

Blog 118 ~ From Car Repairs to Pizzeria

*The store that currently operates as **New World Pizza** on Route 601 (Blawenburg-Belle Mead Road) just north of Georgetown Franklin Turnpike (Route 518) has had a diverse past. In this blog, we show the various owners of the businesses that have been there for over 80 years.*

From Garage to Firehouse

Most stores start out intending to be venues where people can buy things or get services. The building we are looking at in this blog has provided both goods and services. In its first iteration, the building was a car repair shop known as “the old MCM garage.” It is unclear when the building was constructed, but according to the fire company history, it was in terrible shape and required a lot of work to retrofit it to become Blawenburg’s second firehouse



Claude Lewis (L) and Enos Parsell (R) stand in front of the firehouse on Route 601 in the 1960s. The truck was the first new truck owned by Fire Company No. 2. All previous trucks were acquired in used condition from other companies.

As you may recall from Blog 29, *A Tale of Three Firehouses*, Blawenburg Fire Company’s first firehouse was in a leased single-bay garage on the Great Road. It still exists today as the Blawenburg Post Office. Established on October 10, 1946, the Blawenburg Fire Company was an important addition to the village, which had to count

on fire departments in Belle Mead, Rocky Hill, Hopewell, and Princeton for help in case of fire. The garage housed Blawenburg's one hand-me-down fire engine, a 1920 Child's Pumper, which was donated by the Belle Mead Fire Company.

Its first building served the fire company well, but they needed more equipment and soon sought a larger building. They didn't have to look far. In 1952, they found and purchased the MCM building just north of Route 518. It offered a second bay for another fire engine. Because of the needed repairs, it was a year later before they could move in. During the next two decades, the company acquired additional trucks and equipment, and they again needed larger facilities. They considered the old Montgomery school on Route 518, because it had been available since Burnt Hill Road School was built in 1966. This would have required major reconstruction and been very expensive. In 1970, land was purchased from Fred Loeser to build a new fire company on the east side of Blawenburg on Georgetown Franklin Turnpike. In 1971, the old firehouse was sold.

Businesses Next Door to the Firehouse

A building just north of the firehouse on Route 601 had been a service station providing gas, maintenance, and repairs for American cars for many years. The Higgins family built and operated the garage in the 1920s. They sold their garage and established a car dealership and repair business on Route 206 known as **Belle Mead Garage** in 1927. It is still a "Higgins-owned" business today, selling and repairing cars. Ownership of the garage in Blawenburg between the Higgin's era and the 1960s is unclear.

In 1963, Blawenburg resident, Peter Atkinson bought the station and maintained it as a gas station and added a new feature—foreign car sales and service. Atkinson started his career as a mechanic in Hopewell in 1930 and established the **Foreign Car Service** there. He was looking to expand to larger facilities, and in 1963, he bought the Texaco gas station in Blawenburg. He renamed it Atkinson's Foreign Car Service. Unfortunately, he passed away in 1967. Later that year, the business was sold to Nassau Oil Company, and they renamed it **The Blawenburg Garage**.

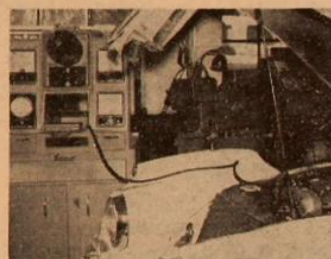
ATKINSON FOREIGN CAR SERVICE, Inc.



24-Hour Towing Service
Anyplace, anywhere, anytime



American Gas & Oil Products



Over \$15,000 in the latest
type service equipment

**. . . is pleased to announce that it is now an authorized
SERVICE representative for Land Rover products.**

**We are also authorized to service Jaguar & Rootes
products (Hillman, Sunbeam, Humber).**

Special Spring Tune-up Offer!

*During April, 1965, this ad is worth
\$10 off any motor tune-up.*

*On all our major repair work on foreign
cars, we guarantee, in writing, parts
and labor for 1 year.*


Blawenburg, New Jersey

Tel: (609) 466-0807

Town Topics, April 1, 1965

The Nassau Oil Co.
 Announces The New Dealership of
The Blawenburg Garage
 (Next To The Blawenburg Fire House)
 The Great Rd. —
 Rte. 518 Intersection
Stop In — See Mike Tolerico!
 "Mike" Is A General Motors Trained Mechanic
 With Years Of Experience.

- *Outstanding Service*
- *Repairs Of All Make Autos*
- *Featuring:*

American Oil Products		Lead Free Amoco Gas
-----------------------------	---	---------------------------

Town Topics March 22, 1967

Repurposing the Firehouse

Seeing the void in foreign car services in the area and the opportunity to buy a small garage, a foreign car enthusiast purchased the firehouse in the early 1970s. Ray Walle established and operated **Little Foreign Car Shop** in Blawenburg. He was a famous race car driver who had competed at the largest tracks in the East—Daytona, Lime Rock, and Pocono 500; however, this business was short lived. In 1974, he partnered with Mel Zentner to establish **Z&W Mazda** on Rt. 206 in Montgomery. Unfortunately, Walle was killed in a motor vehicle accident on Montgomery Ave. in Rocky Hill on March 15, 1976, once again leaving a void in foreign car services.



Town Topics, December 10, 1971



Town Topics, October 12, 1972

That Foreign Car Place was the next business to operate from the old firehouse. Tom Walko purchased the building from Walle and began a foreign car repair business that flourished for many years. It became well known around the area.

From Cars to Pizza



By 2003, **That Foreign Car Place** was for sale, and Anthony DiMeglio purchased the property to operate a pizzeria. This required a major restoration. Blawenburg had only one food service at the time, **Blawenburg Market and Café**, so the pizzeria was a welcome addition. It became widely known in Montgomery Township because of its delivery service as well as its pizza. Its distinctive white illuminated signage atop its delivery vehicles seemed to be everywhere, especially in the late afternoon and evening. **New World Pizza** is still in operation today, and DiMeglio operates another New World in Franklin Park.

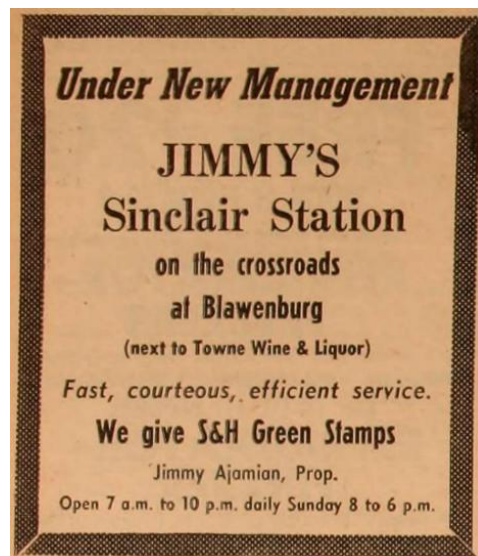
From general car repairs to a firehouse to foreign car repairs to a pizzeria, the small building on Route 601 has had many changes. Since businesses, like people, have a life cycle, we wonder what or who will occupy this building next. It could be anything from a sushi restaurant to a cat-sitting service. It's anyone's guess, so stay tuned.

ASIDES

1. In 1974, I purchased a new car called a **Subaru**, a Japanese import that had just started sales in America. All went well for the first year or so, but then the muffler expired. I didn't want to travel to the dealer since I was busy with my career and new parenthood, so I took the car to **That Foreign Car Place**. It seemed like a logical choice at the time; however, I didn't realize that Subaru wasn't fully stocked with parts in the United States. Much to my inconvenience, I got my new

muffler straight from Japan nine weeks later! **That Foreign Car Place** was apologetic, but it wasn't their fault. I think Subaru is better prepared these days.

2. There is a large telephone pole behind New World Pizza. It's a remnant of the building's fire department days. That's where the siren blew when there was a fire call or on Saturdays at noon when the notification system was tested.
3. Atkinson's Foreign Car Service and subsequent gas station owners next to the firehouse hosted several gas brands over the years. They pumped Texaco, American, Sunoco, and possibly others. Today, the old gas station has been completely remodeled, and it now houses Art Nail Spa, the New Jersey Young Artist's Association, and apartments above.
4. Eric Perkins was a volunteer at the Route 601 firehouse before he was old enough to be a member of the fire department. He reported his job was to prepare the small building for monthly fire company meetings. Since there were only two bays in the firehouse, the trucks had to be moved out to provide room for the meetings. Beginning at age nine, he would climb a ladder to the loft and hand down the chairs and tables for the meeting. This was a big deal for a nine-year-old. In 1968, he became old enough to join the company, and he is still an active member today. Thanks for your many years of service, Eric.
5. There were other gas stations at the crossroads.
 - In the 1930s, Everett May Sr. had a convenience store just south of where New World is today. He pumped White Flash gas.
 - In the 1970s, Jim Ajamian owned **Jimmy's Sinclair** on the corner at the crossroads. He also gave green stamps with the gas! During the oil embargo of 1974, the line of cars to get gas from him extended around the corner and east on Route 518 almost a quarter mile.



Information Welcomed

Who owned the service station between the time of Higgins (1920s) and Atkinson (1960s). Please send an email with what you know. If you have any pictures of any of the tenants of the buildings on Route 601, please share them, too.

blawenburgtales@gmail.com

SOURCES

Information

<https://www.mtvfc2.com/history.html>

Eric Perkins

Ray Walle obituary

Ads and articles from Town Topics

Pictures

Firehouse #2 – Shared by Eric Perkins

Ads from Town Topics newspapers – gathered by Ken Chrusz

New World Pizza – D. Cochran

Writer—David Cochran

Editor—Barb Reid

Researcher—Ken Chrusz

Email: blawenburgtales@gmail.com

Blog website: <http://www.blawenburgtales.com>

Author site: <http://www.dcochran.net>