



Gaslight News

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

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Program:

Monday, March 2, 1987
"Windmills, Etc."

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton
School

Coles Roberts

The term, windmills, usually brings to mind the picturesque windmills of the Netherlands, although they may be of any form, as long as the adjustable slats, wings, or sails are moved by the action of wind, thereby transmitting energy to a pump or machine below. Few windmills with sails were ever erected in our country, and even in Holland they are rapidly disappearing.

Mr. Roberts, perhaps better known as "Jersey Jerry", whose apples are featured each year at Kirby's Mill, has many interests. He will show movies as well as talk about his own windmill, and others, in various parts of our country. His program promises to be a most interesting one.

May 4th will be our final meeting for the 1986-87 season, and is our Annual meeting. Elections will be held at this time, and all members are urged to not only come out to vote, but to participate more actively in the business of Historical Society. Four members will be elected to 3-year terms on the Board of Directors, after which new officers for the next 2 years will be elected. Directors whose terms expire this May 31st are: Edward Gilmore, Toby Hunn, Ellen Layton, Louise Vaughn.

A Nominating Committee will be appointed in March, and the slate will be presented prior to the May meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor, with consent of a nominee.

Update:

Morgan Cemetery:

With all but a few formalities remaining to complete the transfer of ownership from Mr. Kane to Mr. Brewer, the new owner has crew and equipment standing by to begin cleaning up the cemetery as soon as the weather breaks. This is good news for all of those who have been waiting a long, long time for some positive action there.

Plaques:

Many homes in Riverton qualify for a historic marker, giving the date and/or significant event or owner associated with it. The present procedure for obtaining one is to get an application form from Ed Gilmore, complete and return it to him; he then asks the Board of Directors to vote approval of his decision, after which Louise Vaughn arranges to have the plaque lettered.

Reminder:

Note paper is still available at the Library and at Victorian Thymes, and costs \$3.50 a box.

If anyone has overlooked renewing their membership for this year, please do so promptly. Costs have risen steadily in recent years, especially the insurance we must now carry in order to hold our meetings at Riverton School, and our dues are important for a balanced budget. Contact John Parry, treas., 803 Main St. if you are not sure that you are now in good standing.

Assorted Notes:

The N.J. Historical Society, at 230 Broadway, Newark 07104, has various publications for sale. They include books of general interest, of special studies, prints, cookbooks, map reprints, and other items.

On 8 March the Riverton Board of Education will hold a reception at The Porch Club for residents to meet Riverton School's new Superintendent, John Flammer. Open house will be held from 2 to 4 p.m.

The Burlington County Historical Society will open its new facility, The Corson Poley Center, on Friday March 27th. This is a fine achievement, and will offer researchers much improved opportunities and resources for their work. The date and hours when the new Library will be open to the public will be announced--watch the newspapers for additional information.

Yesterday... .

In 1887 railroad cars were still being heated in winter by a car stove, in spite of increasing protests from commuters. Each year a number of persons were burned to death when their clothing was ignited from them. There were stories that a way had been found to heat the cars utilizing the hot water from the steam engines, and some cars in Philadelphia were being heated that way. But for the cars on the Amboy division, the deadly stoves remained.

The trains were also the targets for stones, and Riverton and Riverside reported being hit almost daily, with windows broken and cuts from flying glass. In Riverside an engineer barely missed death when someone shot a revolver at the train and the bullet passed through the cab close enough for him to feel the breeze it made.

During 1887 there were 25 persons killed outright or fatally injured, and 124 who received non-fatal injuries, on the line. Six of those killed were regular employees, and most of the others had been struck while crossing the tracks, or while walking along them and ignoring an oncoming train. Coupling cars often resulted in crushed hands.

The Pennsylvania rail road company was working to improve the lines, and had been at work improving the crossing over Pennsauken creek for several frustrating months. They were erecting a double stone arch culvert, in preparation for a double track--all bridges between Camden & Mt. Holly and Burlington/Bordentown were being rebuilt for double, instead of single, tracks. However, they had been unable to find a solid bottom for the supports. After driving two 20-ft. poles, one on top of the other, through mud and quicksand, and still not reaching solid base, they decided to build an iron bridge with plate girders, instead.

In December of 1887 a contract for the new railroad station at Palmyra was awarded to Roydhouse & Atkinson, for a cost of \$5,000. The actual construction was delayed, however, when in March, 1888, "a real western blizzard" swept the area. It lasted over a Sunday and Monday, interrupting all forms of travel. Many vessels were grounded in the Delaware. In Moorestown John Collins hitched up his mules to the scrapers and started to clear a path, but the mules gave out and had to be dug out of a drift, then taken home. Fences were

covered in many places, and on the Burlington Turnpike the snow was piled up as high as 15 feet, in some places.

Both Riverton and Palmyra were expanding, in that period. In Riverton, a section at a time was laid out for development, and in Palmyra, various farms--or parts of them--were also opened up. Sometimes problems developed, as well. When Morgan laid out a section of his land above the railroad into building lots, he opened two streets, Morgan and Garfield Avenues. Price acquired an adjacent section of farmland, and divided it into building lots. Because of the angle of the lands, access to Price's development was through Morgan's Garfield Ave. When Morgan decided to close the street, Price went to court, and Morgan had to reopen the street.

In March of 1888 Judge William Parry died. His list of accomplishments included not only such generally known things as the establishment of Pamona Nurseries and their development into more than 300 acres, his service as a member of the N.J. Legislature, as a Judge, as president or director of many institutions, but also some lesser known things. When a section of Cinnaminson wanted to separate, in 1880, it was the Judge who came up with a suitable name for it: he used the first syllables of the streams marking two of its boundaries, the Delaware and the Rancocas, and created the name of "Delran".

In time, other communities sought independence from Cinnaminson, too. As Riverton and Palmyra continued to grow, they, too, wanted their own local governments. Various proposals were made for areas to be included, and for what a new community should be called. In the Spring of 1893 a group from within the present towns, then all still "residents of Cinnaminson", were successful in having the Legislature pass a bill permitting the separation of Riverton and Palmyra (not including East Riverton or the county district) as a new township, to be called "Columbia". It lacked only the Governor's signature to become final. Before that happened, however, Rivertonians opposing that kind of division appointed a committee to look into it and to come up with an alternative; the residents paid 2/3 of the township's taxes, but had only a minority of votes. Their efforts resulted in Riverton's independence in December, 1893, and that was followed by Palmyra's, in April, 1894.

Also in the Spring of 1893, John Wanamaker imported a huge painting by Pierre Fritelis, "The Conquerors", and had it installed in the court of his store in Philadelphia, for all to see without charge. It had been a sensation in the Paris Salon, the previous year. Measuring 20 by 85 feet, it represents conquerors of many nations marching toward the viewer. The central figure is Julius Ceasar, with Alexander Sesostria, Napoleon, Atila, Nebuchudnessar, Charlemagne, and others, finally tapering off in the distance.

In June of 1921 Riverton had a fierce fire. The former Carriage Factory of Mr. Woolston, along 7th street below Main, caught fire, and the flames were so intense that several nearby houses were also damaged. Seventeen pieces of equipment were on hand, as neighboring towns responded to the call for assistance, and in the days following the fire, both Riverton and Palmyra companies seriously re-evaluated their own equipment and organization, which resulted in improved safety procedures for the communities.

The former factory had been rented for about two years by a Philadelphia company that made automotive and truck bodies. For about a year it also manufactured, at this place, the Hilton, a coupe with wire wheels and a large rear deck. The car was named for Hilton W. Sofield, founder of the company, and the fire ended its production.