



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

MAY 2024

SAVE THE DATE

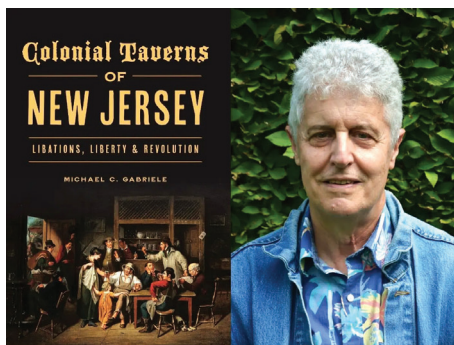
NEXT MEETING
Tuesday, May 28, 2024
7:30 PM

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER
84 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ

**The Intoxicating History of
Colonial Taverns in New Jersey**
Presented by Michael Gabriele

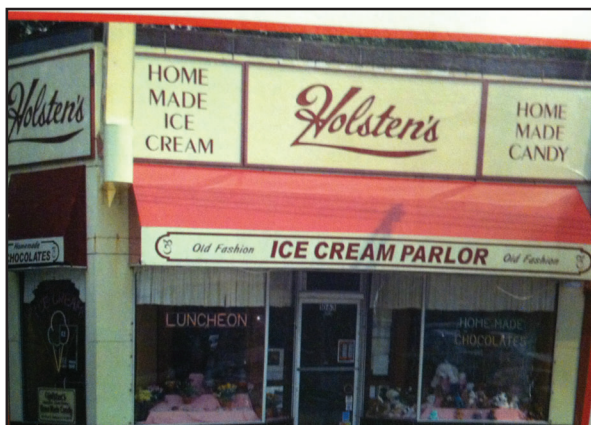
New Jersey was the “Crossroads of the American Revolution” and as battles raged, colonial taverns formed the social network that held our state together. Citing research from his new book—*Colonial Taverns of New Jersey*—lifelong Garden State resident and Nutley author Michael Gabriele will discuss how taverns housed the daily experiences of people during the colonial era, and how these stories provide a window into the state’s history from that period. A haven for Patriots and Loyalists alike, taverns were the “seedbeds” for the revolution, strongholds for political activities, beacons for travelers, and venues for entertainment, merriment and libations. Once the war began, taverns became recruitment stations for colonial militias and meeting places for local committees of safety.

This is Gabriele’s fifth book on NJ history. This program is free and open to the public. Books will be available for purchase and author signing.



Sweet Deal

Holsten’s puts famous booth up for auction



On March 4, 2024, iconic Bloomfield ice cream shop **Holsten’s Ice Cream, Chocolate & Restaurant**—located at 1063 Broad Street since 1939—sold its most famous booth on online selling platform eBay. The booth, a piece of Bloomfield memorabilia associated with TV show *The Sopranos*, racked up 238 bids and a final sale price of \$82,600.

Since 2007, the local eatery has taken full advantage of the notoriety of Tony Soprano’s “cut to black” death scene, keeping the booth intact and installing a plaque that read, “This Booth Reserved for the Soprano Family.”

In March, Holsten’s announced the eBay auction—including both seats, the table and the divider wall with the plaque. It was a “once in a lifetime” chance for a Sopranos super-fan, the restaurant said. While they didn’t want to part ways with their beloved piece of television history, it was a practical decision, as the booth had become “compromised” after years of display, fan visits and photo-ops.

“[The booths] have been repaired many times and this furniture is over 60-years-old,” the restaurant reported. “Obviously, we do not want to do this, however, it has come to a point where they are structurally not safe anymore as a whole and we need to think about the safety of our patrons first.”

“We aren’t going to change the nostalgia of our beloved shoppe ... we aren’t crazy! Just polishing up the place!” Holsten’s said on social media. *Source: Bloomfield Patch*



Museum Acquisitions

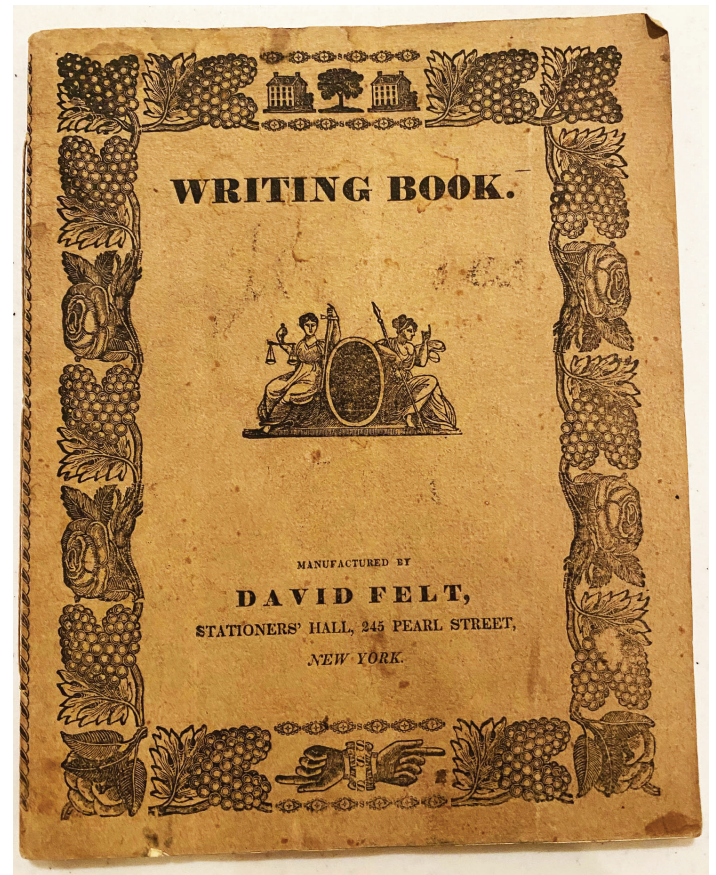
Pamela Oakes Felton recently presented the HSOB Museum with a Writing Book (a child's copy book for practicing penmanship) owned by John Oakes, who was born in Bloomfield on November 22, 1818 and died in Glen Ridge, NJ on March 5, 1910. He is listed in the New York City directories from 1848 to 1896 as a dealer in charts and a manufacturer of nautical instruments. He retired about 1896*.

The Writing Book was manufactured by David Felt, Stationers' Hall, 245 Pearl Street, New York City. Pearl Street itself is steeped in history, should readers want to further their own research.

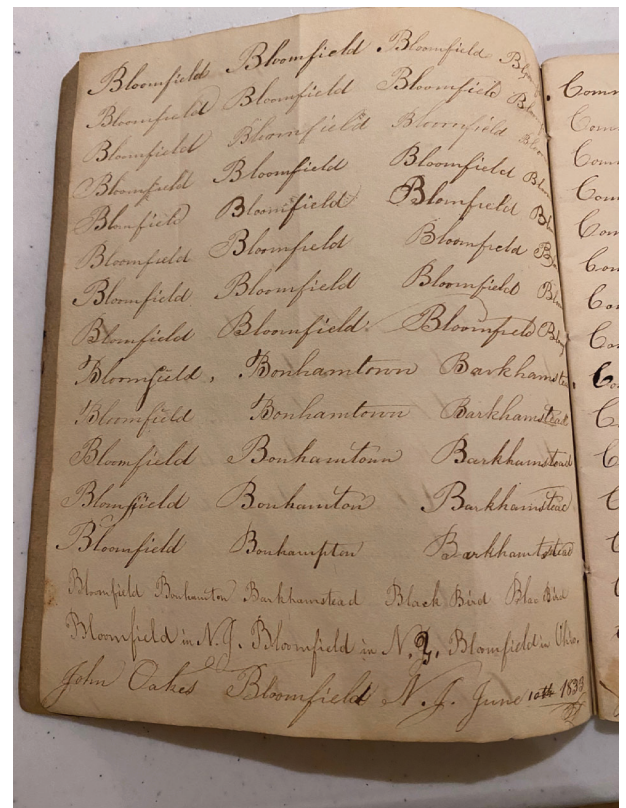
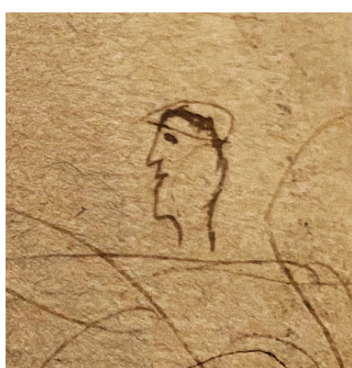
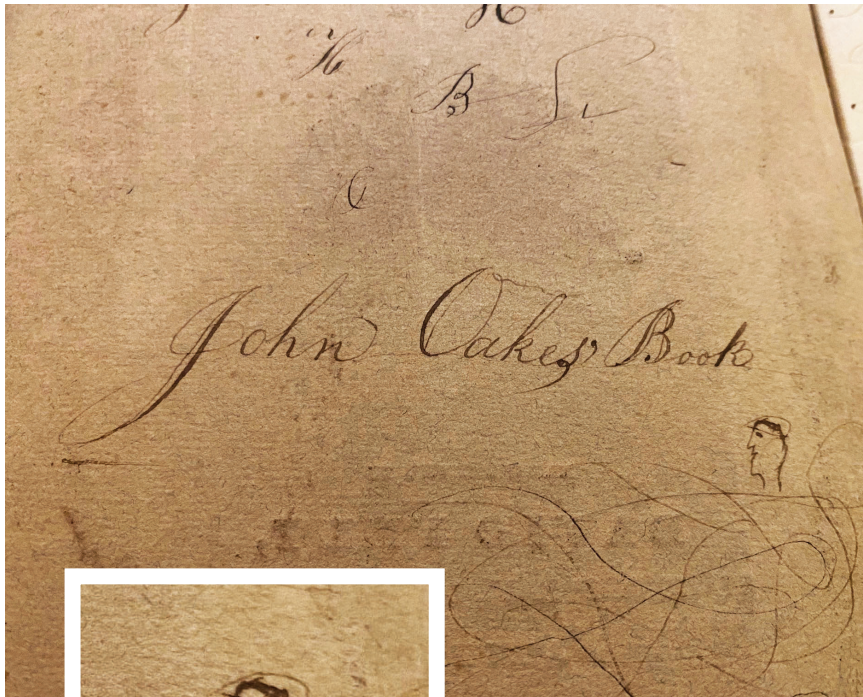
The well-preserved book was discovered for sale on the Internet by David Kingsland Oakes, who notified Ms. Felton. It was purchased and scanned copies were made for each before the original was donated to the HSOB. The book, and all HSOB collections, are available for viewing at the HSOB Museum, 90 Broad Street, 3rd Floor of the Children's Library. Saturday: 11am–1pm and by appointment.

Thank you, Ms. Felton, for this glimpse into Regency Era childhood in Bloomfield.

* [Reference: Smart, Charles E. *The Makers of Surveying Instruments in America Since 1700*; Troy, NY: Regal Art Press. 1962].



Below, 14-year-old John Oakes practices writing *Bloomfield* repeatedly on June 10, 1833. One can't help but wonder if it had been a nice day and would he have rather been outside...



JANUARY, 1957:

A LIFE-CHANGING MOMENT AT BLOOMFIELD'S ROYAL THEATER

Newark, NJ Disc Jockey Pat "The Cat" Connell* presents a "Rock 'n Roll" package show starring Little Richard & The Upsetters

By John Bickler

Jerry Oberg, Don Scott and I made our way down to the front row, stage right, in anticipation of our first Rock 'n Roll show. We sat in front of The Upsetters horn section, who blasted their way through opening numbers. We focused on "Teddy" (on tenor sax). The seated band members used those stand-up podiums that had their names on them. It was the first time I'd seen a Fender



Little Richard & The Upsetters

Precision Bass—the neck seemed six feet long!

The excitement built. Supporting acts arrived onstage; I recall the Shepherd Sisters, then doo-wop masters The Cadillacs. Their version of "Gloria" was one for the ages.

The Shepherd Sisters added a little sex appeal, just by being attractive girls. The Cadillacs

alternated comedy bits with their pure harmonies, then added dance steps. I look at them now as a throwback to Vaudeville, in the best sense.

After The Cadillacs' set, The Upsetters began building excitement, along with Pat "The Cat" who namechecked some of Richard's early hits and finally, there he was! Little Richard in a beautiful green suit, banging on the piano, a huge pompadour...and it was an electric moment.

Little Richard & The Upsetters played not only the radio hits, but also b-sides and songs by other New Orleans artists. He was shouting his way through songs, stalking the stage, working the audience like a yo-yo. Eventually, as the intensity of Richard's performance grew, he just stopped and fell to the floor with a loud thud. The entire audience in the packed theater could hear it, thanks to the microphone hitting the stage.

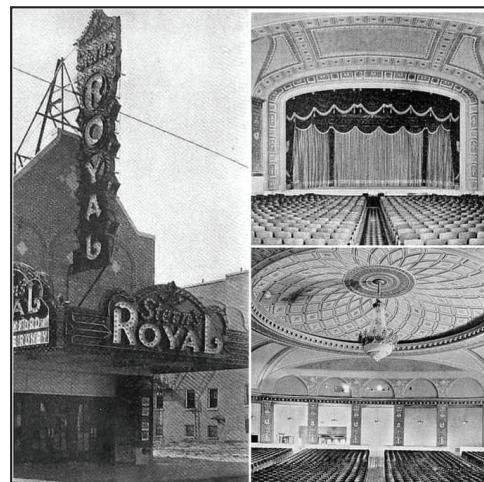


The Shepherd Sisters

Richard, seemingly overcome with emotion, fell on the stage as if experiencing a coronary failure. We in the audience were shocked. What was happening? The band put down their instruments, came to Richard's aid and fanned him with towels (where'd they come from?). I think a couple of prayers were said, and after a long minute—or maybe two—miraculously, Little Richard was on his feet and finished his set! Of course, it was all staged. James Brown used this gimmick, too. Who originated it? I don't know.

We also stayed for the second show. It was all the same set lists and excitement, however Little Richard came out in a yellow suit this time around. For the second time, when he fell to the stage, we knew it was a bit and weren't worried.

It was the personality of Little Richard, to be sure, but it was equally the music: as loud as you wanted it to be at home on your record player, but never was. Rock 'n Roll was new and exciting and personal, too.



The Cadillacs

**Editor's Note:* According to *Oldtimeradiodownloads.com*, Connell was the first African-American hired by a major network as a staff announcer. CBS hired Connell in April 1960 as a summer replacement [*Billboard*, 4/4/60]; one year later, he was made staff announcer [*Jet*, 3/16/61]. A licensed pilot, Connell owned an aircraft and was spotlighted, along with other Black pilots, in an article titled, "Can a Black Man Fly?" in the July 1969 issue of *Flying* magazine.



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD

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Ava Caridad, *Editor*

Correction: In the March 2024 edition of *Can You Identify?* we incorrectly noted that the house at 71 Mill St. was the childhood home of Karen Eriksen; it was, in fact her mother's childhood home. We apologize for the confusion.

Thank You...

The HSOB extends a heartfelt *Thank You* to Tom DeStefano, owner of **Budget Print Center of Bloomfield**, located at 332 Broad Street. Tom generously gave the March 2024 issue of *The New Town Crier* a color upgrade to honor his friend and customer, Emma-Lou Czarnecki. Emma-Lou, HSOB *Treasurer Emerita*, passed away in December and her Memorial was included in the March issue. Tom has long been a friend and trusted vendor to the HSOB and we thank him for this kindness. *Photo used by permission of Theresa DeSalvio; theresadesalvio.com*



Bloomfield rocks!



The Garrabrant House 1735 – 2014

The March 28, 2024 episode of popular TV show *This Old House* features a large, gracious home being restored in town-next-door Glen Ridge, NJ.

The hosts took a break from structural rehabilitation to visit the beautiful Freeman Gardens at the corner of Maolis & Hawthorne Avenues. The garden had been

commissioned by prominent Glen Ridge residents Clayton E. Freeman and his wife Winifred Brownell Freeman and designed in 1935 by landscape architect Ethelbert Furlong. When the Freemans passed away, their heirs gifted the garden to the town.

At the episode's 9-minute-mark, Kevin Sherry, head of the Freeman Gardens, mentions that the vegetable garden uses repurposed stone from a 1760s house that was torn down in Bloomfield. The HSOB contacted Sherry, who confirmed that the stones are from the erstwhile Garrabrant house (43 Montgomery Street; built in 1735, torn down in 2014), and Ball house on Broad Street. If readers wish to track it down, the episode is titled *Small but Mighty* (*This Old House*; Season 45; Ep. 17).

While we're pleased the stones have stayed so close to home and were repurposed in such a meaningful way, in such a lovely place, this editor would rather the houses remained standing.

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:

Donald Fleischer
Cromwell, CT

Laura Hernandez
Bloomfield

John Masi
Bloomfield

Elizabeth Coldwell
Frano
Bradenton, FL

Carmel Loughman
Montclair, NJ

Barbara Siembab
Bloomfield

Mary Anne Marra
Montclair, NJ