



Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

Riverton, N.J.

08077

Founded 1970

Inc. 1978

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Meeting: Monday, March 15, 1993

8 p.m.

Auditorium, Riverton School

Program: Historic Signs

.....Paul Musgrove

Mr. Musgrove is a talented young signmaker whose works have become familiar in our area, and in many other communities as well. His home and business are in Mount Holly, and his innovative approach to "restoring" his High Street house soon led to designing storefront and other facades.

Mr. Musgrove's signs are not only attractive, but relate well to the community, business, or building they serve. He has received an award from the New Jersey Builder's Association for "Best Signs in a Housing Development" for his King's Mill work. His "Welcome To" signs are now in many towns--in Riverton, Palmyra, Lumberton, Medford, Burlington, Salem, and others. Many business-area facades in Mt. Holly, Burlington, and Bordentown are his designs.

Slides will illustrate Mr. Musgrove's talk, which will include styles of different periods and some of the techniques used to obtain the desired results. Various wood shapes, moldings, medallions, pigments, gold leaf, and faux finishes to simulate marble and various wood grains, as well as decorative finishes, are used.

Refreshments will be served following the program. Why not invite a friend to come with you to this interesting meeting?

In March, in accordance with our ByLaws, a Nominating Committee of 3 members in good standing will be appointed to prepare a slate of 4 members to serve 3-year terms on the Board of Directors. Elections are at the Annual Meeting in May, and names will be published in the next Newsletter.

If you are contacted and asked to serve, please accept the nomination--it doesn't take much of one's time, and those who become involved gain far more than they are asked to give, from the experience. If you are not contacted, but interested, please contact any of your Board/Officers and let them know--you are needed!

Plaques:

A plaque has been awarded to Renny and Sheila Jones for their home at 400 Fulton Street. The square, Mansard roof clapboard house was built in 1868 by local builder Joel Grant, for Dr. and Mrs. Lloyd W. Bickley, and records of workmen have been passed on by each owner to the present time. Mrs. Bickley was Hannah Miller, eldest daughter of Daniel L. Miller jr., one of Riverton's founders. Mrs. Miller was Anna Ridgeway, whose father purchased a large tract of land between the new village of Riverton and the creek, sold some to Henry A. Dreer, and deeded some to his daughter. She, in turn, deeded a building lot on Fulton Street (and Proad) to each of their children. Hannah's house was the first built on Fulton, and her sister's house was next to it (Leavett's). Deeds not only restricted building lines, but also the size/value of other homes to be built adjacent to these.

Changes have been minimal, mainly those dictated by rotting wood and updating heating and plumbing facilities.

Riverton homes a hundred years old, and/or of particular architectural or historical significance, are eligible for plaques: call 829-6315 for an application.

Tour:

Historical Society members will be given a guided tour of the recently restored areas of the StateHouse in Trenton, on Wednesday, March 10, at 10 a.m. This is not only a significant building, but also a beautiful one that covers two hundred years of history, art, and architecture.

The tour is free. Transportation, shared rides. Following the tour, your choice of lunching at any of the near-by eateries and/or visiting other interesting places within the area--the State Museum, the Barracks, etc. Call 786-8660 or 829-6315 to register and for more details.

Historic Nomination:

Fifteen years ago, when the Historical Society of Riverton first broached the subject of placing Riverton on State and National Registers of Historic Places, it was soundly rejected by our local governing body. Many residents were fearful of it, in the face of rumors about something they did not understand.

We began a program of education through meetings, workshops, and the distribution of information and materials. Representatives from the State's Preservation Department (which has undergone several changes in name and in staff) came to Riverton and spoke with Council members and residents. Under their guidance and with their support, the Historical Society began to gather information about local architecture and history, building dates, and had photographs taken, for use when a Nomination could be prepared. Individuals who wanted to nominate their homes during that period were discouraged from doing so by the State's department, because the town as a whole is qualified as a district, and they preferred that it be done as a whole, when the governing body was ready to approve that it be done.

In 1989 Council was still reluctant to approve any action, and placed a non-binding referendum on the November ballot to determine the interest of Riverton's residents. The Historical Society prepared and distributed a flyer to every home, explaining the Registers and a Nomination to them, and voters strongly supported taking action.

Requirements for a building/district have not changed since initially determined, but the application itself has become more sophisticated. For a district, the services of a professional consultant are required now to prepare it. The Historical Society's limited budget could not meet such a need, funding sources were very limited, and an organization such as ours cannot focus wholly on one long-term project.

In the Spring of 1991 the Mayor appointed a Steering Committee, consisting of three representatives each from APR and the Historical Society, and one liason person from Council. It proved to be an unworkable arrangement, and by unanimous vote of our Board of Directors, we withdrew from the Committee. (See Sept/Oct 1990 Newsletter)

We learned some weeks later that a new committee of six individuals had been set up. They incorporated as the Historic Riverton Nomination Committee, with the sole purpose of finding someone to prepare a Nomination form and financing same. They hired George Thomas, of the Philadelphia CLIO group, who then visited Riverton and determined the area to be included as the nominated district. Recent news releases say that their consultant has "taken hundreds of photographs" and is researching the town's buildings and history. The district will include most of Riverton, although it does exclude some streets that were well developed in the first quarter of this century, and does include areas developed decades later. Additional areas can be added to a district later, via another application (and additional expense).

Seeing the Historical Society's name in HRNC's letters and news releases has led some of our members, and perhaps others, to think that the two organizations are working together on the project. HRNC is an independent group, and there is no dialogue or communication between the two. There has been no interest shown in what has already been done, or in our long-standing offer to supply photographs, history, and/or survey information whenever a Nomination could be prepared. Although we read that the Historical Society will contribute an audio-visual program about HRNC's work, to date no such request or suggestion has been presented to our Board

of Directors for consideration.

We look forward to seeing a Nomination completed; we hope it will accurately present Riverton's history and architectural heritage, and that it will be accepted. It's what a lot of people have worked toward, for a long, long time.

Reminders, Upcoming Events, Etc.....

Christmas seems long ago, as we look toward Spring's coming. But did you enjoy seeing cheery red bows on Riverton's gaslights, during the Holiday Season? The custom was started some years ago by APR, and the bows were missed during the past two years. Historical Society obtained the bows APR had left, purchased additional ones so that each of the town's 52 gaslights and the 2 station lights we had donated to the town could be decorated. Our thanks to New Leaf for bows at cost, and to members Dan Campbell, Paul Daly, Rick Wark, Jack Laverty, and Harry Richman for putting up and taking down the bows. (And we wonder what happened to about a third of the bows, that disappeared from the lampposts?)

New members are always welcome...and if renewals have been overlooked, please check with Membership Chairman Harry Richman and keep your "good standing" status in force.

Reminders..that notepaper is available at the Victorian Thymes and the Library, and Tapes of "Romance of Riverton", 1926 b/w silent film, are also still available. And with nice weather just ahead, pick up a guide (Library or Vic. Thymes) for our Walking Tour and renew your acquaintance with some of Riverton's fine architecture.

Many organizations have planned trips for Spring:

Porch Club: Trip to Flower Show in Philadelphia, March 9th; \$20 includes bus and admission. Phone 786-1979 for reservation, NOW--only a few seats left.

Trip to Newark March 31st, 9am-6 pm. Visit Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, comparable in size to Westminster Abbey, with over 200 stained glass windows; Lunch, then tour of Newark Museum--an exceptionally fine one. Price, \$35 includes everything. Phone 829-7077.

Camden Co. Historical Society Programs:

March 7, 2:30 pm--Ceramics in So. New Jersey--presentation by David Marshall.

March 13, 2 pm--Family Program of folk music by Tom & Marianne Tucker, using many instruments

April 4--Past & Promise: Lives of NJ Women

April 18, 2-4 pm A Colonial Potpourri--a variety of activities to join, games, crafts, etc.

Trip, April 21 8:15-6:30--Two-State Odyssey: Ladew Topiary Gardens in Md., (house and grounds), Lunch at Ladew; Tour/movie at HERR plant (snacks) at Nottingham Pa., then Phillips Mushroom Museum. \$35, deadline March 24. Chks to CCHS c/o 2004 Maple Ave; Haddon Hgts 08035; phone 547-0607.

Quilts in Women's Lives--Wed. March 24, 7-9:30 pm..talks, slides; Glo. Co. office on Education, Tanyard/Salina Rds, Sewell NJ; sponsor: Rutgers Extension free, but register: 863-0130

April 28-May 16, 37 Tours Phila and NJ by Friends of Independence Nat. Hist. Park; Call 1-800-68207676 for brochure, prices, reservations.

Check The County Bell for other programs--free to Burlington Co. residents by contacting Co. Cultural/Heritage Comm/ 49 Rancocas Rd. Mt. Holly 08060, or call 265-5068.

Yesterday.....

It isn't long after a new community is established that some system of maintaining order and enforcing laws must be set up. When Riverton was a small, new village within the larger township of Cinnaminson, the Constable, a peace officer with authority to arrest offenders, serve warrants, etc., could handle matters throughout the large but sparsely settled township. Offenders were brought before the local Judge, most often called Squire, for fining, or for sentencing to the local jail--or hold =up, as it was known--or transfer to a larger jail.

In the earliest years, problems for the new village seemed to come mainly from tramps, who found the railroad cars a quick and easy way to get into or out of a small

village with their loot, and residents hired watchmen to patrol the built-up areas at night.

In 1880 Cinnaminson appointed George Bishop Constable, and also Overseer of the Poor, and Pound Keeper, for the Riverton area. Louis Ourt, at 400 Main St., was the local Squire, and meted out penalties for offenses, such as a \$10 fine for shooting birds out of season.

In December, 1893, Riverton voted to become an independent borough, a Mayor and 4 Council members were voted for, and began Riverton's own government on January 1st, 1894. One of their first ordinances was to mandate sidewalks--put down by residents--and to have houses numbered. They had to set up various offices, and to set salaries for employees.

In the summer of 1895 Riverton had its first uniformed policeman, and the following May the Marshall's salary was set at \$150, and Marshall police duty, \$20.84 a month. In 1913 the Marshall's salary was increased from \$50 to \$60 a month--with the notation that "killing and burying dogs to be included in service without extra pay."

Around 1903 William Quigley became a policeman, and he and fellow officer Walter Miller were familiar figures in town for many years. Both were men of some size, and were sometimes referred to, in the 1920s, as "the biggest police force in the county", for their belts had to be custom made, and the small enclosures used by police at busy intersections at that time were not practical for them.

Their size did not interfere with their duties, however, and their work was often praised in local papers. One October day, in 1920, they noticed a man on Bank Ave. with tires on his shoulders, and gave chase through the cornfields that still covered most of that area. Quigley heard a splash, and he and a man who had joined the chase jumped into a sailboat and paddled out to the intruder, up to his neck in water. They got him into the boat, he stood up and overturned it--but Quigley caught the man, dragged him ashore and up over the river wall, and so to jail.

In 1926 the new mayor, Fred Hemphill, said police work had become beyond the point where 2 officers could perform the expected duties; he proposed hiring a new man to be police chief and look after such things as sidewalks needing repairs and road problems, which were being overlooked. Police appointments were Williams, Lynch, and Welsh, and Marshalls were Quigley and Miller.

That year Riverton organized its own highway department, and purchased a one-ton dump truck from Palmyra Motor Co, lettered "Borough of Riverton Highway Department." Road problems were many; temporary work done previously now had to be attended to more permanently. Stone roads had been 6" deep, but with repeated scraping they were down to 3". Where heavy oil had been applied over gravel, areas had hardened and broken off. A budget of \$6500 was needed--Park Ave. alone required \$2000 of work. John Carhart was employed to do the roadwork, at a salary of \$140 a month. He also stored the truck, and the scraper, in his own heated garage, and was an expert auto mechanic, able to keep the equipment in good shape.

In 1930 a petition of nearly 1000 signatures was presented to Council to have Quigley named Chief of Police. He was already a Marshall, and it was not legal for him to hold two positions--but it was evidently settled to everyone's satisfaction, and he became Chief.

He died suddenly on January 10, 1931, after 28 years of service. His funeral cortege was attended by State Troopers, police from neighboring towns, and the children of Riverton School lined the curbs as they passed, to pay respect to their friend.

Exactly when Riverton's Police Department was organized as a separate branch is not known. Not until the 1930s was any mention made of a Riverton Police Department, when William Gootttee was Chief, and headed it.