

Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, Inc.

Riverton, N.J. 08077

Founded 1970

Inc. 1978

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Annual Meeting: Monday, May 7, 1990 8 p.m. Music Room, Riverton School
Program: "The History of Riverton Country Club"

.....Bruce E. Beans

There had been some talk of starting a golf club in Riverton for several years, and after the death of Edward Lippincott and the acquisition of the family farm-land by his brother Ezra, he and his nephew, Jim Coale, an avid golfer, made the dream a reality.

Mr. Beans, a free-lance writer and former newspaper journalist, has been research- ing Riverton Country Club for several years, and will talk about its founding in 1900, its growth and problems, original deed restrictions, rebuilding within the section lying in Cinnaminson township, and some of the families and prominent golfers associated with the club.

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Elections: At this meeting four (4) members will be elected to 3-year terms on the Society's Board of Directors. The following slate is presented by the Nominating Committee: Paul Schopp, Sally Mattis, Harry Richman, and Rodman Zwirner.

John Parry, ch.

Ed Moore

Toby Hunn

Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the meeting, before election. At this time we wish to thank Charles Bishop and Anne Cannon, who have chosen not to seek re-election, for serving during the past three years.

The Board would welcome volunteers to serve on various committees for the coming year. Committees are appointed for just one year, and offer a chance to members to become better acquainted with the Society's work, as well as its members. We would like to see more active participation of members living in Palmyra and Cinnaminson. If you are interested, please contact a member of your Board.

The resignation of John Parry from the Board has been accepted with much regret. John has been active and has filled several vital positions over the past eight years he has served on the Board, and will be missed there.

An appointment will be made in May to fill the remaining year of John's term, in accordance with our Constitution article vi, section 2.

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Awards:

The names of those who will receive Letters of Recognition for work in preservation or restoration of their homes are usually included in this issue of Gaslight News. However, the Committee has not completed its work, at this writing, and so the names will be announced at the May 7th meeting.

Each year more people are showing interest in maintaining or restoring their homes in keeping with their original architectural styles. The Historical Society's letters are not sent until such work is completed--or so near completion that the final result is clear-cut.

Members who are undertaking such work, or who have noticed work within their neigh-

borhood, are asked to help the Committee, headed by Dan Campbell, by calling it to their attention--at any time of the year.

National Historic Preservation Week this year is May 13-19. A few years ago Riverton homes were the recipients of several Historic Preservation Awards from the County Cultural and Heritage Commission. Although we have not made a nomination for this year, it's not too soon to think about NEXT YEAR's Awards.

Register Nomination:

The Borough Council has appointed a Steering Committee of 6 members to work with Councilwoman Anne McIlhenny on preparing a Nomination of Riverton for inclusion on State and National Registers of Historic Places. There are 3 members from APR and 3 from the Historical Society: Mort Traugott, Phyllis Rodgers, and Burl Gusky from APR, and Nancy Washington, Rick Wark, and John Parry from our Society. Architect Roy Vollmer and local historian Betty Hahle have also offered to help.

Lights:

We're still waiting to hear when we can pick up the bases for the goose-neck station lights. We have been granted the bases, and hope that we will be able to get them soon, so that this project can be completed by getting the lights in place.

Miscellany:

Property...

At our last general meeting, members requested a letter be sent to the Mayor and Council regarding the Shea property on Broad street, which has become not only an eyesore, but also a fire and potential other hazard. Mayor Engle has responded, saying it is presently in foreclosure in the courts, and a successful conclusion is anticipated within the next three months. Apparently there are buyers interested in the property, and when there is a new owner, he will be contacted about saving/selling/donating salvagable components of the deteriorated building.

Pinelands Trip...

Last call for the May 5th Car Caravan through the Pinelands with historian Bill Leap! We are limited to 15 cars, and at this writing, there is just one space left. If you have forgotten to register for it, or now decide to do so, please call 829-6315 NOW, so you won't be disappointed. We'll tour Lebanon State forest, visiting ghost towns of Martha, Harrisville, Lebanon, Washington, and others, lunch by Lake Oswego, and learn about one of our State's greatest resources.

Reminders...

April 27th is the Arbor Day-Tree City Ceremony this year, 4th/Howard Sts. Phila. Architectural Salvage (free) workshops: April 28, Masonry Repair. Historical Society's Notepaper and Walking Tour folders are at the Library and Victorian Thymes--keep a supply on hand over the summer.

Acquisitions to the Historical Society's Collections during the past year:

Printer Plate of 1903 Price Development Plan, East Riverton: from Ted Hunn
Photographs (2) of Signet ring given by Borough to WW I servicemen-women
(ring of Frederick MacLean Jones, loaned by his dtr. of California to BBHahle;
photographed by John Hartmann)
Xeroxed copies and 1 photograph of interior/exterior 101 Lippincott Ave c. 1900,
owned by Nancy Ritschard Hall--copies from BBHahle
Xerox of photo of Riverton Station circa 1955--Paul Schopp
4 Xeroxed copies of orig. photographs from Mays family, of Palmyra
Postcard and a notebook of pledges to Presbyterian church building fund by Dr. Alex.
Marcy, from Mr/Mrs. Barry Solin, Main St.
Framed photocopy of early Riverton Pier prior to erection of Riverton Yacht Club,
from Gus and Lenore Probsting
Tillicums (PHS Yearbook) for years 1934 and 1936 (2 copies) from Dot Kennedy, per
Elsie Waters.
Clothing--bonnets, blouses, cape, etc. of late 19th/early 20th centuries.

Congratulations!!!

This Spring marks the 100th birthdays of two important institutions: The Riverton Fire Company, and the Porch Club of Riverton.

Riverton had a bucket brigade and a small hand operated pump for fighting fires, as the Second Brigade of Palmyra's Independence Fire Company, which had organized a few years earlier following a disasterous fire on Cinnaminson Avenue. In January 1890 Riverton experienced its own disaster, with a fire started in the Roberts store on the point of Main/Howard streets, that destroyed 2 homes as well as the store, and damaged another. Although they had a hose, it was not long enough to reach the nearest fireplug. It was only through the efforts of the volunteers that Louis Corner's home was saved and the fire brought under control before it spread further, as it so easily could have done. It pointed out the need for a company in Riverton. A group formed, incorporated in May, and elected John C.S. Davis the first president of the new company. The first equipment was housed in a shed facing Main, and then property was purchased 3 years later. Constantly upgrading both equipment and training, and manned entirely by volunteers, Riverton firemen provide a service that cannot be measured in so many words.

That same early Spring, when 8 young women followed a trend of their time and formed a small reading circle, they could not have foreseen how their Porch Club would grow, both in numbers and in dimensions. More women joined and were soon involved in service, educational, and social issues. Their contributions to the community are too many to list here, but a few are: members helped establish the Library, a Kindergarden, elected women to the Board of Education, organized the State Congress of Mothers (now PTA), well baby clinics, Visiting Nurse service in the Tri-Boro area, Family Service with a trained social worker, etc. Awards are given to local school students, and contributions to college scholarships through the NJSFWC. The clubhouse at 4th/Howard is used by the Bloodmobile of Red Cross and for affairs by various organizations, as well as for social functions. With more than 140 members today, the Porch Club continues to be the center of thought and action that was defined as its purpose, so many years ago.

To both of these organizations, The Historical Society of Riverton extends its congratulations...its thanks...and its best wishes for continued successes in the future.

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Yesterday...

Looking at busy Cinnaminson township today it is difficult to picture it as an agricultural center that played an important role in Burlington county's recognition as the chief producer of fruit in New Jersey. Sparcely populated, farms remained in families that had been there for generations--Wallace, Morgan, Parry, Hunter, Coles, Taylor, Evans, Lippincott, to name a few. Several small villages were with-in Cinnaminson township, most a few houses clustered near a crossroads.

In the late 18th century sheep were raised here, to be replaced by cows and dairy farms, most of which were in turn replaced by orchards and truck farms. And this was how it remained, until early in the 1940s.

Probably William Parry and his work at Pamona Nurseries exerted the greatest influence in the predominance of orchards here. He began grafting experiments in 1834, and four years later established his Pamona Nurseries, which soon expanded to 300 acres. It was said that Judge Parry's success was such that one year's profits paid for the mansion he erected on the family homestead facing Branch Pike. He introduced new varieties of fruits and berries, including the Kieffer pear, Parry strawberry, and Wilson blackberry. He wrote many papers on the cultivation of fruits and nuts, headed many related societies, and was widely sought after to lecture on his work. In 1870 Elias Morgan purchased from him 2425 peach and pear trees--at a cost of \$97. Records show that he shipped his trees and plants to at least 12 states in addition to New Jersey, from Massachusetts to Georgia, to Michigan.

In 1880 North Pennsville, the section of Cinnaminson in which Parry lived, changed its name to Parry, in his honor. He died in 1888, and not long afterwards his

widow sold "the name and good will" to T.E.Steele, who purchased a tract of land in Five-Points (crossroad of 130/Cinnaminson Ave) and opened Steele's Pamona Nurseries in that village. Steele's home, of hollow tile and cement, located just above the Morgan Cemetery, was built by Louis Lowden in 1914.

The Parry Homestead became the Campbell Soup Farms, or Pamona Farms. In the spring of 1915 John T. Dorrance had a huge bed of rhododendrons laid out, with 250 bushes of various colors. It was designed and carried out by Grover Johnson, foreman of the farm, and made a spectacular display, the likes of which had never been seen in this area. His son, John T Dorrance jr. was born here in 1919--(his recent death has triggered frequent news articles about Campbell Soup Co. in the past year).

Among the other residents of Parry, in 1887, were listed several clay miners, ship builders, and one toll gatherer named Louis Heiter. Burlington Pike's toll booth was beside the road (now rte 130) just above the Pennsauken creek, and tolls were collected at various points of its 88 mile length. The creek was at that time navigable for about 12 miles, had a barge building company at its mouth, and a grist mill. There was also a lumber yard and steam-powered planing mill founded and run by J.W.Heulings for fifty years before he opened his lumber/feed store in Riverton (Evans' site).

On the other side of the Pennsauken creek, between the C&A railroad and the Pike, and across from a Wallace farm, was the Hylton Plantation. John Dunbar Hylton's home was "built in the Virginia style" and sat high on a bluff over the creek. It afforded a fine view of his orchards--10,000 pear trees, peach trees (unknown number), and 2000 grape vines, including some of the newest variety, the Woodruff. Hylton's peaches were said to be exceptionally fine, and he had a ready market for all the fruits he could produce. He studied methods of insect controls and horticulture in general, and was considered a knowledgeable farmer. In May 1914 the orchards produced a fine crop of Kieffer pears--14 carloads were shipped to Pittsburgh, and 5000 baskets were held in storage.

Hylton, like Judge Parry, was a man of many interests and talents. He wrote poetry, much acclaimed, enjoyed entertaining, and also harvested the gravel and sand beds and mined the clay deposits on his plantation. In 1902 New Jersey was the chief clay-producing state in the USA, and deposits near the Delaware river were primarily types used for terra cotta or for fire bricks, the latter type withstanding very high temperatures.

Hylton may have been something of an eccentric, as well, as he continued to drive his yoke of oxen with a 2-wheeled cart of firewood into Palmyra to sell, long after other area farmers had replaced their oxen with mules. And he found himself in court when he fired a revolver at Dr. Small, who cut through Hylton's property on the way from Palmyra to see a patient.

By now the orchards have almost disappeared from the area. Most recent to be erased are the Ridenbaker apple orchards, where only two summers ago we would purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables. With them go the homesteads and other buildings. Gone also are the gravel hills, sand hills, and the nut and persimmon trees; and the wild flowers--arbutus, lady's slipper, jack-in-the-pulpit, wild azelias, and many more that used to grow along the creeks or in "golf woods". Gone are the many little streams that curved from the creeks throughout the area, covered over and hidden beneath roads and developments, both residential and industrial. And gone are some of the songbirds and brightly colored butterflies and moths that added to summer's beauty.

Those living in some of today's developments may exclaim over orchards in bloom, or heavy with fruit, as they travel to other areas or other countries, never realizing that their own communities were once as beautiful. It's a price we pay, for "progress".

(bbh)

(note: in last Gaslight News: Clayton Conrow, of Riverton....should have read:"of Cinnaminson, in section that separated as Delran".)