



Gaslight News

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

Feb. - Apr. 1985

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Program:

Monday, March 4, 1985

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton School

"Edison's Ogdensburg Mines"

Liz Anderson

Thomas Alva Edison, a genius who enjoyed success and who received so many awards that he once remarked that he could measure them "by the quart", also experienced one large failure: The Ogdensburg Mines.

During the latter part of the 19th century the demand for iron and steel could no longer be met by the Eastern U.S. iron industry, where rich ores had been exhausted. Imports from Europe, or ores shipped east from the West in America became necessary and were costly. New methods for utilizing low grade ores by using magnets to replace tedious hand-sorting interested Edison. He decided it was feasible, and acquired 16,000 acres of land containing low-grade magnetic ores in Sussex county near the village of Ogdensburg. Soon 400 men and their families lived in the mining town; handling processes were developed, and 4,000 tons of crude ore could be processed in a single day. Yet, by 1900, the town was abandoned, buildings dismantled, the workforce scattered. Edison had lost over two million dollars, and today nothing remains but crumbling foundations and some musty records.

Mrs. Anderson is a well-known lecturer, writer, and environmentalist in addition to being a 5th grade teacher in nearby Mount Laurel. She, with her husband Karl, spent several years mapping the town of Ogdensburg, researching documents, interviewing survivors, and have uncovered the story of the Ogdensburg Mines. Her slides and lecture revealing its mystery is not to be missed.

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May 6th will be the final meeting of this season, and the program scheduled for that evening is the film "In The Barnegat Bay Tradition", which was shown on television last year.

This is also our Historical Society's Annual Meeting, at which time elections take place. Each May four members are elected to serve 3-year terms on the Board of Directors. Those whose terms expire this year are: John Parry, Harold Zayotti, Liliane Reynolds, and Betty Hahle.

In accordance with our By-Laws, our president, Louise Vaughn, will appoint a Nominating Committee in March, which will present its slate to the membership prior to the May meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor prior to the vote. This is also the year in which 4 officers will be elected to serve 2-year terms.

Serving in some capacity is a responsibility that goes hand-in-hand with the privileges of membership we accept more readily, and those interested in taking a more active part in the organization are asked to make their interest known to the Committee. In actuality, the benefits derived from service far outweigh the demands made, and you may be surprised to find that you enjoy it!

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Update:

307 Bank Avenue: The lengthy controversy regarding expansion of the Baptist Home of South Jersey on the riverbank, at the expense of a historically significant

building, has finally been concluded. Riverton will lose the Sloan-designed home of one of its founders, William Canby Biddle, and it will be replaced by a 3-story extension of the present modern wing of the Home, with some modifications to the original design by architect Walter Croft. Relocation of the building, in preference to demolition, has apparently not been successful. "Reasonable conditions" have been agreed upon, including assurance that no further expansion will ever be sought here, as advocated by Judge Haines in his decision that over-ruled local zoning laws and denial of a variance for this purpose.

While we recognize the need for facilities to meet the needs of a population with increasing numbers of elderly people, and appreciate the excellence of the care of those who are brought into our community by the Home and the maintainance of their properties, at the same time we must feel sadness that another piece of our heritage has been lost in the process. A solid mass of building, in place of a group of gracious homes, with space between each of them to ensure that the rights of all to enjoy "air and space" without encroachment, as envisioned by the Founders and written into so many Deeds, does not seem the best use of so much of the limited riverfront land.

Morgan Cemetery: At a Hearing before the N.J. Cemetery Board held in Trenton on Dec. 19th, regarding the shameful neglect of Morgan Cemetery by owner William Kane, the Board unanimously voted to delay no longer in taking legal action for appointment of an Administrator to take over its maintainance and operation. Suit was expected to be filed in January, but word of such action has not been received at this writing. Attending the hearing were Mrs. Shirley Seither, who has written many letters protesting conditions found in past years, and who is a descendant of the Purnell family who once owned it; Mrs. Patricia Poletti, representing Tri-Boro Women's Club, whose campaign to get action correcting the situation was joined by the Historical Society, Porch Club, and other organizations and individuals, and by your editor.

Historic District: Adopted in December, as an advisory, rather than mandatory measure, and amended to include any structure within the borough erected before 1915 as well as the business and designated historic district section. This is a positive step in preserving our heritage and in expanding our understanding of the architectural significance of our buildings in Riverton. The Planning Board is currently working to establish a Review Committee, as outlined in the Historic District Ordinance.

Plaques: The Historical Society of Riverton has now purchased a corporate seal, which will be used to authenticate an outline of a house's history, to be given to owners whose applications for plaques are approved, along with the markers.

New Era Project: The excellent feature in the Feb. 7th Burlington County Times on our project to locate and have microfilmed surviving copies of the New Era and the Palmyra News resulted in phone calls from well-wishers, shared memories of the paper and some of the people once connected with it, and at least 5 different copies, donated or loaned, to be added to those already catalogued. A few more, not yet available, have also been offered.

Those interested in helping with this project, but not having newspapers to share, might consider making a donation to the New Era Filming Project Fund, either as individuals, or by encouraging a club or organization in which you are a member, to contribute. An estimated \$300-\$350 will be needed by July, the projected date for filming. Also, please keep on seeking copies of these newspapers--they will be included right up to the day they go to Trenton for filming.

Birthdays:

This year the Riverton School celebrates its 75th birthday. Not the "school" generally, but the building--the first of brick, the first at this location, built of brick in 1910, replacing the outgrown frame building on 4th St. Some 25 years later it was enlarged to its present size (see "Yesterday").

Two churches are celebrating Centennial Anniversaries in 1985: Christ Episcopal Church of Palmyra, and Central Baptist Church of Riverton-Palmyra.

Reminders:

Notepaper is still available, at \$3.50 a box, from Louise Vaughn or at meetings. Don't run short of this attractive triple-fold paper showing the Columbia at the Yacht Club. If you have overlooked renewing your membership, please do so now. If you aren't sure, check with John Parry, treas. Anyone wishing to join may do so at any time; a large membership also helps to keep our annual dues very low, and increases opportunities for new and renewed friendships, and for some fine programs each year. Some who offered New Eras also donated other materials to the Historical Society's collections. Next Newsletter will carry a list of donations received.

Yesterday

Small town newspapers, growing fewer in number each year, provide a wealth of material for research. Not only are names, places, relationships, births, deaths, new or remodelled buildings, businesses, and so on recorded, but also much about the interests, attitudes, and priorities of the times and the area are revealed. The Christmas, 1909, New Era (the most often saved issue) said its purpose in doing that number was twofold: "to gather, briefly, before it is too late, many little facts about our neighborhood of local interest, and"....to show Riverton and Palmyra as desirable "places of residence". They succeeded, on both counts.

The earliest New Era found, 1897, is 4 pages, the size of today's daily papers. The front page does not carry "headlines", but rather lists of where important services may be had: doctors, dentists, churches, lawyers, drug stores, postal schedules, transportation. Sermon reviews and discussions, as well as stories (fiction, with a moral), complete the front page. Inside are the "gossip columns", reviews of news (local, national, international), courts, properties, and business advertisements.

Here are a few notes, selected at random, from some New Eras:

- 1897, Jan: ad: Jos. H. Gest, American Detective Agency, and Bicycle Insurance
ad: Bicycle lamp, jolt and cyclone proof, all brass, nickel plated, for \$4.50, express prepaid, from New York
ad: Rosenberger Co., N.Y., for boys' Sampson Suits, with extra pants, \$2.76, shipped at co's expense to your door; suits wear like iron, are for boys ages 10-15 years; colors, black, dk. blue, oxford gray, olive brown.
notice: J.C. Rulon butcher business on Howard St. just purchased by John W. Chesshire, who hopes customers will continue their business with him.
- 1898, Dec: A new street light being installed at the corner of Broad and Lippincott is creating considerable comment.
- 1903: The Palmyra Field Club was established. This club sponsored football, baseball, and basketball teams that were very popular, and drew large crowds when they played. In 1908 the club took in \$1500 from their activities.
- 1909, April: front page ads: dentists: Dr. Charles S. Voorhees..administers gas..corner Morgan and 4th Sts., Palmyra. Dr. Samuel W. Collin, 404 Thomas Ave. Riverton; hrs 8 to 5 and evenings 7 to 8.
Palmyra news column: Mrs. Lemuel Faunce entertained the euchre on Thursday.
The Field Club will give their annual dramatic entertainment in May.
Riverton column: Ground has been broken for the new house of George Strohlein on Fulton St; C. T. Woolston's house at 7th & Lippincott, with improvements, is for rent; Miss Martha Biddle is expected home from Fla.
- 1910: There were 13 girls in the graduating class at Palmyra High School. They decided to stay together as a club, calling themselves "The Lucky Thirteen". In 1935 they celebrated their 25th anniversary as a group--monthly dinners had replaced the sewing circle hope chest work--in June, at the home of Mrs. Harold Baker (Carolyn Jackson). Others were: Helen Apple Mattis; Marion Reeber Gilpin; Bertha Joyce Hardy; Edna Forester; Mabel Stager Dodge; Ethel Mattis Braddock; Helen Thatcher Mansfield; Adeline Seel; Carol Richer Mathews; Frances Weart Wilkinson; and Jane Weart Bonsall.
- 1912, May: The PHS team defeated Doylestown 5-4, but it took 12 innings to do it. It was the second 12-inning game within a week. Hinkle was the local pitcher, and did well...allowed only 3 hits, struck out 12.
- 1917: Teachers are hard to find--Riverton's Board of Education worked all summer to fill 2 vacancies this year.

- 1931: George Henry Smith, who wrote children's stories under the pen name of Farmer Smith, lived for a time at 410 Main St. He died at his home in Maplewood NJ on January 8, 1931.
 William Quigley, policeman for 28 yrs here, died Jan. 10th; his funeral was the largest ever held in Riverton..had an escort of State troopers, police from many nearby towns, and the schoolchildren lined Main St. for the procession. Walter C. Miller, on the force 27 yrs., replaced him as police chief.
 The PGA Tournament was held at Riverton C.C. in May, the first time a New Jersey course was played by the Association.
 Also in 1931 Memorial Park was dedicated (July 4th) and Sacred Heart Parochial School was also dedicated, in September, with an audience of 1000 attending.
 In May the Burlington-Bristol Bridge was dedicated, and Mayor Howard M. Rogers selected Charlotte Parry to represent Riverton at the ceremony.
- 1932: Remington portable typewriters for sale at New Era Office, \$19.75 and up.
- 1936: In February Riverton's new school was dedicated, completing a 2-year project. PWA funds had made possible the building, which once again brought together all classes under one roof, added an auditorium/physical training area, manual training facilities for boys and domestic science rooms for girls.
 Keatings sold purest Sealtest ice cream, and valentines, from 1¢ up.
 Mrs. Ruth Parsons Strahan, member of the faculty of the Philadelphia School for Expression and Dramatic Art, announced the opening of classes at 922 Parry Ave. in "expression, diction, dramatic reading, recitations, vocabulary, etc." An article, separate from her ad, identified her as well known throughout the area for "exceptional and original monologues".
 Dreer's offered their 98th annual edition of their Garden Book for Spring planting.
- 1939: Thanksgiving day, Palmyra Stadium was dedicated, with ceremonies promptly at 12-noon and the game with Riverside at 1, which would allow everyone to attend church services before the festivities.
 At the Broadway Theater, Myrna Loy and Tyrone Power were appearing in "The Rains Came"
- 1940: Riverton's new Post Office was dedicated; J. T. Evans sold "genuine Kopper's Coke", and the Old Mill Inn burned. An aerial view of the fire was printed, with the note that the Palmyra Airport piloted a photographer from New Era to get it—a "first" in the area. Although not named, the photographer was Karl Latch.
- 1950: Hoeganaes Sponge Iron Corp. came to East Riverton. The company dates from 1737 in Sweden, first at mines and coal deposits in the south, then reorganized in 1903 and focusing on metallurgical products. Pure sponge iron powders from iron ore are produced here.

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Membership form: please give name, address, phone; new or renewal;
 Dues: \$2 per year, per person (\$1. for those 65 or older); PLUS \$1 per Family
 (assessment to help meet rising printing/postal costs.)
 Take to meeting—always open to public—or send to John Parry, Treas.
 803 Main Street, Riverton N.J. 08077.

Mr. & Mrs. Edward Hartmann
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