish this thanks to good management since 1853.

Naturally, the exterior problems created interior problems. We are presently in the process of restoring the interior and will report on it in a future issue of "The Town Crier."

Notice Of May Meeting

MAY 14, 2001, 8PM

OCEAN GROVE AND THE BLOOMFIELD CONNECTION

Wayne T. Bell, curator of the Historical Society of Ocean Grove, N.J. will be the guest speaker. He will present a slide-lecture covering the development of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting and its 19th century architecture.

Mr. Bell is the author of the book *Ocean Grove*, published by Arcadia, and is now in its second printing. (Note photo below). Light refreshments will follow the meeting.

The public is cordially invited. Come and bring a friend.

CIVIC CENTER, 84 BROAD STREET



The Great Auditorium at Ocean Grove, NJ. Why is this photograph in the Historical Society Newsletter of Bloomfield when the building stands 50 miles to the south? Does it have anything to do with Bloomfield? Come to the meeting at 8pm, May 14, in the Civic Center and be enlightened by Mr. W.T. Bell, Ocean Grove Historian, author of *Images Of America: Ocean Grove*, and our speaker for that evening.



THIS MONTH'S PUZZLE: Can you identify correctly the buildings in the 94-year-old photograph above? Cohanes's Store is the structure at the extreme left. Starting at this corner, Glenwood and Washington, can you stroll across the avenue (watching out for those horsecars) and point out and identify the other landmarks in "The Center?"

Editorial

Old timers in the Historical Society of Bloomfield might recognize the masthead of this publication as that of the Society's original newsletter of 1969. It is not simply a quick and easy way to copy the old format and update the contents, but to carry on a tradition begun in the first enthusiasm of New Jersey's newest and largest historical society. So the *Town Crier* has been reborn from our recent past.

It is sad to read in the old issues the many names of former members who are no longer with us. Almost all of the original Board are gone, including President Mary Ann Dorn, Helen Andrews, Harold Brotherhood, Betty Coombs, Marguerete Elliott (the first editor of this publication), and Bill Litvany. But we have a new corps of volunteers, ready and willing to carry on an almost 40-year-old tradition. 40 years because the official founding of a historical society and the establishment of permanent museum were two of the goals of the Sesqui-Centennial Committee of 1962. The Society and Museum of today is an outgrowth of that committee.

The Bicentennial of Bloomfield is on the horizon. We hope that there will be a town celebration to equal that of 1912. Meanwhile, The Society can prepare to do some meaningful work toward this, including publishing an updated *hardcover* history of Bloomfield. Also, historical signs can be renewed where the landmarks they marked in 1962 still exist, and there are others worthy of our attention. New sites can be designated, such as the 1860's residence of Adam Metz on Maple Street. His hotel is gone, one of the many victims of the Garden State Parkway. (See the Arcadia book: *Images of America: Bloomfield*, page 123.) A photo and history of the Metz house will be in a future issue.

In the meantime, please welcome back what was, in 1969, a lively and interesting publication. We hope to carry on that tradition.

—Editor

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BLOOMFIELD HISTORY?

Come join other volunteers as we inventory the Museum holdings this summer. The museum is air-conditioned and various hours will be arranged. Please call Ina Campbell at 973-748-0115 if you can give us some help.

A long forgotten landmark was quietly demolished to build the large store which housed Rickel's Building Supply until recently. Known as The International Arms and Fuze Company, it produced arms and ammunition for World War One. The building was later occupied by Star Electric Company and Charms Candy Company.



General Joseph Bloomfield
THE NEW TOWN CRIER
90 Broad Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

OFFICERS:

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Curator Emeritus, **Lucy Sant Ambrogio**

One of the biggest problems facing the selection committee of the Arcadia Book: "Images of America: Bloomfield" was either the lack of identification of old photographs, and missing or incorrect dates. One of these, The Samuel Moore Fish Market at the corner of Bloomfield Avenue and Washington Street, was labeled 1893, although the view is obviously of a much earlier date.

The Welcome Mat

*New members
January 2001-
March, 2001*

Peter Cullen
228 Davey Street

Mr. and Mrs.
George A. and
Barbara J. Weber
180 Whittle Ave.

Pauline Garrity
86 Ella Street

Mr. and Mrs.
Shaughnessy
41 Lowell Terrace

Barbara Ruth
Whitter
6 Park Ave.,
Apt. 22

Martha A. Logan
38 Beach Street

Patrick E. Reid
38 Beach Street

Dolores Dalzell
32 Hazlewood
Road

Revised 3/29/01

The Bloomfield Book: Looking Back

When Mark first suggested the book and invited me on board the project, I reveled in the opportunity to work with someone whose talent and ability I admired. His newsletter for the Historical Society was prize worthy and "Weird New Jersey" delighted everyone. Though enthusiastic from the start and despite the excitement the book stirred up, both of us felt we had to put the project aside for awhile.

When we came together again, our spirits were buoyed when Fred agreed to accept our invitation to become the third partner. Mark and I crowed with pleasure, realizing the importance of having Fred work with us.

The problem of where to work was solved with Fred's offer of his dining room table for our base of operations. We began in mid-summer of last year, blithely extending a finish date from September (Fred might be traveling), October (I was going away on a long weekend), November (there was Thanksgiving), December (Christmas would be a busy time for all of us), January (consider the cold weather), February (that was such a short month), March sounded good, ah, but April. April sounded about right and, if not, there was always May.

One evening we were sitting at our designated places around the dining room table, waiting for Mark and idly thumbing through some GE memorabilia when Mark arrived and announced with a Guess What: Arcadia wanted the book by early November or would push the publishing date two years away! Could we do it? Talk about having a fire lit under you. This was a blaze, a conflagration.

The wonderful discovery of a flourishing and productive working relationship encouraged us to be completely committed to the project. We soldiered on heroically, sustained by the joy and sense of completion. All is a vivid memory: the furniture, Helen's charming collections in the curio cabinets, pictures on the wall, Tammy's tail thumping when one of us paused to pet her, stacks of books, pictures, maps and papers on every surface, boxes on the floor to be climbed over and around, coffee time at the table, a peaceful buzz of chat, the quiet street coming through the open window.

The hours, the weeks went by. The completed work increased and our appreciation produced a whole stream of reactions. The reassuring: Don't worry. It's in this room. We haven't lost it. It's here. It will turn up. The encouraging: We can do better. It's OK, but not right yet. More searching required. Is it possible to find the date? Who are these people? What used to be there and what's there now? Who has time to go over and look? With a fast-filling store of ideas and facts and flashes of inspiration, the book began to emerge.

Our little ensemble worked well together. What we managed to achieve will be considered by many and I hope it will be received with satisfaction. Fred's dining room table is cleared now, but the friendship, cordiality, collaboration and solidarity is as firmly in place as it was those months ago.

Jean M. Kuras

