



Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton
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November Meeting to Feature Maritime Heritage Through Art

A meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton will be held on Monday, November 29, 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, The Reverend Richard C. Moore, pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church in Riverton, will present a program titled, *Our Maritime Heritage in the Marine Painting of Richard C. Moore*.

We live alongside one of America's great rivers. The Port of Philadelphia, pre-eminent since colonial times, reminds us of our rich maritime heritage, often too little appreciated by many of our fellow citizens.

Richard Moore will review a portion of that heritage through the medium of his paintings. He has concentrated on the recreation of this heritage by depicting ships which have made history, from colonial warships to the renowned clipper ships and great warships of recent years.

Using slides of his own paintings, Mr. Moore will describe various types of ships that have long sailed the seas of the world. In addition to explaining the significance of these ships, Mr. Moore will add interesting commentary on the research and artistic techniques necessary to produce his paintings.

During the evening, Mr. Moore will unveil his latest work to the public. This new painting depicts a whaling disaster above the Arctic Circle in 1871, in which 31 New England whaling ships were caught in the ice pack and lost.

Mr. Moore has resided in Riverton for 27 years with his wife Toshii and two sons. He is a graduate in history from the University of Pennsylvania and received his Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. He served for five years in the U.S. Navy, first as a line officer and then as a chaplain. Mr. Moore is a charter member of the American Society of Marine Artists, the country's principal association for painters of the sea. He is gratified to have been recommended for membership

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Presidential Locations is Program for January

Another meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton will also be held on Monday, January 24, 1994 at 8:00 p.m. in the Riverton Public School Media Center. After a short business meeting, Dr. Robert Heal, of Delanco, will deliver an illustrated talk of *Parade of Presidents*.

Over several decades of vacation travel, Dr. & Mrs. Heal have pursued a special interest in visiting places pertaining to U.S. Presidents, with the aim of recording, on film and paper, evidence of the origins, development and events that shaped the careers of these men.

This has not always been easy; it has required some tracking down. Not all presidents have received equal attention as to historical preservation. There are gaps of publicizing, as well as de-emphasizing by locals who do not want the visitors' traffic. For example, it is only recently that one can find directions to Jersey-born Grover Cleveland's home in Caldwell. President Woodrow Wilson is reputed to have vacationed on the riverfront in Edgewater Park, but Dr. Heal has never been able to confirm this. He has many anecdotes about his searches: encounters with earnest folk who help in preserving artifacts and in alerting the public, albeit with little public or financial aid.

Featured in this program will be birthplaces and other homes, places of crucial importance to Presidential careers (Buffalo, N.Y., for example, where Theodore Roosevelt took the oath of office after President McKinley's assassination) as well as burial places and museums. In this hour presentation, Dr. Heal covers almost every U.S. President. Residences of living Presidents have somewhat limited accessibility, which is to be expected.

Dr. Robert Heal has recently retired after more than 40 years of general practice of medicine, most of it in Delanco. He grew up in Moorestown, where he attended school and met his future wife, Marjorie. He entered into the medical track in the ASTP program during World War II. That took him to many stations around the United States.

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

EXTRA EDITION NEWS

**Riverton Incorporation Centennial
Celebration Planned**

Festivities Set for December 2, 1993

The Borough of Riverton will reach the one-hundredth anniversary of its incorporation as a borough on December 18, 1993. To commemorate this event, the Borough Council of Riverton and The Historical Society of Riverton are co-sponsoring an evening celebration on December 2, 1993, from 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., in the Riverton School Auditorium.

The theme for the evening is *Riverton--A Century of Distinction as a Borough*. The Council and Historical Society have invited the State and local civic groups from the community to participate in the program.

The Riverton Fourth of July Committee will provide patriotic decorations. Musical entertainment, featuring songs from the 1890's to the turn of the century, will be rendered by the Riverton Porch Club Chorus.

New Jersey State Senator Bradford Smith will be present to read a proclamation from the New Jersey Legislature commemorating and recognizing Riverton for its centennial of distinction as a Borough.

The Borough Council and Historical Society will display maps, photographs and papers relevant to the history of Riverton in the 1890s and primarily concerned with the incorporation.

The keynote speaker for the evening will be Betty Hahle, Local Historian, who will provide a program about Riverton in the 1890s, the original founders and the incorporation process.

Riverton was created in 1851 by the *Riverton Improvement Company* as a planned residential community. The founders were primarily Philadelphia merchants with a desire to escape from the city in the warmer weather. At that time, the area that is now Riverton was predominately farmland. Until 1893, Riverton remained a section of Cinnaminson Township known as the Village of Riverton. In 1893, several of the prominent citizens petitioned the State of New Jersey for incorporation as a separate borough. This was approved by the State on December 18, 1893. The original papers of incorporation will be displayed as part of the archival materials shown during the December 2nd event.

All Riverton residents and other interested persons are invited to attend this celebration. Refreshments and a short social period will be provided after the scheduled program. Anyone requiring more information, may call Dan Campbell (President, Historical Society of Riverton) at 786-8660 or Anne Cannon (Borough Mayor) at 829-8494.

Maritime History Program

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by Carl G. Evers, who is recognized internationally as the contemporary master and "dean" of marine art in the medium of watercolor.

Mr. Moore has contributed to many national marine exhibitions. His paintings are in the collections of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Museum in Hyde Park, N.Y., the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Fla., and in a wide variety of museums and private collections in this country and abroad. He produced over thirty sketches for the Franklin Mint and was invited by the Philadelphia Maritime Museum to hold a "one man" exhibition of his paintings at Penn's Landing. He is included regularly in the national exhibitions of the American Society of Marine Artists, the most recent of which was held in Mystic Seaport, Conn.

Please come and enjoy this special program of maritime history. Without the Delaware River serving as a medium of transportation, Riverton may never have been founded! Remember, visitors are always welcome!



Presidential Locations Program

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After the war, Dr. Heal completed his studies and received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Internship took him and his wife to Indianapolis before settling in Delanco.

This should prove to be a most informative and enlightening program. We urge all society members to attend. And why not bring a friend? They are sure to enjoy it, too. Visitors are always welcome!



Upcoming Program Schedule

Frank Wagenknight, our Program Chairman, would like to remind you of the following schedule of upcoming programs:

March 14, 1994-A Continental Soldier from the Old Barracks Museum in Trenton.

May 9, 1994-The Beverly National Cemetery, now over 130 years old, Presentation by Mrs. Dolores Blake, Superintendent.

-RIVERTON-
A Century of Distinction as a Borough

Coming Events of Interest

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Yesterday... pg 3
by Betty B. Hahle

The homes of Trenton's Mill Hill district will open their doors on Saturday, December 4, 1993 for the 27th Mill Hill House Tour. The tour is from Noon to 5 p.m. and tickets are \$10.00. They may be purchased at the Mill Hill Playhouse at 11:30 a.m. on the day of the tour or in advance at Joe's Mill Hill Saloon, located at 300 South Broad Street. Call (609) 989-8977 for more information.

The Burlington County Historical Society is holding their annual Christmas Open House on December 12, 1993. Times are 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Cooper and Lawrence Houses and 4:00-5:00 p.m. at the Corson Poley Center. For more information, please call (609) 386-4773.

The Gloucester County community of Wenonah is sponsoring *A Wenonah Christmas* house tour on December 12, 1993 from 3:00-8:00 p.m. \$6.00 tickets may be purchased in advance from a variety of local businesses or \$8.00 tickets can be obtained during tour hours at the Railroad Station or the Library. For further information, you can call (609)468-6065. This town, like Riverton, shares a similar richness of Victorian architecture.

The City of Burlington Historical Society is featuring a Holiday House Tour on December 12, 1993 from 4:00-8:00 p.m. There will be an admission charged. For more information, call (609) 387-9245.

Beverly and Edgewater Park is also having a Holiday House Tour on December 3 & 4, 1993. On the Third, this tour will be conducted by candlelight from 4:00-9:00 p.m. On the Fourth, the tour times will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call (609) 871-3859 for details about this event.

The New Jersey Historical Commission is sponsoring a its Ninth Annual Conference on December 4, 1993 at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton. This year's theme will be "*All in the Same Boat?*" --Historical Perspectives on Recent Immigration to New Jersey. For more information, please contact Dan Campbell (786-8660) or Paul Schopp (786-1499).

Historical Society News

Have you remitted your 1993-94 dues to Jack Laverty Yet? Your dues are so important to the operations of the Historical Society. They also allow you to continue receiving this newsletter. Please send a check today! If you have never been a member, you are invited to join.

Looking for that certain special gift for someone who has everything? How about giving one or two boxes of Historical Society Notepaper? The illustrations make them special and you will be helping the Society.

In 1893, the village of Riverton was forty-two years old and had more than doubled its original size. The Lippincott Extension in 1877 had added sixty-four lots at the southwest boundary and these were quickly developed. In 1881, Sam Rudderow opened a tract above the railroad and Cinnaminson and Main Streets were developing up to Eighth. The Thomas Extension in 1882 brought the boundary below the railroad to just about today's line, but was slower to develop; few buildings were erected below Fourth Street for the next quarter-century.

Although it was still considered to be a summer home community, each year saw more permanent residents and once again the subject of independence and incorporation as a borough surfaced. Some favored joining Palmyra as a new township, while others favored each remaining separate. Riverton favored a borough form of government. In 1891, newspapers wrote that people were talking separation, but that the topic had been "talked to death" the year before, and nothing would come of it. In Palmyra, the majority of residents had signed a petition against separation. By Spring 1892, meetings were being held in Riverton to discuss incorporation. A Committee was formed and public meetings were also held. There was resentment against taxes and the increase that year and the fact that Riverton paid two-thirds of Cinnaminson's property taxes, but had only a minority vote in its government added to the resentment.

Accounts of feelings and events on the subject of separation are found primarily in newspapers of the day and only a few words in columns of local news appeared from time to time. When Riverton seemed unwilling to unite with Palmyra, for example, name-calling and bickering escalated until Palmyra threatened to form its own township and take all the land to Thomas Avenue; dire predictions were made of troubles a borough form of government would predicate. Then in April 1893, a Legislative Bill was passed to create a new township, to be called Columbia, and included Palmyra and West Palmyra, and Riverton--but not East Riverton. It lacked only the signature of Gov. George Werts when Riverton's Committee to Incorporate became aware of it. A hasty trip to Trenton to protest the Bill was made and within the month, the Committee had drafted a petition requesting a special election to vote for or against incorporation as a borough, for Riverton. Boundaries were mapped out almost as they are today.

The Petition had seventy-two signatures of property owners whose total value amounted to not less than one-tenth of the total taxable value within the proposed area. It was presented on Saturday, November 25, 1893, to the Hon. George Garrison, New Jersey Supreme Court Justice who held Circuit Court for Burlington County.

In the past, a new borough or township was created by Legislative action. When railroads started to run special seashore lines, overnight, small hamlets along

the coast grew and soon wanted to govern themselves. The increased demand for action was such that new laws were enacted--and amended--and rescinded--and re-enacted--until it was difficult to sort out exactly what was required. On April 2, 1891, an Act for the Formation and Government of Boroughs was approved, which allowed communities desiring borough status to apply by petition. Requirements were that an area be not over two square miles, with taxable real estate of not less than \$100,000 and a permanent resident population of not less than two hundred at any time of the year. Under this act, with its several supplements and amendments, Riverton village sought incorporation as "The Mayor and Council of the Borough of Riverton." Riverton's area was short of one square mile; taxable property, certified by Cinnaminson's Collector William F. Morgan, was \$487,000, and the population was verified as 1300. Accordingly, a Special Election was set for Tuesday, December 12th, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., at "the house of the Riverton Fire Company on Howard Street."

Other matters of interest to Riverton residents in this last part of 1893 were a proposed new four-story hotel to be built on the Riverbank on the Thomas Extension, with elevators, electricity and "all modern conveniences." Stock was offered and all seemed good--until it was learned that a bar was to be included in the plan--and the venture failed.

Season tickets for dances at the Lyceum on Fourth Street were on sale. The opera house had opened in September 1886, and offered lectures, plays musicals, etc. The new railroad station had been erected in 1887 and was much admired by commuters--and also, unfortunately, by loiterers. A big frame schoolhouse had been built at a cost of \$4,400 in 1892. Its six rooms finally ended overcrowding and other problems that had been endured by students of the eight elementary grades and the six students studying high school subjects for so many years. New flagstone crosswalks had just been satisfactorily completed at all intersections by Louis Corner, street commissioner. These two improvements had caused an increase in local taxes, although taxpayers refused to accept that explanation. And water mains and fire plugs reached more homes throughout the village each successive year.

Thanksgiving Day in 1893 was proclaimed for November 30th and the New Era, in its fourth year of publication, offered a recipe for temperance mince pie, substituting a mixture of water and vinegar for the familiar brandy or cider in it. A reporter predicted that while Prohibitionists might enjoy it, it would never catch on.

At the Special Election on December 12th, 217 of Riverton's 261 eligible voters cast ballots. Those voting for incorporation, 176; those opposing, 41. On December 18th, Judge Garrison made it official and the Borough of Riverton was formed.

On December 26th, there was another Special Election at the Fire House, this time for Mayor and officers for the new borough. Elected were: Mayor, Edward H. Ogden; four-member council, Dr. H.B. Hall, O.H. Mattis, J.C.W. Frishmuth and William M. Thomas. Of those, the first two served two-year terms and the latter, one year.

Borough Clerk was Edward Stoughton; Assessor, Edward H. Pancoast; Collector, Charles R. Haig; Commissioners of Appeal, Samuel Slim, Ezra Lippincott and Charles M. Biddle. W.J. McIlhenny was elected Judge of Elections and Inspectors were Louis F. Louden and Mahlon Faust. Poundkeeper, George Faust.

All were sworn into office on January 1, 1894 by Lewis Ourt, J.P. Clerk Stoughton then certified the action and the boundaries of the borough, filing these documents on January 4th. Council met at the Fire House on Tuesdays.

For the new governing body and for the residents, there were many things to learn about what they could, or could not, do--lessons that must be learned again and again as both population and societal customs change. A reporter summed it up in this way: "Incorporation will not lower taxes, nor will the town be better governed than before until taxpayers generally take more interest in the primaries than they have heretofore."

As we celebrate a century of our incorporation as a borough, we also pay tribute to all of those, both past and present, who, from the village founding in 1851, through incorporation in 1893, to those serving in many capacities today, have helped to make Riverton the community so many are proud to call "home."

"...But do you think it was honest of them to take Mr. Gardner's steak, and borrow his gun, so that Reddy could have a Christmas turkey?"

Again Mike's eyes fired up. "So Reddy could have a Christmas turkey!" he repeated hotly. "Why, man dear, you know about as much about that boy as an elephant does about a diamond ring. He wanted that turkey for seven little kids, he did, who weren't goin' to get a Christmas unless those blessed boys saw to it, their Pop bein' in bed all winter with the rheumatiz."

"Might I ask how you know all this, and who you are?"

"I'm Mike the motorman, sir, that operates a car between here and Riverview. And I know it all 'cause I'm the kids' father that was laid up with rheumatiz. And it's my kids they gave the Christmas to. It was this way, sir," and off again, Mike told about the Christmas surprise, his side of it, and the boys' also, as he had since heard it from Stocky.

Long before he had finished, the father's eyes again were hot with a scalding mist that blurred his vision--and the hands in his pockets trembled. Never in all his life before had he been so stirred.

Mike the motorman finished in a husky voice. "And that's the kind of kids they are, sir, always doin' somethin' for somebody..."

--excerpted from Reddy by Mary Biddle Fidler (local Riverton Author)

May a joyous and giving season be yours during the 1993 Holiday. It is only in giving that we truly receive. May God richly bless each one of you, now and in 1994!

--Paul W. Schopp--