



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

MARCH 2024

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

7:30 PM

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ

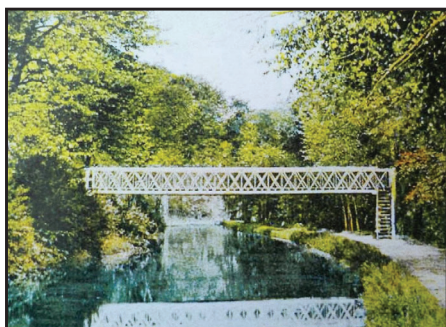
**The Morris Canal—Then & Now:
From Belleville through Bloomfield
to Clifton**

Presented by Michael Helbing

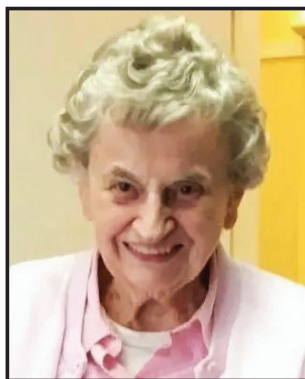
Lifelong hiker Michael Helbing grew up in a canal boat captain's house. The Morris Canal has always been close to his heart and his presentation will take attendees on a virtual walking tour along this iconic canal, across Bloomfield and throughout neighboring towns.

Helbing is Founder & Organizer of Metrotrails, a weekly hiking excursion throughout New Jersey and the Metro area, now going into its 27th year. The focus is often on historic transportation corridors. He has a continuing series on Facebook titled "Then & Now," which features historic photos juxtaposed with what the location looks like today.

Join us on March 26 as we take an armchair journey along the Morris Canal. The program is free and open to the public.



In Memoriam: Emma-Lou Czarnecki 1928–2023



HSOB *Treasurer Emerita* Emma Louise Czarnecki, née Ingraham—known to all as Emma-Lou—passed away on December 5, 2023 at the age of 95.

Emma-Lou was born on September 24, 1928 in Bangor, Maine and grew up in Concord, NH before moving to Bloomfield. She received a BA in English from the University of Maine in 1951 and an MLS from Columbia University. She worked at the Montclair and West Orange Public Libraries for many years.

Emma-Lou was a member of Church of the Advent, Bloomfield and then St. James Episcopal Church, Upper Montclair, serving on the vestry. Besides long-serving on the HSOB Board, she was an active member of Bloomfield Branch of The American Association of University Women (AAUW), acting as President in 1980 and working tirelessly on its annual charity book sale. She was passionate about gardening and singing with Chorus of Communities.

Emma-Lou was preceded in death by her parents Dwight Marden & Edith (née Sewall) Ingraham, and her husband, Herman Czarnecki, Jr. She is survived by a son, Carl (Cornelia) of Bloomfield; a daughter, Janet Louise Jasinski (Nicholas); and grandchildren Erica and Gregory. At the time of her death, Emma-Lou resided at Brandywine Living in Colts Neck, NJ.

Emma-Lou was a beam of beautiful light, reflecting warmth and comfort to all. She was HSOB treasurer for many years, taking on responsibility with skill and graciousness, extending help and willing to go the extra mile to bring success to our projects.

I once attended a concert at St. James. Sitting in the lovely church, I watched as Emma-Lou stood with her choir mates, singing beautiful music that stirred the soul. How like her, I thought, surrounded by the beauty of her friends and faith. We were fortunate to have worked with a woman who radiated friendship, loyalty and dedication. We praise the time we had with her, Emma-Lou, our treasure. — Jean Kuras, HSOB president

Editor's Note: It was a common sight to see Emma-Lou at the AAUW book sale in her smock, organizing the shelves and patiently directing patrons. One year, my friend and I were looking for a certain author (Phyllis Whitney). Emma-Lou asked "What genre?" We weren't sure—historical romance? "The cover art is always kind of risqué," we helpfully added.

"Oh, bodice-rippers!" Emma-Lou exclaimed and expertly guided us to a shelf full of Phyllis Whitneys. The book sales have never been the same without Emma-Lou.

Project Children comes to Bloomfield

Project Children came about in 1975 when Patrick and Dennis Mulcahy, members of the NYPD and natives of Cork, Ireland, watched news footage of Irish violence. “The Troubles” was a period of conflict in Northern Ireland involving republican and loyalist paramilitaries, British security forces and civil rights groups. The Troubles date from the late 1960s through to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

From this conflict, Project Children was born. Over the next 40 years—until 2015—the organization would bring more than 23,000 Catholic and Protestant kids to the U.S. during the summer months as a respite from the conflict in Ireland. Journalist Patricia “Trix” MacBride was one of those children. Her host family was the Barry Family of Elm Street in Bloomfield. HSOB Trustee and former VP Joe Barry, his late wife Pat and their eight children welcomed Trix into their historic 1824 home for two summers—1984 & 1985. In total, the Barrys hosted four Irish children from 1978–1985, with Joe eventually becoming NJ coordinator.



Patricia “Trix” MacBride in the 1980s (above) and in 2023 (below). Photo credit: Joseph Barry; *The Irish News*.

“It was the trip of a lifetime,” MacBride wrote in *The Irish News* in August 2023 of her first trip to Bloomfield.

“A Boeing 747 filled with 500 children from the north and a dozen or so chaperones flying to New York for six weeks of sun, swimming, picnics, amusement parks and sightseeing. At a time when the news was filled with shootings and bombings and when going anywhere meant checkpoints and security searches, Project Children offered a glimpse of a different world,” she remembered.

“I was No. 6 according to the badge that came in the post (mail) and the luggage tag along with it. It had the Project Children logo, my name, and *Bloomfield* written on it. When I got to the airport to take my first ever flight and we were lined up, I realized numbers 1–10 were all teenagers and the other 490 were around 9–11 years old.

“As we boarded the Aer Lingus plane in number order, the flight attendant directed the first 10 of us upstairs. *Upstairs on a plane...* We were met by two U.S. immigration officers who handed us a shoebox of passports and a bundle of custom forms each, which we proceeded to fill out with the details of everyone on board. I might have had to work for the first couple hours of the flight, but I was in First Class and away from the madness in the main cabin. It felt very grown-up.

“The aim of Project Children was to give children a respite from the conflict but it was, in fact, my mother who had six weeks respite from teenage me,” MacBride continued.

“Until I lived in a two parent household with Pat and Joe Barry in Bloomfield, New Jersey, I never realized how much parenting my mother had to do by herself, caring for and raising six children aged 3–16 at the time of my father’s death. Having someone else look after me for the summer meant

there was one less person for her to worry about for that period of time and it really did make a difference.

“As well as that, I got to see a functioning democracy in action. Joe Barry was a city councilman and I attended a council meeting with him where there was no shouting or personal abuse and where reasoned debate and the best interest of the community were paramount. The contrast could not have been greater than



Ambassadors for change: Project Children brought thousands of children from Northern Ireland to the U.S. for a summer of respite from “The Troubles”—and an introduction to a world of opportunity. Photo credit: *The Irish News*.



just two months previously, when my brother Lughaidh had been elected to Magherafelt District Council (now Mid-Ulster District Council), and at the first meeting he and his party colleagues were attacked with chairs and fists from unionist benches when Lughaidh was elected vice-chair. I still have a vivid memory of the late [councilman] John Davey bleeding from a head wound as he emerged from the council offices. That would have been unthinkable in Bloomfield,” emphasized MacBride.

“The project children program was an insight into what was possible,” she continued.

“Many participants came from homes where university wasn’t something that was discussed, but they saw the possibilities afforded by continuing their education because of their American host families and the value they placed upon it.

“Others kept close ties to their host families over the years, myself included, and had that network of support throughout their lives. Some return to the United States to work and live, and some, like me, came back home after a few years. America gave me the tools to do things that I would not have otherwise been able to do. That was the success of Project Children. It was a simple idea that, when executed well, afforded so much hope and opportunity,” MacBride concluded.

When MacBride first came to Bloomfield, Joe Barry told *The New Town Crier*, her only thought was to go on “the dole” (welfare) as an adult.

“When she saw my children preparing to go to college, she realized that there were other opportunities out there. When she went home her mother called me and said, *What did you do to my daughter?* That scared the hell out of me but what she really meant was what had we done to make her change her aspirations from dole collector to university student.”

Project Children is thought to have been a major force in bringing about the Good Friday Agreement and finally ending the violence in Northern Ireland.

How Ronald Reagan came to be a Project Children sponsor

By Joseph P. Barry, Jr.

On June 14, 1985, President Ronald Reagan came to Bloomfield Town Hall to give a speech on tax reform, and Councilman Joe Barry was given the honor of greeting him by Mayor John Kinder. The President entered the building through the basement door to the parking lot with Governor Thomas Kean, and Barry met them in the basement hallway. Barry greeted the President with a handshake and said “Welcome to Bloomfield Mr. President. Here is a lucky Irish penny and a pamphlet about a program I am involved in. I think you might be interested to hear about it.”

The President thanked Barry and proceeded to greet the rest of the Council and the Administrator. Governor Kean shook Barry’s hand and said, “I saw what you did and I heard what you said but I can’t believe you did that,” and followed the President down the line of greeters. They all followed the President up the stairs to the balcony in the Mayor’s office where he gave his speech to the large crowd in front of the building. He soon left to speak to crowds in several other towns that day.

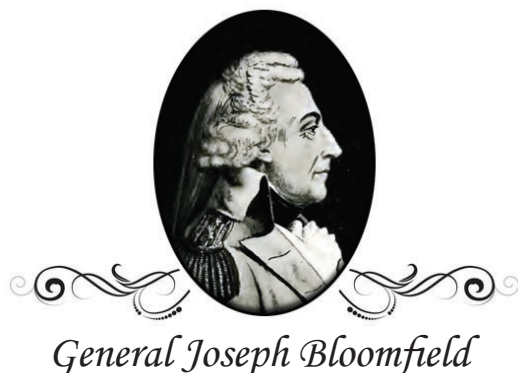
A couple of days later, Barry got a call from Denis Mulcahy, the Chairman of Project Children. Denis was excited. He said, “What did you say to the man?” He had received a letter from

President Reagan, which had been written on Air Force One on the way back to Washington. It said, “I learned of your wonderful program through Councilman Joseph Barry of Bloomfield. Please accept this token of my admiration and appreciation of what you are doing. God Bless you.” The letter was signed “Ronald Reagan.” In the envelope was a check from his personal account for \$500, which was the amount needed to sponsor one child to come to America for a six-week vacation with a Host Family during the violent “Marching Season” in Northern Ireland. President Reagan sent a check to sponsor a child each year he continued as U.S. President.



*To Councilman Joseph Barry
With best wishes,*

Ronald Reagan



THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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 2024 membership. Visit www.hsob.org to renew online or to download a snail-mailable membership form. A form can also be picked up at our 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 HSOB strong with your continuing membership! *Thank you for your support.*

Can You Identify?

This is 71 Mill Street. The photo at left was taken on April 24, 1949 while the photo at right was taken almost 75 years later on February 26, 2024. Thanks to Karen Eriksen for the submission; she grew up in this house.



PLEASE VOTE!

HSOB Members are asked to vote on two (2) issues. Please vote via:

- **Mail:** PO Box 1074, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
- **E-mail:** info@hsob.org • **Phone:** 973-743-8844

Your questions will be answered by the same means. No contact will be interpreted as a "YES" vote on each issue. **Deadline** for voting is April 16, 2024.

1) Members of the Historical Society Bloomfield are asked to vote on the proposed budget of \$9,765, which includes these outstanding lines of expenditure:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Rent: \$1,000 | • Scholarships: \$1,000 |
| • Insurance: \$1500 | • Newsletter: \$400 |
| • Programs: \$300 | • Telephone/Internet: \$2,800 |
| • Historic House Plaques: \$500 | • Website: \$500 |

2) The following slate has been put forth by the Nominating Committee to serve on the Board for the next term. All elected Board Members and Volunteers donate their time, talent, skills and energy to benefit the HSOB.

OFFICERS

President: Jean Kuras
VP/Program: Mark Scurman
Treasurer/Membership: John Debold
Recording Secretary: Tina Caridad
Corresponding Secretary: Mary Shoffner
Newsletter Editor: Ava Caridad

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