



# The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter Of The Historical Society Of Bloomfield  
Editor: Fredrerick Branch  
Design: Mark Scurman



VOLUME TWO, NUMBER TWO

BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY, 07003

SEPTEMBER, 2001

## Notice Of Sept. Meeting SEPTEMBER 24, 2001, 8PM IMAGES OF BLOOMFIELD

Come shake the hands (or twist the necks) of the terrible three (Frederick Branch, Jean Kuras and Mark Scurman) who worked in peace and relative harmony for six long months under appalling conditions to produce "THE BOOK!"

Autographs will be available...slides will be shown...questions can be asked...refreshments will be served. This could be positively the last time any of these three authors will be persuaded to be together in the same room. Don't miss it!!!

OAKESIDE BLOOMFIELD  
CULTURAL CENTER  
240 Belleville Avenue  
Bloomfield, NJ

## Cemetery Gate House Restoration Continues



The Board Room of the restored Bloomfield Cemetery Gatehouse has been completely redecorated and new furniture installed (including a "board"). The interior has been kept as simple as possible: no heavy draperies at the windows which would have been out of place in a post-Victorian room of 1909. The white paint, which had been slathered over everything including the office safe, is gone, and there is a new color scheme featuring green and mulberry. The painting over the mantelpiece is by Charles Warren Eaton, who is buried not far from the cemetery gatehouse. (See notice of Cemetery Tour below.) Photo by Gene Collerd.

### LETTERS

A letter was received from Mr. Philip Jaeger of Cedar Grove regarding the photograph of the Morris Canal which appeared on page 53. The caption states that "The buildings in the right background are probably those of the Oakes Woolen Mill." Mr. Jaeger disagreed with this identification, giving his reasons for doing so, which are quoted below:

"When I first saw this postcard view a few years ago, I too initially thought the building on the right side of the photo might be the Oakes Woolen Mill. In order to check out that possibility, and others, I drove as closely as I could along the former canal's route in Bloomfield from the Clifton to the Belleville border. The topography around the former mill area made it seem unlikely that this was the correct location.

"Sometime later, while looking at the 1906 Mueller Atlas, I noticed that the towpath changed sides at the James Street change bridge. North of James Street the

(continued on next pg.)

by Barbara Vydro

Now that the exterior of our office building had been restored, I approached the Board about repairing the water damage inside. I explained that nothing has been done as far as redecorating since the early 80's and wouldn't it be wonderful to restore the inside of our building to the period when it was built in 1909. They agreed that it was a wonderful idea. Since we were so pleased with the outside restoration, my first (and last) call was to the Scott Imhoff Company. D. Scott Imhoff, President, came down and we brain-stormed what could be done! He gave me a bid that the Board accepted and we were off!

Scott introduced me to Sasa who was his Foreman and the main creative mind on the project. The three of us met and I mentioned that a very generous lot owner (you'll have to visit the office to find out who) offered to donate a chandelier for my office. Scott made a suggestion that we change what we referred to as a "living room" into a "conference room" and use the chandelier there and our final direction was set!

As preparation for the renovation, my crew and I had to totally empty the main floor of the building—the

basement looked like a disaster area! Scott's crew began on January 16th. (Note: I was "evicted" on February 9th and was finally "permitted" back on March 26th! I operated with the telephone and answering machine in the basement, my car and my dining room table!)

Under Sasa's direction they literally worked seven days a week for ten weeks stripping woodwork for seven weeks (I would have quit!), sanding floors, redoing the bathroom, stripping and restoring our huge safe, designing and making an oak workstation, re-configuring closet space into a warming kitchen, plastering, painting, wallpapering, installing fixtures, etc., etc.!

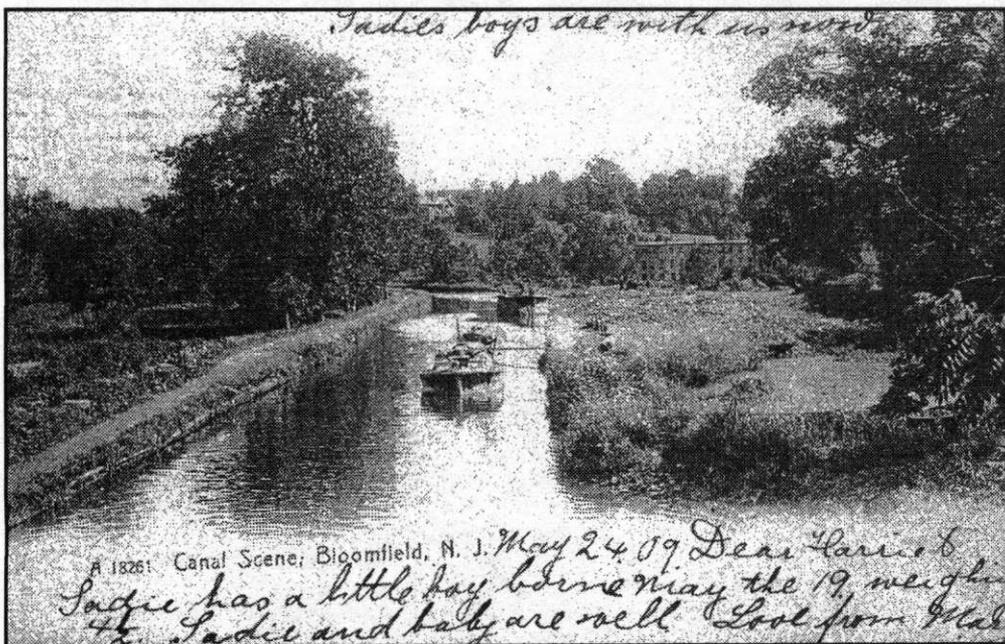
For some reason we were led to do this project now as we turned up some "surprises"! It was determined that one of the beams in the big room had dry-rotted and required serious reinforcement; a large section of the office sub-flooring had severe termite damage and had to be replaced; and, lastly the supporting beam of the back of the granite-stone tower had rotted and had to be replaced with steel! You never know in an old building!

When it came to colors and furnishings, I was in trouble! But thanks to the patience of Sasa, Scott, Brenda (Scott's wife), members of our Board and friends we selected a color scheme, new furniture, tile, etc. The "lot owner" and I selected and ordered a gorgeous chandelier and matching sconces for the conference room. To my horror, when one of my crew and I went to pick up the chandelier, it did not come in a box and would not fit inside my car! My eyes were watching the plastic covered chandelier in the back of our open truck as we slowly drove back to the cemetery. As luck would have it, I spotted a home that had just had a washer delivered and the chandelier fit in that box perfectly!

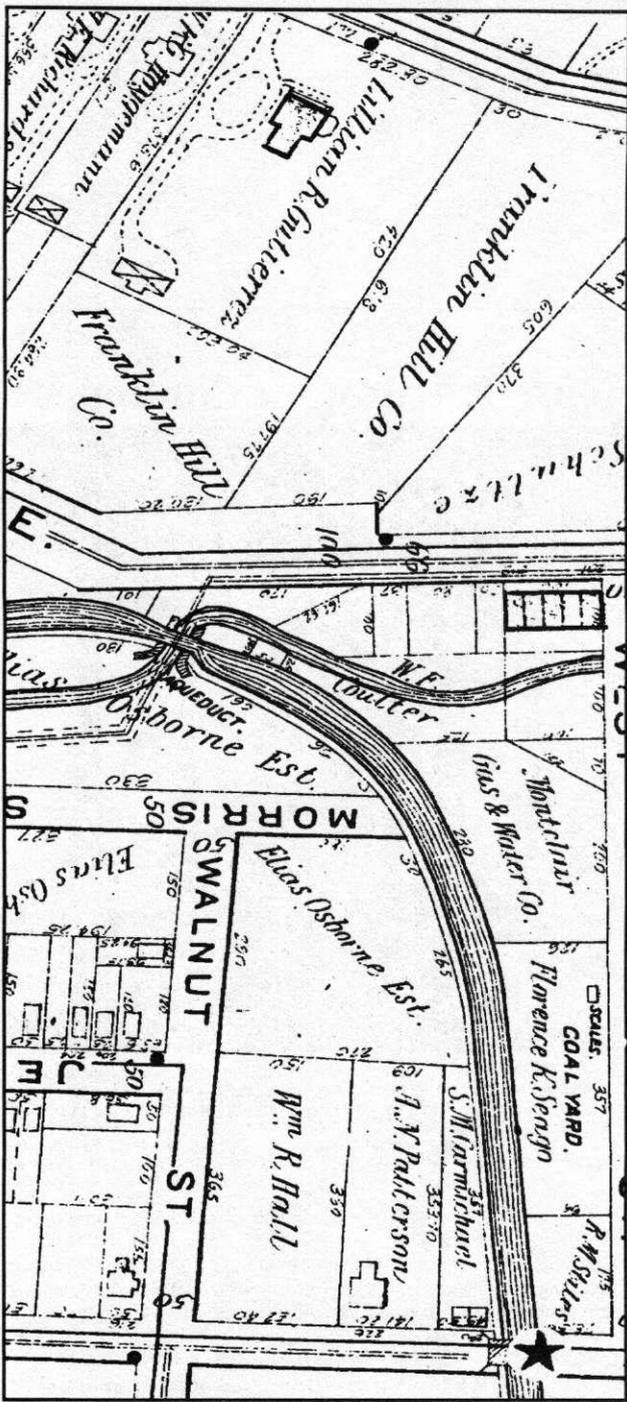
Needless to say, this renovation needed to be done and thanks to our responsible Board and the Scott Imhoff Company team the project receives A++! I think one of our board members said it correctly—we now have the best office complex in New Jersey, or maybe even the United States!

### CEMETERY TOUR

Come join us at 1 PM on Saturday, October 20, 2001 for a walking tour of Bloomfield Cemetery. Sally Meyer, Glen Ridge Borough Historian and Frederick Branch will delight visitors to the Old Burying Ground on Belleville Avenue with engaging stories of many local residents who now rest there in peace. At the end of the tour, refreshments will be served in the newly-restored gatehouse at the entrance to The Cemetery. (Please wear comfortable walking shoes.)



The Morris Canal, looking south from the Montgomery Street bridge (see page 53 top in *Images of America: Bloomfield* for this same postcard view, postmarked 1909). Prominent landmarks are the residence of Lillian Gutierrez at the top of Franklin Hill just above the canal barges, and the back of a brick row of houses, similar to those on Franklin Street next to the Second River. This row, which stood at the corner of West and Montgomery Streets, disappeared many years ago (see accompanying text).



This is the 1906 Mueller map referred to by Mr. Jaeger. The point at which the photographer was standing when he "tripped the shutter" is marked with a star. The imposing house owned by Mrs. Gutierrez, a sister of Doctor Harry E. Richards, is at center top. The brick row at the corner of Newark Avenue and West Street disappeared many years ago and was a vacant lot from at least the mid-1940's until recently.



General Joseph Bloomfield  
**THE NEW TOWN CRIER**  
 90 Broad Street  
 Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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**Letters...**

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towpath is on the western side of the canal and south of James Street the towpath is on the eastern side. The above consideration removed the Oakes Woolen Mill location as a possibility...the towpath was on the wrong side of the canal.

"Armed with the photo and copies of the Mueller maps, I again began driving along the canal route trying to match yesterday with today. parked on Newark Avenue and looking south, I noticed the rise in the land going up to Franklin Street.\* I thought this might be the slope shown in the center of the photo. I drove back to Montgomery Street and parked again.

"This was it! About a century ago, the photographer must have been at this location looking south. Everything in the photo matched up with the Mueller map. The photographer was standing on the Montgomery Street Bridge looking down at the canal when he tripped the shutter. The curvature of the canal on the map matched the photo as the canal curved eastward to the Second River aqueduct. The building on the right matched the rear of the row houses at the corner of Newark Avenue and West Street. The building on higher ground matched the location of the home of Lillian R. Gutierrez on Franklin Street. The abandoned South Middle School occupies the site today.

"Mystery solved. It was fun."

As with many mysteries, the solution is simple only in retrospect. Mr. Jaeger has been interested in the history of transportation for many years and is currently one of the directors of The Canal Society of New Jersey. He is responsible for the text on the Morris Canal signs scattered throughout town. Vice-president of the Cedar Grove Historical Society, he is the author of the Cedar Grove and Montclair books on the Arcadia Images of America series. He and his wife Jean live in the former home of the electronics and television pioneer Allen B. DuMont. Mr. Jaeger is a former mathematics and computer science teacher at Millburn High School.

\*This was called "Franklin Hill" and is the highest elevation in Bloomfield.



Four seats from the old Royal Theater are now on display in the Historical Society Museum. Plans for mounting some of the marquee lettering, salvaged by Peter Cullen, are in the works. Several other artifacts from the theater: plastic signs with ticket prices, ornamental plastering, and a lobby sign will also be on exhibit in the near future.

**Presidential Message**

Thanks to many generous donors, the Historical Society Museum contains a great variety of items of interest to visitors and researchers. We have household things, vintage clothing, antique furniture, pictures, maps and various memorabilia. Below are examples.

•**Photographs and Postcards:** Our collection was used for the book "Images of America: Bloomfield." A 14 ft by 7ft mural of our old photo of the center at the 1912 Centennial Celebration will go in the new Commerce Bank building at 1476 Broad Street. Congressman Pascrell is putting postcards from the museum on his website.

If you have any old pictures of people, places and events in Bloomfield, please consider loaning them to the museum so that we may have them copied.

•**Dress** of Sarah Elizabeth Oakes (1833-1858) and a portrait of her wearing it. Gift of the late Mrs. David Oakes II.

•**Cradle** of the 1880's from the Stone family. Gift of Mrs. Franklin Stone.

•**Scrapbook** of "Bay to Watchung Improvement Association," an early civic organization. Gift of Mrs. Patricia C. Libak.

•**Four Seats** from the Royal Theater, which was recently demolished. Gift of the Township with delivery arranged by Anthony Marucci, Director of Public Works.

The Museum is open on Wednesdays, 2-4:30 pm and on Saturdays 10 am-1pm and by appointment. (Tel. 973-748-0015). Please do come visit.

—Ina Campbell, President

**HISTORICAL FABLES**

Has anyone ever told you the one about George Washington marching up Bloomfield Avenue on his way to Morristown in seventeen whatever? The fact is: Bloomfield Avenue, originally called the Newark and Pompton Turnpike, was laid out as a toll road in the very early 1800's...after Washington's death in 1799. The Glen Ridge Public Library has a copy of (or perhaps the original) survey for the new road, which was made with the help of an instrument now preserved in the Museum of The Historical Society of Bloomfield.

How about the original public library building at the corner of Broad and Liberty Streets? The structure now standing on that corner is said to have been built for library purposes because "it looks like a library." Actually, it is (or was) the Masonic Temple, the cornerstone of which was laid in 1925.

Library Hall was an ill-fated effort to found a public library by subscription. Although supported by many prominent and public spirited citizens, it was unsuccessful. The 1906 Mueller Atlas in the Reference Department of The Bloomfield Public Library shows an "old excavation" on the corner of Broad and Liberty, all that remained of the enterprise about 30 years after it had been launched.

**Editorial**

by Frederick Branch

The initial issue of our Historical Society publication, *The New Town Crier*; was kindly received by all of our friends in Bloomfield and our sister communities in Northern New Jersey. Negative comments were few and constructive, always appreciated by a new enterprise. We hope to improve by experience, presenting news of historic restoration (such as in our lead article) and to promote, encourage and participate in constructive community activities, as we did at the Watsessing Heights Street Fair on June 9th. Our table, which was presided over by HSOB volunteers, helped us to become more visible in the community, prompting The Board to consider participation in other similar events.

Meanwhile, our book of Bloomfield Photographs received a wonderful review in the *Watsessing Heights Newsletter*. Thank you, Mimi Michalski, for your enthusiasm and support.