



Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

Riverton, N.J. 08077

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A Word From The President...

In May I was honored by being elected to the office of President of the Historical Society of Riverton by the Board of Directors. Those who attend our meetings know that I have served as Secretary for the past two years. Others know me better from seeing me up on a ladder, or otherwise working to restore and renovate my carriage-house home.

As an architect I have a particular interest in our town and in its history. Individuals maintaining homes and neighborhoods benefit everyone, and preserve an important part of our heritage. I would like to see our Society serve as a resource, and a forum for ideas, for those restoring buildings in Riverton, making renovations compatible with their original style, or doing basic maintenance of them.

We will continue to advocate preservation issues, through education, promoting public awareness, and encouraging our local government to take such steps as may be necessary to better define and preserve our buildings, streetscapes, and our history.

Does this sound like serious work? It is! Working together we can do a lot. We have an excellent Board of Directors, the continued support and input of long-time residents and members, and as an organization we can learn together and share what we have learned with others.

The first step is easy: come out to meetings, where you can enjoy excellent programs and get better acquainted with neighbors having similar interests. Start by attending this year's first meeting on October 7th--and invite a neighbor to come along with you!
Dan Campbell

Meeting: Monday, October 7, 1991 8 p.m. Music Room, Riverton School
Program: "Early Industry of the Pinelands"
.....Howard P. Boyd

Howard Boyd is the author of a recently published book, "A Field Guide to The Pine Barrens of New Jersey", and a glance at it quickly tells the reader that here is a man with a vast knowledge of that area. His talk, with slides, will cover what the "barrens" are, some of the early colonial development there, resources, and industries.

Mr. Boyd's education includes a BS in biological sciences (majoring in Botany), and an MS in entomology. He has taught at Glassboro, has been an executive in Boy Scouts, and, since his retirement, has focused on the pine barrens and writing his book.

Updates....

Elections last May resulted in the following officers, for 2-yr. terms:
President, Dan Campbell; vice-pres. Paul Schopp; Sec. Robert Smyth; Treas., Paul Daly.
Board: elected to 3-year terms were: Frank Wagonknight, Rick Wark, Grace Coles, and Betty Hahle. These, with Paul Daly, Nancy Washington, Helene Styer, Dan Campbell, Paul Schopp, Rod Zwirner, Harry Richman, and Bob Smyth, make up our 12-member Brd.
Others: Curator, Rick Wark; Historian, Betty Hahle; Programs, Frank Wagonknight; Publicity, Grace Coles; Membership, Harry Richman; Hospitality, Helene Styer and Rod Zwirner.

At the May meeting a proposal to amend our By-Laws, expanding membership categories to include Business Patron @ \$25 per yr., Sponsor, \$50 per yr., and Life, one-time donation of \$100, was offered and discussed. It will be voted on at the October 7th meeting.

Dues are payable now, to Membership Chairman Harry Richman, Remember the new rates: Individual, \$6.00; Husband/wife, \$10.00; Sr. Citizen, \$4.00. This is the first increase in MANY years--and is still a bargain...

Questionnaire:

There was a very poor response to the questionnaires sent out to each member last May. Two who responded offered to write articles for our Gaslight News, and during this year will be asked to do so.

Pictures and Tapes:

Our poster-picture taken for Heritage Week last Spring was sent, with brief history, as per instructions, for display at the National Conference in San Francisco in October. We hope that we will receive some comment from National Trust about it--and will pass on any comments if...when...we do.

Some of the enlarged photos are still available for purchase, at Riverton Library, or from Dan Campbell.

"Romance of Riverton" tapes were re-ordered, and the booklet updated, this summer. They are available from Dan Campbell (786-8660) or Betty Hahle (829-6315) at \$17.95. This silent black/white tape made from the original movie filmed in 1926 is of excellent quality, and is of particular interest to those who have lived in Riverton, and to movie buffs. They make great gifts, too..

Fourth of July:

It seems a long time ago, now that Fall is here, but it was a great celebration! Paul Daly and Nancy Washington distributed over 800 of our traditional Commemorative Cards along the parade route. And Betty Hahle was honored for her long standing interest in local history by being named Parade Marshall.

Acquisitions:

Over the summer we received (anonymously) two Riverton post-cards: one of the Williams-Wright building (Keating's corner drugstore) and Riverton Post Office.

Station Lights:

Mr. Love graciously exchanged a shade and fixture he had, that we needed to complete the second of the pair of station lights our Historical Society purchased and restored, for a similar one that we had, and so now they are completed. We hope the bases will soon be installed, by the Borough Building, and that they will be enjoyed in this location by everyone. When they are placed, and the project completed, credits for the work involved will be fully given.

Coming Events:

Sunday, October 6, 1-5 pm: House Tour in Historic Cranbury. \$8 . Info, 655-3701

Sunday, October 13, 2 p.m.: Camden County Historical Society presents "Steamboats on the Delaware", by Paul W. Schopp. At their Building Park Blvd/Euclid Ave, Camden. Free. Paul Schopp, our vice-pres., is also active in Camden's Society, and serves as a Docent there.

Saturday, October 19, 10 am to 3 pm: Seminar on interpretation and care of family photographs; NJ Historical Society, 230 Broadway, Newark (201-483-3939) \$15, non-members. (Bring own lunch; dessert/coffee provided). Deadline, Oct 14 for regis.

Saturday, November 2, 9 am-to ?pm: Homeowner's Conference, "Stretching Your Old House Dollar", by Preservation New Jersey (and Union Co. College et al) early-bird registration, \$35. non members; after Oct 18, \$45. Members' discount. 170 Township Line Road, Belle Mead 08502 (908-359-4557) Inc. prioritizing, slowing aging process, roofing, updating heating/cooling systems, etc. Buffet lunch; bookstore, exhibits.

November 2 and 3, Voorhees Community Theater: Jersey Sound Chorus, of Sweet Adelines International, presents "It's All Around Us" matinee and evenings; info 234-3314 or 784-6831.

New Publication: Haddonfield Historic Homes. Pre-publication offer, to Oct 12, \$45.00. After Oct 12, \$55.00. Order from Haddonfield Preservation Soc., Box 192, Haddonfield N.J. 08033-9808. 208-pages, full color; edited: Joan Aiken; Photo: J Cooper.

Notepaper: stock up now--prices unchanged--\$3.50 per box of 15 triple-fold notes/envelopes. At Library, Victorian Thymes, or from Louise Vaughn or Dan Campbell.

Yesterday....

There have been some changes, along the way...

In September of 1862, when Riverton was very young, the New Jersey Mirror offered this bit of advice: "a bad practice is throwing watermelon rinds and peach skins into the sidewalks; it is just as easy to pitch them into the street. People can fall on sidewalks...they do no harm in the streets."

In 1898 Dr. Marcy offered one of his rental houses on Cinnaminson St. for \$12.00 a month--and the house had water, a heater, and a bathroom. For the ladies, McCall's patterns sold for 10¢ or 15¢, and a year's subscription to the magazine cost 50¢. The gentlemen picked up their newspapers from George Tucker at his stand at the station--but sometimes forgot to settle up their accounts. The New Era pleaded his cause, saying Mr. Tucker MUST have weekly or bi-monthly settlements of bills, as he had to pay for his supplies, and although 12¢ or 25¢ might not seem like much to owe, because there were many such accounts, and it had become a problem.

In 1901 the trolley line came to Riverton, going north. In 1904 it was extended south, to Camden. For the next 30 years the trolleys, arriving every 20 minutes, provided transportation for our residents. In April, 1931, buses replaced the rattling trolleys--but their tracks remained beside the railroad for many more years.

In 1904 Riverton opened a Savings Bank, and soon had deposits of \$11,000. In 1907 the Cinnaminson National Bank and Trust was formed, and the Savings Bank closed, in deference to it.

Home made rootbeer was popular--Cowperthwaite's carried the syrup, at 13¢, which would make 5 gallons of that delightful thirst-quencher--mixed, bottled and capped, aged outside in the sun, and stored away to enjoy, with a chunk of ice....ahhhhhhh

In 1912 Main Street, between Broad and Bank, got four new arc lights, replacing seven gas street lights.

In 1925 an editorial called on the pride of residents to improve walks and streets. It cited "the occupied side of Penn Street, between 3rd and 4th, where each property has neatly laid sidewalks", in contrast to Bank Avenue, an "eyesore"; the old argument of who owns it and who should take care of it "leaves a road full of holes--and still no sidewalks." That year, in October, the C of C and the Fire Company held an Old Home Week, in Riverton. It began with a parade of 700 children. Both Riverton and Cinnaminson schoolchildren marched, from 5th/Howard up to the point, then down Main to the Riverbank, where festivities were planned. Later, the Fire Co. gave a demonstration in the Park (not yet developed, at that time), and the Porch Club held an Open House. Dreer's declared a holiday and closed for the day, which ended with fireworks, over the river.

The following year Frederick Blackburn died, at age 85. His obit said he was Palmyra's first real estate broker, a Civil War veteran, and an inventor. He was born in Phila., became a machinist, and invented a machine to manufacture straw hats--a first. He became Palmyra's 1st township assessor, a position he held for 20 years.

Also in 1926, the Philadelphia Mint made dies for a new half-dollar, for the Sesqui-Centennial, with likeness of President Coolidge superimposed on George Washington--the first coin minted bearing the image of a living person. The reverse had the Liberty Bell.

And in February, 1926, the local Rotary Club got its charter. Dr. Mills was elected the first president by the 25 members. The charter was celebrated with music by Lee Mitton's 5-piece Twin City Orchestra.

In 1929 local towns were booming. An article extolling Palmyra as a fine place to live noted its convenience to the city: "the routes used by private motorists from Palmyra to Camden are so free of traffic and intersections that the trip can be made more safely than a similar distance from outlying sections of Philadelphia itself." (What would they say of rte 130 today???)

In 1939, on Thanksgiving Day at noon, PHS Stadium was dedicated. The Thanksgiving game was the highlight of the season, and for years Riverside was the rival. On that day many a young person singing in a church choir at Thanksgiving service had on a Band uniform under a choir robe, and within minutes of the end of service would be caught up in a different kind of music, on the Stadium field!

November elections from time to time ask voters to decide questions that have far-reaching influence. In 1920 it was whether or not a bridge should be built across

the Delaware River and a tunnel under the Hudson River. In November of 1947 voters were asked to vote on a new Constitution for our State, and each week the newspapers carried information concerning various changes it would make: a more liberal Bill of Rights, better defined legislative procedures; stronger, more responsible Executive branch (increased governor's term from 3 to 4 years and gave extended powers); a simplified, unified court system; a sounder basis for taxation, and a simplified method of making amendments.

This was New Jersey's third Constitution, and became effective Jan. 1, 1948.

An article on Columbus' discovery of America, written in the 1940s, said that according to the Archives in Genoa, his trip cost a little over \$7000, with the fleet being worth about \$3000, and Columbus' salary \$200 a year.

In 1953 Shulman's was remodelled. The front was lowered to street level, for easy entrance, and the interior was completely modernized. Outside, his name can still be seen, in the sidewalk.

The A&P sold valencia oranges for 29¢ a 5-lb. bag, and their dated loaves of sliced bread, introduced a decade earlier, continued to be popular.

And do you remember the Milside Dairy, with its square dips of ice cream? And its "Lost Weekend Sundae"? That was a huge snifter, with 100 ounces of ice cream, for \$3.00--and served only to a group of 4 or more. Each person had a spoon--the bowl of ice cream looked impossibly big--but, somehow, it would soon be empty!

(bbh)

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Remember the meeting on October 7th--and here are the other dates for meetings, 1991/2:
Monday nights, 8 pm: November 25, January 13, March 2, May 4.

Will we see you there?