



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

MARCH 2018

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

7:30 PM

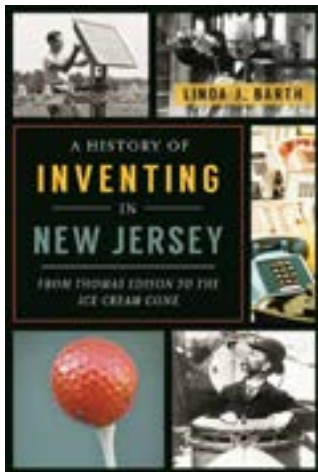
BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ

A History of Inventing in New Jersey: From Thomas Edison to the Ice Cream Cone

Presented by Linda Barth

Historian Linda Barth will speak about her book "A History of Inventing in New Jersey: From Thomas Edison to the Ice Cream Cone" (available for purchase).



New Jerseyans brought sound and music to movies and built the very first drive-in theater. In addition to the first cultivated blueberry, tasty treats like ice cream cones and M&Ms are also Jersey natives. The batting cage, catcher's mask and even professional baseball itself started in New Jersey, as well as the vacuum cleaner, plastic, Band-Aids and many important advances in medicine and surgery. Join Barth as she explores groundbreaking, useful, fun and even silly inventions and their New Jersey roots. Free and open to the public.



The Timothy Ward House

44 Watsessing Avenue

Timothy Ward was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. He built his house of logs filled in with clay and covered in clapboard. It was destroyed years ago but the site remains at 44 Watsessing Avenue in Bloomfield.

Image courtesy of Van Tassel Funeral Home. Photo by Richard Rockwell.

Take a hike!

Morris Canal Greenway in Bloomfield Hike

Saturday, April 21, 2018

10:00 AM to 2:30 PM

On this three mile hike, conducted by Bloomfield Councilman Rich Rockwell and Ron Rice, explore the path of the Morris Canal through Bloomfield using historic maps and photos, then take a bus ride for an additional two miles, stopping at the newly reclaimed section of the canal at Oak Tree Lane. Space is limited—reservations are required. A \$5 donation is requested to cover the cost of the bus and 20-page handout with historic photos and color maps. To reserve a space, email MorrisCanal@gmail.com.



Sponsored by the Bloomfield Morris Canal Greenway Committee, Historical Society of Bloomfield and the Bloomfield Recreation Dept.

Building American LaFrance by Richard Rockwell

We are grateful to Nancy Peters McEntee and Sally Peters Janett for donating this set of photos to the Historical Society. The photos were printed on linen-backed paper that had curled over the years. I digitized and enhanced them and they are now on the HSOB website at HSOB.org/lafrance

American La France Fire Engine & Automobile Company was one of the oldest fire apparatus manufacturers in the United States. The Bloomfield plant was built in 1920 on 15 acres that had been part of the Noll dairy farm, one of the first dairies in operation in the town. Many of Bloomfield's fire trucks over the years were built by American LaFrance. The company moved out of Bloomfield in 1929. At its peak, the plant employed 325 skilled workers and manufactured 150 motor trucks per month.

The plant had a succession of owners over the years. Parts used in military vehicles and aircraft for World War I and World War II were manufactured there. The 1938 map shows the plant as the General Motors Delco-Remy battery plant.

When WWII broke out, it became a unit in a chain of factories building Eastern Aircraft for the Navy. In 1945, International Projector Corporation, manufacturer of moving picture machines, bought the building and planned to employ 600 people. Today, the plant is the home of General Plastics.



The building still maintains its distinctive saw-tooth pattern roof (designed to maximize the amount of natural light entering the plant through skylights) and the brick power house in the distance on the left.



What was once farm land was already being developed for factories. By 1920, General Electric and Westinghouse had already built factories in the area.



The first order of business was building railroad sidings. One of the main reasons American LaFrance chose this location was because of its proximity to a railroad.



The powerhouse, the smokestack with "LaFrance" built into the brick pattern (left) and the water tower were landmarks visible from Bloomfield Avenue for many years. The water tower was demolished long ago. The smoke stack was demolished several years ago. The power house is still standing.



At right, workers pause for a photo op during construction showing progress on the interior.



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General Joseph Bloomfield

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OF BLOOMFIELD
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Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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Reminder!

If you haven't already done so, please be sure to renew your 2018 membership. Renewal forms are available at www.hsob.org or can be picked up at the museum or any HSOB meeting. The HSOB is a non-profit organization, therefore all dues and donations are considered a tax-free contribution. Help keep the Historical Society of Bloomfield strong with your continuing membership!

The Welcome Mat

A cordial welcome is extended to the following *new* members of The Historical Society of Bloomfield. We hope to see you at our next meeting:

- | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Dan Bailey
<i>Bloomfield</i> | Ruth Hodson
<i>Bloomfield</i> | Charles Raszetnik
<i>Stanhope, NJ</i> | Leo Scurman
<i>Bloomfield</i> | Jeffrey Swerdlow
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