



Gaslight News

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

Sept. - Oct. 1985

vol xii xxxix

Program:

Monday, October 7, 1985

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton School

"The Riverside Line"

Barker Gummere

Do you remember the trolleys that used to run along the edge of Broad Street, every half hour, before buses replaced them? Come out and enjoy Mr. Gummere's slides and talk about the old line.

Mr. Gummere's book of the same title was published in 1981, and traces construction of the line from its beginning in late 1898 to completion, and then offers a descriptive ride over it, from beginning to end. Illustrations in the book show various trolleys and scenes along the way, many of which will be familiar to local residents.

Invite a friend to join you for the first program of the 1985/6 season, and share a memorable visit to the trolley line that was once an important part of our towns.

Program Listings for 1985-6:

October 7, 1985: see above

November 25: Privateers of the New Jersey Coast

January 13, 1986: Covered Dish Supper, Christ Church Parish House

"Sherlock Holmes and Victorian Times"

March 3 : program to be announced

May 5 : " " " "

Officers and Directors, Historical Society of Riverton:

Officers: June 1, 1985 - May 31, 1987

Board of Directors: 3 year terms

1986 1987 1988

President: Edward Gilmore

V. Pres : William Baxter

Secretary: Toby Hunn

Treasurer: John Parry

Wm. Baxter

Ellen Layton

John Parry

John Geiss

Edward Gilmore

Janice Renn

Joan Hartmann

Toby Hunn

Betty Hahle

Lenore Probsting Louise Vaughn

Richard Wark

Curator, John Hartmann

Programs, Janice Renn

Publicity, Barbara Hayes

Historian/Newsletter, Betty Hahle

Update:

Friday Night at the Movies...

Last May seems far away from this point in time, but a good audience turned out to enjoy the films, "Romance of Riverton," and "Holiday", a 1938 comedy that was entertainment at its best. Tak-a-Boost and pretzels, and renewed acquaintances with former residents who had returned for the evening's show—including Oliver Bowen, who had starred in the local film—made it a most pleasant event.

Plaques:

Three plaques are in place, to date: Riverton Library building, 212 Lippincott Ave., and 407 Thomas Ave. Anyone interested in securing a plaque for their home or building may get an application form from the Historical Society and complete it. You must

supply information pertaining to building's age or significance, which will be verified by the Plaque Review Committee, after which the plaque may be purchased. It takes some effort and time on the part of the applicant, but it's worth it!!

307 Bank Avenue:

On July 16th the house of Riverton Founder William C. Biddle, that had been designed by architect Samuel Sloan in 1851, was demolished. It took just an hour and a half for one man with one machine to reduce a fine house to a pile of rubble, and a few hours more to erase any sign that a house had stood there for 135 years. It was sad to watch.

Prior to demolition, Pastor Jackson took many slides of both interior and exterior architectural details of the house, and donated them to us. Also, various parts, furnishings, and fixtures were removed for continued use in other local homes. Shutters, windows, doors, lights, railings, sections of clapboard and flooring, etc. were donated to those requesting them, and in this way, at least some part of the historic house will remain here.

New Era Filming Project:

The projected date now for filming and completion of this project is November. No new issues of the New Era or Palmyra News have been located over the summer, and within the next two weeks we expect to have the final, combined price for the filming. A loose estimate was in the neighborhood of \$300, but until a firm figure can be obtained, donations needed for this work have not been sought. However, members wishing to help could do so by encouraging other organizations to which they belong to support this project. Any amount would be appreciated and would help us to preserve this invaluable resource of local history. Once filming is completed, all borrowed materials will be returned to their owners.

Morgan Cemetery:

The Cemetery is still under ownership of William Kane at this writing, and is, as usual, in disgraceful condition. The Twp. of Cinnaminson has more than once had to cut down the high weeds, and records are apparently not available to undertakers needing information from them, which causes both inconvenience and added stress for those wanting to bury their dead at Morgan. An order has been signed for Mr. Kane to appear before Superior Court in Mt. Holly on October 11th, to show cause why relief sought by N.J. Cemetery Board should not be granted. Hopefully, Mr. Kane will appear, as directed. Hopefully, a receiver to manage the Cemetery will be appointed. Hopefully, Morgan Cemetery will once again become the kind of resting place families have every right to expect it to be.

Walking Tour:

The self-guided walking tour, outlined several years ago, is being updated, so that information on the maps available at the Library will be more accurate, in line with the most recent research that has been done.

"Historic District"

Ed Gilmore, who serves on Riverton Planning Board's Review Committee, along with Ted Hunn, Louise Vaughn, and Horace A. Reeves, jr., reports that the committee has been active over the summer months. The new sign at the bank will be modified, some repairs that removed architectural details were halted, and improvements and additions to NU WAY Shopping Center are being planned, using "a Victorian theme."

Over the past few months a number of changes have been noted within the designated area. Trees were planted along Broad street—and promptly knocked down by drivers who can't seem to stay within the street's width. Modern planters against the foundation of the Williams/Wright building (Keating's corner, to many residents) have hidden the ASCO logo included when the building was new, in 1913. The facade of the lovely little church at 3rd and Penn Sts. is being masked with bricks. A fine Eastlake balustrade was replaced with an unimpressive one, spandrels were removed from between porch posts, and steps were relocated, on another building. Modern boxed foundation planters have replaced Victorian style plantings in several places. The bank has installed wall-to-wall carpeting, hiding the beautiful marble floor effectively, as the plasterwork ceiling was hidden by a lowered ceiling a year or so ago.

A fresh look is an asset to the business district. Is it better to modernize, or to preserve? Preservation, properly carried through, achieves the freshness needed, and at the same time preserves the long-term value of a building. Modernization that alters the integrity of a building may be popular for the moment, but once the newness fades, one is left with "just another building".

We are living in a time of recognition and interest in Victorian architecture, and there is a wealth of materials available to anyone interested. There are books and pamphlets on architectural styles, colors, decorating, etc. at local and county libraries and in every bookstore. Learning to recognize and appreciate what we have, here in Riverton—and Palmyra—is fascinating, and can play an important part in preventing the loss of more of our heritage. Once it is gone, it's too late.....

The Burlington County Historical Society gave a summer program on Victorian Houses: Identification and Conservation, and Victorian Colors: Exteriors.

These slide programs were made by AASLH, and are part of a group purchased by BCHS. They included identifying features of several Victorian architectural styles, as well as some problems unique to Victorian construction and ornamentation. Colors were somewhat surprising: although very early painted houses had favored a white body with deep green trim, after 1870, when redi-mixed paints were introduced in a wide variety of colors, a different trend emerged. The body was more often a pale color—gray, lavender, green or blue, and deeper tones were used for trim. In the last quarter of the century bolder colors found favor, with pea green, vermillion, terra-cotta among the most popular, and framing was done with a different color. Sometimes a third color was incorporated into the scheme. By the 1880's there were color books available to suggest colors and variations. Mustard yellow, with a dark green roof, became a popular choice, at that time.

Coming Events Nearby:

- October 6, House Tour, 1-6 p.m., in Cranbury; tickets \$7 at Bank on Main St day of tour.
- October 12, Renaissance Day, 1-5 Open House, Burlington Co. Historical Society
- October 11-20, Cape May's Victorian Week. Many activities, including Antiques Show, Workshops on Victorian Restoration (14th-18th), Crafts Show (18th, 19th) and more.
- Tours. inf: MAC 1048 Washington St, Cape May, or call 884-5404
- October 18, 1-8 p.m., Open House at Riverton School (if you have memorabilia to lend for the event, call 786-0113 or 829-4669).
- October ? Apple Festival, Kirby's Mill (see newspaper for date)
- November 2,3, Antiques Show in Greenwich, Cumberland Co. Historical Society. \$2.25

Yesterday.....

When the house at 307 Bank Ave. was razed, a wad of crumpled paper was noticed at the edge of the debris. Papers once saved had somehow fallen into a crevice and been forgotten, and their hiding place uncovered by the demolition. They were dirty, brittle, bits and pieces; some were lacy with holes made by (??), and others fell apart at a touch.

An invoice showed that in 1876 Mrs. Biddle had had a feather bed cleaned—30 lbs of feathers steamed, @ 6¢, ticking washed at 50¢, and 5 lbs feathers added for 75¢, for a grand total of \$6.05.

Newspaper bits were dated 1862, 1865, and 1876. The earliest dealt with the Civil War—the Battle of Antietam (beyond reading, unfortunately), lists of war dead; Those of 1865 carried headlines and interviews pertaining to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. One, from the Bulletin in June, 1865, contained an article headed "The President and the Philadelphia Friends", which ran a letter sent to President

..... Clip and Mail now.....

Membership Dues, Historical Society of Riverton 1985/6

John Parry, Secretary 803 Main St., Riverton 08077

Names: _____ phone: _____

Address: _____

new: <input type="checkbox"/>	amt: annual dues	\$2.00	\$
renew: <input type="checkbox"/>	(senior rate	1.00	
	print/postage	1.00	
	per family	-	
	Total	\$	

Andrew Johnson about their long years of work for Abolition, signed by Dillwyn Parrish, clerk of Men's meeting, and Mary S. Lippincott, clerk of Women's meeting. His reply was included. The same scrap of paper included Johnson's proclamation removing restrictions on internal, domestic, and coastwide trade that had been in effect during the War.

Items from 1876 were about the Centennial Celebration, in particular, the festivities in connection with its closing. At the banquet held Nov. 9, 1876, at St. George's Hall, 400 invited guests had been in attendance. They included President Grant, Justices, Governors (Jos. H. Bedle, N.J.), Congressmen, and foreign ministers. The orchestra, under direction of Theodore Thomas, played Wagner's Inauguration March, that had been composed for the May opening of the Exposition. Plans had been made for some of the buildings to become permanent parts of Philadelphia, and, in all, it had been a great success.

From the backs of articles saved were other interesting bits: salt was plentiful in the island of Inagua and a schooner had brought back a large quantity, at 8-9¢ a bushel. Ads for boat excursions mentioned the JOHN A WARNER, and "the new steamboat COLUMBIA" that stopped at Riverton. Counterfeiters were printing tickets to swindle the railroad; 3 men were killed by Indians in Laramie, Wyo. Territory; a letter to the editor asked that Reading RR distribute timetables to riders so they could locate trains, without which they experienced confusion and frustration.

(bbh, ed.)

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Mr. & Mrs. Edward Hartmann