



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

March 2020

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

Presbyterian Church on The Green

147 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ
7:30 PM

The Toll of the Garden State Parkway in Bloomfield

Presented by
Richard Rockwell

Join Bloomfield historian Richard Rockwell as he explores the impact the Garden State Parkway had on the township of Bloomfield when it was built in the 1950s. Through historical photos, maps and newspaper articles, explore the controversies and protests surrounding the project, as well as the hundreds of houses that were demolished or moved to make way for the GSP. Love it or hate it, you'll be fascinated by the history of the Garden State Parkway through Bloomfield.

The event is free and open to the public. Parking is available next door at the School Administration Building lot on the corner of Belleville Avenue and Broad Street.



*The Daniel Dodd House
339 Franklin Street: Demolished*



At the Proclamation reading, members of the HSOB joined the Town Council and members of the Boone Family.

Bloomfield Honors Black History Month

At the February 24, 2020 Bloomfield Council meeting, the Mayor and Council recognized a few exceptional residents who've given back to the greater-Bloomfield community, in honor of Black History Month. Held in conjunction with the Historical Society of Bloomfield, the honorees were inscribed into the HSOB, with members on hand.

First, Councilwoman Sarah Cruz read a proclamation in honor of the Boone Family, whose ancestors played a huge role in Bloomfield's history. Royal Boone started the Black Policeman's Leagues and his brother Malcolm Boone was Bloomfield's first African American Police Chief. Their brother Elbert Boone was Bloomfield's First African American Fireman, while their mother Hettie Boone was the backbone of the historic New Light Baptist Church and father Manson Boone was a trade mason who helped build the Original Municipal Building, Bloomfield Town Hall and Demarest School.

Afterward, Councilwoman Dr. Wartyna Davis read a proclamation for Dr. Marcheta Evans, the 17th President of Bloomfield College, who was both the first woman and first African American to serve the college in that position, and Councilman Nick Joanow read a proclamation honoring cyclist, philanthropist and lifetime Bloomfield resident Mac-Adly Hyppolite, Jr.

"Bloomfield is and has always been a diverse and culturally rich place, and we are extremely proud of that," said Mayor Michael Venezia. "Our honorees have made invaluable contributions to our town, and during Black History Month, as well as year-round, it's important to recognize the contributions of civic minded people we know and learn about others we might not already know."

Story by Bloomfield Patch; photo courtesy of Maria Probst/Bloomfield Pulse



*Do you recognize this scene in Bloomfield?
If you don't, it's because most of these houses were demolished to build the Garden State Parkway.*

Millions for demolition, but not one cent for preservation...

An undated, abridged article by Frederick Branch, Editor Emeritus (1925–2018) †

Mention the Garden State Parkway to any Bloomfielder under, say age 55, and the response might be, “Well, it’s always been there, right?”

Well, no. There was a time, long ago, when the Garden State Parkway was just a gleam in the eyes of the New Jersey Highway Authority. There were rumors of a new super-highway linking New York and Northern New Jersey with the Jersey Shore area, Philadelphia and Cape May. The pre-war roads—Route One, Route 35, Route 36 and others—which had been country roads pieced together into two-lane highways in the 1920s, were obsolete. There was a great need to accommodate the fleet of brand new cars speeding out of Detroit to a wheel-hungry American public.

And so it was planned. Beginning in Cape May as a small, four-lane concrete ribbon, the Parkway headed north toward the New York Thruway, eventually connecting New Jersey to New England. The communities along the Parkway’s route, some of them deservedly obscure, suddenly became exit numbers on a highway. Who had ever heard of Woodbridge?

Parkway construction required a detour of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks around the site of a new bridge in

Woodbridge. A careless engineer hit that spot at 70 mph and sent his train—called “The Broker”—rolling down an embankment, becoming a runaway battering ram. The cemetery in Newark fared little better, with dug up corpses scattered left and right.

Early on, the people of Bloomfield knew they were under the gun. Preliminary plans had appeared in the *Newark Evening News*, followed by surveyors from the Highway Authority who boldly trespassed on private property without asking permission. After all, there was the theory of “Eminent Domain, which gave the state the right to seize any so-called private property as needed, and the Parkway was emphatically needed.

Then there was the bizarre remark of a former mayor of Bloomfield, William Huck, who attributed his re-election to the fact that the people of Bloomfield “wanted the parkway” [to come through town].



Walnut Street Train Station: Demolished

Once the bulldozers had finished with East Orange, they advanced eastward toward the Watsessing area of Bloomfield. The route bypassed the gigantic General Electric Company



284 Montgomery St.: Demolished

building on Lawrence Street, heading toward a rendezvous with Bloomfield Avenue, where the Entrance and Exit ramps #148 and #149 would be located. Demolished at that point where the Mendelssohn Speedgun Company and the historic Metz Hotel. A slice was carved out of the southern end of Watsessing Park and a massive bridge was erected to carry the six-lane road over Bloomfield and Franklin Avenues, leaving a no-man's-land of gravel, concrete and weeds underneath the overpass.

Another landmark that surely deserved preservation was the venerable Dodd Homestead on the east side of Franklin Avenue, a 1719 structure that could have easily been moved to another site. However, the highway funds were for demolition, not preservation, and the old house was bulldozed.

This was the beginning of a large curve north toward Belleville Avenue. Several other structures in this neighborhood surely deserved preservation. The Canal Coal Co.

disappeared, followed by the Walnut Street Station of the Erie Railroad. The highway then gobbled up the block of Walnut St. between the tracks and Belleville Ave. Narrowly missing the David Oakes house (now the Oakeside Cultural Center), the Parkway dug up Walnut Street and displaced or demolished the fine homes there. One such home was the Morgan House on the southeastern corner of Belleville Avenue and Walnut Street, which had been built in the 1890s in the Colonial Revival style by Thomas Oakes.

Once across Belleville Ave., the next casualties were the thousands of old trees in the only wooded part of Bloomfield that still remembered the tread of Native Americans. A section of the Oakes Mill, no longer owned by that family, was knocked down, as well as the old boiler house of 1892, built when steam had replaced water power at the mill.

It was as if a gigantic tornado had passed through, devastating everything in its path. Some senior citizens still carried memories of the arrogant attitude of the state of New Jersey commanding them to "get out of your house or we will pull it down over your head."*

However, it was what the citizens of Bloomfield wanted, or so Mayor Huck had said. And the benefits to Bloomfield?

The Garden State Parkway is a bad neighbor. Busy and noisy for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it has swallowed up hundreds of taxpaying properties, thus raising the taxes of those who still live here. Its convenience has made it easy for criminals to come into town, make a hit and then speed back to the Parkway for a quick escape. Money has been drained away to shopping centers in Paramus and elsewhere. Drag racing during the summer nights when windows are open is common.

As for the wonderful convenience of the parkway, sure, we all use it. We take it to the Jersey Shore, to New York State and to the shopping centers. Who shops in Bloomfield Center anymore? Does anybody remember Monday and Friday nights? You could go to the library, drop in Woolworth's to pick up a few things, have a soda at Wessel's on Washington Street and walk home. This is only a part of what we have lost.



259 Walnut Street: Demolished



15 Spruce Street: Demolished

*This is an actual statement made to the author of this article by the late Harold Brotherhood, who lived on Montgomery Street. Brotherhood was a leading and respected citizen of Bloomfield and one of the founders of the Historical Society of Bloomfield.



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD

90 Broad Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Postal address: PO Box 1074
Bloomfield, NJ 07003-1074
Tel: 973-743-8844
E-mail: info@hsob.org
www.hsob.org

OFFICERS

Jean Kuras, *President*
Walter Nacnodovitz, *Vice President/*
Program
Mary Shoffner, *Corresponding Secretary/*
Hospitality
Anne Carlino, *Recording Secretary*
John Debold, *Membership*
Cindi Debold, *Treasurer*
Dorothy Johnson, *Museum Curator*
Ava Caridad, *Publicity & Promotion*

TRUSTEES

Joseph Barry
Tina Caridad
Richard Rockwell
Mark Scurman

PAST PRESIDENT

Ina Campbell†

WEBMASTER

Richard Rockwell

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Ava Caridad, Editor
Nicholas D'Angelo, Layout

Can you identify?

The answer to last issue's challenge is: 17 Franklin Street. The photo on the left was taken on January 15, 1975. That is a Volkswagen Beetle (circa 1966) and Ford Econoline van (1968 or 1969) parked out front. The photo on the right was taken September 19, 2019.



Morris Canal Greenway in Bloomfield Hike

Saturday, May 2, 2020 (Raindate: Sunday, May 3)
10:00 AM to 2:30 PM

Cost: \$8 advanced ticket purchase required

On this 3-mile hike, conducted by Bloomfield Councilma Rich Rockwell and Ron Rice, explore the path of the Morris Canal through Bloomfield, 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. \$8 tickets covers cost of bus and 20-page handout with historic photos and color maps. To purchase tickets, visit www.HSOB.org. For questions, email MorrisCanal@gmail.com.

Bloomfield History Cryptogram

CXO CEUW HGOOW EK BNEEDKQONZ
UVS FTGIXVSOZ QW 1797 KEG CUE
XTWZGOZ ZENNVGS. CXQS QS
CXO SVDA LOVG IEWSCGTICQEW EK
CXO FGOSBLCOGQVW IXTGIX EW CXO
HGOOW UVS IEDDOWIOZ.

Email answers to info@HSOB.org with
"Cryptogram" in the header



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:

Thomas. W. Burden
Bloomfield

Christopher J. Garrabrant III
South Dennis, MA

Eli Kelley
Bloomfield