



Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey

Founded 1970

Incorporated 1978

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Upcoming Program to Highlight History of Long Beach Island

A meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton will be held On October 4, 1993 at 8:00 p.m. in the Riverton Public School Media Center. The school is located at Fifth and Howard Streets and attendees can enter the building through the main door on Fifth Street.

After a short business meeting, Mr. John Bailey Lloyd, noted author of two books about Long Beach Island, will take us back in time via a slide/lecture presentation. The visual portion of Mr. Lloyd's program is centered around the "lost" photographs of Robert Fry Engle, a skilled professional photographer before he took over the management of the Engleside Hotel, around 1900, upon the death of his father, Robert Barclay Engle. As a photographer, Mr. Engle traveled the world with Burton Holmes, one of the greatest travel photographers of his day. Engle continued to take pictures after he settled in Beach Haven and recorded many local activities including the development of the Island and the various forms of transportation used.

The photographs were considered "lost," following Engle's death, until it was discovered that a good friend of the photographer's had them in his possession. The friend held them, waiting, these many years, for someone to use them in a manner that would please their original owner. Robert Engle loved to give slide shows and he loved the history of Beach Haven. According to Mr. Lloyd, there is no better way to honor Engle's memory than with this slide program.

John Bailey Lloyd was born in Johnstown, Pa. and has been on Long Beach Island since 1942 and became a permanent resident with his wife and two sons in 1977.

Mr. Lloyd graduated from Mount Saint Mary's College and received a Master's degree in English from the University of Michigan and a Master's degree in Library Science from Rutgers University. He is currently employed in the Reference Department of the Ocean County Library at Toms River. He can usually be found working in the Baker Historical Library, a division of the Ocean County Library. Mr. Lloyd is currently working on a novel about life in Beach Haven in 1900.

Come out and join us for this evening of entertainment and education. Remember, Long Beach Island was one of the seashore resorts of choice for old-time Riverton residents. You may find out why during this program. Visitors are always welcome!

Future Programs are Scheduled

Frank Wagenknight, our eminent Program Chairman, has announced the following schedule of programs for the upcoming year:

November 29, 1993-The Rev. Richard Moore presenting, "Our Maritime Heritage in Marine Painting."

January 24, 1994-Dr. Robert Heal discussing, "Presidents' Homes and Museums."

March 14, 1994-A continental soldier from the Old Barracks Museum in Trenton.

May 9, 1994-Mrs. Delores Blake, Superintendent of the Beverly National Cemetery.

Festivities Being Planned to Celebrate The Borough of Riverton's 100th Anniversary

December 18, 1993 is the 100th anniversary of Riverton becoming a borough. Prior to December 1893, Riverton was only a section or settlement within Cinnaminson Township. A referendum to separate was passed on December 12 and was officially recorded with the New Jersey Secretary of State on December 18, 1893.

While the festivities are still being planned, it appears that they will take place the evening of December 1, 1993, kicking off a month-long celebration of the anniversary. Plans call for the initial event to be a joint effort of Borough Council and the Historical Society of Riverton. Please keep the evening of December 1, 1993 open for this momentous occasion. More details will be forthcoming in the next issue of *Gaslight News*.

Gaslight News

is a production of the Historical Society of
Riverton and is published four times a year.

Daniel T. Campbell.....President
Paul W. Schopp.....Editor
The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey 08077

Another Plaque Awarded by H.S. of R. Plaque Committee

In June, a plaque was awarded to Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Snyder for their home at 106 Broad Street. Built in 1878 by Charles Lowden, on a lot he had purchased from William Thomas, and described as "between Riverton & Palmyra on north side of the river road," it was surrounded by planted fields, for the Thomas Extension had not yet been opened for development. Lowden moved into his new home from Palmyra, where he had been a shopkeeper and was subsequently identified as a carpenter/builder. Several sons followed in related trades and one, Louis Lowden, became a well known builder of Riverton's homes.

The house is a narrow, 2½ story, frame building, with a side gable roof, and has been well maintained over the 115 years of existence. Heating, plumbing and electrical changes have been made, consistent with present-day living, but the interior is basically unchanged. Beautiful, random-width, flooring is preserved throughout the house, as are the early hot-air registers from the first coal furnace. During the ownership of realtor Joseph Yearly, Sr., the front porch was removed, aluminum siding covered the original clapboard exterior and a small one-room office was added to the left side. The small side porch on the right was reinforced and later enclosed for a "mud-room" entry. The present owners replaced the original 2/2 windows with 1/1 thermal windows.

If you are interested in having a plaque on your home, and it is a century old or is architecturally or historically significant, contact the Plaque Committee for information and an application. Documenting a building is not difficult and it's fun to learn the story of YOUR house.

Betty Hahle, chairman
829-6315

Historical Society News

An election of Directors was held at the annual meeting in May with the following results:

Paul Schopp	re-elected
Rod Zwirner	re-elected
Virginia Kline	elected
Ruth Schweizer	elected

At the Board of Directors reorganization meeting, held on May 24, 1993, the following officers were elected:

Dan Campbell	President
Paul Schopp	Vice-President
Nancy Washington	Secretary
Paul Daily	Treasurer

Honorary life member Harris Sacks and his wife, Anne, have relocated. Their new address is:

Mr. & Mrs. Harris Sacks
Parkview Retirement Center
1801 Wicker Street Extension
PO Box 4057
Sanford, NC
27330

Attached to this issue of *Gaslight News*, you will find a 1993-94 Membership Form. If you are already a member, you are urged to return this to the membership chairman as soon as possible with your check. If you are not a member, the Historical Society of Riverton sincerely invites you to join and become involved in our community's history and architectural heritage.

Don't forget that notepaper and walking tours are available at the Library and Victorian Times. If a new neighbor moves in near you, why not purchase a walking tour to give to them? What a great way to introduce them to the architectural heritage of Riverton. They may also be interested in joining the Historical Society. Let's all try and recruit a new member for the Society this year!

If a member has an article that they would like to see published or would like to reveal some new information about the history of Riverton, please contact Paul Schopp at 786-1499. Contributions to *Gaslight News* are always welcome. Remember, this is your publication.



Coming Events of Interest

The Burlington County Historical Society is sponsoring a Pinelands Ghost Town Tour led by Bill Leap. The tour will be held on October 9, 1993 and the cost is \$30 per car. If you remember, we had a similar tour a couple of years ago. If you missed ours, or would like to have an encore presentation, call 386-4773. The trip will operate rain or shine.

Also at the County Society, Judy Olsen will present her Yuletide program, *Christmas Traditions in the Pinelands* on November 14th in the Corson Poley Center. She presented for us last year and it was very interesting!

Two final events of note at the County Society are a Christmas bus trip to Nemours Mansion and Longwood Gardens on November 30th and a Christmas Open House

at the Corson Poley Center on December 12th. More information on any of these events can be obtained by calling the Society at 386-4773.

The New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance is offering a series of workshops to promote the development of New Jersey studies in schools, libraries, museums and historical societies. The South Jersey workshop will be held at the Educational Information and Resource Center in Sewell on November 18, 1993. The cost will be \$10.00 (\$8.00 for senior citizens) which includes a dinner. Anyone desiring more information about this program should contact either Dan Campbell or Paul Schopp.

The Historic Preservation Advisory Committee is holding Regional Town Meetings in an effort to provide dialogue between itself and the citizenry about historic preservation in New Jersey. They would like residents concerned about promoting and preserving our state's heritage to tell the committee how effective current programs are and how they can be improved. The closest meeting to Riverton would be the Central Town Meeting to be held on Saturday, October 2, 1993, at Princeton University from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. More information can be obtained by contacting Natural & Historic Resources at (609) 292-3904.

The Walter Edge Foran Institute at Morven is continuing its series of workshops to aid New Jersey non-profit historical societies and small museums. This year, the Institute is offering two courses of study consisting of three sessions each, both geared to the non-professional. The first is "Managing Historical Collections" and the second one, "Historical Organization Support." Anyone interested in attending either or both of these courses as a representative should contact Dan Campbell at 786-8660 or Paul Schopp at 786-1499.

The town of Cranbury, New Jersey, is holding a House Tour on Sunday, October 3, 1993, between the hours of 1:00 and 5:00 p.m.. Featured on the tour will be seven homes, two churches, a gristmill's house and a museum and herb garden. Refreshments will be served and the cost is \$12.00. More information can be obtained by calling Elizabeth Callaway at (609) 395-8430. Cranbury is a very old village and is delightful just to drive through. A house tour in this community would really be something quite special.

The New Jersey Historical Commission is offering three new volumes in their *New Jersey History Series*. They are: *One State in Arms: A Short Military History of New Jersey* by Mark Edward Lender; *The Uses of Abundance: A History of New Jersey's Economy* by Paul G.E. Clemens; and *The Indians of New Jersey* by Gregory Evans Dowd. Any or all of these would make a fine addition to your library. Inquiries concerning these books can be addressed to: New Jersey Historical Commission, CN 305, Trenton, New Jersey 08625. Each costs \$9.00.

Yesterday...

by Betty B. Hahle

On December 18, 1993, Riverton will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its incorporation as a borough. The village had been established forty-two years earlier and cared for during its first twenty years by the Founders' corporation, The Riverton Improvement Co., which saw to many things usually taken care of by a municipal government. It also ensured that the village remained a residential community, as planned.

By 1880 some changes had taken place. The country had gone through a Civil War and its recovery. The original corporation had expired, and of the Founding Fathers, only Robert Biddle remained, although he stayed active throughout his life and many branches of his, and other founder's families, populated a good section of town. The initial village boundaries had been expanded and the building trades were again working steadily. There was little development below Thomas Avenue or below Fourth Street, but houses were being built above the railroad. The new lumber/feed yard and several small shops, as well as Woolston's Carriage Works, were kept busy. An increase in population had brought a need for many services and a number of small shops had opened in the front room of a proprietor's home. The old schoolhouse was bulging, in spite of additions, and after an increase of fifty pupils in one school year, a new building was about to be erected, still at Fourth below Howard Street.

In this era, people moving to Riverton were often those called *nouveau riche* or "the newly rich," who had made fortunes from the war or investments in railroads, mining, industries and real estate. Without income taxes, there was money to spend and they did spend freely. They wanted elaborate homes, lavishly furnished—and often gaudily over-done, even for those times. When they found that a small rural village did not have some of the comforts they were used to in the cities they had left, they demanded improvements and became vocal at town meetings. Not surprisingly, their views often met with a decided lack of enthusiasm from older and more conservative residents who feared big increases in property taxes if their wants were not satisfied. Not only that, but they were being "brought about by some who don't even own property here and will be here today and gone tomorrow."

When the Palmyra-Riverton Water Co. formed in 1889, a comment in a newspaper expressed the opinion that there was "pure, soft, cold water here in abundance and it is far preferable to any a company might furnish—unless to accommodate those too lazy to pump their own." By 1890, only a few pipe lines and fire plugs had been installed and drainage pipes were being laid along Main Street for waste water to be emptied into the river. But improvements came slowly and most things we take for granted today simply didn't exist then.

Water was hand-pumped in yard or kitchen, carried to where it was wanted, then carried outside to be emptied. Hot water was heated on the kitchen range and taken where needed. Gas was still a few years away and

electricity more than twenty years in the future. Companies were planned and formed but were not productive. Houses were lighted with oil lamps and heated with coal or wood-fired iron stoves, which replaced fireplaces. An open floor register above the stove allowed some upper rooms to be heated also. "Plumbing" was mainly outdoors--flush toilets were still years away; bathtubs were available, usually hand-filled and emptied--although some were filled/drained by gravity if there was an upper vat for rain water.

Transportation was by train (30 minutes to Philadelphia), river (35 minutes by steamboat), or horse and carriage. Otherwise, people walked. Streets were not paved, but wood sidewalks were usually placed outside during bad weather; a few oil street lamps made walking after dark a little safer, since most properties were fenced in, and gates were sometimes found open.

Seasonal foods were plentiful in a village adjoining acres of orchards and truck farms. Most families kept a few chickens and had a garden patch. Some also had a goat; others had pigeons. Larger homes had stables for horses and a few cows. Dogs and other animals often wandered into the yard. Hand-blown glass jars held canned foods; newer, factory-canned, foods in tins were too expensive for most people to enjoy. Ice boxes were beginning to appear in homes, but most perishables were kept in a cool cellar or on a windowsill (unscreened).

Soap was homemade, laundry was done on a washboard or boiled white on the range. A back shed served this purpose, although, in the summer, it was more comfortably done outside. Affluent families had help for chores such as this--often "washer-women" who worked at home.

A nation-wide depression had ushered in the "Gay Nineties," but, in general, it was a period in which people were happy, pleased with their lives, taking trips and enjoying an upsurge of interest in art, music and literature. Sentiment was prevalent--people cried over *Black Beauty* (1890) and everyone wrote poetry--often dealing with death or salvation. There was a growing awareness of social problems and interest in needed reforms.

There were many activities in Riverton. At the Lyceum on Fourth Street (erected in 1886), there were lectures, concerts, operettas, dances, parties, meetings, bazaars, graduations and basketball. There were local choral groups, a flute and drum band and indoor games of different kinds, including a new game called "Tiddy Winks." Sports were extremely popular. Riverton teams for baseball, cricket, football and basketball played home and away games and they were avidly followed by their fans. Betting on teams was increasing, to the dismay of some.

Bicycles continued to gain favor, although not yet fully accepted for women to use. A tricycle for two was viewed as "shocking and immoral" when used by "persons of different sexes," and riders sped at a pace with horses, resulting in an 8 mph speed limit being set for them. They were banned altogether from using Broad and Main Streets.

The river offered fishing, bathing, boating and gunning along its marshy banks. The Yacht Club, already a quarter-century old, was having a slump, since many of the old, big yachts were gone. Activities now included many smaller craft--rowboats, canoes, skiffs, etc.--in regattas and carnivals. There were also some steam yachts.

Many occasions were cause for a parade through the streets: Fourth of July, the newer Labor Day and Decoration Day celebrations, political rallies, etc. Riverton's Band, sometimes joined by Palmyra's Cornet Band and local club members paraded together. Since the Volunteer Fire Company had been organized in 1890, their members became participants in parades as well.

There was not yet a free public Library, but each Church had a small lending library and the second floor of the new Price Building, not yet rented, was heated and fitted up with chairs and magazines and newspapers and open to anyone wishing to read. A group of eight women formed a reading club to study literature and social issues and called themselves "The Porch Club" after their meeting place.

When Cinnaminson was erected from Chester Township in 1860, a number of small villages were within its 3 x 6 mile boundaries. Some of these villages later separated while others gave up their individual identities and were absorbed into the parent community. As early as 1880, rumors that Riverton was planning to separate found their way into newspapers, although they were shortlived. Periodically, they resurfaced.

When the *New Era* began publication in Riverton in February 1890, Palmyra's local editor apparently found it unwelcome competition and urged his advertisers and subscribers not to patronize it. The issue of separation flared up once again and was fanned when a series of articles, purported to have been written by the *New Era's* Dr. Janney, stirred up heated arguments among residents of both towns. When Dr. Janney and his editor threatened a lawsuit if public acknowledgment that they were false were not made, they stopped. But this time the seeds had been sown and the separation of Riverton--and Palmyra--from Cinnaminson would soon be realized.

(To be continued in the next issue of *Golden News*)

From almost the inception of this publication, Betty Hahle has faithfully labored over each issue with loving care. She performed every task required for its production and distribution with little or no assistance. After producing an incredible 65+ issues, she has decided to retire from this activity with the exception of the *Yesterday...* feature, always her favorite! Thanks, Betty, for all your labors, past, present and future! I salute you!

It is with a lump in my throat that I even attempt to walk in her footprints--I could never expect to fill her shoes! I will do my best to live up to the standards of quality that she has set, adding my own little touches through the use of new technologies. I request your input to guide me in this new venture and I hope you like this, my first issue as editor of *Golden News*.

--Paul W. Schopp--