



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

OCTOBER 2014

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street,
Bloomfield, NJ

7:30 PM

Please note new time

**The Administration
of Mayor Ralph Conte 1963-1966**

The Historical Society of Bloomfield will present “The Administration of Mayor Ralph Conte 1963-1966”, a program on the administration of Bloomfield’s Mayor Ralph G. Conte, the first Democratic mayor in Bloomfield’s history. Mayor Conte will discuss the programs and policies, successes and disappointments of his administration.



Mr. Conte served as Mayor from 1963 to 1966. He grew up in the Ampere Parkway section of town, attended Carteret School, South Junior High, Bloomfield High School (Class of 1947), Seton Hall University and Fordham University School of Law. He was a Partner in the

law firm of Rospond, Rospond and Conte and also served as Municipal Magistrate in Roseland.

Morris Canal Greenway

On May 5, the Township Council passed an ordinance designating the former path of the Morris Canal as Morris Canal Greenway. Bloomfield joins other counties and municipalities across the state recognizing this important historical and educational resource. The Greenway includes the Collins house and surrounding property, which was the location of the Canal’s Inclined Plane 11 East.



The Morris Canal Greenway Committee was also formed to recommend and oversee Greenway projects, including the addition of historical interpretive signs and trail markers and continuing to conduct hikes along the path of the Canal.

Thanks to Councilman Carlos Pomares, who spearheaded this initiative, and to other Council members and Mayor Michael Venezia

for their support in recognizing one of Bloomfield’s most significant historic resources.

For updates on the Committees activities, visit them on Facebook: Morris Canal Greenway in Bloomfield

Church on the Green in Dire Need

Among the churches built by early Presbyterian congregations in America, Bloomfield’s “Church on the Green” stands out for its urbanistic significance and its architectural integrity.

Few American churches have stood so long in their original city contexts, while preserving most of their important architectural features, as the world changed around them.

Bloomfield Presbyterian Church on the Green (BPCOG) was constructed on the popular Wren-Gibbs model between 1797 and 1819 to the designs of Samuel Lawrence Ward, a member of the congregation, with Joshua James as superintendent of construction. One of the most beautiful churches on the Eastern Seaboard, BPCOG is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and was recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey in the 1930s. Featured prominently on the seal of the township, the Church on the Green remains today the single most identifiable symbol of Bloomfield, and it is in danger of catastrophic collapse.



Bowing and bulging of the east exterior wall, stemming from deficiencies in roof trusses installed in the 1980s, required the sanctuary to be closed in 2011 and the east wall to be buttressed to prevent further lateral movement. A survey taken in the spring of 2014 indicated there is new movement in the opposite, or west, exterior wall, facing Bloomfield High School and Broad Street. With this finding, the church’s design build team advised that stabilization work be undertaken as soon as possible.

Accordingly, the church has chosen to move forward with *Phase 1: Stabilization of the Sanctuary Restoration Project*, at a projected cost of \$2.4 million. The scope of the work in *Phase 1: Stabilization* includes the creation of a temporary roof underneath the existing trusses to protect the interior of the sanctuary; boxing in and sealing the church’s 3-manual 48-rank French Romantic Peragallo pipe organ to protect it from exposure; removal of the existing roof and trusses; and installation of new steel trusses, roof paneling, shingles and HVAC equipment.

Church funds and member pledges will not cover the cost of this project, however. Only with widespread financial support from the greater Bloomfield community and friends will this historic and architectural treasure be preserved for future generations. Visit the church’s Facebook page or website (www.bpcog.org) to read endorsement letters from area politicians and find out how you can help save this vital piece of Bloomfield history.

Answering the call...

Bloomfield's massive contribution to the WWII war effort

By John Debold

Bloomfield's war history has been a story of continuous change and expansion—of transition beyond human conception.—“A History of Eastern Aircraft Division,” Copyright 1944, General Motors Eastern Aircraft division.

When America's involvement in WWII became necessary on December 7, 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and four days later with the Germany's declaration of war against the United States, Bloomfield's citizens and the local industries that employed them were once again called to help.

From the Revolutionary War onward, Bloomfield has a solid history of supporting the United States' military. During the War of 1812 against England, Bloomfield sent animal hides to Newark for tanning. These hides were then returned to Bloomfield's shoemakers to produce boots for the war. During the Civil War, Oakes Mills famously produced cloth for Union Soldiers' uniforms. During the First World War, our town produced, among other products, plumbing for battleships.

Bloomfield again answered the call on the town's manufacturing production lines and research laboratories. The allies in World War II needed products from local companies such as Schering, Westinghouse, General Electric, Charms Candy, Lehn & Fink and Scientific Glass Apparatus Company. A not-so-widely known contribution came from the Delco Battery Company located near the present City Subway extension in close proximity to Grove Street.

In 1919, General Motors Corporation (GM) purchased 35 acres of land and buildings from the International Arms & Fuse Company (which produced 21-second bomb fuses during WWI under contract with the British government), on land that company originally purchased from Thomas and Mina Edison. Their purpose was to produce batteries for their Delco-Remy Division.

On January 21, 1942, Eastern Aircraft Company was started by an agreement with the U.S. Navy (Bureau of Aeronautics) and GM. Bloomfield was making twenty thousand lead-acid batteries per week for their Delco-Remy division. Included in the agreement was a small Long Island plane maker, Grumman Aircraft.

Avenger planes, 1943.



Below, an FM-2 Wildcat Fighter during flight testing circa late 1943.





At left, the Eastern Bloomfield Nerve Center. At right, a Bloomfield employee tirelessly contributes to the war effort.



The Eastern Aircraft Company's modern gatehouse in Bloomfield.

When war manufacturing outgrew both its original building and plant built specifically for the effort, another building was purchased in late 1943 that had been used by a large baking company (complete with horse stables) about a mile away in the Ampere Section of town.

Before the War, between 1937 and 1941, GM Linden produced 343,000 Buicks, Pontiacs and Oldsmobiles. It was an enormous challenge to all divisions to retrofit for the manufacture of planes. Eastern Aircraft nonetheless produced nearly 35,000 planes for the United States Navy as well as the British Royal Navy during the war. Future President George H.W. Bush was an Avenger pilot in the Pacific, bombing airstrips and radio facilities.

The Bloomfield plant had to be completely re-tooled to make precision parts, as did GM's plants in Linden, Trenton, Tarrytown, NY and Baltimore, MD for the production of the Navy fighter planes and torpedo-bombers requested—the Avenger Torpedo Bomber and the Wildcat Fighter.

These two planes were needed to both challenge Japan's Mitsubishi Industries' successful "Zero" in the Pacific and the German U-Boat menace in the Atlantic. The Navy wanted these planes to fly by the autumn of 1942.

Bloomfield's factory produced electrical and hydraulic systems, ammunition boxes, the "Star" decal for the wings and fuselage, rudder and brake pedals, pilot seat assembly, radio shelf, pilot's panel, ejection chutes, cowl flap housing assembly and bomb hook and release tubes.



Bloomfield Eastern Aircraft Testing Tubes



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD

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Cryptogram Whiz Kids

The Grand Prize winner of our Bloomfield Brain Buster from the May 2014 issue is Tina Caridad, who won a "Map of Bloomfield" jigsaw puzzle, donated by Jane & Wayne Bond.

The other winners are:

- Maureen Conta • Andrew Kollar • Robert J. DeTrolio
- Joanna Harris Fribush • Jean Kuras • Eileen Larkin

The answer to the puzzle is: "This month of May marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Historical Society of Bloomfield Museum, situated on the top floor of the Children's Library."

On May 4, 1969, The HSOB Museum opened its doors for the first time,



an achievement that had been in the works since Bloomfield's 1962 Sesquicentennial and The Historical Society of Bloomfield's inception in 1966. The Museum, located on the 3rd Floor of the Children's Library, remains there to this day. Many thanks to Museum Curator Dorothy Johnson and Museum volunteers Anne Carlino and Janis Lee for their hard work and stewardship of our town's treasures.

More information on this auspicious occasion can be found at: <http://www.HSOB.org/towncrier/September1969.pdf>

The Baldwin Farmhouse

The Baldwin Farmhouse on 343 Belleville Avenue. During the American Revolution, David Baldwin lived on this property in a house built by his father Benjamin. He later built the house shown here. The wing unit stood in what is now the Van Tassel Funeral Home driveway. The main unit still stands.



*Image courtesy of Van Tassel Funeral Home.
Photo by Ricard Rockwell.*



Holsten's turn 75 on October 26th

Bloomfield landmark **Holsten's Brookdale Confectionary** on 1063 Broad Street, "New Jersey's best old fashioned ice cream parlor", will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary on October 26. Renowned for its home made ice cream and candy, Holsten's was made even more famous in June of 2007, when it was showcased as the setting for the

final scene of the final episode of HBO's "The Sopranos" television show.

The HSOB congratulates this iconic Bloomfield establishment on this important milestone. Stop by on October 26 for a free ice cream giveaway!

The Welcome Mat

A cordial welcome is extended to the following **new** HSOB members. We hope to see you at our next meeting:

Don Cornell
Bloomfield

Charlotte Cuzzolino
Bloomfield

James P. Kotcho
Morristown, NJ

Edward MacGregor
Bloomfield

Wendy Neill
Bloomfield

Carlos & Natasha Pomares
Bloomfield