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# 2013 Parade Marshal

## *Elsie Showell Waters*

Contributed by Casey L. Foedisch

What does it take to be a Rivertonian? An address in the town? Living here for years? Kids in the school? Town pride? Rivertonians can have any of those things, but there is one resident of the town that embodies all of them and more. Elsie Waters is an original Rivertonian, and she has spent a lifetime loving this town.

It all began when her grandfather, Charles. A Wright, saw Riverton from his boat when sailing on the Delaware. The very next day, he came over from Philadelphia and bought a home, moving his entire family across the river to 305 Bank Avenue. Wright was the head of the Tacony-Palmyra Ferry and instrumental in the creation of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. By the time Elsie was born, then Elsie Showell, in her parents' home at 205 Bank Avenue, her family had been in Riverton for a very long time.



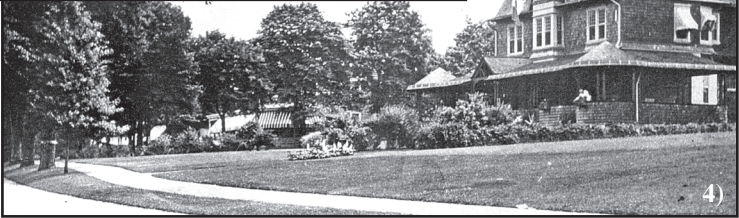
Elsie and her siblings were raised on Howard Street, right next door to their cousins, the Knights, another original Riverton family. With six Showells and seven Knights, the neighborhood was a lively place to grow up. Elsie and her cousins used to pass notes and snacks across the yards of the houses on a pulley system they devised, and they played kick the can and heave the wicket in the yard beside their houses. She recalls fondly the forts she and her siblings built under the dining room table and going on picnics with her mother. Her father was always telling her mother that she was encouraging their wildness, but that didn't stop the fun.

Their families were very close during the Depression, her grandfather offered to let them live in his house on Bank Avenue and rent their Howard Street homes to make a little money. Both families crammed into the house, which the kids affectionately called the Grand Hotel. The Showells got the kitchen, dining room, and third floor, and the Knights used the living room and the second floor.

When Elsie was twelve, she swam across the Delaware River, a rite of passage that all the kids simply "had to do." Elsie learned to swim at age five in the river, and her love of swimming continued into her time at Palmyra High School. There, she was a member of the Swim Team, eventually becoming captain, as two of her sisters had



Elsie in Riverton:  
 1) 4th of July 1944  
 2) 4th of July 1947  
 3) 4th of July 1950  
 4) Bank Ave House  
 where Elsie  
 was Born.



been before her. She later taught swimming to children with cerebral palsy at Medford Leas, and spent many years with Bay Knight Ruff, another cousin, giving swim lessons to Riverton children. Elsie estimates that the two of them taught a third of the town to swim! Today, she still enjoys being in the water and takes water exercise classes at the Moorestown Community Center.

It was at Palmyra High that Elsie met Art Waters, who moved to Riverton his senior year of high school. Elsie graduated in 1936, and she and Art were married in 1940. They had two sons, Bob and John. Art was a volunteer fireman in Riverton for 54 years, taking a brief, six-year break to work in Salisbury, Maryland. Those six years were the only time Elsie ever lived outside of Riverton, and she was thrilled when Art finally told her that the Maryland job just wasn't working out. In 1970, they returned to Riverton, purchasing a house on 8th Street where Elsie still lives today.

It is clear in everything she says that Elsie Waters loves this town. Every story, memory, and funny anecdote she tells are reflections of this feeling. Her fondest memories, though, are of her childhood here, and how Riverton was - and remains today - a wonderful place to grow up.