

1. Do You Know a Bit of Riverton History?

Some towns and cities in the US were founded so much earlier than our 1851 date. Certainly there is a history to the land and our community before the establishment of Riverton. This guide is to help our current residents to extend our knowledge of the history of the town, its homes and businesses, and its residents, primarily after its 1851 founding.

The primary tract of land that was first developed in 1851 was along the Delaware riverfront, what is now Bank Avenue, and then down Main Street, ending at the railroad track. Farmland was purchased from the Lippincott family members by the Riverton Improvement Company, who in turn, sold plots of land, per the town design by architect, Samuel Sloan. With notable exceptions of some earlier residential homes, additional buildings were developed over time, extending up Main Street, and spreading wider and wider to additional streets. Also, when doing your research, remember that Riverton was a part of Cinnaminson and Chester before it became its own borough on January 1, 1894.

2. Do You Have a Current Deed to Your Property?

An excellent first step to researching your property is to locate the deed to your property, a primary resource document. Your deed is loaded with pertinent information about your home and the people who owned it. In it you will find information about property lines, dates it was bought and sold, who sold and who purchased it, and for what price. Most likely your deed will be limited to whoever was directly the previous owner, establishing your right to your property.

3. What Should I Write Down Once I Have My Deed?

Write down:

1. Names of the Grantors
2. Names of the Grantees
3. Date of the Sale
4. The Sale Price
5. You may find that the property lines will change from owner-to-owner, so documenting that information can be important, too.
6. Instrument number (if available)
7. Date of the Deed (most often different from the date of sale)
8. Book/Page
9. Block/Lot

3. No Deed?

If you cannot find your current deed, you can search online using the Burlington County Public Records Electronic Search System (PRESS) <http://press.co.burlington.nj.us/press/index.aspx>. Select *County Clerk* from the menu at the left, then *Property Records* in that drop box. Here is the direct link to the deed search. <http://press.co.burlington.nj.us/press/clerk/ClerkHome.aspx?op=basic>

If you know your block and lot number, or certainly, the name of person who owns the property, you can select any of three options for your search, the easiest being by name or block/lot. Hint: in order to narrow your search in the Name option, be sure to select *Deed* in the Document Type drop down box. Also, you must give a window of dates that the deed was actually registered, which will be different from the date of sale.

Make sure to get **all** the information as listed, above, in #2 for each deed you find. All the "Type" of documents you will be searching will be deeds, and the township is Riverton.

4. How Do I Search Further Back for Previous Deeds?

If you need to go back to find the first owner, you must go from the most current deed to a preceding deed to document the age of your home. Your current deed will have information in it for the previous deed's date, grantee/grantor, book and page number, etc. Use this information to gather the information as listed in question #2, above, going as far back as your online access will allow you to do.

5. What do I do if I Can't Go Further Back Using the Online PRESS?

Once you have gone as far back as you are able to online, you'll have to continue to research the old, traditional way, by going to the deed books that are located at the Burlington County Clerk's Office, County Government Office, 49 Rancocas/Mt. Holly Rd., Mt. Holly, NJ 08060. I found the woman who is in charge of the deed books to be extremely pleasant and helpful. She showed me how to use *their* online search tool at the Mt. Holly office, finding all my previous deeds by book and page number, then directing me to the "tombs" where the old deeds are stored. Once in the archives, I was able to read the actual, old deeds, and continue my own search back to the first deed written from the sale of the property to the Riverton Improvement Company. (As an aside, sometimes properties are passed down to others via wills. Your research may require you to research this data, too. If the will was probated in Burlington County, it is my understanding that there is an index of wills that you can access, should you need to do so.) Again, be certain to get all the relevant information from each deed so that you can go back to the previous deed.

Finding Your House's Roots

With a nod to the PBS series, *Finding Your Roots*, you can continue your research to find out, not just more about the kind of house you own, but about the people who lived in your home over the years, too. Here are just a few of the many resources you can use to learn more about your home's history.

1. Architectural Attributes

What qualities of your home make it special to you? Take photos, read up on the features that may be original to your

home, or like many homes, have gone through multiple renovations and additions. Do you have unique flooring? Square nails? Any original stained glass transoms or panels? Make a list and document what is historic about your home. Use these features to help determine the architectural style. One book that might save you some time is located in our library. [Historic Riverton: Notable Architecture, People and Events, 1775-1930.](#)

The HSR has a handy and informative Self-Guided Walking Tour of our town. It has a wealth of information of housing styles and architectural design information.

2. Maps

Early maps of Riverton are wonderful, visual aids to see how the town developed, and, perhaps, how your own home changed over the years.

Maps include:

1858. [New Map of Burlington County: from Actual Surveys & Official Records.](#) Parry, Skyes and Earl. 1858. Online at the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3813b.la000442/>

1860. [Detail of Map of Vicinity Philadelphia and Trenton.](#) 1860. New Jersey State Library. <https://dspace.njstatelib.org/xmlui/handle/10929/34112>

1890. [Bird's Eye View of Riverton, New Jersey.](#) This is one of my favorite Riverton maps!! The Riverton Free Library offers black and white copies of this map for \$5. A bargain! And many residents, like myself, have it framed and displayed in our homes.

[Sanborn Insurance Maps.](#) 1885, 1996, 1900, 1905, 1911, 1919, and not online, 1925. <http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbcs/aids/sanborn/burlington/riverton.html>

3. United State Census

The United States federal government has been completing the US Census every ten years since 1790. Again, for your research, you probably don't need to go back any further than the 1850 US Census. Be forewarned, streets were not named, nor were house numbers standardized until after 1880 (at least in Riverton), so you might find the name of a person by hunting the early Census, page by page for the Chester area, but no street name or house number. It may take some time to look over pages of the US Census, but you will find a wealth of information about homeowners – number of people in the house, their ages, their ethnicity, whether they could read and write English, the country of their birth, and the occupations of the people in the household.

The US Census is retained at the National Archive. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed most of the 1890 records. The hey-

day of much construction in Riverton was at that time, so you might want to rely on the 1890 and 1895 maps for some details until you reach the 1900 US Census.

Birth, death, parish records, migration records, military records, and US Census records can be accessed for free at the online resource created by the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) at FamilySearch.org.

Another, extensive online resource is Ancestry.com. You can visit the Riverton Free Library and access their site using the library's subscription.

4. Historic Newspapers

Our own HSR online resource of historic newspapers can be searched by key word. Due to the condition of the print, access to all relevant articles can be hit or miss, but scanning through newspapers from the time when you know that a resident of your house had a home or business in town can be successful, too.

<http://rivertonhistory.com/historical-local-newspapers/>

5. 1926 *The Romance of Riverton*

Have you ever seen the HSR's Romance of Riverton, the 1926 film? You can see homes, businesses, and homes as they looked in the 1920's.

Other References

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[Structure and Ornament: A Guide to Architectural Styles in Burlington County, New Jersey, 1700-1900.](#) Text by Keith W. Betten. Artwork by Mildred Engle. Mt. Holly, NJ: The Burlington County Cultural and Heritage Commission, 1979.

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<http://www.oldhousejournal.com/how-to-research-your-homes-past/magazine/1655>

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