



Gaslight News

The Historical Society of Riverton
Riverton, New Jersey

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Incorporated 1978

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“Over Here, Molly Pitcher” Program at October Meeting

The Historical Society of Riverton will meet on Monday October 6th, 2003 at 7:30 pm for a general meeting and program at the Riverton School. The program for the evening will feature a historical interpretation from the Revolutionary War era about the legendary *Molly Pitcher*.

The featured presenter for the evening is author and historical interpreter Stacy Flora Roth of Burlington. “*Over Here, Molly Pitcher*” is a dramatic presentation highlighting the lives of women who “belonged to the army” during the American Revolution.

Stacy Roth draws a portrait of what life might have been like for a woman who served with an artillery company during the American Revolution.

Ms. Roth in her role as “Molly” reminisces about the days when she accompanied her husband through summer battles and winter encampments from Valley Forge to Monmouth to Morristown. Relating tales of firing a cannon in the heat of battle to trudging “behind the baggage”, she provides a glimpse into what it must have been like to be a “camp follower” in the days when American Independence was a dream rather than a certainty.

The goal of Ms. Roth’s program is to create a plausible picture of what life was like for all the “*Molly Pitchers*”, the women who slogged along, willingly or unwillingly, with their soldier husbands in the war. The members of the History Society of Riverton will meet Mary Hays shortly after her husbands’ release from the service in early 1781. This Molly’s “memories” are gathered from primary accounts and carefully selected secondary sources describing both the activities of camp followers,

as well as observations from campaigns and encampments.

Historian Samuel Stelle Smith, a noted researcher on the heroine of the *Battle of Monmouth* believes that the woman observed aiding the cannons that hot June day in 1778 was Mary Hays, wife of William Hays, a gunner with the Pennsylvania-based artillery company of Colonel Thomas Proctor, Jr. Mr. Hays enlisted in the company of Captain Francis Proctor, Jr. (Colonel Proctor’s brother), Company F, on May 10, 1777.

“*Over Here, Molly Pitcher*” is a presentation based on factual material, but it is a conjectural, rather than genealogical re-creation of Mary Hays’ exploits. For more information on the historical interpretation and writings of Stacy Flora Roth contact her at Post Office Box 421 Burlington, New Jersey 08016.

The Riverton School, at Fifth and Howard Streets, and the school Media Center (library) are handicapped accessible. Attendees should enter the school through the main doors facing Fifth Street. There will be a short refreshment period afterward.

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Second Annual Antique Appraisal Fair

Saturday October 18th
11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Porch Club in Riverton
Fourth and Howard Streets

Donation \$5.00
Appraisal- \$5.00
each item

Featuring Antique Appraiser

Hanya Misura-Cosmi

Hoagie Sale

Antique Appraisal Sale

October 18th \$2.50

Call Priscilla Taylor to order

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Membership Renewal

If you are a current member, please use the enclosed form to renew your membership. Members are asked to pay their dues by November 1st, 2003. Your dues payment will renew your membership for the 2004 fiscal year. If you are interested in joining the Historical Society of Riverton please use the enclosed form to apply. Life memberships are still available at the \$100 level.

Your life membership is tax deductible to the full extent of the Federal IRS Code.

We are grateful to members who respond before November 1st to our 2004 dues notice. Your prompt payment of dues allows us to update our membership rolls and plan programs for the coming year.

We appreciate those early birds who reply quickly. Thank you for your support.

Meeting Schedule 2003-04

The *Historical Society of Riverton* meets on five Monday evenings at the Riverton School 7:30 pm in the Media Center.

October 6th, 2003
December 1, 2003
January 26th, 2004
March 8th, 2004
May 10th, 2004



A Riverton
Victorian Christmas
December 6th
New Leaf Gift Shop

2003 Candlelight House Tour

Display sponsored by the
Historical Society of Riverton
A benefit for the Riverton Free Library

Then and Now . . .

Traditionally the Historical Society's *Then and Now* column in the *Gaslight News* is reserved for stories about Riverton from the late 19th and early 20th century. We depart from that tradition to honor Daniel T. Campbell, AIA who made a lasting contribution to local history as President of the *Historical Society of Riverton*.

After nearly twenty years as a member and thirteen years as President of the *Historical Society of Riverton*, Daniel Campbell, leaves Riverton for Chester County Pennsylvania. Dan and his wife Erica have purchased a circa 1830 stone farmhouse in Westtown, outside of West Chester, where they plan to restore and renovate the house as their new home for themselves and their three daughters.

Dan will continue the architectural practice of *John Milner Architects*, specializing in historic preservation, ecclesiastical restorations and new construction in period architectural styles.

Riverton will miss the Campbell family and the devoted leadership Dan provided to local non-profit and governmental organizations. Dan has served on several committees for the *Borough of Riverton*, most notably the Architectural Review Committee which educates the public about appropriate architectural additions and renovations to Riverton architecture. Dan contributed to the development of *Architectural Guidelines* for Riverton.

Dan grew up in Cherry Hill, New Jersey after his family relocated from the south in the early 1960's. Dan first became aware of Riverton while boating and water skiing on the Rancocas Creek and Delaware River as a youth. His first glimpse of the Bank Avenue manor homes in the 1960's and 70's became a lasting memory. Dan's relationship with Riverton grew in the mid seventies when at the age of 14 he crewed on a "*Thistle*" in a Governor's Cup regatta.

Dan recalled in a recent interview for the *Gaslight News*, "We sailed the boat down river from the Red Dragon Canoe Club on that Friday night before the regatta. I will always remember coming around the bend in the river after the Rancocas Creek and seeing the Riverton Yacht Club lighted at night (it was painted all white then)".

Later in life, Dan planned and oversaw the exterior restoration of the *Riverton Yacht Club*. Interviewed by the *Courier Post* newspaper for a May 2001 article, Dan commented on the award-winning renovation of the building,

"...Restoration usually meant removing things that were decaying or falling down and replacing coats of paint. This time the goal was to put things back."

Dan and others pored over old photographs to replace moldings and brackets. To come up with a color scheme, they bored through 15 to 20 layers of paint and examined what they found at the bottom -

"Just above the primer" - under a microscope. A chemical analysis came up with three shades of green, ranging from what today's manufacturers might label "sea foam" to "forest," and a small amount of something close to barn red."

The project was recognized in 2001 by the State of New Jersey's *Historic Preservation Office* and Burlington County's *Historic Preservation Recognition Committee*.

Campbell Family Settles in Riverton

As a young architecture student at Drexel University, Dan worked for architects in Haddonfield and Moorestown. At these firms, Dan became the project architect for the restoration of older buildings where he gained an appreciation for the 17th and 18th century architecture in Southern New Jersey. When looking for a home Dan remembered the Victorian charm of Riverton. He scouted the riverside of the borough and picked out several properties as potential restoration projects. The carriage houses at 16 Carriage House Lane were the most interesting structures. He also liked the idea of being close to the Delaware River. Even though the property was not for sale Dan sought out the owner and purchased it for renovation in 1985. That same year Dan became a registered architect.

In 1997, Dan joined *John Milner Architects*, a firm with a thirty-year history of specialization in historic preservation in the Philadelphia region. The firm is located in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

A New President for the Historical Society

In 1991, Betty Hahle, retired as President of the Historical Society. Dan was elected President and Betty served as the Society's Historian.

Dan had large shoes to fill when Betty Hahle retired. He presided over the general membership meetings, attracted interesting program speakers, contributed articles to the *Gaslight News* and eventually became the editor of the newsletter in 2000.

President Campbell's accomplishments:

- Raised awareness of historic preservation issues in Riverton and throughout New Jersey.
- Increased the number of Life Memberships in the *Historical Society of Riverton* between 1991-2003.
- Preservation of the Historical Society Archives through a partnership with the *Riverton Free Library*.
- Leveraged a matching grant from the *New Jersey Historical Commission* to enable the Historical Society to catalog its collection of local papers and artifacts.
- A decade of service to the Society's *Home Preservation Commendation* program recognizing the outstanding preservation work by Riverton homeowners. Dan created all the house plaques and Certificates of Commendation awarded to selected century-old homes in Riverton.

National Registers of Historic Places

In 1989, the Borough of Riverton Council proposed a ballot referendum to win support for an effort to earn Riverton a designation in the *National Registers of Historic Places*. The referendum passed overwhelmingly by a 3 to 1 margin.

The Borough Council appointed a group of volunteers to explore the feasibility of a nomination. They appointed six representatives, three from the Historical Society and three from the former *Association for the Preservation of Riverton*. A non-profit organization was created and funds were raised to hire a professional historian to write a narrative and research the architecture.

Five years later, the nomination application was completed with the help of the committee and Betty Hahle as historical consultant. The proposed historic district contained 525 properties, with nearly 70% of those structures earning the much sought-after rating of a "contributing building". Dan wrote the architectural descriptions of the 525 properties.

Riverton's district has been adopted by New Jersey's *Historic Preservation Office* and the *National Park Service* as the Riverton Historic District.

The Historical Society Mission

Dan's vision is to see the Society obtain a home of its own in Riverton. The first priority for the use of such a building is to establish a museum. A place where children and adults can visit to experience what life was like in Riverton in a by-gone era..

Dan wanted to share with readers of the *Gaslight News* some of the challenges and opportunities ahead for the *Historical Society of Riverton*.

"In my work as a preservation architect, I have worked on many historic buildings in which a township owns the property and the local historical society operates it. This public-private partnership provides for the maintenance of the building at a low cost to the town. The non-profit organization is eligible for donations and grants from individuals, foundations, and government sources to restore the historic site and operate it as a museum."

"Riverton is a prime location for such a public-private partnership. Riverton can be successful in such a venture with the backing of a Borough Council and Historical Society membership that is committed to providing lots of volunteers and donations. Riverton has the potential to be a respected historic destination on the Delaware River Heritage Trail."

Appreciation

Dan appreciates the faithful support of the Society's membership and Betty Hahle for her guidance as past President and Editor of the *Gaslight News*. Together, Keith Betten and Betty Hahle wrote the narratives for the *National Register Nomination*. Special thanks to Frank Seifert for his architectural knowledge of Riverton and to Nomination Committee members and neighbors Phyllis Rodgers and the late Mort Traugott.

Please join us to bid a fond farewell to our President, Dan Campbell, at our General Meeting on Monday October 6th, at 7:30 pm at the Riverton School.