

Notes on the 1887 Fidler/Lindsay photo album.

By Roger T. Prichard

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This is an album of original photographs in the possession of the Riverton Free Library, depicting scenes and portraits taken over several years about 1887. Many of the scenes are labeled or recognizable as Riverton, NJ, several are from the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia and one is at Broad and Poplar Streets, Philadelphia.

The album measures 7" x 11", with most prints 4.5" x 7.5".

I had scanned it in 2001, using the best resolution then available. I revisited it in late 2016 and found that its condition had deteriorated considerably, so borrowed it again with the permission of librarian Michael W. Robinson and have now re-scanned it at 1200 ppi. The card pages had warped badly (and the binding had completely disintegrated) so I used a block of wood and a weight to press the individual pages flat against the scanner glass. I returned the album to the Riverton Free Library, with CDs of the scans and this document.

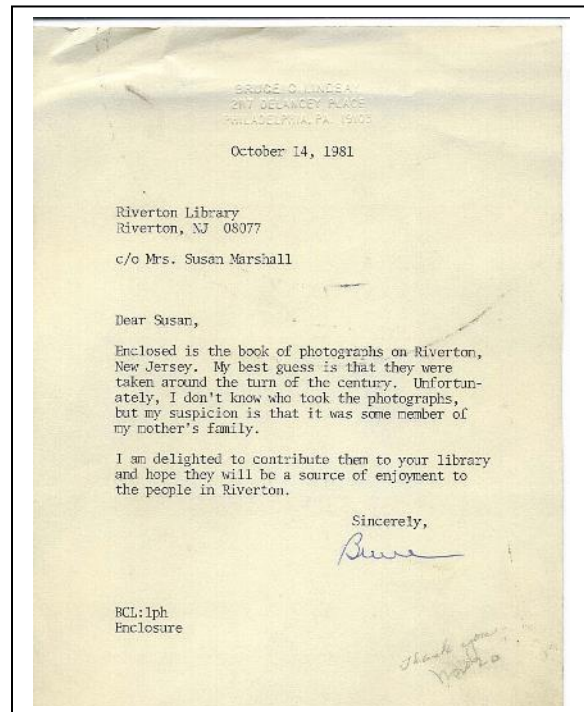
This document is intended to be read while viewing the scans on a large monitor, for the benefit of zooming in to the great wealth of detail on most prints.

Origin of the Album

In 1981 Bruce C. Lindsay donated the album to the Riverton Free Library. See the file named Donors 1981 Letter Image.jpg.

Letter

Twenty years later, on 2/13/2001, I spoke with Mr. Lindsay on the phone at (215)545-4187. At that time he still lived at 2117 Delancey Place in Center City, the address on that letter. He was sure that the book belonged to his mother, Viola Fitler (1914-1983) who lived in Riverton and Philadelphia. He said her father was Dale Baker Fitler. He did not know which Riverton house was theirs.



From Ancestry.com, Dale Baker Fitler was born 12/27/1888. The November 2009 edition of the Historical Society of Riverton *Gaslight News* has a detailed article about the Fitlers by Gerald Weaber (at https://rivertonhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/138_Gaslight_News_Nov09.pdf).

Since Dale Baker Fitler's birth coincides with the approximate 1887 date of the photographs (see next section) it is likely that it was commissioned by his parents, Edwin H. Fitler, Jr. (9/24/1853-7/4/2001) and Nannie Heiskell Myers Fitler. Edwin's father (Dale's grandfather) was the Mayor of Philadelphia 1887-1891 and was the president of a successful cordage company in the Frankford section, and Edwin junior inherited the operation of the company after the passing of Edwin senior in 1896.

Edwin H. Fitler, Jr. and his family moved into 407 Bank Avenue (on the downriver corner of Main Street) after he had that house doubled in size in 1882, according to the National Register nomination for the historic district. (This was originally the Rodman Wharton house, a Sloan design from 1851.)

The likelihood that the book was produced for Edwin Jr. and Nannie Fitler is increased by the evocative **photo 18** “Mrs. Meyers & Mrs. Fitler”. As the section on that photo below discusses in detail, it is likely that the “Mrs. Fitler” in the photo is Edwin Jr.’s wife Nannie and the “Mrs. Meyers” (probably misspelled) is her mother, Margaret A. Myers.

The two photos of brothers grouped as **photo 25** were taken in the back yard of 407 Bank, as discussed further on that page.

There is no obvious connection, however, between the Fitlers and Chestnut Hill or with the Reading Railroad, so no explanation for the several photos of Chestnut Hill houses or why no fewer than five photos in the album depict stations on the Philadelphia and Reading Ry. (today’s SEPTA Chestnut Hill East line). The presence of the Charles J. Harrah house at Broad and Poplar Streets, Philadelphia, is also a mystery.

Arguing against the premise that the album was created for the Fitlers is the obvious question of why is there no formal photograph of Fitler’s newly-rebuilt house at Bank and Main, just the boys in the back yard? Of course, there are some photos missing from the album and one of them could have been of their home on the riverbank.

Dating the album

Only one photo is actually dated, the handwritten note on **photo 6** (the Pennsauken Creek photo) which says “June 30 / 87”.

We know, however, that the pictures were made over a span of years because of the differences between the two views of 205 Bank Avenue in an earlier **photo 15** versus later **photos 10 and 37**. The extent of the ivy growth suggests at least several years have elapsed and also, significantly, means that the photos were not added to the album in chronological order. Someone collected the loose photos but then mounted them very neatly in a nice album after the fact (but then labeled them rather clumsily).

The discussions of **photo 24 and photo 25** also suggest that these also would have been taken a few years after 1887 if the guesses of the identities of the children are correct.

Thus the best we can say is that the pictures were made over a span of at least several years including 1887 onward.

Other date clues:

There is a rubber stamp on two page hinges which reads “Patented April 4, 1882”.

The Edwin Benson residence in Chestnut Hill in **photo 32** was built in 1884.

The George I. Bodine residence in Chestnut Hill in **photo 34** was built in 1885.

The Greek Revival residence of Charles J. Harrah in **photo 36** at Broad and Poplar Streets, Philadelphia, was built in 1887.

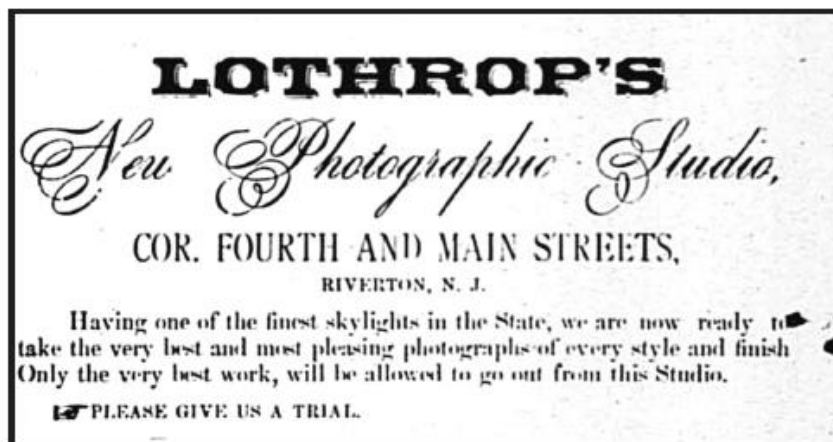
The photographer

Inside front cover is written in large pencil script “Lothrop 54 NG [or NY].”

It seems likely that the photographer was either David Lothrop or his daughter Bertha, both successful commercial photographers who lived in Riverton at 401 Main Street from at least 1877 (per the 1877 *Map of Burlington County* by Hopkins).

The June 2013 issue of the Historical Society of Riverton’s *Gaslight News* has a thorough story on their work. https://rivertonhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/152_Gaslight_News_Jun13.pdf

That article relates that Bertha was already at work in Riverton at the age of about 24 in 1894 when she was mentioned favorably in a magazine. The 1900 census shows the family living at 401 Main Street, Riverton. They had an advertisement in the (Palmyra) *Weekly News* July 10, 1897:



Bertha would have been in her late teens at the time the photos were taken, but she is described as quite capable at a young age, so either one or both could have contributed to this album.

Lothrop had also been a photographer in Philadelphia at 43 N. 8th Street. He is buried in the Epworth Methodist Church Cemetery in Palmyra.

The photographs

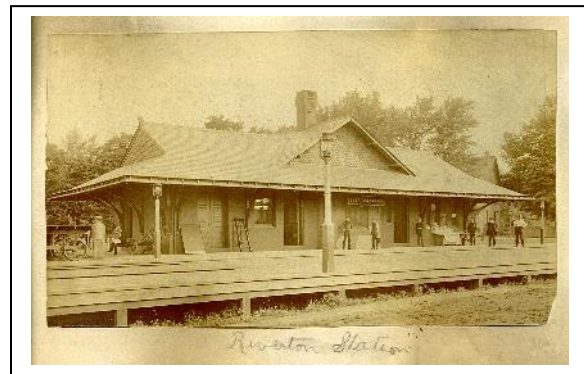
Enlarging the actual scans on a good-sized monitor will be rewarding, as most of the negatives had considerable detail which was captured on the prints and will be visible on zooming in right up to the point where the grain of the printing paper obscures detail in the image.

Although the photographs are very professionally made and mounted in the album, many have penciled captions in a hand that appears to have been done by a child.

The titles here are from these captions and handwritten page numbers.

1 – Riverton Station

Pennsylvania Railroad station, looking north. Broad Street (River Road) is beyond the station, paralleling the track. Trenton is to the right, Camden to the left. The station has several kerosene post lanterns similar to the Dietz “Pioneer” model. The house partly visible in the right rear was on the upriver corner of Broad and Main streets. The 1895 Sanborn map shows that house as a grocery store.



2 - Olga and Curlew

Two catboats racing at Riverton Yacht Club. Not clear is which is Olga and which is Curlew, although the boat on the right is flying a pennant with an "O" on it (meaning the names are in the opposite order of the boats). The boat on the left is flying the original



(swallowtail) RYC burgee. An entry in the minutes of the RYC for a regatta held on the 4th of July, 1894 lists Olga as being 26' 2" long and owned by William H. Bower, presumably related to the H. Bower who lived on the downriver corner of Bank and Howard.

3 - Nettle

Another large catboat sailing at RYC. An entry in the minutes of the RYC for the regatta held on 7/4/1894 says Nettle was owned by Charles M. Biddle, whose grand house at the corner of Lippincott Avenue appears in **photo 9** and others.



Nettle was listed as being just ½" short of 27' in length. The photo is probably looking upriver from the RYC pier.

4 - Bank Road

A view along Bank Avenue looking upriver from the corner of Lippincott Avenue. There are a large number of dead leaves on the ground yet the trees are still full, suggesting this is early Fall.



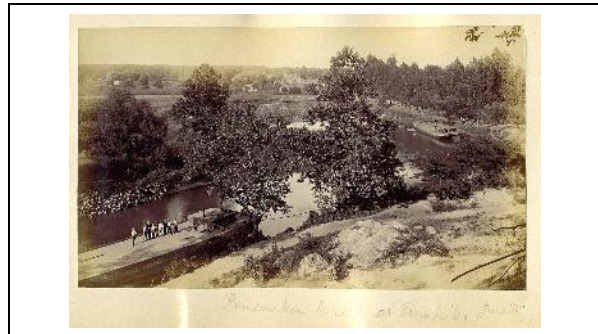
[5 – Main Street](#)

View along Main Street toward the river from the intersection with 5th Street. Enlarged, the lamp can be seen to be kerosene, not gas, with its chimney tilted to one side for easy lighting and a solid fount (reservoir) at the bottom of the lantern. Main Street is dirt with stone curbing, graded with a crown so it drains to the gutters. At the crosswalk there is a “bridge” over each gutter, possibly flagstone on the left and wooden on the right. The farthest house visible on the right side of the street is 401 Main which is where photographers David Lothrop and his daughter Bertha lived and had their studio, assumed to be the photographers of these photos.



[6 – Pensauken Creek at Turnpike June 30 /87 \[sic\]](#)

View from the Burlington Turnpike (later Route 130) next to the bridge over the Pennsauken Creek, looking downstream (north) toward the Delaware River. There are two unpowered barges tied up to trees on the creek bank, aground at low tide. The farther barge's stern is painted with the name “Ella of Pennshaukin NJ” [sic].



[7 – 207 Main St.](#)

View along Main Street toward the river from the corner of 3rd Street. The front walk of 207 Main has a boy on an iron-wheeled tricycle, wearing a fine suit with necktie and cap. While the house in the middle no longer exists, the other two appear today substantially as here.



8 – Presbyterian Church

The original frame church on the corner of 4th and Lippincott, built shortly after the lot was purchased in 1878.



9 – C. Biddle

Home of Charles Miller Biddle at 207 Bank Avenue. He was a son of Riverton founder Robert Biddle and purchased this house when it was three years old in 1878. Charles' brother Henry Canby Biddle's house is shown in **photo 14**.



These two brothers married two sisters (Hannah and Anna Mary McIlvaine, respectively).

The house partly visible to the left is that of Edward Lippincott, on the upriver corner of Bank and Lippincott Avenues (301 Bank) shown in **photo 13**.

10 – T. Roberts and C. Biddle

View upriver along Bank Avenue from in front of 203 Bank (not visible). The closer house is 205 Bank which was built in c.1868-70 for Thomas Roberts, a wholesale grocer whose business was located at 116 S. Front St., Philadelphia.

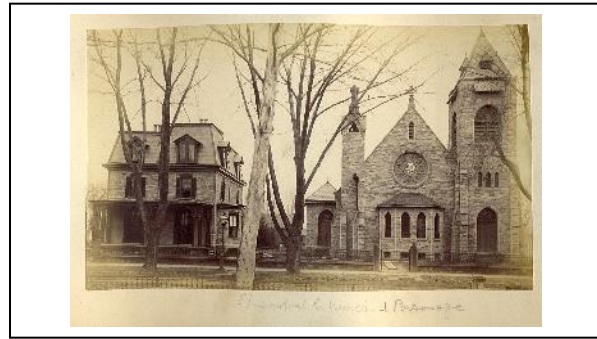


He named the property "Brightfield". The house to the left is the same as in **photo 9** (note the remarkably tall flagpole, with weathervane, on its tower roof).

11 – Episcopal Church and Parsonage

Christ Episcopal Church, Riverton.

Corner of 4th and Main Streets. There are planks on the dirt inside the gate. It was at about this time that the early house on the corner of 4th Street (just to the right) was moved to 300 Howard Street to give the church a better yard, so the planks could be part of a re-landscaping.



12 – J. Frishmuth

This may be the only surviving photograph of the residence of John Coffin Whitney Frishmuth, at 101 Bank Avenue, on the upriver corner of Linden Avenue.



According to Lloyd E. Griscom's 1981

Tales of Three Towns: Cinnaminson, Palmyra and Riverton, this house began life as a 1700s farmhouse on a large tract of land which was part of the plantation owned by James and Eleanor Toy. In 1771 it was purchased by Joseph Morgan, Sr. who sold it in 1805 to Joseph and Beulah Lippincott. They farmed it and raised cattle, their farm extending from today's Elm Avenue to Thomas and inland to about today's Park Avenue.

In 1851 Lippincott sold it to his daughter Rebecca and her husband William F. Thomas. The farmhouse and "its immediate lands" and outbuildings was inherited by their son Joseph L. Thomas who, in 1884, sold it to J. C. W. Frishmuth.

John Coffin Whitney Frishmuth was the wealthy owner of the Frishmuth Tobacco Works at North 17th Street and Lehigh and Glenwood Avenues in North Philadelphia. Earlier, he had served as a sergeant during the Civil War.

He was married twice, both times to sisters, the daughters of Riverton founder Robert Biddle, thus both wives were sisters of both Charles Miller Biddle of **photo 9** and Henry

Canby Biddle of **photo 14** and nieces to three other Riverton founders (Daniel L. Miller, Jr., William Canby Biddle and William D. Parrish). Frishmuth's first marriage was 6/3/1875 to Elizabeth Parrish Biddle but she died of consumption four years later at the age of 26.

His second marriage was to Elizabeth's older sister Hannah Miller Biddle (a marriage which lasted 39 years until J. C. W.'s death in 1921).

Here is how the Frishmuth house appears in the 1890 lithograph Birds Eye View of Riverton NJ (at the extreme right). The next house to the left is "Greystone", home of Nathan Myers Fitler and Mary Biddle Fitler. The next house to the left of that is the Henry Canby Biddle home "Windymere" (Mary Biddle Fitler's childhood home)



shown in **Photo 14**. The lithographer took some artistic license in order to fit the Frishmuth house into this image. Actually it would have been well off the image to the right. It wasn't too long after this litho (about 1896) that the Edward B. Showell house "Mapleton" was built on the site the Frishmuth house appears to occupy in this drawing (105 Bank).

While the decoration and massing of the upper stories of the Frishmuth house is clearly late Victorian, the first two floors have the arrangement of windows and doors so commonly found on earlier houses in the area, consistent with farmhouse origins. The somewhat uneven stucco covering (unique in Riverton houses of the era, which were all new) also suggests a much earlier brick house, whose surface had begun deteriorating after a century of riverfront weather.

It's not clear how J. C. W. Frishmuth commuted between this home in Riverton and his cigarette factory in North Philadelphia. Griscom indicates that there was a wood and iron pier at the foot of Linden Avenue that he says was used by C. Cecil Fitler (next paragraph) to commute to his business, so it is possible that Frishmuth also took a motor

launch across the river. It would be a short train ride on the PRR to North Philadelphia Station, which was just three blocks' walk to his factory.



When, in 1904, Frishmuth's daughter Edna Helen married C. Cecil Fitler (brother of Edwin W. Fitler, Jr. who may have been involved in the creation of this album) Mr. and Mrs. Frishmuth built the newlyweds a grand house

"next door" across Linden Avenue from their own. Completed in 1907 and named "The Anchorage", it still exists today as 11 Bank Avenue. A thorough history of this house is in the May, 2010 edition of the *Gaslight News*. https://rivertonhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/140_Gaslight_News_May10.pdf.

13 - E. Lippincott

This is the house of Edward Lippincott at 301 Bank Avenue, on the upriver corner of Lippincott Avenue. The location today is the parking lot of the Baptist Home. A little bit of it can be seen in the background of **photo 9**. It was demolished in the 1930s.



14 - H. Biddle

This is "Windymere", the residence of Henry Canby Biddle on the upriver corner of Bank and Thomas Avenues (201 Bank Avenue). He was a son of founder Robert Biddle, as was Charles Miller Biddle, whose home appears in **photo 9**.



This was the childhood home of his daughter Mary, known better to Rivertonians as Mary Biddle Fitler, author of four novels for young readers which were set in Riverton around the turn of the 20th Century. She married one of the Fitler brothers, Nathan Myers Fitler, and they purchased the house immediately across Thomas Avenue from this one (109 Bank Avenue), which they named “Greystone”.

15 – Along Bank - road

Looking upriver along Bank Avenue, with Thomas Avenue intersecting from the right. Three of the four houses are (l.to r.) shown closely in **photos 9, 10, and 14.**



16 – Mr. Alfred Earnshaw

Home at 106 Lippincott Avenue of Alfred Earnshaw, on the downriver corner of 2nd Street. According to the National Register Nomination for the Riverton Historic District it was built c.



1885 for Alfred Earnshaw. The contractor was Abraham Merritt of Beverly. Although the design is strongly suggestive of the work of architect Frank Furness there is no documentation of that as a fact.

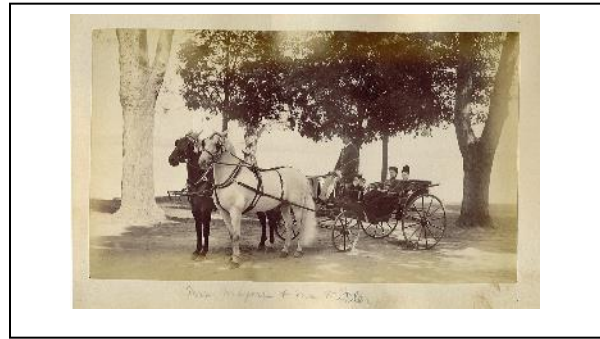
17 – Mr. John Earnshaw

Home at about 200 or 202 Lippincott, no longer in existence. The 1880 Census shows a John W. S. Earnshaw, wife Cornelia, and 8 children, an aunt plus two live-in servants all residing somewhere in Riverton, presumably in this home. No other Census shows a John Earnshaw in Riverton.



18 – Mrs. Meyers and Mrs. Fitler

This is a remarkable photograph of two very well-dressed women of differing ages seated in a fine Victoria coach drawn by two impeccable horses driven by a top-hatted coachman in handsome livery. It is certainly posed on Bank Avenue although the exact location isn't



clear. The pencil caption must have had some typographical problem because the name Fitler was clumsily corrected, one of the reasons to believe that all of these captions were written by a child.

Who is “Mrs. Fitler”?

Assuming that the photo is roughly contemporary with the other date clues in the album, the woman on the left is likely Nannie Heiskell Myers Fitler (thus “Mrs. Fitler”) the wife of Edwin H. Fitler, Jr., whose father was elected the Mayor of Philadelphia that year.

Mrs. Fitler’s appearance is consistent with her being aged 31 in 1887, five years after the couple had purchased, rebuilt, and occupied 407 Bank Avenue on the downriver corner of Main Street.

A different opinion appears in the Historical Society of Riverton *Gaslight News* article of November, 2009, in which Gerald Weaber recounts an interview from December, 2008 with Barbara Page Bartholomew, then age 96, the granddaughter of Nathan Myers Fitler. She identifies one of the women in the carriage as her aunt Mary Biddle Fitler, whom she knew well when she was a young woman.

It is hard to agree with this, as Mary Biddle Fitler was born in 1876. The younger woman in the photo appears to be about 30 years old, so if it was MBF, this picture would have to date to about 1906. The ladies’ fashions (especially the hats) are much more consistent with the 1880s than the 1900s.

Who is “Mrs. Meyers”?

If this “Mrs. Fitler” is Nannie Heiskell Myers Fitler, then the woman on the right may well be her mother, Margaret A. Myers (“Mrs. Meyers” [sic]) who would have been at least 57 at the time. Arguing against this is the fact that the two women do not share an obvious family resemblance, coupled with the spelling of “Meyers”. While the misspelling of the last name is odd, as is the reversal of the order of names versus the left-to-right order of the women in the picture, this could again be consistent with the assumption that the captions were written by a child.

Mrs. Myers is listed in the 1880 Census as living just across the river on the “Road in Torresdale” in the 23rd Ward at about today’s intersection of State Road and Convent Lane. In the record are her husband Nathan and several other members of the Myers family, plus 10 servants.



Here is the area in the 1887 “Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 23rd Ward” by G. M. Hopkins, showing the property in her name, called “Belrose”. Most interesting is their next door neighbor: Mayor Edwin H. Fitler himself, whose namesake son had, in 1877, married Myers’ daughter Nannie to become the “Mrs. Fitler” of our photo. Even more interesting is that the Myers bought this property to become Mayor Fitler’s neighbors in

the same year Fitler's son married their daughter and moved out. This was the Fitler's country estate, named "Luzon".

The Riverton connections continue: Living in the Myers household in Torresdale in 1880 are Nannie's sister Ellen Myers Showell (1838-1891), the widow of Edward Bredell Showell and her son, also named Edward Bredell Showell (1863-1916). He later moved to Riverton and in the late 1890s built a home at 105 Bank Avenue which he named "Mapleton", and began a long line of Showells here. The Showell house "Mapleton" is now lost. It was located between the Frishmuths at 101 in **photo 12** and Nathan Myers Fitler and Mary Biddle Fitler's "Greystone" at 109 Bank (that is, in the middle of the block between Linden and Thomas Avenues).

One of Edward Bredell Showell's sons was Rex Showell (George Rexasamer Showell 1887-1951). The Showell family was very active in the Riverton Yacht Club, which still has an annual race named for Rex Showell. In 1910 he married a girl from down the street, Lenore Baker Wright, who had grown up in 305 Bank Avenue (the house later moved to the corner of Penn and Carriage House Lane). Lenore's father, Charles A. Wright was instrumental in the development of the Tacony Palmyra Ferry and then the Tacony Palmyra Bridge in 1929.

Ellen Myers Showell also had another son, John B. M. Showell, who also came to Riverton, purchasing the old Edward Lippincott house at 301 Bank Avenue, shown in **photo 13**.

Back across the river in Torresdale, apparently Nannie and Nathan Myers became bored with the country life next to their in-laws, leaving there after 15 years in 1892 (about 5 years after our photo). At that time, Nathan bought the Stratford Hotel on the SW corner of Broad and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia. He and Margaret moved there, living there and managing the hotel for ten years. In 1902 he sold out to the owner of the Bellevue hotel across Walnut Street, who then demolished Myers' hotel and built the palatial Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in its place. Nathan and Margaret Myers didn't change their address, though. They lived the rest of their lives in a private suite/apartment in the new hotel, which we can only assume was suitably luxurious. Nathan died just a few years later in 1908 and Margaret in 1915. Each of their death certificates shows their address as "Bellevue-Stratford Hotel".

[Much of the above paragraph about the Stratford Hotel is thanks to a thorough article posted 4/12/2015 on Bob McNulty's Facebook page "Philadelphia Stories".]

19 - Mrs. Taylor

Home at 204 Lippincott Avenue.

According to the National Register Nomination it was built in 1878-80 by Henry T. Walnut for his mother-in-law Mrs. E. Taylor. (Walnut lived at 201 Lippincott.)



20 - Main st Riverton above bend (snow scene)

This is the only winter view in the album, taken on Main Street from just at the bend below 5th Street looking toward the railroad (south). The scene is hardly different today, 130 years later. The house on the left is 501 Main St.



21 - Phila and Reading (Mount Pleasant Station)

This is a station in Mt. Airy neighborhood of Philadelphia on the Philadelphia and Reading (later Reading RR, later SEPTA Chestnut Hill East line). It was built in 1882, designed by Frank Furness

(Furness & Evans). This station was lost to a fire in recent times and the replacement station is known as Sedgwick.



[22 - Riverton \(parlor interior\)](#)

This is a view of a sumptuous Victorian parlor, marked as being Riverton, but otherwise unidentified. While it would be logical to assume that this is in Edwin H. Fidler, Jr.'s newly-redesigned house at 407 Bank Avenue, the windows suggest otherwise. These are simple two-over-two lights whereas the 1882 rebuilding of 407 Bank gave it lower sashes with just a single pane of glass and upper sash with small surrounding panes (see **photo 25**).



[23 - Mt Airy of Phila and Reading](#)

This is another of the pictures along today's SEPTA Chestnut Hill West regional rail line of the Mt. Airy station. The photo looks inbound toward Center City. It was built in 1875, with Frank Furness as the likely architect, and still looks very similar today.



[24 - \(girls - 2 portraits\)](#)

The identities of these young women are unknown. For the pair on the left, we have nothing to help us.

However, there are some clues in the picture of the charming girl on the right with her dolls and dog, posed on an oriental rug arranged on the porch steps. The house is almost certainly one of the original founders' houses, with the distinctive full-length shutter visible at the left.



If the photo is from 1887 or so, the girl is unlikely to be the daughter of Edwin H. Fitler, Jr. at 407 Bank Avenue, since the 1880 Census shows them with no daughters and the house had a large bay in the rear of the side porch.

Examining the other houses of this style in Riverton eliminates all except the house which was one of the homes of Daniel L. Miller, Jr. which appears at the foot of Fulton Street in the 1890 Bird's Eye View of Riverton (and was then moved in 1912 or so and is today 201 Fulton Street).

A photo in RTP's collection shows its broad main steps offset to the downriver side like this, rather than centered on the front door as with every other one of these houses. It also had clapboard siding of just this dimension and full-length shutters with this exact panel proportion and location of the pull ring.

Miller himself had died in 1871 and his widow sold the house in 1878 to Matthew Mesier Reese and his wife Emily, who named the house "Maplehurst". They had a daughter Anna Kate Reese who would have been about 8 in 1887. This girl looks older than that, perhaps 10 or 12, but we do know that the photos in the album were taken over a span of years so this may be the girl – and the house.

[25 - \(boy on bicycle - boy in baseball uniform\)](#)

The pictures of these two boys are unlabeled, but we can make some very confident assumptions. First, they were both taken at the same time (see leaves on the vines) and the family resemblance suggests that they are brothers and this is their back yard.



There is no doubt that this house is the Riverton home of Edwin H. Fitler, Jr. and his family (407 Bank Avenue), for whom I am suggesting the album was created. The Queen Anne-style upper sash of the window is very unusual in Riverton, but was a distinctive feature of this Fitler house after Fitler commissioned its expansion and

updating in 1882. The house still has windows exactly like that today, with single-light lower sashes and uppers with small surrounding panes in a pattern of 6 panes by 6 panes.

I say “back yard” because the trellis and cellar doors (just visible in the left photo) would only be in a non-public area of a house of this pretension, the province of the children and the servants. This part of the house has been changed somewhat in the 125 years since the photograph, including its conversion to apartments. In particular, the locations of the back door and window have been switched and a back porch built here.

However, a visit to the basement of this house on February 23, 2017 with its current owner Michael Spinelli shows that there is still a cellar stairway in the basement wall here which exactly matches the cellar doors we see in the left photo.

The wall in this photo appears to be stucco, scored to suggest stone mortar joints. Today the entire house is sheathed in modern synthetic siding so there is no indication from the outside of the materials which lie underneath that. However, the now-unused attic room on this end of the house has a large hole in the plaster through which it is evident that this is a brick wall, so a stucco surface on the outside is perfectly consistent. (What isn’t apparent is why an otherwise frame structure has one wall that is completely masonry.)

Stucco siding is very unusual in Riverton and apart from the Frishmuth house (**photo 12**) and 100 Main Street (founder Chalkley Gillingham’s house, today owned by Steve Smyth) I am unaware of any other. This is certainly not either of those houses.

At the upper left is visible part of another Victorian house next door, an upper floor window and a cornice with brackets topping a bay window or a porch. This would be consistent with the photo being taken in the back yard of 407 Bank Avenue (i.e. downriver corner of Main), looking toward- and a little downriver. Bank Avenue would be on the other side of these two houses and Main Street would be to the photographer’s right. If this conjecture is true, that next door house would be 405 Bank, originally the first house of Daniel L. Miller, Jr. I am not aware that any photograph of that house exists.

If all of the above is true and this is 407 Bank, then we can guess about the identity of the boy or boys. In 1887 Nathan Myers Fitler would have been 9, which might be possible

for the boy on the right in the baseball uniform (whose “R” undoubtedly indicates the Riverton team). To my eye, the boys are a couple of years older than this, so this could be a photo which was taken in the years following the benchmark year of 1887. The one on the left could then be C. Cecil Fitler, who was about four years younger than Nathan Myers. The image of each boy is about the same size, but the camera is closer to the boy on the left, so he is clearly younger.

To recap, Nathan Myers Fitler was later the man who married Mary Biddle, as mentioned in **photo 14** and C. Cecil Fitler was later the man for whom the Frishmuths built “The Anchorage”, as discussed in **photo 12**.

26 – (unidentified farm)

We have no facts about this picture. From the angle of the sunlight, the photographer is probably looking north and I am not aware of any street in Riverton that has a bend in this direction.



The farmhouse is very typical of Quaker farmhouses of Burlington County, so this is probably not from the Chestnut Hill area, where farmhouses tended to be made of local stone, among other differences.

While the farmhouse is aged and somewhat rough (and at least one set of shutters is closed) the large barn on the right has been maintained beautifully and the stables in the center with the fancy Victorian slate roof is obviously new and reflects an affluence inconsistent with the farmhouse. Under magnification can be seen a farmworker holding the tether of a large cow and, on the ramp to the barn, a large, beautiful horse, held by a small girl. All of this suggests that the old farm has been purchased by wealthier city folk and improved to suit the keeping of fancy horses.

As a complete guess, the bend of the road feels like the one in today’s Riverton Road at the Cinnaminson High School. (The school would be off to the right.) The 1859 Parry, Sykes and Earl map shows a house exactly there (coincidentally marked as yet another property owned at that time by founder Daniel L. Miller, Jr.). However, while the more

detailed 1877 Hopkins atlas shows a house and outbuildings, it has them set back from the road and on the photographer's side of the road bend.

Because the shutters are painted differently, this doesn't seem to be the same farmhouse behind the well-dressed group in **photo 35**.

27 - (Mother and baby, two girls)

No information is available to identify these subjects.



Photos 28 and 29 are missing

30 - (houses in Northwest Philadelphia)

This unlabeled photo shows a splendid block of homes, which turn out to be located at the corner of West Walnut Lane and Wayne Avenue in Germantown. All of the visible houses continue to exist today.



31 - Chestnut Hill (Phila and Reading Station)

This is the station at the end of the line of today's SEPTA Chestnut Hill East line. It was built in 1872 and replaced in 1931. An interior view of the small trainshed on the left is shown as **photo 33**.



32 - Edwin Benson Chestnut Hill

This is “Lynnewood Hall”, the home of Edwin North Benson at 185 Bethlehem Pike, Chestnut Hill. He was a banker and held the rank of Major in the Civil War. The house was designed by Theophilus P. Chandler, built in 1884 of fireproof



stone, concrete and steel, and demolished in 1940. All of the shutters on the house are closed, so this was not a photo commissioned by the owner, who was likely living elsewhere at the time, since the grass edge along the inner drive is unruly while it has been edged nicely at the street. The stone gateposts are all that remain today.

33 - Chestnut Hill Station

This is the interior of the train shed of the station in **photo 31**.



34 - Bodine Chestnut Hill

This is “Belle Ayre”, the mansion of banker George I. Bodine, of the firm Bodine, Altemus and Company. It was built in 1885 at 100 W. Hampton Rd. and has since been demolished.



35 - (unidentified family portrait)

We know nothing about this patriarch surrounded by very fashionably-dressed girls and young women. The farmhouse in the background is rustic and old, with hand-made strap hinges on the shutters and very plain carpentry, in contrast to the fine, stylish clothing of the people.



36 - Broad & Poplar

Brand new at the time of the photo, this is a remarkable house from the era of great wealth being accumulated by some families in late 19th C. Philadelphia, probably most remarkable for its brief life.



This is the mansion built by Charles J. Harrah in 1887 on the southwest corner of Broad and Poplar Streets. The photograph faces the northwest. Harrah had made a fortune in the horsecar industry and built the lavish marble house with extensive gardens that occupied half a block of frontage on North Broad Street through to Carlisle Street. It was utterly unlike any other house in this affluent area or, for that matter, anywhere else in Philadelphia.



It lasted just 22 years, destroyed in 1909 for the construction of Oscar Hammerstein's Metropolitan Opera House, which still stands on the site.

[37 - \(unlabeled view of Bank Avenue, Riverton\)](#)

This photograph is taken from the foot of Thomas Avenue, looking upriver.

Judging by the spread of the ivy on the Thomas Roberts house (2nd from right), this photo was taken at least a couple of

years later than **photo 15**. It appears to be contemporary with **photo 10**.



It has several points of interest. First, on higher magnification there is a very well-dressed child driving a goat cart on the road.

At the left can be seen some form of light-weight boat-launching ramp from the wall in front of the Thomas Roberts house.



Bank Avenue is rutted dirt/dust, with several deposits of horse manure, a cast-iron hitching post (for functional reasons, unlike today), and two nicely-worked rounded granite blocks at the edge of the road on the corner to act as a curb preventing wagon and carriage wheels from cutting the corner and damaging the lawn.

Photos 38 – 42 are missing

43 – (two spaniels)

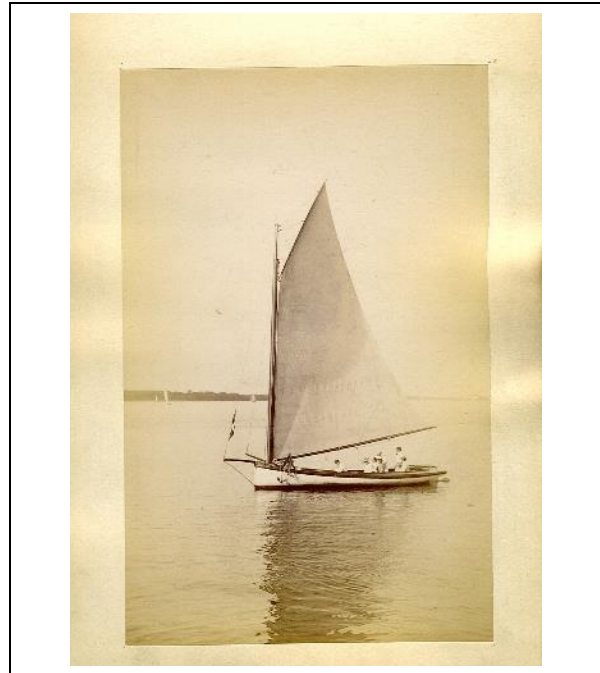
Identities unknown.



44 – (unidentified catboat possibly Olga)

This is almost certainly the same catboat as shown in **Photo 2**, assumed to be Olga, owned by William H. Bower, because of its flag with the large letter “O”. While the other photo showed a crew of 13, on this calm day there are just 7, of which three are finely-dressed ladies.

Why the fluke of that iron anchor doesn’t chew up the nice white topsides of the boat remains a mystery.



45 - NE cor 16th and Green Mr Heim

While this photograph was clearly taken in Philadelphia (and the house still exists and was recently restored) no other information is available about it, or about “Mr. Heim”, or why it appears in this album.

