



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

MARCH 2006

Save The Date

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006

This promises to be an exciting meeting, to be held at Oakeside Bloomfield Cultural Center

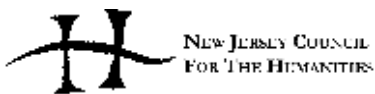
PRINCETON MAN: JOHN WITHERSPOON

The H.S.O.B. will present the program Princeton Man: John Witherspoon at the Oakeside Cultural Center, 240 Belleville Avenue, on Tuesday, March 28th at 8:00 P.M. The public is invited to this admission-free event.

Doctor John Witherspoon, educator and clergyman, is portrayed by Robert Gleason of the American Historical Theatre. Doctor Witherspoon was born in Scotland and emigrated to America at the urging of Richard Stockton to become president of Princeton University, then the College of New Jersey. He brought with him his wife and five children in 1768. He was much admired in New Jersey and as New Jersey's representative to the Continental Congress, he signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Robert Gleason has been associated with the American Historical Theatre for twelve years, holds a theatre arts degree and is an ardent historian. Mr. Gleason has a strong musical background and has appeared in over fifty plays and musicals. From 1970-71 he toured Europe with the Seventh Army Soldier's Chorus.

The Program is Offered through the Horizon Speakers' Bureau of the NJ Council For The Humanities, A State Partner of the National Endowment of the Humanities.



Sally Black 1916 – 2006

For many years, Sallie Black was a close friend, not only through our association with the Historical Society of Bloomfield. We both had other friends and organizations in common, and Sallie did me the great honor of introducing me to those of her friends whom she thought might become my friends. Through her activities in the HSOB, mainly as co-curator of the new Historical Society Museum in the Public Library, we had much to talk about and usually couldn't wait to communicate some new historical discovery that each thought the other should know about.

It was a sad loss, both personally and for the Society, when Sallie gave up her home on Forest Avenue in Glen Ridge and moved to Fredonia, New York. However, we never lost touch. There are bushels of typed letters in my archives that contain much

valuable information about New Jersey history that cannot be found anywhere else. She had an amazing memory and was more than willing to share her information (laboriously thumped out on an old manual typewriter).

Bulky envelopes from Fredonia arrived almost weekly (and sometimes twice weekly) until last spring, when my last letter remained unanswered. It was then that Sallie had the bad fall that, to all intents and purposes, ended her life. Somehow, I knew that we had communicated for the last time, although I hesitated to write to Jean Harper, Sallie's daughter, to inquire. Sometimes it is better not to know.

Among the many wonderful accomplishments Sallie achieved for the HSOB, probably nothing excels the large red cloth-bound book in the Reference Department of the Bloomfield Public Library: "Excerpts from 19th Century Newspapers".* There is hardly a day that this heavy tome isn't taken off the shelf to check out some obscure reference question or unknown fact that has appeared in print in one of Bloomfield's newspapers in the 1870's and 80's and is available nowhere else. Sallie and her assistant in the museum, Margaret Riffin, cross-indexed the book in every way possible. Researching information for both the first Arcadia "Bloomfield Book" of 2001 and the forthcoming 2007 edition would have been almost impossible without this guide to its contents.

Sallie accomplished much in her 89 years in this life. Would that this could be said of all of us.

— Frederick Branch

*There are also copies of this book in the New Jersey Historical Society Library and in the State Library in Trenton.



Sallie Black receives an orchid corsage from HSOB President Dorothy Johnson on the occasion of her last meeting of the Society in April of 1980.

THE ROWE STREET STATION

By Leonila C. Go

The year 1955 was etched on the cement wall of the Boonton Line station on Rowe Street. According to my neighbor, the first building that was built covered the whole concrete platform area, and also

served as a ticket booth and coffee shop with a stationmaster. When I moved to Rowe Street in July of 1982 and started to commute to Hoboken, the station building was still standing, but no longer in use. The

door was padlocked and commuters had no access to it even in the severest winter weather.

Around the end of 1996 and early 1997, the old building was torn down and a

Continued on page 2

The Rowe Street Station (continued from page 1)

new smaller brick waiting-shed with wooden benches was built, and the perimeter was surrounded by chain-linked fence. However, commuters refused to use it except in the worst winter weather because of the stench of urine. It had become the hangout of teenagers and was messed up with graffiti, cans, and broken bottles.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, onboard the Boonton line to Hoboken, we would get our last glimpse of the Twin Towers.

A year later, in the fall of 2002, Rowe Street Station was closed forever. The Boonton line was merged with the Montclair line, so

commuters from Rowe Street are now shuttled to the Bloomfield Station at Lackawanna Plaza by New Jersey Transit mini-busses during the morning and late afternoon rush hours. The commuter waiting-shed and the chain-link fence around the site were subsequently knocked down to deter it from again becoming a teen-ager hangout. Now nobody seems to bother with upkeep of the former station area; weeds and tall grasses have taken over in the summer and snow and ice the whole winter.



The site of the station itself is marked by a concrete curb, on which the brick walls of the building were erected. The rails, laid in 1872, have been torn up for scrap and the weed-grown roadbed and platform resembles that of another abandoned mode of transportation; the Morris Canal. Still defying the elements are the green tile floors of the ladies' and gents' rest rooms.



The stairs to the platform and the handrail are still in place although the tracks that carried the trains into Hoboken have been torn up for scrap. Frank Fabbiano is holding back a heavy growth of vines so that we can see the date of construction etched into the concrete wall. The small brick station it supported is long gone. It was listed in the city directories as "81 Rowe Street".

ROWE & RAWSON

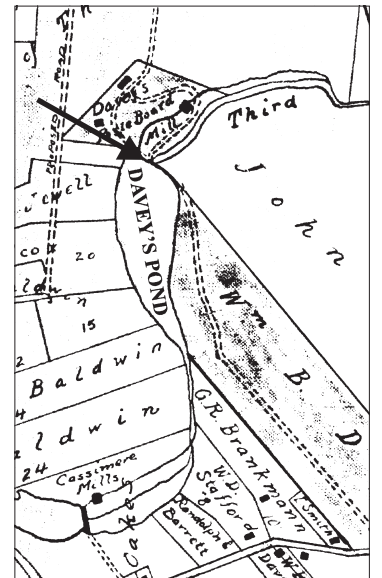
Rowe Street and its parallel twin, Rawson Street, were both begun around 1925 as a modest neighborhood of small and almost identical one-family tract houses. The site had been occupied at the turn-of-the-century by large greenhouses owned by a Mr. Hauck, but most of these had been removed during construction of the development, although one or two remained until recently. The financial crash of 1929 put an end to the project after Rowe had been extended only to the corner of the connecting street, Rowe Place, on which no houses were built until 1946. Banks foreclosed on the owners of homes who were caught with mortgages they couldn't pay, and the remainder of the lands lay fallow, covered with weeds and wildflowers until the close of World War Two.

Between Depression and War, a path led across the vacant lot from the end of Rowe to a flight of wooden steps to the railroad platform. The station was at Orchard Street and was known as such from May 11, 1890 when Seymour Gilbert* and others persuaded Erie to stop the first train next to his land on the north side of the tracks. The proximity of the railroad was certainly the reason for locating these modest houses there, and many commuters flocked there every morning from the surrounding area to the Erie trains as they chugged off, one after another, to North Newark and Jersey City.

*More about Seymour Gilbert in a future issue.

Davey's Lane 1935

A snap-shot by Walter Buck of Davey's Lane, the unpaved road that connected the Davey Paper Mill with Belleville Avenue on the south and Franklin Avenue (now Hoover) on the north. Parts of this access to the mill on the Third River are still in existence as Davey Street and, at the northern end, Shelter Place, so named because the Bloomfield Animal Shelter is located there. Unfortunately, Mr. Buck did not record exactly where he stood to take this beautiful photo on a sunny day in the mid-Depression era, but it could very well be at the point indicated on the accompanying 1867 map (see arrow). The drop to the right would have been part of the site of the millpond, drained around 1935; the abandoned mill was demolished a couple of years later. At this point, the road ran on top of the earthen berm that was thrown up to contain the waters of the Third River, then curved along the end of the pond to the dam and the bridge to the mill buildings.



50th Reunion

BHS CLASS OF '55

By Anthony Ruvo

They came from California. They came from Arizona. They came from Florida. They came from New England. They came from the mid-west. But for one weekend in October, two hundred graduates were from Bloomfield and talked of nothing but the halls of BHS and their grammar school memories. Fifth years may have passed, however, no one would have ever guessed that this group didn't still reside in their hometown.

During their three years in high school the class had been particularly close. In fact, they celebrated reunions every five years since graduating. After the 45th reunion in 2000, a majority expressed interest in extending the dinner party in some way so that more time could be spent together. The reunion committee took up the challenge and planned a three-day event. The graduates could choose to attend all events or any one or two...the decision was left to them. Some even arranged visits to their grammar school!

The itinerary began on Friday afternoon with a tour of the high school, followed by a wine and cheese gathering at Upper Montclair Country Club.

Golf was planned for Saturday morning, but unfortunately was rained out. This didn't dampen anyone's spirits as they gathered for the dinner dance at the club on Saturday evening. Although many were bleary-eyed, Sunday morning's brunch was a great venue to kick back and relive the events of the two preceding days.

"A rousing success" was how many described the three-day format. A majority of the guests arrived early and departed late, which was an indication of the enthusiasm the group displayed for the occasion.

Wonderful food, an extremely friendly location, and, most of all, good friends made the 50th an event that will become a permanent memory for the class of 1955. However, one big question remains: "What will we do for our 55th!?"

Memories of My Hometown

By Marvin Gruber

"There's a High School in New Jersey...Dear Old Bloomfield, Bless Her Name..." The strains of that somewhat corny high school anthem were echoing in my mind as I prepared to attend my 50th high school reunion this past fall. That wonderful, nostalgic weekend triggered many fond recollections of growing up in a very different Bloomfield than exists today and I am pleased to share some of these memories with you.

I spent exactly two decades living in Bloomfield...from 1940 (3 years old) to 1960 (when I got married). My home was in the Brookdale section where there were more open fields and wooded areas than exist today. As a matter of fact, the woods, the brook and the towpath that ran through the Brookdale section are now part of the Garden State Parkway. Brookdale Park was a tranquil, serene escape...very few cars...a safe haven for recreation and fun. The Broad Acres golf course on north Broad Street is now an industrial park. There was no Oakview School...there was no North Junior High. I remember a horse farm off West Passaic Avenue...I remember Brookdale Beverage...I remember Vassar Field and lots of open space. In short, I remember that growing up in this quiet area of town was a wonderful time in my life.

But Bloomfield was a lot more than just the peaceful Brookdale section. It was a vibrant, growing suburban city during the 1940's and 50's and the images remain of things no longer there.

- Wednesday matinees at the Royal Theater (10 cartoons – A serial chapter – 2 films).
- The # 30 and #128 bus lines.

- Thanksgiving Day at Foley Field for the Montclair game.
- The beautiful South Junior High School building.
- Kresge's and Moran's.
- Trolley cars on Bloomfield Avenue.
- After school gatherings at Wessel's.
- The pond at Brookdale Park.
- The Savoy Theater at Watsessing Center.
- The State Diner.*
- The bustling General Electric Plant.
- Lipton's Department Store.
- The Charms Candy Factory & MGM Records.
- Miniature Golf at Broad Acres.
- And most especially for me...
The Bloomfield Economy Market.

The most popular grocery establishment in Bloomfield Center was my father's store, once known as The Garden of Bloomfield (1932-38) and from 1939-1972 as The Bloomfield Economy Market. The store had had three locations on Broad Street: Number 20 (which is now Center Drugs): a shared facility with Heckel's Meat Market at number 40: and a final location at the corner of Broad and Franklin Streets. I spent countless hours working at the store during my high school and college years (summers and vacations), so my memories of The Center are quite vivid.

Before the proliferation of super markets and shopping malls in the late 50's, Bloomfield Center was the focus of your shopping requirements. The streets were crowded with shoppers and stores remained open on Monday and Friday eve-

nings (and on Saturday evenings during the 1930's and 40's).

In those years, the shopping experience was quite different. For example, my father's store offered free home delivery for your grocery and produce order.

His wholesale business included establishments no longer in Bloomfield: Erickson's Diner, The Franklin Arms Tea Room, Westinghouse, Schering Corp. etc. Shopping was a more personal relationship between storeowner and customer. If you bought clothing at Sax's or Fisher's or Barry's or Lipton's...if you went to the Center Deli or Federal Shoe Store or Ace Department Store...if you shopped at Moran's or Woolworth's or Kresge's...you were sure to receive personal and undivided attention.

There was a personality to Center shopping that has long disappeared but remains vivid in my mind for its warmth, and in a sense, small town charm.

I can still remember that a policeman was always stationed at the middle of Broad Street, helping people to cross during peak traffic hours. That kind of community service no longer exists. The Center, in those years, was truly the best meeting place in town.

I understand that Bloomfield will have a rousing celebration for its 200th Anniversary in 2012. My experience involves only one-tenth of that time span, but those 20 years provide me with all the reasons for joining the celebration. As I conclude this memory piece, the words of the Alma Mater aptly describe my feelings and those lingering memories: "Dear Old Bloomfield, Bless Her Name..."

* A new diner is now on the site.



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 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.

Lee Go, Bloomfield, NJ

Eileen Pedalino, Bloomfield, NJ

E-MAIL THE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD AT:

BloomfHist@aol.com

OR CALL US AT:

973-743-8844

BACK COPIES AVAILABLE

Previous issues of this publication can be had by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor at 28 Forest Drive, Bloomfield or the HSOB Museum at 90 Broad Street, Bloomfield. Two different copies will be sent for each envelope received.

MARVIN GRUBER

Mr. Marvin Gruber, an Alumnus of Bloomfield High School's Class of 1955 has very kindly consented to give HSOB Newsletter readers his perspective of the Bloomfield he remembers from childhood to High School; a town that differs in so many respects from the township of today.

Going on to higher education, Mr. Gruber attended Temple University, from which he graduated with a B.A. Degree in 1959, became Director of Marketing for Volkswagen of America from 1961 to 1983 and is now retired president of Gruber Marketing Consultants, a firm that he founded in 1984. He is married, has two children and five grandchildren, and lives in Fair Lawn, New Jersey.

LETTERS TO THE HSOB

Dear Executive Board,

I am a graduate of Bloomfield High School (Class of 2002) and a past recipient of the [Historical] Society Scholarship. I am currently in my senior year at the five-year musical education program at Montclair State University. I would like to take the time to thank you once again for this award as it has aided me in focusing entirely on my studies.

Enclosed you will find an invitation to my senior recital. It is one of the major steps that need to be completed for my degree. While I have still another year of school after this year, this step completes my musical requirements. Though I know it is hard to attend, I would still like to extend the invitation as an expression of my thanks for your generosity.

Thank you again,

Brendan Hughes

Jan. 13, 2006

Dear President Wilbert,

Enclosed in my check...in memory of Sallie Black, who died in December, 2005 in Fredonia, New York. Sallie, formerly of Glen Ridge, was a long-time volunteer at the Bloomfield Historical Society. ...She shared two copies of her newsletters with me because she knew that I had grown up in Bloomfield. As a result, I became a subscriber. In N.Y. she continued her devotion to Community history, lecturing and demonstrating.

I hope my modest donation can be of use in some phase of your publication. On a personal note, I would like to comment on my interest in your recent story of the demise of the Bookmobile. I think I may have been one of the first members of the library staff to drive that vehicle a few times. As Children's Librarian under Janet Melvain and Helene Scherff Taylor, one of my responsibilities was to select books for and directing our staff in providing this service to the community. I do not know how long the Bookmobile continued. I left my position when I moved to Livingston in 1952. I would be interested in more details about the Bookmobile.

Sincerely,

Claire Dugan Rizzolo

— Stop Press —

We have just received news that HSOB member Harry Greenfield has broken his hip. He would surely like to hear from his Bloomfield friends at:

1700 Route 37 West, Apartment 6, Tom's River, New Jersey 08757.

EDITORIAL, MARCH 2006

This is in response to an error on page three, column one, paragraph three, line six of the article titled: "Mary Arny's Christmas Hymn", published in the January issue of the NTC. The editor's apologies are extended to all concerned.

Your editor apologizes to both Presbyterians and Congregationalists for his carelessness and confusion regarding these two different sects. He is in good company, though. No less a person than the Reverend Abel Jackson, minister of the Church on the Green from 1800 to 1809, waffled between both during his career as a religious leader. He was dismissed from his charge in Bloomfield on suspicion of being not entirely Presbyterian, only to return to his hometown (Middletown, New York) and convert another Presbyterian Church into a Congregational one. To add injury to insult, he then had the building demolished and replaced it with a larger (Congregational) edifice. The whole affair ended up in the New York State Legislature, which ruled in favor of the Presbyterians.