



Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey

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Alice Paul to be the subject of March Meeting

The Historical Society of Riverton will meet on **Monday, March 13 at 8:00 pm** in the Riverton Public School Media Center. The subject of the evening's program will be **Alice Paul - New Jersey's Crusader for Equality**. The lecture and slide presentation, approximately one hour in length, will be an overview of Alice Paul's life's goal, which was women's right to vote, and eventually, advocacy of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Alice Paul (1885 - 1977) was born of Quaker parents in Mt. Laurel, NJ. She became a tough-minded reformer while working with militant women suffragists in England, where she was pursuing a graduate education (1907 - 1910).

After her return to the United States she was dismissed from the gradualist National American Woman Suffrage Association because she applied such strong tactics to the suffrage cause. She became a leader in the fight for women's suffrage and designer of some of the most outstanding political achievements on behalf of women in the 20th Century.

In 1913, she formed the National Woman's Party and used protest marches and other forms of direct action to focus attention on the movement for women's right to vote. After 1920, when the 19th Amendment was ratified granting voting rights to women, she worked for enactment of an Equal Rights Amendment.

The Alice Paul Centennial Foundation (APCF) was created in 1984 to celebrate the centennial of Alice Paul's birth. The foundation's major goals are to enhance public awareness of

the life and work of Alice Stokes Paul; to educate and empower women and girls to accept leadership in their communities and work places; and to develop and present educational programs.

The APCF also strives to create a living and permanent memorial in Alice Paul's name at her birthplace in Mt. Laurel, NJ: **Paulsdale**. The site is listed on the NJ State and National Registers of Historic Places and is designated a National Historic Landmark.

The presentation for our March meeting was developed by the Alice Paul Centennial Foundation and is sponsored by the NJ Council on the Humanities, which sponsors speakers for arts and history programs throughout New Jersey. The speaker for the evening will be Lucy Beard who is a life-long resident of Mt. Laurel, a former president of the Alice Paul Foundation and a frequent speaker with the Council's Speakers Bureau. Ms. Beard is a public historian, who consults with historic sites in the Mid-Atlantic region.

All persons, are encouraged to attend this informative event. The Riverton School, at Fifth and Howard Streets, Riverton, and the Media Room (Library) are both handicapped accessible. Attendees should enter the building through the main doors facing Fifth Street. There will be a short refreshment period following the meeting.

If unable to attend this meeting, more information can be obtained about visiting Paulsdale, from the APCF, by calling 856-231-1885.

Information obtained from the Grolier Encyclopedia and the Alice Paul Centennial Foundation.

Gaslight News

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of Riverton; and is published four times a year.



Daniel T. Campbell, AIA *President & Editor*

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey 08077

We Welcome New Members

The Historical Society welcomes the following
new members for the 2000 year:

Helen and J. A. Cadwallader

Charles Caruso

Jill and Hank Croft, Architect
(Business Patron)

Connie and Mike Danielson

Kim and Michael Fusco

Pam and Robert McLaughlin

Elaine and Don Martin

Loyre Watson

We thank all new members, as well as renewing
members for their interest and participation in
preserving the history of Riverton. Please attend
our interesting meetings to hear informative
programs, and to meet your culturally minded
neighbors!



Events of Interest Here and Elsewhere

An exhibit of **New Jersey Medical History** sponsored by the **Burlington County Historical Society** runs from March 1 to 29, 2000 in the Corson Poley Center at the BCHS property at 457 High Street, Burlington. Admission is free. For more information call 609-386-4773.

The **Burlington County Historical Society** is also hosting their **Eighth Annual Duck Decoy Show and Sale** on Saturday March 25, 2000 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Manahawkin Elks Club, 520 Hilliard Boulevard, Manahawkin NJ. This event has been acclaimed as the "Best Old Decoy Show In New Jersey". Admission is \$3.00, children under 12 free, and there are free decoy appraisals. For more information and directions call Clarence Fennimore at 609-758-7272.

The Pine Barons Chorus Annual Show will be held on March 18th and 19th at the Pennsauken High School, 2:00 and 7:30 pm on the 18th and 2:00 pm on the 19th. (Fee), call 856-822-2474.

Lets Go Fly a Kite, 10 am to 4 pm on March 18 at Batsto Village, Wharton State Forest, Hammonton. A different way to see Batsto and it's free. Call 609-561-7310 for more information.

Quaker Meeting Houses of Burlington Co., sponsored by the Burlington County Historical Society, April 9, 2000 at 4:30 pm at the **Friends Meeting House, Mt. Holly**. The program is free - if you missed it at our Fall meeting, it is highly recommended. You will learn the history of all 18 Meetinghouses, and how to locate them on the-highways and byways of Burlington County. Call 609-386-4773 for more information.

Annual Meeting for 2000

Our annual meeting for the 2000 year will be held on Monday, May 8 in the Riverton School Media Center (Library). **Please note the time change to 7:30 pm !!!**

A Home For The HSR ?

For a long time, a goal of the Historical Society of Riverton (HSR) has been to have a homebase in one of the beautiful, historical buildings of Riverton. It would be a place to hold meetings, display our historical artifacts and to maintain a small library of preservation and architectural restoration information - all to be made available to the public. "House Museums" of this type are operated by many Historical Societies in the Philadelphia / South Jersey Area. It would be good for the HSR by increasing the visibility of the Society, and good for Riverton by increasing the knowledge of Riverton residents and others about our unique and valuable history.

Because we are of limited funds, the initial outlay for the purchase of a such a building would probably have to come from the generosity of an individual or a foundation who could afford to purchase a property outright, then donate it or lease it, (or a portion of it) to the HSR. If the property is in the newly approved State and National Registers District, and it is used for commercial purposes, there would be tax credits available to a property owner who invested in historic restoration of the architecture of the building.

In addition, as a non-profit corporation, the HSR is eligible to apply for several types of grants which would provide money for restoration of a building, for managing a historic site, and for conducting programs for the public. A typical lease requirement for some grant agencies is a period of fifteen years. If the HSR vacated a leased property (some grants require a 15 year lease), then the owner would retain the increased value put into the building by the HSR through our fund raising and restoration efforts.

The HSR is creating a committee to research the possibilities of a building donation from a foundation, or a joint project with a commercial building owner. We will be looking at the foundations who operate in our areas, as well as looking at possible buildings in Riverton.

All are welcomed to help in this effort.

Dan Campbell AIA, Editor

Yesterday

Some old deeds use landmarks as well as directional and distance measurements to identify a property being acquired. An 1840's deed set a boundary line to land in what is now East Riverton, in Cinnaminson, by "a stake in the bank of the river". One in 1851, within what would become Riverton, marked the end of a line across the land as "to a Maple corner by the side of the Pumpasse (as the Pompeston Creek was known then) then down the creek to the low water mark of the Delaware River." Another deed that year set a boundary "from a stone at a corner of the river and running to John Willis' land." A few years later another landmark was given for a piece of property as going down the river to a corner of Buckman's land, and to the middle of an old ditch...

Such landmarks would be hard to find today, and town plats make identifying locations much simpler. Some old references continued to find their way into deeds, though, as in one filed in 1950 for a piece of land above Second Street on Thomas Avenue, That defined a line as "up to a wire fence and including the orchard". Both of those landmarks had already disappeared, as far as can be determined from maps and former residents.

Fences, as boundaries, have long existed. When Riverton was new, some had wood fences along the alleys used for carriages and hucksters, and wrought iron fences across front and / or sides of properties. A stone fence was erected around the schoolhouse in 1880s to deter wandering cows from entering the schoolyard. When wood fences became shabby, and gates didn't close securely, they became a hazard for those walking along streets after dark.

The building boom of early 1900s brought many new residents, among them middle-class workers who now could buy homes of

their own, instead of renting. There was tremendous pride in realizing ownership, and boundaries were carefully guarded — and frequently marked with wire, hedge, or shrubbery fences. In 1935 the New Era carried an article that said “the Henry A. Dreer Nursery firm — Riverton’s only industry —” had “contributed much to the appearance of the town.” The tall hedge along the east side of Fulton Street had been removed, and replaced with “an attractive wire fence of substantive construction”.

They had also demolished three run-down houses on Cedar Street (then also a part of the Dreer property) — the old Seckel house, at the corner, about where the Park sign is now, and two others between Seventh and Eighth Streets. They also requested removal of the (Pennsylvania Railroad) tool shed at the corner “to enhance the entrance to the park and rose gardens”, but were not successful in doing that.

The large rose gardens were where Cedar Street homes are now. It had been developed by J.C. Clark, one of the rose growers at Dreer’s, and was then “reconstructed and laid out artistically, with a new metal fence running the length of it”.

Although not mentioned in that article, some residents may also remember the chrysanthemum beds on the other side of Cedar, before the Park extended all the way to the street.

Styles of fences change, as do other fashions. For a while fences were gradually taken down, and people enjoyed the feeling of openness of unfenced yards. Today the trend has moved toward wooden fences of several styles that offer privacy, as well as boundaries.

On a different note — January’s wintery weather has brought to mind an article found in a newspaper during the winter of 1917-1918. For the first time in many years the river had frozen all the way across.

Measurements made by boring holes into the ice set the depth of ice from seven-and-a-half to twelve-and-a-half inches. The weekend after the deep freeze brought out large crowds of people, estimated to be close to 1000. The article said that “every man, woman and child who owns or could borrow a pair of skates helped swell the crowd”. People were eager to be able to skate on a long, smooth surface, instead of the smaller and often rough ice on local ponds.

Two young men from Moorestown came to Riverton and drove their car across the ice to Philadelphia; and one of the Biddle boys (who lived on Bank Avenue) drove out onto the ice “and put it (his car) through a number of fancy stunts”.

A number of ice boats glided out and around the skaters. Biddle and Frishmuth boys had the largest ones, capable of carrying twenty passengers, and had a great time on the ice — until the wind died out.

A smaller ice boat captured the most attention and interest. It was built by 11-year-old Art Wright, who lived at 305 Bank Avenue (in the house now located at Penn and Carriage House Lane). He loved the river, and spent all possible time there, both winter and summer. When his older brother began to build an ice boat, Art gathered up some scraps of lumber and made for himself a small ice boat “that would bear his light weight, and could outsail anything on the river.”

The channel dug during the second World War, and stronger ice-boats ended the spectacle of the Delaware river freezing all the way across. Perhaps some “Gaslight News” readers may still remember the ice boats, and skating on the river (with clamp-on skates), and bonfires on the bank to warm up.....

Betty. B. Hahle
February, 2000