



Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, Inc.

Riverton, N.J. 08077

Founded 1970

Inc. 1978

Nov. 1989-Jan. 1990

vol.xvi-2 (#56)

Meeting: Monday, November 27, 1989 8 p.m. Music Room, Riverton School
Program: "Memories and Memorabilia"

...Lenore Probsting and Rick Wark

The articles in our Historical Society's collection are not seen often enough, even by our own members, because we do not have a place in which to display them, since we have no building of our own. For tonight's program our Chairmen have asked "Sister", who cares for the clothing items in our collection, and Rick, who is caretaker, or curator, of the other things, to set up a small display and to tell us something about the items seen and how we acquired them.

Those attending the meeting are invited to bring a photograph, souvenir, or other object of Riverton memorabilia to show and to tell about--perhaps even to ask for help in identifying people or events pictured, or in dating a photograph. It should be a particularly interesting evening.

Meeting: Monday, January 22, 1990 8 p.m. Music Room, Riverton School
Program: "A Brief History of Smithville, 1865-87"

...Henry W. Metzger

A slide and lecture presentation about the once-thriving community that is now the county's Cultural & Heritage Center will be our first program in 1990. Smithville has a fascinating past, at least three different names and high points, each of which ended in failure. Home of the Star bicycle, manufactured by H.B. Smith in his era, the site was acquired in 1975 by the Freeholders to be developed as a Park and site for concerts, displays, and other events, among them the "H.B. SMITH CORNET BAND" concerts enjoyed by so many, during the summer.

Henry Metzger, Sheriff of Burlington county and former Freeholder, lives with his family in Willingboro. Among his many activities, he serves as president of the Friends of the Mansion, a project he says is "especially near and dear to my heart". Note the date NOW, because this is a program you won't want to miss.

Historic Nomination...

The question on November's ballot to determine community interest in having the Borough Council seek Nomination to place Riverton on the State and National Registers of Historic Places was supported 4-to-1 by the voters. Although the referendum was not binding, we hope that the support shown will encourage Council to stop stalling and to take positive action now. Time and much work are needed to realize this goal. We thank the dozen members who distributed 1000 flyers, giving facts about Nomination--what it is, and is NOT--during the week prior to Election Day; and to the Library for letting us run them off, at a nominal fee.

New Jersey Pride Day, on October 14th, was a new idea with a date conflicting with many other more established Fairs and activities. We had a table display of photographs, reference materials, tour folders, and notepaper. Attendance was disappointing, but the idea was a good one, and perhaps it will be done again, with more success, next year.

Memorial Dogwoods...

As a part of the Riverton Park Clean-Up Day in October, we were asked to do something

about the markers by the row of dogwood trees along the roadway nearest the Creek. The trees were donated by families to honor residents and friends of Riverton, and were dedicated May 30, 1950, according to the largest marker. The Historical Society cleaned up and painted the 16 markers, and have asked that some plan for continued care of both trees and markers be initiated. Some markers have become bent or flattened, apparently from heavy equipment coming too close to those nearest the walkway, and some trees have not survived. There seems to be no record of the dedication, or of donors, so we are setting up a file so that this information will be available to those wanting to know something about the persons so honored.

Markers indicate that trees were given to honor the following: Gertrude W. Knight; Rev. F. Teilo Evans; Ens. Harry V. Groome, 1923-45; Elizabeth Woolston; Lt. Richard N. Barclay, 1919-1944; Pfc. David C. Wilson, 1924-45; Mary Yearly; Alfred Smith & Family; Julia S. Eisele; Henry L. Randall; Lemuel Burhoe; Charles A. Wright; The Armstrong Family; E.F. Thum, Sr. The largest marker gives the date of dedication of the Memorial Dogwoods. If readers have saved clippings about this, or have information about those so honored that could help us to compile a record about them, please contact Betty Hahle.

Trips...

The October trip to Pomona Hall for the Open Hearth Cooking demonstration and tour of Camden County Historical Society's facilities was delightful. Hoe cakes with syrup, Pumpkin soup, apple rings, and gingerbread, all cooked at the open hearth, were delicious, and had a flavor that can't quite be duplicated when prepared in more modern ways. If our members are interested, a special tour of their collection of samplers and quilts, not on display because of lack of space, will be arranged for early Spring. Please let us know if you are interested...

If you have not yet signed up for the Car Caravan in the Pines led by Bill Leap, on May 5, please do so now. After the first of the year we will accept reservations from anyone wishing to go, and expect that the limit of 15 cars will quickly be reached. To avoid disappointment, send in your reservation slip and check now. If you have mislaid your flyer, sent with the previous Newsletter, call 829-6315.

Storm...

The storm that swept through our area just before noon on November 16th didn't make the evening news, but it left scars here that will be visible for years to come. Apparently moving up from Camden, it capriciously snapped off a row of telephone poles along the railroad at Lincoln Ave., then a few blocks further on, turned toward the river. A resident said she could see it clearly, moving rapidly in that direction. At 2nd. Street it spread out, lifting huge trees from the ground and dropping them down as it moved on its destructive path. Between 2nd and the river, from Lippincott on to Palmyra, hardly a large, old tree survived its fury. The trees were, for the most part, a century or more old, with some dating back to the 1850's and the landscaping efforts of the Founders of Riverton. Fortunately, people and their homes escaped injury. Some cars were damaged, but the greatest loss was so many of our town's old and beautiful trees. Not in our time will that part of Riverton look the same, again.

Reminders...

Dues have been coming in nicely, this year, with the forms that went out with the last Newsletter. In case you have overlooked sending yours in, do it today, before the Holiday activities put it out of mind again. Feb. 1st is the deadline for avoiding interrupted membership and your Newsletters.

Notepaper is still available at \$3.50 for a box of 15 triple-fold sheets, with envelopes. Each box contains notepaper of both scenes, the Columbia at dock, and the old Railroad Station. Available at Victorian Thymes, the Library, or by contacting Louise Vaughn. A box makes a nice gift...

Self-Guided Walking Tour folders have been updated, and we have a good supply on hand now. Why not enclose one with a Christmas Card, this year? Cost is minimal, a small donation to help defray printing costs. They're available, as above, or call 829-6315. Remember the November meeting--look up that old photo, or souvenir, to bring and share during program-time. And mark January's meeting on your new (Library) calendar--the next Newsletter comes out in February. Come out to both...and invite a friend, too.

Other notes...

Budget cuts have resulted in a reduction of services for those doing genealogical and other research at facilities in Trenton. The Bureau of Vital Statistics, Dep't. of Health, will not be able to search their records for genealogical requests, and the State Archives is closed on Saturdays now. The State Library no longer has either Saturday or evening hours. Letting your state legislators know that such cuts concern you could help to restore these services.

Sunday, Dec. 10, at 2 p.m. "The Romance of Bargello" will be presented by Charlotte Forman at the Camden Co. Historical Society, Park/Euclid Ave., and is free for all interested persons.

Camden Co. Historical Society will also present a series of workshops on Historical Research, Genealogy, Furniture, and Decorative Arts of 18th & 19th centuries, during the month of February. In March there will be an Open Hearth Cooking Workshop. For information, costs, reservations, call 964-3333. Registration is limited.

Sympathy is extended to the family of Ella May Moore, a former Secretary of our Historical Society and a member for many years.

Yesterday...

People, some random notes...

In May, 1905, N. Myer Fitler purchased William Thomas' stone house at Bank/Thomas, back to 2nd street.

Mamie Frishmuth, daughter of JCW Frishmuth, won a prize at the Ladies Golf Tournament at Riverton Country Club--a gold bar pin, set with emeralds.

C.T. Woolston had had a fire at his carriage factory at 7th & Main, and was rebuilding. Otto Koehler, who lived on Main at 7th and was the lithographer of the well-known 1890 picture of Riverton, was recovering from a stroke.

The Children's Summer Home (now Cinnaminson Home) was having a 2-story addition built. Drilling by the Boys' Brigade on Main St. frightened a horse, causing a runaway.

Killam Bennett, of Delair, contracted with J S Rogers of Moorestown to build a large house on the riverbank for him. (605 Bank Ave.)

Effie Wolfschmidt won the 1st prize for needlework at Girls' Friendly Society.

In 1909 David Styer, secretary of the Bordentown military institute faculty, married Miss Lillian Richardson. The ceremony took place at Pueblo, Col. on June 29.

In July, builder Louis Lowden broke ground on Howard St. for a house for Charles A. Wright, which he was having built for his daughter who would soon marry Rex Showell.

In August, Dr. Alex Marcy bought a new Ford auto..and was driving around town in it.

In November, Ezra Perkins sold his house and butcher shop on Main St. to Mr. Stiles, the druggist, and planned to move to California for his health. Within a few months Stiles had built a "thoroughly modern drug store" on the site. (Later, it became Freeman Hunter's furniture store, and today is The New Leaf)

Soon it would be winter, with ice skating on the frozen river, and sleigh rides over snowy roads. A horse could pull a far greater weight on runners over snow than on a wagon, and farmers took advantage of that fact. Sleds, or sleighs, were loaded heavily with materials or with people, and moved along at a good pace--but were very hard to stop. One way to help avoid collisions with others--especially pedestrians heavily bundled up against the cold, was to attach bells to the sleighs, or horses.

Bell making in this country goes back some 200 years, but sleigh bell factories first appeared early in the 19th century. An experienced cannon-maker during the war of 1812 developed the first rapid method for making them, by casting them in a single spherical piece with an enclosed pellet. The product was called a crotal, and soon became the best selling sleigh bells. The content of the metal determined its sound, and sizes ranged from less than an inch in diameter to about four inches. The number of slits in the bell controlled the sound that was released.

In 1902, Sears, Roebuck & Co. sold a 30-bell strap for \$2.20. The last cast sleigh bells were made in the early 1950's, and have become collectors' items. Today's "sleigh bells" are stamped from brass or steel, and lack the tone of the old, cast bells, but still add something special to the Christmas season.

Holiday blessings to all, and best wishes for a good New Year!!

And a special greeting to the Riverton Fire Company, and to the Porch Club of Riverton, both celebrating their 100th birthdays in 1990!!!

(bellhistory from Early American Life 1985)



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RIVERTON, NEW JERSEY 08077

Don Campbell

*Board Nov 20th
Hohl's*