



Campbell's Soup Program, Tues., March 12, 2019, 7pm. See page 3 for details.

Gaslight News

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Historical Society of Riverton

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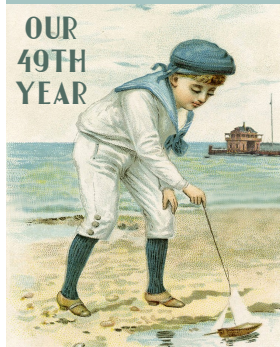
Founded 1970

Riverton, NJ 08077

Incorporated 1978



“
Doing research like this is addictive, like reading a mystery novel, because behind each dusty date and fact lies an engrossing human story.”
Roger Prichard



In this issue

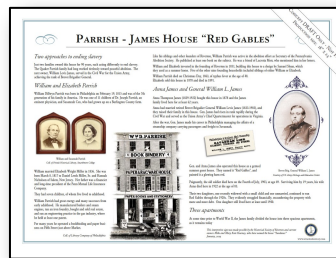
HISTORICAL MARKERS - ROGER PRICHARD	1
A DEBT OWED - JMC	2
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - WM. C. BROWN JR.	3
MUSEUM FOR A DAY - JMC	4

HSR will install two more historical markers

Historical markers develop public awareness of the significance and meaning of a place

The Historical Society uses interpretive signage to honor and preserve Riverton's rich historical past for the enjoyment and education of residents and visitors alike. Several wayside markers tell the story of Riverton's people, buildings, historic sites and events.

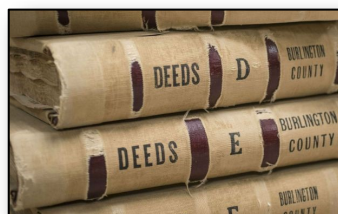
Except for two text-only cast metal signs at the [clock plaza](#) and near the former site of the [bicycle track](#), the signs each start with a significant town feature with a well-documented story to drive the content and focus. Compelling, site-specific graphics and text illuminate the story and enhance what the visitor is seeing and experiencing. [311 Bank Ave. marker draft](#)



Board member **Roger Prichard**, lead researcher and designer for the Society's [Historical Marker Program](#) since 2017, shares below his experience and tells about the next signs we can expect.

Doing research like this is addictive, like reading a mystery novel, because behind each dusty date and fact lies an engrossing human story. With every mystery there are puzzles to solve.

It is easy to start with the deeds at the [Burlington County Clerk's Office](#) in Mt. Holly because each deed has the name of the owner(s) and refers you back where to find the previous deed.



20-pound, leather-wrapped Burlington Co. deed books
PHOTO CREDIT: PHILLY.COM

The key to solving the clues to these elusive stories arises from data mined from the "tombs" where the old volumes of deeds are stored.

Burlington County now has the most recent deeds [online](#), but to get everything prior to that you need to use one of the computers located in the Clerk's office that has their software to bring up the scanned historical pages.

Lurking behind all the mundane title deed information for a property lie clues leading to the usual suspects behind a property transfer - relocation, death of the owner(s), divorce, foreclosure, and bequests.

For each owner whose name we know, the next rich source of information is [ancestry.com](#). I have been compiling a large family tree there called "[Early Families of Riverton NJ](#)," which anyone with an Ancestry subscription can see in full detail.



The deed gave us the name and the approximate dates the person lived here. With that, an Ancestry search can turn up census, church, military, and directory records for people who are likely matches. From some of these you can often turn up occupations and the names and ages of spouses, children, servants, and boarders, etc.

Google is your friend, too! Use the name with "Riverton" or "Philadelphia" and be prepared to sift through hundreds of useless hits. Persevere in the face of such red herrings and dead ends and follow the evidence.

Google has a huge number of books and periodicals from the era of expired copyrights, including trade and professional publications,

See **MARKERS** on 3

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Please
leave a message



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As another
disruption
of the polar
vortex promises to
bring a towering
mass of winter-chilled
Arctic air our way,
we look back to
some deep-freezes
of yesteryear.



Gertrude Wright out for a
sleigh ride in 1914 from
[Snow Day 2014](#)



1896 Snow House from
[Another Riverton Snow Day -
1896 style](#) March 20, 2015
PHOTO CREDIT: ELSIE WATERS

Historical Society of Riverton



Community owes a debt to the Historical Society for the Riverton history we know

The Society serves a critical role in preserving the historical record

Scanning and posting back issues of the *Gaslight News* to our website has been both an eye-opening and humbling experience.

Eye-opening because I am discovering so many bits of Riverton history that further illuminate topics I have dealt with here since I edited my [first newsletter in 2007](#).

Humbling because I realize what a debt we owe to those many persons who have contributed research and supported the preservation mission of the Society since its inception in 1970.

While folks post wintry scenes on Facebook and stories of the Delaware freezing have appeared here before, perhaps nothing paints a better picture of how old Riverton coped with frigid weather than this *Gaslight News* excerpt from **Betty Hahle's** signature "Yesterday..." column (#96 March 2000).

On a different note - January's wintry weather has brought to mind an article found in a newspaper during the winter of 1917-1918. For the first time in many years the river had frozen all the way across.

Measurements made by



Betty B. Hahle, former *Gaslight News* Editor and contributor,
HSR President, Town Historian
PHOTO CREDIT: HAHLE FAMILY ALBUM

boring holes into the ice set the depth of ice from seven-and-a-half to twelve-and-a-half inches. The weekend after the deep freeze brought out large crowds of people, estimated to be close to 1000. The article said that "every man, woman and child who owns or could borrow a pair of skates helped swell the crowd."

People were eager to be able to skate on a long, smooth surface, instead of the smaller and often rough ice on local ponds.

Two young men from Moorestown came to Riverton and drove their car across the ice to Philadelphia; and one of the Biddle boys (who lived on Bank Avenue) drove out onto the ice "and put it (his car) through a number of fancy stunts."

A number of [ice boats](#) glided out and around the skaters. Biddle and Frishmuth boys had the largest ones, capable of carrying twenty passengers, and had a great time on the ice - until the wind died out.

A smaller ice boat captured the most attention and interest. It was built by 11-year-old Art Wright, who lived at 305 Bank Avenue (in the house now located at Penn and Car-



Ice Skaters on Delaware River c1888 from
[Snow Day! Jan. 28, 2011](#)

PHOTO CREDIT: SCAN OF A PRINT DEVELOPED
FROM GLASS NEGATIVE BY RICHARD GAUGHAN

MARKERS from 1

so searching the name along with "woolen merchant" or "attorney" can be helpful.

My third most helpful source has been another paid subscription site, Newspapers.com. Its millions of searchable pages of text and images bear riches beyond belief. If your owner was a hero, or an ax murderer, chances are he or she will turn up in one of the Philadelphia newspapers at some point (even if only in their obit). In addition, it is always fun to page through the Philadelphia Inquirer on the day you were born, just to see what was going on – or do the crossword!

See the two complete illustrated research papers compiled for founders' homes at [309 Bank Avenue](#) and [311 Bank Avenue](#) on which the historic markers will be based. Look for an installation in the spring.



309 Bank Avenue, July 2018
PHOTO CREDIT: ROGER PRICHARD



311 Bank Avenue, Jan. 2019
PHOTO CREDIT: ROGER PRICHARD

The next two after that will probably be for 106 Penn Street (formerly on the riverbank and home of two illustrious abolitionists) and the Rodman Wharton House at 407 Bank Avenue. (Rodman lived here just a couple of summers, dying of cholera in this house in the summer of 1854. His brother Joseph later founded Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.) There are stories everywhere!

- MR. ROGER PRICHARD



President Wm. C. Brown outlines upcoming events

We wish you all a very much belated Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year.

February Board Meeting at RFL Feb. 27

Wednesday, February 27, 2019, the HSR Board will meet at 7PM in Riverton Library for a dual purpose; Society member Keith Betten give a brief Archives Status Report and we will hold a Strategy Session to plan for spring activities.

As a former Deputy Executive Director of the Division of Archives and Records Management for the State of New Jersey in Trenton, and one of the principal preparers of [Riverton's National Register of Historic Places Registration Form](#), Mr. Betten is eminently qualified to make recommendations.

New archival shelving is in place and "populated" with the HSR archival collection boxed (by our crew of volunteers) by "Record Group" and "Record Series".

Records will then be transferred from their current bankers boxes into more easily handled "clam shell boxes" each of which will be assigned a Record Group/Record Series number, and a specific shelf location. That information will be incorporated into a printed "finding aid". Later, the HSR will pursue prospects for "digitizing" the collection for online research.

Keith will present draft "Accession" and "Deaccession" policies. Such policies determine the parameters of what archival items we will accept and what we will designate for removal – a critical policy, given our spatial constraints. Keith will conclude by giving a tour of the newly organized "Archival Area".

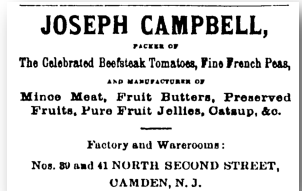
Board Discussion - Planning Objectives

Immediately following Mr. Betten's Archives Status Report, we will hold a Board strategy session with the goal of developing objectives for the following ideas for the spring: fundraising, archives, declining membership issue, grant applications,

Preservation Awards, Arbor Day

Campbell Soup Program at March Meeting

During our first General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, March 12, 2019, @ 7PM we are pleased to offer a very special presentation by Marisa Bozarth, Museum Curator, Burlington County Division of Parks, entitled "Campbell's: More Than Just Soup."



Riverton Journal 2/15/1881

It follows the company from its beginning as a small canning company through to becoming a multibillion-dollar global food company. She will discuss the various individuals, including Joseph Campbell, who worked to make the company what it is today, as well as how Burlington County farmers played a role in its success.



[308 Main Street](#) 12/23/2018

The best part - the venue will be next door to the Library at 308 Main Street, the former home of Joseph Campbell, now home to Jan and Dennis DeVries.

Understandably, seating will be limited.

2019 Dues Reminder

Finally, please tell us your email address and phone number on the included form when you send in your dues for 2019.

Best to all,
Bill Brown





Like Brigadoon, our museum comes for a day, then disappears

The biennial return of the RFL's Candlelight House Tour provides excuse for another Historical Society Open House

Our Museum for a Day on December 2 exhibited many items in the Society's collection of artifacts, collectibles, documents, and photos.

We were delighted to display for the first time a gift of former resident **Alice Pippitt Fluckiger** - an incredibly detailed doll house which is a perfect replica of her childhood home (1965-1986) at 806 Main Street.

One young visitor declared, "This is the most amazing, beautiful dollhouse. It looks like the tooth fairy could live here!"



HSR Board Member Susan Dechnik gives a tour of the dollhouse. PHOTO BY JMC

The original house predates the founding of Riverton. When widow **Eleanora Lippincott** lived there, she employed a butler and a cook whose son grew to become **Dr. Clarence Benjamin Jones**, a close associate of **Martin Luther King Jr.**

HSR volunteer docents, **Nancy and Bill Hall**, **Bill Brown**, **Susan Dechnik**, and **John McCormick**, guided visitors.



Here, Bill Hall provides color commentary on a 1920s aerial map. PHOTO BY JMC

Nancy and Bill Hall loaned for display this recently restored Genealogical Tree of the Lippincott Family Tree that starts in the 1600s.

A photo of the **John Warner** paddlewheel steamer at RYC, original items related to the novels of **Mary Fidler Biddle**, and a 19th century fire fighter leather bucket were gifts from **Mr. and Mrs. Robert Morris**.

Sales proceeds of historically themed mugs, Romance of Riverton DVDs, books, and reproductions of historic photos support the mission of the Society.

We sincerely thank the **Riverton Free Library Assn.** and especially **Librarian Nancy Fort** for accommodating this temporary exhibition and for providing storage space in the basement.

Our Museum may be closed for now, but you do not have to wait a hundred years to buy our historically themed mugs. Leave a message at 609-220-8040 and your call will be returned. See more photos [online](#).



The roots of their Lippincott family's lineage run deep -very deep, as Nancy and Bill Hall can attest. PHOTO BY JMC

- JMC



DEBT OWED from 2



H. McIlvain Biddle's iceboat, UNDATED PHOTO FROM [STEEL FAMILY ALBUM](#)

riage House Lane). He loved the river, and spent all possible time there, both winter and summer. When his older brother began to build an ice boat, Art gathered up some scraps of lumber and made for himself a small ice boat "that would bear his light weight, and could outsail anything on the river."

The channel dug during the second World War, and stronger ice-boats ended the spectacle of the Delaware river freezing all the way across. Perhaps some "Gaslight News" readers may still remember the ice boats, and skating on the river (with clamp-on skates), and bonfires on the bank to warm up...

Betty. B. Hahle February, 2000

[Sledding at the Golf Course and More](#)

MERRY SLEIGHERS,
THE NEW ERA, FEB. 10, 1899

MERRY SLEIGHERS

Main street presented a lively appearance on Friday, February 10, 1899, with sleighs of all sizes and shapes out. These ranged from natty cutters to lumbering farm sleighs.

The snow storm that afforded the fun was one of the most severe ever experienced here, food being very scarce for several days. There was no school from Monday until Thursday, and the first freight train of the week did not arrive until the latter day.

As Betty expressly directed, her article appears here as written.

Arguably, no other person has contributed more to Riverton's historical record than former HSR president, *Gaslight News* editor, and Town Historian [Betty B. Hahle](#). She passed away in 2011 at age 92.

She wrote the article above almost 19 years ago and scarcely anyone now can remember such times. Our website preserves her work and that of many others who have helped chronicle the story of Riverton.

It and others like it demonstrate the critical role of the Society as it serves as a keeper of culture, preserves the historical record, and interprets the past to the public.

How else would you know how awesome Riverton is?

Look for more stories in the back issues of [Gaslight News](#).

adapted from a rivertonhistory.com post [Jan. 24, 2019](#)

- JMC



Betty B. Hahle, October 2009
PHOTO CREDIT: HAHLE FAMILY ALBUM

