

Gaslight News

May 2010

Historical Society of Riverton

vol. XXXX, no. 2 (#140)

Founded 1970

Riverton, NJ 08077

Incorporated 1978

1822 school near Elm Ave.



Photo scan courtesy Mr. Ed Gilmore

1892 School Bldg. No. 1
1896 School Bldg. No. 2



postcard scan courtesy Mr. Mike Robinson



1910 RIVERTON SCHOOL

1935 postcard of 1910 RPS



postcard scan courtesy Mrs. Betty Hahle



Recent photo

- JMc

In this issue

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING / 100TH BIRTHDAY FOR SCHOOL MAY 27

- GERALD WEABER

1

REHABBING ANCHORAGE HOUSE

- MRS. PHYLLIS RODGERS

1

RECAP OF MAR. 17 CONCERT

- JOHN McCORMICK

2

RIVERTON TREASURE SURFACES IN DELRAN

- JOHN McCORMICK

5

Society to meet May 27 at Riverton School's 100th Birthday Open House 7:00 pm

7:00 pm business portion will elect two new Board members; adjourning 7:30 to see school events

The Historical Society of Riverton (HSR) will hold its Annual Meeting on Thursday May 27, 2010 at Riverton Public School, Fifth and Howard Streets in Riverton on the second floor at a new time, 7:00 pm.

The meeting will begin with the election of new board members. The Nomination Committee of the board will forward two nominees for a three year term: Mrs. Mabel Gnanng Kloos and Mrs. Susan Dechnik. Nominations may also be made from the floor followed by the board member election.

The meeting will adjourn at 7:30 pm so members may participate in the 100th Anniversary of the Riverton Public School

program featuring a presentation by Superintendent Mary Ellen Eck, a student art exhibition, and student projects commemorating the 100th anniversary.

Students constructed a virtual scrapbook of Riverton School memories from alumni submissions of pictures, stories, and memorabilia of the last ten decades. Historical memorabilia will be on display by town residents until 9:00 pm.

Find more information on school events and the July 3rd parade event "Saluting Alumni Through the Decades" at: <http://www.riverton.k12.nj.us/>

- GERALD WEABER



Rehabbing Anchorage House

Former teacher and current proprietor of The New Leaf Tea Room explains the three Rs of the real estate rescue tale of 11 Bank Avenue—renovation, restoration, and rehabilitation

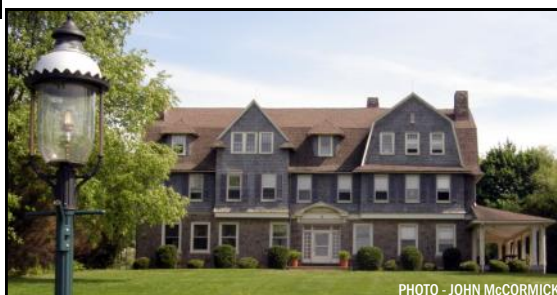


PHOTO - JOHN McCORMICK

The Victorian architecture and rich history of the riverfront mansions have always stimulated my interest and imagination of a bygone era. One particular house at 11 Bank Avenue was surrounded by stories of romance, mystery, and intrigue; and it caught the fancy of my parents over thirty years ago. It has been an enjoyable part of my life ever since.

The trials and tribulations of this grand estate overlooking the Delaware all began with a love story as two young Riverton socialites were united in marriage in 1904. The bride, Miss Edna Helen Frishmuth, was the daughter of Mr. John C.W. Frishmuth and Mrs. Hannah M. Biddle Frishmuth, members of a prominent family who owned the thriving Frishmuth Bros. & Co. Tobacco Manufacturers in Philadelphia as well as property in Riverton. Clarence Cecil Fidler, the groom, was the son of Mr. Edwin H. Fidler, founder of Philadelphia's Fidler Cordage Factory, and Mrs. Josephine Baker Fidler.

See ANCHORAGE on 3

DeNogla's ghillies stepped to the beat of McDermott's Handy



PHOTO - JOHN McCORMICK

Ghillies, bodhráns, and bouzouki—who knew there would be a vocabulary quiz?



bodhrán

bouzouki

Ghillies are the specially designed shoes used for Irish dancing, and the local Riverton chapter of the DeNogla School of Irish Dance introduced an appreciative crowd at the Porch Club on March 17th to a lively Celtic dance performance.

Instructors Cathleen Jordan-Rubin and Megan Heron-Hunt had prepared the two age-grouped troupes well for their debut at the venerable Porch Club. It was a photo op for proud parents as stepdancers executed their moves in time to the traditional Irish music performed by McDermott's Handy.



PHOTO - JMc

Two age groups of dancers performed supervised by their championship level instructors

beverage served by this editor called Irish Punch—at least it was green.

The HSR expresses its sincere appreciation to the Porch Club members for again providing such a gracious setting for this celebration of Irish music and dance.



PHOTO - JMc

The charming Porch Club venue suits performers and audience alike

Find out information about McDermott's Handy at their dynamic website which includes links to bios, soundclips, details on music lessons from Kathy or Dennis, Irish culture resources, booking information for concerts, private parties, school assemblies, and corporate events, and more at: <http://es45.hslic.org/~gormley/>

DeNogla School of Irish Dance holds classes at a number of South Jersey locations including one at Riverton Health & Fitness Studio at 600 Main St, Riverton, NJ 08077. Find more information at: <http://www.denoglaschool.com/page1.html> or call 973-325-6762.

-JMC

Would you like to catch up friends and family with what is going on in these pages?

Extra copies and back issues of GN are available for sale at the New Leaf Tea Room and Gift Shop in Riverton.

Even easier, find recent issues posted on the HSR website where they can be viewed as PDF files.

An added feature is that e-mail addresses and web addresses are hot links.


Place your mouse cursor on the blue text, press **CTRL** + , and your internet browser will open and take you to the spot.



PHOTO - JMc

Ireland is the only country in the world with a musical instrument as a national symbol—the harp.

Musicians Kathy DeAngelo and Dennis Gormley of McDermott's Handy returned to the scene of their popular 2008 Saint Patrick's Day concert and found once again that everyone in town seemed to be Irish—at least on that night.

Their extensive repertoire included numerous ballads, lively jigs and reels, rousing comedic songs, and the stirring lyrics of Irish emigration. They are clearly masters of many instruments, among them Celtic harp, fiddle, flute, guitar, mandolin, banjo, bodhrán, tin whistle and bouzouki. Daughter, Emma, and friend, Rick Wharton, often accompanied the pair to great effect.

HSR members provided an assortment of refreshments at intermission including amazing homemade scones and a puzzling

The March 2010 issue of *Gaslight News* proved to be one of the most popular among members, as well as with the general public, if it is to be measured by requests for extra copies. The centerpiece of that issue was Ms. Priscilla Taylor's article on Irish immigration and Riverton's own Irish Row. While not meant to be a comprehensive treatment of the topic, it certainly resonated with a number of readers who had ancestral ties to Irish surnames mentioned in the story. As always, we invite readers to share memories, anecdotes, ephemera, photos, etc. which can add more details to this continuing archive.



C.C. Fidler starter home: 36 rms w/ rvr vu on 4 ac. w/7 srvnts

ANCHORAGE from 1



1921 *Scranton Times* ad for Frishmuth made cigarettes

The Frishmuth family gifted the young couple with a four acre tract of land bordered by Carriage House Lane and Linden, Morgan, and Bank Avenues; and the Fidler family had the house built.

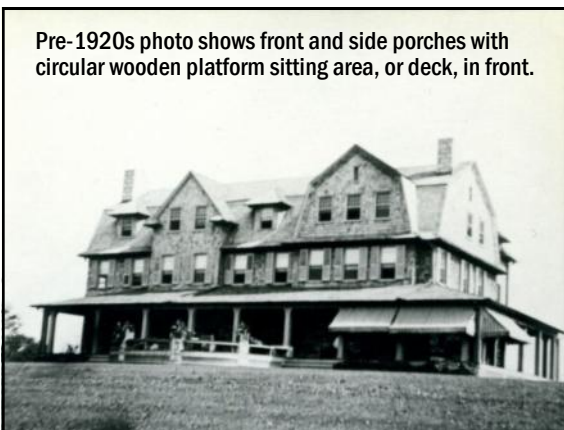
Construction of the newlyweds' home was started in 1905 and was fully completed in 1907.

Fidler M^{rs} C Cecil (Edna H Frishmuth)
Page 49. "The Anchorage" Riverton N J

1913 Social Register entry

The prestigious Philadelphia architectural firm of G.W. & W. D. Hewitt designed and built the lavish three-story home christened "The Anchorage House" owing to the anchor-shaped flower garden on the front lawn. Built of greystone base with cedar shake siding and roof, a columned porch ran the width of the front and right side of the house, and a circular wooden platform sitting area extended in front. The front portion of the porch was destroyed in a windstorm in the 1920s and was never rebuilt—the side porch survives. A stone pillared roofed carriage port served as the home's informal entrance at the rear of the house.

Pre-1920s photo shows front and side porches with circular wooden platform sitting area, or deck, in front.



The interior boasted 36 rooms with features that included plaster crown moldings, 11-foot ceilings, oak woodwork, mahogany wainscoting and louvered shutters, six ornate fireplaces with imported ceramic tiles, a three-story grand staircase with winding banister, a rear servant staircase, 10-foot high sliding pocket doors (one side oak, the other side mahogany) and six porcelain tiled bathrooms. The first floor contained a formal living room with floor-to-ceiling oak columns, a dining room, billiard room, kitchen, butler's pantry, and reception area.

The second floor housed the family bedroom suites, and the third floor had a three-room nursery suite, separate maids' quarters, and wardrobe and linen closet. Red oriental carpets lined the staircases and halls, and opulent furnishings filled the rooms. According to a 1910 census, seven servants, including three maids, two butlers, a coachman, and a groundskeeper maintained the Fidler household. The splendid grounds further included a large garage for motor coaches, multiple stables in which to house their five show horses, and a coachman's house on Carriage Lane which still remains.

In 1905, a four foot wide, nine foot high, 400 foot long riverwall was constructed.

C. Cecil Fidler often took his private ferry from the iron and wood wharf at the foot of Linden Avenue to the family business at the Fidler Ropeworks in the Bridesburg section of Philadelphia.

Presently, Edna gave birth to three children; however, two did not survive infancy.

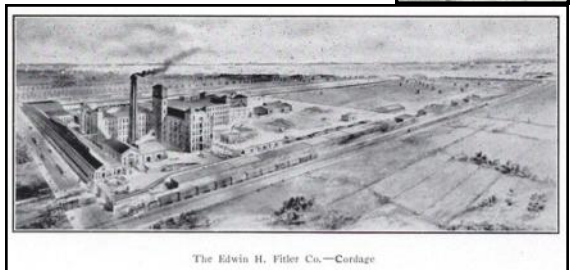
"The interior boasted 36 rooms with features that included plaster crown moldings, 11-foot ceilings, oak woodwork, mahogany wainscoting and louvered shutters, six ornate fireplaces with imported ceramic tiles, a three-story grand staircase..."



To her New Leaf Tea Room customers HSR Vice-President Mrs. Phyllis Rodgers is known as a person with a flair for elegant presentation. Others recall her efforts in organizing the successful Victorian Day events or her dedication in teaching youngsters at Riverton School. Now we may add rehabbing to her many talents.

Reality TV beckons, Phyllis.

1982 No heat!



The Edwin H. Fidler Co.—Cordage

Mr. C. Cecil Fidler commuted to work in the city by private boat from his own dock in front of his home to the family business at the huge Edwin H. Fidler & Co. Cordage Factory in the Bridesburg section of Philadelphia.

See ANCHORAGE on 4

Renovating 11 Bank Avenue has been a three decade-long family affair

ANCHORAGE from 3

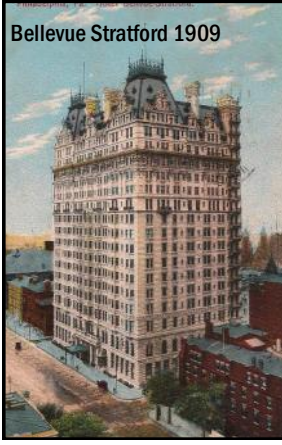


Bourse Bldg.
1930

Edna and Cecil raised their daughter Margaret in the grand house, and Cecil's brother Dale also resided there. The Fitler household took a conspicuous stand in Riverton society and entertained many well-known Philadelphians including Fitler's celebrated cousin, Margareta Fitler Murphy Rockefeller, nicknamed "Happy," who summered often at the riverfront estate.



Mrs. C. C. Fitler at the Plainfield Riding and Driving Club circa 1911 where she competed in harness racing and saddle racing categories



Bellevue Stratford 1909

Fitler M. W. C. Cecil (Edna H. Frishmuth) U. I. R. C.	P. No. 49
Jim. M. Margaret H. [Cy. Hv. Nn.]	"The Anchorage" Riverton N. J.

1922 Social Register entry

In 1925, Cecil Fitler died suddenly at age 42, and his widow Edna subsequently moved to Bryn Mawr, PA, where she later remarried. In the mid-1940s, a real estate company purchased the house, and in 1947 the building was divided into nine apartments and the grounds were subdivided. Over the next 30 years, the property would change owners more than a dozen times. Even so, it offered quiet, peaceful apartment living for many.

However, by the late 1970s, the tired old apartment building would become home to some less than law abiding transients. The mansion where the rich and socially prominent hobnobbed became a haven of domestic unrest and disturbance. Riverton

was often in the news for all the wrong reasons. Surrounding neighbors were extremely concerned about the hopeless and uncertain fate of the decaying old mansion.

Greatly intrigued by the building's potential, my parents, Dan and Phyllis Goffredo, recognized a sleeping beauty beneath the graffiti-tagged façade. In the fall of 1981, they purchased the property, eager to start work. After so many years of neglect, the once glorious house needed the three Rs—renovation, restoration, and rehabilitation—and they employed my services to oversee the project.

It would prove to be worse before it could improve. We shoveled piles of debris from the cavernous rooms and removed drop ceilings and paneling in order to restore plaster ceilings and walls. Former occupants had used the balustrades of the back staircase for firewood. We coaxed one last winter out of the antiquated furnace. A few squatter tenants refused to vacate even though there was no heat, and the building had been declared condemned. Cries from resident raccoons and squirrels accompanied our labors.



We became contractors and hired heavy equipment operators, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and various tradesmen to complete the project.

We removed old linoleum, sanded floors, and applied gallons of paint throughout. Plumbers and electricians updated systems, and each apartment received a new heating unit, kitchen, and bath. A new roof, cedar shake siding,

a paved parking area and a massive grounds cleanup completed the project.

By late spring of 1982, a new group of tenants proudly called 11 Bank Avenue home, and the neighbors breathed a collective sigh of relief. More than 150 Rivertonians viewed the transformation at a May Open House. My parents, the Goffredos, grew more curious about the home's history, so they turned to long time friend

Home of Henry D. Welsh Chestnut Hill 1893—one of over 100 Hewitt designed homes in Chestnut Hill



<http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/ajnl/ksub43.jpg>

http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMEVEY_The_Bourse_Philadelphia_PA

<http://johnnygoodtimes.com/2009/12/old-philly-postcards-the-bellevue-stratford/>

http://oc.gov/pictures/resources/gpbain_093117/

and town historian Mrs. Betty Hahle who was extremely helpful and generous in contributing her research and expertise.



Town historian Mrs. Betty B. Hahle holds a 1909 postcard of the very house which she helped the Goffredos research. *Phila. Inquirer* 2/12/1995

In February 1982, we were fortunate to meet Margaret (Peg) Fidler Anderson (daughter of Edna and C. Cecil Fidler). Then in her mid-70s, she vibrantly recalled her years growing up in Anchorage House. As a small child, Peg spent most of her time in the third floor nursery tended by her nanny with many cousins visiting. She recollected roaming the vast gardens and visiting the stables to admire the beautiful horses. She remembered that her mother Edna would sit in a grand dining room chair and press a button on the floor to summon two butlers to serve elaborate dinner parties. Edna's granddaughter still lived in the area, and she remembered her grandmother as kind, loving, and a true lady.

Family patriarch, Dan Goffredo, now 86, still visits the grounds of the Anchorage House, which has been a labor of love for over 30 years, to see that all is well. It has been an honor to be the rescuers and caretakers of the old mansion for this brief place in time.



l. to r.: Mr. Dan Goffredo, Mrs. Phyllis Goffredo, and Mrs. Margaret (Peg) Fidler Anderson meet in 1982 to discuss historical details regarding 11 Bank Avenue.

We have been fortunate to attract renters who have great respect and a deep appreciation for the beautiful building. May future generations of Rivertonians continue to value the unique architecture and rich history that has earned Riverton its seat on the National Register of Historic Places.

- MRS. PHYLLIS GOFFREDO RODGERS



A A A

The archives of the New York Times have several accounts of Mrs. C. C. Fidler's successes in racing horses *and* automobiles.

Search "C. C. Fidler": <http://query.nytimes.com/search/query?srchst=p>



Riverton Borough
11 Bank Avenue
SHPO Opinion: 3/12/1982
Anchorage House (ID#4191)

<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/identify/lists/burlington.pdf>

Another Riverton treasure surfaces—in Delran

One of the most gratifying experiences for me as a member of the HSR has been to help people to reconnect with items, especially vintage photos, postcard views, and ephemera which remind them of Riverton.

There is something about seeing someone that you recognize in an old photo or a name on a school program which can evoke a flood of memories of past events and acquaintances.

What started as an effort on my part to collect a few pictures of Riverton "back in the day" to show my history classes at Riverton School has evolved into a considerable archive of images—many the result of the kindness of strangers.

When shown a restored print made from the scan, an incredulous Mrs. Pam Reynolds Deitz remarked that she had never seen this image of her mother.



Photo of 1936 May Queen Sylvia Reynolds and her court lent by Mrs. Anna May Wolfschmidt Stavely, now living in Delran, NJ. Also see her 1936 eighth grade photo, p. 6.

This recent find serves to underscore the importance of rescuing these gems before they are discarded by persons who do not realize their value. Please contact us if you have items to donate to the HSR or to lend for scanning. jlmccormick@comcast.net —JMC



⑥ THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

Post Office Box # 112
Riverton, NJ 08077
856-786-6961

Richfield gas station Rt. 130 & Church Rd. 17 ¢/gal. gas



Scanned from original loaned by Mrs. Nancy Hotz

Do you have any vintage photos, postcards, maps, ephemera, or recollections to share which you would allow to be highlighted in an upcoming issue or a future program? Please contact Mr. McCormick directly in order to make arrangements. 856-764-1551

jlmccormick@comcast.net

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, "Rehabbing Anchor House," a recap of the March 17 Porch Club concert, and notice of the May 27 Annual HSR Meet/100th RPS Anniversary at Riverton School.

Gaslight News

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

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The Universe has provided more images with which we may reminisce. Actually, this came by way of Mrs. Mabel Kloos, who borrowed the original print from Mrs. Anna May Wolfschmidt Stavely long enough for John McCormick to scan it and provide a copy for Mrs. Eck at Riverton School. This 1936 eighth grade graduation photo is



one that had been missing from the school's records. If you find yourself at RPS during the upcoming 100th Anniversary observance and see that a photo missing from the hall display is one that you can provide, please contact us.

Eighth grade class photos missing from the lineup: 1910-1916, 1918, 1919, 1922-1927, 1929, 1930, 1932-1934, 1938, 1940-1942, 1945, 1947, 1950, 1952, 1959-1961, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1969, 1971-1973

Additionally, Mrs. Alice Cook Costello, now of Burlington, NJ, has thoughtfully provided copies of the 1938 RPS Closing Exercises Program and a 1941 program for the eighth grade production of the H.M.S. Pinafore operetta. I know a certain Ms. Edith Harris, now of Mountain View, CA, whom I must mail a copy of the operetta program, since she played in the cast. ;-) —JMC

