

Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey

Founded 1970

Incorporated 1978

November 2002 to January 2003

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December Meeting:

Battle Incident at Petticoat Bridge - December 1776

Had it not been for a brilliant Revolutionary War skirmish at Petticoat Bridge at Columbus, NJ, General Washington would not have been as successful at the Battle of Trenton. Because of a timely rumor and 600 militiamen from what is now Camden County, Colonel Samuel Griffin was able to rouse 2500 reserve Hessian troops who were 20 miles away on the day of the battle.

It was December 21, 1776 when Colonel Griffin detached his troops to threaten a Hessian outpost two miles below Black Horse (now Columbus NJ) at the Petticoat Bridge over Assiscunk Creek near Slabtown (now Jacksonville).

The Historical Society of Riverton will hear of this exciting part of our Revolutionary War history on Monday, December 2, 2002 at 7:30 pm in the Riverton Public School Media Center (Library).

The presenter of the evening's program will be William W. Leap, and the title of this 40 minute talk is "Incident at Petticoat Bridge". Bill Leap is a tireless historical researcher, with 25 years of experience researching history, speaking, and conducting tours of South Jersey historical sites.

Bill is a past president of the both the Camden County Historical Society and the Audubon Wildlife Society, and is president of Heritage Asset Study of NJ, V.P. of the League of Historical Societies of NJ, and is the author of *The History of Runnemed NJ, 1626 to 1976*. Bill is also an accomplished photographer whose work appears in the National Park Service's Great American Rivers Poster Series, and the NJ Pinelands Commission interpretive program. Bill's efforts have won him both local and State of NJ awards for advancing the knowledge of NJ History.

January Meeting:

Conflict of Conscience; Quakers and the American Revolution

The Revolutionary War was not only a conflict of political bodies, but also represented a conflict in the minds of many Quakers in Philadelphia and our local New Jersey area due to the Peace Testimony, a Quaker doctrine. Believing in freedom for all people, but rejecting violence as a means to achieve it, there became a great conflict of conscience among Quakers.

These sensitivities will be examined at the Historical Society meeting on Monday, January 27, at 7:30 pm in the Riverton School Media Center (Library), where we will hear the details from Ms. JoAnn Kaitz, an adjunct professor of history at Camden County College, who has degrees from Rutgers and Trenton State College.

The talk, approximately 30 minutes in length, will focus on how the Quakers strived to maintain their pledge of non-violence amid all the conflict involved in the American Colony's fight for independence from England.

In particular, two men, John Redman from Camden County (then Gloucester County), and a Miller from Pilesgrove (Salem County) were arrested and kept in jail in Woodbury for about 3 months of 1776 & 1777. Shortly after Redman and Miller's detention, 20 Philadelphia Quakers were also taken, and were relocated to Virginia for a longer period during the conflict.

Most Quakers who maintained the Peace Testimony were able to remain in the area, while many of those who sided with the Colonials were turned away from their Meetings.

Some members of the Society of Friends would eventually take up arms with the Colonials (and became known as "Fighting Quakers"). Many objectors who refused to fight, instead moved to Nova Scotia or returned to England as a result.

All persons, whether Historical Society Members or not, are invited to attend these interesting and informative events. The Riverton School, at Fifth and Howard Streets, Riverton, and the Media Center (Library) are both handicapped accessible. Please enter the building through the main doors facing Fifth Street. Refreshments will be served following the meetings.

Gaslight News

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Daniel T. Campbell, AIA *President & Editor*
Gerald Weaber, *Contributing Writer*

The Historical Society of Riverton
16 Carriage House Lane
Riverton, New Jersey 08077

We Welcome New Members:

Jan and Dennis DeVries

Christopher Ford

Also Upgrades to Life Membership:

Pat and Richard Bruner

Gayle and Joseph Farrell
(a life membership for each)

May Uland
(a life membership plus a financial donation)

Appraisal Fair Successful

The first Historical Society Appraisal Event and Old House Fair was held on September 28 at the Riverton School gym. Over 100 people attended from the membership and the general public.

Dr. Lori Verderame was a very qualified and interesting appraiser who delivered her analysis of over 100 antique items in an interesting style including anecdotes about the antique business, and insights into the history of decorative arts.

There were 6 vendors present (two woodworkers, a roofing contractor, an artist, and an architect). The Historical Society thanks all board members and others who assisted with the event, especially Bob Kennedy for so much help in arranging the event, Betty Hahle for helping to staff the sign-in table and Margaret Westfield, preservation Architect, for being present to answer questions about people's houses.

The event netted over \$600 for the Historical Society treasury. Those who could not attend missed a unique event for Riverton. Please look for this type of program to come around again in the future.

Upcoming Meetings

March 10, 2002 -

PROGRAM - Local Railroad History

May 13, 2002 -

ANNUAL MEETING - Musical Program.

Riverton Building News

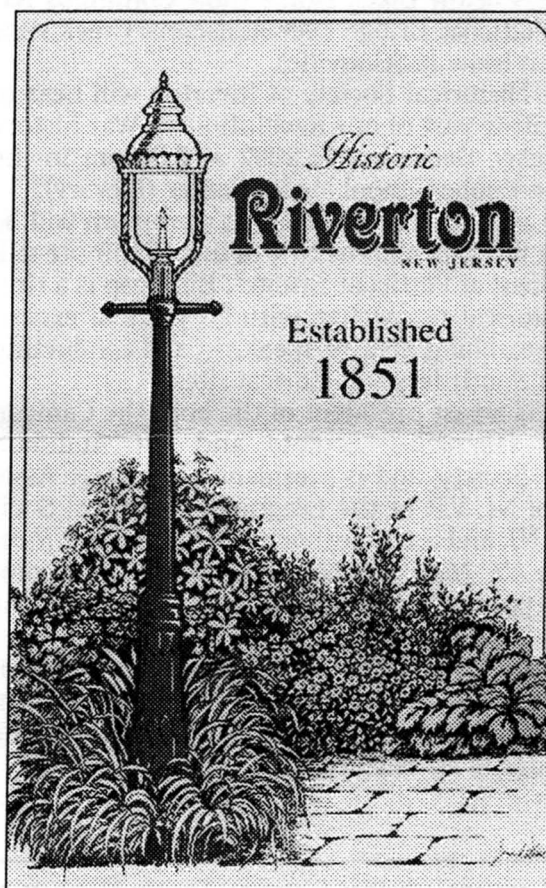
By now you have probably noticed the enormous construction crane located on a floating barge moored next to the Riverton Yacht Club.

After many years of fundraising, engineering, and agency approvals, the former steamboat pier, on which the Yacht Club resides, is finally receiving its preservation treatment in the form of new metal sheet piling currently being installed around the three outer sides of the wharf.

The principal cost of the pier restoration is being paid for by a grant from the NJ and Federal DOT's in the amount of \$919,000. The cost of the engineering and construction monitoring has been raised by private donations from the Yacht Club members and others.

Soon, the causeway to the pier will be replaced with a modern steel structure and new wood decking will be installed to match the old. Lastly the existing iron railings will be reinstalled, and restored.

Our hearty congratulations to the Riverton Steamboat Landing Foundation and Yacht Club members for their perseverance in making this project possible for Riverton and for all of New Jersey in order to continue this valuable interpretation of Delaware River history.



Limited edition Riverton Flags are still
available - great Christmas gift! \$45.00
Call 856-786-8660

Then and Now . . .

The First Friends in Burlington County

This year Burlington City commemorates the 325th anniversary of the its settlement. Many Rivertonians know Burlington City as the home of the celebrated author James Fenimore Cooper, who wrote *The Last of the Mohicans*, and Benjamin Franklin's son William who was Royal Governor of New Jersey. Fewer people know and appreciate the contributions made by the Friends (another name for Quakers) who came to Burlington County from England in 1677.

The early Quakers seized the opportunity to settle in West Jersey to escape religious persecution and to gain the freedoms denied them in England as a religious minority. England imprisoned Quakers under the reign of Charles II and when Quakers went to North America the Puritans shunned them. Quaker beliefs were radical for their time. Persecution was common for their refusal to remove their hat to superiors, refusal to take oaths or to take up arms or to pay tithes for the upkeep of the state church.

Among the first Quakers in West Jersey was a group of two hundred and fifty colonists organized by William Penn who set sail from England in the good ship *Kent*. The *Kent* sailed down the Thames River for its voyage to the Americas and its destination at Burlington on the Delaware River in "West Jersey".

The Wilds of West Jersey

The Quaker leader George Fox conceived of the idea for a Jersey settlement following a religious visit to the American colonies in 1672-73. George Fox's visit began in Maryland and continued north through East Jersey to New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Descriptions of the wild country that Fox found on his trek through the Delaware Valley and the Burlington County area are contained in his journal. (1)

An excerpt from George Fox's journal describes a pre-colonial South Jersey upon his crossing from the Dutch town of Newcastle to the Jersey side the Delaware River.

"Then we had that wilderness country to pass through since called West Jersey. We traveled a whole day together without seeing man or woman, house or dwelling place. Sometimes we lay in the woods by a fire, and sometimes in Indian wigwams or houses."

The Fox journal goes on to relate a southern passage across the Delaware River to the settle-

ment of Burlington in New Jersey.

"We swam our horses over a river about a mile wide, at twice, first to an island called Upper Didinock, and then to the mainland; having hired Indians to help us over in their canoes. This day we could reach but about thirty miles and came at night to a Swede's house, where we got a little straw and lay there that night. Next day, having hired another guide, we traveled about forty miles through the woods, and made us a fire at night by which we lay and dried ourselves; for we were often wet in our travels."

Some months later Fox returned to England where he met with the young twenty-nine year old William Penn. Fox and Penn talked about the wild unsettled country on either side of the Delaware River that contrasted to the growing Quaker settlements north and south of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Their conversation that day is believed to have been the first step in the establishment of the Salem and Burlington (both in West Jersey) settlements.

The Quaker's formed the first colonies in Salem and Burlington counties years before William Penn chartered Pennsylvania. The land referred to as the 'Jerseys' was property owned by both Sir George Carteret and Lord John Berkeley until Berkeley sold his holdings in 1674. Friends purchased the West Jersey tracts with the intention of encouraging Quaker emigration to America. The rest of New Jersey to the north and east was owned by Carteret and called East Jersey.

Quakers starting a new life in West Jersey fared better than the settlers in the Virginia and Massachusetts Bay colonies. The fertile land and the Quaker's just treatment of Native Americans in 'the Jerseys' avoided much of the suffering and violence experienced by other early immigrants to America.(2) The settlement in Burlington became the chief port on the Delaware River and capital of the province of West Jersey. By 1678, a Quaker monthly meeting for worship was established and by 1681 fourteen hundred people lived in the Burlington area.

The West Jersey province was organized under a contract called the Concessions and Agreement which was the most liberal charter in its day. (3) The religious oppression of the Quakers by the English under Charles II was believed to be the reason for the settlers insistence on an

agreement to ensure their rights in the Americas. William Penn worked on the agreement with the proprietors of the new colony. The Quaker settlers signed the Agreement before they left England and it was issued in the new colony in 1677. A new government by freeholders in West Jersey was based on a Bill of Rights including absolute religious freedom, public trial by jury, right of petition, freedom from arbitrary arrest or imprisonment for debt, and equal taxation by representatives.

America's struggle for freedom owes much to the early Quaker settlers in West Jersey who asserted their rights based in part on article 39 of the Magna Carta that stated:

"No freeman shall be arrested, or detained in prison, or deprived of his freedom, or outlawed, or banished, or in any way molested; and we will not set forth against him nor send any against him, unless by the lawful judgment of his peers and by the law of the land."

The West Jersey Concessions and Agreement of March 1677 went further than the English Bill of Rights in 1689 to proclaim religious freedom.

Early Burlington Quakers

The following anecdotes on early New Jersey Quakers and their influence on our history are drawn in part from the Tercentenary Family Album produced by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and illustrate the history and culture of our region:

✪ Elizabeth, the daughter of a wealthy London Quaker came to Jersey in 1701 where she married a traveling Quaker minister and later built a substantial home on the Cooper River and called it Haddon Field. Haddon Township and the Borough of Haddonfield derive their name from the Elizabeth Haddon Estaugh family. The story of the romance between Elizabeth Haddon and John Estaugh can be found today in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*.

✪ Issac Collins began publishing *The New Jersey Gazette* in 1777, a paper that promoted a revolution against England. Isaac Collins was asked to leave the Quaker Meeting for advocating violence. In 1778, Collins moved his printing press to Trenton and in the early 1800's, he printed a quarto Bible far more superior than other editions available at the time. In 1808, Collins returned to his hometown of Burlington, made amends to the Quaker meeting for his promotion of war, and he resumed membership in the Society of Friends. (The site of the Collins print shop in Burlington City is now known as the Collins-Jones House. The house on the corner of Broad

and York Streets was the home of the newspaper publisher Isaac Collins. The Jones family donated the home to the Burlington County Historical Society). You can visit the recently restored Collins-Jones House by calling the Burlington County Historical Society at 386-4773).

✪ A Quaker physician from Burlington, Joseph Wright Taylor, devoted his legacy to the creation of the first American college in 1885 to offer women a graduate education through to the Ph.D. The college's mission was to "offer women rigorous intellectual training and the chance to do to original research, a European-style program that was then available only at a few elite institutions for men. That was a formidable challenge, especially in light of the resistance of society at large, at the end of the 19th century, to the notion that women could be the intellectual peers of men." reprinted from the history and mission statement of Bryn Mawr College.

The Historical Society of Riverton will publish a second part of this story about the Quakers of Burlington County, featuring the modern Friends and their influence on New Jersey history and culture. Please read it in a later edition!

Sources:

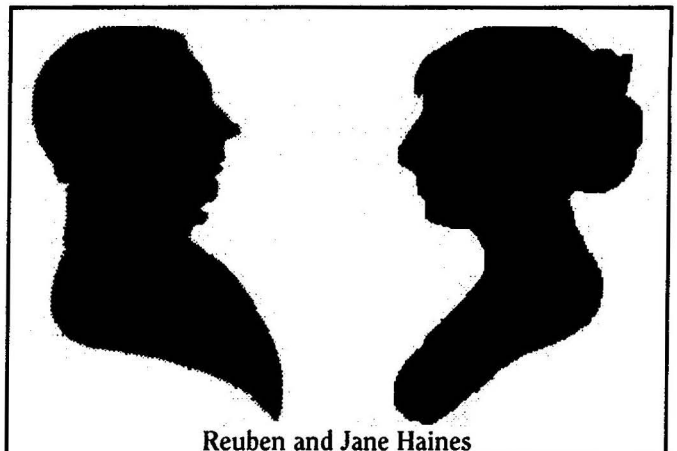
(1) Journal of John Fox (Rufus Jones edition). Friends United Press, 1976.

(2) A History of the Friends in America. Thomas, Allen C. The John C. Winston Co, 1930.

(3) "West Jersey Concessions" Dictionary of American History. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976.

(4) Philadelphia Quakers 1681-1981, A Tercentenary Family Album. Wilson, Robert H. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1981.

Appreciation to the Smiley Family at the Mohonk Mountain House for use of their Quaker Collection. *Gerald Weaver, Board Member*



Reuben and Jane Haines

Quaker Silhouettes