



Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, inc.
Riverton, N.J. 08077

Founded 1970

Inc. 1978

Sept.-Oct. 1989

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Welcome to the twentieth season of Riverton's Historical Society!

Meeting: Monday, October 2, 1989

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton School

Program..."Morven Magic"

....Robin Austin ~~Morven~~

Morven, built in 1758, is one of New Jersey's most important buildings. Many great figures of American History have visited or lived here, including Richard Stockton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. It has been the official residence of four Governors, and, more recently, the site of an archeological dig, after which it will become a museum.

Our speaker is the Development Director of the project, and will give a talk, with slides, on Morven's background, and some of the findings that research, to date, has uncovered. Some "handouts" will also be available.

Handy Reference:

1989/90 Meeting Dates

Monday, October 2, 1989

Monday, November 27, 1989

Monday, January 22, 1990

Monday, March 19, 1990

Monday, May 7, 1990: Annual Meeting

Special Events: see flyer:

Wed. Oct. 25: Open Hearth Cooking
Camden Co. Historical Society

Sat. May 5, 1990: Car caravan, guided
tour, of Pinelands--adv. registration

Your Officers/Chairmen

President: Betty Hahle

Vice Pres: John Parry

Secretary: Dan Campbell

Treasurer: Paul Daly

Membership ch: John Parry

Publicity: Sara Guertler

Programs: Helene Styer & Nancy Washington

Curator: Rick Wark

Hospitality: Anne Cannon

Awards: Dan Campbell

Plaques: Wark, Hahle, Vollmer

With payment of membership dues this year, members will receive a copy of the 1989 revised By-Laws, that were approved at the Annual Meeting, and printed over the summer. See enclosed form. Anyone interested may join this Society; new members welcome at any time.

Update...

Historic Nomination...Borough Council is apparently unable, or unwilling, to make a decision regarding applying for the inclusion of Riverton on State and National Registers, and has decided to determine local interest by placing a question on the November ballot. Requirements for Nomination have not changed, but costs for preparing the nomination have increased many times over, since we first approached Council with this project, more than 10 years ago. Remember: Inclusion on the National Registers in NO WAY interferes with an owner's rights regarding his property; ONLY LOCAL LAWS effect that. What it CAN DO: can avoid, or deter, changes using public funds, that could adversely affect the designated area (such as road widening or locations, dredging/dumping silt, etc.); offers tax breaks for income-producing properties. It also raises awareness and pride within the local community. Also, anyone who feels strongly against having his property included, can have it removed by writing a notarized letter stating his wish. There are advantages, and no disadvantages, to a listing on these Registers--which are simply a record of our Nation's treasures, of various kinds. Finally, your vote in November is NOT binding, but ONLY an indication of interest.

Meanwhile, changes are taking place...

Cinnaminson Street, between the railroad and Eighth, is being repaved and "improved" through HUD funding, by having its old brick sidewalks replaced with new cement ones. This area was developed in the 1880's, long before Cinnaminson below the railroad was built upon, and the original sidewalks are a part of their heritage. Some years back, Council passed a resolution to NOT remove any more brick walks.....

The development of the former Evans property, in the center of town, into "Riverton Mews" is still being studied and discussed. Three meetings have been held by the Zoning Board, over the summer, in which the project has been the main topic, and has drawn a considerable representation of residents to attend. The next meeting is scheduled for October 11th, at Riverton School auditorium. In July our Society sent a letter to the Board protesting the development, as then presented. We cited the density, lack of adequate building line set-back, and style of buildings planned as being out of keeping with the neighborhood, which would further reduce the eligibility of that area for Historic Nomination: For a community architect-designed for residential use, one that from the onset has respected the use of space and the rights of neighbors in its designs, to now have a group of inner-city style row houses, set close to the sidewalk, in the center of town, is unthinkable. Some individuals have suggested a "Victorian-style" facade for the buildings--again, not in keeping with the neighborhood, the four corners of the crossroads: the Williams/Wright building, 2-story, flat-roof, brick building, was erected 1923; the Collins building, first replaced the early frame buildings in 1907, then erected the present structure in 1914--again, 2-story, flat roof, brick. And "Klipple's corner" has undergone many changes, as owners attempted to modernize, the buildings erected circa 1891-etc. These commercial buildings are Post-Victorian, and are different from the earlier residences above the business corners. Do you care what is done at this corner? Go to the meeting on October 11th, and let the Zoning Board members know how you feel.....

inders.....

Need more note paper? Triple fold, in packages containing 2 scenes from early Riverton, are available at the Library, Victorian Thymes, or from Louise Vaughn or Betty Hahle. A good buy, at \$3.50.

Zurbrugg Women's Guild, Designer Showcase, this year at 500 Chester Ave. in Moorestown.. September 16-October 1st. Check newspaper for times open.

New Jersey Historical Society Workshops: (Newark, N.J.) Sept. 24, Textile Conservation; October 22, Furniture Conservation; November 12, Paper Conservation. Cost, \$15 each or \$40 for the series of three. (ck. to: NJHS/Public Programs/230 Brdwy/Newark 07104)

New Jersey Pride Day, Saturday October 14, at Moorestown Friend's School, by Burl. Co. Memorial Hospital. Booths, displays, demonstrations, highlighting NJ history, accomplishments, etc. 9-5, with displays from 12-5. (We plan to have a table there)

Free Workshops, Architectural Salvage Ltd, 1214 N. 26th St, Phila (215-236-9339): Oct. 21, chimneys and fireplaces; Oct 28, Roofing; Nov. 4, electrical systems; Nov. 11, installing wood and tile flooring.

Dues are payable now; use form included with Newsletter for your convenience. Don't put off, and forget--unpaid memberships will be dropped in February.....

Register NOW for October trip to Camden Co. Historical Society, and the May 1990 car caravan through the Pine Barrens..space for both is limited.

terday.....

Many things contribute to the changes that move "yesterday" to "today". Wars often mark such changes, as they bring about economic changes, technical advances, and are followed by greater mobility. New industries produce not only new products, but also new wealth; new wealth seeks outlets, often moving to different areas for homes/recreation, bringing with it new ideas.....

Some local changes, in this century....Riverton, still learning to handle its own problems, as an independent Borough, was hotly debating the building of an electric lighting plant in town, in 1900. Rivershore's office building (Klipple's) was completed in

late April, and gas was turned on for the first time. Although not everyone could afford such luxury, it was a great improvement over oil lamps for lighting, and wood or coal stoves for cooking. The following year trolley tracks were laid in town, to Riverside, and beyond, greatly improving local transportation. Trolleys ran every 20 minutes. That Autumn the Riverton Country Club's house was completed...built by Samuel Rudderow, for \$7000...and the golf course, opened in July, was proving popular, as plans to expand it to 18 holes were made. Dreer's was also expanding--building another large greenhouse, between Fulton St. and the Creek. Perch were "biting lively" off Riverton, the Cook property (from Howard St. to Dreer's) was about to be sold for several homes to be built along the riverbank. And the old McKinley & Hobart Club changed its name to The Republican Club of Riverton. It had nearly 200 members. Chas. Wright, who had been treasurer of the old club, became vice-president of the new one, and Alfred Briggs was elected president.

In 1901 the Episcopal Sunday School building was moved by Sam Rudderow, who had purchased it, from the church lot near Howard St., to his property on Main above the railroad. Porch Club, which had grown beyond meeting on Ogden's porch, rented it for their Club-house, and they in turn rented space to Riverton School for Kindergarten classes in the morning. (The building became the Post Office, then the New Era building, now Freddy's Shoe repair...)

In 1906 voting machines were replacing paper ballots. Riverton petitioned to remove those assigned to our town. They preferred paper ballots, as they felt machines to be "distasteful, and not in keeping with American principals of individuality"...

Tennis increased in popularity...in 1910 Howard Coffin had a tennis court laid out on the lot next to his home on Midway... Riverton's first bank building had been erected (1907) by John S. Rogers, and was highly successful. Borough Council introduced an ordinance calling for more cement sidewalks, and were improving Bank Avenue. William Thomas had sold his coal business to J.S. Collins of Moorestown, who was replacing the frame buildings with a brick-front building. After a fire, in 1914 Collins would build again, a larger brick building designed by architect Fletcher Street... And W.H. Stiles moved into his new drug store on East Main Street, "nearly opposite the Post Office"...the former site of Perkins' Butcher shop, which was demolished to make room for the "completely modern" drug store...and which is now The New Leaf...

By 1924 Cinnaminson Electric Light & Power company was supplying 24-hour daily current, and at last some of the electrical conveniences developed over the preceding 25 years to make housekeeping easier, could gradually be added to local households. Local population has passed 2300, and most properties were the homes of year-around residents. Ads began to show the housewife using a Hoover vacuum cleaner, using electric irons, washing machines (with hand-turned wringers), etc., and the image of women as care-takers of the family emerged. Monday was the customary day for washing (ironing on Tuesday, etc), and on that day would find a whole community of women in their back yards hanging clothes--and exchanging gossip. Although most soap was still bar soap, made at home, Lux had recently begun to sell Lux Flakes, eliminating the chore of shaving flakes from bars on wash-day.

Social issues and health care became topics of study and of initiation. Zurbrugg Hospital opened in 1915, with 12 beds...two years prior to that, the Porch Club had started a Visiting Nurse service for Riverton, adding Palmyra a few years later, when the gift of a car made a broader range of travel practical. In 1920 they purchased a house, at Broad/Lincoln Ave., for the 2 registered nurses' home. In 1927, initiated by Lions Club, representatives from churches and organizations met to form a Community Welfare Association for the Tri-Boro area, and elected George Wimer its first president. Four years later, sponsored by a Department of Porch Club, a local Family Service was opened in Riverton, with a trained social worker.

In 1923 one could ride a bus to Philadelphia for 25¢. The bus driver's wage was 65¢ per hour. (In 1947 fares increased to 24¢ per zone...the driver's wages increased to \$1.30 an hour...). The American Legion building in Palmyra opened--named for Fred Rodgers, who had been killed in France in 1918, it was one of the first such groups

organized in the U.S.A. Their first Commander was Herbert Kemmerle, in 1919.

In 1941 Henry A. Dreer's Nurseries had a new rose, Crimson Glory, and in May sent invitations to the public to come to Riverton to see it. Trainloads of tomato plants were arriving, then, at the siding above Thomas Avenue, and farmers' wagons and trucks made heavy traffic in town, as Campbell's Soup growers came to get the plants.

In 1961 Riverton was looking into construction of a swimming pool adjacent to the Park, to be fed by fresh-water springs. Costs would have amounted to approximately \$30 per family, and it was defeated. The following year churches and schools held free clinics for distribution of Sabin oral vaccine, on a sugar cube, in March and in May. It was the first step in ending the yearly threat of infantile paralysis, or polio, as we call it now. Today's vaccines and health measures have made us all but forget the terrible epidemics and high death rates of not so many years ago.

In 1965 Medicare was an idea many saw as a threat. A letter to the editor of a local paper protested the proposition, saying families, not government, should take charge of the care of the sick, and predicted that if the government took over, its cost would prevent people from being able to save money for care that was needed...

How many of these changes do you remember? ? ? ?

Note: A correction : The May-June Gaslight News, "Yesterday" feature, erred...the first 2 items, Palmyra National Bank, and migrant school, should have been listed last, not first, as they were opened in 1920, not 1890!! Sorry about that.....)

bbh, ed.

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