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May 2021

Gaslight News

Historical Society of Riverton

vol. LI, no. 1 (#186)

Founded 1970

Riverton, NJ 08077

Incorporated 1978

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON Constitution Article II - Purpose

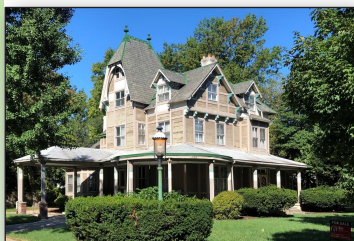
The purpose of the Society shall be to bring together those people who are interested in history and especially the history of the Borough of Riverton, but not limited thereto. The Society's major function will be to create an awareness of our heritage, to discover, restore, and preserve local objects and landmarks, and to continue to expand our knowledge of the history of the area.

Hot real estate market puts decaying homes at risk by speculators

The research by HSR members Roger Prichard and Keith Betten reveals the history of homes in the Historic District and their former owners to help attract buyers

Well-maintained Riverton homes often command premium prices, but a neglected one can be a candidate for demolition. Here, we try to match a home needing some TLC with a buyer looking for a home to rescue.

The Society has taken positive steps to educate the public about the heritage of some homes and engage with involved parties.



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

Our readers may recall our website campaign last September to find a new owner for the [Alfred Earnshaw house](#), the marvelous

c1880 mansion at 106 Lippincott Avenue, a design attributed to Victorian Era architect Frank H. Furness. (See [GN Oct 2020](#)).

We're happy to report that a new buyer is now renovating that historic home. It's a huge undertaking but it's not their first restoration, so

bravo to them! It will be a stunner.

Commencing with our recent [April web post](#), the HSR is helping to find a caring homebuyer to tackle the renovation of a badly neglected Edwardian home on the National Register of Historic Places.



Frederick S. Groves Mansion
411 Lippincott Ave., March 2021
PHOTO: Roger Prichard

At \$174,900, the home at 411 Lippincott Avenue built for steamboat shipping magnate Frederick Stanley Groves, Sr. by Philadelphia Architect Frank T. Mercer presents a rare restoration opportunity for someone with serious renovation experience.

The seller is working diligently to find a buyer with a track record of renovating homes and we have provided some solid research into the fascinating family that built the house, so a buyer will realize that no old house is just a building - every one comes with the rich history of many lives lived there. - ROGER PRICHARD & JMC



Restoration & preservation projects ensure a legacy remains for future generations to enjoy

Our Work List: Scan the 1890 bird's-eye view of Riverton, capture higher-resolution video from the 1926 Romance of Riverton movie, & hi-res scanning of vintage glass negatives

Our familiar meetings and presentations on historical topics may have been disrupted by COVID-19, but Historical Society of Riverton Board Members have been occupied during this unanticipated hiatus with several projects worthy of the expense of your dues dollars in pursuit of our organization's mission objectives.

Some will remember that Riverton Free Library used to sell copies of this 1890 Bird's-

Eye View of Riverton years ago and some still hang in area homes. We now have a super-high-resolution scan



See **PROJECTS** on 2

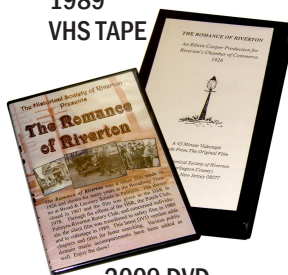
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Nearly 500 posts and over 8,500 media items are on display on rivertonhistory.com to help illuminate Riverton's past and preserve its amazing history.

Please add your voice to the conversation and help our collection grow.

1989
VHS TAPE



2009 DVD



DVD screenshot

There are 45,043 individual TIFF files in the *Romance of Riverton* folder, one for each frame. Total of 773GB of data!

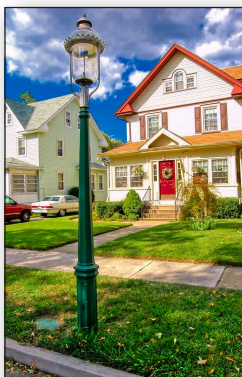


PROJECTS from 1

of it that will let us sell copies to the public again! More information will be forthcoming once we organize this effort.

Restoration and preservation projects have always been our brand since the activism of HSR members in the late 1970s helped save the 52 gaslamps that PSE&G had earmarked for removal.

A handsome example of an original gaslamp post refinished by homeowner, Mr. Harry Richman, Sept 2007, PHOTO: JMc



In another project, a collaboration of the HSR, the Porch Club, Palmyra-Riverton Rotary Club, and concerned individuals resulted in transferring to 16mm safety film the 1926 silent film *Romance of Riverton* in 1979.

In 1989, the Society produced and sold a VHS videotape of the film and a later transfer to DVD in 2009 added a soundtrack with sound

effects and various public domain music accompaniments.

That comparatively low-resolution (by today's standards) copy was the best that we could do at the time.

We recently commissioned from a highly-respected lab a newly-digitized video of the archival negative.



newly-digitized frame 26979

We have not yet determined by what method we can make this higher quality video available for viewing.

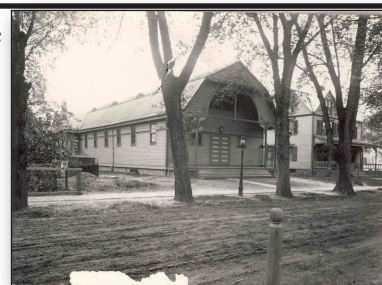
The March 1976 Gaslight News issue mentions another early preservation project first undertaken by HSR member **Richard Gaughan**.

The Society has an amazing collection of negatives from c1907-1910, with very sharp imagery on 5" x 7" glass. Richard made slides and prints of them for us.

Thank you, Richard! We have used them many times over since, in this newsletter and

on our website to illustrate old Riverton.

Modern scanning equipment can now capture an even greater amount of astonishing detail. The Society has committed the funds and hired the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia to make super-high-resolution digital copies and also re-house the fragile glass negatives in archival materials to keep them safe.



Lyceum Hall, 4th & Main, photo from glass plate by Richard Gaughan, 1976

We look forward to soon sharing what has been hidden in those images for over a century!

Probably the most tedious job is the task of taking inventory of items in our archival collection, creating an organizing scheme, cataloging the items, and safely storing them according to best archival practices.

Many hands continue to make slow but steady progress in organizing the artifacts in the Historical Society's collection into useable record groups, and subgroups, arranged in labeled acid-free files, stored in labeled archival storage boxes, in designated locations on specific shelves on the recently assembled racks in our storage space kindly provided by Riverton Free Library. Finding aids have been prepared for all of the shelved materials.



Many rare items comprise this irreplaceable collection. PHOTO: JMc

There are approximately 150 items of clothing, most from the late 1800s and early 1900s.

They include dresses, suits, capes and jackets, hats, purses, gloves, children's and baby clothes, eyeglasses, and shoes.

What lovely things, lovingly made by hand long ago!



Softlines Dept. PHOTO: JMc

CONTINUED →

The highlight of the collection is [Hannah McIlvain Biddle's wedding dress](#) from 1868. There are also books, loving cups, glass bottles, oil lamps, and other antique objects.

Without a clubhouse of our own in which to *actually* display the items, the goal of all this is to eventually *virtually* display more of the collection online.

Since we streamlined the [House Plaque application process](#) a number of the new designs of historical tablets have been installed on the following homes:

- 106 Lippincott Ave.
"Earnshaw House," 1880,
owned by **Jamie & Virgy Centeno**
- 401 Main Street, 1858, owned by **Iris & Richard Gaughan**
- 303 8th Steet, "Welsh Cooper" Residence, 1919,
owned by **Roy & Suzanne Vollmer**
- 402 Linden Ave., 1910, owned by **Eileen & Joe Della Penna**



PHOTO: Bill McDermott

We are pleased to welcome the following new members: **Mark & Lorraine Timlin, Megan & Chris Lawler, Anthony & Laurie Janiszewski, Bridgette Endicott Veasy, Martin Hain, Janice Armstrong, Kim Custer**

Thanks to everyone who has renewed their membership for the 2021 calendar year! Of our 148 member households, 97 have paid thus far, and many gave more than their \$25 dues payment. As of May 14, members have contributed \$2,625 in *additional* donations.

Thanks to the following for their extra support this year: **Keith & Memo Betten, C. Miller & Joan Biddle, Amanda & Bob Boulton, Suzanne Cairns Wells, Steve & Nedra Cawley, Jeff Chambers, Carl Colozzi, Lance Comas, Joann & Edward Costigan, Michele & Joseph Daniel, Janey & Denis DeVries, Tom & Ashling Ehrhardt, Faith Endicott, Eileen Gilbert, Jeanne Giles, Paul Grena, James Griffin, Henry Parrish Hackett, Helen Hughes, Michael & Mary Kate Kearney, Eleanor Paladino, Barbara & John Palko, Mary Pat Peters, William C. Probsting, Phyllis & Bryan Rodgers, Carlos & Adrienne Rogers, Paul Schopp, Pat & Barry Solin, Michael Spinelli, Dorothy Talavera, Mark & Amy Thomas, Richard Winans Jr., Mark & Lorraine Timlin, Lynn Johnson**

Gerald Blaney, a previous donor ([GN #185](#)), has just contributed a framed 1920s aerial photo and an 1860 map of this area.

For now, there are no HSR meetings scheduled. For the latest announcements please go to rivertonhistory.com and our [Facebook page](#).



PHOTOS: JMc

CONTRIBUTED BY
**KEITH BETTEN, PAT BRUNKER, HEATHER HUFFNAGLE,
BILL McDERMOTT, ROGER PRICHARD, JMc**



Two Self-Guided Riverton Walking Tours available

THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN A POST ON RIVERTONHISTORY.COM

Back in 1981, **Lenore Probsting** provided the hand-drawn illustrations to accompany **Louise Vaughn's** and **Betty Hahle's** text for the first Walking Tour of Historic Riverton. They revised it in 1989.

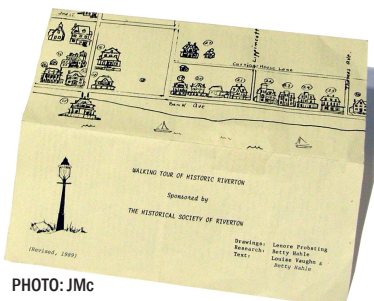


PHOTO: JMc

The informative and no-nonsense double-sided leaflet guided hundreds of visitors and residents for over thirty years in their exploration of the history and architecture of our village. ([See the entire printable copy here.](#))

The HSR shall be forever grateful for the pioneering historical research of Riverton and the preservation efforts of those early members of our organization.

In 2012, the Society made available the first of two new Riverton Walking Tours. The idea was to make two individual loop routes that added together would total more than the original 27 stops.

The first one covered 17 stops on a route that started at Broad and Main, went toward the river along Main to Third Street, turned right to Howard, and finished back where it started.

The intention was to produce a second Riverton Walking Tour that would go along Bank Avenue, circle back along Carriage House Lane to Penn Street, to Third, and finally along Main back to Bank Avenue.

To say that we got stalled is an understatement.



Walking Tour #1, 2012
PHOTO: JMc

See **WALKING TOURS** on 4

WALKING TOURS from 3

Nine years later we can offer two Riverton Walking Tours comprised of 17 and 24 stops respectively. Together they encompass an area from Broad Street to the Delaware River.

Folks can now view each Riverton Walking Tour online, download printable copies, or pick up one of a limited number of hard copies

Shall we, my dear?

- JMc



The things we find when we organize...

Former RPS Librarian **Mrs. Pat Solin** actually relished the job of delving into the Library's catacombs to inventory items. So it was with a certain glee that she sent us a hi-resolution scan of an undated and uncaptioned photo that she found.



While a group email among Board Members awaited a consensus about its origin and date this Editor was motivated to post it along with a number of other vintage and modern views of our favorite library.

See them all [here](#).

- JMc



PHOTO: JMc

available at [Riverton Free Library](#), [Tillie's Trinkets & Treasures](#), and [Nellie Bly's Olde Tyme Ice Cream Parlour](#) for a \$1 donation.

[Riverton Walking Tour #1](#)
-download printable 3.24MB PDF

[Riverton Walking Tour #2](#)
- download printable 2.46MB PDF

Help make our HSR website at <http://rivertonhistory.com/> grow with YOUR comments, recollections, and contributions. Check in for info on upcoming events, past issues of *Gaslight News*, vintage images, a veterans' page, artists' page, our blog, and more.

Gaslight News

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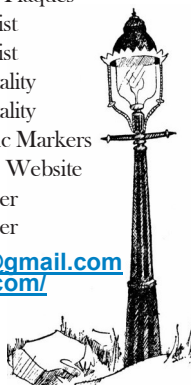
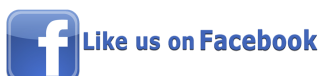
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

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Fun Fact. Google "Riverton, NJ" and one finds on Wikipedia, among other things, a sadly deficient list of Notable People and the following notorious designation:

In 1916, Japanese beetles, now a widespread insect pest in the United States, were first discovered in a nursery near Riverton.

We might as well [own it](#).



Impress your friends with your newfound knowledge of this pest's origin at [Dreer's Nursery](#).

We introduced the idea for a [tribute page to local artists](#) in an article in the [May 2020 Gaslight News](#). The page lists the names of 16 local artists, past and present. Clicking on a name displays an article with a brief bio and examples of their work. Help us recognize more local artists.

Riverton Free Library by
Richard C. Moore



Please go to our [Contact & Membership Information](#) page and note our website link for a [membership form](#) if you wish to mail a check for your 2021 membership dues.

To use PayPal, kindly click on the PayPal icon on the lower left side of our webpage. When prompted, enter the dollar amount. You will receive confirmation of your payment. Please use the contact form there to inform us of your membership payment or donation.