

Gaslight News

September 2013

Historical Society of Riverton

vol. XXXIV, no. 3 (#153)

Founded 1970

Riverton, NJ 08077

Incorporated 1978

In Effect Feb. 16, 1924
THROUGH TRANSPORTATION
to and from
Riverside, N. J., to any Point in Philadelphia
via Tacony-Palmyra Ferry
and Frankford Elevated
by the
Philburco Coach Line
GEORGE D. STEEDLE, Prop.

Leave Riverside	Leave Palmyra	Leave N. J. Ferry	Arrive Frankford L.
A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
A 6:20	6:02	6:00	6:28
A 6:55	6:37	6:35	7:03
A 7:25	7:07	7:05	7:33
A 7:55	7:37	7:35	8:03
A 8:25	8:07	8:05	8:33
A 8:55	8:37	8:35	9:03
A 9:25	9:07	9:05	9:33
A 9:55	9:37	9:35	10:03
B 10:25	10:07	10:05	10:33
A 10:55	10:37	10:35	11:03
			P.M.
			11:33
			12:03
11:25	11:07	11:05	11:33
11:55	11:37	11:35	12:03
P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
12:07	12:11	12:15	12:33
			1:03
B 12:25	12:07	12:05	1:33
A 1:25	1:07	1:05	1:45
A 1:55	1:37	1:35	2:03
A 2:25	2:07	2:05	2:33
A 2:55	2:37	2:35	3:03
A 3:25	3:07	3:05	3:33
A 3:55	3:37	3:35	4:03
A 4:25	4:07	4:05	4:33
A 4:55	4:37	4:35	5:03
A 5:25	5:07	5:05	5:33
A 5:55	5:37	5:35	6:03
A 6:25	6:07	6:05	6:33
B 6:55	6:37	6:35	7:03
B 7:25	7:07	7:05	7:33
B 7:55	7:37	7:35	8:03
B 8:25	8:07	8:05	8:33
B 8:55	8:37	8:35	9:03
B 9:25	9:07	9:05	9:33
B 9:55	9:37	9:35	10:03
B 10:25	10:07	10:05	10:33
D 10:55	10:37	10:35	11:03
			P.M.
			11:30
11:50	11:30	11:28	12:00
			12:28
Leave Frankford L.	Leave Palmyra	Arrive N. J. Ferry	Arrive Riverside
A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
D 6:50	7:00	7:14	7:28
A 7:20	7:30	7:44	7:58
A 7:50	8:00	8:14	8:28
A 8:20	8:30	8:44	8:58
A 8:50	9:00	9:14	9:28
A 9:20	9:30	9:44	9:58
A 9:50	10:00	10:14	10:28
A 10:20	10:30	10:44	10:58
A 10:50	11:00	11:14	11:28
B 11:20	11:30	11:44	11:58
			P.M.
			12:28
A 11:50	12:00	12:14	12:28
P.M.			
12:50	1:00	1:14	1:28
B 1:20	1:30	1:44	1:58
A 1:50	2:00	2:14	2:28
A 2:20	2:30	2:44	2:58
A 2:50	3:00	3:14	3:28
A 3:20	3:30	3:44	3:58
A 3:50	4:00	4:14	4:28
A 4:20	4:30	4:44	4:58
A 4:50	5:00	5:14	5:28
A 5:20	5:30	5:44	5:58
A 5:50	6:00	6:14	6:28
A 6:20	6:30	6:44	6:58
A 6:50	7:00	7:14	7:28
A 7:20	7:30	7:44	7:58
A 7:50	8:00	8:14	8:28
A 8:20	8:30	8:44	8:58
B 8:50	9:00	9:14	9:28
B 9:20	9:30	9:44	9:58
B 9:50	10:00	10:14	10:28
B 10:20	10:30	10:44	10:58
B 10:50	11:00	11:14	11:28
			P.M.
			11:58
12:10	12:40	12:54	1:08
C 12:50	1:20	1:34	1:48

A—runs daily except Sundays and Holidays
B—runs Saturdays, Sundays and holidays only
C—runs Riverton daily, Riverside Saturdays only
D—Buses run without Bus
Fare—Riverside 15 cts. including Ferry; Frankford L. 7 cts.
L time to Broad and Market Buses 25 minutes, total time from Riverside 64 minutes; Riverton 52 minutes
The only transportation system of this character in the United States

Geo. D. Steedle moved millions with Steedle's Express & Philburco Buses

In 1918, a young Riverton entrepreneur started a moving company now in its third generation



Steedle Family album

For article co-author Mrs. Patricia Solin in 1983, and for many Riverton families during much of the last century, the mover of choice was Steedle's Moving and Storage Company. Founded in 1918, Steedle's Express, eventually operated with offices in Riverton, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and New York City. Another chapter of George Steedle's legacy is his role in helping develop an innovative interstate passenger transportation system.

The Steedle family has been living in the Delanco, Cinnaminson, Riverton, and Palmyra area since about 1870. George Dewey Steedle, born to Edward and Slatia Steedle in c.1898, became locally famous in 1915 for saving

the life of fellow Boy Scout Jack Corry who had fallen through thin ice on the Delaware River.

Just three years later, a young George and his wife, Dorcas, founded Steedle's Express, managing operations from their Cinnaminson Street home.

Perhaps it was his success with the moving and freight truck service between Riverton and Philadelphia that encouraged him to pursue an interstate passenger bus service that had no precedent.

Before the Betsy Ross, Tacony-Palmyra, and Benjamin Franklin spans were built, persons wishing to go to Philadelphia from Riverton, Riverside, and Palmyra first traveled by car, trolley, or steam passenger train to Camden, where

GEORGE D. STEEDLE
Riverton-Palmyra-Philadelphia Express
Moving and Hauling

Philadelphia Office
25 South Front - Street
Riverton Office
517 Cinnaminson Street
Telephone 142

Through Transportation
to and from
Riverton, N. J., to any Point in Philadelphia via Tacony - Palmyra Ferry and Frankford Elevated by the
Riverton-Palmyra Frankford L Bus Line
26 Buses each way daily
Fare 15 Cents
GEORGE D. STEEDLE, Prop.

See **STEEDLE** on 2 *New Era*, Oct. 18, 1923, p.23

In this issue

GEO. STEEDLE, MOVER OF MILLIONS - MRS. PATRICIA SOLIN & JOHN MCCORMICK

1

OCT. 10 MEETING - SCANDALS, RUMORS, & DIRTY ROTTEN LIES - JMC

1

WHILE YOU WERE OUT - JMC

4

Scandals & Rumors Dirty Rotten Lies

RIVERTON PUBLIC SCHOOL
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2013
7:00 P.M.



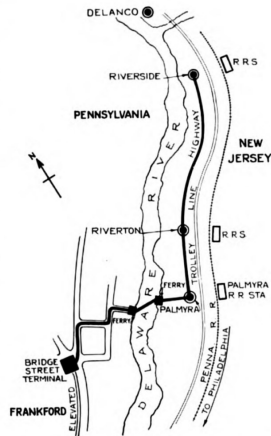
Dorothy Stanaitis gives us a peek behind closed doors to learn what was churning the gossip mills of Colonial Philadelphia.

Join us at Riverton School, *Thursday, October 10, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.* as this certi-

fied Philadelphia tour guide and author of over 100 essays of historical nostalgia presents *Scandals, Rumors & Dirty Rotten Lies*, a delightful & entertaining program of "historical gossip" from America's colonial period. Light refreshments served.

- JMC





Inter-State Bus Route Uninterrupted by Special Ferry Arrangement
The Commercial Car Journal
 November 15, 1924

"His bus line complemented the elevated and ferry systems, providing a service that could not exist without each of the three units."

- *The Commercial Car Journal*

Bus Lines Here on Bridge Route

Two New Lines Provide Quick Transit For Riverfront Towns

Two different bus lines are now to carry people of Riverton, Riverside and Palmyra to Philadelphia via the Camden bridge.

The bridge route provides the quickest transportation to Philadelphia ever given this section, the trip being made from Riverton to 13th and Market in 35 minutes with the utmost comfort and convenience.

Harry McCloskey and William Worth, of Beverly, were first in the field, starting a line last Saturday from Burlington to Philadelphia, stopping at all the river front towns enroute. This line is equipped with luxurious Studebaker buses and has been well patronized from the start.

This weekend the Philburco Coach Line, which has made such a success with its line across the ferry to the Frankford "L", will start a 30-minute service via the bridge to 13th and Market, using the fine new gas-electric machines which have recently been put into use.

New Era, Aug 19, 1926, p.1

STEEDLE from 1

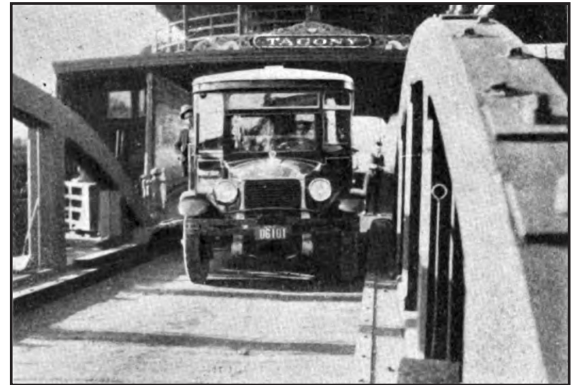
they boarded a ferry to their destination. On May 6, 1922, ferry service began between the Tacony section of Philadelphia and Palmyra. The Frankford Elevated Railway opened during the same year. George Steedle viewed these transportation developments as holding great potential for him.

In May 1923, he formed the Philburco Coach Company. Most likely with provisional approval from the New Jersey Public Utilities Commission, he operated a jitney service between the Riverside train station and the Tacony-Palmyra Ferry Company terminal at the foot of Cinnaminson Avenue in Palmyra.

In October 1923, the NJ PUC granted George D. Steedle a franchise for that service and in May 1924, it allowed the Philburco company to expand operations using three buses with one bus running every 1½ hours between the two locations, picking up and dropping off patrons along the route. From the Tacony side, the new ferry slip was within blocks of two trolley lines, the Market-Frankford elevated rail line, and the Pennsylvania Railroad, thus connecting passengers to Philadelphia as never before. Philburco patrons saved riding time and enjoyed uninterrupted direct passage to Philadelphia.

Mr. Steedle evidently continued to pursue other investments. A garage on the same Broad Street property that accommodated the

bus fleet also performed service on automobiles. Later, another Steedle property at Broad and Lippincott would serve as an auto laundry, or car wash, and Pontiac auto dealership beginning in 1929.



A Philburco bus leaves the ferry. The bus was timed to arrive at the slip just as the boat was to leave. The trip across the Delaware took about five minutes.

IMAGE CREDIT: *Commercial Car Journal*

By November, one GMC and seven Mack buses provided runs on the #10 Route from Riverside to Frankford at fifteen-minute intervals on Saturday and Sunday with half-hourly runs on weekdays.

Steedle's company also operated franchise Route No. 9, from Delaware and High Streets in Burlington to Riverside. A contemporary trade magazine observed, "His bus line complemented the elevated and ferry systems, providing a service that could not exist without each of the three units." It was the only transportation system of its kind in the United States.

Business for the ferry and the savvy transportation executive in 1924 was, well...cruising along at a quickening pace. A 1926 Philburco newspaper ad boasted, "This bus line has

JUST IN TIME

A little more delay in changing the oil in the crank case would probably have made expensive repairs necessary. Change the oil frequently and use the best grade oil obtainable, such as we sell. We render crank case service to our patrons.

Steedle's Garage
 Geo. D. Steedle, Prop.
 Broad Street East Riverton
 Telephone Riverton 33

New Era, August 7, 1924, p.4



George Steedle shrewdly engendered customer good-will by naming each of his buses — Miss Frankford, Miss Philadelphia, Miss Palmyra, Miss Riverside, Miss Riverton, Miss Bridgeboro, and Miss Delanco—an area first. IMAGE CREDIT: Steedle Family Album

carried approximately two million passengers to and from Philadelphia without a single casualty to passengers or travelers on the road."

Originally named the Delaware River Bridge, the Benjamin Franklin Bridge opened July 1, 1926, and it immediately attracted traffic away from the ferry and bus system. A competing bus company added insult to Steedle's injury by beating him in providing transit from Riverfront towns across the new span into Center City.

Steedle responded in August by providing Philburco customers a ride in the latest new gas-electric coaches leased from PRT (Philadelphia Rapid Transit).

What finally ended Philburco's run was not a new bridge or competition from other carriers, but a tax. In 1927, the Philburco Coach Company, along with 200 other interstate bus and truck companies, received notification from the State of New Jersey that Philburco owed a tax of 1½¢ per mile for every mile driven since the inception of the service. Steedle did not have the funds to pay the levy, so in June 1927 he sold the entire bus operation and the franchise routes to the Pennjersey Rapid Transit Company.



Steedle sound car, 1920s - Steedle Family Album

Mr. Steedle engaged in many local social and political affairs; he became a Rotarian and the Free and Accepted Masons appointed him District Deputy; he served on the Riverton School Board and as a Riverton Fire Company Director; he ran (unsuccessfully) for tax assessor; and the New Jersey Commissioner of Alcohol and Beverage Control appointed him as an investigator. All the while, he continued managing Steedle's Moving Company, first from his Cinnaminson Street home and later from his Seventh Street address.

In 1966, a 24 year-old Don Deitz, fresh out of the Air Force, found employment in the Steedle family business with its creator George Steedle remarkably still at the helm. Don was great friends with George's son,

Monroe, or Monty, as his friends knew him. Don learned how to pack a truck and remembers his on-the-job training from crew boss Clyde. Sometimes Mr. Steedle came along on the truck if the assignment involved a difficult job like a piano rigging



Piano rigging IMAGE CREDIT: Steedle Family Album

When payday rolled around, he handed out cash wages to the workhands and a shot of whiskey to those who partook. Don earned \$75 a week and partook, just once, and that was enough. In a typically incredible Riverton coincidence, today Don and his wife Pam now live in the very same Seventh Street dwelling in which George and Dorcas Steedle and their three children lived.

When George passed in 1970, his son, Monroe and his wife, Joan, took over the Steedle Moving Company until 1979, when their son, Scott and his wife, Denise, became owners.

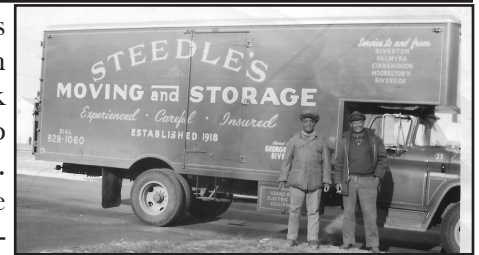
The thoroughly modern [A-1 Steedle Moving & Storage Company](#) of today features a fleet of moving trucks, from small van size trucks to huge 53-foot long-distance haulers capable of transporting 30 rooms of furniture, and a 23-ton crane with 100 foot hydraulic boom. The heated 10,000 sq. ft. warehouse constructed of concrete, block and steel rests on three acres in [West Deptford, NJ](#) at the corner of Route 295 (Exit 23) and Route 130.



Wouldn't Granddad Steedle be amazed?

- MRS. PATRICIA SOLIN & JOHN MCCORMICK

We thank Sandy Steedle for sharing family photos. A special acknowledgement to historian Paul W. Schopp for so generously providing research guidance and for his meticulous fact-checking and editing of our drafts. We invite you to share your recollections and reflections about this subject by posting relevant comments or photos on rivertonhistory.com. Or write to: Historical Society of Riverton, PO Box 112, Riverton, NJ 08077.



Crew boss Clyde on right IMAGE CREDIT: Steedle Family Album

A WORK IN PROGRESS

HELP WANTED

BARCLAY BEES INFO

I Produce HONEY

which is of excellent flavor and well seasoned.
Price \$2.50 per gal. package (12 lbs.), delivered by post

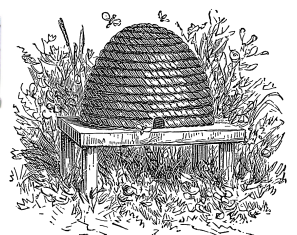
Richard D. Barclay
RIVERTON, N. J.

In the 1930s, Richard D. Barclay (1888-1938) rented out 400 colonies of bees annually to farmers for use as pollinators of fruit tree blossoms and produced honey for sale.



If you have information that would aid in the research of this brilliant apiarist who, in 1905, was the youngest person to have graduated from Penn State University, please contact *Gaslight News* Editor John McCormick at 856-764-1551, or email rivertonhistory@gmail.com.

2 f



To: **HSR Members**
 Date: **9/25/2013** Time: **7:00 pm**
WHILE YOU WERE OUT
 Mr. **John McCormick**
 of **Historical Soc. of Riverton**
 Phone: **856-764-1551**

TELEPHONED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PLEASE CALL	
CALLED TO SEE YOU		WILL CALL AGAIN	
WANTS TO SEE YOU		URGENT	
RETURNED YOUR CALL			

MESSAGE: **historic house plaques, Museum for a Day, projects and programs, new officers, a New Leaf Dickens Tea, and more in store this coming year**
 OPERATOR: **coming year**

We acknowledge the remarkable contributions of two former HSR Board members, twenty-year member **Charlotte Lippincott**, our very dedicated secretary for the past several years, and **Gerald Weaver**, our president since 2009. During his tenure he introduced the HSR to partnering with Riverview Estates for musical presentations, he arranged an Annual Meeting at the

Bank on Main, transitioned us into a new website, helped make available online digitalized files of historic local newspapers, and initiated a Preservation Awards Program—all projects requiring strategic planning and management. **Pat Solin** has undertaken the important job of secretary and **Phyllis Rodgers** will helm the HSR for the current term.

Now available—**historic plaques** awarded for qualifying structures, minimum 100 years old, of particular architectural significance or of local historical significance. Call 856-786-8422 for an application which the HSR will review. Plaque donation: \$150.

Sincere thanks to Riverview Estates' **Donna Maratea** for coordinating two events last year—the March Antique & Collectible fair and the May Pine Barons Concert. We hope to team up with Riverview Estates again to present another musical event.

We thank those members who renewed dues this summer—**Ken Barth, Beatrice and Michael Horn, Kenneth**

and Sharon Merriman, Roger Pritchard and Astrid Caruso—and welcome new members—**Nancy and Joseph Fort, Memo and Keith Betten, Michael Kearney Family, Karen Kelly-Barlup.**

The HSR Board decided in August to adjust our fiscal year to coincide with the calendar year so that **dues will be due by December 31**. Dues sent in over the summer and throughout the end of 2013 will be applied to the 2014 fiscal year. As always, thank you for your support.

Stop by the HSR's **Museum for a Day** on display at the century-old Main Street Victorian gem that once housed Stiles' Drug Store, now the New Leaf, during Riverton Free Library's **Holiday House Tour**, Saturday, December 7. Do you have a Riverton artifact to loan or donate for exhibition? Contact Cheryl Smekal, 856-829-9375.

For news in between issues go to rivertonhistory.com.

JMc



Visit our content-rich HSR website at <http://rivertonhistory.com> for information on events, past issues of *Gaslight News*, vintage images, a veterans' page, our blog, and more.

Readers: Inside this issue read about the program for the October 10, 2013 HSR Meeting, *Scandals, Rumors, & Dirty Rotten Lies* plus learn of George D. Steedle and the two companies he founded that have moved millions across towns and across the Delaware River.

Gaslight News

is a publication of the Historical Society of Riverton and is published four times per year.



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

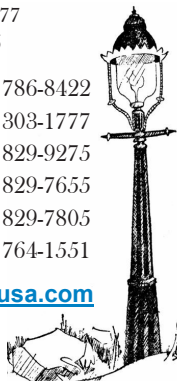
Post Office Box # 112

Riverton, NJ 08077

AREA CODE 856

Phyllis Rodgers	President	786-8422
Pat Brunker	Vice President	303-1777
Cheryl Smekal	Vice President	829-9275
Paul Daly	Treasurer	829-7655
Pat Solin	Secretary	829-7805
John McCormick	Editor, Website	764-1551

E-mail/Web: rivertonhistory@usa.com
rivertonhistory.com/



The Riverton War Memorial

will be installing at least one more name of a military veteran at the November Veterans Day observance. Former Riverton resident **Jeff Cole** moved to Florida last year but keeps in touch with his hometown with his *Gaslight News* subscription. For more information on how to apply to have a veteran's name added to the Memorial, check with the Riverton's Military & Veterans Affairs Committee through the [Borough webpage](http://Boroughwebpage).

Family albums sometimes have an image available nowhere else like this one of the RPS Class of 1936 from



Nancy Hall. We will make a copy for the school.



We have been fans of Carlos Rogers and his *Historic Riverton Criterium* since the first one in 2011 because Riverton history was obviously in the making.

Carlos and Adrienne Rogers scored a hat trick by bringing back the crowd-pleasing Historic Riverton Criterium for the third year in a row.

The excitement of the cycling competition and the fun had by spectators at this family-oriented summer tradition are eclipsed only by the generous spirit of this philanthropic couple who have donated over \$9,000 so far to community organizations such as the Shade Tree Commission, Palmyra Ambulance Assn., Boy Scouts, Riverton Free Library, Riverton Memorial Park, Riverton Fire Company, and, oh, yes... the *Historical Society of Riverton*.

Thank you, Carlos and Adrienne, for this wonderful and unexpected gift which will help in our mission to create an awareness of our heritage and expand our knowledge of local history.

- JMc



Carlos and Adrienne Rogers present \$500 to an appreciative *Gaslight News* editor.