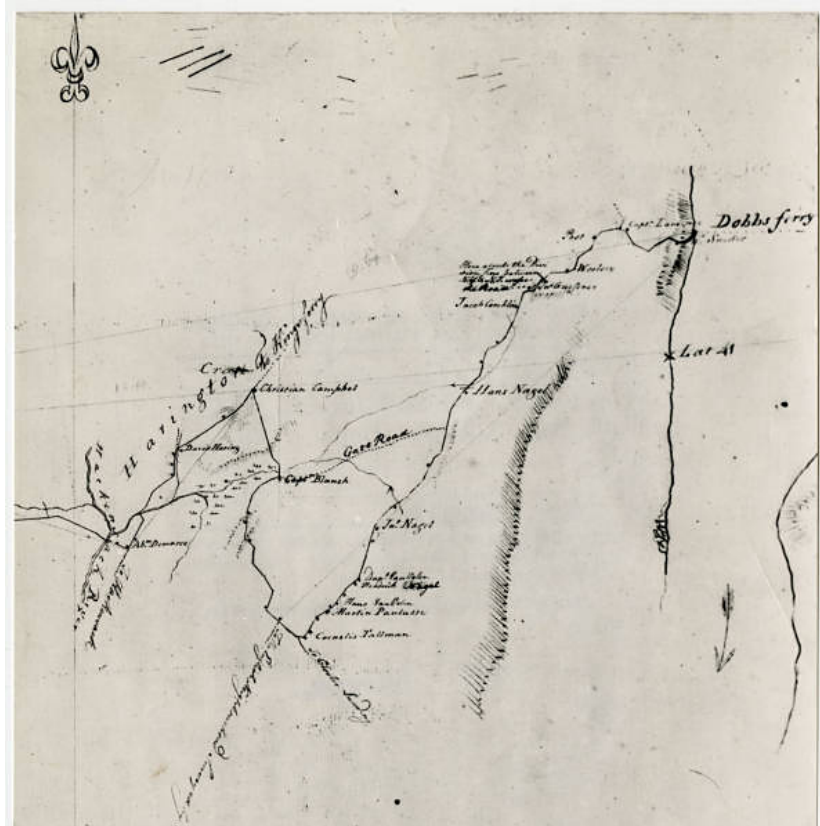


Nomination Report  
For Historic RECOGNITION of  
**Blanch Avenue**  
Closter, NJ



*Erskine Map (1780)*

**Closter Historic Preservation Commission**

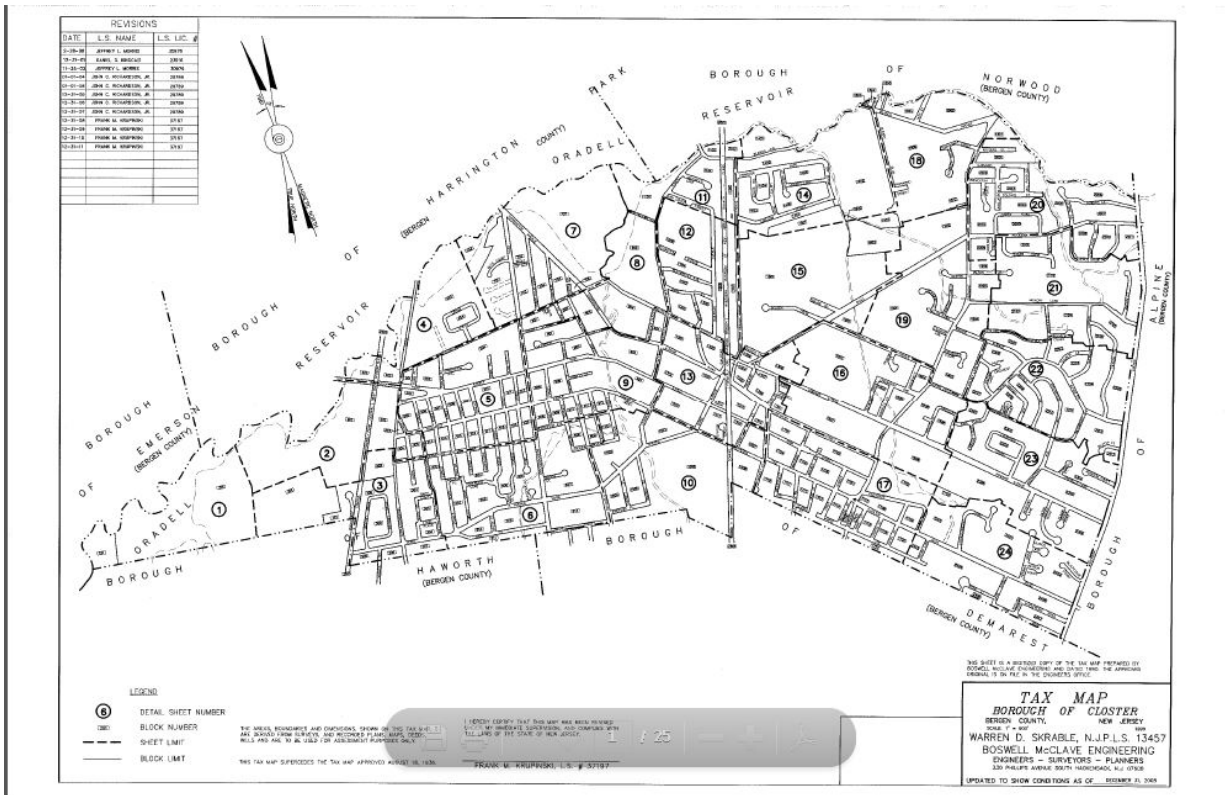
Tim Adriance, Chair  
Jennifer Rothschild, Vice Chair  
Bobbie Bouton Goldberg  
Erik Lenander  
William J. Martin  
Susan McTigue  
Orlando Tobia  
Jayne Rubenfeld-Waldron  
Joel Zelnik

Joseph Yammarino, Council Liaison  
Sophie Heymann, Planning Board Liaison

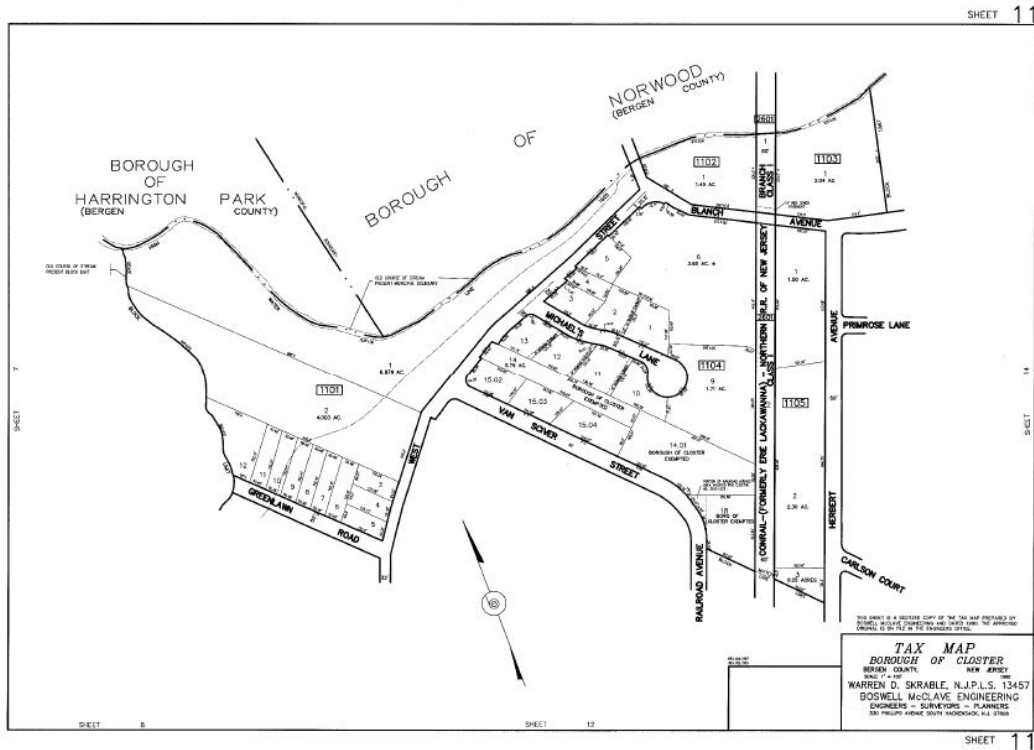
*Dedicated to Dr. Arthur Goldberg*

**DESCRIPTON:**

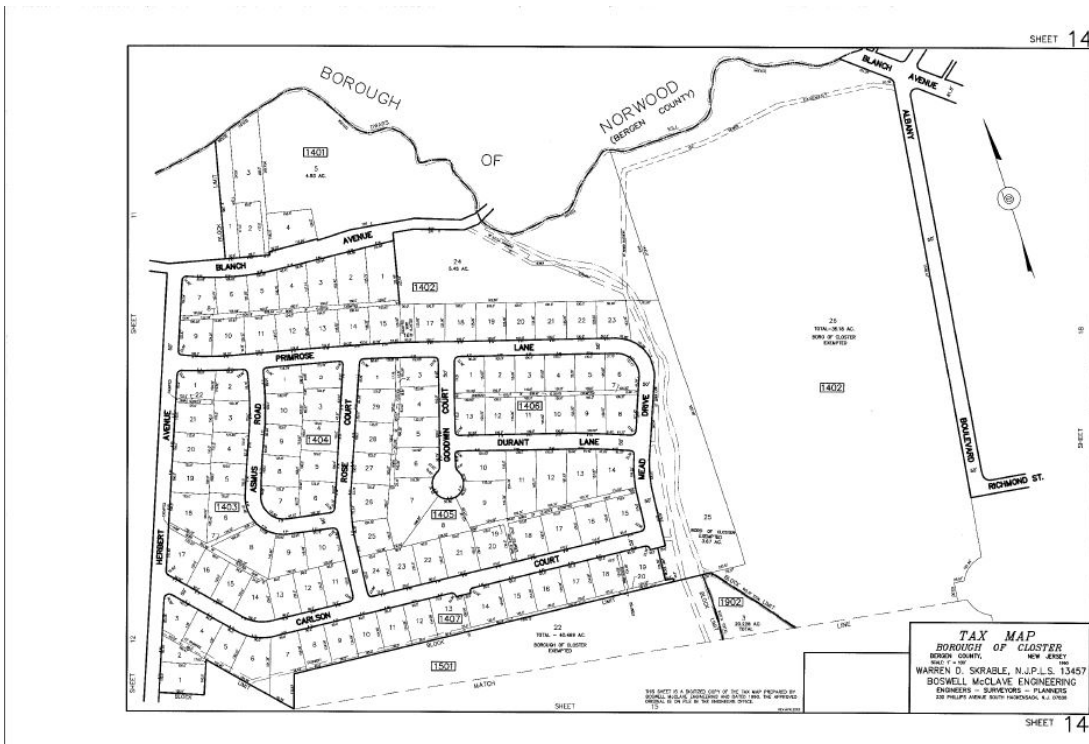
Blanch Avenue is a public roadway belonging to the Borough of Closter located along the northern Closter border where it crosses the Dwars Kill creek and passes through portions of present day Norwood. The eastern end of Blanch Avenue starts at Piermont Road, while the western end continues into Norwood and Harrington Park. The middle section in Closter and Norwood is a dirt road that traverses the DPW area, Closter Nature Center acreage and runs along the police shooting range. A motorized vehicle cannot travel from the eastern section of Blanch Avenue to the western side, since the old bridges across the Dwars Kill are gone and parts of the old roadway are overgrown. Blanch Avenue is officially disconnected and is no longer considered a through-street.



Tax Map, Borough of Closter showing Blanch Avenue roadway at top of the right half of the map



*Detail of Closter Borough Tax Map showing western portion of Blanch Avenue*



*Detail of Closter Borough Tax Map showing eastern portion of Blanch Avenue*

## **HISTORY OF THE ROADWAY:**

Blanch Avenue was originally a colonial-era farm lane, possibly in existence as early as 1745. It first shows up on a circa 1780 Erskine map as a dotted roadway labeled “Gate Road,” that starts at Piermont Road, crosses the Dwars Kill brook and ends at the property of Captain Blanch. The road is an important remnant of Bergen County and Closter’s transportation history. It functioned as a county road for all of its history, and in certain places it looks very much as it did almost two hundred years ago when it was basically a wagon trail.<sup>1</sup>

In 1795, a country road petition was filed in Hackensack that recorded the names of all the early settlers that signed off their property rights to the county for this roadway. Thirty-three men signed, including many from the notable families of that time, including: Ferdon, Naugle, Haring, Jordan, Auryance, Demarest, Blauvelt, and Westervelt.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, Colonel Thomas Blanch was not a signer and he died at the ripe old age of 83 in 1823, so he was alive when the papers were filed. His change in status from “Captain” to “Colonel” is an unknown story.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bergen County Historic Sites Survey, Borough of Closter, 1999 pg. 2

<sup>2</sup> Bergen County Road Return dated 1795 (Bergen County records D-63)

<sup>3</sup> Email from Tim Adriance September 2, 2014





common pleas held at New Barbadoes.” (In 1693, New Barbadoes was a township in Essex County, and comprised the whole of the territory between the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers. By 1921, the old township had lost its identity by having its name changed from, “Township of New Barbadoes, County of Bergen” to “City of Hackensack.”)

The request stated:

*“Gentlemen it is with the utmost regret that we the subscribers have seen the Detriment & Inconveniency which Accrewes from an Existing Road recently laid out (which leads from the Road running from Tappan to Closter to the –Road which Runs from Closter to Dobses Ferry) and Deem it of privet Utility as well as Conducive to Public Interest to Exert ourselves Effectuate an alteration Purely Stimulated by their motives we Request the court to appoint Surveyors to make the Desired alteration”.*

In the 1796 papers, Blanch’s house is described as “the wagon house of Thomas Blanch and the width of the road is two rods.” The papers also state that the Road from Tappan Church to Closter is known as “Old Closter Road.” (Other old maps show different roadways labeled “Old Closter Road.”)

Thomas Blanch (1740-1823) was descended from the Englishman, Richard Blanch (1704-1766/7). Richard had two sons, Isaac and Thomas, who, were both active in supporting American independence in the area just south of Tappantown in Norwood and Closter.<sup>5</sup> Isaac married Geertje Haring and inherited the historic Blanch-Haring home and mill in Harrington Park. Thomas was “One of the most prominent men in Bergen County in his day,” according to the Genealogical History of Hudson and Bergen County.

During the Revolutionary War, Thomas Blanch was Captain of a company of volunteer soldiers. It was noted in The Revolutionary War in the Hackensack Valley that Thomas Blanch was one of the men who “risked their lives and property by

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<sup>5</sup> Tappan 300 Years 1686-1986 Tappentown Historical Society 1988

openly serving as patriot officials in a no man's land between two armies." <sup>6</sup> In Gillman's, The Story of the Ferry, Blanch is described as a "large powerful man, who, like other militia men, spent most of his nights in hiding to avoid capture during the war." (Possibly he hid in the woods around Blanch Avenue). He is listed as a magistrate and held county and township offices, including serving as a Freeholder in 1782.<sup>7</sup>

In 1761, Blanch married Effie Johns Mabie and had thirteen children. The Blanch home was probably the small stone house at 26 Blanch Avenue, later owned by Anthony Monaco, the proprietor of a pansy farm there. Col. Blanch, according to his great-grandson, lived half a mile north of Closter on the Dwarskill in a stone house by two great willows. This area was often visited by British troops in foraging.<sup>8</sup>



*Anthony Monaco's Pansy Farm House ca. 1954 (no longer extant) The house was torn down sometime after 1954. Spectrum for Living is now located where the house once stood.*

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<sup>6</sup> Leiby, Adrian C., The Revolutionary War in the Hackensack Valley: The Jersey Dutch and the Neutral Ground 1775-1783, Rutgers U. Press New Brunswick 1992

<sup>7</sup> Harvey, Cornelius Burnham, Genealogical History of Hudson and Bergen County, New Jersey, The New Jersey Genealogical Publishing Company, 1900

<sup>8</sup> Gilman, Wintrop S., Palisades Notes written in Palisades N.Y. Dec. 16, 1899 p.51

In 1789, Thomas bought the historic Campbell-Blanch property in Norwood for his son, Richard. Thomas helped Richard build an addition to the house, which served as a way station for stage coaches.

Unfortunately, Richard Blanch's Norwood house/restaurant (which stood at the corner of Tappan Road and Blanch Avenue) burned down in 1997. Colonel Blanch was baptized in 1741 at the Dutch Reformed Church in Hackensack and buried in the Tappan Reformed Church Cemetery in 1823. His wife, Effie is also buried there.<sup>9</sup>

The Blanch roadway shows up on a 1795 map and an 1811 map; neither has much detail. Gordon's 1828 map shows the road and the 1830 Coastal Survey map shows the road with five buildings. These buildings include two which are close to West Street, the J.A. Ferdon house east of the Dwars Kill, an unnamed building near Piermont Road, Jan Ferdon house (in Norwood), and the Jan and Johannis Ferdon house, now labeled N. Ferdon, at 102 Blanch Avenue. An 1840 map shows these houses plus barns.

Colonel Blanch's house is on the 1859 railroad map, while an 1861 map shows 102 Blanch Ave., four labeled houses and a hotel near the railroad tracks.<sup>10</sup> The three houses east of the railroad were listed as the property of J. Bartow (near Piermont Road), Jan Ferdon (in Norwood), and the Jan Ferdon and Johannis Ferdon house (102 Blanch Ave.)

In a "walking map of New York City and Vicinity" from 1863-1866, "Colonel Blanch's Station" is shown in big, bold letters. A hotel is shown west of the train station, as well as nearby buildings belonging to Naugle, Ward and Blanch. The Ferdons owned two buildings east of the station and there is another unlabeled building near Piermont Road. On later maps the station and hotel are gone and no information has yet been discovered to tell what happened.

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<sup>9</sup> Ancesters of Davidd Kipp Conner and Roots Web, The Maybee Society

<sup>10</sup> 1861 Hopkins- Corey Map

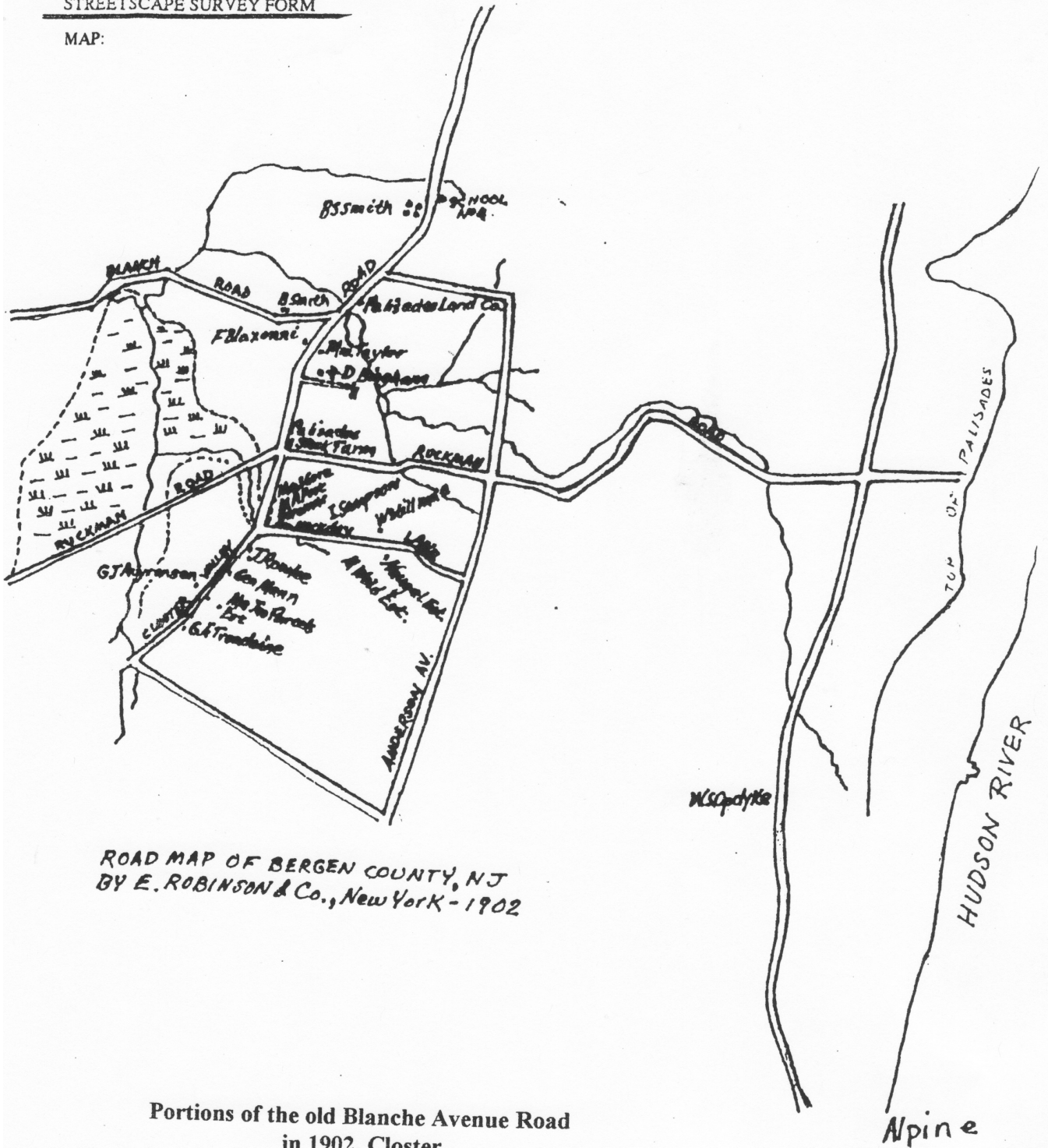


*Walking map of New York City and Vicinity, 1863-1866*

An 1876 map shows only three houses on Blanch, while an 1884 map shows the streams that cross Blanch Avenue, but not the houses. The 1892 “Colton’s Driving & Wheeling map of the country 25 miles north of New York City” (Yes, a road map for cars) shows Blanch Avenue as a secondary road and Piermont Road as a primary route. Blanch Avenue is shown on a 1902 map, but unlabeled. Blanch Avenue remained a “real” road as late as 1965. (Sometimes Blanch was spelled with an “e” at the end.)



MAP:



ROAD MAP OF BERGEN COUNTY, NJ  
BY E. ROBINSON & Co., New York - 1902

Portions of the old Blanche Avenue Road  
in 1902, Closter  
From D. Robinsons complier,  
Map of Bergen County, New Jersey: 1902

## HISTORY OF THE AREA

Colonel Blanch's house is gone, and according to former resident of the Ferdon house, George Dalcero, other Patriot houses are also gone. He remembers reading a book from the Closter library that told about several homes along Blanch Avenue being burnt by the Tories in the Revolutionary War. In the 1960s, Mr. Dalcero explored the area looking for remains of these homes and found several old stone foundations (fairly close together) on the northern side of Blanch Avenue. Looking further, he found meersham pipes, salt crocks, and various items confirming this theory.<sup>11</sup>



*Drawing of 102 Blanch Avenue by M. Jane Bailey*

Fortunately, the Ferdon home at 102 Blanch Avenue still stands. The last will and testament of John Ferdon, dated 1817, “left an estate of 165 acres of farm, dairy and dwellings”. The original and larger tract on which his home stands was purchased in 1749 by his father, Wilhelmus Ferdon, and it then included almost 500 acres of land.<sup>12</sup> Wilhelmus or William purchased the land a half mile west of the Naugle

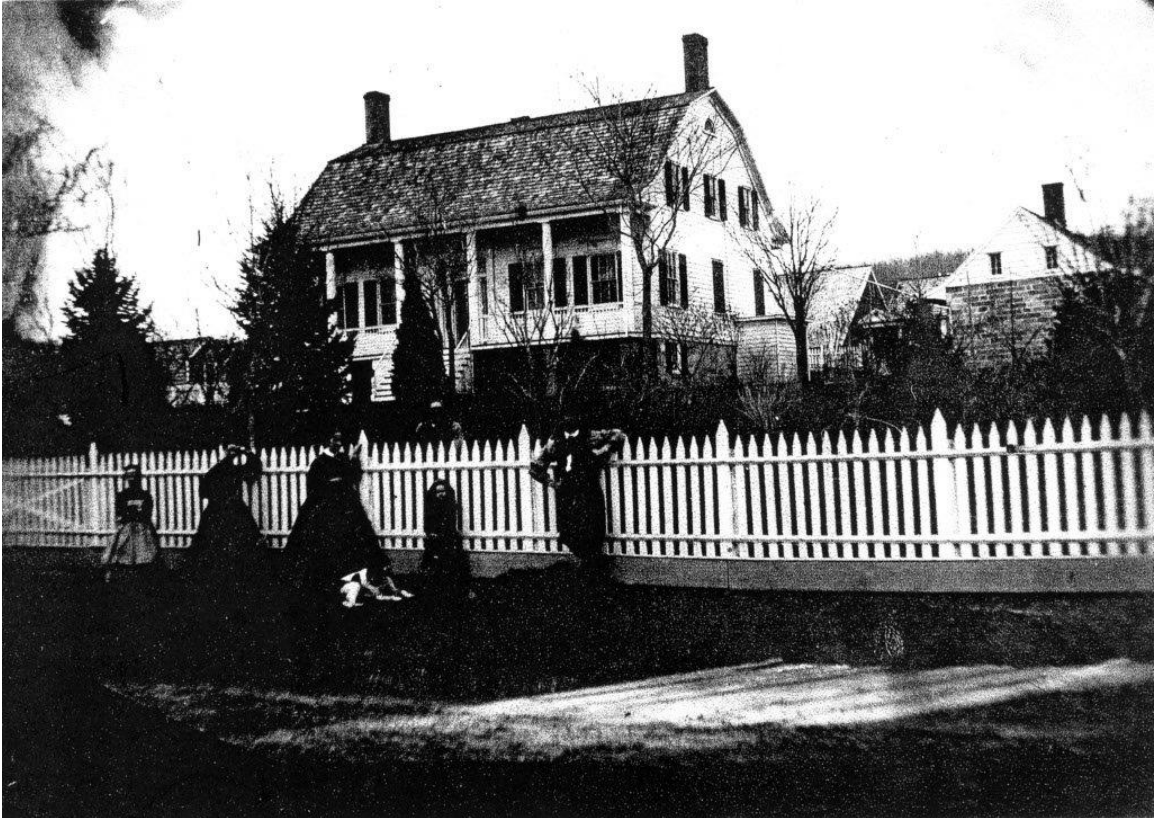
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<sup>11</sup> Facebook site, [Are you From Closter](#) written by George Dalcero, September 2015

<sup>12</sup> Gurnee, Jeanne ed. [Historic Homes in Closter](#), Environmental Commission, Closter, N.J. 1979

homestead on the east side of the Tenakill Brook. The house was built in 1817 and is a fine example of the Federal style in Bergen County.

John Ferdon , according to historian Pat Garbe-Morillo, was a leading civic and political citizen in Closter and Bergen County. He served two terms as a Chosen Freeholder of Harrington Township in 1812-1817 and 1822-1825.<sup>13</sup> This house is registered as a national, state, and local historic site and was in the Ferdon family into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



The B.N. Ferdon House on the north side of Blanch; no longer extant.

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<sup>13</sup> Garbe-Morillo, Patricia, Closter and Alpine: Images of America, Arcadia Press, 2001



## Asmus Nursery



One of the next owners of this property was Edward R. Asmus, born in 1878, known for growing prize winning roses. According to the History of Bergen County: “Mr. Asmus was a well-known horticulturist and a specialist in the production and care of roses of every variety.” His father, Ernest, was a florist with greenhouses in North Bergen and, along with Edward, was one of the first men in the country to start growing roses on a commercial scale. After graduating from Drake’s Business College, Edward and his father started a business in Closter in 1902, named E.G. Asmus & Son. After Mr. Asmus senior died, his son took over the business.”<sup>14</sup>

The business did well and was one of the three largest in Closter, employing 12 men and winning many prizes. It included 45,600 feet under glass and produced about 700,000 blooms a year. Edward R. Asmus married in 1900 and had two children.

In 1946, Mr. Asmus’s wife died and he decided to sell his business to Tony and Mary Lupardi of Madison, New Jersey. According to the Memories of Mary Lupardi, the

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<sup>14</sup> Westervelt, Francis A., History of Bergen County, New Jersey 1630-1923, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc. N.Y. & Chicago 1923 Vol. 3 p.349

property included; “57 acres of land, barns, a three car garage, an old colonial home with a well in the front.” It also had “a brook, 3 large greenhouses and one small one, a huge packing shed with an ice box and an office. The ice box was as big as 2 rooms put together.”<sup>15</sup>

“The house was on one acre of land with a tennis court. Our business was one of the three largest businesses in Closter in 1947. My husband was soon called the Rose King of Bergen County. They used to put rose symbols on the high school rings”. Much of the land was rented to a farmer who primarily grew lettuce. The Lupardi’s also had a large garden and did a lot of canning. Their son, Tony, one of five children, had an egg business and raised pheasants that he sold to a gun club, while a daughter complained that “We live in the woods, who is going to find me out here?”

16

In 1955-56, the Lupardi’s sold off 14 acres, and in 1961 they sold the business, but kept the house and ten acres. Young Tony bought an adjacent 14 acres in Norwood and started a nursery-landscaping business. He later was given back a part of the ten acres with two small greenhouses. The Lupardi Nursery is still located at 75 Blanch Avenue on the Closter-Norwood border. The historic Ferdon house was recently sold by owner Beverly Philips Watkins.

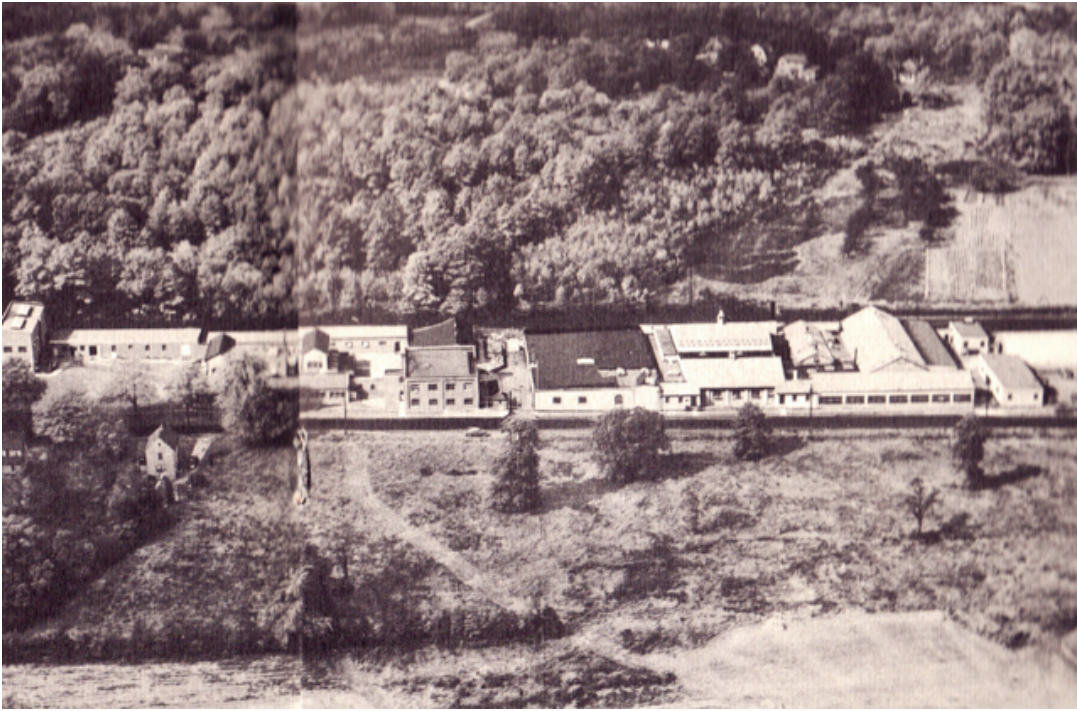
### **Bronze Powder Works**

In the early 1920s, the E. G. Asmus Company was the second largest business in Closter, after the United States Bronze Powder Works, which was across the street and also bordered on Blanch Avenue. (Although the addresses indicate Herbert Avenue)

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<sup>15</sup> Memoirs of Mary Lupardi [www.devenezia.com/family/lupardi/mary/memoirs](http://www.devenezia.com/family/lupardi/mary/memoirs)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



*1954 Aerial view of U.S. Bronze and Powder works*

In 1918, Henry H. Mandle and M.A. Harwick took over B. Ullmann Company, an enemy alien bronze powder company, by consent of the U.S. Government and by order of the Supreme Court. The Paint, Oil, and Drug Review in 1918 wrote, “It is a source of great satisfaction at this time to know that, while heretofore bronze powder factories have been usually foreign owned, the new enterprise is distinctly American in management and ownership.” The recently built B. Ullman Company had been owned by German interests, and before the war Germany dominated the bronze powder market.

By 1920, after refurbishing the original buildings, the Closter company was expanding by constructing a new factory adjoining the original building. The cost was \$250,000 and would help produce almost 1,000,000 pounds per annum and employ 16 people, including a day and night watchman.

In peace time, the plant produced bronze and aluminum powder for the graphic arts and painting industries. It became the largest employer and industry in the Northern Valley in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1942, it received their first government order and the company’s concern turned to explosives. Bronze was

used in bombs, tracer bullets, and sea-markers. In 1943, it was awarded their first of three Army-Navy "E" Awards for outstanding contributions to the war effort. After the war, bronze powder was used in cloth and paper products and painting industries. The factory closed in 1955 and the buildings have been used for various businesses.

Mr. Mandle, according to Who's Who in Engineering of 1922, studied engineering at Columbia University, did special work on explosives and cracking of hydrocarbon in France and England from 1915 to 1917, and did special war work in Washington D.C., working on gas masks. He was in charge of research and production and known for developing patents.

A leading civil and municipal leader in Closter and the Northern Valley, Henry Mandle helped fund the construction of the library, Temple Beth-El, Closter Borough Hall, and the Closter Nature Center cabin. He was a Councilman, and as head of the finance committee, he helped save Closter from bankruptcy. He also was very important in the building of the Pascack Valley Hospital and was named the Bergen County "Citizen of the Year" in 1959.<sup>17</sup> His wife, Florence, was also a very active civic leader, and the hospital named the Obstetrical Nursing Unit in her honor.

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<sup>17</sup> Bergen Record March 14, 1959



# U. S. Bronze Powder Works



**HENRY H. MANDLE**

In 1932 when a coalition of Republicans and Democrats was formed in an attempt to restore proper equilibrium to the financial structure of Closter, Mr. Mandle was drafted for the office of councilman, and was given the chairmanship of the finance committee.

One of the first pronouncements was to the effect that he was "not a politician, had no desire to become one, and hence had no aspirations for higher office." He pledged himself to the job of looking after the financial side of public affairs, and did a thorough job of it. At the expiration of his term as councilman he was offered the nomination for the mayorship, but declined and retired to private life. He also resigned membership on the board of directors of financial and other corporations in order to devote all of his time to the perfection of new equipment and process for the manufacture of Bronze Powders.

*These were  
very beautiful  
people. I graduated  
CHS with Richard.*

Closter's largest manufacturing industry is located at the northern end of Herbert Avenue, where the United States Bronze Powder Works, Inc., has been in business since 1918. Organized at that time by Henry H. Mandle of Closter to replace the bankrupt concern of B. Ullman and Co., German interests, the corporation has become the largest producer of fine quality bronze powders in this country, with the most modern plant and equipment of any plant of its kind in the world.

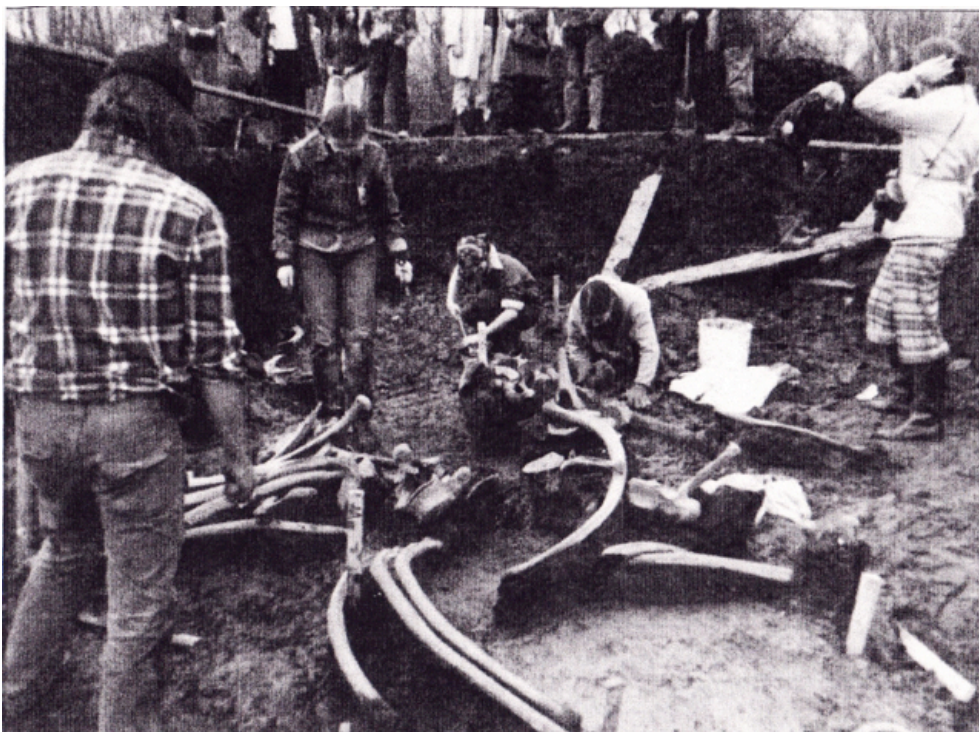
Mr. Mandle, a graduate of the Columbia University School of Engineering, is in charge of research and production in this and affiliated or subsidiary companies. During the past year another new unit has been added to the Herbert Avenue buildings. This houses a laboratory and experimental plant where Mr. Mandle has developed new machinery for the manufacturing of bronze powder and a new process for its application and treatment. The powder now produced is of finer grade and higher quality than heretofore manufactured.

Today the U. S. Bronze Powder Works is only one unit of a group of other plants in Malone, N. Y., which in terms of physical units is even larger than Closter's. Another plant functions in Valleyfield, Prov. of Quebec, Canada. The Company has patents on the equipment products developed through Mr. Mandle's research in every country where bronze powder is manufactured and used. It has licensed plants in England, France Italy and Switzerland for the milling of the product according to the new process.

The Closter plant is widely known throughout the States as a model of safety both to mechanical devices good housekeeping orderliness and health care for the workers. From it the powders are shipped daily far and wide over the United States. Mr. Mandle is recognized as an authority in the manufacturing and application of bronze powders, and is often called as consultant of the various users of the product.

Henry Mandle described in Closter: Its Economic and Political Life, J. Arthur Pelletier, Inc. 1938





*Exhuming the Dwar Kill Mastodon, early 1970's.*

A 10,000 year old fully articulated mastodon skeleton was found near Blanch Avenue at the northwestern part of Closter and the Harrington Park/ Norwood borders. A Hackensack Water Company shovel operator was dredging where the Dwarskill empties into the Hackensack River in the early 1970's and discovered a 75% intact male skeleton. An archaeologist from the American Museum of Natural History worked with the Bergen Museum of Art and Science to excavate the "Dwarskill" mastodon.<sup>18</sup>

Local resident, Emil Giotta, also discovered many archaeological finds in this area, including tools and artifacts representing all phases of the prehistoric periods, from Paleo-Indian to the latest stages of the agricultural periods of the Lenni Lenape. This is from about 6,000BC to the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD. He found many Lenni Lenape objects, from Early Woodland to Late Woodland (1,000BC – white settlement), including a pottery smoking pipe bowl with a human head effigy circa AD 500.<sup>19</sup>After 1,000AD,

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<sup>18</sup> Garbe-Morillo, Patricia, Closter and Alpine: Images of America, Arcadia Press, 2001

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

the Late Woodland period, the Lenape lived in villages and raised crops. Mr. Giotta reported finding post holes of a long house in the Blanch Avenue area.<sup>20</sup>

George Dalcero, who lived on Blanch Avenue and once worked at Lupardi's Landscaping, remembers always finding Indian arrowheads and some spear points when they plowed the fields where the nursery is now located (75 Blanch Ave). He also remembers an exploratory search for the Lenape village there, and was made aware that they found where the perimeter post holes of the stockade were located.<sup>21</sup>



*c. 1930-1940 Buzzoni Farmhouse showing farm dog "Charlie" on the cellar door, and ducks and geese in the foreground*

Meanwhile, at the eastern side of Blanch Avenue, an 1861 map shows that J. Jorden owned the land and a house on the southeast corner of Blanch Avenue and Closter Valley Road, now called Piermont Road. (Piermont Road has been named Closter Valley Road, County Road and Old Closter Road at different times in history) This lovely home added a front addition in the early 1900s and still stands.<sup>22</sup> It is located at 20 Piermont Road.

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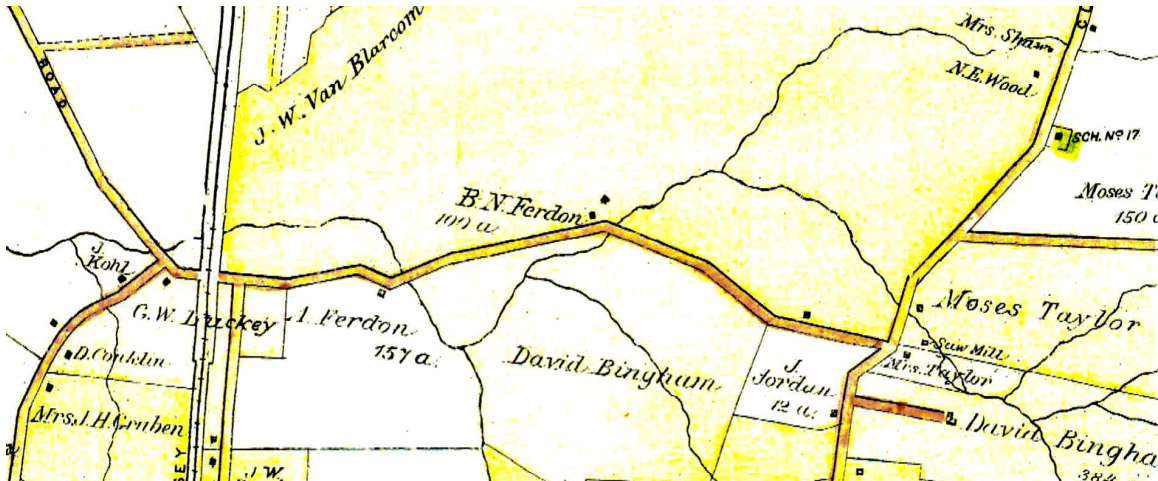
<sup>20</sup> Bergen County Historic Sites Survey Report: Borough of Closter 1999 # 37

<sup>21</sup> Email from George Dalcero, November 4, 2015

<sup>22</sup> Garbe-Morillo, Patricia, Closter and Alpine: Images of America, Arcadia Press, 2001



According to an 1891 map, the land on the south side of Blanch Avenue, next to the Jordan property, was owned by David Bingham. He later acquired 27.16 acres with several buildings on nearby on County Road.<sup>23</sup> He also owned a quarry and after the Church of the Holy Communion in Norwood was damaged, “kindly allowed the builders to take from his quarry all the stone required to rebuild the walls.”<sup>24</sup>



Portion of 1891 Beers map showing properties owned by David Bingham and J. Jordan along Blanch Avenue

Members of the Ferdon family owned the land starting from Piermont Road on the north side of Blanch in the 1800s. Maps show two houses on this stretch, one owned by B. N. Ferdon, There are photos, but unfortunately the house is no longer standing. On the north side, there is an older home with the address 375 Blanch Avenue, but it might have been moved here later.<sup>25</sup>

By 1912, the eastern part of the Ferdon property was owned by F.M.Dyer. (19.09 acres)<sup>26</sup> Mr. Dyer owned Cedarvale Farms (mostly located in Norwood and also named Cedar Valley Farms) which advertised in *Home and Field* in 1919 about their

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<sup>23</sup> 22 Bromley map of Bergen County 1912 vol.1

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the Vestry June 1887

<sup>25</sup> Conversation with Orlando Tobia November 16, 2015

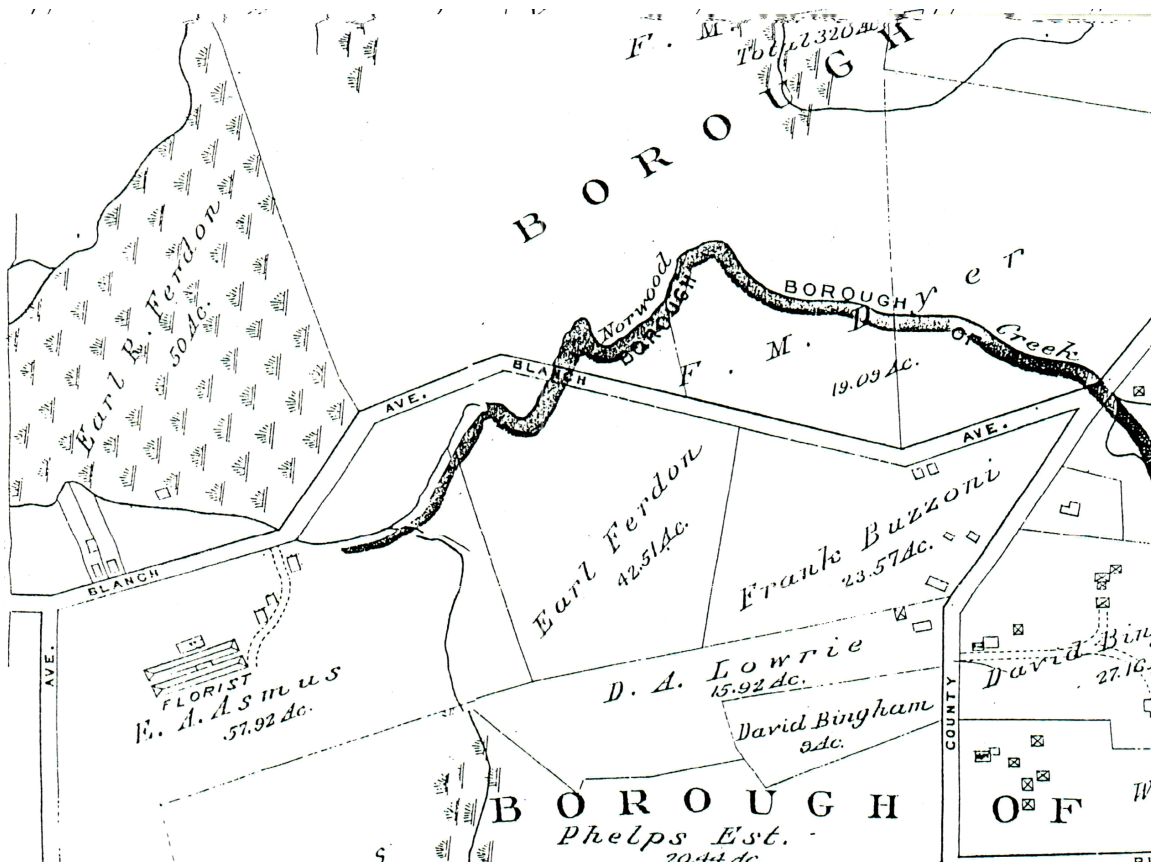
<sup>26</sup> Bromley map of Bergen County 1912 Vol.1



Jersey cows with beautiful dairy lines and high butter production. He also was a founder of the N.J. Unit Brick and Tile Company of Belleville, and an avid golfer. This corner property of Blanch Avenue was later (probably from the 1940s to the 1970s) rented to George Trautwein where he grew mostly corn and tomatoes.

### The Buzzoni Farm Tract

Frank and Rose Buzzoni emigrated to the U.S. from northern Italy in 1889. They settled in Closter in 1897 where they raised a family of twelve children on their Blanch Avenue farm. The farm consisted of 10 1/2 acres with a house (moved on logs from Piermont Road) and a dozen outbuildings, including a horse stable, blacksmith shop, chicken coop, a smoke house, and a large barn. They had four teams of horses. A 1912 map shows that they owned 23.57 acres on the south side of Blanch starting at Piermont Road.<sup>27</sup>



*Bromley map of Bergen County showing Buzzoni land and Smus property on Blanch Avenue, 1912*

<sup>27</sup> Bromley map of Bergen County 1912 vol.1

The farm had a heart-shaped pond that Mr. Buzzoni built for his wife so that she could sit there and knit while enjoying watching the ducks and birds.<sup>28</sup> It also had a large vineyard for the family wine that Rose made in the cellar.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, the vineyard is gone, but the pond still remains, as well as some old fence posts. The Buzzoni's raised horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens, and ducks, and they owned "Sunny" the bull, who was the only one in the area. When customers brought in their cows to be serviced, the children had to stay in the house away from the windows.<sup>30</sup> The farm was not a commercial farm - the livestock and produce fed the large family. It remained a family farm into the early 1960's.

The Buzzoni men earned a living by excavating cellars for homes in Closter and nearby areas. (They worked on most of the homes on High Street for Sophia Speake Maples.)<sup>31</sup> One longtime resident remembers taking a Buzzoni Halloween hayride to the old graveyard in Tappan.<sup>32</sup> Others remember the Buzzoni's using their horses to pull out cars that were stuck on Blanch Avenue in the "Lover's Lane" section in the 1940s and 50s.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Buzzoni granddaughter, Jo Daniels on November 9, 2015.

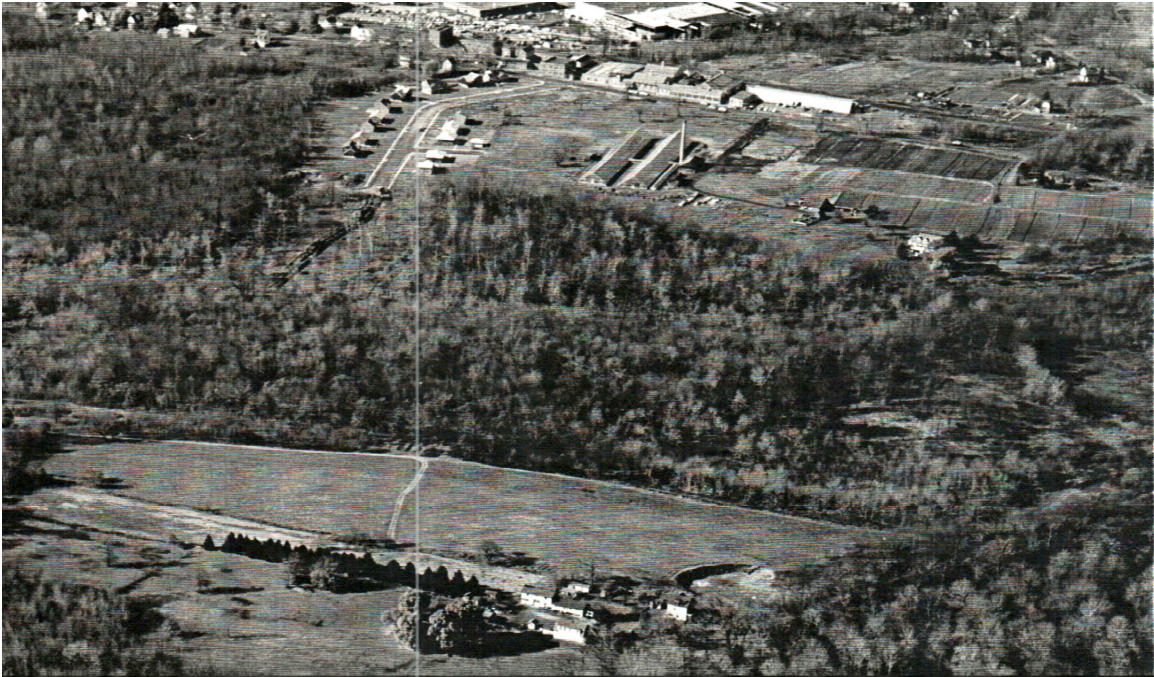
<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Phone conversation with Buzzoni granddaughter, Jo Daniels in October, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Conversation with Doris Heise October 2015

<sup>33</sup> Discussion with Orlando Tobia, November 16, 2015, also Facebook site [Are You From Closter](#) from George Dalcero written September 1915, and Jo Daniels conversation November 9, 2015.



*Aerial view of Buzzoni farm, Lupardi greenhouses, and U.S. Bronze & Powder Works 1958. (Note tall chimney by the two greenhouses.)*

In 1966, The Borough of Closter bought the 10 1/2 acre farm through the New Jersey “Green Acres” Program. This land, located next to property used by the DPW and the police shooting range area, was rented out for a time, before the buildings were torn down and the land began being used as a passive parkland and conservation area.

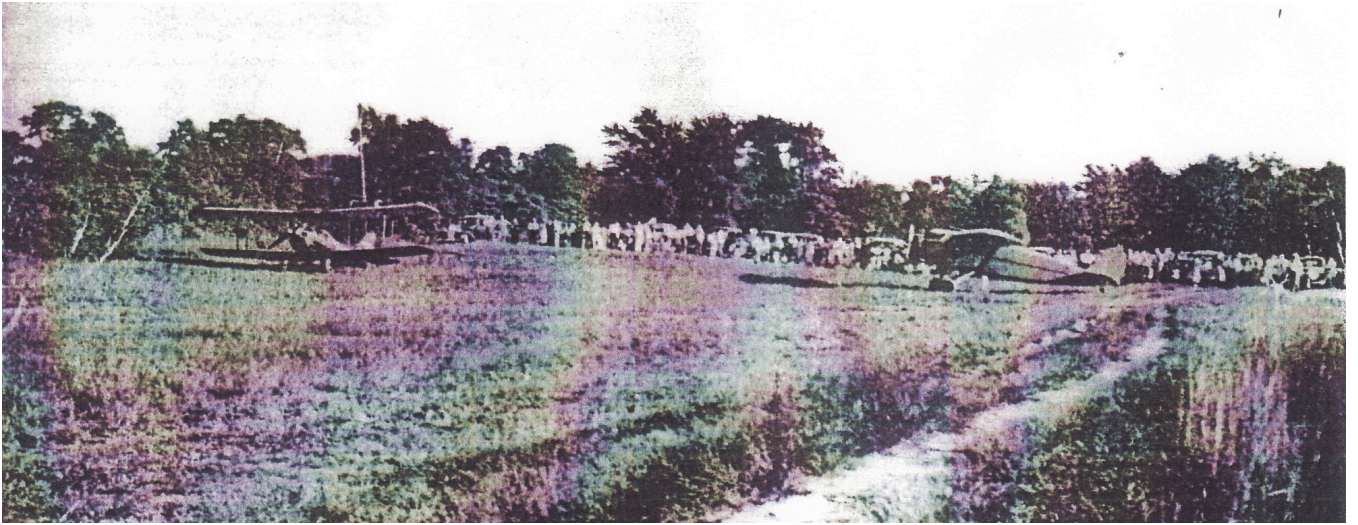
The Environmental Commission has placed a large sign here, with old photos and information about the farm. There is a long alley of tall evergreens that were planted by Ernest Buzzoni.<sup>34</sup> One of Closter’s “landmark” trees, a large American Beech (circumference 8’ 11”), is located at the farm. Under the authorization of the Environmental Commission, Bobbie Bouton-Goldberg and Beverly Murray (with major help from Billy Dahle and the DPW crew) have planted and are maintaining a pollinator garden. The garden is located by the old stone wall that was once part of the farmhouse.

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<sup>34</sup> Phone conversation with Jo Daniels, October 2015



## The Norwood/Closter Airfield



*The Closter/Norwood Airplane Field ca. 1939*

In the late 1930s, an airfield located in Closter and Norwood adjacent to Blanch Avenue was active. (The entrance to the field was by Blanch Avenue.)<sup>35</sup> Ernest Buzzoni used his team of horses to maintain this small field, which was a good source of entertainment for the folks of Closter and Norwood, according to Norwood historian Mary Bernardella. She notes in 100 Years of Norwood Pride 1905-2005, that “Johnny Hubschmidt, a pilot from Teaneck, would take a rider on board for a flight over Norwood and Closter at the cost of one dollar.” (He died at age 30 in a crash at the Franklin Lakes airfield.)

She also mentions that sometimes parachute jumping was held on Sundays. Ann Buzzoni remembered when a parachutist missed his target and landed in her brother’s cornfield. A crowd of people ran through it and ruined the crop. A Closter resident also remembers that a local pilot used a swimming pool on High Street as a landmark for finding the airfield.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Conversation with Jo Daniels November 9, 2015

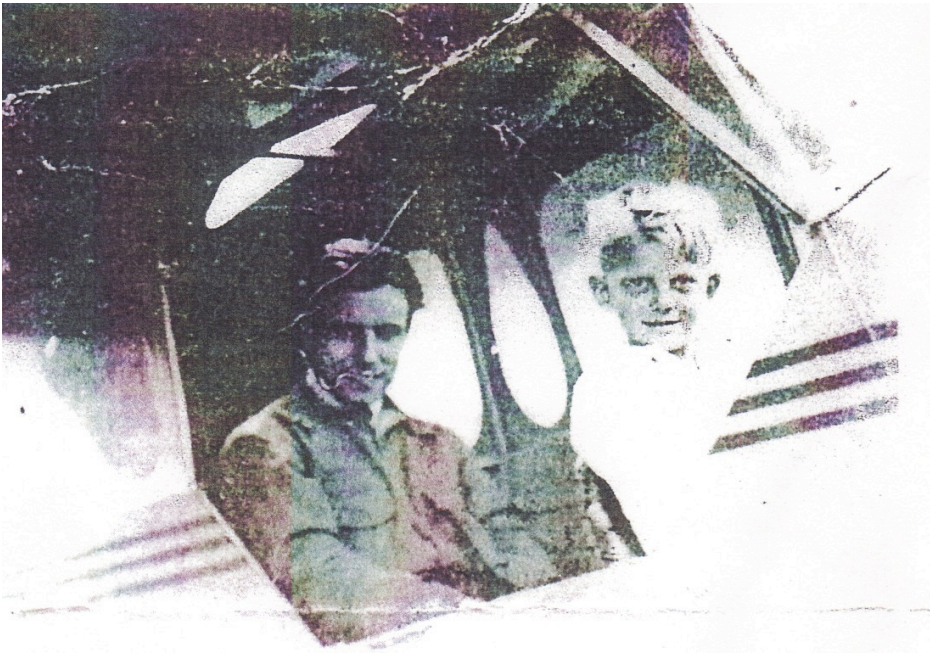
<sup>36</sup> Conversation with Ed Only at 366 High Street, 2010



*Arthur Gulick helping Freddie Rose harness his parachute before take-off. 1939*

Arthur Gulick would go there as a kid and help out pilots like Albert and Aldo Zampolino from Closter (Albert had a biplane) and Rocky Gallo, a Buzzoni brother-in-law, from New City, NY. (A children's book, *When Artie Was Little*, tells about this time.)

The brothers, Albert and Aldo, were both pilots, who volunteered in late 1941 for a secret mission to Africa to help set up an aircraft repair depot as part of a lend lease project. This highly classified venture, called Project 19, was staffed by vetted civilians and managed by Douglas Aircraft Corporation. It lasted from 1941 to 1943, and by quickly getting damaged RAF aircraft back into action, they succeeded in helping the British chase Rommel out of Africa.



*Albert Zampolino accompanied by Arthur Gulick on a Sunday afternoon on one of their airplane trips. 1939*

Albert then moved on to India, to help the government fight the Japanese and build up their Air force. He became an executive with Hindustan Aeronautics before returning to Closter to build a home on Columbus Avenue in a style influenced by his stay in India. Aldo returned home from the War to buy the Ward's Hotel, and with family members, bought and developed many properties in Closter, including the new bowling alley and diner.<sup>37</sup> Aldo's son-in-law, Joe Bianco, remembers that Aldo on his way to the Closter air field got lost over the meadowlands and was able to get back on course by spotting the Empire State Building then being constructed.

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<sup>37</sup>Various phone interviews with Joe Bianco and his presentation at a Closter Historic Preservation Commission meeting on October 26, 2015



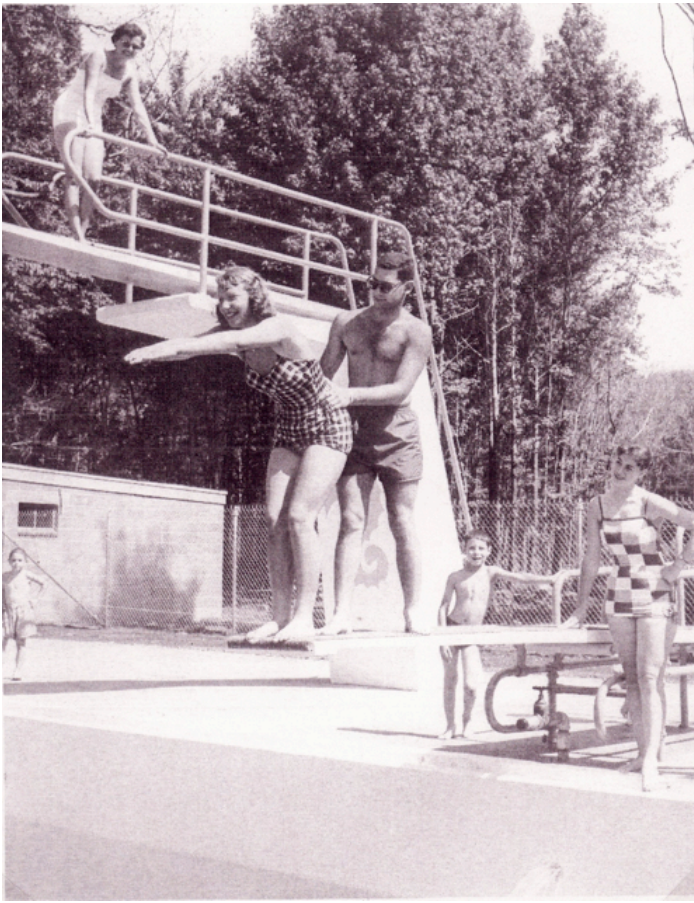
Today, on September 29, 1939  
 I soloed, and I think that it  
 was the greatest experience of my  
 seventeen years of life. I will be  
 Eighteen this Nov. 23 and am getting a car.  
 But I don't think it will equal the  
 thrill of my first solo flight.  
 Aldo Z.

Notation by Aldo Zampolino in his diary, dated September 29, 1939 (image courtesy of Joseph Bianco)

DATE	AIRCRAFT FLOWN				TIME				ELAPSED		FROM	TO	No. Passengers	
	License No.	MAKE	ENGINE	Class	TAKE-OFF HR. MIN.	LANDING HR. MIN.	HR.	MIN.	HR.	MIN.				
8/20	NC 16659	TAYLOR CUB	CONT A-40-3	15	AM	PM					20			
8/27	"	"	"	"	AM	PM					20			
9/3	"	"	"	"	AM	PM					10			
9/4	"	"	"	"	AM	PM					10			
9/10	"	"	"	"	AM	PM					10			
5/2	NC 8846	TROYER AIR	CURTIS 02X6	25	AM	PM					36			
5/3	"	"	"	"	AM	PM					30			
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
					AM	PM								
Signature of Pilot											Total Time Flown		Attested by	

Aldo Zampolino's flight log (image courtesy of Joseph Bianco)





*The Closter Swim Club on Blanch Avenue. This photo shows Margaret Lindgren receiving diving lessons from the lifeguard, Stuart Sarbone, at the opening of the club. 1959*

Also on Blanch Avenue, The Closter Swim Club (15 acres) was started in the late 1950's and was active until it closed in 2012. The club had an active swim team and held many meets at the facility. A member remembers it as a bucolic refuge, "Where my children competed with the swim team, where they made life- long friends, then grew up into Lifeguards."..."These were days not to be forgotten".<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Written statement by Susan McTigue, 2015





*Closter Nature Center ca. 2005*

The Closter Nature Center is a reserve of natural land situated along the portion of Blanch Avenue that is in the woods. It was established in 1962 after Closter's Mayor and Council established a committee to study prospects for a nature center. The Borough leased the Center 80 acres of land, and more has been added through the years to a total of 136 acres. In 1967 a building was erected for meetings and classes, and in 1985 the lease was amended and extended by 50 years.<sup>39</sup>

The Nature Center is a Closter jewel with ponds, brooks, meadows, wetlands, and forests to explore. The Center has a full time Naturalist and an active community outreach program featuring interesting programs, lectures, and hikes for adults and children.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Closter Nature Center web site, [www.closternaturecenter.org](http://www.closternaturecenter.org) and conversations with Mayer Mayer, February 2015

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



*Wetlands trail at the Closter Nature Center*

The Nature Center has 3 miles of trails, with the blue trail and yellow trail leading into Blanch Avenue. Entrance to the blue trail is by way of the paper street, Albany Street, which intersects with the dirt section of Blanch Avenue just west of Buzzoni Farm Park. The yellow trail meets Blanch Avenue just west of Albany Street.



*Naturalist Marc Gussen leading a night hike at the Closter Nature Center*



*Blanch Woods (2002)*

In 2002, Closter applied to the County Open Space Program and N.J. Green Acres for help in acquiring three wooded lots of almost four acres, which adjoin Borough open spaces. The lots are located just west of the Swim Club property and across Blanch Avenue from the Buzzoni Farm. The northern border of these lots, now called Blanch Woods, is the Dwarskill Brook, which is the border with Norwood.

The large diameter of many of the trees in these woods, suggest that the stream frontage area was not farmed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, unlike much of the adjacent land. The trees include: red and white oaks, beach, sweetgums, and red maples. One white oak has a diameter of over four and a half feet. <sup>41</sup>

The area provides habitat for diverse wildlife including indigo buntings, redbellied woodpeckers, garter snakes, and turtles. Across the road at the Buzzoni Farm site, sharp-shinned hawks are nesting and turkey vultures roost. (Spotted in 2002).

Acquiring this area was a unique chance to maintain a contiguous rural forest strip that would remain undeveloped in a virginal state, as it was in pre-revolutionary war times. Though Blanch Woods is a small area, if it had been developed, pavement, street lights, traffic, and constant human activity would have intruded into the quiet of the woods. Equally important, the beneficial flow of wildlife

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<sup>41</sup>Closter Open Space Acquisition Projects for the Year 2002, Project title “Blanch Woods’ Acquisition application



between the Nature Center and the large tract of preserved woodlands in Norwood would have been reduced. Contiguous open space tracts have a much higher wildlife habitat value than the same acreage separated by development. When appropriate pedestrian use of open space is encouraged through simple trails and safe stream crossings, then members of the community can enjoy their open spaces and are more likely to support continued preservation. Some additional trails and bridges would increase the public's access and so their awareness of the historically and ecologically significant Blanch area.<sup>42</sup>

“In Closter, macadam covered Blanch Avenue starts at Piermont Road and continues a short distance through residential homes to become an earth road entering a forest. It then crosses the Dwars Kill into Norwood, making a slight loop for about 1000 feet as an earth path, to then cross a substantial bridge over a small brook to reenter Closter as a macadam-covered road. (On a 1912 map the Dwars Kill was called “Norwood Creek”)

Norwood's Council wanted to vacate their portion of Blanch Avenue thus destroying the integrity of the road and essentially to make it disappear. Recognizing the historic importance of Blanch Avenue, under the leadership of Arthur F. Goldberg, MD, Borough Historian and member of the Environmental Commission, Sophie Heymann, Mayor, Borough Attorney, Edward Rogan, Esq., and Steve Isaacson, member of the Environmental Commission, made a presentation before the Norwood Council, August 2, 2007, to prevent this from happening.

Members of the Norwood Council had an unfounded fear that a major car roadway would be built on their segment of Blanch Avenue disrupting their efforts to preserve their proposed parkland since the road passed through the park. Equally they incorrectly foresaw that a major car bridge would be built across the Dwarskill which no one wanted. The bridge in the past was a single wooden bridge which had been washed away in a storm. Their solution was to vacate the road and their position was firm. To counter this, Closter's contingent made a coherent factual

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<sup>42</sup> Closter Open Space Acquisition Projects for the Year 2002, Project title “Blanch Woods' Acquisition application

presentation informing the Council members of the historical importance and history of the road. Norwood was totally unaware of these facts. The most important document presented was a copy of the road map written in 1795. About twenty-five local farmers and land owners deeded land to create a public road from Closter through neighboring towns north to Old Tappan. Today this road is on the Bergen County Historical Site Survey.

After the facts were presented by all, it appeared that the Council members might possibly change their minds. However, they continued adamant in their opinions. All seemed lost. The discussion became intense until Steve Isaacson made the proposal to keep the road but to reduce its width to nine feet. They eventually accepted that idea, but reduced it to eight feet and agreed not to vacate the road. The continuous integrity of Blanch Avenue was saved after being in existence for over 200 years.

Closter's presentation made a profound effect on Norwood's Council. Subsequently, they commemorated the road with an installation ceremony and the Norwood Historic Preservation Committee and the Norwood Environmental Commission have placed plaques on the western side of the road describing historic Old Blanch Avenue and a reprint of the signers of the 1795 road return. The Borough of Norwood has a 116-acre conservation area preserved in perpetuity, protecting a large part of the beautiful wooded wetlands along the old Blanch Avenue area."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Written submission by Arthur Goldberg M.D. October 12, 2015

# Path to saving history

Records 5/3/07

## Norwood, Closter preserve open space and a road's heritage



THOMAS E. FRANKLIN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Closter historian Arthur Goldberg walking along Blanch Avenue. The road, actually a dirt path, was created in 1795.

By **DEENA YELLIN**  
STAFF WRITER

**NORWOOD** — A decision to remove a street permanently from the maps to preserve open space has raised the ire of neighbors.

Borough officials sought to vacate historic Blanch Avenue, just as they had vacated 13 other streets surrounding a tract of land that had been preserved as open space.

Their intention was to deed the street to the Meadowlands Conservation Trust so it would be adopted by the surrounding Central Woods. That way, it would keep the land out of the hands of developers in perpetuity.

But Norwood officials never foresaw that such actions would lead to controversy.

When they began discussing wiping a portion of Blanch Avenue off the map, some irate Closter officials showed up at their door.

The portion of Blanch to be vacated is a roughly 1,000-foot loop that is on the Bergen

County Historic Site Survey. It is an unpaved road that is overgrown with weeds. Vehicles cannot use it, and people rarely traverse it. Deer and coyote are the primary users of this trail.

Vacating a road, which requires a council vote to remove a street from maps, would allow the street to be taken over by the Meadowlands Conservation Trust as part of the borough's open space.

But Closter officials feared that the plans would threaten the historic road, which dates to 1795.

"Blanch was a very important road," said Closter's borough historian, Arthur Goldberg. "If they vacate it, Norwood would be ruining a Colonial road that has remained unchanged for over 200 years."

Norwood and Closter held several meetings over the past month in the hopes of ironing out a compromise. The officials came up

See **PRESERVE** Page L-4



DIANE TINSLEY/STAFF ARTIST



# Preserve: Norwood, Closter save open space, road

From Page L-1

with a tentative proposal to narrow the street rather than eliminate it from the maps altogether.

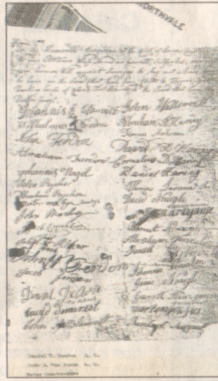
Final approval will be determined at Norwood's council meeting on Tuesday.

Norwood has already vacated portions of 13 other "paper streets" within the Central Woods, said Norwood Mayor James Barsa. "The only one we didn't vacate at this point is Blanch Avenue. Closter came to us as a neighbor because the street goes through Closter. They were concerned. We want to be good neighbors, but we also wanted to come up with something that will make us happy."

Closter Mayor Sophie Heymann said she does not want the street that runs through her town to be wiped from the maps.

"This street has historic value, which is the main reason we didn't want it eliminated," Heymann said. "If the road would be vacated, it would no longer exist, and the continuity would no longer exist. This way, it would still go all the way from Piermont Road to Old Tappan."

Barsa and Heymann agreed on a proposal to narrow the street



THOMAS E. FRANKLIN/STAFF

Closter historian Arthur Goldberg, right, showing a copy of the 1795 deed, above, signed by area landholders, that led to making Blanch Avenue into a road.



from 55 feet to 8 feet and keep it unpaved to prevent it from being developed.

"There will be a footpath as there is now, but no room for ve-

hicles," said Heymann. If the Norwood Council approves that plan, she will be thrilled, she said.

"This is a nice example of two communities trying to find a com-

promise instead of going at each other in the courts," she said.

Goldberg, who also serves on the Environmental Commission, said that the street was named af-

ter Col. Thomas Blanch, a Revolutionary War hero. "In 1795, about 25 of the local farmers and landowners felt they needed a road to go from the church in Old

Record article dated May 3, 2007 (part II)

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, 2007

## d's history

Tappan through Closter. Eventually, the road ended up in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.”

Some Norwood residents said all the hullabaloo is about nothing.

To have a street in a conservation area makes no sense, said Christine Hageman, chairwoman of Norwood's Environmental Commission. “It came as a surprise to us when Closter had objections to this. We will not let the street disappear into the dust.”

Norwood approved measures to protect the tract of open space in the center of town in April 2006. The borough transferred the land to the Meadowlands Conservation Trust to preserve the land for the future. The borough's plan is to eventually install recreation trails in that area.

Norwood owns that property and gave the trust a conservation deed.

The borough plans to install a sign to recognize the historic significance of Blanch Avenue. The installation ceremony is scheduled to take place during the dedication of the Central Woods in September.

E-mail: [yellin@northjersey.com](mailto:yellin@northjersey.com)

Record article dated May 3, 2007 (part III)

### RATIONALE FOR HISTORIC RECOGNITION OF BLANCH AVENUE

Blanch Avenue is not only one of the oldest roads in Closter, it is related to the first found mention of the name Closter in this area. An early deed (1721) to Peter Haring pertaining to the Tappan Patent stated, “Beginning at the bridge which comes out of the Closter by the Dwars Kill and is bounded, S.W. by Garret Huybertse Blauvelt, N.W by Cornelius Haring, N.E. by Cornelius Haring, S.E. by the myry swamp, 236 acres.” The bridge mentioned is the bridge over the Dwarskill on Blanch Avenue. The swamp is the area just north of Blanch Avenue.



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MAPS

1780 Erskine map (From Dobbs Ferry to Peramus)

1795

1811

1828 Gordon's map

1830 Coastal Survey map

1840 Coastal Survey map 1859 Northern Railroad map

1861 Hopkins- Cory map

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