

# Gaslight News

March 2010

Historical Society of Riverton

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Founded 1970

Riverton, NJ 08077

Incorporated 1978



PHOTO - C. CARUSO

McDermott's Handy played to a large appreciative crowd when they last performed here in 2008.



HTTP://WWW.HARPAGENCY.COM/ARTIST4.HTM

## McDermott's Handy brings traditional Irish music to March 17 HSR meet

Husband-wife duo to reprise popular St. Pat's Day concert 7:30 p.m. at the Porch Club

The Historical Society of Riverton hosts a lively concert of Irish folk music at the Riverton Porch Club located at 4th and

Howard Streets in Riverton, NJ. To be held on St. Patrick's Day, Wednesday, March 17, 2010 at 7:30 p.m., the program features the husband and wife duo of McDermott's Handy—Kathy DeAngelo and Dennis Gormley— and a dance performance with children from the DeNogla School of Irish Dance.

Public admission \$8.00 per person; \$6.00 for Society members. Light refreshments served. Tickets will be on sale at the door.

All proceeds benefit the non-profit, public education work of the Historical Society of Riverton dedicated to preserving local history in New Jersey.

Credit for keeping traditional Irish music and dance alive in Southern New Jersey is primarily due to the commitment and talents of two groups: the musical team of Kathy DeAngelo & Dennis Gormley known as McDermott's Handy and the DeNogla School of Irish Dance led by instructors Cathleen Jordan-Rubin and Megan Heron-Hunt.

The name of the group is a living memorial

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Ms. Priscilla Taylor, great-granddaughter of Charles Webster Tahaney and Mary Gallagher Tahaney of County Sligo, Ireland and past president of the HSR, reports on Irish immigration and early occupants of Riverton's Irish Row.

## Ireland's Potato Famine launches waves of 19th century immigration

Industrious Irish among early Riverton residents and many live along the 600 and 700 blocks of Cinnaminson Street—Riverton's own "Irish Row".

In October 1845, a serious blight began in Ireland, ruining about three-quarters of the country's potato crop, which was the chief food staple for more than four million Irish. The blight became known as the Potato Famine and was a historic and tragic disaster, as by 1851 nearly a million people were estimated to have died of starvation and typhus during the Famine.

The Potato Famine stimulated a desire among its people to emigrate to America. The figures for this period show a dramatic increase in Irish people arriving in the United States: 92,484 in 1846, 196,224 in

1847, 173,744 in 1848, 204,771 in 1849, and 206,041 in 1850. By the end of 1854, nearly two million people - about a quarter of the population - had emigrated to the United States in ten years.

A census carried out in 1850 revealed



Searching for potatoes  
*Illustrated London News*  
December 22, 1849

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ALL PHOTOS - GERALD WEABER

# Many reminisce at 100th anniversary of Riverton School



Alumni, staff, parents, and board members reconnected at the very place where many had first met.

School Superintendent, Mrs. Mary Ellen Eck, warmly welcomed the more than sixty former students, staff, and interested commu-

nity members who assembled in the gym on the evening of January 19th to observe the 100th birthday of Riverton Public School.



An animated Mrs. Mabel Kloos had her hands full for over two hours.

They were treated to a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Mr. John McCormick and presented by Mrs. Mabel Kloos, former teaching colleagues. Like a carefully crafted lesson plan, the slideshow presented a visual history of the Riverton School building. Mr. McCormick themed much of the design of the slideshow around Mrs. Kloos's personal memories. "Class participation" was invited by Mrs. Kloos, clearly savoring her memories as she reminisced about her alma mater and her thirty-three years as a teacher in the school. Still teaching today, as a substitute teacher, Mrs. Kloos has retained strong ties with the community where she grew up.

**"Between Mabel's vast experience, incredible memory, and charming public speaking delivery, I can't imagine anyone else doing this PowerPoint."**

- John McCormick



Panel members: (left to right) Mr. Richard Park, Walter Croft, AIA, Mrs. Helen Mack, Mr. Michael Robinson, off-camera— Mrs. Mabel Kloos

Three current Board of Education members Richard Park, Walter Croft, AIA, and Helen Mack, and director of the Riverton Free Library, Mr. Michael Robinson, all of whom are also former RPS students, formed a panel participating in the presentation by adding their thoughts.



Mrs. Susan Dechnik, left (pictured with Mrs. Phyllis Rodgers). Mrs. Dechnik brings her considerable knowledge of Riverton and writing experience to her first *Gaslight News* article.

Aided by vintage images and referring to text in her slideshow, Mrs. Kloos explained at the outset that there had been earlier public schools in Riverton preceding Riverton

Public School, but they were there to mark the birthday of the present school building.

As photographs of school events and class pictures flashed on the screen, some audience members added their recollections, and many in the group were astonished to see their own faces and faces of former classmates and teachers sitting a few seats away. A beautiful photograph of a May Day celebration and May Day Queen brought exclamations from the audience. The reunion of sorts ensued as Mr. William Harris, lifelong Riverton resident and RPS Class of 1949, crossed paths with, Russell Phelps who was in his brother Norman's class, a school chum he had not seen in over forty years.

Seeing a kindergarten class from long ago posed in front of the nursery rhyme tiles in what is now the music room was a clear reminder of Riverton School's past. The tribute lasted more than two hours, ending with the singing of the Riverton School song, led by Mr. Robinson and Mrs. Kloos. Attendees then had the opportunity to pore over table displays of old school photographs, newspaper articles, and assorted RPS memorabilia which sparked even more flashbacks to their school days.

HSR President Gerald Weaber later acknowledged that the exceptionally well prepared presentation by Mrs. Kloos had made him feel like he had spent time in her classroom. The event also resulted in the acquisition of two more scans of missing eighth grade graduation class photos from 1917 and 1962, leaving forty-two of one hundred still needed.

Other events are to be planned marking the school's centennial, so watch the Riverton School website at <http://www.riverton.k12.nj.us/> for news.

- MRS. SUSAN DECHNIK



# Irish leave Famine despair behind to fill needs in a growing America

IRISH from 1

that there were 961,719 people in the United States who had been born in Ireland. At this time, they mainly lived in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio, and New Jersey. The Irish Emigrant Society tried to persuade immigrants to move to the interior United States, but the vast majority were poverty-stricken and had no money for transportation or property. Instead, they tended to settle close to the port where they disembarked.



Irish emigrants leaving home - the priest's blessing  
*The Illustrated London News* May 10, 1851

## Hard-working Irish arrived at the right time for America

Coincidentally, the Irish arrived during a time of great need for America. The country was growing, and she needed men to do the heavy work of building bridges, canals, and railroads. It was hard, dangerous work; a common expression heard among the railroad workers was that "an Irishman was buried under every tie." Desperation to avoid starvation drove the Irish to these jobs.

Not only had the men worked hard but the women, too. They became chamber maids, cooks, and the caretakers of children. A prominent Philadelphia hotel keeper was asked why all the women servants in his hotel were Irish. He replied, "The thing is very simple: the Irish girls are industrious, willing, cheerful, and honest—they work hard, and they are very strictly moral.

I should say that is quite reason enough."

The Irish were unique among immigrants. They fiercely loved America, but never gave up their allegiance to Ireland...and they kept their hatred of the English. In New York City, during the Civil War, they rioted against the draft lottery after the first drawing showed most of the names were Irish. For three days, the city was terrorized by violent Irish mobs and only after an appeal for peace by Archbishop Hughes did it end.

In Pennsylvania, the Irish formed a secret organization called the Molly Maguires to fight mine owners who brutalized the miners and their families. They ambushed mine bosses, beat, and even killed them in their homes.

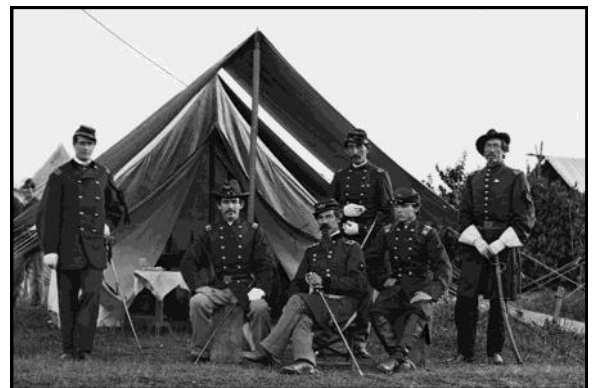
The Irish loved America and gladly fought in her wars. During the Civil War, they were fierce warriors, forming among other groups, the famous "Irish Brigade". A priest accompanied them and, before each battle, they would pray together before charging into the enemy—even against insurmountable odds. Their faith guided them. They felt the English might have a better life on earth, but they were going to have a better life after death.



A potato dinner at Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry. *Pictorial Times*, February 28, 1846.

### It's a fact...

According to the 2000 US Census figures, 29% of the people in Riverton, or 805 out of 2759, reported Irish ancestry—more than any other ancestry group.  
<http://censtats.census.gov/data/NJ/1603463660.pdf>



Gen. Robert Nugent and staff (Irish Brigade).  
Library of Congress

"...a common expression heard among the railroad workers was that 'an Irishman was buried under every tie.'"



On January 24, 1892, the Riverton division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians was organized for men from 18-45 of Irish descent with fourteen members.

The original officers were Michael O'Neil, president; Michael Fenton, vice-president; Martin Kerrigan, Jr., recording secretary; John McDermott, financial secretary; Thomas J. Flannery, treasurer.

The AOH is a Catholic, Irish American Fraternal Organization founded in New York City 4 May, 1836. The Order can trace its roots back over 300 years to a parent organization in Ireland.

Today, Rivertonians of Irish descent may join AOH organizations based in Pemberton, NJ or the Tacony section of Philadelphia, among others, from the 1909 *New Era* Christmas Issue



## Riverton's own "Irish Row" and the one day a year in which we're all a bit Irish

### IRISH from 3

Early in the 20th century, the 600 and 700 blocks of Cinnaminson Street in Riverton were known as "Irish Row." Many of Riverton's hard-working Irish lived in the circa 1885-1890 homes on that street. The sidewalks of Cinnaminson Street used to be made of old bricks until a Borough project in 1989 replaced the crumbling walks. The homes on the odd-numbered side of Cinnaminson Street shared a border with the Henry A. Dreer trial gardens. There were fewer homes on the even-numbered side because most of the Main Street properties spanned from Main through to Cinnaminson Street.



Our gang on the 600 block of Irish Row in Riverton, c. 1928. Pictured are (left to right) three McDermott brothers—Bill, Paul, and Carl—also, Les and Joe Yearly, and Ducky Spear

### A Sampling of Irish Row Occupants Living on Cinnaminson Street—Irish Row (according to Riverton's 1900 Census)

- 703 - Annie McDonald (hairdresser)
- 707 - Nora Williams
- 709 - Julia & Patrick Ford (day laborer)
- 710 - James Flynn (florist)
- 712 - Annie & James McIlvain (coachman)
- 717 - Virginia & Patrick Rarins
- 721 - Maggie & John McDermott (steamfitter)
- 723 - Mary & Patrick Jordan (day laborer)

Many Ireland-born women were employed by wealthy Riverton homeowners as their

personal house servants. Here are just a few of those industrious Irish ladies as found in the 1900 Census of Riverton:

Theresa McPool (age 25) - employed by Charles Miller (101 Lippincott Avenue)

Katie Langers (35) and Katherine Graham - employed by L. Robinson Coale (100 Lippincott Avenue)

Margaret McGreeley (41) - employed by David Carroll (313 Lippincott Avenue)

Rose (31) and Lily (21) Cavanaugh - employed by John Murdock (204 Lippincott Avenue)

Tillie & Mary Cafferty, Annie Boyle, and Maggie Conan - employed by Edward Showell (105 Bank Avenue)

Annie Lawry & Annie Conner - employed by Ann Biddle (210 Bank Avenue)

The long uncomfortable years of "No Irish Need Apply" quietly disappeared. Saint Patrick's Day parades replaced violent mob confrontations. The Irish not only won acceptance for their parades, but also persuaded everyone else to become Irish, at least for one day.

### An Irish Blessing

May there always be work for your hands to do

May your purse always hold a coin or two

May the sun always shine on your windowpane

May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain

May the hand of a friend always be near you

May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.

- MS. PRISCILLA TAYLOR





# ANNOUNCEMENTS



## We gratefully acknowledge these special gifts to the Historical Society of Riverton

- ◆ Mr. & Mrs. Alan & Helene Lilholt \$500
- ◆ Mr. & Mrs. Wayne & Linda Tillman \$120
- ◆ Mr. & Mrs. Robert & Agnes Kennedy \$100
- ◆ Ms. Janet DeVries \$100

## Sincere thanks for providing vintage photos or other memorabilia to be scanned, thus helping to ensure that others may benefit from these materials

- ◆ Mr. Jeff Chambers
- ◆ Mr. & Mrs. Rick & Peggy Trauger Crook
- ◆ Mrs. Carolyn Hoad Furrer

## HSR Recruiting Board Members

The Historical Society of Riverton is recruiting board members for new terms beginning July 2010 for one and three year terms.

If you have a passion for preserving local history we invite you to join the board of the Society. We are looking for new board members who are interested in serving as leaders of the following committees:

- Programs
- Special Events
- Publicity & Membership
- Society Archives

The Society needs members who have interests & skills in writing newsletter articles, oral history interviews & historical research, fund-raising and/or creating/maintaining a membership database as well.

Please contact Society President, Gerald Weaber, by March 15th, 2010, to learn more about placing your name in nomination as a board member of the Historical Society of Riverton. You may also recommend a prospective board member for nomination. Please call 856-786-6961 or write [rivertonhistory@usa.com](mailto:rivertonhistory@usa.com)

The absorbing article by Mrs. Phyllis Rodgers on the grand Fidler Mansion on Bank Avenue will be in the next issue.



## Kate the Cook and the Strike Anywhere matches



PHOTO - MRS. NANCY HALL  
Kate McGlinden, cook for the Ezra Lippincott family

HSR member Mrs. Nancy Hall recalls a family story about her Great-Grandfather Ezra's Irish cook named Kate McGlinden.

Ezra Lippincott and his son J. Lawrence Lippincott developed much of the enlarged town of Riverton at the turn of the 20th century. Ezra built the house

that is today the central building of the Baptist Home, now Riverview Estates.

It seems that Kate purchased for the household from Robert's Store a box of

Strike-Anywhere matches—and they wouldn't!

She returned them to the store owner who promptly took one of the wooden sticks from the box and, to prove the performance of his merchandise, he struck it on the rear of his pants.

Kate the Cook responded, "Sure'n I should be carryin' Joe Roberts' arse around all day."

Kate returned to her kitchen with a new box of matches.

—MRS. NANCY HALL

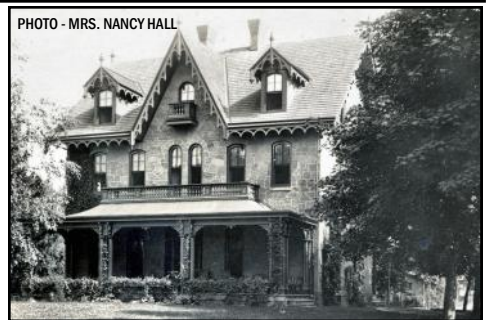
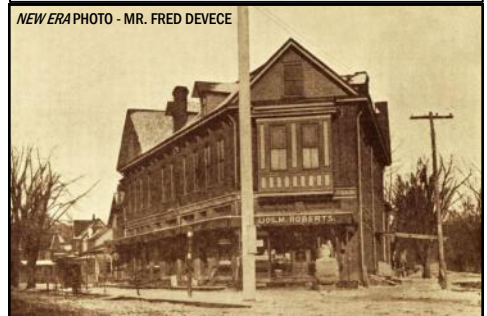


PHOTO - MRS. NANCY HALL  
303 Bank Avenue home of Riverton developer Ezra Lippincott, now part of Riverview Estates



NEW ERA PHOTO - MR. FRED DEVECE  
Joseph Roberts' Store, demolished in 1938 to make room for a service station; now a hair salon

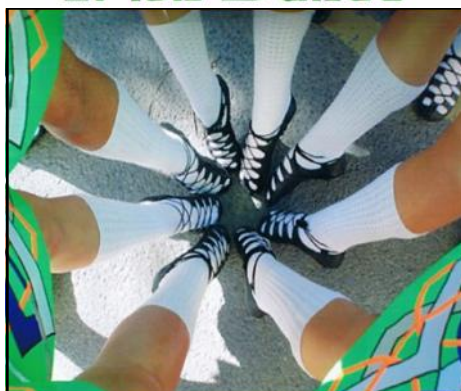
McDermott's Handy  
tel. 856-795-7637

DeNogla School of  
Irish Dance  
tel. 215-205-4507

CONCERT from 1

to Ed McDermott who was a friend and mentor to Kathy DeAngelo. Mr. McDermott, a fiddler who emigrated from Ireland in 1915, very much inspired Kathy and other young people with his music.

DeNogla School  
of  
Irish Dance



They performed together for a number of years, and when Ed McDermott passed away at 81, she organized a tribute to "Mac" for the 1977 New Jersey Folk Festival. Many of the young people he had taught came to honor Ed McDermott so they called themselves McDermott's Handy -- in Mac's honor. Kathy DeAngelo introduced Dennis Gormley to the tradition and together they have performed Irish music across the country ever since.

The spirited stepdancers of the renowned DeNogla School of Irish Dance will also perform. Instructors Cathleen Jordan-Rubin and Megan Heron-Hunt, who have themselves competed at world class championship levels, will accompany a troupe of their local pupils from the classes held at the Riverton Health and Fitness Studio at 600 Main Street. Each year elite dancers from the several DeNogla Studio locations throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania compete in local, regional, national, and international contests.

Go to the McDermott's Handy website at <http://www.hsnc.org/~gormley/> for more details on its origins, upcoming gigs, and even sound clips from several CD tracks. For more information about the classes, instructors, and activities of the DeNogla School of Irish Dance look into their website at <http://www.denogla.cabanova.com/>



Visit the dynamic HSR website at <http://gaslightnews.homestead.com> for information regarding events, past issues of *Gaslight News*, membership information, links to Riverton School's Riverton Project, slide shows of vintage images, and more.

Readers: Find inside a feature article about the Irish in Riverton, a recap of the January observance of the Riverton Public School Centennial, and a publicity item about the upcoming Irish music and dance concert.

It seems that with each HSR meeting someone comes forward with an item that had been given up for lost. Such was the case with this charming Riverton School Class of 1917 photo restored from an original scan owned by Mrs. Peggy Trauger Crook. It had belonged to her mother, Rebecca White, seated fourth one to the right.



When it comes to filling in the missing class photos on the wall display in the school this Class of 1962 photo supplied by Mrs. Carolyn Hoad Furrer is just as treasured because the photo for this graduating class was also missing.



When I was a teacher at RPS, I scanned and restored about ten old graduation class photos in order to fill in the missing ones on the wall. Retired now, and still seeing many parts of that picture lineup

outside my old classroom not filled in, it remains a goal to complete, especially during this year of the school's anniversary. Please help if you can provide a scan of any one of these eighth grade class photos: 1910-1916, 1918,1919, 1922-1927, 1929, 1930, 1932-1934, 1936, 1938, 1940-1942, 1945, 1947, 1950, 1952, 1959-1961, 1964, 1966, 1968-1969, 1971-1974

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

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