



# Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, inc.  
Riverton, N.J. 08077

Nov. - Jan. 1984/5

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## Program:

Monday, November 29, 1984

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton School

"Geology of the Inter and Outer Coastal Plain of New Jersey"

— Ned S. Gilmore

November's program will be given by Ned Gilmore, local resident and member of The Historical Society of Riverton, who is a graduate of Stockton State College, Pomona, New Jersey.

Ned is an environmental scientist who has become keenly interested in paleoenvironments. His membership in the Delaware Valley Paleontological Association has afforded him the opportunity to study and secure specimens from various sites in the country as well as New Jersey and Burlington county.

Ned's presentation and slides will concentrate on the geology of the inter and outer coastal plain of New Jersey, and promises to be of interest to all. (g)

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Monday, January 14, 1985

6:30 p.m.

Parish House, Christ Church

"Good Will Fashion Show"

The January meeting will be an encore of the successful covered dish supper held last year. The program will be a narrated fashion show by an auxilliary group from GoodWill Industries, with their members modeling fashions from late Victorian years on up to more recent times, that they have carefully preserved and researched. Their program is both interesting and fun, and the costumes change from time to time, so that one can see the GoodWill Fashion Show several times, and always see something different.

With good friends, good foods, and good entertainment, this will be a good way to start 1985!

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## Update:

307 Bank Avenue: Negotiations continue between the legal representatives of our Borough and the Baptist Home of South Jersey, Inc., and every effort is being made to resolve this long and difficult problem in the best interests of all concerned. Reasonable conditions have been presented; efforts by the Home to relocate the Sloan-designed home of Riverton founder William C Biddle have not, to date, been successful; nor has their civil rights and damages suit against our Borough been settled.

Morgan Cemetery: A number of organizations, churches, and individuals joined us in protesting the neglect and deteriorating condition of this local cemetery, and the Cemetery Board has responded by contacting the owner, William Kane, and outlining what he must do to correct the situation. Mr. Ingling, Cemetery Board chairman, responded to each letter of complaint received, and Mr. Kane was also to answer each complaint with specific outline of how each situation was being taken care of. The Historical Society received a lengthy letter from Mr. Kane, with somewhat confusing and contradictory statements within it.

The improved appearance of the cemetery is due to mowing and clearing by Cinnamin-

son township, for which Mr. Kane has been billed. Negotiations with prospective purchasers continue, and it is to be hoped that the matter can be settled before further deterioration occurs. Apparently, some of our State Laws regarding sale of the cemetery help to delay such transactions. However, keeping interest in the care and maintenance of Morgan Cemetery before those in authority WILL get results. Our thanks to those who are helping.....

**Historic District:** At the November meeting of the Borough Council an amended ordinance to create an historic district was read. It will include the area outlined by the Planning Board, and, as amended, will also include any other building erected before 1915, recognizing the importance of carriage houses, barns, ~~as well as~~ as well as residences elsewhere in Riverton. As amended, the ordinance will be advisory, rather than mandatory. The Ordinance will be printed, in entirety, in the Burlington County Times, and public hearings will be held at the next meeting, before adoption.

This is an important step in recognizing and protecting the orderly architectural development that is significant in Riverton. Most property owners considering major structural changes will welcome the advice of persons knowledgeable in styles, materials, periods of development, etc., as to what is most appropriate for a particular building, enabling it to retain its character and identity, and increasing its value. Without such a resource to call upon, what is popular at the moment, or what a good salesman convinces us is desirable, often so changes a basically "good" building that it becomes just another building, with no particular identity, and ultimately its value is lessened.

**Historic Placques:** Several applications have been received for Historic Placques, and 3 are being lettered at the present time. Others needing further documentation will be prepared in the near future. With the plaque, which is to stay on the building, should ownership change, will be given a certificate verifying the building's qualifications for recognition.

Anyone whose home or building is 100 years old, or is architecturally or historically significant, may apply for a marker. Applications and/or information may be obtained from president Louise Vaughn, or from Joan Gilmore, chairman of the Plaque Review Committee.

**Newspaper project:** For the past several years we have attempted to locate copies of The New Era, a weekly newspaper published in Riverton for almost a century, so that they can be microfilmed. A number of readers have responded, and a list of those available, together with number of pages and condition of the papers, is being prepared now, so that an estimate of the cost of microfilming can be made. Filming will be done in 1985 at the State Archives; papers loaned for filming will be picked up and returned to owners by Betty Hahle, chairman of this project. Wright and Stellhorns' Directory of N.J. Newspapers list only ONE issue of The New Era, and none of The Palmyra News, as extant. To date, we have located 37 copies of the New Era, from 1897 to 1965, with a few more offered but not yet catalogued, and 11 copies of the Palmyra News, plus bound copies from years 1949 through 1960--our project will be a valuable contribution, making an otherwise soon lost source of area history available for anyone interested in using them, both now and in future years.

If you have any copies of these papers and are willing to lend them for microfilming, please contact chairman as soon as possible. Funding for this project will be discussed more fully later, but tentative plans are to seek donations from area service organizations and/or industries.

#### mindere:

Our By-Laws say that dues for membership are due by November, each year. If you have not yet sent yours in to John Parry, Treasurer, please do so promptly.

Note paper is still available; at \$3.50 a box, and Christmas nearing, better pick up a box or two before the supply is exhausted.

A note of thanks to Harold Zayotti is long overdue: it <sup>was</sup> through his generosity that our quarterly Newsletter ~~is~~ printed, at his Archway Print Shop, <sup>for the past 5 years.</sup>

House Tours in many areas are scheduled for December, among them the Riverton Library's on Saturday, December 8th (details at the Library), and City of Burlington Historical

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Society's on Sunday, December 16th (tickets, \$5.00, from Burlington City Hall, Burlington N.J. 08016).

Perkins Center for the Arts in Moorestown will hold its 6th Annual Juried Craft Show (and sales) Nov. 28-Dec 2, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., plus evenings until 9 on Nov. 28 and 30.

Watch The County Bell and local newspapers for listings of other special events.

Additions to Historical Society's Collections, recorded by Joan Hartmann, member who serves as Curator:

A Hymnal, given to Calvary Presbyterian Church by Mrs. Jacob D. Eisele in memory of her husband; Architect's drawings for 1972 additions/alterations to Riverton School, donated by Ed Gilmore;

Xerox copies of a Map of Cinnaminson, from Scott's 1876 Atlas, and of a Map of Main St., Riverton, drawn by Parry, donated by William Baxter;

Length of wooden duct used under Riverton's streets for telephone wires in 1906, (replaced in 1975), donated by Harry Mount, formerly of Burlington;

1934 Graduation program, Riverton Public School; Photograph of PHS Color Guard, 1941;

Programs from 1st and 12th Governor's Cup Regattas, and from Riverton's 4th of July celebrations for years 1962 through 1984 (except for 1975 and 1978); various articles of clothing from their families (stored with Lenore Probsting) from Ralph and Gertrude Swope;

Glass Photographic Plates, from Giles Knight;

New Era, Dec. 1898 and Jan 1897, plus special 1909 issue, from Mrs. Fred Metzgar, whose late husband succeeded Walter Bowen as editor of that newspaper.

#### House Histories..

Have you ever wondered how a house's history can be uncovered? It takes time and a few basic guidelines, and the search can open up a whole new range of interests and friendships. A few things require expert knowledge, but much can be learned by anyone interested in giving it a try.

This is what you want to learn: date your house was built, architect and builder, original owner and successive owners up to the present time. You should learn its architectural style and the period it represents; major changes to it (when, what, and by whom); and things of particular interest about it, such as special construction, carvings, stained glass, etc., and also interesting people or events connected with the house. Other things to note would be fires, change in use, or re-location. Not everything can be found, but it is surprising what good sleuthing can uncover!

Records that contain such information: Deeds, Wills, Tax Records, Maps, Newspapers of the period being searched, old letters or photographs, Census and Directories, and oral histories related by former owners or long-time neighborhood residents.

Always check for more than ONE source of information--records are kept by humans, who are subject to human error and prejudices; popular tales often prove inaccurate when checked out.

Begin by visiting a Library for basic information on architecture: Riverton's Library, as well as our County Library, has excellent books for laymen identifying styles, special features, what to look for, mistakes to avoid, etc. Magazines such as The Old House Journal, Victorian Homes, and Americana have illustrated articles on specific components, such as windows, stained glass, doors, fireplaces, etc., as well as on identifying styles and on restoration.

You will need: paper, pencils (pens are taboo when working with old records, which should be handled with care and respect), and some idea as to what a particular trip to the Library, County Clerk's office, Surrogate's office, or individual's home, seeks to accomplish. A magnifying glass helps with reading old records (written without punctuation) and microfilmed records. Do wear comfortable shoes and clothing--Deeds, for example, are recorded in heavy books stored on shelves from floor to a high level, and are carried by you to a stand-up desk for reading.

A few terms you will encounter in deeds are: a Grantee is the person buying property; a Grantor is the seller; Deeds are indexed under both titles, and give the book and pages in which they have been recorded, as well as the year.

Property title in fee simple means that ownership is complete, and is the best kind. Ownership in moity means each person(or group of persons) owns one-half; Tenancy by

entirety is another form of joint ownership, but must be between husband and wife. When property is sold for \$1 and other consideration, "consideration" refers to other fee or recompense, usually a mortgage, and further information can be found in the mortgage books about that.

Deeds give names of parties of transaction, cost, date, boundaries (lengthy, but usually summed up by shape and size of land and lot number on a map also registered in the County Clerk's office), ownership and restrictions, and, sometimes, information about the persons involved, such as inheritances, divisions of land, developments, etc. These are the things you want to record for your house's history. Each Deed also records book/pages where current Grantor obtained title when he, in turn, was the Grantee. By following this clue, beginning with your own Deed to the earliest one recorded, you will learn much. The earliest will be for land only, although all possible things that COULD be on land may be mentioned; unless a house is specifically identified, do not assume that it is there. Property selling for, say, \$200, and resold a few years later for, say, \$3000, may be assumed to have been improved, and will give you a "circa" date for your house. Inflation changed prices, but not that much.

Other tips: a deed noting tenements means that the house was a rental property, not for residence of the owner. Don't assume the original house on the property is the one there today, without checking further: fires burned frame houses, after which they were rebuilt; houses were moved to other locations, etc. Once you have a Deed date, read newspapers from that period. The New Jersey Mirror and The Mt. Holly Herald, on film at the County Library, make fascinating reading, and often record houses in our area being built, or persons moving into new houses, visitors of note, sheriff sales, estate settlements, etc., any of which would add to a house's history. Record your findings carefully, enjoy the search, and watch your house's history grow. Be sure to share your history with the next owner, should you sell your house, so that it can be added to (and be sure you have noted your own changes/additions) by him.

Yesterday....

In 1897 Riverton's Post Office was located in a room of Milton Cowperthwaite's home on Main St., which also housed his drug store. It was open daily (except Sunday) from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. ... Dr. Joshua D. Janney was still editor of the New Era, which sold for 3¢ a copy or \$1 a year, and was printed on machinery recently moved from the 2nd floor of the Roberts Building to the newer Price Building, on Broad. It's mailing address was "Riverton-On-The-Delaware, Post Office Lock Box 12".

Lothrop's new Photographic Studio, at 4th & Main, boasted one of the finest skylights in the state, assuring the best and pleasing photos for its patrons. A "cent a word" column advertised fine cigars at Wolfschmidt's barber shop, a 3x6 pool table and ivory balls for sale by CFCrosta, and watch & clock repairing by AAGrant. In Palmyra, George T. Williams, prescription druggist, was located opposite the RR station, Chas. Seybert sold papers, magazines, and repaired umbrellas at his Broad St. shop, and Alfred Collier had a tailoring shop at 616 Garfield Ave.

In December, 1898, Alba Dentists of Philadelphia offered a Christmas Gift special of false teeth, with written guarantee for 20 yrs., ranging in price from \$1.25 for a partial set, to \$5 to \$8 for a full set of beautifully hand-carved teeth, natural colored gums, and guaranteed not to fall out. "Hints to Santa" from a shop in Palmyra offered tinsel, colored cotton, and patterns (McCall's were 10¢ and 15¢), while Smith's in Riverton offered ornaments, cards, calendars, and other "useful and fancy items."

Riverton and Palmyra each had a long column of items, headed "notes about your neighbors and occasionally about yourself" and added "I know not what the truth may be. I'll tell it as 'twas told to me." Palmyra's column named many suffering from grip, and noted that one classroom in school with an average daily attendance of 50 was down to 20; Dr. R. H. Lamb (dentist and realtor) started off on a trip to Egypt. And a Reading Room for Elderly Men, founded by Dr. Alex Marcy jr. had 27 men between the ages of 65 and 93 enrolled and enjoying it. Dr. March also advertised one of his rental properties in Riverton at \$12 a month--hot/cold water, bath, heater included. Pupils of Berkeley Hall had exercises for Christmas, enjoyed by parents, and displayed gifts they had made, and readers were reminded that "those who have to spare" should remember those in need, that "some little dainty or toy will go a long way toward making a childish heart happy." Skating was good, in spite of an untimely thunderstorm, and one young lady fell, breaking her leg. She was taken home in a wagon....