



GASLIGHT NEWS

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON, Inc.

Riverton, N.J. 08077

Sept - Oct 1980

No. 1

A new season is beginning, and some fine programs are planned for our members and friends.
The first will be Monday, October 13 8 p.m. Riverton Public School

"Tombstone Rubbings"

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Marie Hahn

Mrs. Hahn is a history teacher in the Millville Public School System who was looking for an idea for a unit during the Bicentennial. She made a rubbing of a Revolutionary War soldier's tombstone, and discovered a new hobby. She says it is rather like the potato chip commercial -- she couldn't stop after one!

Her interest has branched out to include epitaphs and carvings, and she will bring a selection of rubbings along with her, as well as her supplies for making the rubbings, and give a mini "how to" lesson.

It will be an interesting program and fun, too--Mrs. Hahn has a great sense of humor.

Circle the date today, and when you come, bring along a friend.

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"The Romance of Riverton"

After the initial showing of the film to Historical Society members and sponsors, a policy for its use in the future was determined by the Board: Rotary, Porch Club, or Riverton School may use it without charge; any other group interested will be asked to make a donation to the Historical Society in return for use of the materials--film, notebook of shots made from film, and script. Arrangements can be made by calling 829-6315.

Rotary saw the film at their June 12th meeting. A date for showing it for the general public will be announced in local newspapers.

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Papers, pictures, and related materials belonging to the Historical Society should be available for research being done by those seriously interested in their content. Until we have a better place for storing them, anyone interested may contact our curator, Joan Hartmann (829-0045) about their use.

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Opportunity

A course in genealogical research techniques will be taught by Judy Olsen at Burlington County College (Library) on Saturday mornings from 9 to 12, beginning Sept. 13th. Those who are 60 or over may audit the course. Others, or those desiring credit, must pay \$64.50 (3 credits) plus a \$15 registration fee. The course will not only help beginners, but will also help those who have done some genealogical searching to locate more resources, and to get the best possible use from them, and to keep your records in order.

Board Meeting
Oct 6 8 pm
405 meeting

There is still time to register --phone Shirley Namath at 894-9311, ext. 582, at the college. Note the lowered age for auditing courses at BCC, and take advantage of the opportunity. Judy Olsen is historian, author, genealogist, teacher--you will remember her as one of our program speakers last winter.

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Yesterday.....

The 1850 Federal Census included a Mortality Schedule, and at the end of each township's report was a brief paragraph about it. Chester was a large township, a small section of which would soon become Riverton. Film is hard to read, but says, in part "on the river shore extending back from 1 to 3 miles the land is very (?) for the market gardens, being mostly sandy". The rest was described as "a rich loamy soile," of the best kind for grass and grain; and was "occasionally gravelle". "Timber is Pine, Black and White Oak, and Chestnut...."

Thirty years later the marshes were swarming with gunners after rail birds. There were plenty of reed birds, too, but they were "too hard work" and so were less sought after. It was noted that some of the gunners got peppered with shot, as well..."and some get shot with their pocket pistols, which causes such a reaction of weakness that they have to be led home."

A year later the summer was very hot and dry--the birds were half starved, and the columnist wrote scathingly about gunners who shot them. A milk and butter famine was predicted if no relief came soon, as the pastures (in Riverton, and elsewhere) were brown and dry. A builder digging a cellar found the earth dry to a depth of 7 ft.

Doctors were kept busy: smallpox was less, but malarial and other fevers were unusually prevalent. A doctor in Palmyra was said to make 50 calls in one day...

There were complaints.....about those who abused the Sabbath by gunning on Sunday; of a cigar store that stayed open to accommodate the hunters; of those who rowed across the river to Tacony for beer and sometimes returned "quite drunk." (One such was said to have fallen on his face in the mud as he got out of the boat, to the obvious satisfaction of the writer).

And about streetlights that didn't shed much light and were "dingy-looking affairs." The writer said "...but we think the fault lies as much with those whose duty it was to take care of them, as it was the lamps. We could not expect much light from those that are not properly cleaned and trimmed, no matter how good the lamps may be." Both lamps and lamplighter were replaced, and lighting improved. (Have you noticed the dirty globes of our lovely old gas lamps today, a hundred years later? Our "lamplighter" is "Public Service".....)

And teachers....their pay was often late in starting even though their jobs began around September 1st. It seems monthly reports had to be sent to the superintendent before payment was approved, and some months the approval was slow to come back. Often the first payment was not until December, and the explanation (Riverton's Board) was that there was no money for salaries until after taxes were collected--in November.

And taxes...a homeowner's house and lot were sold for delinquent taxes; unpaid, for the year 1879, were taxes totalling \$3.60.

The State Fair occupied many columns in the papers. Mt. Holly Herald's Oct. 2 issue noted "The Lippincott family tree has been remodelled, perfected, and artistically engraved and handsomely colored and mounted. The production of it has been attended with great expense. All the Lippincotts in America are displayed in their appropriate places and in such a manner that the (record) is complete back to 1639, the date of the family's first appearance in America. It will be on exhibition at the Fair, where copies can be procured, or at any time of Charles Lippincott, Cinna-minson N.J."

1880 was an election year, and partisanship was fervant at all levels. The Republicans were divided into 2 factions, Half-Breeds and Stalwarts. It took 36 ballots to compromise on candidates James A. Garfield, who leaned toward the former, and Chester Arthur, a Stalwart.

The Democrats chose Winfield Scott Hancock, with less bickering.

Columnists did not hesitate to express individual feelings when they wrote their news items...the writer's delight when rain postponed a parade in Riverton was apparent, as it was again the next week when he wrote "a citizen nearly burnt his house down in his zeal to illuminate the Republican parade on Friday...a kerosene oil lamp in one of the front rooms exploded and set fire to furniture and carpet. The flames were extinguished with difficulty."

On November 6, 1880, the Herald reported:

Garfield Elected!
NEW JERSEY STANDS FIRM

The report said Garfield had won by a majority of 57 votes in the Electoral College even though "Hancock has a majority of about 100,000 in the popular vote." It praised New Jersey for voting soundly Democrat. When the final votes were in, the popular vote showed a plurality of about 40,000 for Garfield.

Garfield was not to serve for long, however. In July of 1881 he was shot by a self-proclaimed Stalwart who was frustrated over not receiving an appointment he wanted. Garfield died in September, and Chester Arthur became the 21st president. The assassin was hanged in 1882.

During Arthur's term of office there were 38 states, with a population of more than 51 million people. The Brooklyn Bridge was completed during that period, and various reforms were enacted concerning succession of office, Civil Service, and Post Offices.

Locally, Josiah Pancoast offered choice sheep of imported stock for sale; new houses were being built on Main St and Thomas Ave; William Morgan laid out 10 acres of land for building lots, opposite the station and near the public school and the church. Palmyra had been growing during the past 3 yrs, and would soon surpass Riverton in population. Grocery ads offered cranberries at 8¢ qt., sugar 10¢ lb; coffee 20 to 25¢ lb., English Breakfast Tea 65¢ lb., hams 12¢ lb., and raisens, 12¢ lb. Also available were 3 qt. coffee pots at 25¢ and superior wash boilers at \$1.10.

Wanamaker's, in Philadelphia, had opened in 1876, and had just expanded. Half-page ads showed the new floor plan, covering 2½ acres of space. The Market St. side was mostly men's and boys' clothing, with a smaller section for boots and shoes, and china, crockery and glass along the west side. The Chestnut St. section was the focal point, with a cashier in the center, surrounded by 3 rings of counters offering gloves, fringes, shawls, fans, muslin underwear, dress goods, etc., and other counters arranged along the walls. There was also a fountain to the right of the circle of counters.

(Above material obtained from "Riverton" or other columns in Mt. Holly Herald, Sept-Oct-Nov, 1880 and 1881, unless otherwise noted) (BBH, ed)

SAVE THIS SECTION FOR REFERENCE:

MEETING DATES: October 13 December 1 January 12 (1981) March 9
May 11 (Annual Meeting; election of officers)
meetings 8 p.m. Riverton School Music Room, notices local papers.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON:

(term ends: May 1981) Ruth Schmierer, Nell Layton (treas), EllaMay Moore (sec). Louise Vaughn.

May 1982) Nancy Hall, Betty Hahle (pres), John Parry, Harold Zayotti (Vpres).

May 1983) William Baxter, Joan Hartmann (curator), Lenore Probsting, Alice Myers.

CLIP ON LINE BELOW AND MAIL OR BRING IN: 1980/81 MEMBERSHIPS NOW DUE \$2.00 per person (65)
\$1.00 sr citizen yrs

Mrs. Ellen Layton, Treasurer
Historical Society of Riverton
630 Linden Ave., Riverton N.J. 08077

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ (zip) _____

date _____ sr. citizen? _____ total paid _____

Renew your membership now.....and bring in a NEW member.....

1847 definition of politics: "A national humming top, which spins least when it hums the most."