



Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, Inc.

Riverton, N.J.

08077

Founded 1970

Inc. 1978

Feb. - April 1990

vol.xvi-3 (#57)

Meeting: Monday, March 19, 1990

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton School

Program: "Here and There in Burlington County"

....Paul Schopp

The program Paul did for us last year, on Steamboating on the Delaware, was so well received that he was asked to do another program for this year. He will show slides made from his fine postcard collection of not only river activities, but also of the riverfront towns. Some scenes will be easily recognized; others will make us more aware of changes that have taken place; all will be interesting.

Paul Schopp, a historian and member of our Historical Society as well as of others, has knowledge of many areas, and is an avid collector of artifacts pertaining to many fields of interest. Some of his collections have been displayed in the case at Riverton Library.

May's meeting, on the 7th, will be our Annual Meeting, with a program about Riverton Country Club. Elections for three year terms on the Board will take place. If you are interested in serving in this, or any capacity, during the coming year, please contact a member of the Board or Nominating Committee--participating actively not only helps your organization, but can be a rewarding experience.

Trees...

The Memorial dogwood trees in Riverton's Memorial Park have all been trimmed, and will be in bloom before too much longer. They are a real asset to our community, and if you haven't walked in that vicinity lately, turn your steps in that direction soon. Trimming of bushes along the path is needed, and volunteers are needed to work with, and under the guidance of, the Shade Tree Commission. If you can help, leave your name at the Borough Office, and you'll be contacted about time, etc.

One new dogwood will be added to the Memorial trail, given by the family of Dorsey VanBibber, who lived just across the Creek, and who was a driver of the #9 bus for many years. The tree will be a newer variety, (Cornus Kousa) that is resistant to the borers that have destroyed so many dogwoods over the years.

Trees II....

Family trees, that is.....From time to time we get requests for help in a genealogical search, and are glad to help when we can. Also, as schools are more often giving classroom assignments on family histories, and parents and grandparents are contacted for information--quick!!--they sometimes wonder where to begin.

A Workshop for Beginners will be held at Riverton Library on Sunday afternoon, March 25, from 3 to 5 p.m. There is no fee, but we would appreciate your signing up, either at the Library, or by calling 829-6315, so that we will know how many to expect. This is to give one some idea of how to begin, where information may be found, how to record what you find. Climbing a family tree can be fun....

Trees III....

Our Shade Tree Commission, under Barry Emmons, hopes to plant 26 new trees in our town this year, making a big step toward replacing those destroyed in the winter

Delayed - 12 weeks 8 pm
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(How are the 11 minutes?)

storm. Once again Riverton has been awarded a Tree City recognition. Those who attended the Arbor Day service last year found it impressive. This year's Arbor Day will be on April 27, at 4th & Howard Streets. Newspapers will have more information when the time approaches, but meanwhile, note it on your calendar, and plan to attend. Trees add much to the town's beauty, and those who care for them deserve our support and recognition. And donations from organizations and/or individuals would help, too!

Historic Nomination...

Having heard nothing further since our Borough Council passed a Resolution recognizing Riverton's significance and stating their intent to seek inclusion of our town in the Registers of Historic Places, we attended a recent Council meeting to seek further information. Assurance was given that Council does intend to follow through with their Resolution. Realizing that our Council members are volunteers who have only so much time to spread over many things, the Historical Society's suggestion is that they appoint a committee of representatives from actively interested organizations, or particular individuals, under the direction of an appointed chairman and accountable to the Council, to get the work moving--and accomplished. A lot of time and work goes into preparation of these Nominations.

Newspapers.....

A significant contribution to preserving Riverton's history has been made by Freddy De Vece, who has agreed to have his collection of The New Era, which covers a wide span of years, microfilmed. It will be done at the State Archives, under the Rutgers Grant Project to microfilm local newspapers, and will be scheduled sometime this Spring.

The Palmyra newspapers, that are available to us from other sources, will be done at a later date; hopefully, not too far in the future.

Tape....

A fine quality Master Tape has been made of our film, The Romance of Riverton, a Chamber of Commerce promotion of the area made in 1926. Over the summer we hope to have a sound background dubbed in, and then in the Fall we will offer tapes for sale. At this time we cannot specify the cost, but every effort is being made to keep it very affordable. If you are interested in purchasing one, please let us know--it will help us to determine how many to order--and the more ordered at a time, the better the price we can get to have them made.

Trip....

There are still a few available spaces for the May 5th car trip through the Pine Barrens under the direction of Bill Leap, well known naturalist and historian. It's an all-day trip, rain or shine, and cost is \$25 per car. There are also a few available seats for individuals who are not driving, at \$6.50. Reservations are required, and are now open to anyone, and not limited to members. Send check, or call 829-6315, to hold a place for you.

Miscellany...

April's schedule of free Workshops at Phila. Architectural Salvage, which are funded in part from the Pew Charitable Trusts are: April 7: Window Repair; April 14, Plumbing for older homes; April 21, insulation/weatherproofing; April 28, Masonry repair. Reservations are not required; info : 215-568-4210. Sat. ams, 10-12 noon.

A Conference on Women's History will be Friday, March 16, at the Student Center, Trenton State College. Reg. deadline, March 9th; \$15. NJ Hist. Comm/4 N. Broad St. CN305/Trenton NJ 08625.

The Memorabilia Search Committee of the Office of Legislative Services in Trenton is searching for data and items related to the State House--articles, photos, furniture, etc., especially items associated with 1891 Assembly Chambers and the 1903 Senate. Also, photos/memorabilia associated with legislators serving during the 1890-1915 period. Need not be donated, but seek documentation/photos.

Did you see the article in Colonial Homes, Feb. 1990, about the restoration of George and Viola Mayer's lovely home in Morrisville, Pa.? Mr. Mayer was for

many years a teacher of 7th grade in Riverton Public School.

The Winter issue of Victorian Homes has an interesting article on Victorian Gardens, and offers a list of books particularly helpful to those creating or restoring one of that style. The Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion in Germantown is pictured in the article, and tours can be arranged. One is being planned by Porch Club's Garden Department, open also to Historical Society members, for later this Spring. Let us know if you are interested.

Remember to keep a supply of Historical Society Note Paper handy, and to pick up a Walking Tour guide at the Library or at Victorian Thymes.

Yesterday...

When the "county hospital in Mount Holly" opened in May, 1880, gifts of many kinds were gratefully received. Some of those recorded during those earliest years were a teapot, a day's work in the gardens, a coal scuttle, one pig, and 25 heads of cabbage.

Have you ever wondered what to do with a fireplace over the summer? The Mt. Holly Herald offered this suggestion--illustrated: remove the fixtures and place inside a small set of shelves; arrange a silk or tapestry curtain in front, hung on a brass rod, and there you have...a closet for hats and shoes!!! (1907)

On March 18th, the 6th Annual St. Patrick's euchre was held at the Lyceum by Sacred Heart Parish, "under the direction of the popular pastor Rev. J. I. Hendrick." It was attended by 800 guests from all the riverfront towns, as well as Philadelphia, and realized \$600, "to pay off the church debt". Cards were played for about two hours, followed by dancing. The item said the Lyceum was "handsomely decorated in green, in honor of the day...with American flags, cut flowers, and Chinese lanterns".

Board of Education elections took place in March, and a journalist wrote: "It is proposed to pick out a good woman with a mind of her own to fill the vacancy on the (brd) next week. Don't speak out all at once." When the returns were in, winners in Riverton were O H Mattis, W O Wolcott...and Mrs. R F Corry. Of the 11 towns reporting similar elections, only one other, Moorestown, had a woman candidate--and only Riverton's Mrs. Corry was successful. She was strongly supported by her fellow members of The Porch Club, and although only men had the privilege of voting, can there be any doubt that their wives and daughters made their preference known?

In April of 1907 the Annis Stockton Chapter of the D.A.R. was formed at the home of Mrs. Alex Marcy, jr., on Main St. The State regent appointed Mrs. Harriet Merrill Pancoast regent of the new Burlington county chapter, and Mrs. Marcy vice-regent. Mrs. R. F. Corry was the registrar.

Newspapers were beginning to carry columns about infant and child care. They suggested that a little girl of 3 years should have her hair washed every week, that when bread was given a 1½-old child it should "be sliced thin, buttered, and given in small quantities". It also suggested cocoa as almost as important as milk in a child's diet--but could be made with half water, for very young children. Women's clubs, through Mothers' circles, sponsored talks on many phases of child care at home, in school, and in society. One such talk was entitled "How to Teach Children to Spend Money". A reporter added "as a rule children do not need any instruction in this line. They just blow it in at the first candy store."

Bids were being received for a stone road, a 3 1/8 mile section of the former Westfield & Camden turnpike, from "the bridge over the Pomposse creek in Cinnaminson to the Riverside stone road in Bridgeboro." The county's 1st stone road was the one now known as Main street, and Riverton road--from river to Westfield meeting, then on into Moorestown. Clayton Conrow, of Riverton, originated the movement that led to the development of the plan adopted in 1890, known as the N.J. State Aid Road law, which called for State, county, and local contractors to combine to build permanent stone roads. The law brought recognition to both our county and State, was adapted by other States to meet their own needs, and resulted in many miles of good roads built under the program.

Lights along Riverton's streets continued to be a problem. Electric lights had been

in use for several years, but service was poor, necessitating deductions from the town's bill of \$90 per light each month. Several gas street lights had been installed, were found more satisfactory, and bids were being received from both the Cinnaminson Electric Heat, Light, & Power Co., the current contractor, and the Public Service Corporation, for a better system.

Before we became a "throw-away" nation, many services and supplies were offered by itinerants who travelled by foot or rail or wagon--and later, by car--to households along whichever route their travels took them. William Fisher was an itinerant umbrella mender and tin pan solderer who lived in Camden and rode the train to towns along its route. One Fall day in 1907 he had worked in Riverton, stayed overnight, and planned to return home on the 7:15 train Saturday morning. He walked to the stop at Riverton Gun Club, in East Riverton--a platform without benches or shelter--and sat down to wait for the train, on the edge, facing the tracks. When the train came along, the engineer saw a sleeping man, blew his whistle--and Fisher slept right on. Frantically, the engineer threw the brake, jolting commuters out of their seats, and when the train stopped, both crew and passengers got out, anticipating the worst. There was Fisher, on the platform, in a dead faint! He had awakened at the last possible moment and pulled his legs up, suffering only a sprained foot and scraped shins. These were treated at Cooper Hospital, after which he was released.

Another close call with a train was in August of 1914, when Mrs. Walter K. Woolman was riding in her chauffeured car and it "became unmanageable and backed on the railroad tracks in front of a fast approaching train". George Stoer, a carpenter, saw the situation and ran for the watchman to flag the train. The express did stop in time, only a few feet away from the car.

In the Fall of that year, Riverton's Shade Tree Commission planted 91 new trees in town.

And the big story at the end of that year, 1914, was a \$50,000 fire that destroyed the J.S. Collins & Son lumber yard and store, a 2-story building erected after Collins' purchase of the Thomas Bros. lumber business. With it were lost Worrell's plumbing "establishment", Adolph's newsstand, McCombs' tailor shop, and the Cramer & Rogers grocery store. The present 2-story brick building, known here for so many years as the Collins building, was built after that fire.

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*Mrs. & Mr. Daniel T. Campbell
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