



# The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

OCTOBER 2023

## SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

7:30 PM

**BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER**

84 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ

### **The History of the Early Morris Mills of the Brookdale Section of Bloomfield**

Presented by Mark Wiley

Long-time Bloomfield resident Mark Wiley will present on the saw and grist mills built by the Morris family in the Brookdale section of Bloomfield in the early 1700s. Wiley has done extensive research on the Morris family, who settled in Bloomfield in the late 1600s and built a saw mill in 1702 (fed by what is now Clarks Pond). A short time later, the Morris family built a downstream grist mill located near Bay Avenue. Wiley will explain the mechanical workings of both saw and grist mills, as well as show videos of operating mills. Additionally, he will provide a history of the Morris family, including Ephraim Morris, the inventor of the Morris Canal inclined plane mechanism.

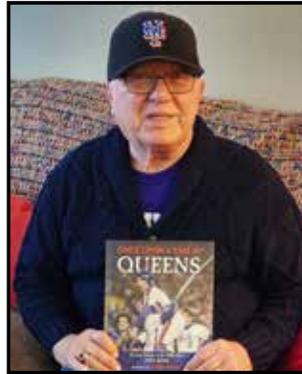
Wiley is a long-time resident of Bloomfield and has worked as an engineer at Lummus in Bloomfield since 1981. His hobby is historical and genealogy research, and, as some of his ancestors were millers, Wiley has a special interest in mills.

Join us on October 24 as we explore 1700s Bloomfield, its mills and the legendary Morris family.



## **In Memoriam:**

### **Walter Nacnodovitz 1949–2023**



Former HSOB Vice President Walter Nacnodovitz, Jr. passed away on July 19, 2023 at the age of 73. He was born on Nov. 15, 1949 in Northern New Jersey, where he lived until 2021, when he and his wife, former HSOB Recording Secretary Anne Carlino, relocated and retired to Asheville, a city in the mountains of western North Carolina.

Walter grew up in North Bergen, NJ and graduated from North Bergen High School in 1967. He attended NYU and graduated in 1972 with a degree in Civil Engineering. In the late 1990s, he founded

Walton Engineering/ Walton Construction Consultants.

Walter was a history buff with a particular interest in the Civil War. He was a ferocious reader in his spare time, as well as being an avid NY Mets and Rangers fan. He was a passionate story-teller and conversationalist who enjoyed meeting new people anywhere he traveled.

Walter is survived by his wife, Anne; children Thomas, Christine and Jill; grandchildren Lily, Declan and Jonah; and stepchildren Jen and David.

*Is it true that hearts can break? Yes. Mine is in one hundred pieces. News of Walter's passing came to the Board with a bruising sorrow and regret.*

*Walter was a kind and generous man who always supported the endeavors of the Historical Society. He was devoted, dependable and available in emergencies; an intelligent, gentle man with an infectious sense of humor. The greatest joy of Walter's life was Anne and their family. His love was boundless and unconditional.*

*And so we wear our sorrows, honoring with fondness the memory of our dear friend, Walter. — Jean Kuras, HSOB President*

## **Can You Identify?**

Where in Bloomfield is this house? This photo was taken on April 24, 1949.

Email your answer to [info@HSOB.org](mailto:info@HSOB.org) and put "Can You Identify?" in the header.



# From the Speculation Files...

## Could Dutch Schultz's lost loot be hidden in Bloomfield?

By Lisa Caivano

**Fact**—Every New Jersey kid has their own gangster story.

**Fact**—Children are often bored.

**Fact**— My story involves gangsters and boredom, and I'm going to tell you how.

My story is based on information from the father of a friend and his neighbor, (coincidentally these guys spent a lot of time in the bars together) and so on and so forth, and my own direct knowledge, but I swear every word is true—as far as I can remember.

If you want the full lowdown on Dutch Schultz, a.k.a Arthur Flegenheimer, you can just GTS (Google That Stuff); I'm here to tell you about my relationship with one of the most notorious gangsters ever.

In a nutshell, Schultz began his career as a youth, and was imprisoned for the first time at the age of 18 for burglary. Once released, his life of crime really took off. He was known for his ruthlessness, with crimes encompassing, but not limited to, murder, bootlegging, numbers, extortion and racketeering. He was the devil reincarnate and made life hell for anyone he met.

In 1935, Thomas Dewey was appointed special prosecutor, specifically to handle organized crime, in New York County (Manhattan) by Governor Herbert H. Lehman. Bootlegging and racketeering ran rampant and the community was outraged. One of Dewey's first targets was Dutch Schultz and Dewey made "business as usual" virtually impossible for "The Dutchman," as he was referred to.

Schultz took a personal dislike to the newly appointed special prosecutor and decided to assassinate Dewey. Although Schultz was tolerated in the criminal world, his insanity became obvious to even the most hardened of criminals. At this point, even the five major crime families knew something had to be done. When Schultz asked Murder, Inc. for permission to murder the G-Man they, in turn, put a hit out on Schultz.

So it was that The Dutchman found himself in The Palace Chop House in Newark, NJ on October 23, 1935. He and a few of his associates were gunned down. Schultz was mortally wounded and succumbed to his injuries the next day—October 24, 1935. The official cause of death was listed as peritonitis. He was 34 years old and his reign of terror was over. Problem solved.

However, the legacy of The Dutchman has far outlived the man. This is where my story begins.

As wonderful as life in Bloomfield was in the 1960s and early 70s, we were often bored. My best friend and I had free run all over town, but after tiring of Brookside Park, Pulaski Park, Marcal Paper Mill, Scientific Glass and all the other great places to explore in the "Polack Hill"\* section of Bloomfield, we would whine and complain, "There's nothing to do!" My friend's father would always suggest that we grab our shovels and pails and start digging in the yard for "Dutch's gold." We had no idea who "Dutch" was, but digging for his treasure seemed to be a great way to spend an afternoon.

Before his untimely death, Schultz knew he was skating on thin ice. He commissioned the construction of a special air-tight and water-tight safe, where he allegedly placed \$7 million in cash and bonds, the equivalent of more than \$138 million today (October 2023). The story is that Schultz and an associate, Bernard "Lulu" Rosenkrantz, drove to an undisclosed location in New York's Catskill Mountains and buried the safe. There was never any indication that



Mobster Dutch Schultz shown here in a 1935 mug shot; he would be murdered in October of that year.

either man ever disclosed the location of the treasure and it has never been found. Even today, people who find themselves in the Catskills with time on their hands will stop in one of the local shops and pick up a map that they hope will lead them to The Dutchman's fortune.

We have all come across shady characters and so it was with my childhood friend's grandfather. This man was a contractor, an immigrant that came to this country to make his fortune. He was a good, honest hard-working man that simply wanted to provide for his family and give them opportunities that he hadn't had. He wanted to live The American Dream.

We don't know the particulars, but whenever The Dutchman was arrested, and he was often arrested, our houses were frequently put up as bail, simultaneously in different courts, since the lack of modern communication meant that there was no way to check from one municipality to another. In 2023, the property contains four three-family homes and a workshop, but during the time that Schultz was

running rampant in Essex County, there were only two three-family residences on the property, which was owned by my friend's grandfather. Although the plot of land was valuable, the homes my friend's grandfather had constructed for his family became even more precious as more extended family depended on these homes for shelter. These houses were jeopardized on numerous occasions in more than one jurisdiction when they were put up for Schultz's bail.

I do remember one story very clearly. Schultz had made another frantic, demanding call for bail and my friend's dad decided to tag along with his father to one of the local courtrooms. As they approached the bench, the judge spoke directly to the landowner, asking him pointedly if he understood exactly what he was risking by using his property to bail out this heartless monster, a man who would shoot you as easily as look at you. The judge tried to explain how a man like Schultz had no conscience. How could he risk everything he had worked so hard to acquire for a man that honestly could not have cared less? The answer was, "If I lose these homes, I'll build more."

Whatever the connection was between this hardworking man—my friend's grandfather—and the gangster Schultz, we will never know, but obviously, there was a level of trust, respect, or more likely, obligation.

We all know how stories grow and legends are created, but I remember another particular story, told in hushed tones, about the near miss this industrious, upstanding citizen (and he was, make no mistake about that) had. He had plans to meet Schultz at The Palace Chop House that very evening in October 1935 for dinner. Luckily, his wife put the kibosh on those plans and he not only survived, but thrived as a vital part of the community. The close association between the two men might lead one to believe that The Dutchman didn't have to drive all the way to the Catskills to hide his fortune.

We have yet to find "Dutch's gold," but if I ever had the notion to satisfy my own curiosity, I wouldn't be digging under trees in New York State, I'd start a little closer to home—in a back yard in Bloomfield, New Jersey.\*\*

**\*Editor's Note:** No angry letters to the editor, please! According to Bill Lamb, a previous *The New Town Crier* contributor, in an article about Walter Van Grofski written for the Society for American Baseball Research, "Polack Hill" was a "stronghold for recent arrivals... a close-knit community locally renowned for ethnic allegiance, devotion to St. Valentine parish and athletic prowess. Among Walter Van Grofski's neighborhood friends and contemporaries were future New York Yankees Hank Borowy and Don Savage (originally Saiewicz), and some years later, Denver Broncos quarterback Frank Tripucka."

**\*\*Editor's Note:** No inquiring letters to the editor, please! I don't know the location of this property and, anyway, nobody wants you dropping by their house at all hours of the day and night with a backhoe.



The Palace Chop House in Newark, NJ. *Getty Images.*



*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](mailto:info@hsob.org)  
[www.hsob.org](http://www.hsob.org)

#### **OFFICERS**

Jean Kuras, *President*  
Mark Scurman, *Vice President/*  
*Program*  
Mary Shoffner, *Corresponding Secretary/*  
*Hospitality*  
Tina Caridad, *Recording Secretary*  
John Debold, *Membership/Treasurer*  
Dorothy Johnson, *Museum Curator*  
Ava Caridad, *Newsletter Editor*

#### **TRUSTEES**

Joseph Barry  
Dean Cole  
Richard Rockwell  
Mark Szep

#### **PAST PRESIDENT**

Ina Campbell†

#### **WEBMASTER**

Richard Rockwell

#### **NEWSLETTER STAFF**

Ava Caridad, *Editor*

## New Revolutionary War Memorial



On July 1, approximately 100 people gathered for the unveiling of a memorial stone with a plaque bearing the names of the 32 Revolutionary War veterans buried in Bloomfield Cemetery on Belleville Ave.

Cemetery Director Mary Jones credited Bonnie Sharkey (Regent of the Major Joseph Bloomfield Chapter, Daughters

of the American Revolution) and Michael Perrone (local mason and President of the Belleville Historical Society) for making the dedication possible. Perrone, who wore a Revolutionary War military costume—replete with tricorne hat—on the day, has made it a personal mission to clean the headstones of veterans interred in northern New Jersey cemeteries, including the Bloomfield Cemetery.

During the dedication, flautist Jessica Valiente played compositions from the 1770s–1780s, including “A Toast to George Washington,” by Francis Hopkinson and “Chester” by William Billings.

Perrone, who created the stone, and Val Hadshinow, from Designs by Val in North Arlington and who engraved the names, unveiled the monument. According to Perrone, Hadshinow was responsible for engraving all 3,000 names on the 9/11 monument located at Eagle Rock Mountain Reservation in West Orange (Source: *The Independent Press*).

Following the placing of the memorial wreath, the ceremony concluded with Perrone setting off a multiple-cannon salute. A file with complete info and photos of the ceremony is available at the HSOB Museum.

## HSOB Scholarship Winners



**Demetria Glennon** and **William Jones**, Bloomfield High School Class of 2023, have been selected as the winners of this year’s Historical Society of Bloomfield Scholarship.

Awards were based on 1,000-word essays submitted by BHS seniors who are going on to college. Applicants were asked to expand on the role the HSOB plays in protecting and preserving the historical record of our town.

## 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:

Cynthia Barrett-Bismuth  
*Bloomfield*

Jenny Mundell  
*Bloomfield*

Susanna Lill &  
the Jones Family:  
William, William R.,  
Claire F. & Colin M.  
*Bloomfield*

Paul Gauer  
*Bloomfield*

Fran Phillips  
*Bloomfield*

Lou Lopez  
*Bloomfield*

Beth Sehr  
*Bloomfield*