



Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton
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Meet General George Meade at the March Meeting

The Historical Society of Riverton will have a visit from General George Meade to discuss the Battle of Gettysburg on **Monday, March 12 at 7:30 pm** in the Riverton Public School Media Center. In this "first person" performance Dr. Andrew Waskie will assume the persona of the Union hero of Gettysburg, recounting the battle in the General's own words.

George Gordon Meade was born in Cadiz, Spain on December 31, 1815, graduated from West Point in 1835, and fought in the Mexican War (1846-48), for which he was promoted.

Although he was severely wounded in the Peninsular Campaign (1862), Meade performed well at the Second Battle of Bull Run and, as a division commander, at the battles of South Mountain, Antietam and Fredericksburg. Promoted to corps command, Meade was not heavily engaged at the Battle of Chancellorsville (1863), although he commanded effectively.

Meade was named commander of the Union's Army of the Potomac a few days before the opening of the Battle of Gettysburg, one of the most important battles of the U.S. Civil War, fought at Gettysburg, Pa., on July 1-3, 1863 when Gen. Robert E. Lee invaded Pennsylvania for strategical and logistical reasons. Lee's army of about 75,000 encountered the Army of the Potomac, about 90,000 strong, under Gen. Meade on the outskirts of Gettysburg on July 1. In a battle of considerable movement, Lee tested first the Union right (July 1) and then, in an assault led by Gen. James Longstreet, the left (July 2).

On July 3, Gen. George Pickett led perhaps the most famous charge in American military history against the Union center. Only 5,000 of his original

force of 15,000 survived the repulse.

Although not intending to fight at Gettysburg, Meade showed skill in his handling of infantry, artillery, and cavalry, effectively led his unit commanders, and defeated the Confederates.

Gettysburg, a military and logistical disaster for the South, cost Lee 20,000 men (killed and wounded) and 30,000 arms. Meade lost almost as many men. The battle had considerable psychological effect on both North and South, calling forth President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Occurring in the same week that Vicksburg fell to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, Gettysburg put the Confederates on the defensive in the east. Meade served ably under Grant until the war ended, and then he commanded several military departments. Meade died on November 6, 1872.

The presentation for our March meeting was developed by Dr Waskie, who is the founder and current president of the Gen. Meade Society of PA. Dr Waskie received his degree in history from the Bloomsburg University of Penna. Having taught languages and history in the Pennsbury School District in Bucks County, PA for 31 years, Dr. Waskie is now a professor at Temple University, and an adjunct professor at two other colleges. He also teaches Civil War History at the Civil War Institute, which he helped to found.

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. Enter the building through the main doors facing Fifth Street. There will be a short refreshment period following the meeting.

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Daniel T. Campbell, AIA *President & Editor*

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey 08077

Welcome to New Members

The Historical Society welcomes the following new members for the 2001 year:

Edith Harris
Mountainview California

Cathi and Jerry Laughin

Thomas and Dana Schneider

Barbara Westergaard
Princeton, NJ

Our additional thanks to Business Patrons:
Hank Croft, Architect

and Sponsors:
Paul Grena and Neil Clancy
Thomas and Dana Schneider

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!

Members whose dues still need to be paid for 2001 will find a reminder notice in this issue.



Borough looks at Post Office for Offices and Town Center

The Riverton Post Office at 613 Main Street was designed and constructed in 1939-40, at the end of the era of Works Project Administration (WPA) which was a government program to invest in communities and provide employment after the Great Depression of 1929. It was dedicated on July 4th, 1940. Since construction of the Cinnaminson / Riverton Post Office on Route 130 in 1990, the building is under utilized for the space that it contains (approx. 4,000 sq ft in each of the first floor and a substantial basement).

The Riverton Borough Council is exploring the possibility of acquiring the Riverton Post Office to convert it to a Town Center with borough offices, council chamber and meeting rooms for municipal committees and other groups. The Borough Council has formed a committee including representatives of the Council, The Planning Board, The Economic Development Committee and the Historical Society to study the feasibility. Dan Campbell and Roy Vollmer have agreed to serve on this committee to represent the Historical Society.

The present idea is to keep some Post Office space inside, since the continued presence of the Post Office in Riverton is a priority of the Borough Council, and one which the Historical Society also favors.

This is an exciting prospect for several reasons. It would provide the Borough with much needed space (including ample parking in the rear), upgraded facilities mandated by the County Court system, it could provide for the restoration and preservation of the exterior of the building and its lobby, and could become the centerpiece of a revitalization of the downtown area of the borough.

Dan Campbell, Editor

Annual Meeting for 2001

Our annual meeting for the 2001 year will be held on Monday, May 14 in the Riverton School Media Center (Library). **Please note the meeting time is 7:30 pm.**

Yesterday

March is designated by many historical organizations and government agencies as Women's History Month. In recognition of such, we continue our Yesterday columns previously written about historically significant women of Riverton. The May 2000 Gaslight News reported about Mary Biddle Fidler, authoress of a series of books about children growing up in Riverton, the Sept / Oct 2000 Gaslight reported about the Porch Club of Riverton, and the the club's role in creation of the NJ PTA. The following are excerpts of narratives written by Betty Hahle about other Riverton Women, all of whom have been nominated to the NJ State Historic Preservation Office's recent effort to create a Women's Heritage Trail in the state.

Mary Marcy (Mrs. Alexander Marcy, jr. M.D.), born in 1864, was an early member of the Porch Club of Riverton. She was particularly interested in encouraging children to read, and had a group of children come to her home regularly to read, with prizes for completing books suggested over the season. She was a part of the Mothers Circle (of the Porch Club) that formed the State Congress of Mothers, and was the second State President, 1904 to 1908, following founder Mary VanMeter Grice (Mary Marcy had been the Congress's first secretary).

For many years after that she served as (State) First Vice President, heading the State Child Hygiene program. In that capacity she initiated programs throughout the State to improve sanitation, infant care, child labor reforms, institutional care improvements, children in jails, etc. Under her leadership a resolution was passed to the United States Congress to establish a Children's Bureau at the National Level.

Dr. and Mrs. Marcy lived at 406 Main Street. The Second Empire frame residence was built circa 1855, was purchased by Dr. Marcy in 1887, and remained in the family for almost 100 years. Some changes have been made: i.e. a round open porch on the left rear corner was enclosed and given a turreted roof, and became a doctor's office. The wide front porch was removed in the mid 20th century. The house has a Historical Society Plaque and is a contributing build-

ing in the Riverton State and National Registers district.

The Marcys had one daughter, Marjorie, who was a member of the All American Girls Hockey team. In 1921 she chaired the first area League of Women Voters that met and was formed at the Porch Club in January, 1921. Marjorie Marcy and her husband Gardner Crowell, lived in the Marcy's Main Street home until her death in the 1980's.

Lela Bowen (born in 1877 as Lela Slater) was active in PTA work over a long period of years. During her term as President of the NJ State PTA from 1935 to 1938, she had the task of returning to public education a number of subjects that had been dropped during the preceding Depression years, as well as the restoration of cuts in teachers' salaries. State PTA records say that during her administration "she strengthened greatly the position of the NJ Congress, gained it state-wide recognition as a major organization working in education, welfare, and health."

Mrs. Bowen served in many capacities at every level of the PTA -- State, County & local as officer and as a tireless member. The PTA publication was edited by her for eight years (and the mailing address was Riverton, NJ). She served on a joint commission for the eradication of Social Diseases in New Jersey, The Extension Advisory Committee of Rutgers University, the NJ Health and Physical Education Committee, the NJ Commission to the World's Fair of 1939/40, and various other State and National Organizations. She advocated more state aid for public school education. In 1938 Mrs. Bowen designed the Life Membership pin of the NJ State PTA that is still worn by those members.

Lela married Walter L. Bowen in May of 1902 in Palmyra. Walter was owner / editor of the New Era, a weekly newspaper printed in Riverton for over 80 years. Many PTA publication items were printed at the New Era's Main Street shop and office. The Bowers resided at 408 Thomas Avenue, a 2 1/2 story three bay frame house, built circa 1895, and purchased by Bowen in 1908. It has a side gabled roof, with a large gambrel center dormer, and open front

porch (now enclosed). The Bowens raised three children there. Mrs. Bowen died April 8, 1965.

Dorothy Stewart Everet (Mrs. W. Brooks Everet), born circa 1908, grew up in Riverton, and lived here until moving to Medford in 1967. As a child, she developed an interest in plants and flowers, in her mother's gardens, and herself always had a way of creating similar interests in others, in particular with children.

Dorothy was educated in local schools, the Glassboro State College (Normal School) after which she became a Kindergarten teacher. As her interest in plants continued, particularly in the Pine Barrens, which at that time had not yet attracted much interest, she became an authority, and identified a number of plants found growing there. For about 35 years she explored the area, gave tours, and lectured about the Pinelands.

Mrs. Everet was active in a group similarly interested in the Pinelands and concerned that it be preserved and protected from abuse. She chaired the group that established the Pinelands Conservationists in the 1950's, which was one of the first, if not the first, dedicated to Pinelands Preservation. Mrs. Everet also graduated from the Barnes Arboretum Foundation program, in Merion, PA. She lectured on horticulture and the Pinelands throughout a wide area. She was also recognized as a prominent horticulturalist and flower show judge, earning a rank of master judge emeritus of the National Council of Flower Judges.

Mr. and Mrs. Everet, married 57 years, worked closely together. He, whose line was insurance, became a noted photographer of nature. One of his best photos was of Bucks Run, in the Pine Barrens, a wetland area with a small stream running through the forest, where Ogden Nash once had a cabin. The photo was made into a widely distributed poster for the Conservation Foundation.

The Everet's residence was 430 Thomas Avenue, a three bay, 2 1/2 story frame Second Empire style house, erection date not known but it is shown on an 1886 map of Riverton. In 1987, the garden section of their former property was sold to Weber Funeral Home at the corner of Thomas and Broad Street,

which adjoins it, in order to extend the business's parking area. The Everets had three children. Both Mr. and Mrs. Everet died in January 1990, just a few days apart.

Isabella Wright Davis (Mrs. John C. S. Davis) was interested in forestry, and was an active member of the Foresters Organization. She had an experimental tree farm in the Burlington area, and circa 1903 had a book published on forestry. A copy of the book is at Rutgers' Library, Rare Book Section, in New Brunswick.

Mrs. Davis had a son and daughter by her first marriage, and a daughter from her marriage to J. C. S. Davis, an oil cloth manufacturer who was very active in Riverton development and activities. In 1887 Mr. Davis purchased a very large stone house on the Riverbank that had been built very shortly after Riverton's founding in 1851. The home was demolished in the late 1930's and the site contains a modern ranch style home.

Frances Ruppert, (Mrs. Lawrence F. Volz) was born in Riverton in 1905, was reared here and received her education in local schools. In Palmyra High School, from which she was graduated in 1923, she was recognized as an outstanding athlete, winning many events in sprinting and relay racing.

By 1925 she had set a world record for the 40 yard dash of 5.2 seconds, had won titles in all the Middle Atlantic Amateur Athletic Union indoor and outdoor sprints. She ran for the Meadowbrook Club of Philadelphia, where she aided in bringing the National Relay Championship to Philadelphia. She was chosen as anchor for the 4-member All American Girls Relay Team that competed with Canada in the 440-yard relay. In all, she had won more than a hundred medals for 50- 60- and 100-yard dash competitions. She was often referred to as one of the greatest woman athletes of that time.

Her home in Riverton was 214 Fulton Street, a simple Carpenter Gothic Style residence with a gable roof and open porch that was built for her parents, John and Martina Ruppert. She had two older sisters and a younger brother. As far as is known, Frances Ruppert had one daughter.

Betty. B. Hahle, February 2000