



Gaslight News

Founded 1970

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey

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October Program - Friends Meetinghouses of Burlington Co.

The first meeting of the 1999-2000 year for the Historical Society of Riverton, will be held on **Monday October 4, 1999 at 8:00 pm** in the Riverton Public School Media Center (Library). After a short business meeting, there will be a program entitled **Friends Meetinghouses of Burlington County**. The speaker for the evening will be Burlington County historian **Joseph Laufer**, a resident of Vincentown.

Mr. Laufer had researched the Quaker meetinghouses for the Burlington County tercentenary in 1994 and has refined that information into a slide presentation which he will present to the Historical Society of Riverton.

In 1994, the Friends Council for New Jersey reported that there were 4,153 Quakers in the state. The 1999 World Almanac reports that there are 104,000 in 1,200 meetinghouses in the United States.

There are, or were, 18 past and present meetinghouses in Burlington County. Some are active meetings, some are under the care of historical societies and some have been converted to other uses.

The meetings were an outgrowth of William Penn's colony in Philadelphia, which is the seat of Quaker culture in America. The buildings have so much historical value, that the National Park Service decided to study and record them this past summer, for the National Archives, through use of the Historic American Buildings Survey process (known as HABS).

This past summer, a team of architecture students visited a total of 15 meetinghouses in New Jersey and Pennsylvania to make measured drawings of the variety of representative types. Of the

15 chosen for study, the Arney's Mount Friends Meetinghouse, in Springfield, and the Little Egg Harbor Meetinghouse, in Tuckerton (Ocean County) were selected for the most thorough documentation in our area.

The meeting houses presented in Mr. Laufer's talk will be Arney's Mount, Bordentown Friends, Burlington Friends, Copany near Jacksonville in Springfield, Cropwell in Evesham, Crosswicks Friends, Crosswicks Orthodox Friends, Main Street Friends in Medford, Mansfield Friends in Columbus, Mount Holly Friends, Mount Laurel Friends (now under the care of the Moorestown Friends Meeting), Rancocas Friends in Rancocas Village, Union Street Friends in Medford, Upper Springfield Friends, Vincentown Friends in Southampton, and Westfield Friends in Cinnaminson. They range in construction date from 1772 to 1859.

There were once two Friends meetinghouses in Moorestown: the Orthodox, originally established in 1700, with the current building erected in 1802, and a Hicksite Friends building established in 1897, which is now the cafeteria in the West Building of the Friends School in Moorestown.

All persons, whether Historical Society members or not, are invited to attend this interesting and informative event. Attendees should enter the Riverton School through the main doors facing Fifth Street. The school building and meeting room are handicapped accessible. There will be a short refreshment period after the presentation.

Portions of this article are excerpted from the *Burlington County Times*, and information provided by Joseph Laufer. *Dan Campbell*

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Daniel T Campbell, AIA – President & Editor

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The Historical Society of Riverton
16 Carriage House Lane, Riverton, NJ

Yacht Club to Repair Pier

No, the sky is not falling, as Chicken Little predicted, but the **Riverton Yacht Club** pier is sinking. Every day, more soil is lost to the river bottom through deteriorating bulkheads on the three outriver sides of the pier.

The Riverton Yacht Club pier, over 150 years old, is the last remaining former steamboat landing on the Delaware River. As such, it is a valuable historical resource as a reminder of the paddle wheel steamboat transportation that existed between Riverton, Philadelphia, and other river towns along the Delaware.

With great foresight and volunteer effort, the Riverton Yacht Club formed a nonprofit branch in 1988, **The Riverton Steamboat Landing Foundation**. The Foundation applied for and received a combination State & Federal Transportation Act grant for \$919,000 to be used to repair the pier.

The money will be spent in 2000 to install new bulkheads, add new soil, install new concrete topping, widen the causeway and add new equipment for the continued use of the pier as a sailing facility. After the repairs, the pier will be opened to the public and will house a small museum of Yacht Club and steamboat history.

That is the good news. The bad news is that the grant will not pay for the engineering needed to prepare bid documents for the work. The **Steamboat Landing Foundation** needs to raise approximately \$60,000 to pay for these services. As Commodore Hank Croft said recently, "It will be like getting nearly a million dollars for an investment of \$60,000". Part of the money will be raised from Yacht Club members.

The Historical Society Board of Directors will be deciding what our contribution will be to help save this Riverton landmark. Contributions will also be needed from individuals, organizations or foundations.

We urge all to contribute what you can to this worthy cause. All contributions from individuals are tax deductible. For more information, please contact the RSLF at P. O. Box 75, Riverton, NJ 08077 or call the RSLF treasurer at 856-829-9309.

Meeting Schedule 2000

NOVEMBER 29, 1999 - LAST MEETING OF 1999

Program to be announced

JANUARY 10, 2000 - MID-WINTER MEETING.

Program to be announced

MARCH 13, 2000 - SPRING MEETING.

Program to be announced.

MAY 8, 2000 - ANNUAL MEETING.

Annual election of new officers, program to be announced.

John Farr, our program Chairman is working to find fine programs for these meetings. There is a refreshment period at the end of each meeting for socializing with your historically minded neighbors.

Membership Information

Enclosed with this issue is a membership form for your use. If you are a regular member, please renew with this form. If you would like to join the Historical Society of Riverton, please fill out this form attach a check, and send it in. All who apply are heartily accepted into membership.

There is often confusion about when Historical Society dues are payable. The Historical Society year is similar to the school year, running from September 1999 through May 2000. According to our By-Laws, dues must be paid by the end of February of 2000, therefore we refer to it as the 2000 year.

Next, please remember that dues are due in advance for a small-budgeted organization such as we are. We start our membership renewal process in September / October with this first issue of the *Gaslight News*.

We are grateful to members who respond promptly (before December 31), to this first dues notice. This allows us to update the membership rolls and prepare mailing labels for the coming year. It saves the Society the time and expense of dispatching additional reminders and the confusion created by missed or deleted names from the mailing list. Thanks again to those early birds who reply quickly and thank you for your support.

Jack Laverty, Membership Chairman

Plaques Awarded

300 Howard Street

In June, a plaque was awarded to Mrs. Ethel Hunn (Toby) for her residence at 300 Howard Street. Built circa 1870 on the corner of 4th and Main Sts., it was moved to its present location in December, 1888.

The vacated lot was then presented to Christ Episcopal Church by the parishoner who had purchased both sites. A modest addition and some alterations were made after the building was moved, and some of the original fireplaces have been closed over.

The architectural commentary of the plaque application states "the original building represents a modest vernacular typical of the period in which it was built, including later modifications to the porch in keeping with local tradition (Doric classical wooden columns)".

Our congratulations to Toby Hunn.

Penna Railroad Section Shed

Some plaques have been donated by the Historical Society for significant buildings, such as the Riverton Library building, the Yacht Club building, and the oldest part of the Riverton School.

In May 1999, a plaque was presented to the Borough of Riverton to recognize the significance of the small Pennsylvania Railroad tool shed (also known as the Section Shed), that had stood at the railroad crossing at Cedar Street for over one hundred years. The Shed was moved, by the Borough, to Memorial Park in September, 1998. This Section Shed is the last one remaining in South Jersey.

A brief history of the shed, written by Betty Hahle, was presented to Mayor Gunn with the plaque.

The plaque has been installed on the Shed so that visitors to the park can learn of its original purpose, location, and the date of its removal to the park.

Yesterday...

Editors note: The following is a continuation of the story which ran in the May 1999 issue of the Gaslight News, detailing the activities and founders of the Riverton Improvement Company:

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.

Robert and William Canby Biddle were sons of Clement Biddle, a sugar refiner. They had recently started a hardware business, as partners. They married Anna and Rachel Miller, sisters of another founder, Daniel L. Miller, jr.. Robert (1814-1902) was said to be more interested in sports than academics, and was well liked by children and adults alike. He actively helped with the founding of Swarthmore College, and was its treasurer from 1875-1901. He was an abolitionist; he was president of the Riverton Improvement Co. from 1868, succeeding Caleb Clothier, who

removed to Philadelphia then. William (1816-1887) was particularly interested in the anti-slavery movement, and in the works of Friends Meeting. He was the first treasurer of Swarthmore and a member of the original board of directors. He was gifted in languages and in mathematics. He was treasurer of the Riverton Improvement Co. from 1861-1872. When the son of another founder needed funds to enter into a partnership with a friend, William loaned him \$10,000 to do it (according to the Biddle Family History).

Daniel L. Miller, jr. (1820-1871) married Anna Pancoast Ridgway, and had 11 children. He made the initial purchase of land for the founding group, and issued the earliest Deeds for the company, in his office as treasurer. In 1861 his actions led to litigation, and he was removed from that office and from the company. He moved into the house now at 201 Fulton, then at its original site on the riverbank, which was at that time just outside the limits of the village. He became a broker of petroleum, drugs, chemicals, etc. His father-in-law, Thomas Ridgway, replaced him in the Company as a stockholder.

Dillwyn and William D. Parrish were sons of the well known Philadelphia physician, Dr. Joseph Parrish. Dillwyn (1809-1886) married (first) Elizabeth Thomas, and then Susan Maxfield. His son Stephen became a well known landscape painter and etching artist; Stephen's son Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966) was a noted illustrator and commercial artist.

Dillwyn was a druggist, and a founder of the Pa.

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Orthopedic Hospital. He also was on the board of the Women's Medical College. He was President of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting Abolition.

William (1815-1863) married Elizabeth W. Miller, a sister of Daniel L. Miller jr.. He was a dealer in rags and all types of paper and paper goods, including school books. He, too, was active in promoting abolition. He succeeded Rodman Wharton as secretary of the Riverton Improvement Co. in 1854.

Rodman Wharton (1820-1854) married Susanna D. Parrish, sister of William D. and Dillwyn Parrish. His family lines go back in Philadelphia to the time of William Penn. He had only recently (1847) started his own business in lead and paints, on South Front Street. He served as the first secretary of the Riverton Improvement Co., and, with D. L. Miller jr., purchased additional land for the company to expand the village beyond the original 120 acres, as planned.

Caleb and James Clothier were half brothers, born in Mt. Holly, NJ. Caleb (1806-1881) married first H. Hallowell, then Anna Hunt. He had 11 children and worked at various trades, including brick-laying, flour merchant, clothing merchant, etc. He worked with his son Issac, who went into partnership with Justus Strawbridge in 1868 (Strawbridge & Clothier) as did others in his family. Caleb was treasurer of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, and president of the Mutual Fire Insurance Co. of Philadelphia. He was the first president of the Riverton Improvement Co., from 1851 to 1868.

James (1815-1889) married Adeline Walker in May, 1853, and had 6 children. He did not build a home in Riverton, but bought land closer to the Westfield Meeting, in Cinnaminson (then Chester Township). He entered diplomatic service, spending time in England, Trinidad, and Washington, D.C., before returning to Mt. Holly, where he served on the School Board for several years.

Prof. Charles D. Cleveland (1802-1869) was the son of a Presbyterian minister and was born in Massachusetts. He early found his interest lay in learning. He was graduated from Dartmouth, became a professor of Greek and Latin, and opened a girls' school in "old Philadelphia", near the business establishments of the other Riverton founders. He was best known for his compendium on English Literature, his translations of the classics, and his Hymns for Children. He was active in the Abolition movement, writing and delivering speeches throughout a large part of the United States. Failing health prompted him to give up teaching in 1861, after which President Lincoln appointed him U. S. Consul to Cardiff, Wales. He served there from 1861-1868.

Chalkley Gillingham married Kesiah Warrington, and had a farm in Chester township "near Moorestown". Records show he purchased some land at "five points" that adjoined his farm. He did not build in Riverton, but remained a stockholder for a number of years. In 1858 he removed to Virginia, where his wife had inherited some property, according to a Deed on record.

J. Miller McKim was not a founder. He is included here because his name so often is cited as a founder even though records show that he was not. McKim was a Presbyterian minister who came from Lancaster, circa 1830, and married "a Chester Quakeress", according to his brief biography. He worked ardently on anti-slavery issues with Dr. Joseph Parrish, in Philadelphia. He was acquainted, through the abolition movement, with those who were founders, and quite possibly at some point considered investing in the project (since one preliminary, undated map lists his name) but did not join the founding group, and never owned land in Riverton or the surrounding area. In time he became a Quaker, and eventually returned to Lancaster.

When the Riverton Improvement Company's term of incorporation expired, in 1872, few of the original members remained. The Biddle brothers had made Riverton their permanent residences, remaining there for the rest of their lives. They purchased the unsold company properties, including the Lawn House and the Company Store, and continued to work for the interests of the village. For a long period of time the Biddles, and their extended families, populated a large part of Riverton. They continued to develop and improve the village as it had been planned from its inception, contributing much toward making it the fine residential community it became.

Five years after the Riverton Improvement Co. ended, the descendants/heirs of Joseph Lippincott began to open sections of the remaining farmland for development, to become a part of Riverton when built upon. The boundaries of the town were set December, 1893, although large sections of the land were not yet built upon. The pattern of developing a section at a time formed a record of the architectural styles most popular at the time of each addition, harmoniously related by consistent building lines, fence heights, streets lined with trees (and some with gas lights), sidewalks, lawns, and gardens.

It is interesting to note that the biographical notes, family records, and obituaries of the founding fathers make no mention of their roles in establishing Riverton, save those of the two Biddles. Do you think they would be pleased, or disappointed, if they could see it today?

Betty B. Hahle