



Gaslight News

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, Inc.

Riverton, N.J. 08077

May - July 1986

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Program:

Monday, May 5

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton School

"Miss Liberty '86"

New Jersey Bell

A timely talk and color film about the history and restoration of the best known symbol of freedom in the world...The Statue of Liberty.

Janice Renn, Program Chairman

Election:

The May 5th meeting is also our Annual Meeting, at which time 4 members will be elected to the Board of Directors. The following slate is presented:

Joan Hartmann - Kenneth Palmer - Nancy Siefert - Edwin Moore

Nominating Committee:

{ Barbara Hayes
Betty Lockhart
Alice Myers

Nominations may be made from the floor, also, providing nominee has agreed to serve, if elected. Terms are for 3 years. The resignation of Janice Renn, due to time needed for her work on the Board of Education, as well as her employment in nursing, has been accepted with regret, and Sarah Guertler has been appointed to fill her unexpired term.

Our thanks to Janice for the fine programs she has presented this year, and to Bill Baxter, Lenore Probsting, and Jack Geiss, who chose not to run for re-election this time. Bill has served as vice-president for several terms, and "Sister" has served in many capacities for many years, as president, vice-president, program chairman, etc.

There will be a brief meeting of the Board immediately following the program, May 5th.

Update:

Filming Project:

At long last we can report the completion of this project. The microfilm (2 reels) has been received, and borrowed newspapers will be returned to their owners within the next week. The films will be available at the Burlington County Library, on Woodlane Road, Mt. Holly, for anyone wishing to use them. Our Historical Society has purchased an extra set, also.

Morgan Cemetery:

The 3rd and final hearing on proposed sub-division of Morgan Cemetery (sale of a strip of land for building along Parry Ave.) is scheduled in Cinnaminson during May. Conditions outlined by the Cemetery Board, regarding amount of money to be placed in a Perpetual Care fund, and other matters, have been agreed to, and during the summer a gradual improvement in conditions there should begin to be noticed. After so many years of neglect it will take some time to bring it again to the state of a well-cared-for appearance, but under new ownership, this will be achieved.

Walking Tour:

The newly updated and printed self-guided walking-tour of early Riverton is now available. Copies may be picked up at the Library and at Victorian Thymes, and a container for the suggested donation of 20¢ per copy will be available, as well, for your convenience. This is a lovely time of year to walk about Riverton, and

a good way to renew, or to become better acquainted with, our town and its heritage.

In the next few weeks we will be host to many out-of-town visitors who will be here to see Riverton's Victorian homes, and some newer homes and gardens. Those coming on May 15 on the Friends of Independence Park House Tour will be given a copy of our Walking Tour, as well as the Guide to their particular house/garden tour. And on June 8th, those attending APR's Porch Parties will also be given copies of the Walking Tour, to enjoy after their lunch.

Let's all "bone up" on our local history, check our lawns and sidewalks for stray papers or other discarded items, and help our visitors to take home with them a very positive image of our small town.

Notes and Reminders:

Riverton School's Open House was set aside because of budget and other matters that had to take precedence at that time. There will be publicity about date and time when plans are more specific.

It was with sadness that we learned of the death of local historian Lloyd Griscom just after the last Gaslight News was issued. His many books and articles have been read and enjoyed far beyond this area, and will be a living memorial to his deep interest in Burlington county history, and to his ability to weave a tale around it.

Note paper is available, at \$3.50 per box at the Library and at Victorian Thymes... New members are welcome at any time...anyone just joining at the May meeting, or over the summer, does not have to pay dues again in the Fall, when renewals fall due.

"Preservation N.J." 's publication, Perspective, tells us that legislation has been passed that clears up, once and for all, the question regarding the authority of N.J. municipalities to create historic preservation commissions. The amendment to the state's Municipal Land Use Law became effective March 22nd, and recognizes historic preservation as an integral part of community planning, according to Mrs. Connie Greiff, president of Preservation New Jersey.

15 May: Friends of Independence Park/Porch Club of Riverton House Tour, 10:30-3:30 p.m. Tickets, including a gourmet box lunch, \$15, and must be purchased by May 6th. Tickets for tour only, no lunch, are \$6, and may be purchased in advance or at the Porch Club on day of tour. Houses, gardens, C.E.Church, and Porch Club, which will have an art exhibit, will be included. Call Sandy Gunn, 829-1886 for tickets/inf.

8 June: APR's 4th Annual Porch Party, 1 p.m. champagne luncheon served on porches throughout Riverton, and walking tour afterwards. New menu this year sounds super! Tickets, \$12.50. Call Barbara Hayes, 786-1068 for tickets/information.

17 October: "Friday Night at the Movies"--with 1920's silent film Romance of Riverton, and also some of Dr. Dean LeFavor's home movies of Riverton and Palmyra, shown by the McAlisters. Donation, \$2. at the door (Riverton School auditorium). October seems a long way off, in Spring, but it's a date to circle now so that you'll have it open when Autumn comes again.

Yesterday.....

Spring is a busy time....now that we've moved our clocks ahead to save some of summer's daylight hours, can you picture how it was when time was reckoned by the sun? What was noon at one location was earlier, or later, in another; and when railroads were coming into their own, in the last quarter of the 19th century, trying to establish a schedule for trains became frustrating, to say the least. In 1883 William F. Allen, who had been born in Bordentown but later moved to South Orange saw his plan for a Standard time, based on longitudinal degrees, become effective in November. His plan was based on an earlier one by Prof. Dowd, of Saratoga, N.Y. that had not proved to be practical. Four time zones were established, and on the day Standard Time took effect some towns found they had 2 "noons"--as clocks set on sun-time had to wait for standard time, a little later. Riverton, located on the 75th meridian, had no problems: it was right on time, both by the sun, and by the new standard reckoning.

Spring has seen many changes...in 1827, the first friction match was invented; in 1845 Texas joined the USA; the first World's Fair held in American was in the Spring of

1853, just 2 years after Riverton's founding. In 1863 the Battle of Gettysburg was fought; on May 1, 1873, the first postal card was issued, and 1881 the Red Cross was founded. Locally, in 1914 Ogden Mattis bought a new ice wagon, the railroad offered an excursion to Washington on May 31st for \$3., round trip; and a surprise fire drill at Riverton school pleased Albert Reeves, the Fire Co.'s foreman, when the building was cleared of 410 pupils and staff in 1 minute 20 seconds. Spring of 1963 saw oral immunization clinics set up, where we swallowed lumps of sugar moistened with 2 drops of Sabin vaccine to protect us from polio.



Spring is a time for planting.....a 1959 Almanac suggested this garden:
 "First, 5 rows of peas--Preparedness, Promptness, Perseverance, Politeness, and Prayer.
 Next, 3 rows of squash--Squash gossip, Squash criticism, Squash indifference.
 Then 5 rows of lettuce--Let us be faithful; Let us be unselfish; Let us be loyal; Let us love one another; Let us be thankful.
 No garden is complete without turnips--Turn up for church; Turn up with a smile; Turn up with a new idea; Turn up with real determination."

Spring sports are enjoyed....in 1899 James A Bower's Main St. bicycle shop ran ads saying "Wheels are Cheap!" and "Prices lower than ever before". In 1900 the new Riverton Country Club had a 9-hole course, laid out by John Heid, Atlantic City's pro, in use by May, although the clubhouse was still only on paper.

Baseball had been popular for some time, and in 1908 the Palmyra-Riverton Field Club added a junior group, the Field Club Tigers. The Club held an annual minstrel show at POS of A Hall--camp #23, sometimes called "The Skidoo Camp". In 1914 the FHS team played the Boy Scouts in Burlington, and Palmyra's Russell "Lena" Blackburn was playing 2nd base for the White Sox. Four years later he "reported to training camp of the Cincinnati Red Stockings in the South", and later became coach of the Phila. Athletics.

The 1930 Marble Shooter Championships were held at the "Y", and there were 10 players eligible (winners from local schools). Phillip "Peanut" Mathews, of Riverton, won the district championship, and Ralph Dages was runner-up. They would then compete at Camp Ockanickon for the county championship. They were awarded bronze medals, plus gold medals (dist. champ.) and school honors--plus a free trip to the Phila. Navy Yard and to Valley Forge.

In April of 1933 the New Era announced an exhibition/contest of "an old English game of badminton still played in the British Isles and Canada," to benefit the Cinnaminson Home. "This novel game" had been played by local folks travelling abroad, and they introduced it here.

The end of Spring brought lists of graduates and of winners of various school contests. In 1913 John Ruppert, Morris and John Steedle, Merle Schaff, and Elizabeth Corner were among those with perfect attendance for the year. In 1921 Rosalie M. Roberts, of Palmyra, age 13 and in 7th grade, wrote the winning essay on "What the Ferry Will Do for Palmyra". Among her predictions were the improvement of roads, use of wasteland, drainage of marshes "where mosquitos breed, causing malaria", avoidance of traffic in Camden, and reduced time to Willow Grove. She also felt it would "benefit automobilists" and Palmyra, and "other places along the line".

And Summer soon follows...wooden tubs of Crane's ice cream, packed in chunks of ice and delivered by steamer from Philadelphia to the Riverton pier. And then...the Fourth of July!

In 1886 Riverton celebrated the Fourth "in the old fashioned way, with houses decorated with bunting and flags...and lighted with Chinese Lanterns". The Chinese Lanterns at the Lynch home, 2nd & Main, merited special note. Races at the Yacht Club had to be called off because of lack of wind, so pair-oared scull races were substituted.

Winners were Lawrence and Haines Lippincott. The Lawn House had some activities, and then the Calico Club paraded around town.

It was in 1897 that Charles W. Davis and Albert Briggs had the idea of a children's parade for the celebration, and the Yacht Club liked the idea and set it in motion. The parade formed at the Roberts store on the point, each child was presented with a silk flag, and all proceeded to the riverbank, where singing and oration followed. Aquatic events and then fireworks ended the day.

The next year more than 250 children were in the parade, headed by the Metropolitan Band of Burlington. An article describing the day said that two 3-year-olds, Georgie Corner, dressed as Uncle Sam, and Clarice Frishmuth, as Goddess of Liberty, led the whole procession. Then there were 30 little boys, dressed in Dewey suits (the Spanish fleet had just been destroyed) and commanded by Captain Walter Wright, who had been drilling them for 2 weeks. Then came the 250 children with their silk flags, "prettily costumed". At the riverbank, Rev. Charles Nevin, son-in-law of the 1st mayor of Riverton, gave an inspiring address. And evening fireworks climaxed the day.

In 1908 there was threatening weather--but some 600 children marched in the parade, led by Mayor Brown and Chief of Police Major, and the Metropolitan Band. 1932's parade had a special feature: two of the marching Riverton Firemen wore fire hats that had been donated by L. A. Flanagan. They had been worn ca. 1842 by members of his family in Philadelphia, and bore the date of 1800, the year of their Fire Company's founding.

By the 1940's and '50's the children's athletic events in the Park took up most of the afternoon, with relays, sack, potato, 3-legged, and other races for various age groups, and prizes of skates, cameras, rings, and other things donated by local merchants. And free refreshments for all the children (from Riverton). Palmyra had its children's events in the Grove, and often included a Punch-and-Judy show, then joined Riverton for fireworks on the riverbank.

Time brought some changes, but "Riverton's Glorious Fourth" became a well-established tradition, a day of shared activities, family gatherings, reunions with former residents and friends. In 1964 wooden wash-tub races and tilting were scheduled again, for the first time in some years. Floats were popular: some were individual, some were group entries; all showed imagination, enthusiasm, and many, many hours of work. The Porch Club, in 1965, had a large platform truck made to look like a front porch, with ladies in costume and seated in rocking chairs depicting a meeting in 1890. John Parker had made a large float of the Yacht Club; Frank Lockhart and Charles Foster made a large replica of Barnegat Lighthouse; and the Parry family celebrated the New Era's 75th year of publication with scenes of their office as it was in 1890.

For a few years there were no fireworks to climax our Fourth of July celebrations, although other traditional activities continued. They were welcomed back enthusiastically recently, at the Park instead of the Riverbank--and once again the Fourth ended spectacularly.

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ave a safe and happy summer....come back in the Fall with some new ideas, new enthusiasm, and enjoy another season with the Historical Society of Riverton.

bbh, ed.