



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2

BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

NOVEMBER 2004

MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23

8:00 PM

at the

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER
84 Broad Street, Bloomfield

Fred Camp: Bloomfield's "Other" Architect

Our speaker for the November 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.

ARCHITECTS

There are several members of the architectural profession buried in Bloomfield Cemetery: Joseph Kingsland Oakes, Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892), Frederick T. Camp (1849-1905), and George W. Cadmus. Bloomfield is also given as the birthplace of the grandfather of a very distinguished member of the architectural profession. Richard Mansfield White (1797-1849), whose grandson was the famous (some say notorious) Stanford White (1853-1906), was born "in Bloomfield", which at that time included the present towns of Belleville, Nutley, Glen Ridge and Montclair. It is not known if the White family lived in any of these other communities or present-day Bloomfield. In any case, it would be perhaps more accurate to say that White had been born in Newark, inasmuch as Bloomfield was not officially set apart until 1812.

"Uncle Billy" McLaughlan

By Frederick Branch



"Uncle Billy" in his backyard on Walnut Terrace. (Photo courtesy of Agnes McLaughlan)

This article about a well-loved Bloomfield citizen was actually begun years ago on one of this writer's many visits to Mrs. David Oakes II in her 1890's Colonial Revival mansion on Belleville Avenue, which has since been preserved as the Bloomfield Cultural Center. Mrs. Oakes, despite her distinguished heritage, was a very down-to-earth practical person, who told me that she had taught her children the value of a dollar (it came out "dolluh" in her soft Virginia accent). There were many high spots in our evening visits through the 1960's and 70's, during which I learned much unwritten Bloomfield history as she had personally experienced it. Unfortunately, a portable tape recorder was not available to capture her fascinating reminiscences, so they cannot be documented.

During one of my first visits, Mrs. Oakes proudly showed me the practical use put to the formerly wasted space under her grand stairway, which had been built with paneled sides in the late 19th century, "colonial" style. The panels had been cleverly replaced by drawers in which her children kept their winter hats, gloves and mufflers handy to the front door. The drawers were carefully worked into the original design so that the appearance of the paneled wall was unchanged. As they glided in and out of place, Mrs. Oakes said that a wonderful craftsman named Billy McLaughlan who worked "down at the mill" had done these for her many years before, in addition to other special storage cupboards elsewhere in the house.

This was my first introduction to the name. It meant nothing at the time, but was filed away in memory for future reference. Then, just a year or so ago, a letter came from Ms. Agnes McLaughlan, who told me about her father, Billy McLaughlan, a craftsman in creating furniture and even small buildings. He had worked at the Oakes Mill for 35 years and the pieces of the following story began to fall into place.

Ms. McLaughlan enclosed a photocopy of a 1945 letter from the late Eleanor Oakes Skinner, daughter of David Oakes II and Jean Doswell Oakes, in which she thanked Billy for repairing her glove-stretcher. Mrs. Skinner went on to say: "... it has stimu-



The Old Randolph House at 166-168 Liberty Street.

(continued on next page)

"UNCLE BILLY" MCLAUGHLAN (continued from page 1)



The fence on Fremont Street.



John A. Moran's gazebo on Fremont Street.

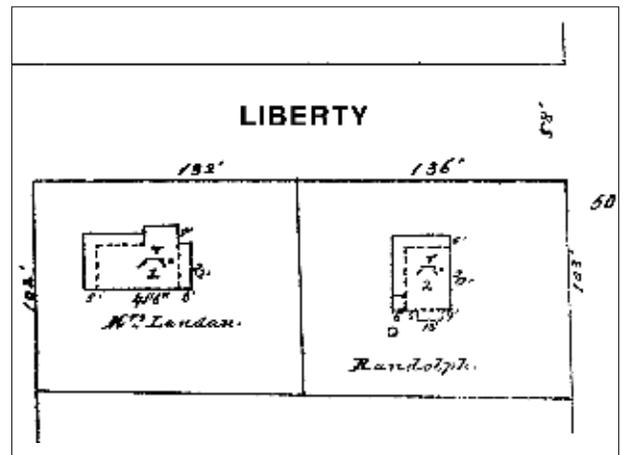
lated many thoughts of former years ... each time I have taken it out to stretch small fingers in children's gloves, I think of the times when mine were not much larger [and] when I adored nothing better than to go to the "Carpenter Shop" [at the Oakes Mill] and watch Billy McLaughlan." This was high praise, indeed.

Who was Billy McLaughlan? He was originally from Scotland and first lived with his wife and four daughters on Walnut Street, then moved to 44 Walnut Terrace when his youngest child, Agnes, was four years old. The photograph on page one of Mr. McLaughlan in his back yard, was taken on Walnut Terrace on Easter Sunday, April 9th in 1944. It was his family home for 39 years. "Uncle Billy" was well known in Bloomfield.

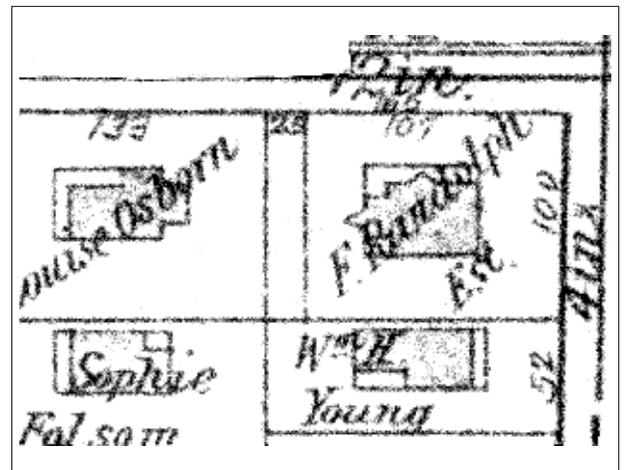
Agnes recalls that she hated to walk to the Center with him because he met so many friends who stopped to talk, that it took all day to get there.

Two of his cousins also came to the United States. "The Aunts," as they were called, first lived in Orange, then moved to a house on Bloomfield Avenue on the site of the school operated until last spring by the Sacred Heart Church, where they were communicants. When this house was razed to build a larger school building in the late 1920's, they moved to numbers 166-168 Liberty Street, a large double house just two doors east of Oakland Avenue. The 1888 map in the HSOB Museum shows a smaller house owned by a Mr. Randolph on that site. By 1906 it had achieved its present size and somewhat odd shape. It may have been converted into a multiple dwelling shortly after this date. The Landan residence next door was torn down in the late 1920's for a large apartment building that was never built, and is now the site of the old Bloomfield College gymnasium. The college plans to demolish both the gym and the 1870's Randolph residence.

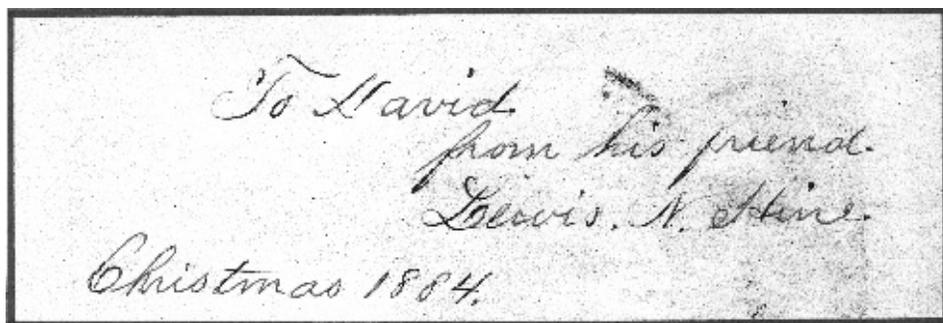
The McLaughlan name was synonymous with fine craftsmanship. He also worked for John A. Moran, for many years the owner of the stationery store at 28 Broad Street. Mrs. Mary Moran Schofner very kindly allowed the author to photograph her summerhouse and ornamental fence, both built by Billy and both in superb condition after many years of exposure to New Jersey weather. Mary remembers many pleasant summer evening suppers in the summerhouse in the pre-air-conditioning days when it was simply too hot to use the family dining room. And the fence is still as Billy left it more than 60 years ago. Until 1946, the Morans had a view of Joseph David Sears' tree-shaded estate and gardens instead of the brick walls of the apartment house that has since replaced the old Sears' mansion on Franklin Street.



1888 map of the block of Liberty between Oakland Avenue and Spruce Street.



Corner of Liberty and Spruce from 1906 map.



WOODSIDE: A LOST PART OF BLOOMFIELD

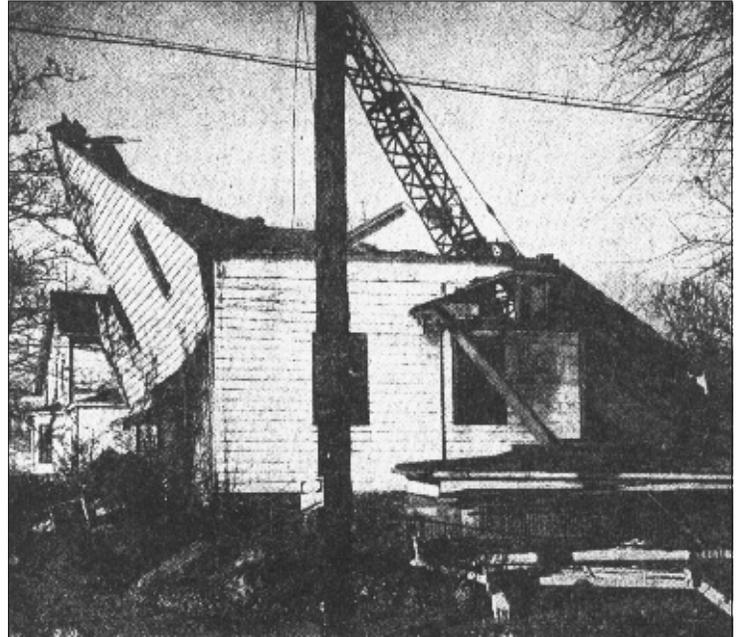
There is a book of Woodside history, authored by Newark resident C.G. Hine and published in 1909, which has much interesting material that relates to Bloomfield. A second point of interest is the relationship between the Hine and Oakes families. This was not known until Mrs. Madeline Kish of the HSOB recently gave the Museum a book she bought at the Oakes house sale about 20 years ago, given in 1884 to David Oakes by Louis N. Hine as a Christmas gift, when David would have been about nine years old. This one item ties both of the families together: evidently they moved in the same social circles. Hine wrote about the "Old Road to Bloomfield" so well that some excerpts from his book were included in the previous issue, along with some 1909 photographs taken from his book and contemporary views of the same areas.

NEW JERSEY HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The State of New Jersey has had a bad rep for their lack of historic preservation laws, particularly the Highway Authority, which behaved very badly in the early 1950's. Their goal was to blast the Garden State Parkway right-of-way through Bloomfield "irregardless" of anything that stood in their way. This publication has printed a number of pictures of good buildings, both old and new, which had the misfortune to stand in the way of "Progress", that worn-out excuse for just about anything. For this issue, we have decided to feature one of the greatest outrages the State committed in Bloomfield: the razing of the 230-year-old Daniel Dodd home on Franklin Street. If there was any building in town worthy of moving to another site, it was this house. Instead, it was leveled with as little regard as an old chicken coop.

This photograph, published in the old Newark Evening News, date unknown, shows a crane pushing the west wall of the house into Franklin Street. Donald Scott, Mayor of Bloomfield at that time, did send telegrams and letters, (which the newspaper called "strangely worded") to Governor Driscoll, protesting the actions of the Highway Department, but only because they planned to locate "gasoline filling stations, a restaurant, snack bar, equipment maintenance, bus, parking, etc. in a "Class 'A' residential zone in Bloomfield", located far north of this site at Lindbergh Boulevard. He said nothing about the wrecking operations in the south end of town. Thanks a lot, Donald Scott.

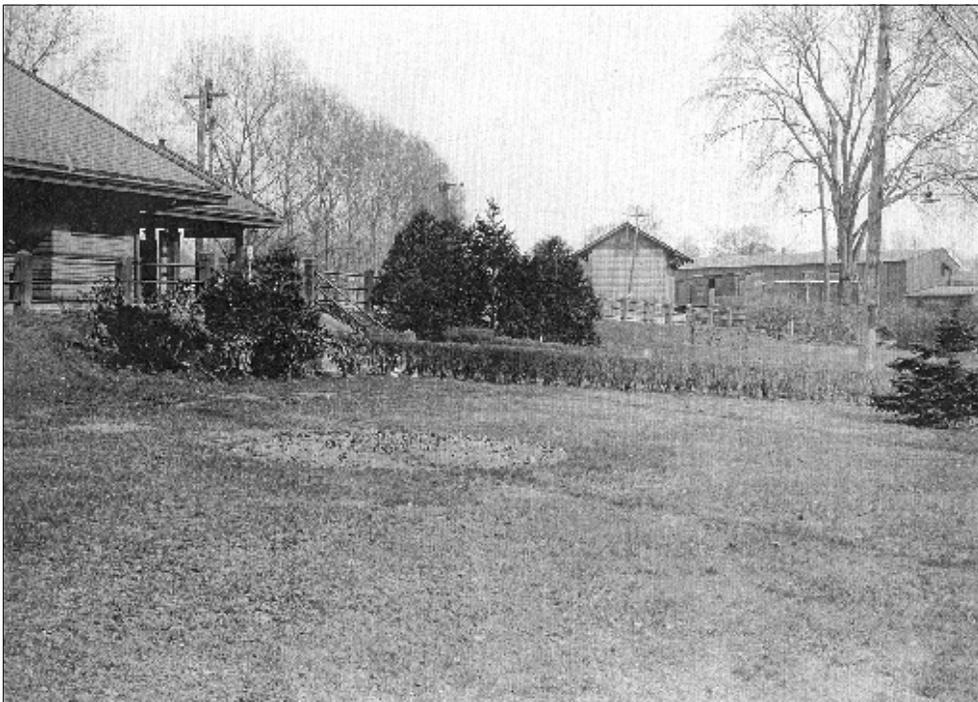
The Dodd homestead which had a cornerstone dated 1719, stood on "the Old Road to Bloomfield" during the Revolution, long before Israel Crane built the Newark and Pompton Turnpike (Bloomfield Avenue) in the early 1800's. As written by the late Herb Fischer, "... more than once it heard the tramp of soldiers' feet marching by. Washington, himself, is known to have passed



LANDMARK RAZED – Wall of the house at 339 Franklin Avenue, Bloomfield, recognized as the oldest in that town, topples as the building is leveled to make way for the Garden State Parkway. Records show that the house was built in 1719 by Daniel and Sarah Dodd.

the homestead, and quite possibly stopped by on several occasions, although there are no records to prove that he did."

The property on which it stood is now buried under the eastern end of the long bridge over Bloomfield Avenue to Franklin Street. So much for what Fischer called "hallowed ground".



GONE WITH THE PARKWAY

There is absolutely nothing left of anything in the above photo, taken of the Walnut Street Station of the Erie Railroad in the early 20th century by the Town Improvement Association. The station is gone, the shrubbery, the hedge, the Freight House, the C.J. Murray Lumber Company, that owned the large shed in the right background, the grass, and even the soil beneath the grass. Where the unknown photographer stood on this winter day in the early 1900's is now the center lane of the northbound Garden State Parkway. And, believe it or not, so is the railroad.

How To Join The HSOB

A short time ago, a young person heard about the Historical Society of Bloomfield and wanted to know if you "had to be old" to join. No, there are certainly no age requirements for membership. In fact, the Society welcomes young people who have an interest in local history and who want to know more about it. Moreover, anyone below the legal voting age who wants to contribute to this newsletter is more than welcome to submit a manuscript to this Newsletter. If you have a special area of interest, please, let's hear about it.

Our address is:

Historical Society of
Bloomfield Museum

c/o Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield 07003



General Joseph Bloomfield
THE NEW TOWN CRIER
 THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
 THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 OF BLOOMFIELD
 90 Broad Street
 Bloomfield, NJ 07003

OFFICERS

Mary Wilbert, President
 Audrey Moore, Treasurer
 Jean M. Kuras, Secretary
 Emma-Lou Czarnecki,
 Corresponding Secretary

TRUSTEES

Dorothy Johnson
 Frederick Branch
 Alan Slaughter
 Richard West

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Pat Post

HOSPITALITY CHAIRPERSON

Marlene Bua

CURATOR EMERITUS

Lucy Sant Ambrogio

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Ina Campbell

NEW TOWN CRIER STAFF

Frederick Branch, Editor
 Pat Post, Assistant Editor

☞ **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.

Mr. & Mrs. James R. Branch
 Norman & Ruth Harrison
 Mrs. Madeline Jockel Kish
 Ms. Karen Luschar
 Ms. Patricia Marinaro
 Watsessing Heights Neighborhood
 Association

E-MAIL

The Historical Society of Bloomfield
 at:

BloomfHist@aol.com

OR CALL US

at:

973-743-8844



☞ **Theatre Historian Has Tour** ☞

At the invitation of Monica Abbott, your editor had a thrilling look at the backstage area of the old Lincoln/Broadmoor/Center Theatre which brought back memories of Saturday afternoons in the 1930's when a few cents bought a whole afternoon of cartoons, newsreels, and a romantic feature that was far over our heads, which was just as well. Even more of a kick, however, was climbing a metal staircase spiraling four stories into the gloom of the stage house, and walking on the metal grid from which scenery and lights were hung during World War One. There are eight dressing rooms, two on each floor with windows (long boarded up) looking out to Bloomfield Avenue and the rear parking lot.

Sadly, the occupancies of subsequent owners have removed any artifacts that may have dated from opening night except one. Possibly mindful of the disastrous Iriquois Theatre fire in Chicago in 1901, the management of the new Lincoln posted a large sign at stage right, which is reproduced above. The skylight would have been weighted to fall open automatically when the rope was cut, thus causing smoke and suffocating gases to escape should the theatre catch fire. At the same time a fireproof curtain would have dropped into place, confining the blaze to the stage and allowing the audience time to exit the theatre (which did not happen in Chicago).

GREAT ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC TEA COMPANY
"The A&P"

In 1931, there were 49 A&P Stores in this area, with 21 of them in Bloomfield. Bloomfield Avenue had the greatest number of any one street. Between Bloomfield, Montclair and Caldwell, there were 17 A&P Stores on Bloomfield Avenue.

ENJOY OUR MUSEUM

LOCATION: Above the Children's Library at 90 Broad Street.

HOURS: Wednesday from 2:00 to 4:30pm all year. Saturday from 10:00am to 12:30pm
 September to mid-June and by appointment (973) 743-8844

MEMBERSHIP FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD

Dues: Individual \$10.00; Couple \$15.00; Student (under 18 years) \$5.00;
 Organization (non-profit): \$10.00; Organization (commercial): \$25.00

Please send check, payable to "The Historical Society of Bloomfield",
 along with your name, address and telephone number to:

Membership Chairman

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD

90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003