



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

March 2014

SAVE THE DATE

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 25, 2014

BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER

84 Broad Street,
Bloomfield, NJ
7:30 PM

Tour of Historic Bloomfield

Presented by Richard Rockwell

From Bloomfield's "Washington-stopped-here" houses to the sites of industries that employed thousands of people in the 1940s, this informative and entertaining presentation explores many of Bloomfield's most notable historic sites. This program was created by the Bicentennial Historical Research Committee as a bus tour for Bloomfield's Bicentennial in 2012. Sit back and enjoy this virtual tour through a slide show of historic photographs from the HSOB archives.



Richard Rockwell is a local historian and resident of Halcyon Park. He is a Trustee on the HSOB Board and is responsible for digitizing, archiving and maintaining the HSOB's vast collection of historical photos and maps. He has created a number of historical websites, including those for the Halcyon Park Historic District, HSOB and for the area where he grew up in southwestern Pennsylvania: Eldora Park and the Charleroi Interurban electric railroad.

A popular pastime for Edwardian teenagers...

The postcard below is of the Bloomfield High School (BHS) Glee Club circa the turn of the 20th Century. The exact year is unknown, although the postcard was printed in 1907 or later. The group appears to be convening on the lawn outside of the Bloomfield Presbyterian Church on the Green on Broad Street. This makes sense, as the High School at this time would have been located next door on the corner of Broad Street and Belleville Avenue, in what is now the BHS Administration Building. The BHS building as we know it today was built 1911.

A glee club is a musical group, comprised historically of male voices but also of female or mixed voices, which traditionally specializes in the singing of short songs—known as glees—by trios or quartets. "Glee" therefore does not refer to the mood of the music or the singers, but to this specific form of English part song popular between 1650 and 1900.



The first named glee club was founded in Harrow School, in London, England, in 1787. Glee clubs were very popular in the UK until the mid-1850s, but were gradually replaced by choral societies.

In the late 19th Century, glee clubs were very popular in most American schools and became a high school tradition, although by the mid-20th Century, proper glee clubs were no longer common. However, the term remains in use, primarily for choirs found in North American colleges and universities, despite the fact that most American glee clubs are choruses in the standard sense and no longer perform glees.



*This photo dates from before the BPC started clean-up and restoration work on Indian Springs in 2009.
Photo courtesy of Frederick Branch*

Brookdale Park's Indian Spring

You climbed all over it as a kid and now walk your dog past it as an adult. You may even remember when a stream used to run through it, feeding the pond. Did you ever stop to wonder why it's there?

The Indian Spring in Brookdale Park once gushed from the foot of a six-foot sandstone cliff, a crossing point on the Watchung-Acquackanonk Indian trail where it served as a tribal gathering place for the Native American tribe known as the Lenni Lenape. The Indian Spring fed a small brook that crossed the park towards the east, feeding water into a natural pond area. In the early 1900s, this naturally occurring scenic feature was incorporated into the Olmsted Brothers' Brookdale Park Master Plan as an overlook, so that it could be viewed and enjoyed by all of the park community. Today, what remains of the Indian Spring can be found near the middle of the park, just south of the present West Circuit Drive.

In June of 2009, with cooperation from the Essex County Parks Department, the Brookdale Park Conservancy (BPC) started restoration work on the historic Indian Spring site. The project began with an aggressive clean-up of pedestrian litter, plant debris and sediment. Phase Two involved the careful removal of a non-native and highly invasive shrub, Amur Honeysuckle, which had obscured the site from view. Phase Three reintroduced native shrubbery to the area, as well as native herbaceous groundcover to keep the nearby brook's appearance natural. An environmentally responsible and sustainable maintenance program was incorporated by the BPC and supervised by the Essex County Parks Department.

According to *The New Town Crier* Editor Emeritus Fred Branch, the Indian Spring was identified in the past with a historical marker placed by the Bloomfield Sesquicentennial Committee in 1962.

"This sign, as well as almost all of the other [identifying signs] at that time, [have] long since disappeared, as have some of the historic sites so marked," he explained.

The History of Brookdale Park

Brookdale Park, located in the northernmost part of the eastern section of Essex County, is bordered by Watchung Avenue, Grove Street and Bellevue Avenue. It lies within the municipalities of Bloomfield and Montclair and is the third largest park in the county system, containing 121.41 acres.

The land that is now Brookdale Park was at one time used as a gathering place by the Lenni Lenape. During the 17th Century, Dutch settlers moved into the area and transformed it into farming and grazing land. The fields came to get the name Stonehouse Plains, which is what the area was called until the late 1800s, when the location was to get a post office. It was then decided that Stonehouse Plains was too long a name, so it was changed to Brookdale. In 1928, land purchases began for the future park, and were completed in 1931.

It is rumored that the site was once a horseradish farm, which is probably true, as Bloomfield was known as the “Horseradish Capital of the World” in the 19th Century.

When the Depression hit in 1928, work on the park began, and what was originally estimated to take only a few years ended up taking many years. Following the design set out by the Olmsted Brothers’ Master Plan, the basic work was in place by 1930. Construction became dependent upon labor available from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA), and the major work was completed by 1937.

On May 22, 1937, the park had its first Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) track meet. On June 11, 1959, the North Jersey Rose Society donated 750 rose bushes, establishing the rose garden, a major attraction to this day that boasts over 100 different species of rose. Brookdale Park is the favorite local venue for summer concerts and Fourth of July celebrations.



*1958 Brookdale Playground known as “The Corral.”
Photo courtesy of Essex County Archives*

Other distinguishing features of the park include 11 tennis courts; a field house and grandstand; archery, soccer, softball and football fields; a 1½ mile fitness course and ¼ mile synthetic running track; playground; interpretive trail and bike races.

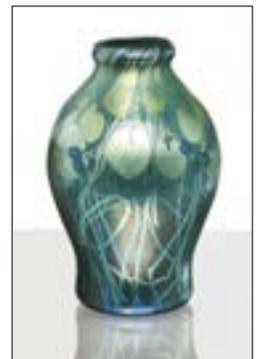
Current improvements include rubberized safety surfaces in the playground and track; an artificial turf field for sporting events; electronic scoreboard; the reconstruction of Great Meadow and the installation of drainage and irrigation systems; a dog park; modernization of the tennis court facility; and the repaving and reconstruction of the roadway, parking lots and walking paths.



*Boy Scouts camping on the field, circa 1950s.
Photo courtesy of Brookdale Park Conservancy*

DON'T MISS: The Art Glass of Louis Comfort Tiffany

Paul Doros, noted Tiffany historian, will survey the life of Louis Tiffany and the history of his various enterprises, followed by an exploration of the one-of-a-kind glass objects inspired by Tiffany and created by his gifted craftsmen. Awaken your senses to the form, color and beauty of Favrite Glass. March 17 at 7:30pm, 82 Union St., Montclair, NJ. Presented by *The Northern NJ Chapter of The Victorian Society in America*, whose Silent Auction fundraising event will also be held the same night.





General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF BLOOMFIELD

90 Broad Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tel: 973-743-8844
E-mail: info@hsob.org
www.hsob.org

OFFICERS

Jean Kuras, President
Joseph Barry, Vice President/
Program
Mary Shoffner, Corresponding
Secretary/Hospitality
Anne Carlino, Recording Secretary
Emma-Lou Czarnecki, Treasurer/
Membership
Dorothy Johnson, Museum Curator
Ava Caridad, Publicity & Promotion

TRUSTEES

John Debold
Richard Rockwell
Mark Scurman
Mary Shoffner

PAST PRESIDENT

Ina Campbell

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Ava Caridad, Editor
Nicholas D'Angelo, Layout
Richard Rockwell, Assistant Editor/
Photo Digitizing

The Welcome Mat

A cordial welcome is extended to the following *new* members of The Historical Society of Bloomfield. We hope to see you at our next meeting:

David & Ingrid Barth
Glen Ridge, NJ

Van Tassel Funeral Home
Bloomfield

Charles DiGuilio
Bloomfield

Carole Sklar
Bloomfield

Gene Nichols
Bloomfield

Mike DiGuilio
Bridgewater, NJ

Beth Stobbs
Bloomfield Hills, MI

Paul & Kathy McKeown
Bloomfield

New Postal Address!

Please send all correspondence to the HSOB at its new postal address:

HSOB
PO Box 1074
Bloomfield, NJ 07003-1074

You can still visit us in person at our permanent address:
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield.

Bloomfield Books for sale!

Available for purchase at the HSOB Museum:

Bloomfield by Jean Kuras, Mark Scurman and Frederick Branch. Price: \$15.99 for HSOB members and \$19.99 for non-members.

Bloomfield Revisited by Jean Kuras and Frederick Branch. Price: \$15.99 for HSOB members and \$19.99 for non-members.

150 Years around the Green: a Brief History of Bloomfield, NJ—1812-1962 by Rachel F. Diamond. Price: \$5 for hardcover, \$3 for softcover.

Visit the museum and pick up your copies today. Located on the 3rd floor of the Children's Library at 90 Broad Street, hours are Wed. 2:00pm–4:30pm, Sat. 10:00am–12:30pm and by appointment. PH: (973) 743-8844.



Reminder!

If you haven't already done so, please be sure to renew your 2014 membership. Renewal forms are available at www.hsob.org or can be picked up at the museum or any HSOB meeting. Help keep the Historical Society of Bloomfield strong with your continuing membership!