



# Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton  
Riverton, New Jersey

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## Soup Tureens Program Featured

A meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton will be held on Monday, November 27, 1995, at 8:00 P.M. in the Riverton Public School Media Center. The school is located at Fifth and Howard streets. Attendees can enter the building through the main door located on Fifth Street. After a short business meeting, Felecia Rehmann, Campbell Soup Tureen Museum Assistant Curator, will present "Insights into the Campbell Collection".

Using her creativity and decorative arts knowledge, Mrs. Rehmann, a former teacher, will engage the audience as she transforms these elegant tureens into vessels to which all can relate and find delight. Her presentation will include a twenty minute video entitled, "Artistry in Tureens," which depicts the production of two magnificent eighteenth-century pieces. These reflect the grandeur of the Campbell Collection. Those in attendance will be encouraged to handle two tureens from the collection and all questions will be welcomed and skillfully answered.

The Campbell Museum was chartered by the state of New Jersey in May 1966 as a nonprofit educational institution. Its objective has been to assemble and exhibit to the public a collection of tureens, bowls and utensils made for food service dating from 500 B.C. to the present.

Not surprisingly, the majority of items collected to date were made in the eighteenth century in western Europe, where the decorative arts received abundant attention and financial encouragement from the royal families and other great houses. Formal dining during this period was done on a grand scale and with an elegance that is probably unmatched in all history.

In many, if not most, table services the soup tureen has been the most massive and decorative single object. Recognizing the great workmanship found in many antique tureens and realizing that because of their size and cost, tureens have seldom been sought by the average collector, or even by many museums,

(continued on Page 2)

## January Program will Feature Shipbuilding on the Delaware

Another meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton will also be held on Monday, January 22, 1996 at 8:00 P.M. in the Riverton Public School Media Center. After a short business meeting, your editor, Paul Schopp, will deliver an illustrated talk on Shipbuilding on the Delaware River.

An area of intense shipbuilding activity since colonial times, yards have dotted the shores of the Delaware River from Bordentown to the State of Delaware and the Jersey coast of the Delaware Bay.

Burlington was an early site of such activities. Gabriel Thomas, writing in 1698, stated that "several fine Ships and Vessels (besides Governor Cox's own great Ship) have been built there." In 1744, the much-celebrated privateer *Marlborough* was constructed in Burlington and taken to Philadelphia for outfitting after she was launched.

When iron shipbuilding became widely accepted, it was the yards of the Delaware River that pioneered the use of this material. One of these companies, John Roach & Co., constructed more iron-hulled vessels during the nineteenth century than all of the other yards along the river combined. Many of the forgings necessary for iron shipbuilding were supplied by the steam forge at White Hill (now Fieldsboro), New Jersey. The Delaware River earned the nickname of "The American Clyde," after the Scottish river, during this period of iron ship construction.

World War I loomed on the horizon for America, and the government realized that the country's merchant fleet was somewhat of a rag-tag group of ships, many with wooden hulls, left over from the nineteenth century. Existing yards along the Delaware River were retooled and expanded. The Federal government formed the Emergency Fleet Corporation to oversee the construction and utilization of shipping resources. This new corporation sponsored the construction of new "Agency Yards" to answer the

(continued on Page 2)

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### **Soup Tureen Program**

(continued from Page 1)

the management of Campbell Soup Company suggested that this museum be established. The company provided the financial support so that a collection principally of tureens, bowls and ladles could be formed where the serious student of the decorative arts as well as those interested in foods and the history of food service could study, under one roof, examples of fine tureens in many different materials and from many parts of the world.

No other part of the dinner service has lent itself to the unusual and bizarre in form and design as have tureens. They run the gamut from ship to fish, fowl to animals, vegetables and fruits to flowers, and often to a combination of several. They may not all be appetizing and they may not all be objects of beauty, but they are often surprising—if not startling—and certainly not dull. As they became fashionable, they became status symbols of monumental size and objects of elaborate decoration for affluent dining tables. The museum was first opened to the public in 1970 at the Campbell Soup Company's world headquarters in Camden, New Jersey.

### **Shipbuilding Program**

(continued from Page 1)

desperate need for more and modern ships. The total tonnage output was unprecedented. During this period, the famous Hog Island shipyard was constructed.

World War II presented additional challenges to the shipyards of the Delaware River, but the challenge was met and exceeded with many tons of additional shipping being built. Just this year, the Delaware River has lost its last active shipbuilding facility with the closure of the Philadelphia Naval Ship Yard.

The focus of this illustrated program will be primarily the World War I era, with information provided on the heritage that some of the yards represented. In several cases, more modern occurrences at yards will be described. Please come out and learn more about the industrial activities along our town's western boundary, the Delaware River.

## **Coming Events of Interest**

### **License Plate Moves Ahead**

The bill to establish a New Jersey historic preservation license plate (Senate Bill #2071) was passed unanimously by the National Resources Trade and Economic Development Committee on October 19th. Next, it must receive approval from the Budget and Appropriations Committee prior to a full Senate vote. The Assembly unanimously passed its companion bill in June. The fees collected for the plates would go into a fund to help provide grants for historic preservation projects in the State.

**The Merchantville Holiday Tree Lighting Festival** sponsored by *Main Street Merchantville and the Merchantville Public Events Committee*, will be held on December 1st and 2nd. Festivities begin 7:00 P.M. December 1st with the opening reception featuring candlelight shopping, hot cider, carolers and a downtown display of tabletop trees decorated by civic groups, merchants, and townspeople. The trees are then available for sale by silent auction through December 15. On December 2nd, starting at 10:00 A.M., a Holiday Parade will be held with the arrival of Santa Claus, fire trucks, string bands, and a neighborhood float competition. Afterward, you can enjoy the downtown tree festival. A map and self-guided walking tour of the Cattell District in Merchantville will be available then, or at any time, from area merchants or the Borough Hall. The Cattell Tract is a recently approved National Register Historic District, encompassing approximately eight blocks of Merchantville and filled with excellent examples of historic homes. For information and a program call 665-6211.

**The Burlington County Historical Society** exhibit *site-seeing: Historic Burlington County* is on display until November 29th, at the Corson Poley Center. The exhibit is open during regular tour hours: Monday-Thursday 1:00-4:00 P.M., Sundays 2:00-4:00 P.M.

**The Burlington County Historical Society** cordially invites you to their Holiday Open House on Sunday, December 17, 1995 at 457 High Street in Burlington. Visit their seasonally decorated historic houses amid festive holiday music. Refreshments will be available throughout the afternoon at the Corson Poley Center. Hours 2:00-5:00 P.M.

**—RIVERTON—**

*A Century of Distinction as a Borough*

## Yesterday...

by Betty B. Hahle

The long and exclusive association of the Dorrance family with Campbell's Soup has left the man whose name the company carries almost forgotten.

Joseph Campbell was born in Bridgeton, N.J. on 15 May, 1817, the son of James and Hannah Campbell. As a young man he left the family fruit farm to seek a career of his own in Philadelphia. He became a purchasing agent for fruits and vegetables, travelling throughout New York and Pennsylvania. In 1858 he married Sarah Boyd Foster, a young widow with a small daughter, Ella Mary. Six years later the couple became parents of twins, Elizabeth Boyd and Bertram. The boy lived for only six months, and it was almost a decade before another child was born, daughter Antoinette.

In 1869 Joseph Campbell joined Abram Anderson, an ice-box maker, in a preserving company he had recently started, and the Anderson & Campbell Company was formed. With the company established in Camden, Campbell decided to move his family to New Jersey. They had summered many times in the Burlington area. They chose a crested Second Empire house on Main Street, Riverton, and, moved there in 1872. A small lot was added to the property a few years later, extending the Campbell property along Fourth Street from Main to Church Lane. Years later the carriage house on the added lot was converted into a small private school, where Mrs. Howard Sharp taught many Riverton children—including Campbell's granddaughter, Therese Spackman—in grades K through 5th.

Anderson retired in 1873, and the business continued as the Joseph Campbell Company. A few years later Walter S. Spackman joined the company, and he suggested that his friend, Arthur Dorrance of Bristol, Pa., be invited to join, also. In 1882 a partnership of Campbell, Spackman and Dorrance was formed. That year local builder-contractor Samuel Rudderow was engaged to renovate and enlarge the Campbell home on Main Street.

The company's factory and warehouse were located at 39 and 41 N. Second Street in Camden. Their delivery wagons were drawn by teams of fine Percheron and Belgian horses, that were winners at horse shows held in Camden and in Collingswood. Newspaper ads identified the company as "packers of The Celebrated Beefsteak Tomatoes and Fine French Peas," and manufacturers of Mince Meats, Fruit Butters, Preserves, Jellies, Catsup, Prepared Mustards, and Salad Dressings. Business was conducted through

a series of committees, whose chairs formed a Board, with Campbell at the head.

Walter Spackman married Ella Foster Campbell, and the couple lived at the Main Street home while their own house, designed by Hewitt & Hewitt on Lippincott Ave., was being built. Their child, Therese, was born there in December, 1889, and the new house was completed a few weeks later. Spackman died in 1891 from appendicitis, and Ella's sisters moved in with her. Later the whole family moved there, renting out the Main Street house, then selling it.

The company incorporated in 1892 as the Joseph Campbell Preserve Company, and again felt it prudent to bring younger members into the company. Arthur Dorrance suggested, somewhat reluctantly, his nephew, John T. Dorrance, who had recently been graduated from the University of Göttingen with a Ph.D., after having received a B.S. from M.I.T. two years earlier. They were not sure a young man with so much education would be contented to work at preserving and canning, but Dorrance accepted a position, at \$7.50 a week, and he got the laboratory he wanted—provided he outfitted it himself.

Joseph Campbell was remembered as a kind man, fun-loving, warm and compassionate. He was an incorporator of Calvary Presbyterian Church, and served as Elder there. He was in the habit of walking from his home to the railroad station for the train to Camden each day. One day in late March, 1900, when he was in his 83rd year, he felt ill, and decided next day to stay home from work. He died that day, and was buried at Woodlands Cemetery in Philadelphia.

Elizabeth and Antoinette never married. They were active in local concerns, particularly in the Library, where both served as Librarians for many years. Elizabeth died in 1930, and Antoinette in 1948. Therese Spackman grew up, married, and reared her four children in the Lippincott Avenue home.

Dr. John Dorrance was 24 years old when he joined the Campbell Company in 1897. He had been offered teaching positions at four prestigious colleges, but was not interested in an academic life. Instead, he had an idea, and his skills in mathematics and chemistry, and the timely association with an established preserving/canning company gave him the opportunity he needed to act upon it.

While studying in Europe he had grown very fond of the tasty and nourishing soups that were included daily in meals there, and he missed them on returning home. Soups in America were not very popular, and canned soups were sold in large, bulky containers and priced higher than most families could afford. Dorrance believed that good soups could be



condensed while retaining their flavor, and that a smaller size can would not only be more convenient, but also reduce the cost of containers and transportation, thereby lowering consumer prices.

Dorrance not only focused on his idea of condensing soups, but seemed obsessed with being in total control of the company that produced it. He began at once to buy up stock, chaired various company committees, and in September 1900 was elected a Director and Vice-President. In 1910 he became general manager of the company, a position he created, and eliminated the committee system of management. Four years later he became President and General Manager, positions he kept the rest of his life. In 1915 when his uncle Arthur retired he was persuaded to sell his stock to John, who then became sole owner of the Campbell Company. He then phased out production of everything but his soups.

Dr. Dorrance married in 1906, had four daughters and then, in 1919, a son, John T. Dorrance Jr. In 1911 he and his family moved to Pamona Farms in Cinnaminson, where he had beautifully landscaped gardens created, and raised specimen tomatoes. He enjoyed a simple country life, which complimented his totally absorbing work, but his wife yearned for a different lifestyle. In 1925, in time for the debut of their eldest daughter, they purchased a fine home on Philadelphia's Main Line and enjoyed the social life there.

Arthur Dorrance, John's uncle and early Campbell partner, lived for some years in Riverton; in 1906 he built an imposing house on Park Avenue. The Dorrances were members of Christ Episcopal Church, where John served as Warden. He was a member of Riverton Country Club and of many Philadelphia clubs and organizations.

John's brother Arthur, younger than he by twenty years, joined the company in 1914, left it after a year to manage several other companies in succession, then returned in 1920. In 1922 the Company name became officially The Campbell Soup Company. Arthur continued in an executive position until John Jr. was ready to join the company in 1947.

Dr. John T. Dorrance realized his dream of condensing soups, then created a market for them by spending (then) unprecedented sums on advertising them. When he died in 1930 he left a fortune of 130 million dollars—and a very long Will detailing how control of the company should continue. He was buried in a Mausoleum in Laurel Hill Cemetery that he had had erected for the exclusive use of those bearing the Dorrance surname.

Heirs did not have the drive of John (Sr.) for such total personal involvement, possession and control as he had had. John Jr. became a Patron of the Arts, and amassed great collections of Art and Art objects. Some stock was sold, with family members retaining a controlling majority; professional managers were hired to run the business; diversity was added through acquired subsidiary companies.

A long while ago John Campbell was a pioneer in commercial preserving and canning. John T. Dorrance succeeded him and became a giant in the field. Today it would be hard to imagine there was no Campbell's Soup.

### References:

Deeds, Census records;  
Newspapers: *Mt. Holly Herald*, *Riverton Journal*,  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*;  
Mary B. Sim, *Commercial Canning in New Jersey*  
(New Jersey Agricultural Society, Trenton, 1951);  
1984 interview with Therese Spackman Barclay  
Willits.

### Upcoming Program Schedule

Our Program Chairman, Frank Wagenknight, would like to remind the membership of the these outstanding presentations planned for the remainder of the program season:

March 11, 1996—A program on the Marquis  
De Lafayette

May 13, 1996—Lighthouses



Don't forget to mark your calendar as you will not receive a Gaslight News before the January meeting. I look forward to greeting each of you then. —Paul W. Schopp—