



GASLIGHT NEWS

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, INC.

Riverton, N. J. 08077

Sept - Oct 1979

No. 1

Days have grown shorter, nights are cooler, and there's a feeling of Fall in the air. Children are back in school, and another season of activities is beginning. We hope you will enjoy your membership and the activities of Riverton's Historical Society this season. There will be 4 regularly scheduled meetings, and 2 others, one of which will be the showing of "Romance in Riverton". The year's schedule, together with a list of your Officers and Board and a membership renewal slip, are on the last page. Keep it handy for reference. Welcome back

October meeting

Monday, October 8

8 p.m.

Riverton Public School

"The Seat of Easement: 18th Century Necessaries and Their Accouterments"

A slide/lecture about an unusual but fascinating and revealing topic--a story of privies and plumbing from Crete to Monticello, given by Mrs. Linn P. Brown of the Fairmount Park House Guides of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Mrs. Brown is a University of Pennsylvania graduate, an Interpreter at Cliveden, Chairman of Guides of Stenton, a lecturer at Main Line Adult School, and a member of the Colonial Dames of America and the D.A.R. And in addition, is a speaker whose wit and charm captivate her audience.

Don't miss this first meeting of the new season. Bring along a friend.

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Film

In June we received a donation of \$500.00 from the Parish Club, proceeds from the Doll House Show in May, a success in spite of two days of pouring rain. And a donation of \$100.00 from Palmyra-Riverton Rotary. And smaller--but equally welcome--donations from several individuals. 1156 feet of film that had not deteriorated have been reduced to 16mm size on safe film, and will be available for showing soon. Prints and slides from individual frames are yet to be made, but will be done this Fall. Our grateful thanks for all those whose interest has made it possible for this old nitrate film about Riverton in 1926 to be preserved:

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Survey

The survey should have been completed by now. Unfortunately, several assignments were not completed, and others have a few scattered spots needing additional information. If 4 or 5 members are willing to volunteer their assistance now, for about 6 weeks of work, we can get this project completed and the nomination in before the end of this year. If you can help, please call 829-6315 and offer to do so. This is a worth-while goal, something we can take pride in having done.

And once completed, other projects can be considered. More of these, later.....

Gas Lights

Your Board is making an effort to note any lights out of service, and to call it to the attention of Public Service. Notifying our local police who, in turn, call Public Service, gets a prompt response, in contrast to a direct call from a resident. You can help by reporting any light you see that needs attention; show your interest in these beautiful old gas street lamps by making sure that they are cared for properly at all times, and not just noticed in time of crisis.

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Odds 'n Ends

Did you see our Float in Riverton's Fourth of July Parade this year? It was the "brain child" of Mary Griffith, who, with her committee, planned and executed it--and won an award!

Our thanks were sent to Campbell's Soup for lending us the truck on which the picnicing families rode.

BCC has this semester introduced 2 new courses in Genealogy and Local History, dealing with researching and resources. The college has a fine Library, available to the public as well as to students. These are credit courses, and started Sept 10, but information is available by calling 894-9311 ext 222.

Also at BCC are 2 history lectures open to the public: Sept 24, 7 pm, with Robert Reiner, on influence of John Tatham on 17th century Burlington county. On Oct 19, also 7 pm, Ellis L. Derry, author of "Old and Historic Churches of NJ" will speak about churches of Burlington county in the colonial period.

Please phone 894-9311, ext 320 in advance if planning to attend either lecture.

If you think things remain unchanged in a small town, look about you today: how many houses have had additions, siding, or other alterations in recent months, on just your street? Photographs and written notes help to maintain an accurate record of changes soon unnoticed.

And will you soon forget the fire, one hot July night, that destroyed a hundred years of history in a matter of a few hours? As the ruins of the Evans building were pulled down, early in the morning, the brick facade fell away, exposing for a moment the earlier clapboard front with its painted ads for various kinds of feeds and grains, as well as for lumber and building supplies.

The business had begun as A.C. Heulings feed and building supplies in the last half of the 19th century. Albert C. Heulings bought the property in December 1885 at a sheriff's sale, from Sam Rudderow, who bought it again after Heulings' death and re-sold the property to Evans, who expanded the business and the buildings. The original long shed-like building may have been built much earlier--Palmyra Moravian Church has a receipt dated 1863 for lumber for a fence that was purchased from Heulings.

When the New Leaf reopens, across the street, take time to look at the building so painstakingly cared for and restored. It was built in 1909 for Wm. H. Stiles, local druggist, and has a beautiful tin ceiling--one of the few remaining in the area--and the original lighting fixtures and shelves along the walls.

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Yesterday

Speaking of changes, time and seasons bring an endless flow of them.....consider, for a moment, the period from the first half of the last century to the first half of this.....

In Philadelphia, at summer's end, families began to plan for their moves back to their city homes from their summer farms out in the country--Mount Airy, Fairmount, sites along the banks of the winding Schuylkill with its overhanging trees and wandering streams so delightful for rowing and yachting.

Things had been changing, though, since the War: along the docks the wide promenade and all but a few of the big old pines and other trees had disappeared. Market houses were edging up High Street, even flanking fine homes there; and neat rows of houses, with wide, friendly porches, were springing up all around the edges of the old city, erasing finally the destruction by British troops, and spreading beyond. The summer farms no longer seemed so far out in the country

There were other changes, too; although some still shook their heads at the idea of public libraries instead of private book collections, Franklin's concept, begun with a collection placed in Carpenter's Hall, was gaining acceptance. Young men were less often sent to England or Europe for their educations, and Academies for young ladies were replacing tutors in the home.

Professor Charles D. Cleveland, educator, author of textbooks and hymns, tireless worker to end slavery, opened a School for Young Ladies on Clinton Street in old Philadelphia, conveniently close to the homes and businesses of many successful merchants, and it was a success. The young professor suffered poor health, and sought a climate that might be beneficial to him. He built a home on the riverbank of a cove in Chester, N.J., a pleasant spot becoming a popular summer vacation place with scattered farms and a few boarding houses. Yachtmen found the sail a pleasant one, and train and stage services made the transportation reasonable.

A group of 9 of these merchants liked the area well enough to envision a village rising on the spot, carefully nurtured to grow in an orderly fashion into a community of fine homes and family life. They purchased farmland, laid out their plots, and formed a company to direct their village's development. Professor Cleveland sold his riverbank home to his friend J. Miller McKim, a fellow abolitionist, and built again, further from the river. When the first church was built, it was on a site the professor owned, near the railroad. He served as an officer of the Riverton Improvement Company until his death, in Philadelphia, in 1869. Professor Cleveland, although not mentioned in most records of the town, might be its earliest "father."

The little village grew. Less than 50 years before its founding the area was wooded, from Pennsauken to Rancocas Creeks, with scattered areas of meadow and marsh. A small brick schoolhouse served the children from the scattered farms, built in 1822, was moved out of the path of the Camden and Amboy railroad tracks that were laid in 1836, forever changing a way of life. With the development of the village of Riverton a 1-room frame school building was erected at 4th and Howard Streets (1865) identified as 1st District, #7, Cinnaminson. Of the 125 pupils registered, 51 were from Riverton. By 1892 a 6 room, 2 story building was at the same location, with its bell--used until 1932--in a cupola on the roof. In 1896 the original Catholic mission was purchased and moved from down the block to join the school, and became the first kindergarten in the county--a concept promoted by the Porch Club. By this time some pupils were receiving 10th and 11th grade instructions in the school, and travelled to other areas for further education. After 1907 students could attend the new Palmyra High School. In 1909 there were 305 students enrolled in Riverton school, and the first brick school building was authorized. It was centered on the lot, and faced 5th Street, had 11 classrooms, an auditorium, and manual training facilities. It could accommodate 400 students. Successive years brought further additions and alterations, but that central building is still a part of our school.

The little mission-kindergarten building moved across the railroad, in 1910, and was joined to the former Episcopal parish house, all ready moved to that site, and became a Post Office. Later it became the New Era building, and then Freddy's shoe repair shop, where you can still see the hook from which the first bell was hung.

The parents of all these children were busy, too. In spite of long working hours they were active in churches, and in a surprising number of clubs, organizations, and secret societies. The 1909 New Era listed some 26 such groups, in addition to the Porch Club, Yacht Club, and Country Club, in Riverton and Palmyra.

Yes, changes come with time and season, and Fall ushers in many of them.....

Meetings, Historical Society of Riverton, 1979-80 Season (scheduled)
Monday evenings, 8 pm, at Riverton School unless otherwise notified

October 8 November 26 March 10 (1980) May 12 (annual meeting)

Officers, May 1979 to May 1981

President	Mrs. J. W. Hahle (Betty)
Vice President	Harold Zayotti
Secretary	Mrs. Edwin Moore (EllaMay)
Treasurer	Mrs. Grandon Layton (Nell)

Board of Directors

term expires:

1980	1981	1982
William Baxter	Ruth Schaeferer	Nancy Hall
Joan Hartmann	Nell Layton	Betty Hahle
Lenore Probsting	EllaMay Moore	John Parry
Alice Myers	Mary Griffith	Harold Zayotti

Chairmen:

Program	Karen Hough
Publicity	Connie Frantz
Curator	Joan Hartmann
Newsletter	
editor	Betty Hahle
printing	Harold Zayotti
distribution	Nancy Hall

"Gaslight News" published quarterly, delivered to all members

Organization founded, By-Laws adopted: 1974
incorporated, 1978
Newsletter started Fall, 1975

Memberships are NOW DUE. Tear off and return, with check, to Mrs. Ellen Layton
If receipt is desired, please enclose SASE 630 Linden Avenue

Membership, the Historical Society of Riverton 1979/80

Name _____

Address _____ phone _____

membership: \$2.00 per year _____ senior citizen: \$1.00 per year _____

Mr.-Mrs. Edward Hartmann
708 Linden Ave
Riverton NJ 08077