



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

March 2015

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 24, 2015

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street,
Bloomfield, NJ

7:30 PM

Please note new time

New Jersey in the American Revolution

Presented by Arthur S. Lefkowitz

The Historical Society of Bloomfield will present “New Jersey in the American Revolution.”

This 50-minute slide presentation is based on the presenter’s



book *The Long Retreat*. The program focuses on the British invasion of New Jersey in late 1776, which ended with Washington’s famous Christmas night raid on Trenton. The speaker will demonstrate that the closest the British ever came to winning a military victory in the American Revolution was at New Brunswick, New Jersey, on December 1, 1775.

Can you identify?

This house in Bloomfield is still standing (most of it that is—the tower no longer exists). Do you know where it is? (Hint: It’s not on Broad Street, but the name of the street does begin with a “B.”) The whereabouts of this house will be divulged at our May 26 meeting. Come along and all will be revealed. This photo is included in the book *Bloomfield through Time* by HSOB Board Trustee Richard Rockwell, due out in the Fall of 2015.



Daniel Van Winkle House Site

This is the site of the Daniel Van Winkle House on 1685 Broad Street. It was built in 1670 by Abraham Van Riper for his daughter Aettje when she married Daniel Van Winkle. This well-known landmark stood for almost two centuries. *Image courtesy of Van Tassel Funeral Home. Photo by Richard Rockwell.*



Bloomfield loses the 1735 Garrabrant House

One of the oldest houses in Bloomfield, known as the “Garrabrant House,” located at 43 Montgomery Street, was demolished on December 13, 2014. There was a sign in front (visible on the right in the 2012 photo) that designated it the historic “Garrabrant House” for Bloomfield’s sesquicentennial in 1962, named for several generations of the Garrabrant family who lived there after 1851. The sign stood in front of the brownstone house from 1962 until 2014, designating it as a distinctive Bloomfield historic site.

History of the house

The oldest section of the house was built in 1735, the same year John Adams and Paul Revere were born. Back then, Montgomery Street was known as “Quarry Road” and prior to that, “The Road to Watsessing Dock.”

One of the earliest known owners was J. X. Miller, whose tenancy dated back to 1746. A well on the property that dates from Miller’s ownership was inscribed “J.X.M. 1796.” Miller is described in the historical record as an entrepreneur who, in addition to owning a mill on the bank of the Second River, also ran a stone quarry down the road from the house at Mill Street. The Presbyterian Church on the Green is said to have sourced materials from Miller’s quarry. Sandstone from his quarry also made its way aboard ships down the Passaic River to New York City and south to Philadelphia, where it was used to construct brownstone houses.

Beginning in 1851 and for over a century, generations of the Garrabrant family lived there, lending their name to the dwelling. As with many very old houses, Garrabrant House was added onto in sections.

In an article by David Robert Anderson from the *Independent Press*, dated October 20, 1977, titled “The Garrabrant House—Early Dutch,” the author provided great detail in describing the construction of the house. It had heavy oak beams with the spaces filled by stones and clay binding, an early form of insulation. The interior of the house held several large fireplaces: one with a carved mantle and built-in carved oak cabinet and another with a big stone mantle and hearthstone that originally had a bake oven.

“The house as it appears today looks much like it did over two centuries ago,” stated Anderson. “Mr. Hauck, the present owner, along with his predecessors, has taken great pains in preserving the house to keep it as close to its original form as possible.”

20th Century owners

Several generations of the Hauck family owned the Garrabrant house from 1965 until July 2014. The family owned a nursery that sold plants and flowers off Montgomery Street, where condominiums are now located on John Street. Tommy Hauck, a son of Florence Hauck, told the *Independent Press* that he had seen the property soon after the demolition.

“I was very sad that day,” he said. “We purchased the Garrabrant House from Mrs. Healy.; she was not a Garrabrant.”

Hauck said his mother loved the house but another family across the street also wanted to buy it. They



2012. Photo courtesy of Richard Rockwell

were willing to pay more money but intended to tear it down, so Mrs. Healy sold it to the Hauck family instead. Hauck said that when his family no longer needed the house, it was put up for sale and remained on the market for nearly two years.

“We sold the house to the first person who gave us money, with the market the way it is,” he said. “It definitely made me upset to see it torn down. There were quite a few old houses in the neighborhood, but they’re all gone. Unfortunately, it’s all dollars and cents. Nothing famous ever happened at the Garrabrant House. It wasn’t like George Washington stopped there. But if you keep tearing everything down, you won’t have anything to look back on.”

Tommy’s brother, Richard Hauck, of Franklin, NJ, the executor of his mother Florence’s estate, told the *Independent Press* that no one in his family wanted to remain in the house or own a rental property. He had spoken to a developer who had built a condominium nearby, but that the developer wasn’t interested in putting condos there.

“Finally, we gave [the house] to an agent,” he said.

Richard Hauck stated that the house had been changed considerably over the years and was only about 50% original, including much of the basic structure. As for the historical significance the Garrabrant House may have had for the township, Hauck opined that it might have been easier for someone to demolish the house and ask for forgiveness than to try and obtain a demolition permit against objections by preservationists. He said although he was saddened by the demolition, he was not surprised. He, however, thought the property could have been used for more than one new house.

“With the size of the property, he could have put up two houses,” he said. “That would have been logical. But it’s still disappointing to see how it was done.”

Sale and demolition

The lot on which the Garrabrant house until recently stood is much larger than the surrounding lots of land. The 1,766 square-foot property was purchased by Cesar Martinez Cueva in July 2014 for \$212,000. The house was demolished on Dec. 13 without a town permit. Cueva then began construction of a new foundation around the remains of the Garrabrant foundation.

A stop-work order was issued by the township on Dec. 15, two days after the demolition.

“They did not get a permit to demolish the house,” Mayor Michael Venezia told the *Independent Press*. “They had a permit to do minor work with the foundation.”

Glenn Domenick, the Bloomfield Director of Community Development, said Cueva would be fined \$1,000 a day until the demolition issue is adjudicated.

As we go to press, Cueva intends to appeal the penalty before the Essex County Construction Board of Appeals, according to his attorney, Charles Auffant. Auffant had said his client purchased the house with the intention of remodeling it. However, an architect advised him that a remodeling would be very costly. Cueva then decided to build a new house.

“We all have to comply with rules and regulations,” said Auffant. “Sometimes we step afoul. The law sets responsibility and we have to ascribe to them. As I’ve said, it was never his intention to violate the law. We want to move ahead. I believe [Cueva] will have a fair hearing.”



2014. Photo courtesy of Richard Rockwell

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General Joseph Bloomfield

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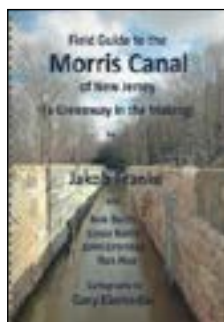
Historic Preservation Commission is born

Unfortunately, the Garrabrant House was never listed on any official registry of protected historical sites, either with the county, state or federal offices. Historical Society of Bloomfield (HSOB) Trustee Richard Rockwell joined a delegation wanting to meet with the owners as a representative of the HSOB and Historic District Review Board on two occasions in the Spring of 2014 while the property was up for sale, in hopes of viewing the interior and taking photographs. Rockwell told the *Independent Press*:

“We were told the tenants couldn’t accommodate us, then shortly after that, the real estate listing expired and the ‘For Sale’ sign was removed. The fact that this house did not have any registered official historical status with the state, National Register or with Bloomfield is one of the things that motivated us to transform the Historic District Review Board into a Historic Preservation Commission. One of the first tasks of the Historic Preservation Commission will be to make a list of properties that should be designated as historic and work with the town to enact ordinances and revise the master plan to protect those resources. The Garrabrant House would have been one of the houses on the list for protection.”

The Bloomfield Historic Preservation Commission will go into effect sometime in 2015. Meanwhile, all that’s left of the Garrabrant House are some photographs, a pile of debris and an expired real estate listing that describes the house as a 4-bed, 2-bath, 1,766 sq. ft. “tear-down” property that entices “Build the home of your dreams with all of the space that you want.”

Morris Canal guidebook recently published



Just published (after 23 years in the crafting) is the first-ever *Field Guide to the Morris Canal of New Jersey*, an easy-to-use, full color guide that includes a brief history of the canal, a table of significant features, a glossary and a bibliography.

The Guide covers the 102-mile canal in 23 sections of about 4.5 miles each. Each section has points of interest (with GPS data), a list of facilities, directions, historical commentary, a detailed map and photos, both historic and current. The 8.5 x 11" Field Guide to the Morris Canal of New Jersey is 160 wire-bound pages and can be folded back for easy access.

Price: \$25 with \$5 shipping if ordered through the mail. To order, contact Jakob Franke—PH: 201-768-3612; Email: jf31@columbia.edu

Morris Canal Hike through Bloomfield

Saturday, April 25 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Join us for a three mile hike following the path of the Morris Canal through Bloomfield and bus ride to additional sites where the canal is still intact. Space is limited. Reservations are required. \$5 donation requested to cover the cost of the bus. To reserve a space, email MorrisCanal@gmail.com. The excursion will be co-sponsored by HSOB, the Bloomfield Morris Canal Greenway Committee and the Bloomfield Recreation Dept.

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!