



# Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton  
Riverton, New Jersey

Founded 1970

Incorporated 1978

Sept / Oct 2002

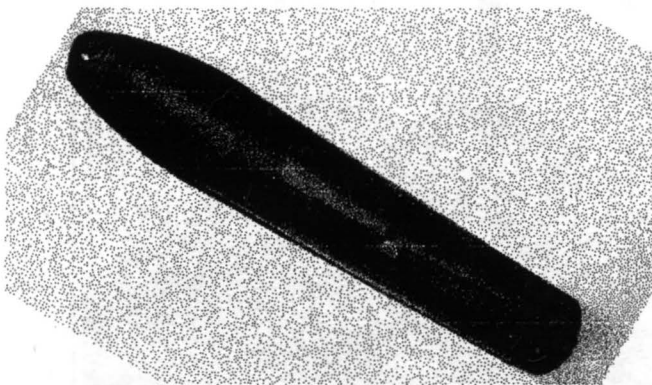
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## Appraisal Fair September 28

The Historical Society will sponsor a new and exciting event for Riverton in the form of an **Antique Appraisal and Old House Fair** to be held on Saturday, September 28 in the Riverton School gymnasium, Fifth and Howard Streets, from 10am to 4pm. During that time, visitors can get advice from local contractors and vendors who will display information about products and services suitable for old houses.

From 11 am to 3pm Dr. Lori Verderame, certified appraiser and art historian, will conduct appraisals during her presentation "What's It Worth? with Dr. Lori V.". Dr. Lori Verderame is the Director of Masterpiece Galleries in Bucks County, PA and appears regularly on KYW-TV's "Trash or Treasure" program.

We invite people to bring that old or unusual object from your living room or attic to learn about its history and what it might be worth on the antique market of today. Admission to the Fair is \$5.00 per person plus an appraisal fee of \$5.00 per item. **THIS IS A FUND RAISING EVENT** for the Historical Society, so we encourage all members and friends to attend to support us. During the fair, baked goods, hot dogs and beverages will be available for purchase at the outdoor "HSR Cafe".



### WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S IT WORTH?

Can you guess what this item was used for? It was manufactured in Riverton by the Ball-Biddle Company. It is brass, cylindrical, 20 inches tall. Stop by the Society booth at the Appraisal Fair to see if your guess is correct!

## General Meeting September 23

The first meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton for the Fall 2002 will take place on **Monday September 23 at 7:30 pm**, in the Riverton School Media Room (Library) at Fifth and Howard Streets, Riverton. The program for the evening will be **The Architecture of Local Historic Houses of Worship**, presented by Dan Campbell, president of the Historical Society of Riverton. The program will be accompanied by slides showing photographs of 11 historic churches (and a Meetinghouse), as they appeared in history, compared to photographs of how they appear today.

Dan is an architect with John Milner Architects, Inc., Chadds Ford, PA, a firm which specializes in the preservation of historic architecture. All persons, whether Historical Society members or not, are invited to attend this informative and entertaining event. The Riverton School is handicapped accessible. Enter the building through the main doors facing Fifth Street. Refreshments will be served following the meeting.

The following is a synopsis of the program, with much more information to be provided along with the slide photos, on the evening of the 23rd:

**The Westfield Friends Meetinghouse** at Riverton Road and Rt. 130, in Cinnaminson began as a school authorized in 1780 by the Moorestown Meeting, (then Chester Township) on land purchased from Thomas Lippincott in an area that he called his "west field". A Meetinghouse was later constructed in 1799 to 1800. A stone building, it served for Meeting worship, and Sunday school from 1800 until 1859, when it was destroyed by fire and was replaced in 1860 with a brick building with wood trim in a simplified Georgian style.

The 1860 building at Westfield still remains in use today as the Sunday School, with a 2 story addition on the former entry porch side. A new Meetinghouse built in 1960, is directly across a lane from it, and is used for worship and all social functions.

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## Gaslight News

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## Membership Information

The Historical Society begins our membership renewal process each year with this first issue of the Gaslight News. 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 2002 through May 2003. According to our By-Laws, dues must be paid by the end of February of 2003, therefore we refer to it as the 2003 year.

Next, please remember that dues are payable in advance for a small-budgeted organization such as ours. 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. *Priscilla Taylor, Membership Chair*



## **VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED**

for the Appraisal Fair

If you would like to help the Historical Society with the Appraisal Fair, we are looking for people to:

- \*Donate baked goods for the HSR Cafe
- \*Donate 1-2 hours of your time to help with ticket and food sales

Please call Priscilla Taylor, 786-3852, if you are interested in helping on September 28. This is a fun event - please join us! We would also like to borrow a dress-maker's dummy -- please call if you know where we can borrow one for the day!

## Historic Riverton Flags for Sale

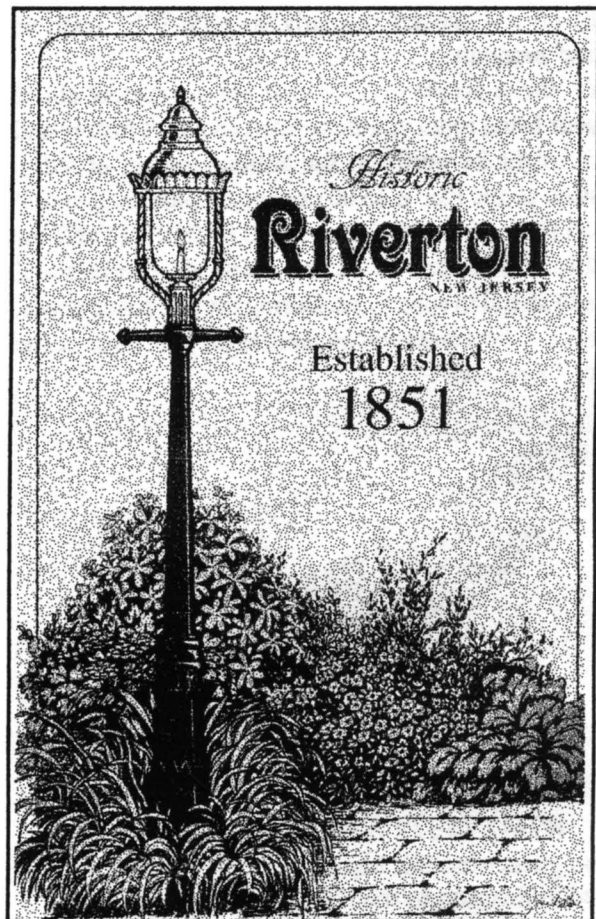
The Historical Society proudly announces the first in a series of banner flags commemorating Riverton. The flag was designed by Jean Pettine, of Jean Pettine Graphics, 611 Main Street (where she the beautifully renovated the Cinnaminson Bank building). Jean has donated several designs of Riverton scenes to the Society for our use in fundraising. Thank you, Jean!

The Flag is a limited edition of only 100. It is 2 feet by 3 feet in a vertical format, 4 color printing process, on durable synthetic material, made by the Freedom Flag Company of North Miami FL.

Help support the Historical Society by purchasing a limited edition flag depicting this image of our beloved Gaslight, a landmark of historic Riverton!

The flag will be on sale at the General Meeting on September 23, so bring cash or a check that evening to assure yourself of getting a flag. When they go on sale again at the Appraisal Fair, they may all sell out.

To purchase now, you can call Dan Campbell at 786-8660. The cost of the flag is \$45, and monies raised by this fundraising will be put toward the Historical Society Museum Fund.



Four Color Limited Edition Riverton Flag

## Then and Now . . .

*continued from page 1 . . .*

**Palmyra Moravian Church**, located on Cinnaminson Avenue near Rt. 130, purchased its land in 1860, and built a church by 1863. The sanctuary was an Italianate styled building, a simple boxy sanctuary, with no narthex (foyer). The exterior was stucco with lines scored in the stucco to simulate more impressive limestone blocks, a common architectural technique.

By 1902, the congregation had outgrown this sanctuary and the same building was reconfigured with a steeply gabled roof, and an impressive tower using the more popular Gothic Revival style. Gothic details appear in the pointed arches over the stained glass windows, and over the front door. The tower is crowned with a copper "witches hat" roof which is visible today from a great distance around. The original foundation of the sanctuary with scored lines in the stucco is still visible below the siding on the exterior.

**Christ Episcopal Church, Palmyra**, Parry Avenue, Palmyra: The original Episcopal Church in this area besides Moorestown was constructed in 1859 to 1861, located at the corner of Broad and Main streets in Riverton, where the Riverton Bakery now stands.

As the intersection grew, (right across from the noisy Riverton train station), the church building was moved to a newly acquired property at Fourth and Main Streets in Riverton. When a larger church was planned in 1883, Christ Episcopal Church decided to turn this building over to the Episcopal congregation in Palmyra for their use.

So, this church building was moved again during the winter of 1884 to 1885, it took 40 days, only 16 of which are recorded to have been good moving days, to its present home on Parry Avenue in Palmyra where it stands amid some residences, near the Wawa and across the street from the Palmyra War Memorial.

The building, designed by local architect, John Fraser is wood framed, Carpenter Gothic in style, was originally clad in wood siding, with a wood shingle roof. Its attached Parish Hall to the right side still retains its a small belfry over the door which contains a bell that was cast in England that was installed in the original church in 1860.

**Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church** organized in 1921 as the First Lutheran Church of Palmyra and Riverton, and constructed a stone Gothic church on Garfield street near Broad Street in Palmyra in 1924. During the hard times of the depression, their mortgage was foreclosed and they struggled for a few years until a nearby building became available -- the Palmyra National Bank at Morgan Avenue and Broad Street, which had foreclosed on them at their former site!

The red brick bank was designed in the Beaux Arts style, which had been popularized by the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, and its influence on institutional architecture remained strong for at least the first half of the twentieth century, and later. First Lutheran acquired this building in 1939 and adopted the name of Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The sanctuary is in the original banking room with beautiful round arched windows. A perpendicular gabled section at the rear, and the narthex at the front are additions designed in a matching style.

The nearest **Methodist** church began in 1854 with a building near the intersection of Broad and Cinnaminson Avenue in Palmyra, where it had an unusual second floor sanctuary in a Colonial styled building. In 1893, the congregation sold this building to the Society Hall Association, and constructed a church on newly purchased land at Morgan Avenue and Fifth Street, in Palmyra and took the name **Epworth Methodist Episcopal Church**. The original church building later became Palmyra Borough Hall in 1941, with many additions it still serves the community today, and still retains the second floor worship space as Palmyra's Borough Council Chamber.

The new church was a fine example of the Carpenter Gothic style, a wood sided building and tower, and still retains it's slate roof today. The form of the sanctuary is in the shape of a greek or maltese cross (with equal arms) creating a more centralized feeling in the worship space.

The original **Central Baptist Church of Riverton and Palmyra** was organized in 1885, by February of 1886 Joseph Morgan donated a lot to them along Maple Avenue, and in the summer of 1886, their first chapel was constructed at a cost of \$2800. Their church that we know today, at the corner of Fifth Street and Maple was built from 1928 to 1929. It is a stone Gothic Revival sanctuary facing the street corner, with a Tudor styled Christian Education wing to the right along Maple Avenue. Upon closer examination, one can see that the original sanctuary was the building that has been heavily remodeled into the Sunday School. The octagonal louvered cupola over the old sanctuary still remains. with its original slate shingled roofing, however the ornate Queen-Anne styled tower over the original entry has been removed.

**First Church of Christ Scientist**, 10th and Main Streets, Riverton was founded in 1911 by 23 members, and by 1914, had raised enough funds to purchase a residence, and with \$1,000 worth of alterations, began to worship there at 703 Thomas Avenue. This location served until 1958, when land was purchased at 10th and Main streets on the border of Riverton, the design was commissioned to Walter Croft,



architect who was a member, and a new church was completed in December 1960.

Christ Scientist is a well executed modern design with a steeply pitched "A" frame roof, reminiscent of the steep pitch of Gothic church roofs. The porte cochere located under a roof to the right is indicative of the automobile oriented society which the United States had become by that time, and provides a strong horizontal counterpoint to the dramatic verticality of the nave roof. The whole composition has a quietness and serenity in a beautifully landscaped setting.

**Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church**, had a small mission chapel near Fourth and Linden, Riverton from 1879, then purchased more land around it until they could afford to construct a large wooden church in 1892 in a fine example of the Carpenter Gothic style, with and an impressive bell tower on the gable end.

In 1931, a stone Gothic school building was built along Linden Avenue, and a convent was built on Thomas Avenue for a combined cost of \$100,000.00. An even larger school building (modern) was erected and completed by 1960 across Fourth Street.

In 1963, the wooden sanctuary was closed and removed, and a new masonry sanctuary was completed by 1964. The present church is modern in style, but is a more faithful return to the Basilica form typical of early Christian churches around the Mediterranean. Its off-center bell tower at the front left corner is designed to simulate the Italian campanile arrangement, ending in a carillon at the top from which music is played before Mass.

After the former church was moved, **Christ Episcopal, Riverton** was built at Fourth and Main Street from 1883 to 1884. It is a brownstone Gothic Revival church, but has overtones which have references to the strength of the America Industrial Age which was taking place at the end of the 19th century.

The architect, John Fraser, resided in Riverton, but had practiced widely in the Philadelphia area, where his work included the Union League on Broad Street below Market. From 1867 to 1871 Fraser was in partnership with Frank Furness, and Burlington resident George Hewitt. Furness was a wildly imaginative designer, and Furness' Victorian influences are very evident in this work by Fraser.

The front and right facades are dominated by a magnificent tower of huge proportions crowned by modified witch's hat and an iron Celtic cross and eight other Celtic crosses adorn the church. The rose window at the Main Street facade was constructed by the Tiffany Company.

The Parish Hall completed in 1895, is again an English styled building, but with a more simplified form, and details that make it an early example of what is called the English Craft style. It was completed in 1895 and was designed by John Fraser's son, Archibald, who died shortly before its

completion.

**Mt Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church** was established as the Mite Missionary Society in 1896 to 1897 in Riverton. After a decade of meeting at a building which no longer exists, they purchased the property at Third and Penn Streets, and for \$1,000 constructed their church by 1909 with a membership of 19.

In 1929, tragedy hit the church in the form of a lightning strike which hit the rear of the sanctuary during a storm. The resulting fire all but destroyed the rear half of the nave. The congregation's efforts to rebuild took until 1931, at which time the building took on the form that we know today.

It has a steeply pitched gabled roof, with an asymmetrically placed tower on the front. Most of the exterior walls are stuccoed, except the front facade and the tower which have been veneered with red brick. It has Gothic arches on the front and side facades over stained glass windows and the entry door.

**Calvary Presbyterian Church**, Fourth and Lippincott Avenue., Riverton, was established in 1874 with six trustees, including Joseph Campbell (who had a small vegetable company in Camden), William Dreer (owner of a large nursery in Riverton), and John Fraser, a local architect. Calvary purchased their present lot for \$600.00 and contracted for the construction of a church in June of 1878.

John Fraser was the architect, and the building was built by a Burlington builder for \$8,000, dedicated on July 2, 1879. The building was a wood framed church in the Carpenter Gothic style with Stick style elements. The dominant bell tower with a witch's hat roof, and first floor narthex was nearest to the corner of Lippincott and Fourth. An attached chapel which sat in the yard near Church Lane, housed the Sunday School and was designed by the architectural firm of Hewitt and Hewitt.

By the mid 1920's, the congregation had outgrown the church and it was enlarged by 1927. During the reconstruction, worship services were held in the Porch Club of Riverton, and Sunday School was conducted at the Riverton Public School. The reconstructed church was designed by George Savage, a Philadelphia architect, in the English Gothic style, made of stone with cast stone accents to simulate natural limestone. The Christian Education wing, in a modernized Gothic style was added in 1952.

In conclusion, it is amazing to see that in the small area of Palmyra, Riverton, and the nearest part of Cinnaminson that we have looked at today, there is such a diversity of types and sizes of churches. You are encouraged to attend the September 23rd meeting of the Historical Society to see the old photographs of these Historic Houses of Worship.

*Dan Campbell - September, 2002*