



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

MAY 2005

MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 24th – 8:00 PM
at the
BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER
84 Broad Street, Bloomfield

Bloomfield as a Mirror of America

Mr. Robert Burnett
Guest Speaker

Mr. Robert Burnett will be guest speaker at the Historical Society of Bloomfield's general meeting on May 24th. He is a graduate of Albright College in Delaware and the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware, with a major in American History.

Mr. Burnett has taught at Bloomfield College since 1982. The Historical Society of Bloomfield members may remember him as he has spoken to us in the past, though not recently. Many years ago, Mildred Stone and Lucy Sant Ambrogio attended his History of Bloomfield class at the college. Since 1991 he has taught a course on the history of New Jersey.

By describing Bloomfield's past and its leading families, Mr. Burnett hopes to show his audience how Bloomfield is a typical American town – or, if atypical, why that is so. He will also use slides during his presentation.

The public is cordially invited. The meeting will be held at the Bloomfield Civic Center, 84 Broad Street, at 8:00 p.m. on May 24th. Parking is off State Street behind the Civic Center. Refreshments will be served.

Lucy Sant Ambrogio 1906 – 2005

The Historical Society heard with great sorrow the news that our museum curator emeritus had passed away on March 11th.

Lucy's touch seems to be on everything in the museum. Her organizational and research skills were devotedly applied to the museum. For twenty years she cataloged its hundreds of holdings and assisted in creating displays and researching questions. Lucy received a museum certification from Seton Hall University. In 2001, she was honored for longtime service at a luncheon given by the Historical Society.

I recorded an oral history with Lucy two years ago and was fascinated by the story of her life. She was four when the family moved into the house on Newark Avenue. She remembered the day they moved in and how she tripped down the stairs. Her father, Giovanni, a custom tailor and Italian immigrant, had the house built. He and Mrs. Sant Ambrogio, Mariangelina, were married in Cairo, came to America, and raised a family of nine children. When I asked with curiosity, "Do you mean Cairo, Egypt?" Lucy answered with a grin and went on with the story.

During World War II, she traveled to Washington where she worked as a secretary in the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA. From me, "The CIA, Lucy!" Again from her the grin and then the story. After the war, she came home to the house on Newark Avenue and a job in the Legal Aid Department in Newark. When she retired, it was as a secretary in the Prudential Insurance Company.

On the last day of our recording, Lucy suggested we finish up in the yard. I went outside and pulled two chairs and a table over and then went back to the kitchen to make tea. There we sat, sipping, talking and enjoying the sunshine. I was so delighted when I listened to the tape at home and heard birdsong in the background. I called Lucy and said, "I want you to hear this." I drove over to Newark Avenue the next day and we listened to the tape, birds chipping away.

"Remember the radio?" she asked. When we first met, I volunteered in the museum on Saturday. She had a little radio and listened to the afternoon opera broadcast. She asked me if I would mind and I said, "No, I would love it." We would hum along, she with much more assurance than I. Then we would take out the thermos and share tea and cookies.

And so we wear our sorrow, honoring with fondness and gratitude the memory of our dear friend, Lucy.

— Jean Kuras



MARY E. DILLON

Mary E. Dillon, who was a sister of Catherine Crogan of 29 Oak Street. Mary was a 1904 graduate of the Saint Joseph School of Nursing in Paterson and in the mid-to-late 1920's, she became the First Public Health Nurse in Bloomfield. After 1930, when the Red Cross took over this function, Mary continued to work with them until she retired in 1946. (Photograph courtesy of John Gibson).

A Brief History of 24 Oak Tree Lane

BY RAYMOND J. KEEFE



This house has been in the direct ownership by a member of the Marzloff family since March of 1882. The construction of the original house has been dated to roughly the 1840's. The house is located on the banks of what is left of the Morris Canal. This is the only part of the actual canal left that I know of, that has not been filled in. As can be seen in the black and white photo of the house, this was taken some time prior to the 1924 draining of the canal. Our mother used to tell us stories of her childhood, when they used to swim in it during the summer and ice skate on it during the winter. The following information has been assembled from documents that have been found in the house during the cleaning out when Clara died in March of 2004. Original deeds and property tax receipts dating back to 1882 were discovered; this along with asking Clara's remaining brother and sisters about the family and life here when they were growing up is how this history was pieced together.

According to deeds found, this house and 4+ acres of land were purchased by recent German immigrants, Michael and Barbara Marzloff in March of 1882 from the estate of Abraham Riker. The deeds go on to indicate in the survey that Abraham Riker purchased the house and property from the estate of Isaac Kierstead in 1853. (Please note that there are several various spellings of both Mr. Kierstead's name and the Marzloff's in various documents). What the Marzloff's purchased was the house and parcel of land of 4+ acres for the sum of \$460.

According to my grandfather, William (their second son), Michael Sr. and Barbara

left Germany to get away from "the bad people". Later this was explained to me that they were afraid of some people there who were believed to be witches and were after their young daughter.

Michael Sr. and Barbara Marzloff left Germany with their young daughter, Barbara and son, Michael Jr. In 1886 another son, William, was born in this very house. When Michael Sr. passed away after the beginning of the 20th Century, his son, Michael Jr. inherited this house and land. At this time, Michael dropped the Jr. from his name. This later is what caused some confusion about a certain travel trunk that was in this house.

All during my childhood everyone referred to the trunk in the 2nd floor closet as "Uncle Mike's" trunk. When it was pulled out during the cleaning and examined carefully, we found that it was really Michael Sr. and Barbara's travel trunk from Germany. The very one they used to carry his possessions to America with. It has the baggage and shipping company routing labels on it, in both German and French, along with his signature. Inside it was found what is believed to be Barbara's black traveling dresses, cape and hats that she probably wore on her trip from Germany to the United States.

As I understand the custom of the time, the eldest son inherited the possessions of his father, and the younger son, William, appeared to receive a parcel of land. About 1915, William erected a Sears & Roebuck catalog on the parcel he received. Today it still stands at 8 Oak Tree Lane, where one of his remaining daughters resides.

It has been told to me that Michael Jr. never held a job. He has been described to

me as being a farmer, growing potatoes and other crops on this land. He supplemented his income during the Great Depression, and into his later years, by selling parcels of land for \$50 each. Those sales slowly became Pilch, Palmer and Pierson Streets, along with the houses from Pilch Street to Palmer Street on the West side of Broughton Avenue.

During the 40's the strip of land on the West side of Broughton Avenue from Oak Tree Lane South to Pierson Street was vacant land. Michael received income from a company that dumped ashes on it and he also received income from a billboard company that had erected a billboard on it.

Michael Marzloff lived a simple life in this house, one without central heat or electricity all of his life. His source of water was a hand dug well outside the house, approximately 35 feet down. As a child I remember getting water from the well house with a handle and bucket on the end of a rope. At some time a pipe was run into the well and was connected to a hand pump in the kitchen next to the stove. I remember my father had an electric pump connected to it at one point before he had to connect to the city water and sewer system in the late 50's. This is the original well from when the house was built. Today the well still exists and is currently covered over by a concrete slab with a hole in it. I remember that my dad, John, had a hand pump that he was going to fit to it. That was never done and the pump is long lost.

Mike's bathroom facility was an outhouse, and it was used by the family until the mid 50's just after the house was connected to the city mains. I have vague recollections of it being very cold in the winter. It was located near where the current metal shed is next to the large black walnut tree. He heated with wood in a fireplace in the living room, and a pot belly stove in the kitchen. For light he used kerosene lamps.

In 1954, Michael died. Clara (Marzloff) his niece and John Keefe, her husband, with their young son had been renting the 2nd floor of the house from Mike prior to his death. Their apartment consisted of the master bedroom, the small hall closet was a kitchen, with an electric hot plate, and a refrigerator. The room that is now called a study was a bedroom for their young son. Upon his passing they were able to apply the rent they paid him toward the down payment on the purchase of the house and a second lot when the remaining land was subdivided in 1956.

During the early possession of the house, John and Clara Keefe had central coal fired steam heat put in, had electricity installed, city sewer and water and propane for cooking. No more hand pump for water, no more trips to the outhouse in the winter. Telephone service also was installed at that time; since telephone facilities were in short supply, they had to have a 4 party line; on it were Clara's sister, father and a neighbor on Pierson Street. John had left the chimney in the kitchen and since the new gas stove was a dual fuel one, he connected it to the stove, just in case they ever ran out of propane and could also heat the house with it using wood or coal.

John did many renovations. He ripped out the fireplace and old chimney and raised the ceilings to their present height. In 1963 while removing the chimney in the living room, he found an old newspaper all folded and stuffed in the wall. He was about to throw it in the bucket, but stopped to unfold it and read it. He was in for a shock. He knew the house was over 100 years old at the time, but he never really believed it or could prove it. Since the title search when he purchased the house only went back 100 years, he knew it was at least that old. The date on the newspaper was 1863. Apparently, Mr. Riker stuffed it there for insulation when he built the fireplace chimney.

During this renovation of the living room, John removed the plaster ceiling to install a modern acoustic tile one. When the

old one was taken down, what was revealed were great oak timbers, all hand cut and varying sizes just like what is in the cellar under the floor. Some folks told him to leave them exposed and finish them for a rustic look; but Dad had already purchased the tiles and that was what was going up. Those beams are still there waiting to be uncovered and refinished.

It appears that the kitchen was added at some time during the turn of the century. It's built on a crawl space while the main structure of the house is on what is called a "rubble stone" foundation. The stones appear to be local as do the timbers that were cut and shaped for the floor joists. In the attic the ridge joints are lap joints and held together with wood pegs, no nails. The original roof was a wood shingle type. The infill of the first floor walls is all stones. John had put insulation over the stones when he installed the wood paneling in the 1960's. In 1865 this area of Bloomfield was referred to as Stone House Plains.

In 1997 John was diagnosed with advanced Parkinson's Disease. The walkway and floating deck were constructed for him to be able to get around and for his family to get him to a car. This proved to be one of the best things done, as the disease progressed and John became dependent upon a wheel chair with a family member pushing him around in it. The walkway was a blessing to get him to a waiting car.

In November 1999 John passed away. In the winter of 2000, Clara was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Again the walkway turned out to be a blessing since Clara was starting to have difficulty walking and getting around.

Clara lost a 4 year battle with advanced breast cancer in March of 2004. Placing our family homestead up for sale has not been an easy decision; we only wish that it be kept up by someone who cares about it's history and the local history of the area.

MUSEUM VOLUNTEER TO STUDY IN ENGLAND

Rachel Itwaru, a high school volunteer in the Historical Society Museum, has been granted a place in the Oxford Traditions program, a four-week semester for tenth and twelfth graders from around the world. For the month of July, Rachel and only about 360 other students will study with Rhodes scholars and have an experience of college a few years early. A teacher at the high school remarked that she "couldn't believe that they made kids like this anymore." This newsletter echoes this statement and is proud of the fact that Rachel chose to honor the Society's Museum by volunteering her time where it was greatly needed and appreciated.

"We Do Our Part"

A sign of the dear dead Depression years of 1929-1940 is seen above. The date on the back of the photo is given as "C. 1935", which seems about right. We know that President Franklin D. Roosevelt's National Recovery Act was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court ("nine old men") not too long after we began chanting the alphabet when FDR became President in 1933. The United States, reeling from the Wall Street disaster in 1929, was willing to accept anything that might bring normalcy, so these enthusiastic parades were held all over the place, and those little blue eagle stickers were glued to almost every surface.

These people would march anywhere to break a five-year cycle of bank closings, foreclosures, and breadlines. They would have to suffer through yet another five years of the same before the greatest economic depression in our history was brought to an end by the preparation for World War Two, which revived our industries and created new jobs.

The A&P contingent paused for the photographer in front of 383 Broad Street, just north of James. Believe it or not, all of the buildings seen in the background are still there today, 70 years later.



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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.

John Semcer, Bloomfield, NJ
James G. Brown, Jr., Bloomfield, NJ
Michael Sisco, Bloomfield, NJ
Jane Califf, Bloomfield, NJ
Victoria Sant Ambrogio,
Bloomfield, NJ

E-MAIL
The Historical Society of Bloomfield
at:
BloomfHist@aol.com
OR CALL US
at:
973-743-8844

Mayor Walter S. Steinmann

A reminder of the 1962 Bloomfield sesqui-Centennial Celebration is an impressive photograph of the Town Council posed on the east lawn of the Municipal Building next to the first historical marker, which was erected at the site of the old 1812 "Gildersleeve-Jackson" cannon. His Honor posed for a group photograph with the members of the Town Council, all of whom dressed in period costume, except Mr. Steinmann. They were Don Cetrulo, Mr. Conti, Mrs. Dorothea Jewkes, Mr. Schmidt, Mr. Raymond Schroeder, Mr. Joseph Russoman and Mr. North. This very large group picture will appear in its entirety (possibly in three sections) in the second volume of old Bloomfield Photos, to be published by the Arcadia Press later this year. The original framed photograph had been donated to the Historical Society Museum by the late Maryann Dorn, first President of the Historical Society of Bloomfield.



A resident of Verona for the past 42 years, Steinmann had the distinction of being one of the youngest members of the Bloomfield Town Council. He was also a Trustee of Bloomfield College and Montclair Community Hospital, a Veteran of both World War Two and the Korean War, and a former member of The Session and Board of Trustees of the First Presbyterian Church of Verona. He was also a member of the graduating Class of 1943 at Bloomfield High School.

Walter S. Steinmann died on March 24, 2005 in Mountainside Hospital.

LETTERS TO THE HSOB



The Gang in Magai's Driveway

Hi,

A friend has just sent me a copy of the March, 2005 Town Crier with a picture of some children in our driveway in 1932. Needless to say, I was delighted to see it. I'm writing to fill in a couple of blanks – our address was 36 Forest Drive (unimportant, really) but mainly to add the fact that my brother Lloyd died in 2003. I'm going to send this to my other brother, Don, who now lives in Seattle, and a copy to Bobbie Siver Schmidt, who divides her time between Montville, NJ and Florida. Wandering down memory lane is always warm and wonderful. Thanks for the tour.

Mary Magai Mutter

P.S. It was suggested that I was still in the cradle at the time of the picture!

THE EDITOR'S REPLY: It is letters like the above that make the work of editing the Newsletter a real pleasure. Yes, wandering down memory lane can be pleasant, but also has its downside. It was sad to hear of Lloyd Magai's death in 2003. He will always be the cute little kid in the old photo and live on in our memories.

– Frederick Branch

ENJOY OUR MUSEUM

LOCATION: Above the Children's Library at 90 Broad Street.
HOURS: Wednesday from 2:00 to 4:30pm all year. Saturday from 10:00am to 12:30pm
September to mid-June and by appointment (973) 743-8844

MEMBERSHIP FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD
Dues: Individual \$10.00; Couple \$15.00; Student (under 18 years) \$5.00;
Organization (non-profit): \$10.00; Organization (commercial): \$25.00

Please send check, payable to "The Historical Society of Bloomfield",
along with your name, address and telephone number to:

Membership Chairman

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003