



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

OCTOBER 2024

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ

7:30pm

The Early Aeronauts of Bloomfield & Essex County

Presented by Dean Cole

In the years just before the start of the First World War, interest in all things aeronautical was at a fever pitch.

All across the country, in backyards, garages and barns, inventors and would-be aviators were trying to get airborne in homemade contraptions with varying degrees of success—and Essex County had its fair share of these intrepid aeronauts!

In 1909, a pair of young inventors would become suspects in a series of “Mystery Airship” sightings in the skies above Montclair. By 1910, Belleville had its very own airship company. In 1913, two teenagers from Bloomfield would launch themselves from the rolling hills above Broad Street in the first ever gliders with rudders, flaps and landing gear.

Be sure to join us on October 22 for tales of aeronautical adventure in Edwardian Essex County. The program is free and open to the public.



The Bell Tolls for Thee



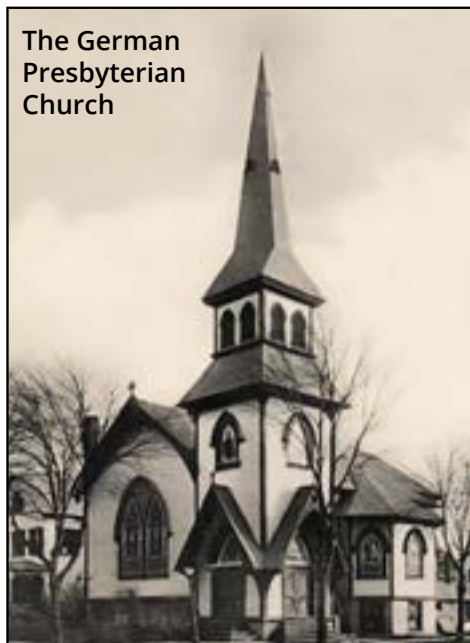
Felix J. Rospond, P.E., died on July 5, 2023 at the age of 87. If the name doesn't ring a bell, long-time Bloomfield residents may remember the predicament in the 1970s of what to do with the steeple bell from the German Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue at State Street, which had been dedicated in 1896. When the church was torn down in 1972, the fate of the impressive bell was unknown. The Presbyterian Church on the Green, with whom the German Presbyterian Church had merged in 1966, already had a bell it was happy with.

Pastor Dr. Merle Irwin of the merged congrega-

tion asked then-Councilman Joseph Barry if he could come up with a location for the bell. Barry struck on the idea of locating it on the South Green in front of Bloomfield College's Seibert Hall. Mayor John Kinder and the rest of the Town Council wanted to know what the bell's structure would look like before approving it. Barry conferred with his friend Felix Rospond, owner of F.J. Rospond



The German Presbyterian Church



Associates, a Bloomfield engineering firm. Rospond spoke to Levon Khachadourian, AIA, a Bloomfield architect, who agreed to donate the design of the monument. Rospond donated the engineering. Barry returned to the Mayor and Council with an architectural rendering of the monument and they approved both the project and its location. Work was completed in October 1979 and the bell was dedicated on November 4, 1979.

Read the full account of “The Bell Monument on the Green” in the May 2009 edition of *The New Town Crier*: hsob.org/towncrier/towncrier_2009may.pdf. Learn more about the the old Park Avenue German Presbyterian Church on p. 4.

43 Maple Street Bloomfield's "Currier & Ives House"

By Karen M. Eriksen

In the early 1990s, I took great care of "Mr. Bill's" house as if it were my own. His house, located on Maple Street, was topic of discussion among neighbors and passersby. It was a lovely two-story, one-family home of yellow wood with white trim on a generous portion of property. The property was enclosed by a white picket fence and by the front curb was a hitching post and upping stone for dismounting and securing a horse and/or carriage. There was a well in the backyard that was hooked up to a pump system that brought water to the kitchen. The flip of a toggle next to the kitchen sink switched the municipal water to the well water, making the tap water so crisp, clear and cold.



Front of the house

The yard in back went deep and halfway through was an aerated Koi Pond where I would sit and read when time allowed. Among the plants and gardens were paths of slate and stones that led to an old shed by the wooden water wheel (years ago there was a stream running through the property—part of the old Morris Canal). Out back and to the one side of the house, there was a wall-to-wall screened-in porch with vintage wicker high-back peacock chairs and Adirondack chairs.

At the end of the unpaved, gravel driveway was a yellow wood garage with white-trim. The garage—which had a personality all of its own—was separate from the main house. It had actually been a one room schoolhouse that the original homeowner had purchased from one of the upper



Back of the house

New England states, had disassembled and then brought to Bloomfield with the belfry still intact. At the forward of the driveway was a small gazebo—built over a sealed well—which was then used to house the refuse cans.

The cool stone basement had an open fireplace with a more than ample hearth—in the middle of the wall—that once served as a kitchen stove back in the 1800s. It had a wrought iron arm that one would swing out in order to hang the pots and kettles over the fire. Above the landing leading to the basement, there was a stone cubby built into the wall, deep in the earth, that had been used to keep food cold "back in the day."

Running from down in the basement, through two stories—up to the attic—was a strand containing multiple tiny bells hanging from it. The cord was



Driveway and garage in the distance

attached to a white knob at the front door. In the old days, prior to electric doorbells, one would pull the knob, which in turn would pull the cord, causing all the bells to ring. (The sound from the bells would tug at the heartstrings, as well.)

The front steps leading to the house had built-in seats that, upon lifting the bench portion, became storage areas for gardening supplies. There were white flower boxes underneath the front white-shuttered windows. The front sitting room had a lovely mantled fireplace



The former 43 Maple Street as it appeared in 2023.

decorated by a wall mirror and sconces. The window treatments were that of white-on-white sheer curtain panels with pullbacks. The air smelled of oil from the collection of hurricane lamps and lanterns that sat on the shelves of a window box that was three-dimensionally tiered outside of the house, just off the living room. The library, with its walls of vintage books, also housed an old Victrola that played 78 RPM records.

The dining room was small and simple with a four-seater, blue and white, antique wood table and matching blue chair rails. The saloon-style swinging doors between the dining room and kitchen were a challenge. Frustrating times were accessing the wood cabinets throughout the kitchen—which had latches rather than knobs!

Up in the attic were trunks—the kind that a person sailing the ocean on a liner or ship in the days of old would use to carry a complete wardrobe. Upon my first discovery, I dressed up in the vintage laced dresses, corsets, gloves and all.

Then, in the cool, early evenings of summer, I would sit out on the benches in front around 6 PM and listen to the choir of church bells from the Presbyterian Church on the Green's chimes. The bells sounded in 15 minutes of song. There were times when the bells moved me to tears.

We were friends for decades, and I am eternally grateful for "Mr. Bill," who entrusted his home and his dog, Baron, to my care for the short while I was there.

Gone with the Developer...



Maple Street (formerly Canal Street) is not especially known for distinguished architecture. True, the houses there are (mostly) 19th century, but almost all have undergone extensive alterations with modern additions and aluminum siding. (See *The New Town Crier*, November 2002, for a feature article about the Metz House). All except this one (43 Maple Street), which a former resident had called "The Currier & Ives House." It had a Greek Revival pediment over the doorway, a nice back porch, bay window, distinguished architecture and enough land around it for elbow room. Unfortunately, this land was its undoing. A couple of "businessmen" decided to raze the house and "improve" Bloomfield with several more two-family houses. All that remains of this distinguished old house is the above pile of rubble. So much for Currier & Ives.

—Fred Branch, Editor Emeritus †
[The New Town Crier, April 2004](#)



Thank you, Mary

The HSOB Board would like to thank Mary Shoffner for her many decades of service to the Historical Society of Bloomfield. Mary has decided to step down from her positions as Corresponding Secretary and Refreshments Coordinator. We will certainly miss Mary's enthusiasm and dedication, and look forward to seeing her at future events. If you see Mary around town or at an HSOB meeting, be sure to say Hello.



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD

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The old German Presbyterian Church



This postcard, printed by F.G. Temme Publishing Company in Orange, NJ, shows the German Presbyterian Church, which sat on the corner of Park Street and State Street. It was built in 1854 and the steeple and bell were added 11 years later in 1865. If one looks in the background to the right, the tower of Sacred Heart Church can be seen; it is still standing today.

The German Presbyterian Church was demolished in 1972. The pretty house to its left is also no more. In its place are a rather squat duplex and the parking lot for Park United Methodist Church at 12 Park Street (still standing). Across the street is a parking lot for Bloomfield High School. When this editor attended Bloomfield High, this parking lot was student tennis courts.

The postcard was written by a young person named Julia to her parents. We assume she is a child because she attends Sunday school; we may also assume her parents were (German?) immigrants because Julia compliments her mother's "pretty good" and understandable writing; of course, these are merely guesses and perhaps there were other circumstances. This editor also believes it was written in August, which is the only month in 1913 when the 4th fell on a Monday and the 7th fell on a Thursday. The message reads:

Mon. [August] 4, 1913

Dear Mama & Papa,

I got your letter Saturday and also a letter from Edna & a card from Anna & Minnie. I wrote to every body I could think of. I spent 43¢ on cards & stamps. Dear mama you write pretty good in the cards and letter. I can understand every word. xxx xxx xxx xxx Julia

This is the Sunday school I went to. I lost grandmother's address. Please send me another. Is Papa's birthday the 7th [of August]; Thurs.?

Postcard collection now online!

Speaking of postcards, the entire HSOB postcard collection is now available online in the HSOB Photo Gallery. Peruse 286 postcards segmented into categories such as Bloomfield Center; Business & Industry; Churches; The Green; Houses, Streets & Sites; Morris Canal; Municipal Buildings; Parks; Railroads & Stations; Rivers, Lakes & Ponds; Schools & Colleges; and Celebrations. Find them here: hsobphotos.jalbum.net/HSOB%20Photo%20Gallery/Postcards/index.html



Squares, hipsters, students and scholars enjoy a meal in this postcard of the Bloomfield College Dining Hall.