

Founded 1970

Riverton, NJ 08077

Incorporated 1978



With the approach in April 2017, of the [centennial of the US entry into World War I](#), the *Gaslight News* publishes this first in a series of articles to honor the courage and sacrifice of those who served, as well as to depict the way it was here on the home front.



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Riverton's Gold Star Boys of World War I

Mrs. Patricia Solin's first of three articles on Riverton and The Great War

Before World War I was over, at the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month of 1918, so much had changed from the previous two and a half years for Rivertonians – as was true in the United States, and the world.

More than four million American families sent their sons and daughters to serve in uniform during the Great War. Over 100,000 US soldiers gave their lives in combat. This is the story of six of Riverton's own who gave that ultimate sacrifice.

The New Era newspaper of [July 4, 1919](#), listed more than one-hundred men and women who served during the Great War.

In a tradition dating to that time, families displayed flags or banners with blue stars representing each relative fighting in the conflict. If the loved one was killed while serving, a gold star replaced the blue star.



Bessie Clark, writing for [The New Era in April, 1919](#), described an Arbor Day program during which students planted six trees in front of and alongside Riverton Public School for "Riverton's gold star boys."



But which six? It's another Riverton history mystery.

RAYMOND T. MCGIVNEY was born April 18 in either 1893 or 1894, and was about 23 when he was killed in action September 29, 1918 while serving at a Red Cross Station during shelling in the Vieville-en-Haye, on the St. Mihiel battle-front in France. The son of Thomas McGivney of Kingston, NY, and Mary Moser, who lived at 623 Main Street, McGivney was

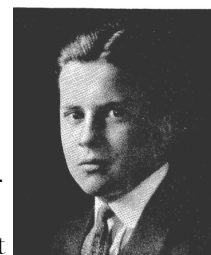


attached to the 311th Ambulance Corps. Letters to his family, which included his sister, Mrs. John Strohlein of 422 Linden Street, praised McGivney for his "coolness under fire . . . one of our best men." Initially interred in a Catholic cemetery in France, his remains were removed then rein-

terred in a cemetery near his birthplace in Kingston, NY.

THOMAS ROBERTS REATH, born July 5, 1897, was killed in action, June 12, 1918. Called Bob or Bobbie, he was only 20 years of age.

Reath was a member of the Phi Kappa Sigma Fraternity and was among the Class of 1919 at the University of Pennsylvania. He enlisted with class friends, the famous "Fighting Five," in the spring of 1917. Initially slated for the Officers Training Camp of Marines at Philadelphia Navy Yard, they "abandoned rank" to be able to begin immediate service.



Enlisting as a private in the 43rd Company, 5th Regiment, USMAC, AEF, he soon rose in rank to Sergeant. On June 12, 1918, "he displayed remarkable courage in a spirited attack" at Belleau Wood, Chateau-Thierry, on a German machine-gun pit, single-handedly capturing over forty prisoners. After securing his prisoners, he returned to the fight and found that his commanding officer had been wounded in both legs. Reath carried the officer to safety despite an "extremely heavy barrage," and once again, returned to the fight. An officer and friend remarked in a letter to

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WM. H. STILES
Pharmacist

Phone 300 Riverton, N. J.

James Bradley worked in a local drugstore as a clerk before the war. Possibly, it was Stiles' Pharmacy, now The New Leaf.



THIS ST. MIHIEL DRIVE, PART OF BURLINGTON COUNTY ROUTE 543, CONNECTS RIVERSIDE WITH DELRAN. SO NAMED THE ST. MIHIEL DRIVE BY LOCAL VETERAN POSTS TO HONOR THE VICTORIOUS 1st AND 2nd ARMY OF OVER 500,000 IN THEIR FIRST BATTLE IN FRANCE WITH TWO FRENCH DIVISIONS OF OVER 100,000. THIS STARTED SEPT. 12, 1918 IN THE TRIANGULAR ST. MIHIEL SALIENT CAREFULLY PREPARED FOR TRENCH WARFARE BY THE GERMAN ARMY AND HELD BY THEM SINCE 1914. AN AERIAL ARMA-DA OF OVER 1400 ALLIED AIRPLANES WERE ENGAGED IN THIS ACTION, THE LARGEST OF WORLD WAR I. AS MEMORIALIZED BY GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING: IN THEIR DEVOTION, THEIR VALOR AND IN THE LOYAL FULFILLMENT OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS, THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES HAVE LEFT A HERITAGE OF WHICH THOSE WHO FOLLOW MAY EVER BE PROUD.

GOLD STAR from 1

his family that, "Bob went out again, and had not been out ten minutes before a large shell exploded right next to him and killed him almost instantly." For his bravery, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Reath's parents, Theodore Wood Reath of the Norfolk & Western Railroad Co., and his mother, Augusta Meade (Roberts) Reath, lived together with his siblings and grandfather Roberts on Bank Avenue, with a property at 15th and Pine St. in Philadelphia, too.

Reath was buried with honors at the [Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial](#) in Belleau, Picardie, France.

WALTER KENNEDY was aged 26 when killed in action. Born of Samuel and Anna Kennedy of 411 Elm Avenue on October 7, 1892, he joined the service May 16, 1917, shortly after the call for volunteers. He fought bravely with the Fourth Brigade, Second Division of the Marine Corps.



Decorated with the Croix de Guerre at Chateau Thierry and Marbach for his bravery, he earned two citations for the Belleau Wood battles of June 1918. He had five battle clasps for the defensive sector, St. Mihiel, Meuse Argonne, Aisne Marne, and Aisne.

Kennedy died on October 10, 1918, while helping to blow up a German machine gun nest in the Champagne offensive. As noted in *The New Era*, September 16, 1921, "this upright and conscientious young man's" funeral service was held in Christ Church, Riverton, conducted by Archdeacon R. Bowden Shepherd, who confirmed Walter when he was a boy. Residents displayed their flags at half-staff in his honor that Sunday. He was laid to rest in the family plot, located in Berlin, NJ.

JAMES A. BRADLEY died, November 2, 1918, near Clery-le-Peti during the Argonne Campaign at age 27.

His father, John S. Bradley, a widower, worked in Riverton for the gas company as a stock keeper. James worked in the local drugstore as

a clerk before the war. Together, they lived as boarders in a residence at 10th and Main Streets.

Major W. C. Whitmer of the Sixteenth Infantry reported the circumstances of James' death to Bradley's father.

Near the command post, the Germans bombed the ammunition cache, setting off grenades and other incendiaries. Among those who worked to put out the fire, moving ammunitions out of the way of the fire was Sergeant Major Bradley. After working for hours to stop the fire and clear the area, Bradley called out for stretchers so that those wounded by grenades could be moved from harm's way and receive the care that they needed. He was not heard from after his 5 AM call on November 2. His body was found that morning at 8:30 AM, about 100 yards from that dangerous location; no one died with him, and it was not known if a fragment of an exploding grenade or enemy fire killed him.

After the war, James' father, John Bradley, made the pilgrimage to France in July 1920, to his visit his son's burial place, [Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial](#).

In 1919, veterans formed the [James A. Bradley American Legion Post](#) in honor of its last fallen hero of World War I, Sergeant Major Bradley.

Some casualties of war were the result of another kind of battle—one with influenza virus infection.

A small news item in the May 11, 1918 *Mount Holly Herald* noted that two underage juveniles were caught playing craps, a dice gambling game, and trespassing with some adults at J.S. Collins and Son store. Pleading guilty in court, Raymond Pratt and Charles Kelly were each fined a lower amount than the adults, \$3, and court fees of \$2 due to their young age.

An understandable youthful indiscretion, to be sure.

However, within six months of this "news" these friends in life, while serving their country, each died within two weeks of one another during the Great Influenza Pandemic.



Still just kids.

RAYMOND PRATT, aged 17 at the time of his death, was born June 2, 1901. His death certificate of October 1, 1918, listed Pratt's occupation as soldier. His father, Rathmell W. Pratt, and mother, Anna Rutherford Pratt of 515 Howard Street, buried their son in his uniform in historic Mount Moriah Cemetery in Philadelphia.



CHARLES KELLY, died while a member of the Canadian Army on October 12, 1918. "Was taken with influenza after enlisting with Canadian Rifles, dead after short illness."

His death certificate placed his age at 19, occupation, soldier, having died of bronchial pneumonia at the Camp Hospital in Niagara, Canada.



Calling this outbreak which claimed them the flu belies the deadly nature of this disease. With no antibiotics or vaccine to treat it, the highly infectious disease caused far more deaths than fatalities resulting from combat.

The best that could be done was palliative, to keep their patients as comfortable as possible. [Local drug stores](#) provided what they could, when faced with symptoms that included high temperatures, vomiting, diarrhea, and respiratory distress.

Now, nearly a century since their passing, we honor them for their courage and sacrifice, and acknowledge their service.

There are no surviving veterans of World War I in America today. Except for the families that preserve their stories, time passes, and memories of their long-ago valor and sacrifice may become lost. The Society would be honored to help preserve your information, photos, or artifacts related to Riverton's men and women who served as well as the civilians here on the home front.

- MRS. PATRICIA SMITH SOLIN



President's Message

Mrs. Phyllis Rodgers outlines our winter/spring agenda

We wish you all a Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year as the Society nears its half-century mark.



Trish Chambers
PHOTO BY Susan Dechnik

Trish Chambers' presentation of **Old Christmas** on Nov 17 colorfully depicted Washington Irving's Christmas Eve stagecoach trip to Yorkshire and described the holiday games, food, and rituals of early 19th century England.

Our **Museum for a Day** in the Library basement Saturday, Dec. 3 during the RFL sponsored **Candlelight House**

Tour showcased some of the Society's documents, artifacts, and photos. Thank you for buying thirty mugs, Romance of Riverton DVDs, books, Riverton banners, and reproductions of photos in our archives in December, all which support the mission of the Society.



Smaller than it appears but packed with history. Thank You, RFL, for the space.

Preservation Awards Night, slated for Thursday, February 16, 2017, at 7 pm, will be devoted to recognizing achievements in historic preservation.

Several home owners will describe their renovation projects. We will screen a series of Mike Cattell's "Then & Now" Facebook videos in which the ingenious photographer morphs



vintage photos of local landmarks into present-day view of the same places, perfectly matched in proportions and perspective to the original.

Very cool to see.

We can watch video

clips from The Romance of Riverton DVD during refreshments. Copies of the DVD and our popular historically themed mugs will be available for purchase.



Thursday, March 23, 2017, at 7pm, **Kate Butler's The Golden Age of Silent Film & Hollywood Regency** at RFL examines memorabilia of old Hollywood including cosmetics and toiletry items, hair products, grooming instruments, now-banned toxic products, and reports on immigrant cosmetologists Max Factor and Helena Rubenstein. Sure to be illuminating.

We are already looking to June and the excitement of the **Historic Riverton Century and Community Ride** on June 10 and the **Historic Riverton Criterium** June 11.

Be sure to keep reading the *Gaslight News* and visit rivertonhistory.com for more details of upcoming events.

Best to all,
Phyllis Rodgers
856-786-8422.





THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

Show and Tell

Editor John McCormick recaps some activity on rivertonhistory.com

I totally get it. Hardware, software, and internet access are costly and something is *always* going wrong. The following bullet points highlight some items that helped add another stitch to the fabric of Riverton history.

- HSR members **Jill and Hank Croft** recently gave us another example of things that aren't there anymore in this undated [photo of Klipple's Fine Pastries](#).



- **Matt Mlynarczyk** sends us this scan of a [Riverton fire engine](#).



- **Colin Cattell**, a PHS School student who loves history, saw this [Kodachrome slide](#) of the 1979 Riverton fire that destroyed the Collective Federal Savings building that once stood next to Freddy's Shoe Repair on Main Street, bought it, and gave it to the HSR. Classy, Colin.



- I posted some [chrome postcards](#) acquired through eBay auctions. Not terribly antique images, but part of local history, nonetheless.
- HSR member **Carl McDermott** drew attention to a Courier-Post story about his great-great nephew, Pitman point guard [Matt Pensabene](#), going the length of the floor and making a ridiculous [game-winning shot](#) in overtime. With a great-grandfather and two great-great uncles in PHS's Athletic Hall of Fame during 1930s and 40s, one might think sports skills run in the family. Carl, 95 years old, checks in regularly on his iPad.
- One of Riverton's greatest human resources, **Deb Lengyel**, allowed me the use of her snow-clad RYC photo in this virtual [snow globe](#). The Borough honored her this month with a [proclamation](#) for many years of volunteer service to the town.
- Finally, our Museum may be closed for now, but you can still buy our historically themed mugs. Call 609-220-8040.



-JMc

Our website has a new look. Visit the dynamic HSR website at rivertonhistory.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 *Riverton's Gold Star Boys*, the first of three articles by Pat Solin about Riverton's role in World War I, HSR President **Phyllis Rodgers' Message**, and Editor John McCormick's **Show & Tell**.

Now that winter is upon us we would suggest that those who are able, should place board walks on their pavements. The boards should be placed nearer the fences than heretofore, so as to leave room for the snow ploughs to pass. It is to be hoped that more general attention will be given to the walks than was bestowed last winter.

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1881, p2

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Our debt to the past

Still to come in future issues—two more articles by Patricia Solin to recognize contributions of Rivertonians to World War I.

On the Home Front

explores the role played by individual citizens, organizations, and institutions in support of the war effort. With energy, and a commitment to sacrifice for the good of their country, the Riverton community came together to help win the war.

Helen Elsie Biddle from the [Steel Family Album](#)

effort. With energy, and a commitment to sacrifice for the good of their country, the Riverton community came together to help win the war.

A Grateful Community will examine how

residents honored veterans for their service with receptions, parades, and even gold rings. In early 1919, the Borough considered multiple options for a worthy memorial. After four months, a citizens' committee resolved to establish a park. Memorial Park, was dedicated July 4, 1931.



Mayor Bennet, Col. D'Olier

People of Riverton!

Help the Victory Loan—and subscribe through Riverton.

The War is won, and every loyal citizen wants to help pay the bills—help to bring the soldiers home.

Riverton has not once failed—each time her allotment has been over-subscribed.

This is the last Loan.

Remember you are not making a gift, but a gilt-edge investment.

Subscribe all you can—boost Riverton's total.

VICTORY LOAN COMMITTEE
of Riverton

