



Gaslight News

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

Founded 1970

Inc. 1978

Feb. - Apr. 1988

vol. xiv:3 (#49)

Program:

Monday, March 7, 1988

8 p.m.

Music Room, Riverton
School

"Buying Prints--and Print Collections"

Sherman Ricards

Sherman and Mary Ricards deal in old prints, from 1760 to 1920, and love to display and to talk about them. Mr. Ricards is a retired professor, with a PhD in Sociology, but for the past 10 years has concentrated on buying and selling prints. Some are black and white, some are in colors, but each has a story of its own. There will be a display of prints, as well as a talk about buying and collecting them, and some tales about them, too.

Mark the date now on your calendar, and invite a friend to come along with you to enjoy this interesting program.

May's program will be described more fully in the next Newsletter. Meanwhile, here's a clue: How much do you know about Burlington County? If you were asked what it might be famous for, what would you say?

May is also our Annual Meeting, when 4 members will be elected to serve 3-year terms on the Board of Directors. Those whose terms expire this year are: Sara Guertler, John Parry, Richard Wark, and Betty Hable. The Nominating Committee's slate will be included in the May Newsletter, and additional nominations may also be made from the floor.

We apologise for the disappointment and any inconvenience that cancelling the January meeting may have caused our members. We hope that at another time we will be able to schedule that, or a similar, program.

Update...

Morgan Cemetery:

Work has begun on the cemetery, so long neglected, and hopefully will before much longer present a well-kept appearance. Brush has been cleared away, trees trimmed, and as soon as weather permits, the road will be fixed. Building along Parry Avenue is expected to begin this Spring, and the cemetery itself fenced in. A letter has been sent asking that the iron fence, erected by Mr. Morgan in 1888, of a spear and hairpin pattern, be preserved. The new owner is Norman Brewer, of Oaklyn. He can be reached through Evergreen Cemetery, in Camden.

Riverbank:

It is hard to see how a public trust of 136 years' duration could be overturned by a few owners who oppose an open riverbank, particularly in view of the wording of Deeds restrictions and learning that such use does NOT threaten insurance coverage of the owners. The open riverbank is an asset to all who live here, and hopefully will continue to be enjoyed for many years to come.

Congratulations...

...to the students whose essays on The Constitution, sponsored by the Borough Council, won awards. Winners were: 8th grade, Karin Keller, Tressa Stedman, and Jennifer Shaw. For 7th grade, Elizabeth Renn,

Janie Hulse, and Mason DeFrank. Trophies were presented to these students by Anne Cannon, of the Borough Council, and Mayor Walter Engle, at a special Assembly on February 8th.

Why study history? Cicero said that to know nothing of what happened before you were born is to remain forever a child. History serves society in much the same way memory serves an individual--it identifies circumstances, provides a guide to satisfactory behavior, offers a standard of comparison across time; it is a way to come to terms with the past and to develop an awareness of previous influences, to better cope with the future.

An excellent article on education may be read in "History News", published by AASLH in the January issue. Excerpted from "American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation's Public Schools" by Lynne V. Cheney, it describes the importance of studying history, how the topic became lost in "social studies" and some of the results being seen now from that change in focus. It notes that history, the ideals and ideas that molded us into a nation, is a sort of "glue" that binds us all together, no matter how diverse individual backgrounds may be, into a strong nation.

An invitation...

...APR has invited Historical Society members to join them for their April 16th meeting, held at the Porch Club at 8 p.m. The speaker will be Margaret Westfield, a restoration architect, who will talk about preservation problems and maintaining older homes. Our organizations, while different, share many interests and objectives--and members; and meeting together will be most pleasant, as well as informative.

Genealogy classes...

...at BCC will be given by Judy Olsen on Tuesday evenings, beginning on March 1st. These are 1-session, non-credit courses, and the fee is \$15. for each: March 1, Genealogy Basics; March 22, Land Records; April 12, Census Records. Later Spring classes will cover Cemeteries, and Quaker Records. Send registration, or call 894-9311, ext. 395.

An Appeal...

...has been received from the New Jersey Historical Society for our members to also join the State organization. Founded in 1845, this Historical Society has a fine collection that is now in jeopardy from inadequate funding, and from changing times that has resulted in a too-small building in a (presently) less-than-desirable location.*

...A trip, by car-pool, is being planned for Tuesday, March 8th, to visit the NJHS Museum in Newark to see the current exhibition depicting life in N.J. during the period in which the Constitution was formed, entitled "Thus United Free". Call 829-6315 to register for the trip--an opportunity to enjoy the exhibit, and to get acquainted with NJHS...

New Books...

Our Historical Society has recently purchased 4 new books for a collection that will soon be available at the Riverton Library. Since these are paperbacks, our Board voted that they should be used for reference on site, and not taken out on loan. The books are:

1. Houses & Homes, the 2nd of the AASLH Nearby History Series:
...tells where and how to search for clues to a home's history, how to interpret what is found, and how to put it all together.
2. Field Guide to American Houses, by Virginia & Lee McAlester:
...an excellent, easily read and understood guide, with many pictures and diagrams, to help one identify houses from the 17th century to the present, and significant features of various styles of each period.

* NJHS/230 Broadway/Newark 07104. Dues, \$25. Donations welcomed.

3. Fabrics for Historic Buildings, by Jane C. Nylander:
...gives types, styles, colors, and uses of fabrics for different periods, and suggests where reproductions or similar fabrics may be purchased today.
4. Wall Papers for Historic Buildings, by Richard C. Nylander:
...a companion book to above, offering the same types of information for wallpapers.

For further information on various aspects of caring for Victorian houses, there are many ASSH technical leaflets that can be purchased--two excellent ones are: #76, Rescuing Historic Wallpaper, which tells you how to find and preserve bits of old wallpapers on your walls, how to record what you've found, types of papers used, etc.

#15, Paint Color Research & Restoration, which help one date paint layers by colors, match them for restoration, simulated finished for early whitewashed walls, etc.

The current Americana magazine (Feb. 1988) has an excellent article on how to Repair Historic Windows, by Peter V. Fossel. Its sub-title is "Even windows with rotted frames and missing panes can be fixed--and nothing suits an old house better". Simple, practical "how-to" help.

The same issue carries an article about a Preservation Law Newsletter, particularly helpful to communities with local historic-preservation commissions without a source for up-to-date laws and court decisions.

Don't forget to replenish your supply of note-paper, or to take a self-guided walk about town--things are changing all the time...both paper and tour folders available at the Library and The Victorian Thymes.

Have you enjoyed the display of Riverton past, as seen on Post Cards? These are from the collections of Paul W. Schopp, South Jersey historian, who readily agreed to share them through the Library's display case. Following this, our Historical Society will have a display of doing House Histories, both for applying for a marker, or just for fun; and after that, Paul will have a display of Post Cards from Palmyra. Enjoy!!!

If you happen to go to the Antiques Show at the Mt. Holly Armory next weekend, stop by the booth of our March speakers, Sherman and Mary Ricards, and say "hello".

Yesterday...

The winter of 1880-81 was a severe one. After an unseasonably warm spell in early January ('81) that brought out buds on shrubbery, a long and bitter cold spell began. The river was frozen over, and was soon being used as much for business as for pleasure, with businessmen going to Tacony and Philadelphia by that route. A constant threat was from places where blocks of ice had been cut out, leaving only a thin coat of ice which would give way under the weight of horses and carriages. The sentiment was expressed that the river was as much a public highway as any road, and laws should be enacted to prevent cutting holes in it so that travellers could use it safely.

Late in January Caleb Clothier died, at his home in Philadelphia. He had been born in Mt. Holly 75 years earlier, and his obituary mentioned his various works and accomplishments. His role of a Founder of Riverton was not included--probably that venture was given far less importance than we make of it, today.

The Thomas Brothers' brickyard was once again open, and was busily filling back orders. New Jersey is the chief clay-producing state in the country, and bricks are the oldest manufactured building material known.

They are made from a mixture of ground and screened clay and water, and formed from soft "mud" pressed into molds, stiff mud in ribbons then cut into bricks by machine, or dry press-face bricks pressed into molds with hydraulic power. After drying, they are heated. The iron content in the clay determines the color--high compounds make red bricks, and low iron produces yellow ones. They are laid in various patterns, and come in various sizes, according to use desired. Until early this century bricks were commonly used to pave streets and sidewalks. Riverton's old sidewalks are laid in at least 3 different patterns, and the bricks are from dark red to yellow in color, of several sizes. The smallest, darkest ones were used for carriage driveways. Other clays in this area were fire and terra cotta, with some white deposits along the creek, a good pipe clay.

Winter brought epidemics--Palmyra's churches and schools were closed for several weeks during an outbreak of smallpox. That was followed by diphtheria. Newspapers offered remedies for that--2-5 gr. chlorate of potash dissolved on the back of the tongue each hour, and a gargle made of chlorate of potassium, alcohol, creosote, muriatic acid, and hot water, repeated every half-hour. Those were terrible diseases.

Once the weather broke, the town was bustling. Dreer's had Capt. Dunn, of Bridgeboro, building "a new bank". Dr. Alexander Marcy, jr. received his M.D. from U of Pa. Fishermen began to catch catfish, perch, suckers, and striped bass in the river. The attempt to stock the Delaware with black bass, the year before, had been a failure. Builders resumed their work, and Mr. Rudderow, a skillful builder of good reputation, denounced a statement printed in The Riverton Journal, a newspaper started the past Autumn (and short-lived) connecting him to another contractor of lesser reputation. James Brown was contesting the railroad company, which had closed a crossing through his property with a barbed wire fence. And Squire Carbe, of Riverside, who had started to build a hotel on Riverton's riverbank, was made to stop construction. "Cause _____." (was it the liquor clause? or the problems of the new Building & Loan company?)

Leggett & Co., in Riverside, announced the successful manufacture of a glass-lined can after years of experimenting. It was just in time, as France had announced they would no longer buy canned goods in lead-lined cans after this Spring, to use on their ships.

Bicycles were still a novelty. H.B. Smith Mfg. Co. had taken out a contract for making the American Star Bicycle, and some of their employees were determined to learn to ride the new vehicle. One managed to get up on the seat, but soon fell off, "and had all the skin knocked off his eye sight". A few days later another brave lad tried it; he managed to stay erect for a few minutes, then plunged through the factory's window. People persisted, however, and soon bicycling was popular. Rulon-the-butcher's son became a popular "trick" rider in Riverton, both here at the town's own track, and in competitions at others.

Lent brought the sound of peddlers with codfish and potatoes, to the disgust of the town's 6 butchers. Presbyterian and Episcopal churches held two services each Sunday, but the Catholics still gathered on alternate Sundays.

At the Yacht Club, which had a fleet of 30 yachts and a year-old clubhouse valued at \$3000, members were busily rigging their boats for a new season of sailing. They were described as well mannered young men who had few accidents. During their coming Fourth-of-July activities they would introduce a new "trial of strength", called a Tug-of-War.

Tramps were back in town, boarding houses were filling up--the Lawn House was being enlarged to accommodate an additional 100 guests--and gardens were once again sprouting and budding. Spring had come....

(items from Mt. Holly Herald)(bbh)