

Gem of the Mountains

Spring 2010 • Edition I

The Boonton Historical Society & Museum



The Women's Improvement Society (From Boonton Gem of the Mountain 1910)

By Mrs. Charles B. Seabury

The Boonton Improvement Society, organized thirteen years ago by a few earnest women and having at the present time about sixty members, is one of the recognized institutions of the community. Its plan from the first was to co-operate with the city government in all matters pertaining to the cleanliness, sanitation, morality, and beauty of the town, to attend to the details of decoration or improvement which the Council had neither time nor money for — in short to take the woman's part in the municipal housekeeping. This it has done in such a way as to win for itself an undisputed influence.

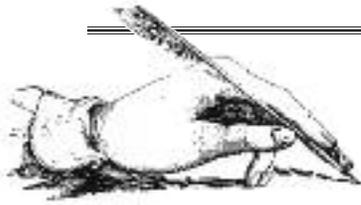
There are six standing committees as follows: Streets and Sanitation; Public Schools; Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Public Library; Decoration or Beautifying, and Press. The business of these committees is transacted at a regular monthly meeting (second Friday). There is also a social meeting once a month (fourth Tuesday) for which a short literary program is provided, consisting of some civic or economic topic for study, or the reading of a good story solely to promote good fellowship.



Drinking fountain on Washington Street

The Society has to its credit the putting up of a drinking fountain; a footbridge built over the river; the lighting of a dark thoroughfare (until the city took it over); a stone rest or seat overlooking the Falls; some added comforts to the teachers' room in the high school house; some improvements about school grounds; neatness of canal banks; the beautifying of half a dozen triangles where streets of the town meet, putting up street signs, etc., etc. Its latest achievement is the procuring of a twenty-thousand-dollar gift to the town of a strip of land to be known as the Schultze Park, which perpetuates a magnificent view and provides a much-needed thoroughfare between two streets.

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Letters to the Editor

Our article on Boonton's Bakeries resulted in some more interesting information from Ernie Piscitello and Ed Hughes. Ernie writes;

About 1910, my grandparents, Giuseppe and Ernestina Maciariello, and my grandfather's brother and his wife, Giovanni and Luisa Maciariello, moved from Montville to 115 Mechanic St, Boonton. Giovanni and Luisa opened an Italian general store on the first floor there, and both families lived in rooms behind and above the store (see photo).

There were baking ovens in the basement of the building. A hired baker baked bread which was sold in the store, and my grandfather also delivered it to the rural areas around Boonton.

About 1918 the family name was Americanized to Marcello. About 1919 John and Louise built a building on the corner of Birch and Division Streets with a grocery store on the ground floor, and apartments above, and Joseph and Ernestine took over the store at 115 Mechanic St. About 1924 Joseph and Ernestine bought the house at 136 Division St and they moved there with their eight children. Their property extended to Mechanic St. Also about this time, they built the brick building at 132-134 Division St with two retail stores on the first floor and two apartments on the second floor. They moved their grocery store to 134 Division St.

As a child, I remember being in the building at 115 Mechanic St, but not in the basement. My mother told me of the ovens in the basement, but I've never seen them. Some time about 2002 I was looking for information about the house at 115 Mechanic St, and met a Mr. Sheating, a resident there, who told me that



The Maciariello Family

Photo courtesy E. Piscitello

he had seen the ovens and wondered what they had been used for. Unfortunately, the cellar door was locked, but Mr Sheating told me that the building was owned at that time by a Mr. Barnish from Montville. On another occasion, in 2004, I found the outside cellar door open and I walked down the steps, but the cellar was dark, I couldn't find a light switch, and I didn't have a flashlight.

I was born in the apartment at 134 Division St in 1934 and lived there a year or so, until my father became ill and died, and then we moved into my grandparents' home at 136 Division St. Every once in a while my grandmother would send me to Manfredonia's (note correct spelling) bakery on Mechanic St to buy freshly baked, still warm bread, or freshly made bread dough with which she would make home-made pizza pumarole (tomato pizza or tomato focaccia) for supper, or pizza frite (fried bread dough) for breakfast the next morning. I remember the bakers dressed in white using long handled, wooden peels to move the loaves in and out of the stone ovens. Everything in the

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bakery, including the bakers, was covered with white flour and the room had an unforgettable scent of flour and baking bread. The Lanciano family lived in an apartment above the bakery.

One interesting story. My grandfather had 2 bread delivery routes which he did on alternate days. One day he delivered bread to one house, and a woman with a big belly was washing clothes in a stream. On his next visit to that house, two days later, he saw the same woman, but this time without the big belly, again washing clothes in the stream. My grandfather asked a man at the house what had happened, and the man said that the woman had had a baby.

John Marcello's descendants include my second cousins County Clerk Al Scerbo, Frank Scerbo, Father John Scerbo and Louise Scerbo Carter. Joseph's descendants include my mother, Teresa Oshonka, who owned Bonny Beauty Shoppe at 132 Division St, and later at 319 Old Boonton Rd, and my mother's brothers, Tony and Joe Marcello, who owned Marcello Brothers' Auto/Sporting Goods store at 310 Main St, and later at 301 Main St.

Ev Hughes writes from Georgia and tells us; Thanks for keeping me on the email blast list of the Historical Society — I enjoy the news from Boonton. Haven't been to Boonton for a few years, but the next time I'm there I do want to stop in at the Museum--which I still think of as Town Hall.

I enjoyed reading about the bakeries in town — many of them I also remember. Two comments — I recall that Louie Basch rented the right side of Manfredonia's on Mechanic Street for some years during the 30/40's and used it as the home base for his paper delivery routes. I remember going there to pick up the papers for my route which was in the William, Cornelia, Church streets area.

Reference was made to the Sunshine Bakery in the 900 block of Main Street across from the old Lyceum building. I believe the name of the proprietor was misspelled — it should have been Van Kouteren rather than Van Kourteren. I remember his wife's name was Janna (sp?) and I recall he had two daughters — one of whom's name was Martha.

Keep up the good work and have a great 2010.

Message from the President 2010

In these troubling economic times, we are tightening our belts along with everyone else and are mindful of our ability to judiciously manage our income and expenses while, at the same time, continue to offer innovative programs and exhibits of an historical and educational nature. We

have developed a list of high quality events for 2010, however, rising costs have resulted in fewer offerings.

Our continued success has been due to the support and extraordinary efforts of our trustees and member-volunteers. There are many benefits to be gained from volunteer work and involvement in the community and I hope that you will consider lending your talents and abilities to the Historical Society. We can now be reached on Facebook as well as at Boontonthistory@Boonton.org and of course in person at our Museum which is open on Saturdays from 1:00 – 4:00 pm. In addition, we will be experimenting with additional museum openings on Sunday afternoons during the summer — volunteers needed!!

If you haven't already done so, I hope you will renew your membership and join us in making this another successful year.



Jennifer M. Coultas
President



Boonton's First Woman Physician

Marietta H. Crane Woodruff

Excerpted from the notes of Alex D. Fowler

Dr. Woodruff was Boonton's first woman physician and, also, one of the relatively few women practicing in the country. By 1874, when Mrs. Woodruff graduated, there were probably less than 250 women in this country with medical degrees. Dr. Woodruff was not sufficiently distinguished to be noticed by the biographical encyclopedia of the day, but she did serve her community well and was an honored and respected person as well as a very capable physician.

She practiced homeopathy, was the family doctor for many Boonton families, and had a large practice in obstetrics. Her patients remember her as a stocky woman, very sure of herself and commanding the confidence of her patients.

Dr. Woodruff was the daughter of Judge Benjamin Crane and his second wife, Barbara. Judge Crane and his wife had two daughters: Marietta H., in 1837, and Barbara Flora, somewhat later. Of Marietta's early life and schooling, the records are bare. Presumably she went to one of the local schools, either the one on Horseneck Road (a little east of the intersection with Changebridge Road), or the one at Pine Brook.

In 1861, when Marietta was 24 years old, she married Christopher D. Woodruff, Jr., of Rahway, N.J.

Christopher, himself, was also just 24 years old, and but for his marriage, might have been involved in the Civil War. President Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers did not come until two months after the Woodruffs' marriage. To the Woodruffs were born three children: Benjamin Crane., who died in infancy, and Flora Crane, born in 1864. Their third child was

a son, Franklin Crane Woodruff, born September 6, 1865. Flora remained unmarried and lived with her parents. Franklin C., became a doctor of medicine (homeopathic), married Carrie Grimes of Boonton, had five sons, and practiced medicine in Atlantic Highlands, N.J. for many years.

Perhaps it was not until after her children were born that Mrs. Woodruff gave serious thought to enrolling as a student in a medical college. Until about 1863, the opportunities for women to study medicine were indeed few. In that year, however, the New York Medical College and Hospital for Women was chartered and opened its doors in New York City as the first medical college exclusively for women in the country.



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In 1872 she entered the New York Medical College for Women, each year's course of lectures ran for 28 weeks and cost the student about \$60.00. There was a final fee of \$10 for the diploma, and there were other fees if the student elected hospital experience at near by Bellevue Hospital 24. Dr Woodruff was graduated head of her class in 1874. She engaged in general practice in Boonton,

served as vice president of the New Jersey State Homeopathic Medical Society; on the staff of St. Mary's Hospital, Passaic; three years on the Boonton Board of Health and was a member of the Ladies' Improvement Society.

In 1878, Mrs. Woodruff and her husband adopted the infant natural daughter of a scion of a prominent Boonton family. The adopted daughter apparently received the love and affection of the whole Woodruff family, and she was well remembered in the wills of both Dr. Woodruff and Miss Flora. There may have

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been no connection, but it was in 1878 that Dr. Woodruff appeared to have an extra \$500 which she used to purchase the vacant corner lot (No.19) from her mother.

For about 65 years the Woodruff residence stood on Washington Street near Monroe Street. In 1930 the house was moved across Washington Street and placed facing Monroe Street, where it stands today.

Preserving The Past Through Oral Histories

In 2009 the Historical Society embarked upon an ambitious project to record and video tape members and friends as they described their lives growing up in Boonton. Tales of The Great Depression, of World Wars and of a town entering post-war prosperity are all included as participants talk about a time before television, microwave ovens, antibiotics, pantyhose, Frisbees, Xerox, and Kinsey — times when time-sharing meant togetherness, hardware meant hardware, and software wasn't a word. Julia Dunn and Edna Austin remember when the State Theater cost 15 cents and an ice cream cone at Whelan's cost 5 cents.



Ann Barnish Osterhoudt

Terry & Lloyd Charlton have undertaken this project for the Society and have enthusiastically taken on the task of interviewing and transcribing the memories of our members. With the written permission of close to thirty participants, we want to share with you some of their memories of Boonton circa the 1930s to 1940s.

Old time remedies were the order of the day when someone was sick. Some home cures recorded included milk of magnesia, Vicks, mustard plaster, horse lineament for sprains, a teaspoon of sugar with a small amount of kerosene, skunk grease and, worst of all, a tablespoon of castor oil!! Illnesses considered common at the time included: the common cold, flu, pleurisy, whooping cough, polio, pneumonia, measles and chicken pox. Two interviewees remembered the flu epidemic of 1918.

Margot Ammann Durrer remembers that in the evenings after a hot summer day and before the existence of television, air conditioning and the computer, the children would run under the sprinklers, play games or chase fireflies, while the adults would relax with neighbors out on their front porches.

Lucille Scerbo recalls that “we knew everyone and everyone knew us and if you were doing something wrong they’d let your mom know about it.” Bill Bednar remembered when Duke Endrell (phonetic) would light lanterns at the railroad station on Birch Street so the kids could go sleigh riding. Danny Bonanni remembers a game where a bunch of kids took turns running across the melting ice at Hillary’s Pond until someone fell in.

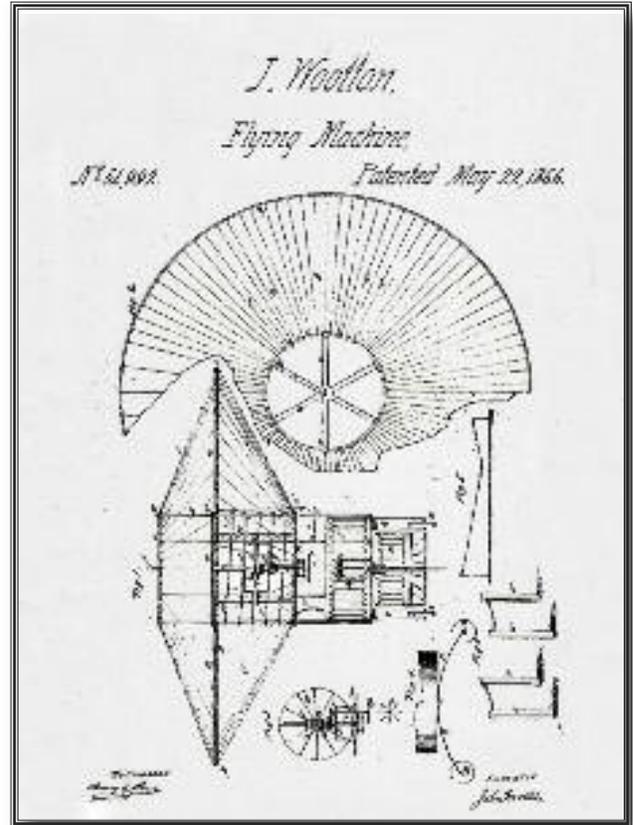
A truck delivered fresh fruit and vegetables around the neighborhood. There was a milk man delivering milk. There was an ice man (in days before refrigeration). Put a sign in your window and the Dugan’s bakery truck stopped by. Telephone the local grocery and they would make deliveries

At one hundred and five years of age Ann Barnish Osterhoudt is the oldest participant to date. Our interviewer, Terry Charlton, commented that Ann is trim, pretty and has perfect posture. Her mind is wonderfully sharp for a person who has lived 105 years, and she is very friendly, open-hearted and gracious. Ann recalled that “religion had always been a very important part of her life – before we went to bed – all us kids – stood at the table together and prayed.” There were 13 kids altogether and, Ann proudly announces, “all of us were born in the house.”

We are looking for senior citizens who grew up in Boonton who are willing to share their memories with us. If you would like to participate in this project, contact Terry via e-mail at Terrycharlton@optonline.net or 973-334-7789.

New Exhibit Features Local Inventor

In 1866 John Wootton of Boonton patented his plan for a Flying Machine. His patent application discusses reversible propellers and a helicopter-type aircraft in which a take off of the catapult type is described. We don't know if he ever got it off the ground..., literally!!, but copies of his plans and patent application can be seen as part of our new exhibit entitled;



“Bits & Pieces From Boonton’s Past”

This exciting new exhibit features many diverse and varied items from the corners of our archives including some of the bricks which formerly covered our Main Street; odd medical instruments and medicines from Doctor Wiggins’ office on Cornelia Street;



our collection of personalized barber’s mugs; 1930’s plates from plate night at the Darress Theatre; an intricately detailed and illuminated scale model of Whelan’s



Drug Store; 1930’s era radio equipment from Boonton area electronics industries; crates and bottles from local bottlers; and a 27 foot long banner “Boonton Community Trust Fund Drive” from 1925,

as well as many other odds and ends from our town’s past.

Come in and get a glimpse of what Boonton was all about. Museum is open Saturdays 1:00 – 4:00pm and during the week by appointment.

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The Women's Improvement Society

There is a tradition that, in years gone by, a leading citizen, trying to brace the courage of a modern Cincinnatus (farmer) who had been called to the mayor's chair from his plough, or other peaceful occupation, said to him:

“Mr. Blank, don't you worry,
there will be no trouble at all.
You'll get along all right — un-
less — the Improvement Society
gets after you, and then —
Heaven help you !”

Not so now. The tables are turned, and everybody, without regard to race, color, or previous condition of servitude, gets after the Improvement Society. Any annoyance, from that of stray cats and dogs to the qualms produced by objectionable bill boards, any suggestion for betterment, from the licensing of cab drivers to the establishing of a new park, from the correction of a bad custom to the founding of a permanent improvement, is pretty sure to find its way to this ever-sympathetic body. It seems only fair to say that, so far, appeals have seldom been made in vain.



Foot-Bridge to Park

(Editor's Note: We would welcome any information on a possible location for the Schultze Park mentioned in this article. We do know that General John S. Schultze was Superintendent at the Iron Works. He lived in the manager's house, formerly owned by William G. Lathrop on Cornelia Street, about where the Elk's Club is now located. He was also a director and later vice-president of the Boonton National Bank. He died in 1912).



The Boonton Historical Society & Museum

210 Main Street, Boonton, New Jersey 07005
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Open Saturdays from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
and by appointment.

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- Candace Grant Flyer Designer
- Andy Barlak Museum Building
- James Kuhnert Graphic Design

Opinions expressed in the Gem of the Mountains are not necessarily those of the society.



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210 Main Street
Boonton, New Jersey 07005

Do you have OLD photos of old houses located in Boonton?

The museum is seeking photos of houses to supplement our current collection. We are looking only for photos that were taken before 1930. You know the kind--- those sepia toned photos that are mounted on card stock. If you have multiple copies, we would be happy to have you donate one to the museum. If you have only one copy, we will make a copy for the museum and return the original to you.

Thank you for your help with this project. If you have questions, please call Monica 973-335-2666.

The Boonton Historical Society & Museum

Open Saturdays from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. and by appointment.

