



The New Town Crier



Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

OCTOBER, 2004

MEETING

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
8:00 PM

at the
BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER
84 Broad Street, Bloomfield

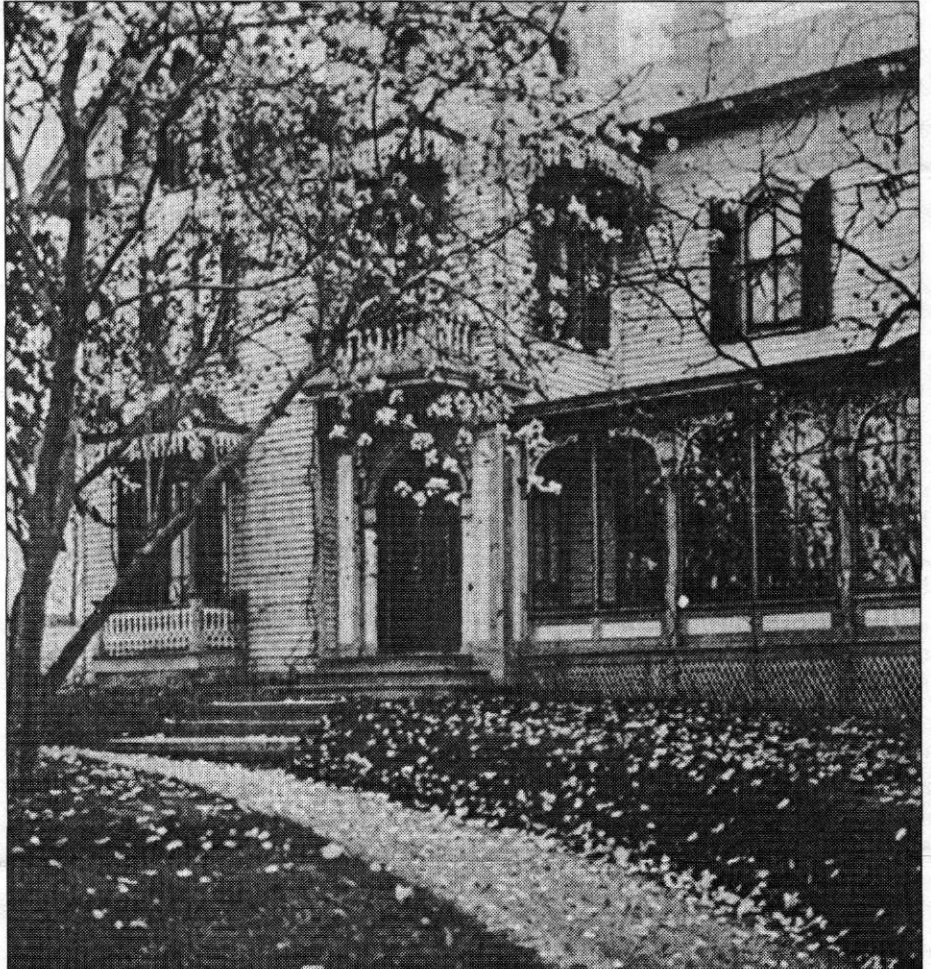
Fred Camp: Bloomfield's "Other" Architect

Our speaker for the September meeting will be Wayne T. Bell, of Ocean Grove, NJ, who will present a lecture and slide show on Frederick T. Camp, one of Bloomfield's architects.*

In his lifetime, Camp designed various houses and high-rise buildings both in New York City and New Jersey, and also his own home which still stands at 187 Broad Street in Bloomfield. While a lesser-known architect, Camp's family is a study in the rise of America's middle-class in the period after the Civil War. One of Fred Camp's greatest achievements was the design of the 10,000 seat Great Auditorium in 1894.

Bell, who is a published author of two Arcadia books, Images of America, Ocean Grove, and Vintage Postcards of Ocean Grove, is also a member of the Ocean Grove Historical Society and gives lectures on the Camp Meeting Movement throughout New Jersey.

**Other Bloomfield architects are Alexander Jackson Davis, Joseph Kingsland Oakes and George Cadmus. All four are buried in Bloomfield Cemetery.*



Hine Residence, 209 Washington Avenue (demolished ca. 1952)

A LOST BIT OF BLOOMFIELD: WOODSIDE

An Excerpt from the book by C.G Hine

"For nearly 100 years this region was a portion of Bloomfield, or Wardesson, as it was formerly called, and when in 1839 Belleville was set off from eastern Bloomfield, Woodside became a part of the newer township, and so remained until March 24, 1869, when it became independent of all outside control.

But alas! On the fifth of April, 1871, our independence was lost forever, and most of us were turned over to the tender mercies of the Newark politicians, who have ever since exercised a wonderful ingenuity in taxing us poor inhabitants to the limit and giving us as little in return as possible."

The author then elaborates on this theme and points out specific abuses suffered by the inhabitants of that small portion of Newark that has changed hands so many times since 1666: rarely for the better.

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Here and Now

By Ina Campbell

The Historical Society treasures the past, but we also want to take part in Bloomfield's present. Following are several ways we are contributing to the "Here and Now".

Sunday openings at the Bloomfield Public Library are dependent on financing from outside sources. The Society was pleased to provide funds for two Sunday openings this spring.

Jean Kuras and Mary Schoffner, our unofficial volunteer "Beautification Committee", have again done plantings around the Soldiers and Sailors Monument and at the Historic District Marker. At these spots, The Society paid for the flowers and the ladies are the gardeners. The four shrubs at the corners of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument plots were donated by O'Boyle's Landscaping. Former councilwoman, Martha Skinner, representing Harvest Fest, arranged for Harvest Fest to give the plants the ladies placed at the DAR General Bloomfield Memorial on The Green.

Each year The Society presents two scholarships at the High School Senior Awards Program in June. One goes to a boy, the other to a girl, each having shown sincere interest in history. This year the recipients are *Jason Commarata* and *Diana Piersant*.

A LOST BIT OF BLOOMFIELD: WOODSIDE

(Continued from page one)

The Old Bloomfield Road

The old Bloomfield road is frequently spoken of as a former Indian trail "from the mountain to the river". This may have been one of the many paths which intersected the great Minisink trail extending from the Shrewsbury river to Minisink Island, in the Delaware river below Port Jervis, where the council fires of the Leni Lenape constantly burned. This particular branch probably passed through Great Notch on the First mountain, meeting the main path near Little Falls.

The road began where what is now Second avenue joins Broadway and labored up the grade to the present Prospect place, where it turned toward the north for Bloomfield. The old road itself is largely a memory, for those who have exploited this region have almost obliterated the former highway, finding that its meandering course interfered with their straight lines, and not having in mind the attraction that a bend in the road, the curving line of beauty, with its mystery of a fair, unknown country beyond, has for the stroller.

It is said that a toll-gate once stood near the canal bridge, which was kept by Archibald Jacobus, and those who went skating on Sunfish pond could recall the ruins of an ancient grist mill whose wheel was turned by the waters of the pond.

Until the toll-gates were removed around 1875 from the Turnpike or "New" road, as the present Bloomfield avenue was called, the old road was the avenue for pleasure driving and also for much heavy traffic between Newark and Bloomfield. This made the highway of prime importance and may help to explain the inflated values set on land in this region before the panic of 1873.

In those days the Hackensack meadows were covered with a dense cedar growth which was a hiding place for those whose deeds were evil, and the road was the scene of many hold-ups. On one occasion a man, while driving home, overtook a woman who asked for a ride, and he took her in his trap, only to discover that the supposed woman wore heavy boots; he then concluded that they would later meet with others who

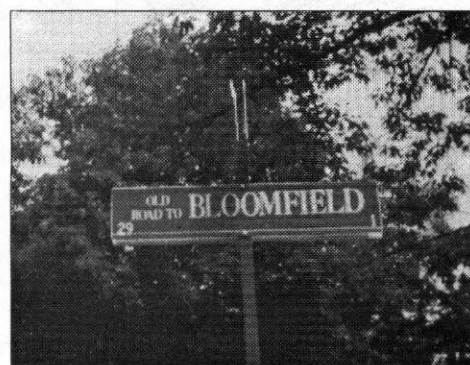
would assist in relieving him of the necessity of carrying his money home. Having made up his mind to rid himself of the passenger, he dropped his whip and requested her to get it, as he could not leave his restive horse; and, of course, once she was out, he did not wait for whip or passenger.

Land values before the panic of 1873

This property was purchased by Peter H. and John H. Ballantine just before the panic of 1873 (the deed is dated January 31, 1873) when prices were greatly inflated, and they paid therefor the sum of \$217,000, paying \$50,000 down and giving a mortgage and bond for the remainder. It was not long before the new purchasers saw the error of their ways and desired to relinquish the property and the \$50,000, but to this the Smith estate would not agree. It is hardly probably that they will ever see a profit on the investment, as interest at 5 per cent (and it was more than five in those days) would in itself now amount to almost twice the original outlay, and when the taxes and assessments to which the property has fallen heir are added to the loss of interest, even eighty dollars a foot can hardly seem a large sum to the Ballantine estate.

The Sidman family dates back to the time of William the conqueror, when the first ancestor of whom there is any record is said to have come to England from Normandy. He appears to have been a favorite of the great William and received from him a considerable grant of land on the river Syd and from this the family derived its name - Sydenham, which was later shortened to Sidman.

The house now standing is not the Hancock house of 1711, though it is known to be more than two hundred and fifty years old. The Dutch oven, where bread and pies were formerly baked, is still a part of the structure,



Just one block remains of the Old Road to Bloomfield which is now marked as such. This passes in front of the old Sydenham (or Sidman) house and continues west roughly to Heller Parkway, which then crosses the City Subway, once the Morris Canal as described by Mr. Hine. After the intersection with Franklin Avenue, the Old Road becomes Franklin Street and continues on a zig-zag course up Franklin Hill (the highest elevation in Bloomfield), past the old South Junior High School of 1940. Then the street turns northwest toward its meeting with Broad Street at the Parade Ground) now know as "the Green").



The two houses photographed and published in the book are still at the corner of Clifton and Berkeley Avenues, but the charming winding remnant of the Bloomfield Road is now covered with houses and backyards. It is no longer possible to take a modern view of this scene from the 1909 photographer's position.



A photograph of the same scene a century later.

and the long-handled, wooden shovel, used to remove those edibles when baked, is still a part of its furnishings.

The present spelling of the name Sidman has been in occasional use for at least two hundred and fifty years, as the name is so spelled in the grave-digger's bill for John (2), who died in 1754. In the paper detailing the settlement of the estate of John (2) the name is spelled Sidnham. In a document dated in 1816 the name is spelled Sidingham. The present spelling came into general use with David, son of Thomas, who refused to sign his name other than Sidman.

Miss Laura M. Sydenham told me that when she was a child a certain hollow on the crown of the ridge which had the appearance of having been surrounded by a heavy stone wall, and which was situated in the fields,

she thinks, somewhere between the house of Mr. Elias G. Heller and the Presbyterian church, was pointed out by the elders as the site of a fort erected for protection against the Indians, but nothing more definite than this is known.

The woods on the Sidman place were used to some extent as a camping ground by certain Indians. Miss J.A. Sidman having heard her grandmother tell of an invitation extended to her by these Indians to dine with them and, as she preferred not to offend the red-skinned neighbors, the invitation was accepted; but this proved to be one of the times when a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, for she arrived in time to see the dinner preparing and the careless and uncleanly methods of her hosts so nauseated her that she invented some excuse and came away.

The Farrand Family

The old Moses Farrand home formerly joined the Keen property, extending to the canal. The building was torn down many years ago. It was a fine old place in its day, having been erected, it is said, near the close of the eighteenth century. The rooms were spacious for those days, while a great central hall extended from front to rear. The walls were thick and massive, the brown stone of which they were constructed is supposed to have been taken from the quarry at Soho.

The oldest Farrand home in this region was situated on our old road, but across the line in Bloomfield.

The Farrands, name originally spelled Ferrant, were Huguenots, and presumably were part of the emigrants who left France owing to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, following which several hundred thousand Frenchmen were compelled to seek refuge in other lands. A considerable colony settled in the neighborhood of New York during the early part of the eighteenth century.

VALUABLE ARTIFACTS

One of these was Pierre LaCour, the artist who sat in a second-floor room across from Federal Hall on Wall Street and sketched the first inauguration of George Washington as First President of the United States. La Cour's drawing formed the basis of Amos Dolittle's famous published engraving of the event. His workbook, written in both English and French, is preserved in the Museum of The Historical Society of Bloomfield.



John and Susannah Sydenham built their Colonial farmhouse along the Old Road to Bloomfield where it now overlooks Branch Brook Park. A recent attempt to photograph the house for this article was impossible because of the thickly wooded property surrounding the old landmark.

THE SYDENHAM HOUSE

This superb drawing of the 1710 Sydenham (or "Sidman") house was made in 1998 by Jersey City artist Richard LaRovere and is published here with the kind permission of Mr. Douglas Eldridge of the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Commission. Folded five-inch by seven inch folded cards with reproductions of this and other landmarks drawn by Mr. LaRovere may be purchased from the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Commission, P.O. Box 1066, Newark, N.J. 07101.

FOOTNOTE: The editor is indebted to Madeline Jockel Kish for her gift to the HSOB Museum of the book given to David Oakes by Louis Hine in 1884 which inspired this article. Thanks, also, to Jean Kuras for her research on the subject of Woodside in the form of a newspaper article from the Newark Evening News, dated March, 1949, in which the subject is described in detail by two former residents of this now forgotten community.

— Frederick Branch

THE WILLIAM B. LITVANY ARCHIVE

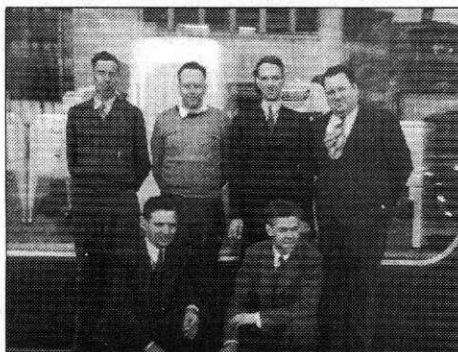
(Photographs of Bloomfield taken from ca. 1939 through 1944.)

A recent discovery in the files of the Historical Society of Bloomfield was a box of about 83 photographic negatives given to the Society many years ago by Bill Litvany. Bill was President of the Society during the Bicentennial and represented George Washington on the Society's float in the Bicentennial Parade. Unfortunately, Bill was a heavy smoker, and a flu shot stirred up latent cancer in his lungs, which caused his untimely death in 1977.

Bill was the editor of the Independent Press for many years and was married to Staff Writer Helen Wentworth. He was very active in civic affairs in Bloomfield.

The photographic negatives had been carefully preserved by the Society, but there were only a few prints among them, although someone, possibly Bill, had carefully labeled and dated each batch. These are valuable documents now more than 60 years old and represent some scenes that cannot now be duplicated. (Among them are the 1890 interior of the Sacred Heart Church

during the funeral of Monsignor Donovan in 1941, the interior of the now demolished Park Avenue (German) Presbyterian Church, and some wartime activities by the Bloomfield Red Cross.) Prints have now been made from these negatives and they will be reproduced in the Historical Society's newsletter. Many will be published for the first time and some enlargements will be exhibited in the showcase in the Bloomfield Public Library.



RADIO AND TELEVISION CORP.
594 Bloomfield Avenue, May, 1941

This photo may represent the reopening of the store under new management. It was, for many years, the location where the editor spent much of his disposable income on records. In these days their stock consisted of heavy albums of 78 RPM shellac records, replaced around 1950 by the Long Playing (or "LP") record. As shown by the washing machines and refrigerators in the window, the store also sold appliances as well as radios and that brand-new invention, TV. The limestone sidewall of the Bloomfield Bank and Trust Company building across the street can be seen reflected in the window. The only employee in the photo known by name is Charlie Paulson, who managed the Record Department, shown kneeling on the right side of the front row.

After World War Two, the business was bought out by Ralph Schneider, who operated it for many years. Schneider had been employed by Curtiss Wright during the war, and asked his secretary at that company,

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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 WILLIAM B. LITVANY ARCHIVE

(continued from previous page)

RADIO AND TELEVISION CORP.

Marguerete Elliott, to assist him with the bookkeeping in his new business. Later she became head of the Record Department and worked for Schneider until his death. Miss Elliott was also active in the Historical Society of Bloomfield, serving as Editor of the first newsletter and several terms as President. She remained a member of the Church on the Green until her death about 15 years ago.



BLOOMFIELD WOMEN'S CLUB, ART CLASS: 1941

A 63-year old photograph of the ladies of the Bloomfield Women's Club, with their easels, paints and wearing their colorful print smocks and hats. A closer look at the picture reveals that the lady second from right has almost finished her painting of the old Davis house just opposite on Franklin Street. The location is the back lawn of The Club's impressive head-

quarters at 392 Franklin Street in the former G. Lee Stout mansion. Stout's widow had died in December 31, 1915, and the Club had bought the spacious French Second Empire mansion with its four-story tower and mansard roof. (For a photograph of this house, see page 19, bottom, of the Bloomfield Book.) The Bloomfield Art League also rented space in the house, and this writer can remember Saturday morning art lessons on the third floor.

Other occupants of the house listed in the 1937 Town Directory are The Girls Scouts of America and George G. Randolph, who may have been the caretaker.

The Club later moved to smaller quarters at the corner of Clarendon Place and Hazelwood Road. The Stout residence then became the "Municipal Building Annex". After some years of neglect and deterioration, it was demolished. The only landmark still standing can be seen through the trees to the left: the 1933 United States Post Office. This charming tree-shaded spot has been black-topped and is now a parking lot.

☞ **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.

Rosemary Cerracchio
Bloomfield, New Jersey

Edith Cool
Scottsdale, Arizona

Ethel McGrath Meola
Summit, New Jersey

Claire D. Rizzolo
Livingston, New Jersey

Richard Rockwell & Rodolfo Cao
Bloomfield, New Jersey

Clay Spencer
Bloomfield, New Jersey

**TWELVE MILES WEST
WELCOMES THE
COMMUNITY TO
OCT. 30th OPEN HOUSE**

12 Miles West Theatre Company has found a new home! The not-for-profit arts organization, which has been in residence in Montclair since its founding in 1992, had relocated to 562 Bloomfield Avenue in Bloomfield. The site has played a prominent part in Bloomfield history since the late 1800's and had become a vaudeville and silent movie house between 1910 and 1915, when the Lincoln Theatre was constructed.

On Saturday, October 30th, 12 Miles West will open its door to the community for an Open House Celebration and all are invited to stop by. Plans are still being formulated for the event, so please watch the marquee and local newspapers for more details.

12 Miles West would like to have the oldest of the people with memories of this site as honored guests at our first production.

Monica Abbot
973-783-9131 phone/fax

**LEAGUE MEETING
IN MONTCLAIR**

The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey will hold its fall meeting in the First United Methodist Church at 21 North Fullerton Avenue in Montclair on October 23. Admission to this day long event is \$20. Registration is a 9:00 am; the programs will begin at 10:45 am.

Roy Shepard will speak on "A Snapshot of Montclair's 300 Years of History"; Alicia Schatteman will discuss the problems in changing from an all-volunteer to a staffed Historical Society; and Majda Kallab Wittaker will present "Converting a Home to a House Museum; Case Study of 'Evergreens,' The Schultz House Museum."

Included with the registration fee is lunch at the church, followed by self-guided tours of The Crane House, Schultz House, Munn Tavern and Van Vleck House and Gardens.

To register please send check payable to Montclair Historical Society and mail to:

Montclair Historical Society
108 Orange Road, Montclair, NJ 07042

E-mail

The Historical Society of Bloomfield
at:

BloomfHist@aol.com
or call us at: 973-743-8844