



Historical Society of Riverton, NJ

May 2022 Gaslight News #191



President's Message

This has been an exceptional year for the HSR Board and its members. The citizens of Riverton and we were united and concerned about the possible demolition of the Grove's Mansion, located 409-413 Lippincott Ave. Attendance was considerable for the Zoom meeting hearings conducted by the Planning Board, with four straight months of evidence and legal arguments presented on our behalf. Thanks to the Planning Board's decision not to demolish this beautiful historic home, we were successful. (See more details later in this issue.)

Also, the HSR had entered into an agreement with Arcadia Publishing Company to prepare a book titled "Images of America – Riverton." Congratulations to **Faith Endicott**, **Roger Prichard**, and **John McCormick** for their hard work and efforts. What an impressive achievement! When they submitted the completed draft, the publisher called Faith to tell her that it was the best one they had ever produced.

HSR Board member and Borough Historian **Roger Prichard** has completed the research and layout for another splendid historical marker for a cherished Riverton land-

mark that will be installed later this summer.

If you find the articles, images, and historic hometown newspaper archive on our website of value to you, if you support our efforts to research and promote local history, please consider this an invitation to partner with us in our efforts with your membership or a cash donation.

Warm regards,
William C. Brown Jr
President, Historical Society of Riverton

Spunky historic town bucks national “teardown” trend

At less than one square mile, Riverton is a small town known for its distinctive older homes, most of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Citizen volunteers from all walks of life take on many roles here. Twenty-five years ago, Riverton volunteers inventoried and researched all historic properties and successfully placed Riverton on the **National Register of Historic Places**. Riverton’s Planning Board consists of unpaid public officials and volunteers who are charged with balancing the public good with private rights and interests as they guide the orderly growth and development of the community. Historical Society of Riverton volunteers research and celebrate the historic structures and advocate for their preservation.

In this roaring real estate market, a developer targeted **Groves Mansion**, a historic residence on a large lot with mature trees, originally the home of the president of a steamboat company. He applied to the Planning Board to tear it down and squeeze in three new vinyl-clad houses on Riverton’s prettiest historic street.



This grand Edwardian home was built for the owner of the Baltimore and Philadelphia Steamboat Company.

It was an unusual test of Riverton’s strong Demolition Ordinance and this volunteer community’s resolve to protect and enhance it. The town has prevailed – for now.

The developer tried hard to demolish the mansion over four lengthy hearings but failed by a vote of six to three. Dozens of residents attended Zoom meetings, and many spoke passionately about the homes they had restored, believing that the historic area around them would be defended.

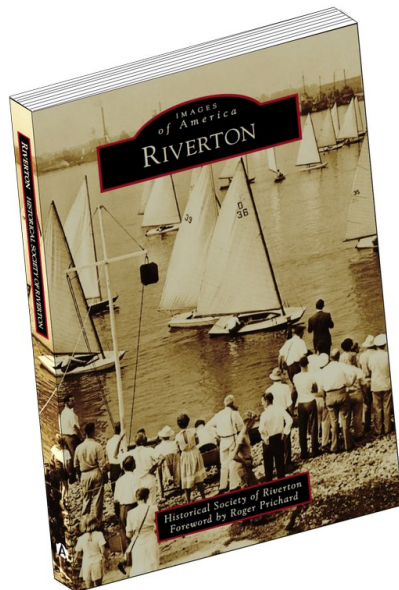
Ultimately, the developer could not prove what he needed to under the law. When pressed, he refused to make his engineer available to testify and even denied access to an independent engineer hired by the Historical Society to make a thorough, unbiased examination.

The developer bought the property even though it is not zoned for what he wanted. He took a business risk that he could get an exception to the historic protections. Not all business risks pay off.

This is one historic house teardown that didn't happen.

– Roger Prichard

Reflections on our Arcadia Images of America book cover image



How appropriate it is that our long-awaited Images of America book about Riverton will be on sale during Riverton's Glorious Fourth this year!

There are over a hundred vintages with illuminating captions, many seen by the public for the first time.

Consider the cover illustration showing the start of the very first Duster Nationals at Riverton Yacht Club that *The Philadelphia Inquirer* ran on Sunday, September 8, 1946.

the center of the pier?

See the snappy guy in the suit out in



He's a press photographer, probably from the Bulletin, since our photo is from the Inquirer.

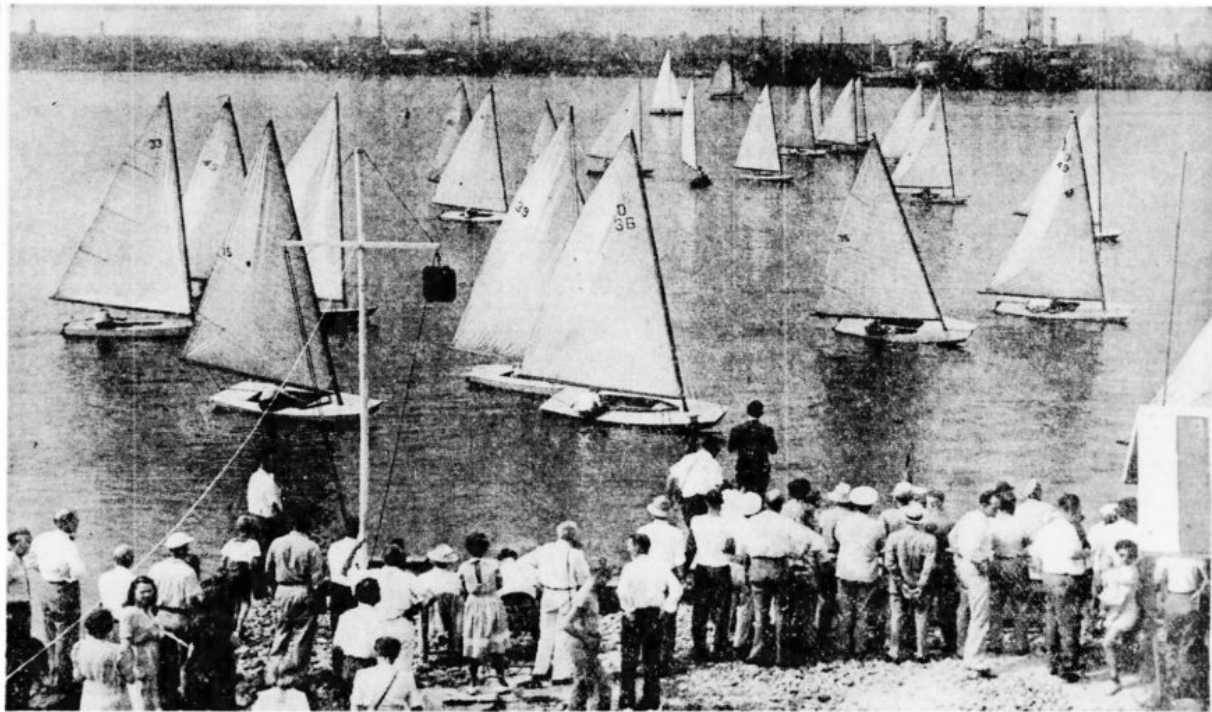
Here is a wonderful amateur shot of this dashing man taken by an unknown RYC member the same day.

I wish we knew his name. Don't you love it – two newspapers covering a sailboat race in Riverton. Our man has his classic Speed Graphic camera at the ready.



This is how the shot appeared in the Sunday sports section of the Inquirer:

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER. SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1946



DUSTERS OFF TO FAST START AT RIVERTON, N. J. WINNER GETS ADMIRAL WILLIAM F. HALSEY TROPHY

Thomson Wins In Riverton Race

Bobby Thomson, Riverton Yacht Club's 15-year-old skipper who piloted his duster sailboat Marsala to the Delaware River Yacht Racing Association championship last week, won the opening race of a three-event series for the Admiral William F. Halsey Trophy yesterday at Riverton, N. J.

Thomson covered the five-mile Riverton Yacht Club course in two hours, one minute, and 44 seconds. His closest competitor was Bobby Farrow, 18-year-old Palmyra (N. J.) High School senior, from the Spray Beach Yacht Club, who piloted the Duster No. 1.

Number three boat was the Grco Phoebe, Jr., piloted by Johnny Cherubini, Lakewood Canoe Club, whose time was two hours, 12 minutes, and 54 seconds.

1. Bobby Thomson, Marsala, Riverton Yacht Club; 2. Bobby Farrow, Duster No. 1, Spray Beach Yacht Club; 3. John Cherubini, Grco Phoebe, Jr., Lakewood Canoe Club; 4. Pete Rose, Limbo, Lakewood Canoe Club; 5. John Knight, Goodness, Riverton Yacht Club; 6. Carl Turner, Stardust, Cooper River Yacht Club; 7. Bob Cox, Interceptor, Cooper River Yacht Club; 8. Michael Crockett, Champion, Riverton Yacht Club; 9. J. Clifford Lashar, War Hawk, Lakewood Canoe Club; 10. Virginia Woodard, Gator, Riverton Yacht Club; 11. Jack Gault, War Hawk, Jr., Lakewood; 12. Knute Dunn, Cooper Riverton Yacht Club; 13. Bernard Cox, Skooter, Spray Beach Yacht Club; 14. Bob Lundstedt, Will-B, Riverton Yacht Club; 15. Gay Seeger, B-1, Riverton Yacht Club; 16. Wade Larimer, Rye and Rye, Dulles Yacht Club; 17. Philip Holman, Bluebird, Cooper River Yacht Club; 18. J. Prestwood, Harry, Cooper Yacht Club; 19. Thomas McGinty, J., No name, Red Dragon Canoe Club; 20. Don Leving, Gee Wee, Riverton Yacht Club; 21. John Neebe, Jay See, Riverton Yacht Club; 22. Bob Buchanan, Emile, Cooper River Yacht Club.

The Philadelphia Inquirer, 08 Sep 1946, p35

There is lots more going on in the crowd, and notice the group of ships across the river.



detail from photo published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* Sept. 8, 1946

They are ex-WWII vessels in a scrap line. They were cut into pieces right there on the river's edge at a scrapyard named Northern Metal.

Over the years, they cut up freighters, destroyer escorts, landing ships, and many other types of vessels. Later, a tanker built for the Navy for WWI arrived, but they didn't cut it up.

Instead, they made it into a pier by sinking it. It's still there, right across from RYC (the pier with the pointy end!). This was the 1917 **USS George G. Henry**. See her Wikipedia article under her later name, **USS Victoria**.



2016 Northern Metals pier aerial
Bing Maps

Because it was a bizarre operation, it was a major source of water pollution here, with all the residue of crankcase oil and fuel going right into the river.

Barb Smyth vividly remembers sailing Dusters as a kid and always wearing her oldest clothes because if you capsized, you'd have smears of tarballs on yourself that were impossible to get out.

And in that context, consider that some considered the **Clean Water Act of 1972** a controversial "overreach" by the government.

River pilots and tugboat captains still refer to this spot on the river as "Northern Metals" when communicating on the radio, even though that company went out of business as a scrap yard over 40 years ago (and its actual name was singular, "Northern Metal"). The current scrapyard that appeared in the last five or six years is unrelated to the old one.

Some RYC kids of that generation who are now well along in years yearningly recall rowing over there at night to see what they could "liberate" from the ships while the night watchman slept.

It was a different world.



1946-09-07 Duster Nationals start at RYC, by The Philadelphia Inquirer (ran in 1946-09-08 edition)

On July 4, 2022, our new 128-page Arcadia Images of America paperback book about Riverton will be available for \$23.99 in front of Riverton Free Library at 306 Main Street. Richly illustrated with captioned vintage postcards and photos from our archives, the volume is sure to become a cherished keepsake for all Rivertonians.

– Roger Prichard

Memorial service for Bill Probsting at the Porch Club of Riverton, 11:30-1:30, July 4, 2022

We understand from Bill's family that there will be a memorial service for him at the Porch Club on the Fourth of July. We reprint below our post from Oct. 9, 2021.

William C. Probsting, a valued member of the HSR Board, passed away at his home in Riverton on Monday, September 20, 2021. A life-long resident of Riverton, Bill Probsting lived in the house on Howard Street that has been in his family for three gen-

erations. Bill was headmaster of Westfield Friends School from 1974 to 2013. After his retirement, Bill continued to serve his community through membership on the board of the Riverton Historical Society and through involvement with other non-profit organizations in the area. Donations in his honor can be made to the Riverton Historical Society and to Westfield Friends School.

We will miss him.



Our annual Recognition Awards Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 19, 2022, at 7 PM in the Presbyterian Church meeting room.

Thank you



Early Bird, 519 Main Street

We sincerely thank **Nicole Rafter**, proprietor of The Early Bird, the new eatery at 519 Howard Street, for selling our exclusive historically themed mugs that display images from our extensive archive.

She promptly sold out all 16 mugs and ordered another 16.

Milanese Pizza previously occupied that location and waaaay before that, Silas J. Coddington moved his retail business there from the Price Building in 1919. You can catch a glimpse of the place in a scene from the 1926 Romance of Riverton film.





screen capture Romance of Riverton, Coddington Estate, 519 Main St

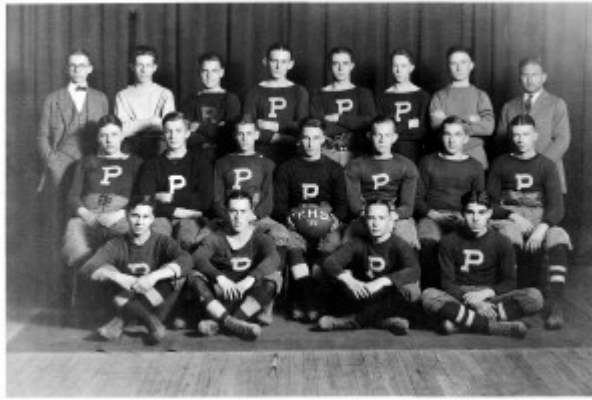
Isn't it amazing how there is history everywhere in Riverton?

100 Years Ago

top row: Carl Latch/ 2-? /3-?/ Roy Kersey/ Frank Probsting/ Richard Graham/ Joe Joyce
Coach Harry Ivory

row 2: English / 2-?/ Wally Sullivan / Calvin Boal / Horace Richman / Wagner / Carl Lutz

front row: Baxter / Gil Palphyman / George Becton / Harold Wood



1922 Palmyra High School Football Team, PHOTO

CREDIT: Harry Richman

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Gaslight News

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Historical Society of Riverton



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

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PUBLISHED BY



John McCormick

Former teacher at Riverton School, amateur historian, Historical Society of Riverton Board Member, website and newsletter editor [View all posts by John McCormick →](#)

📅 May 10, 2022 👤 John McCormick

4 thoughts on “May 2022 Gaslight News #191”



Chris Ford

May 10, 2022 at 7:29 pm

Could you please post a link to a way to purchase the “Images of America: Riverton” book? I am sure many would benefit from a link, especially if it directly benefits the HSR.



John McCormick 👤

May 12, 2022 at 12:11 am

I emailed Chris and explained that we will have 300 copies available for sale on the Fourth in front of the library. For those fans of Riverton living at a distance there will be an option to buy directly from Arcadia.



Joe Della Penna

May 11, 2022 at 4:03 pm



Great stuff as always! Keep it up
Joe d



John McCormick 👤

May 12, 2022 at 12:16 am

Eileen & Joe: Thanks for the positive encouragement, and thank you for your support of the HSR.

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