

# Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton  
Riverton, New Jersey

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## Lighthouses of the East Coast Subject of May Meeting

A meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton will be held on Monday, May 6, 1996, 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, Don and Dorothy Armstrong will present a program on Lighthouses along the East Coast.

Lighthouses are a familiar feature along our state's coast, as any visitor to Barnegat, Cape May or Atlantic City can attest. The use of these aids to navigation can be traced to the great lighthouse of Alexandria, Egypt, one of the seven wonders in the ancient world. Reportedly, the mysterious mirror used in this ancient wonder could reflect and transmit light for 35 miles off-shore using sunlight by day and a large bonfire at night.

It stood for centuries as a beacon to seamen and a curiosity to others. Damaged by earthquakes, it was finally tumbled into the sea by Sultan Qaitbay who wished to construct a fort. In October 1995, underwater archaeologist located pieces of this structure.

Closer to home, lighthouses were located at Sandy Hook, Navesink Highlands, Sea Girt, Barnegat, Tucker Beach, Atlantic City, Ludlam Beach, Herford's Inlet (North Wildwood) and Cape May Point. Lightships could also be found at various strategic points. In later years, lightships served as replacements for lighthouses removed from service. The shifting sands of the Jersey coast required that these beacons warn vessels from coming too close to the shore and running aground.

Lighthouses also served to guide ships up through the Delaware Bay and into the river. Guarding the shoals and marking the channels, lights were located at Fourteen Foot Bank, Miah Maull, Cape Henlopen, the breakwater, Brandywine Shoal, Cross Ledge, Maurice River, Egg Island, Mahlon River, Ship John

Shoal and Cohansey Light. A type of lighthouse was also found at Bombay Hook, Reedy Island, Finns Point, New Castle, Penns Grove, Tinicum, Billingsport and Verga. These lights served as channel markers, allowing pilots to stay mid-channel by visually aligning the lower and upper light.

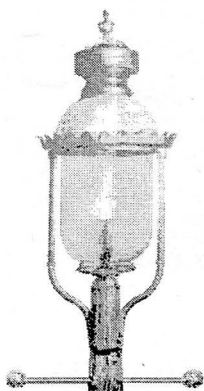
New Jersey has the distinction of hosting the oldest extant lighthouse in America. The Sandy Hook light was constructed in 1763 by ex-Burlingtonian Isaac Connaroe. After erecting many buildings in Burlington, including a windmill, Connaroe moved to New York where he advertised himself as a mason and brickmaker. A group of merchants raised money through lotteries for constructing the lighthouse and they selected Isaac to build the structure.

Known commonly as *The New York Lighthouse*, the merchants prevailed upon the New Jersey colonial legislature to negotiate the land price with Hugh Hartshorne, who was asking a small fortune for this narrow spit of sand. Eventually, enough money was raised by the lotteries that Hartshorne's price was met.

Constructed as a tapered octagon, the lamp chamber was made of iron and roofed with copper. The tower was 103' high and 29' in diameter at the bottom. The total cost of the lighthouse was £5,119: 12s. 3d. Originally illuminated by 48 pots of burning oil, this lighthouse is now automated and still in service guiding ships into New York Harbor.

Don and Dorothy Armstrong became interested in lighthouses as a result of reading an article in a camping magazine. It suggested planning a trip around seeing the lighthouses of Maine. They did just that in October 1993 and the rest is history. Since that time they have visited some 40 or more lights from Acadia National Park in Maine to Cape Florida Lighthouse at Biscayne Bay in Florida. Not all the lights visited are operational and some are privately owned.

The program will cover some of the history of lighthouses, light keepers compensation and a discussion of the lighthouses in New Jersey. There will also be a 30-minute video on the Lighthouses of Maine done by a professional photographer.



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## News From Your Board of Directors

by Dan Campbell

### Election to be held at the Annual Meeting

Present Board members who are candidates for re-election are: **Paul Schopp**, who is currently our Vice President; **Charlotte Lippincott**, who has completed the term of a director who retired early; and **Virginia Kline** who has served on our Board for more than three years and is on the Hospitality Committee. Our Nominating Committee has located an excellent candidate for new election. She is **Judy Evans**, who has been a member for a few years and in Riverton for many. She represents a local real estate firm and resides on Elm Terrace with her family. Her husband Mark is active in the Riverton Yacht Club, serving on their Board of Directors.

Regretfully, our friend Ruth Schweizer will be retiring. Ruth has served us cheerfully as a member of the Hospitality Committee and most recently as our Paper Goods chairperson, keeping stock of our Riverton notepaper – our steadiest fund raiser. We give our sincerest thanks and best wishes to Ruth!

As a side note that I must include, this year our Nominating Committee made over two dozen calls to locate a candidate for the Board this year (delaying the release of this newsletter). Our thanks to those who considered it, but possibly we may be calling the wrong people! If it were generally known what a fun and rewarding job this is, more people would respond with a **yes**. If you are interested in serving on the Board, please feel free to contact me (or any Board member) **now**, so that we can contact you in the future. Thank you.

It is with regret that the Board has also accepted the resignation of Frank Wagenknight, our Program Chairman. At the same time we are happy for Frank and Peg, as they will be moving to a beautiful retirement community in Pennsylvania. Many of you know that Frank has scheduled excellent programs for us at our meetings over the last several years. It has been both educational and entertaining to attend. His sense of humor and worldliness, as well as his sense of history, have been reflected in the programs he

brought to us, and we are extremely grateful for his choices. What many people don't know is that Frank has personally delivered about half of our *Gaslight News* to the members at each issue. He has been a hard worker and diligent champion of Riverton and the Historical Society. Frank will be missed by all of us on the Board. We can't say it enough - thank you, Frank!

## Coming Events of Interest

**Mauricetown Day** will be held at the Edward Compton House located on Front Street, Mauricetown on May 11, 1996 from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. There will be tours of this 1864 Victorian House/Museum/Library and the 1700 Swedish log cabin adjacent to the property.

Admission is free, and there will be refreshments. Call 609-785-1137 for more information.

**Up and Down the Old Barracks Museum** in Trenton – wear comfortable clothing and shoes to explore the attic and cellar not normally open to the public, on May 15, 1996 from 12:00 P.M. to 1:00 P.M. You can see historical evidence that will soon be covered by current restorations, led by the Curator and Associate Director. Call 609-396-1776 for details. Admission is \$2.

**Evesham Township Historic Preservation Awards Ceremony** on May 18, 1996 at the historic John Inskeep Homestead, 70 North Locust Ave. (directly behind WalMart) in Marlton at 1:00 P.M. Certificates of Commendation will be presented to owners of four restored historic houses. Free Admission, call 609-596-5415.

**Indian King Day** begins at 10:00 A.M. sponsored by the Haddonfield Preservation Society at the Indian King Tavern, 233 Kings Highway East, in Haddonfield. There will be a tour of the Haddonfield Historic District and refreshments in the garden of the Indian King. More information: contact Joan Aiken 609-429-2269.

Even though Frank Wagenknight is leaving us, he has structured next season's programs in his usual inimitable style. This presentations will feature such subjects as: Edgar Allen Poe; the history of Post Cards; a program on Beverly and Edgewater Park; Fakes, Frauds, Flim-Flams and Scams and Our Founding Mothers.

The September issue of *Gaslight News* will provide you with the dates of these programs so you can mark your calendar.

## Yesterday...

by Betty B. Hahle

In August, 1927, Riverton's memorial Park was a public playground, "enjoyed by hosts of little folk." It was still undeveloped, offering only a baseball diamond, a few benches, and a dammed up area of the creek for swimming. After a fatality when a child dove into shallow water Edward R. Williams, Director of Public Safety, appointed Russell Miller to supervise the children. In addition to swimming and baseball, golf and other games were taught. High tide times were noted in the paper.

Frank Mills flew Charles DeLaney over Riverton for 45 minutes in his hydroplane. DeLaney, an avid photographer, recorded Dreer's, the riverbank, golf course, and residential parts of Riverton and Palmyra to add to his thousands of feet of movies. The following year DeLaney and Robert Knight showed the movies at a PTA meeting, along with films of RPS Field Day 1927, and a reel of Lindbergh's epic flight.

Frances Ruppert, nationally recognized sprinter and relay runner, married Lawrence Volz at Sacred Heart Church on September 3rd. Volz excelled in basketball and swimming. Maxine Meitzner, local high school student and a swimmer whose motto was "English Channel or Bust" attempted the 21-mile swim from Cape May Point to Lewes lighthouse. High winds came up, and she became so exhausted from battling 10-foot-high waves that she had to be lifted from the water just one mile short of her goal. Philadelphia's Charles Durburow had made the swim in 16 hours in 1912; no one else had done it successfully since then.

In September the War Department finally authorized construction of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge, and bids were being received. When it opened (1929) the local ferry joined the ranks of things gone from the local scene.

Borough Council was trying to resolve the problem of private sewer lines from homes along the riverbank. They had not been maintained, were broken, and were discharging materials on the beach instead of out into the river. More street lights were needed, as were street signs and warning signs around school areas.

The School Board was concerned over crowding from steadily increasing enrollment at Riverton School. Some rooms had 40 or more pupils. Space at Flanagan's (Main at 4th) was rented for a first grade, and a new teacher hired. Architects Simon & Simon were engaged to plan a new school building, and proposed sites were visited. Suggestions were many—build a new school in Memorial Park...build on Broad St. above the railroad—build a junior high school and use the 5th St. building for lower grades.

Eventually it was decided to enlarge the current building, erected in 1910.

Miss Hannah Chew, principals made reports throughout the school year. She said a major problem was the wide range of ages in each classroom, and cited the 5th grade, where ages ranged from 10 to 15 years as an example. There was no other place for over-age children under the existing Educational system, she said. She also urged hiring a school nurse, whose cost of \$300 a year was so small in comparison to the benefits to be realized. The Summer Round-up for pre-school screening, a recent nationwide movement conducted by the National Congress of Parents & Teachers, found eye, teeth, and ear problems, and follow-ups were needed, as well as avenues located for correction for many of the children. Later in the year Miss Chew announced that in June, 1928 a new award would be made to a graduating student. Most awards were for boys, but the American Legion had decided to give a medal to an outstanding 8th grade girl, on her graduation, to be based on her honor, courage, scholarship, leadership, and service.

On October 23 Riverton's Presbyterian Church was dedicated. Built at a cost of \$80,000 (excluding memorials), it was constructed of "6-color Foxcroft stone laid in the manner of a building at Swarthmore college about fifty years ago." George Dold, building committee chairman, had traveled extensively to visit other buildings and learn about features to incorporate in the church's new edifice. A separate foundation under the tower and multiple exits from each room were safety features found and adopted. Dold personally donated hotel-quality kitchen equipment for the new basement kitchen.

Easter came in April, and Keating's chanced off a large pink bunny, displayed in the drugstore window, Chew's Bakery suggested *Roman Punch*, described as an ice cream dessert, for dinner. Builder Curtis Stavely reminded homeowners to "screen now and be fly-free this season."

The Lawn House was scheduled to open May 18, 1928 "under old management." The Shreve family had owned it since 1881, but for the past 16 years they had rented it to various managers. This year E. Mercer Shreve would run it, and improvements were under way. Rooms were redecorated, new kitchen equipment installed, and a garage erected. Riverton Country Club and Yacht Club extended privileges to Lawn House Guests; card parties and dances and other entertainment were planned, and a great season was anticipated. Who could have guessed that in less than a decade the Lawn House would pass from existence?

The East Riverton Volunteer Fire Company #1 was organized on April 18, after Riverton Borough



Council and Cinnaminson Township Committee couldn't agree on the cost for fire protection. Riverton's fire chief said as far as he was concerned, he would respond when needed, anyway.

On May 3rd an 8-inch water main on Broad Street burst. Water was seen seeping up along the trolley tracks opposite the telephone exchange (Price Bldg.); then the roadbed gradually rose and finally broke open with a gush of water. It left a hole 6 X 10 feet, and interrupted the water supply for a wide area.

New service stations were opening, and offered washing, storage, and accessories, as well as gas, oil, and specials on tires and tubes. On May 21 Otto Sauers opened a "Shaving & Hair Dressing Parlor" at 406 Howard St., "opposite the schoolhouse." On May 24 Joseph Roberts started his "Going out of Business" sale. After he closed his store in the brick "Flatiron Building" on the point of Main/Howard Sts. it became an A&P for a few years...and then was gone.

On Saturday, May 26, 1928, Cinnaminson Bank & Trust opened its new building to the public for the first time. Between 5 and 9 p.m. some 3000 people came to see and admire the limestone and brick building designed by architects Davis, Dunlap and Harney (Phila.), and received gifts of 1500 roses and 1500 pen and pencil sets. Cake and ice cream were served in the basement, which contained storage vaults, and music was provided via an orthophonic victrola. Many bouquets of flowers from well-wishers, some from the 200 New Jersey Bankers who had visited two days earlier, added to the festive atmosphere.

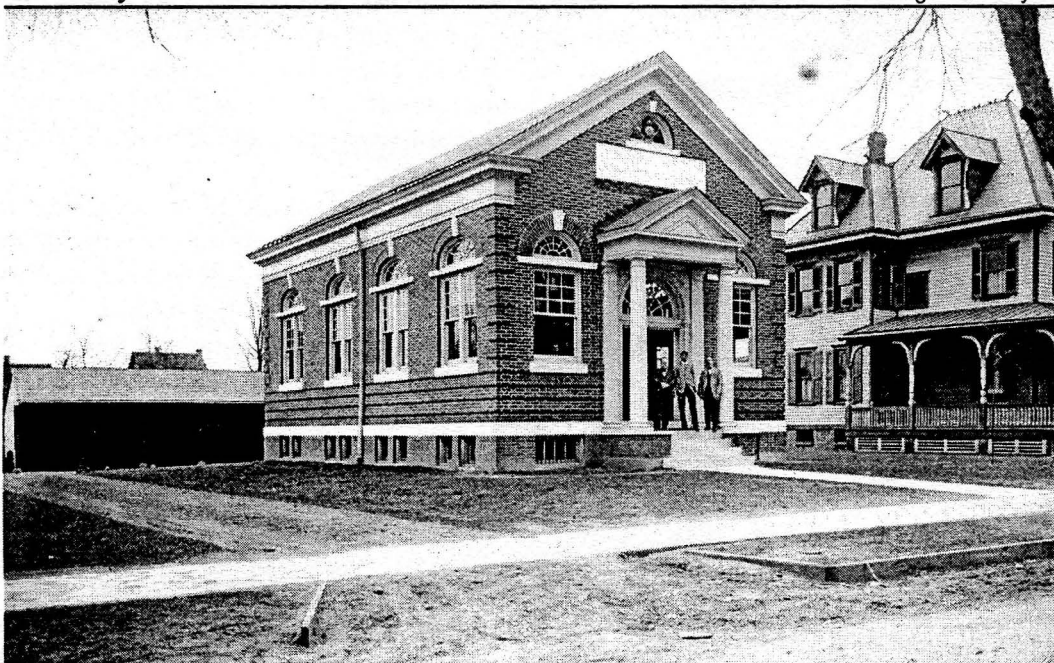
From the central entry the focal point was the fire-and burglar-proof vault, with its 10-inch thick circular door and much publicized electrical controls and safety features. Inside could be seen the over 500

deposit boxes and, cash drawers. To the left of the entry was an open office, with a fireplace. Beyond that were the Coupon rooms. On the right side were work and bookkeeping rooms. The Board Room was on the second floor. The building had cost \$125,000 (or \$100,000, depending on which article one read), was built by Wm. Dougherty & Sons, and furnished with "all the latest in office furniture."

Cinnaminson Bank & Trust Co., its name chosen because it represented the area it would serve, began in 1907 in a room over the Roberts store. It was successful from the start, and within its first year had moved into its own brick building at 611 Main St. Soon an addition was needed. When it was outgrown again the decision to erect a new building was made. William Holland's property at Main/Harrison Sts. was purchased, and the small frame building there, demolished. That building had been built at 405 Lippincott Ave. in 1884 for a private school conducted by Dr. Hall's sister, Lillian. Two years later the building was moved to this location and became a grocery store. A few years later Holland bought it, and opened a restaurant in it.

The Bank continued to prosper, remained solid throughout the Depression, expanded, redecorated, and served Riverton residents and businesses well until 1966, when it was acquired by Garden State Bank, ending local control. Successive takeovers followed, until October 1995, when it was bought by PNC, which announced the closing of Riverton's bank as of April 26, 1996. Will another Banking facility acquire the building and continue its role as an integral part of life in Riverton? Or will it, too, join the ranks of things that are gone?

References: *The New Era*, July 1927 to July 1928. Available on microfilm at the Burlington County Historical Society.



The 1908 Cinnaminson Bank & Trust Company building at 611 Main Street, before the addition had been constructed. Notice the wagon shed behind the bank.