



# Gaslight News

Founded 1970

The Historical Society of Riverton  
Riverton, New Jersey

Incorporated 1978

May 1999

vol. XXVIII, no. 4 (#93)

## Civil War History Program at May Meeting

The annual meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton, NJ will be held on **Monday May 10, 1999 at 8:00 pm** in the Riverton Public School Media Center (Library). After a short business meeting, there will be a program entitled **Upon the Tented Field - Real Stories of the Civil War**. The program will be a recounting of events of the Civil War, as told from the letters of soldiers, in their own words.

The speaker for the evening will be Bernard A. Olsen, author of the civil war history book, *Upon the Tented Field*. Mr. Olsen has been a history teacher at Marlboro, NJ High School, and is a life long New Jersey resident from Little Silver, NJ.

He wrote his book based on the letters of Sgt. Albert Harrison who was with the 14th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, recruited in Monmouth County during the summer of 1862. The NJ Volunteers later linked up with the 6th Corps of the Army of the Potomac during the pursuit of General Robert E. Lee after the battle of Gettysburg.

The historical time frame of the presentation will be from 1862 through 1865, profiling several soldiers lives and many events of the Civil War, through the soldier's letters, photos and experiences. Four of these soldiers are known not to have survived the war.

Please attend this event with your historically minded neighbors. Attendees should enter the building through the main doors facing Fifth Street. The school building and meeting room are handicapped accessible. There will be a short refreshment period at the end of the meeting.

## Riverton Recorded in National Register

What do Boston's Old North Church, George Washington's Mt Vernon, Abraham Lincoln's boyhood home, and Riverton, NJ have in common? They are now all listed in the United States Park Service's National Register of Historic Places. I am pleased to announce that the NJ State Historic Preservation Office has notified us that as of March 5, 1999, Riverton's Nomination of a district of over 525 properties was accepted into the National Register. The Riverton district, as it will be known, is unique as being the first planned residential community in the United States.

In the case of the Riverton District, no building is recognized individually, but instead we are judged as a group of historically and architectural significant structures. The boundaries of the district are the same as the NJ State Register district which was approved in the fall of 1998. Within the district, individual properties are designated either as *contributing*, or *noncontributing*, depending on their age and amount of original condition.

The impact of the district designation on property owners is that there are no restrictions on construction at privately owned residential and commercial properties. For properties used commercially, there is a federal program which allows a tax credit for renovations which meet certain historic guidelines. For publically owned properties and on public land, there is a review process performed by the state, before construction can take place. Shortly, the borough Clerk will have information about the district, and the Federal tax credit.

### *Gaslight News*

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

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The Historical Society of Riverton  
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## Riverton Building News

You may have noticed several changes taking place in the village center area of Riverton:

**The Collins Building** 600-612 Main Street has a newly completed porch which makes easier access to the shops there. A dedication ceremony involving public officials will take place there shortly.

**The Woolston Service Station** (now Rainer Painting) at the point of Main & Howard is getting a new second floor/roof in a Victorian style designed by Moorestown architect David Donachy. The Zoning Board approved a fence to be installed on the Main Street side of this building - hopefully all of these changes will improve the appearance of this prominent location.

**The Main Street Bakery** (formerly Klipples, originally constructed as Rivershore Gas Company) has received some major exterior renovations by their new owners, Ciny Vee and Mort Traugott, including removal of the aluminum and glass block entrance added in the late 1940's early 50's.

The Riverton Steamboat Landing Foundation, recently formed arm of the **Riverton Yacht Club**, applied for and received a grant from a private foundation to restore the exterior of their building on the Delaware River. An architecture firm from Pennsylvania specializing in historic preservation has been hired to assess the condition of the building, make recommended changes which include the return of some original decorative bracketing and historically correct colors discovered under many layers of paint. Building systems will also be upgraded for the safety and longevity of this Riverton landmark.

## Area Programs of Interest

**New Jerseytimes** - a series of radio programs about New Jersey presented by Rutgers University has three upcoming programs about NJ History: Sunday, May 16 @ 3:00 pm **New Jersey Diversity**; Sunday June 6 @ 3:00 pm **New Jersey Poets**; and Sunday June 13 @ 3:00 pm **South Jersey**. All are broadcast on radio station WOGL-FM 98.1.

**The Burlington County Historical Society** is continuing their new Duck Decoy Exhibit, entitled **The Marters of Burlington**, on display at the Corson Poley Center, 454 Lawrence Street, Burlington, NJ until July 1, 1999. Call the BCHS at 609-386-4773 for more information and hours of their museum.

## Election of Officers to the Board of Directors

At the Annual Meeting, on May 10, 1999, we will conduct the election of four officers to our Board of Directors. Three of the four candidates this year are incumbent directors, one is up for election for the first time. The following are your candidates for new three year terms on the Board of Directors:

**Judy Evans** presently is our publicity chairperson and helps out with the hospitality at the general membership meetings. She and her husband Mark are active at the Riverton Yacht Club and are restoring a 1 1/2 story home on Elm Terrace.

**John Farr** is our recently elected program chairperson. The quality of the past year's programs attest to his commitment to the Society. He and his family reside in a beautiful Queen Anne style Home on Lippincott Avenue.

**Charlotte Lippincott** you will recognize as your frequent hostess of the refreshment time at our meetings, but more importantly she works dilligently behind the scenes compiling each issue of the Gaslight News for distribution. She resides with our oldest member, her father Fred, 97 years old.

**Patricia Bruncker** is an active newcomer in the Society, and has recently taken over storage of the clothing artifacts of the Society. She and her husband Richard are restoring the Earnshaw carriage house at Second Street and Thomas Avenue.

## Yesterday...

Brothers and Sisters and their families today often live far apart from one another, so that family oriented activities become special events that happen less and less often.

Yesterday, families tended to remain closer to each other, and many of the activities they enjoyed, they enjoyed together.

In the late 1840's a group of merchants who were engaged in different businesses in Olde Philadelphia fell into the habit of having lunch together each day. Some were related, some shared religious beliefs, some shared other interests. Their conversations covered many topics. Increasingly, conversations turned to the pollution of the Schuylkill, where many of them had summer homes. And to the ever expanding city, with its dreaded epidemics each summer. Lately, there had been strikes by those protesting the hiring of Irish immigrants, and demonstrations against the influx of slaves and other negroes from the South. There was also interest in the railroads and their potential influence on their lives.

Along the railroad lines, villages seemed to be cropping up quickly. Most of them had a tavern or inn at the center where transients tended to gather – and often left a trail of fires and thefts behind them.

At some point the group began to talk about starting a village of their own, where they could have new summer homes and avoid the problems of the city, yet be able to commute to their businesses and to visit the city when they wanted to enjoy its various functions. They began to look for a site that would meet their needs, and found a piece of farmland lying between the Delaware River and the Camden and Amboy railroad line opposite Tacony. Joseph Lippincott, owner of the farm, listened to the proposal, and apparently approved of it, and an agreement for a sale was made.

The group engaged architect Samuel Sloan to design a whole community--streets and walks, division of the land into building lots, an attractive riverfront, commuting facilities, and a villa for each of the ten founding families. The Philadelphia Ledger noted the enterprise by saying that Sloan had been engaged to draw up plans, and named seven men as the founders: J. M. McKim, W. D. Parrish, R. Wharton, Daniel L. Miller, W. C. Biddle, Edward Biddle, and Caleb Clothier.

Maps were drawn to show the site, with sketches of the proposed villas and the names of the owners of them--and listed nine founders: J. M. McKim, Caleb Clothier, William Biddle, Robert Biddle, W. D. Parrish,

Daniel L. Miller jr., Rodman Wharton, and James Clothier. Rodman Wharton had a copy of this map, and in 1936 a descendant donated it to the Riverton Library. The variations in the names of the founding group in this and other papers often leads to confusion until one realizes that in the preliminary period of any plan, changes are often made, and so it was with this one.

The New Jersey Mirror carried items about the new village from February, 1851, when Miller purchased the Lippincott farm for the group (as it was explained in subsequent Deeds and other records), through to the time the first occupants had come. It noted plans for ten villas costing \$2000.00 each, and complimented favorably on the plans the reporter had seen for the village. Progress was noted in May and June, with "12 or 15 houses in the course of erection", and in September, when the wharf with 50 ft. wall was completed, the bank graded, sodded, and walled, and the first 10 villas erected -- "most of which are already occupied by their owners". Shortly after that, the State Governor arrived via the pier for an overnight visit.

Governor Fort, who grew up in the Pemberton area, had begun his term in January of that year, and was said to be particularly interested in the C & A railroad. He was a graduate of The University of Pennsylvania Medical School who set aside medicine for a political career. When he retired from politics he practiced medicine in New Egypt.

By this time, the group was in the process of incorporating, as the Riverton Improvement Company, and another undated map had appeared, produced by Kollner & Camp of Philadelphia, it lists the names of ten founders, and gives directions for obtaining information about it, from George Shinn, who was running the company store at the point of Main/Howard streets, or Chalkley Gillingham, one of the founders, who lived "near Moorestown". Quite possibly this is the map that was filed with the County Clerk, and is referred to in the first Deeds issued, in 1852. The recital of establishment, names, lot numbers and locations, all agree with it. The Clerk's map has disappeared from those files, but a copy was given to the Porch Club, which had it professionally preserved and housed. In 1855 an amended map was filed with the County Clerk, adding the layout of the second purchase of land for the village, and changing slightly the division of the triangle at the point by the railroad.

From the beginning the village was carefully

planned. Title to the land had been traced back to 1683 and certified as good at the time of the purchase. The stated purpose of the company they formed was "not for speculation or to advance the interests of the stockholders, but to keep it under mutual control in order to maintain peaceful and secure homes for themselves and those who would join them" in the village called Riverton. At the end of a twenty year period the company the company would cease to exist, and the funds that remained would be distributed evenly among the stockholders.

One hundred shares were issued, at \$500.00 each. One share equalled one vote: election of directors was held in June of each year. Deeds were to be issued by the company for lots sold within the village, and legislative action was obtained permitting a restrictive liquor clause to be included in them.

The New Jersey Mirror said it "put the knife to the manufacture and sale of spirits", and quoted "and be it enacted that the deeds of any land hereafter laid out and conveyed to said company shall each contain therein in substance as follows, viz. that it shall not be lawful for the grantee or grantors thereof, his, her, or their issue or heirs, to manufacture or cause to manufacture, sell, or, cause or knowingly permit to be sold directly or indirectly in or upon the premises thereby conveyed or any part thereof, any spiritous, vineous,

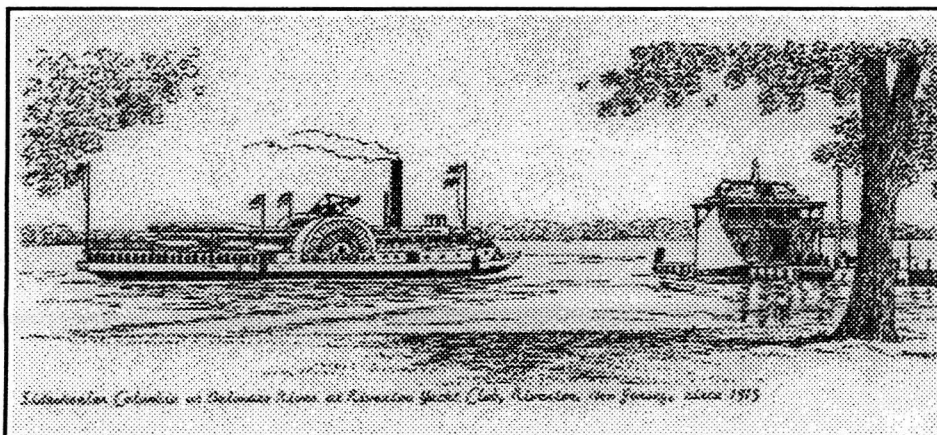
fermented, or other intoxicating liquor except as a medicine or for medicinal purposes in case of sickness".

The reporter added that the liquor law in Maine, after which it was patterned, had created great artistry in getting medicines there, and cited the sale of mint juleps at the druggist's as "vegetable tonics". He said "the way they indulge in medicine is a caution!".

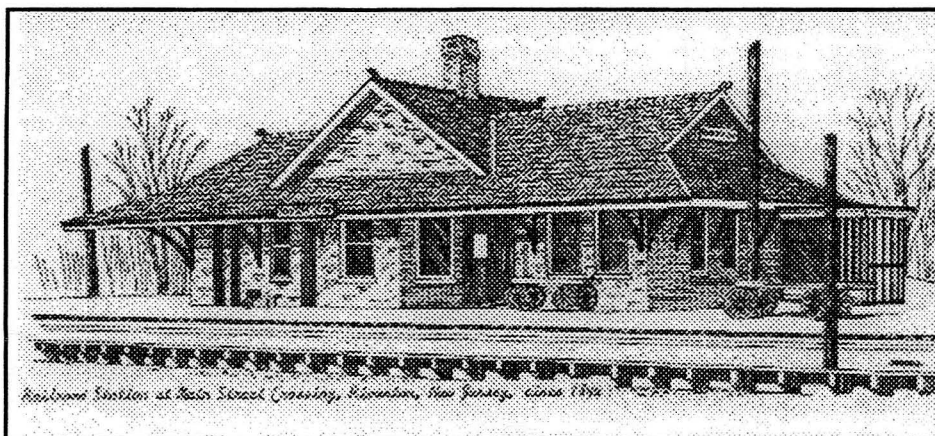
Now, who were these founders of Riverton in Burlington County, New Jersey? Most of them were related. Most of them were Quaker. They were actively interested in education and community issues and services. They were not strangers to the area: Clothiers had been in Burlington County for more than a century. The Parrish's maternal grandparents had built Oxmead, in Burlington, and their brother George was currently living there. There were family relationships with many of the old lines in the county, such as Ridgways, Pancoasts, Warringtons, and others. The population of Burlington County was predominately Quaker, and through Friends Meetings the new Rivertonians knew, and were known by, residents already here.

*Betty B. Hahle*

Editor's Note: This article will be continued in the Fall issue of the Gaslight News with names, ancestry and details of the founders of Riverton.



*Steamship Columbia on Delaware River at Riverton Boat Club, Riverton, New Jersey, circa 1895*



*Riverton Station at Boat Social Evening, Riverton, New Jersey, circa 1895*

## Riverton Notepaper

The Historical Society has 7" x 10" folded notepaper with these two images printed on the outside fold. The notepaper is packaged in sturdy boxes of 15 cards each (with envelopes) in an approximately equal mix of the two images.

The cost of the notepaper is \$3.50 per box, and it is available at Victorian Times, the Riverton Free Library, at all general meetings, or by calling 786-8660.