



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

May 2015

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday, May 26, 2015

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street,
Bloomfield, NJ
7:30 PM

TIA: An Inspirational Story about Bloomfield's Environmental Activists of 1907

This program will feature a digitally enhanced presentation of original hand-colored magic lantern slides of TIA sites in Bloomfield. Original sites will be shown, along with what the site looks like in 2015.



Garbage dump on Bay Avenue.

Can you Identify?

The two houses on the right are still standing, but they have been modified. They still have the turrets and dormers, but they have been covered with siding and the first floor fronts have been drastically changed. The house on the left behind the tree was demolished for a parking lot many years ago. Where in Bloomfield are we? The answer will be announced at our May 26 meeting and in the October 2015 issue.



Parsonage of the First Methodist Episcopal Church

Located at State and Liberty Streets, this building was built in 1832 as a parsonage. It was later owned by the Baldwin family. It was destroyed in 1937.

*Image courtesy of Van Tassel
Funeral Home.*

Photo by Richard Rockwell.



The Town Improvement Association (TIA) was created in 1907 with the goal of beautifying Bloomfield. Members and Officers over the years are a who's who of prominent Bloomfield families including Mrs. Harry E. Richards, Mrs. David Oakes, Mrs. Frank Oakes, Mrs. Allison Dodd, Mrs. John Dodd, Mrs. Edward Baldwin and Mrs. William R Broughton.

The TIA appeared regularly before Town Council and the Health Department advocating for the elimination of trash dumps around town, cleaning up tenements, keeping the streets clean, regulating trash pickup and protecting the Green and its shade trees. And they didn't just complain about the deplorable conditions; they held fundraisers and organized beautification projects including landscaping at schools, railroad stations and the Green and helping to preserve and expand open spaces.

This program will present the collection of magic lantern slides the TIA created from 1912 to 1916 to illustrate deplorable conditions around town and to showcase its accomplishments. The presentation includes then-and-now photo comparisons, captions prepared by local historian Frederick Branch and additional historical information about the TIA. Presented by local historian Richard Rockwell, the event is open to the public, free of charge and refreshments will be served, so bring a friend!

Bloomfield Represented in World Series Baseball

By John Debold

Bloomfield. Major League Baseball Pitcher. World Series.

The person that comes to mind when you put the above words together is usually Hank Borowy. Bloomfield High School (BHS) standout Hank had a fine career with the Yankees, Cubs, Phillies, Tigers and Pirates from 1942 to 1945. He was selected to the prestigious All-Star team twice.

However, did you know that Bloomfield had another Major League (and World Series) pitcher a few years prior in Alex Ferguson?

James Alexander Ferguson was born in 1897 and his family lived in Bloomfield. He was an alumnus of Watsessing School (playing shortstop) as well as a Bloomfield High School student. He left BHS after his sophomore year to pitch semi-pro baseball in the area—including the Bloomfield Catholic Lyceum team. It was in 1916 that he was scouted by the NY Yankees and, in the Sacred Heart Rectory basement, signed to a \$250 per month contract (approximately \$5,700 in 2015 dollars)—an offer Alex could not refuse. After some minor league preparation, he was called up to the New York Yankees in 1918.



What is interesting about the story of Alex Ferguson is how we view major leaguers now as compared to back then. Alex spent the off season at home with his parents in Bloomfield working as a stock clerk at the General Electric Company a block from his parent's house. During one particular off-season, he toured the country as an exhibition basketball player.

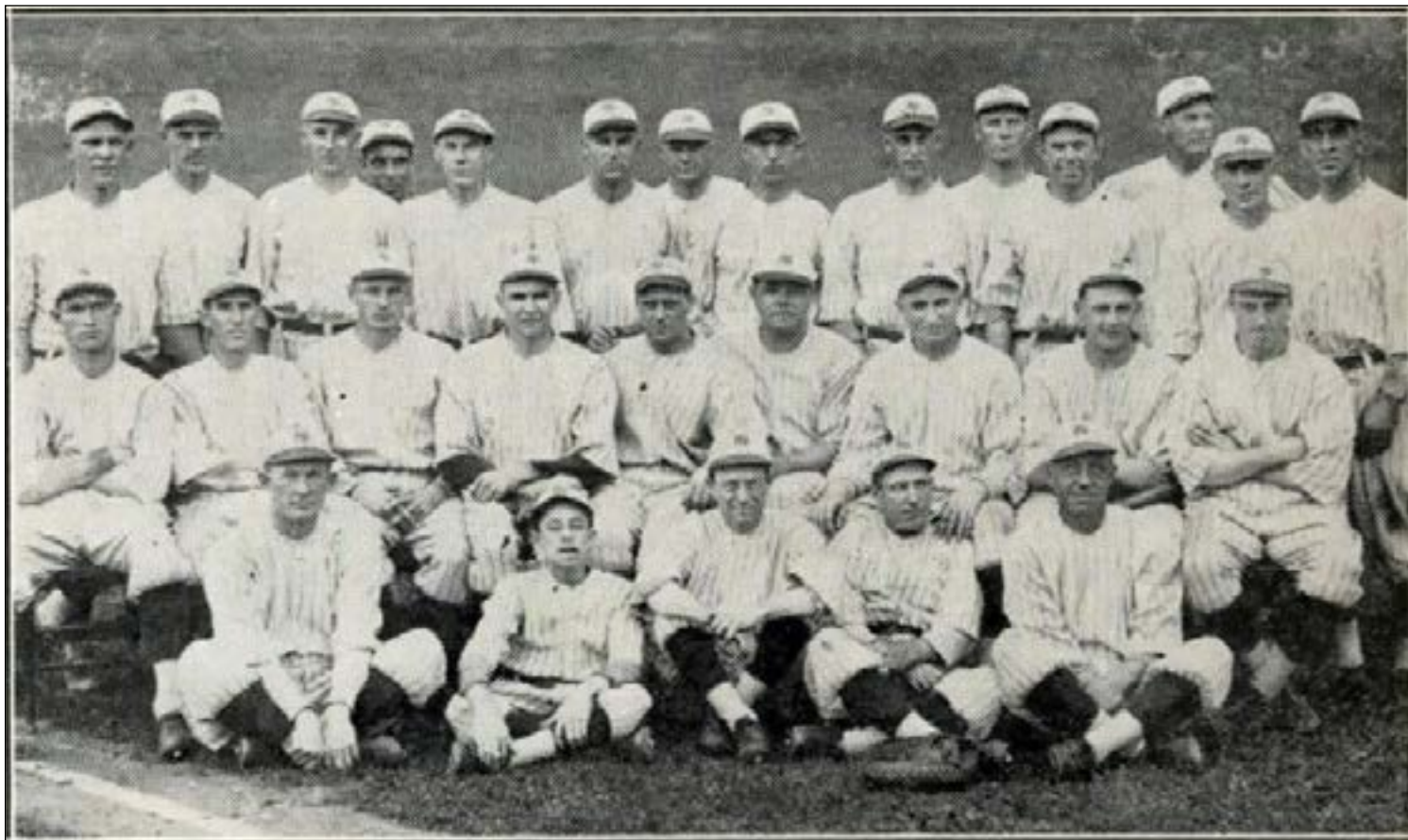
After his famed World Series win, Bloomfield Mayor Charles Demarest presented him with a 23-jewel watch at a banquet in his honor at the Elks Club.



Military duty called in 1919 but by 1920 he was back in the majors. Yankee manager Miller Huggins made him a relief pitcher in the 1921 season. In 1922–1924 he was sold to the Boston Red Sox and with the Boston club he had an impressive 14 major league wins.

By 1925 he was again sold back to the Yankees (the year Lou Gehrig began his “consecutive games” streak). Babe Ruth was there too (see team picture). As baseball owners had complete ownership of a player's services back then, they could move players around as they pleased. So the Yankees sold him to the Washington Senators in the same year, and it proved providential for Alex as the Senators, with famed pitcher Walter Johnson, were making a pennant run that year. In the final weeks of the regular season, Alex produced a 5-1 record, helping the club to clinch the American League pennant. They played the Pittsburgh Pirates in the World Series and Alex won his start in game three, 4-3. Pittsburgh went on to win the series but Alex's win was quite a notable accomplishment.

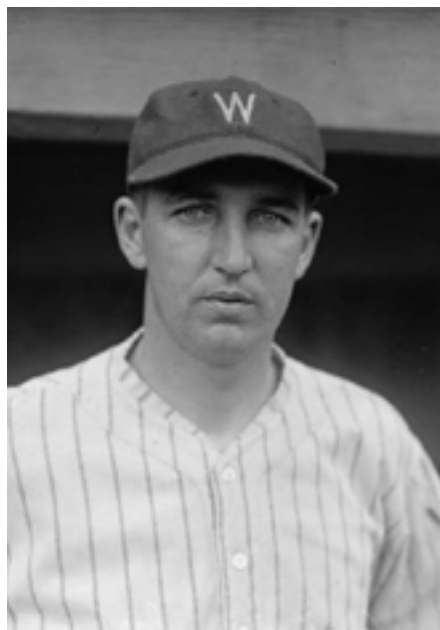




Alex Ferguson is back row third from left. Babe Ruth is middle row fourth from right

Always quiet and reserved in his comments, he thanked everyone and said he "...would do all he could to keep Bloomfield on top."

He went on to play on other major league and minor league teams until he concluded his career in 1929 after ten major league seasons. He retired after a few minor league years at age 36. He was noted as one of the first pitchers to throw the "forkball." He returned to Bloomfield and opened a liquor store/tavern with Cliff Hildebrant called, what else, *Cliff & Alex's* at 601 Bloomfield Avenue (now Rainbow Beauty Salon). After closing his tavern in the 1940s, he tended bar in the area for the next 15 years.



In 1975 he was inducted into the NJ All-Sports Hall of Fame—and the Bloomfield Hall of Fame at its opening in 1982.

He was always known as a dedicated, hardworking, quiet gentleman. The famous writer Damon Runyon praised him in a newspaper article for his integrity in the game. He kept a copy of that article on the wall of his tavern. Alex died in California in 1982.

Oh, and back to Bloomfield's Hank Borowy. Alex always made a special effort to root for Hank's success.



Sources:

1. Society for Baseball Research – Bill Lamb
2. Thumbing the pages of Baseball History. Bloomfield Independent Press 1939. Samuel C. Pierson.



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
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OF BLOOMFIELD

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Reminder!

Please be sure to renew your 2015 membership. Renewal forms are available at www.hsob.org, the museum or any HSOB meeting. The HSOB is

a non-profit organization and all dues and donations are considered a tax-free contribution. Help keep the HSOB strong with your continuing membership!

Parade Volunteers Needed!

The Historical Society of Bloomfield seeks members and friends to march with us at the Memorial Day Parade on May 25. Adults and children are all welcome to march under the HSOB banner. Show your civic pride and support the HSOB at the same time! For more info, email HSOB1812@gmail.com. PH: (973) 743-8844.



Presidential Anagrams

Each phrase below contains the name of a U.S. President. Unscramble the underlined letters to reveal the names of 10 of our country's leaders. The solution will appear in the October 2015 issue of *The New Town Crier*. If you want to verify before then, send your puzzle solution to HSOB1812@gmail.com. If you get it right, we'll print your name!

The MAJOR OFFSET the HENS

His REVOLVER CLANGED in the night

The FLORID RAM fell ILL under the ELM

The NASTY RUGS cost LESS

WITHDRAW to the MOAT or I'll FLAIL you

The VARMINT BEAR chased the NUN

That ROYAL is wearing a CRAZY HAT

OH! He BETRAYS the HERD by selling their FUR

I caught LICE at the VOLCANO DIG

That INFERNAL PICKER won't get out of my fields

The Welcome Mat

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

Jane Califf & Ted Glick
Bloomfield

Helen & William Fallon
Montclair, NJ

Erick Kniesley &
Justito Candari
Bloomfield

Richard & Irene
Johansen
Lone Tree, CO

Sally Meyer
Verona, NJ

Lois Moffat
Bloomfield

Sandra Watson
Bloomfield

Women's Club of
Bloomfield
Glen Ridge, NJ