



Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

Riverton, N.J.

08077

Founded 1970

Inc. 1978

May-June 1992

vol. xviv-4 (#66)

Annual Meeting: Monday, May 4, 1992 8 p.m. Porch Club, 4th & Howard Sts.

Program: "300 Years of American Silver"

...Ulysses G. Dietz

Colonial silversmiths came from England and Europe, and brought their craft to New England in the 17th century. Early American silver was simple and graceful in form, adapted or copied from English works of the period. Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore became centers for silver production, and from these beginnings a wide range of styles and techniques, both handcrafted and machine-produced, have developed. The program, illustrated with slides, will trace American silver from early smithing to the present time.

Mr. Dietz, who has held the position of Curator of Decorative Arts at the Newark Museum since 1980, is well qualified to tell silver's story, and is an interesting speaker. He holds many titles and degrees, and with his experience, is an expert in his field.

Please note the date and place of the May meeting now, and invite a neighbor/friend to come and enjoy the program with you.

Elections: Four members will be elected to serve 3-year terms on the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee (Lenore Probsting and Ellen Layton) presents the following slate: Jack Laverty, and incumbents Paul Daly, Nancy Washington, Dan Campbell. Additional nominations may be made from the floor, with consent of the nominee. Helene Styer, who has completed her term, chose not to run again; we thank her for interest and service during her tenure.

Robert Smyth has resigned from the Board and his office as Secretary, and his replacement will be appointed in accordance with the ByLaws, after which it will be announced by the President.

Awards:

Plaques...Two plaque applications have been approved, and will be awarded at the May 4 meeting.

..422 Lippincott Avenue, owners Guy and Robin Lamon. Second Empire residence built 1884 for Theodore Haas. Mansard roof has skirt-like eave, which has cut-out section over 2nd floor windows, on each side. A large bay window is on the left side, and a similar one on the right has been replaced with a 1st room addition. Front porch wraps to both sides, with slender turned pillars and millwork brackets. Asbestos siding covers original exterior; slate roof has scalloped pattern.

..207 Main Street, owners Stephen and Michele Wagenknight. Queen Anne Victorian residence built 1884 for Albert Foster. This is a beautiful example of its style, and Riverton residents have watched with interest as this young couple has restored it to its original appearance, as per dated photograph (1886), maps, etc. Their restoration project has been submitted to the 1992 Burlington County Historic Preservation Awards Program, and we hope theirs will be one of those chosen for recognition, during Preservation Week. They deserve it!!!

Letters... Our Annual Letters recognizing restoration/preservation work in Riverton completed during the past year have not yet been fully decided upon by the Awards

Committee at this writing. They will be announced at the May meeting.

Preservation Week:

This year Preservation Week will be celebrated nation-wide May 10-16, and the theme is "Preservation Brings History to Life." The focus is on helping children to learn about the history of our country, and one way for us to help, at the local level, is to invite a child to walk with you through a part of Riverton, using our Children's Scavenger Hunt Walking Tour as a guide. Copies at the Library.

A few photos from our project last year--taken at the Yacht Club--are still available. See Dan Campbell to purchase one, before they are all gone.

Welcome!

New members during the current 91/92 year are: Mrs. M. Geraghty, Linden Ave.; Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Farrell, new residents at 200 Main St.; Jack Laverty, Cedar St.; Harry White, Elm Ave.; and Mrs. Grace Wolfe, Second St.

New Category: Life Member: Mrs. Shirley Ellis.

Census, 1920:

Now available are all 2076 reels of population schedules and 8585 rolls of index, at National Archives, 9th & Market Sts., Phila. They may be used daily, 8am to 5 pm, and each 2nd Saturday, 8 am-4 pm. Readers are limited to 3-hours, on a 1st come, 1st served basis, and advance reservations are not permitted.

Area reels are also at Gloucester Co. Historical Society Library, Woodbury, and at the Burlington County Library (when it re-opens).

Trip:

Historic Bartram's Garden Wildflowers and Honey Day is Saturday, April 25, from 10 am to 4 pm. Adult admission is \$4 at the door, and includes special events and activities for children, sales of wildflowers, perennials, herbs, etc.; honey and honey baked goods, candles. Also included are hearth cooking and a tour of the historic house. Parking on grounds. 54th & Lindbergh Blvd., Phila. Those wanting to go as a group with our Historical Society, plan to meet in front of Riverton School at 9 a.m., for car-pooling.

Gardens:

On May 12 The Porch Club of Riverton will hold a tour of 10 local gardens, from 10 am to 4 pm. Tickets are \$8.00 for tour, and \$12.00 to include lunch. Lunch tickets must be purchased in advance. Call 829-1544 or 829-6798 for info and/or tickets.

During April, and until May 20, visit the Charles H. Mueller Co, for spectacular displays of tulips and other bulbs in bloom. Open to the public 10-5 daily; 7091 River Road, New Hope, Pa. Info: 1-215-862-2033.

April 30, 9:30-3: Haddonfield Garden Club Herb, Perennial & Pantry Sale--at the Historical Society, 343 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield.

Etc:.....

April 21: at Smithville, 11 am: slides/talk on Railroads of Burlington Co., by Frank Kozempel; program sponsored by County Freeholders, Cultural/Heritage Dept. Free. Info/pre-registration: 265-5828.

April 22, 7:30 pm, Exhibition, Conversations, with Gary Giberson, well known decoy carver, at Cherry Hill Community Center, 820 Mercer St. A pair of his decoys will be raffled...coffee and desserts...pre-register with Helen Zmijewski at 1119 Yardley Rd., Cherry Hill 08034.

April 28, Barclay Farmstead, 7:30 pm; clinic for gardeners, discussions on composting, landscaping, insect/disease control. Dr. Paul Weiss & Dale Ledden. Free

May 2, Burlington City, 10-4. Old House Preservation Fair, begins at St. Mary's Guild House, includes tours of 6 buildings, and speakers Gail C Winkler (interiors) and Roger Moss (exterior painting). \$10.00. Call 386-6953 or 387-4332.

May 3, 2 p.m., Camden Co. Historical Society; 6th Annual Cooper Day, honoring Cooper family. Includes music, entertainment, more...

May 9: Homeowner's Preservation Workshop, "Old House Basics", co-sponsored by Preservation Salem and PNJ, at St. John's Episcopal Church in Salem, 8:30 am-4:30 pm. \$15 includes lunch. Call 935-7635 for info and to register.

Interesting, well-planned, and reasonable day-trips are run by Camden and Burlington Co. Historical Societies. To get on their mailing lists, or for info, call:
Camden Historical Society Trips: 547-0607, or 964-3333.
Burlington Co. Historical Soc.: 386-4773

Visit the new Acquarium in Camden; ride the ferry to Penn's Landing; See the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria--Spanish replicas of Columbus' ships--now making a world tour, when they visit Penn's Landing, in June. Watch papers for date....

And consider a trip to Trenton, for a tour of the recently restored State House, the nearby State Museum and Planetarium, and The Old Barracks. Well worth your while--a pleasant surprise, if you haven't been there in years.....

Camden Co. Historical Society is planning another Pinelands Tour for next October, and is taking reservations NOW. Those who went on the one we sponsored a couple of years back know this is an excellent tour, not to be missed. Call 964-3333.

And, finally..stock up on Historical Society note-paper--still \$3.50 a box, at the Library, Victorian Thymes, or from John Parry or Dan Campbell. Romance of Riverton tapes are also still available--call Dan, or 829-6315 to pick one up.

.

Yesterday.....

For many years the residents of villages throughout this area--including Riverton and Palmyra--depended on the N.J. Mirror and the Mt. Holly Herald for bits of local news, as well as topics of wider interest. In 1884 Charles M. Hood changed that, by starting a monthly paper in Palmyra, called The Record. It had a short life, and lay sleeping for years, until in 1909 the Seel family printers purchased it and published it weekly, until their entire staff went off to war. Meanwhile, in 1886 John Shaidell started The Weekly News. This paper frequently changed ownership, editors, and name, but continued publication for the better part of a century.

In 1889 Riverton got its own newspaper, The New Era. It was owned, edited, and printed by Charles W. Brewster. Two years later Dr. Joshua D. Janney, a Cinnaminson physician much respected, grew interested in the paper, became its editor, and then purchased printing equipment for it. The new New Era printing shop was on the 2nd floor of the Roberts Building, on the point of Main/Howard streets. That year, 1891, young Walter Bowen joined the staff, and when Brewster moved on to other fields, he became the paper's business manager. He was not quite 16 years old. In January the shop moved again, this time to the 3rd floor of the new Price building that had been erected on the site of the earlier Episcopal churchyard.

Other moves followed: in 1902 the print shop moved to its own building above the railroad (that burned and was razed in 1979), and later, just next door, to the recently vacated post office building--an unpretentious structure that has a long and colorful history of its own.

In 1919, when Dr. Janney was in his 88th year, he retired, and Walter Bowen became sole owner, editor, and printer of The New Era. In 1937, the year of its final move, the paper incorporated, with Bowen as president, Karl Latch vice-president, and Fred Metzger secretary/treasurer. In 1955 Walter Bowen retired, and a few years later the paper was sold to Jack Armshire, who kept the office in Riverton, but printed the New Era at his shop in Pemberton. The age of "throw-away" papers, with many ads and less focus on local gossip and issues was replacing the folksy small-town papers. Soon the paper changed hands again, and then still again, to cease publication during the 1970s.

Walter Bowen's great pride in his home town was apparent in The New Era, and particularly so in its special issues. The 1909 Christmas special, the various Dedication and Anniversary issues, carry a wealth of information about Riverton, its people, its history. Many stories were printed as people remembered them, which sometimes

differ from records of the same events, but they still provide information not to be found anywhere else, and are valuable resources.

Many people worked at The New Era, besides the small staff: women who folded papers and gathered "society" news items, boys to run errands and to deliver papers. And at one time or another, almost everyone in Walter Bowen's family worked there. His younger brother and sister, Will K. and Elizabeth, worked as inker and typesetter at the New Era for several years before they opened their "Ye Upholstery Shoppe" here. Ink-ers wore a kind of skull-cap, to protect their hair from their inky hands, and Will was rarely seen without one on his head, for the rest of his life.

Early newsprint had a high rag content, giving it durability, and early papers extant now are still white, with clear, easily read print, in contrast to later paper that soon "burns" and crumbles. Pages were few, but large, and content differed somewhat: front-page items were church notices, stories, and a few ads. In 1887 churches had 3 or more services each Sunday, and additional class, prayer, and other meetings during the week. Rev. R. Bowden Shepherd was Rector at Christ Episcopal, Riverton, and Rev. R. G. Hamilton was Rector at CE, Palmyra. His notice added that seats were free, and strangers welcome at all services. Epworth M.E. of Palmyra & Riverton was served by Rev. Marshall Owens, who also invited strangers to attend his church. At Central Baptist of Riverton & Palmyra, Rev. I.D. Moore offered preaching at 10:45 and 7:30 pm, and also mentioned "free seating". Rev. C.P. Butler was pastor of Calvary Presbyterian; Rev. S.B. Walsh led the Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart in Riverton, and at the Moravian church at 5-Points, the Rev. O.E. Reidenbach held services in German and English on alternating Sundays. Rev. F.S. Slator was pastor at Asbury M.E. Church; Union M.E. did not name a pastor; and Wrightstown Methodist-Protestant Church offered preaching at 10 am by Rev. G. H. Bools.

The Thomas Brothers were still operating their coal yard opposite the railroad station, the post office at Cowperthwaite's was open from 7:10 am to 9 pm daily--except Sundays; Rulon's butcher shop on Howard street was purchased by John W. Chesshire, and Alfred Smith's small store offered neckties at 25¢ each. Residents were offended by the more affluent residents "permitting washerwomen to haul (laundry) through the streets on Sunday afternoons."

In 1911 the Moravian church purchased a lot adjacent to the south end of their property at 5-Points. George Shaner built an addition to J.S. Bioren's home on Bank Ave., and Silas Coddington did the painting. Mrs. Ann Rudderow (mother of Samuel), one of Riverton's oldest residents, died at her home on Lippincott Ave., in her 90th year.

In 1926 Riverton's school was so crowded that in the Fall the principal had to give up her office for a classroom, and use a hallway for her office. The School Board was looking into erecting an additional school building in Memorial Park.

In 1929 the Fire House was remodelled, providing "a 2nd floor seating hall of 400, which can be rented for a suitable fee." It was remembered that Edward Ogden had been the motivating force in establishing a fire company, after seeing the devastation caused by fire in a town without one, in another area. A group had then met at the home of J.C.S. Davis--on the 3rd floor, because a temperance meeting was being held downstairs, and on his lawn, at the time. Edward Pancoast made the first donation--\$25.00--toward the purchase of equipment to fight fires.

1929 was also the year that Mary Biddle Fitler saw her first book in print. It had been written some years before, was rejected, then lay waiting.....When Harper & Bro., the New York publisher, printed "Reddy", its sales soon broke records, and readers clamored for more. "Kid", "Anna Mary", and "The Big Wharf" followed in successive years. These are charming stories of growing up in the Riverton of an earlier time. Was it really only..yesterday..?...

bbh