



NEWS FROM THE PAST

One hundred years ago in Closter from the Tenaflly Record - Jan. 3, to July 3, 1908. The social scene was the mainstay of the Closter column in 1908. Activities in the community that were covered included: the Pinochle Club, a motion picture show with illustrated songs to benefit the baseball team, the Gymnastic Club's exhibition in Hammond Hall, the refinishing of the Tennis Club's courts and the overhauling of the pool tables at Oscar Ward's bowling alley. In March, the Literary Club discussed Charles Darwin's life and works, and the Loyal Temperance Legion sponsored a medal contest at the Congregational Church, while the Ladies Sewing Circle held a bread and cake sale. The bean social held by the Social Club featured games played with beans, and the girls Dutch Arms Basketball Team from Closter was challenged by an Englewood team. They were behind at half time 5-1, but the game ended 17-9 in favor of Closter.

Local church items were always included, the most interesting news in early 1908 was that the A. M. E. Zion Church burned its mortgage in April, and that the Reformed Church's organ was now blown by electricity.

News concerning the running of Closter was commonly covered. In 1908, the assessed value of the Borough was \$670,000. The Council voted to add another policeman, after the Borough Club requested the need for more protection. Having another policeman meant an extra tax of \$2.00 per thousand. The Council set the salary at \$65.00 per month with 9-5 the hours for policing. The town's committees included: Finance, Roads, Ordinance, Lighting and Lamps, Fire and Hydrants and Stationery. A school meeting was held in May to vote on appropriations - of 350 borough voters only twelve were present, of whom seven belonged to the Board of Education.

Occasionally, some local business news was included, such as Tavenier and Johnson receiving a new car load of 28 horses, or J.J. Parcell's 54 acre farm being sold for \$9,500.

The sad news that recorded the most coverage was the death of Dr. Lewis Parsell at the end of April. He was much loved, and the Congregational Church, which held 200 people, was overflowing for his funeral. Six members of the Fire Company were his pallbearers, and the businesses of the town were closed from 2-3 P.M. Dr. Charles D. Richardson of NYC arranged to begin practice at once and would make his headquarters in Dr. Parsell's home at 270 Harrington Avenue. This house was featured in the last newsletter.

BOBBIE BOUTON GOLDBERG

BOROUGH HALL MEMORIES

To the Editor:

I loved your newsletter, particularly the article about the Borough Hall, which I knew as the Municipal Building. Yes, it was a triumph of the times to have that building built. My father, Edwin Bogert, was a member of the council at that time and even though he was not an FDR man, he was very proud of the building and what it did to consolidate the services of the community.

As a child I played on the foundation edges, etc. while Dad regularly checked the building progress. When it came time to consider what should be placed in the Cornerstone, my friends and I provided a copy of the Tenakill School 6th Grade publication, "THE CHATTERBOX," so we felt a part of this special occasion.

When the threat of war was upon us just a couple of years later, Dad was asked to head up the Ration Board for the Northern Valley area. A small office just inside the front door was utilized for supplying ration stamps for sugar. With no staff, our family was drafted and the four of us, Dad, Mom, my sister, Sally Bogert

Mandle, and I were put to work. As more items were rationed, the Council Chambers were soon turned over to the Ration Board. A secretary was hired full time. The Board members consisted of a representative from each community and were all volunteers. They met to approve applications after having put in a full day of work in the city or locally.

I'm not sure just what date the Ground Observer Corps was established, but the roof of the building was soon put to use also. Women were advised to wear slacks (not the popular attire they are today) as they were required to climb a ladder to get to the little shack shelter above. Housewives worked the daytime shifts, men the later hours, and teenagers on weekends. I'm still in touch with my Observer Corps partner of that time, Virginia Seitz, although we have both traveled a long way from Closter over the years.

These are just a few thoughts that occurred to me as I read of the Closter Borough Hall.

MARTHA JANE BOGERT SEMMENS



In our last issue, we mentioned the proposed tree removal and general cleanup of the Hickory Ave. Auryansen cemetery. Since then, Joe Ulrich of Palisades Tree Service removed dead limbs, one dead tree and the sea of sassafras saplings there were engulfing the area. It is now possible to walk among the stones unimpeded. The C.H.P.C. will use local Open Space Funds to continue the maintenance of this important historic site.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.closterhistoricpreservation.org

To read about Closter's history, see old photographs, read our Design Guidelines for historic buildings, and more!!

The Closter Historical Society: 243 West Street, Closter, NJ 07624 • 201-784-1566

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Closter, New Jersey 07624

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CLOSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LIVING IN HISTORY

Tales of a locally designated home

My husband, two sons and I moved to Closter in 1995. We didn’t know much about historic preservation back then but we always liked older houses for the charm, solid construction, beautiful woodwork and unique, sometimes quirky characteristics. My son chose the bedroom where he could roll a marble from one end to the other. This house even had a family name, The J. Jordan House. Wow, its own lineage! Knowing that generations of families lived and prospered here, gave this young family a sense of permanence and community.

We remodeled the kitchen in 2000. To be historically accurate, a hearth would have been appropriate, though totally impractical for a young family. Along with installing granite countertops, we chose to save the wood-burning stove.

In 2002, we were approached by Pat Garber-Morillo, then Chairwoman of the Closter Historic Preservation Commission about having our house locally designated. Initially, We were skeptical, after all, who needs a governmental agency to put even more regulations on our property? Our house was over 200 years old and wasn’t going anywhere! We had several misconceptions, would we have been allowed to have our modern kitchen? What about other renovations we were considering? We learned that the only way to truly preserve our house from the wrecking ball is through local designation. Being on the State or National Historic Registers does not protect a house from being torn down. If designated, the commission only reviews alterations that require a permit from the building department AND those which can be viewed from the streetscape. We decided to designate our home. The commission did all the legwork, providing us with some explanation of the architectural and historical significance of our house. By the end of the year, the J. Jordan House, along with 9 Dutch sandstone and 2 wooden frame houses, were designated as historic structures in the Borough of Closter.

In 2005, I was asked to join the Closter Historic Preservation Commission. There, I developed a strong feeling for the principles of preservation: to maintain rather than repair; repair rather than replace; preserve, rather than restore and restore rather than replace. Preservation is to be mindful of the past while adapting to the present. As a commissioner, I have researched the economics of preservation and can provide articles on request. A 2003 New York Times article states: “Sales prices of one and 2 bedroom homes, per square foot, within historic districts were higher than nearby neighborhoods in every study since 1975. And on average over the entire period, prices of homes in historic districts increased in value slightly faster.” Another article states that historic

designation is on the rise because it “stabilizes neighborhoods and encourages homeowners to maintain their properties.” While there is no hard data on historic homes outside a district, it is generally assumed that, while the pool of potential buyers is smaller, those interested pay a premium for a well maintained historic house.

Since designation, we have remodeled two bathrooms, both requiring permits but no Historic Commission review, as renovations did not affect the streetscape. We painted the exterior of the house, which is exempt from review for surfaces which have already been painted. However, we chose to avail ourselves of the collective knowledge of commissioners who are architects, builders and historians. We have been given cost effective ideas about how to better weatherproof windows and doors while maintaining historic appropriateness. The Closter Historic Preservation Commission intends to propose the historic West Street area for local designation. I hope I have provided insight into the designation process.

JAYNE RUBENFELD-WALDRON

Closter Historical Society Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Type ☐ Individual (\$10) ☐ Family (\$15)

Volunteer: _____ Skill: _____

Phone _____



Closter Theatre, Opening night, June 1963 with actress Diana Dors



May 1963, Closter theatre under construction