



# Gaslight News

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

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August - October 1983

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## President's Message:

Welcome to the 1983-84 season of the Historical Society. I hope that you have had a pleasant summer and are looking forward to the interesting programs that are planned for the coming year.

Many fine things have been accomplished in the past under the capable leadership of retiring president Betty Hahle; much remains to be done. As your new president, I earnestly solicit your support and cooperation so that, together, we can expand the important work of our Society.

Louise Vaughn

## Programs:

Programs for the coming year, 1983-84, have been announced by Lenore Probsting, chairman:

October 10, 1983: "Burlington County Cemeteries" .. Mrs. Elizabeth Perinchief  
November 28 : "Heartland of the Rancocas Valley" .. Mrs. Blanche Gandy  
January 16, 1984: Covered Dish Supper--program to be announced later  
March 5 : "Old Post Card Collection" .. Alfred S. Newton  
May 7 : "Colonial History of East and West New Jersey ..Dr. Nicholas  
Kamaras

## Program:

Monday, October 10, 1983 8 p.m. Music Room, Riverton School  
"Burlington County Cemeteries" .....

Elizabeth M. Perinchief

Mrs. Perinchief's interest in cemeteries seems natural, when one considers that her husband's family have been morticians for a century. Cemeteries and genealogy go hand-in-hand, and as a certified genealogist Mrs. Perinchief was instrumental in founding the Burlington County Genealogy Club, which meets twice monthly at the County Library, where she is Superintendant Librarian.

Mrs. Perinchief is a native of Mount Holly, a graduate of Wellesley College and Drexel University, and the author of "History of Cemeteries in Burlington County, 1867-1975", which was published in 1978.

This should be an interesting program with which to open a new season; genealogy and local history cannot be separated, and cemeteries hold a wealth of information for those willing to look for it. Circle the date on your calendar NOW, so that when Fall's activities begin you won't forget to come.

## Workshop:

Saturday, September 24, 1983 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Porch Club, 4th & Howard Sts.  
"Old Houses: Preservation/Restoration"  
A Workshop for laymen is scheduled for anyone interested in learning the rudiments

of recognizing architectural features, dating and researching the history of, and practical approach to preservation/restoration of houses dating roughly from 1850 to 1930's. There will be speakers, displays, and a brief walking tour, as well as a box lunch, included in the \$10 registration fee. Capacity is limited, and advance registration is required. See attached flyer for particulars. Additional information, Betty Hahle, chairman: 829-6315.

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#### Update:

##### Founder's House, 307 Bank Avenue

Over the summer the Borough Council established a Planning Board and engaged the services of Planning Consultant Louis Glass, in compliance with an earlier ruling made by Judge Haines. The members, under the chairmanship of James Wittmeyer, have met regularly and developed a comprehensive land use and zoning plan, and prepared Ordinances regulating these. Their recommendations have been presented to Boro Council, and by the time this Newsletter is distributed, public hearings will have been held and the necessary Master Plan and regulations adopted, according to the September 11th deadline that was set. The Planning Board is also drafting regulations outlining preservation/restoration practices in Riverton, which will be recommended as an amendment, for the protection of our heritage. Meetings are public, notices are in local papers or available at the Borough Office, and we urge your interest and support in matters that concern—and can benefit—all Riverton residents.

Further information on what will happen to the William C. Biddle home designed by architect Samuel Sloan in 1851 (on the riverbank) will follow the September decision by Judge Haines.

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#### Survey:

In the Fall of 1979 our Historical Society decided to make a survey of all buildings in Riverton—a large undertaking for a small group of people even for so small a community. Its purpose was twofold: first, to record accurate information about the town, its buildings and its history, and, second, to gather information from which application for recognition of Riverton as an Historic District could be prepared. Many tales, often repeated, about the town and/or its earliest residents change over the years, until it is difficult to know which are factual and which are not, unless care is taken to research and record them accurately. "Signs" can be misinterpreted—as in the case of the excited young folks who discovered "stalls" in the basement of an early home, and thought horses must have been hidden there during a war—they were of a generation unfamiliar with coal bins (and some big houses had more than one heater, requiring several bins to feed them!)

Workshops for public and for volunteers were held, forms were developed, and work began. Within a year much had been done, and done well. But some areas were yet to be covered, some work done poorly—and some not done at all. After the first burst of enthusiasm, there were far fewer volunteers; time brought changes, and more stringent requirements, and so the work has continued at a snail's pace. Descriptions need to be written for some, research/histories, particularly for the oldest houses, done for others, and a few scattered areas have not yet been done at all. Then those who have volunteered to type the survey, so it will be presented in a uniform manner and will include all that is required for presentation, —another big job—will do that, the additional photographs required now will be completed, and...the job will be done.

It has taken much longer than anticipated. It WILL be completed. When, depends on how many will help to complete the remaining work. Fall's weather and diminishing foliage make it a good time to work on Survey needs. Will you help?

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#### Special Project:

A reminder of our ongoing project, in conjunction with Riverton Library, to locate copies of The New Era, so that they can be filmed and then available for research. Register yours with Donna Tarkington at the Library, or Betty Hahle.

#### Map:

The Porch Club map of Riverton has been treated and housed by the Conservation Center in Philadelphia over the summer, and will soon be back in the Porch Club building.

The APR has broadened its interests, and is currently updating the electrical work of the Porch Club. That building was erected in 1909, for the Women's Club founded in 1890, and was without benefit of electricity until 1921. The system hasn't been updated since that time, and the work is long overdue, in the interest of safety, if for no other reason. The successful fund-raising APR is to be commended for its active involvement in preservation projects in Riverton, and for the opportunities for renewed and broadened neighborliness their activities offer.

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Yesterday.....

Memorial Park was dedicated on July 4, 1931. It had been a long while coming...after W W I an athletic field was decided upon, as a fitting memorial to those who had given their lives in service to our country, and to those who had returned. After many delays, a part of the Dreer property above the railroad was purchased from the company, and the Park was realized. Killam Bennett was Mayor when the land was purchased, and Howard Rogers was Mayor at its dedication. A decade prior to this 100 men and women who were veterans from Riverton were presented with rings, chosen by a Citizens' Committee headed by Edward Flagg jr. Their names were published in the New Era. (Anyone have, or know of, one of these rings today?)

In October, 1893, the Lawn House (Riverbank at Penn) closed for the summer. The popular boarding house was not without problems, from time to time: during the summer of 1899 the wife of its proprietor sold a barn on the property to a man employed by someone else, who took it down and had the wood cut for firewood. The proprietor's wife was charged with larceny...

In September, 1881, special services were held at the Episcopal church in accordance with a proclamation of the Governor, for the recovery of President Garfield. And in Cinnaminson, Tacie Parry married William Paul.

In 1901 you could be fined for leaving horses or mules standing unhitched in Riverton; it could cost you \$5.00 for exceeding a speed of 8 mph. A few years earlier a newspaper noted that boys in bathing suits had fun in the swells rolling against the river wall caused by the steamers.

Fall brought epidemics of diphtheria, called, in 1885, "an extremely dangerous disease" to which the "now popular germ theory applies well". Fresh air and liquids were advocated, sulfur is administered by many doctors, and vapors of lime and of turpentine added to a kettle of boiling water in the room were all thought to help. (Immunization has long since erased diphtheria from our lives, so that this so-often-fatal disease will soon be beyond the memories of most.)

In the Fall of 1900 the Catholic church "extinguished" its debt...Walter Bowen, of the New Era, was married...Riverton Country Club purchased additional ground from Howard Thomas (on Thomas Avenue), and expected its clubhouse to be completed soon. The town was having trouble with its telephones..first they had to await an ordinance permitting the wiring, then thieves stole 2 miles of wire strung from the poles between Riverton and Camden. A little further up the line, Howard Taylor cut the lines fringing his property line—he didn't like them.

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b5hahle, ed.

For your information about the Historical Society of Riverton:

Officers (2 yr-terms, beg. June 1 1983)

Pres: Louise Vaughn; V-P: William Baxter; Sec: Ellen Layton; Treas: John Parry.

Committees: (1 yr) Program: Lenore Probsting and Donna Tarkington; Publicity, Anita Parry.

Other: Curator, Joan Hartmann; Newsletter: Betty Hahle.

Board members (3 yrs): ending 1984: Ellen Layton, Edward Gilmore, Donna Tarkington, and Louise Vaughn. ending 1985: John Parry, Harold Zayotti, Betty Hahle, and Liliane Reynolds. ending 1986: William Baxter, John Geiss, Joan Hartmann, and Lenore Probsting.

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RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP IS NOW DUE FOR 1983/1984.

\$2.00 annually (\$1.00 if over 65 yrs of age) plus \$1.00 per FAMILY (begun last year to help meet rising costs)

Send to John Parry, treasurer, 803 Main St. Riverton 08077, or take to next Meeting.