



*With all that is going on now, we especially appreciate those able to support the Society.*

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*Two advantages of eliminating our print edition*

- Saves printing costs
- no limit on the number of pages

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## Riverton resident Ed Gilmore reflects on a life of community involvement



A family celebration marked Ed Gilmore's 90th birthday Sept. 19, 2020 PHOTO: Ned Gilmore

The Historical Society of Riverton congratulates HSR Emeritus Board Member **John Edward Gilmore** on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday. Recently, a few HSR members had the opportunity to meet with longtime Riverton resident, Ed Gilmore in his charming Main Street home where he shared photos and memorabilia from his personal scrapbook.

Ed has fond memories of his contented childhood growing up in Palmyra, NJ, which was then brimming with vibrant businesses.

He reminisced about the antics of his Palmyra

High School buddies, ice cream sodas at McAllister's, the senior trip to Washington,

DC, earning a varsity letter in basketball, and enjoying all the pleasures of small town living.

After serving in the Korean War, Ed married and moved to Riverton where he soon became involved in town activities.

He served on the Riverton School Board for seven years where he helped to oversee the 1974 building additions. He served as chairman of the 4th of July Committee and was a member of the BurlCo YMCA Board; he presided over the Lions Club. He became an active member of the HSR during its formative years and in 2014, the Society later designated Mr. Gilmore an Emeritus Board Member.

As a two term Borough Council Member, he was involved with enacting many town improvements and positive changes.

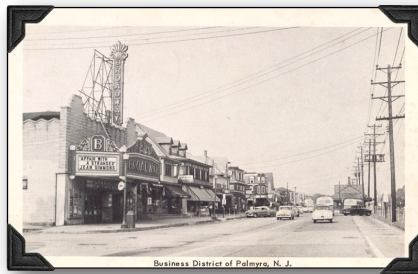
Perhaps Ed's greatest civic achievement was the crucial part that he played in enacting a major change to downtown Riverton.

The intersection of Broad and Main Street presented an unsightly and dangerous traffic situation to pedestrians and motorists and the plan was to do away with a right hand turn.

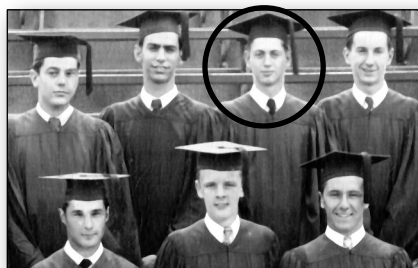
Ed had a vision born from his many visits to quaint Victorian towns in the South. He made a sketch on cardboard from dry cleaner shirts showing a gazebo and gas lights and gave it to the Borough Engineer. Ed calculated the size



Palmyra High School Varsity Basketball 1949 PHOTO: Ed Gilmore ([click here for full class photo](#))



Palmyra Business District, c1953, IMAGE CREDIT postcard scan courtesy of Wm Downs



PHS Class of 1949 detail, PHOTO: Ed Gilmore ([click here for full class photo](#))

See **GILMORE** on 5

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Reverend Anna Howard Shaw  
PHOTO CREDIT: [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Howard_Shaw)



Helen Lippincott, 1892  
PHOTO CREDIT: Mrs. Nancy Hall



Alice Paul, 1910  
PHOTO CREDIT: [alicepaul.org](http://alicepaul.org)

The National Women's  
Party—organized by Alice  
Paul and Lucy Burns—  
adopted a color scheme of  
purple, white,  
and gold, signi-  
fying loyalty,  
purity and hope.



# Porch Club observes 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of passage of 19th Amendment to the Constitution

Charter members took an active leadership role in the movement

[The Porch Club](#), from its inception in 1890, has been involved in the rights of women to hold an equal and significant place in society. The Suffrage Movement was no exception. Many suffragists came from Riverton. The town had a large Quaker population and there were close ties between the Quakers and the Suffrage Movement.

In February of 1904, upon the request of several Porch Club members including **Miss Helen Lippincott** (one of the eight Charter Members in 1890), a Suffrage Section was formed in the Club. Helen Lippincott was elected Chairman of the Suffrage Section and many of the Club's members joined her.

In February of 1907, a Porch Club Suffrage Section meeting attended by over 100 people was held at Helen Lippincott's home at 107 Lippincott Avenue. The guest of honor was the **Reverend Anna Shaw**, President of the National Woman Suffrage Association from 1904 to 1915.

Anna Shaw lived in Media, PA, was a physician and one of the first ordained female Methodist ministers in the United States. She addressed the crowd in Riverton and in a later speech, was famously quoted as saying, "The only way to refute" the argument that America was a democracy and therefore women were entitled to vote was "to prove that women are not people." She has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Noted suffragist **Alice Paul** was a member of the National Woman Suffrage Association, but disagreed with Anna Shaw on the use of militant tactics to gain the vote. The association between Riverton women and Alice Paul is strong. Alice Paul came from neighboring Moorestown, was related to the Parry Family of Riverton, and was an active Quaker at Westfield Friends Meeting along with many other Riverton women - past and present.



In suffrage colors, Pat Brunker addresses a socially distant group at the home of Phyllis Rodgers on Women's Equality Day, Aug. 26, 2020  
PHOTO CREDIT: Susan Dechnik

The Suffrage Section of the Porch Club was affiliated with the New Jersey Woman's Suffrage Association and within that organization was known as the Riverton Suffrage League.

Helen Lippincott was treasurer of the NJ Woman's Suffrage Association from 1893 until 1900, attended both the State and National Conventions in 1912, joined the organization's board as second vice-president in 1913 and was made a member of the executive committee in 1914. The Association grew rapidly when Helen Lippincott was an active member - from 2,200 in 1912 to more than 6,000 a year later.

In August of 2013, Helen Lippincott took part in a demonstration in Washington, arranged by the National Congressional Committee, at which petitions were presented to the Senate asking for the immediate submission of the Federal Suffrage Amendment. She was one of 12 delegates from the United States listed in the program for the eighth congress of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, an assemblage of women from 31 countries who met in Geneva in June of 1920. **Carrie Chapman Catt** and Anna Howard Shaw also represented the United States.

In 1915, the Riverton Suffrage League offered the pupils of Palmyra High School cash prizes for the three best essays on Equal Suffrage. Later that year, the Riverton League entertained seventy guests at a four o'clock tea at the Porch Club. **Mary VanMeter Grice** (first Porch Club, NJ PTA President, and member of Alice Paul's Advisory Board), **Elizabeth Powell Bond** (first Dean of Women at Swarthmore College), and **Dr. Earl Barnes** (active in the Home and School League in Philadelphia) spoke in favor of a resolution petitioning the United State Congress for the immediate enfranchisement of women.

The resolution was passed and forwarded to Washington with dozens of others from New Jersey, to be presented to Congress on the 9th of May with those from all the other States in the Union. The company then marched under yellow pennants to the corner of Howard and Main Streets where the first open-air meeting of the League was held. Dr. Barnes again addressed an interested audience, and the cash prizes for the suffrage essays were awarded.

- PAT BRUNKER, PORCH CLUB HISTORIAN





# Remaining social during a pandemic

We usually think of researching the history of a house as a solitary activity, whether turning pages in old books from stack storage or, today, staring at a screen and clicking through endless digital images, following clues. The ultimate in social distancing, right?

But great opportunities to meet new people turn up, often with the chance to help each other in our present-day quests. And, of course, we sometimes “meet” people who have long-since passed on when we turn up poignant stories which help bring them colorfully back to life for a little bit.

## Old Riverton Families Today

You may know from our previous blog entry on [rivertonhistory.com](http://rivertonhistory.com) that we’ve been helping find a new owner for the **Alfred Earnshaw** house, the amazing ca. 1880 mansion at 106 Lippincott Ave. whose design is attributed to celebrity architect **Frank Furness**.

(We are told, by the way, that the house is now under contract, though with contingencies, so we’re keeping all fingers crossed.)

In the process of researching its history, we turned up third-generation members of the Earnshaw family, folks who had no idea that the house of their great-grandparents even existed, let alone that it was an eye-popping design of Philadelphia’s trendy architect of the 19th Century... let alone that it is for sale and they could get to see the inside!

Seems unlikely, doesn’t it, finding descendants of folks who sold the house 128 years ago? Well, here’s how we found these present-day cousins.



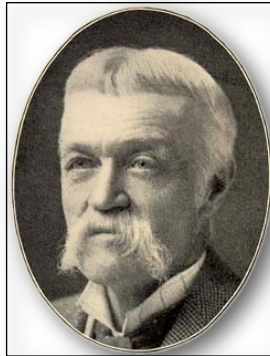
Alice Rebecca Strange Earnshaw,  
Collection of Dallas McWilliams

Everyone always wants to have pictures of the main characters in these history dramas. Usually it’s easier to find photos of the men from that era (captains of industry, and all that), but none seem to exist for Alfred Earnshaw. However, a family tree on Ancestry had a photo of his wife, **Alice Rebecca Strange Earnshaw**.

Ancestry.com makes it easy to send messages to other Ancestry users, so we sent a polite message to the owner of that family tree, introducing the Historical Society



Former Alfred Earnshaw House  
106 Lippincott Ave., Aug. 2020  
PHOTO: Roger Prichard



Frank Furness PHOTO: Moses King -  
Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphia  
ans, 1901

of Riverton and asking if she might have a photo of Alfred she could share with us – and why we wanted it.

You never know whether a shot-in-the-dark like this will get a response, but the owner of the tree replied right away. While she didn’t have the picture we had hoped for, she is a delightful – and helpful – person who shared what she knew. Susan B. Strange turned out to be the great-granddaughter of the brother of Alfred’s aforementioned wife, Alice Rebecca Strange.

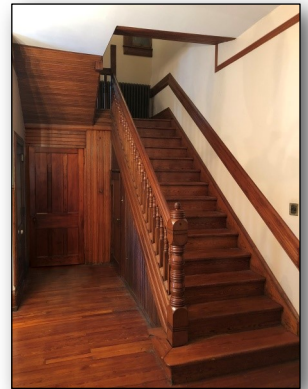
Susan kindly put us in contact with her third-cousins, **Dallas Kinley McWilliams** and her brother **Joel Earnshaw Kinley**, great-grandchildren of the first owners of the house.

We’ve had a fine correspondence!

Among them, they generously shared several pictures of family members who were born in the house.

In one of many emails we mentioned that we had the chance to take a lot of photos of the interior. Susan, who lives in Maryland, jumped at the idea and suggested that we all get together – socially distanced, of course – so the cousins could see it in person and see each other for the first time in exactly 30 years. The only answer to that is “absolutely!”

And so we had a wonderful, personal visit in early September, meeting each other and sharing what we knew about the various members of the family. Joel and Dallas got to experience the home where their



Stairway with original woodwork  
PHOTO: Roger Prichard

grandmother was born (in 1883!) and we all had a fine lunch on that grand porch, with Philly cheesesteaks from Milanese Pizza.

What a day. In a year when you have to be creative to make any social contacts work, this solitary hobby of historic house research produced a fine and gratifyingly human day to be remembered for a long time.



Ellen Dallas Kinley McWilliams, Joel Earnshaw Kinley, Susan B. Strange and husband Pat Parkinson  
PHOTO: Roger Prichard

## Bringing Alfred Earnshaw to Life

Sometimes we can also piece together parts of lives from long ago and feel a bit of their humanity today.

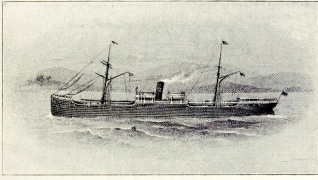
Alfred and Alice finished this house in 1881 when he was 37 and Alice was just 31. They were obviously already

See **EARNshaw** on 4

## EARNSHAW from 3

wealthy at young ages. Alfred ran a successful iron-importing business and within five years would found his

### THE EARN LINE STEAMSHIP COMPANY



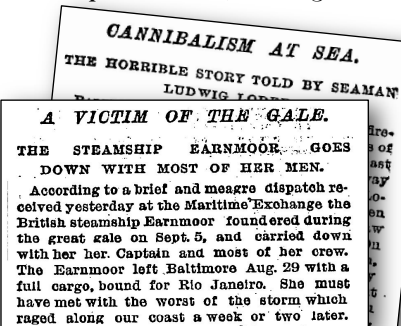
S. S. EARNWELL, PRINCE STEAMER OF THE EARN LINE.

*S.S. Earnwell* 1895 from *Hand Book of Lower Delaware*

was unluckily named the *S.S. Earnmoor*.

The *Earnmoor* didn't earn more, in fact it met with bad fortune from the start. In January of 1889, less than two years old, it struck a rock in the Delaware River above Wilmington and began to sink rapidly. It was heavily laden with 2,600 tons of coal and saved only by the quick-thinking captain running it aground in the soft mud along shore.

It was repaired but only had another nine months to live, caught in a September hurricane and sunk about 250 miles north of Puerto Rico. Only a few of her crew of 24 survived in an open lifeboat, drifting for 21 days in the Gulf Stream.



*New York Times*, [Oct 4](#) and [Oct 26](#), 1889

of October 26, 1889.

Neither the loss of the ship (insured, evidently) nor the notoriety of cannibalism seems to have had ill effect on the Earnshaws' lives, but that year was unhappy nevertheless. Alfred's namesake son Alfred Jr. died in April of that year, probably in this house, at just 10 years of age.

Alfred seems to have had many friends and was well-liked. He was a member of quite a few Philadelphia social clubs, including the Art Club, Merion Cricket Club and Philadelphia Whist Club. (There was a "Whist Club" - and they even had their own suite of club rooms in Philadelphia!)

But there was one final twist for poor Alfred. He, Alice and their three remaining children stayed in this house only

own shipping company with his brother.

The Earn Line Steamship Co. started with a pair of brand new steamships, built for them by Palmers Co. in Newcastle upon Tyne, England in 1886 and 1887. The second

#### SUNK AT EDGE MOOR.

**The British Steamer Earnmoor Struck a Rock in the Delaware.**

The Philadelphia Record of to-day says: The Earn Line steamship Earnmoor, which left this port on Thursday afternoon with a cargo of coal for St. Thomas, West Indies, got out of her course and ran upon a rock in the Delaware river,

*The Evening Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), [Jan. 12, 1889, p49](#)

After their miraculous rescue, some of the survivors raised the Earnshaw drama to a higher level, alleging that their survival was only made possible by cannibalism after some fellow crew died, according to the *New York Times*

another three years, moving in 1892 to Center City to a beautiful house at [1720 Spruce Street](#). They also bought a mansion in Chestnut Hill, for a little escape from the hot summers. Alfred's obituaries relate that the family was there July 24, 1896 when he was felled by a stroke after a short bicycle ride that evening. He was only 51 years old.

Earnshaw family lore deepens the tragedy with the poignant detail that he had borrowed the bicycle from 14-year old daughter Elsie and then dropped to the ground just as he was giving it back to her.

Alfred's wife Alice never remarried and lived another half-century.

Young Elsie's life had more trials after losing her father when she was 14. She married at 27, then five years later was badly injured in a horrific railway accident. She survived but she and her husband had no children until she was 39, when she bore their only child, a girl, who died at birth. Not long after, she contracted breast cancer and died at age 46.

Fortunately, all was not gloom. Alfred and Alice's other daughter Ethel (grandmother of Riverton's new friends Dallas and Joel) was long-lived, passing on in 1975 at the age of 91.

The remaining sibling, Geoffrey, was also born in this house. Three months after the U.S. joined WWI, he enlisted though he was newly married and had an infant daughter. He served in Europe in an ambulance brigade. Afterward he became an advertising executive in New York City and died at 61.

The steamship company, by the way, was taken over by Alfred's partner, his brother George, who purchased more ships. George sold their very first ship the *S.S. Earnwell* (the one of the pair that didn't sink in the Gulf Stream) some years later. Renamed the *S.S. Leelanaw*, it became one of the first two American-flag ships to be sunk by German U-boats, taken off Scotland on July 26, 1915.

And now we know a whole family. That's how history goes, sometimes. Dry facts can sneak up on you, names and dates on a screen transform vividly into real people with real joys and real sorrows.

- ROGER PRICHARD



### ALFRED EARNSHAW DEAD

**The President of the Earn Line Steamship Company Dies Suddenly From the Bursting of a Blood Vessel.**

Alfred Earnshaw, president of the Earn Line Steamship Company, died suddenly at his summer home, the Lorenz Mansion, on Summit Avenue, Chestnut Hill, last evening. Just after dinner he left the house on his bicycle, and returned about 9 o'clock. As he was about to dismount in front of the porch, he reeled, and after crying to those on the porch to help him fell to the ground. He was carried into the house and a physician summoned, but he died soon after the arrival of the latter. His death is attributed to the bursting of a blood vessel.

*The Times* (Phila.), [July 25, 1896, p2](#)



## GILMORE from 5



Gazebo, Oct. 2020 PHOTO: JMc

of the gazebo, and picked out the components for the custom structure that the Palmyra-Riverton-Cinnaminson Lions Club donated.

The concept was presented to council; the plan took five more years to win State approval. Mr. Gilmore oversaw the project. According to Borough Council Minutes, he procured a \$60,000 Centers of Place Grant from River LINE NJ Transit to replant

the areas where trees had to be removed to accommodate the train station.

Gilmore, along with the council members, also procured the Broad Street Enhancement Grant for more than \$300,000 to beautify the downtown area.

The project transformed a once unsightly into a centerpiece befitting our beautiful Victorian village. The grant paid for the greenery, but nearly 30 volunteers and **Smythe Landscaping** planted the trees and bushes in the summer of 2006.

The addition of brick sidewalks, trees, flower planters, antique clock, gaslamps, benches and gazebo made Ed's dream a reality and we wholeheartedly thank him for his

vision and perseverance.

The effort earned Riverton a Suburban Greening Award in 2006 from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in Philadelphia for its tireless efforts to maintain the area surrounding the River LINE station.



Broad &amp; Main Sts., Oct. 2020 PHOTO: JMc

In 2006, on behalf of the governing body, President of Council, **Robert K. Smyth** recognized J. Edward Gilmore for his years of service to the Borough.

In addition to being a valued HSR Board member, Ed has donated many items to our archives, including out-of-print newspapers, school blueprints and records, photos, vintage postcards, collectibles, and local advertising merchandise. Our collection is much richer as a result. Few among us can point to so many tangible examples of a legacy of community involvement and service.

- PHYLLIS RODGERS



## Ed Gilmore's donations have enriched our archive

Click on links to see representative examples of Ed Gilmore's donations.

Ed Gilmore donated 16 out-of-print local newspapers from the 1930s through the 1960s to our archive. See full issues online [here](#).

Rare undated July 4th photos [1](#) & [2](#)



[PHS Class of 1949 trip to Mt. Vernon](#)

[Porch Club c1915](#)



[riverbank c1908](#)



[early post office](#)



[Riverton football team](#)

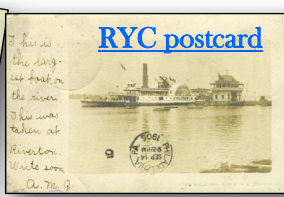


[PHS, Wash. DC, 1921](#)



[biplane in Delaware near RYC](#)

[bicycle track](#)



[RYC postcard](#)



[first school 1822](#)

*and much, much more!*