

Research Tips

A Handout for the Historical Society of Riverton's Researching Your Riverton Home

1. Do You Know a Bit of Riverton History?

Some towns and cities in the US were founded so much earlier than our 1851 date. Certainly there is a history to the land and our community before the establishment of Riverton. This guide is to help our current residents uncover the history of our town -- its homes and businesses, and its residents -- primarily after its 1851 founding.

The initial tract of land that was first developed in 1851 was along the Delaware riverfront, what is now Bank Avenue, and then up Main Street, ending at the railroad track. Farmland was purchased from Lippincott family members by the Riverton Improvement Company, who in turn, [sold plots of land](#), per the town design by architect, Samuel Sloan. With notable exceptions of some earlier residential homes and stores were developed over time, extending up Main Street. The founders purchased more farmland from the Thomas and Morgan families then spread the town wider and wider to additional streets parallel to Main Street and above the railroad tracks. When doing your research remember that Riverton was a part of Cinnaminson and Chester before it became its own borough on January 1, 1894. Let's get started!

1. Maps

When I start a house research project, my first, best option is to look at early maps. [The Historical Society of Riverton's Gaslight News website has an excellent selection of maps.](#) You can see maps of our area from before the town was established to later maps that show property owners and images of the homes on those lots. See if you can find your home! My favorite Riverton maps are from 1886 and 1900. Don't forget to visit the [Riverton's Sanborn Insurance Maps](#) for structural details that are noted on these terrific maps, such as building materials, house entrances, number of stories, porches, out-buildings, etc. Be sure to take screen shots of those maps that show your property and name them by date.

Some Quick Map Links:

- 1858. [New Map of Burlington County: from Actual Surveys & Official Records](#). Parry, Skyes and Earl. 1858. Online at the Library of Congress.
- 1860. [Detail of Map of Vicinity Philadelphia and Trenton](#). 1860. New Jersey State Library.
- 1886. [Hunter and Richards Map of Palmyra and Riverton](#).
- 1890. Otto Kohler: [Birds Eye View Map of Riverton, New Jersey](#). You can purchase a paper copy from the HSR ready for your framing!
- [Sanborn Insurance Maps](#). 1885, 1996, 1900, 1905, 1911, 1919, and not online, 1925.

2. Check Out the Riverton's National Register Historic of Historic Places Inventory Application

Riverton was approved to be listed in the country's [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1999. Is your house on this list, described as either being "contributing" or non-contributing"? Check out the history of the town in the first pages of the application then look for your house by street and house number.

3. Do You Have a Current Deed to Your Property?

Do you have a primary resource document, the deed to your home? Deeds are loaded with pertinent information about your home and the people who owned it. In it you will find details about property lines, sale date, who sold and who purchased it, and for what price. Most likely your most-current deed will be limited to whoever was directly the previous owner, establishing the right of the that owner to sell you the property. Using you deed, complete the table, below. Be sure to note the Deed Book & Page Number for the next, previous deed. You'll need that information to search using an online resource, provided by Burlington County's County Clerk's Property Records.

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4. What Should I Write Down Once I Have My Deed? Start With This Template!

	Deed Date	Grantor (Seller)	Grantee (Buyer)	Deed Book/Page Number	Sale Price	Notes
Most- Current Deed						Block/Lot Number
Previous Deed						

5. No Deed?

If you cannot find your current deed, you can search online using the [Burlington County Public Records Electronic Search System \(PRESS\)](#)

The screenshot shows the Burlington County Public Records Electronic Search System (PRESS) interface. The page has a blue header with the Burlington County logo and navigation links. The main content area is titled 'Property Records' and contains a search form. The form has four tabs: 'By Instrument Number', 'By Document Type', 'By Block and Lot', and 'By Name'. The 'By Block and Lot' tab is selected. The form includes fields for 'Municipality' (a dropdown menu), 'Block' (a text input), 'Lot' (a text input), and 'Qualifier' (a text input). There are also date range fields labeled 'From' and 'To' with a 'Date Range [mm/dd/yyyy]' label. Below these are radio buttons for '3 days', '7 days', '15 days', '30 days', and '90 days', along with a 'Quick Date Range' link. At the bottom, there is a 'Show Records/Page' dropdown set to '20' and a 'Total Records' display showing '900'. A 'Search' button is located at the bottom right of the form.

If you know your block and lot number, or certainly, the name of person who owns the property, you can select any of four options for your search, **the easiest being by block and lot.**

Make sure to get **all** the information as listed, above, in #4 for each deed you find, working your way backwards using the deed book and page number to find all earlier deeds. All the “Type” of documents you will be searching will be **deeds**, and the township is **Riverton**.

5. How Do I Search Further Back for Previous Deeds?

First, exhaust all PRESS information by completing the chart in #4, going backwards to all previous online deeds, adding lines to your chart as you find earlier sellers and buyers. HINT: Be sure to either print out a copy of the deed or use a screen shot to capture copies of the tops of all deeds, naming the shots by year so that you have the pertinent names, dates, and sale prices listed within that deed. Again, name your screen shots by date so that you can easily recognize and organize your deeds. Roger Pritchard notes that it is best to download your Deed using the download button on both the PRESS and Image search devices in order to get the clearest copy of your deeds.

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6. What Do I Do if I Can't Go Further Back Using the Online PRESS?

Once you have gone as far back as you are able to using PRESS (as far back as 1965), you no longer do you need to go to Mt. Holly and search the old deed books. You can search online using [Burlington County's Deed Archives](#). Login as a Guest (no username or password required) and continue to search by book and page for deeds. You should be able to go back to see when your land was sold by one of the Lippincott, Thomas, or Morgan families, or other first owners of the properties using this system.



The image displays two screenshots of the 'Image sync' website interface. The left screenshot shows the login page, which includes a 'Guest Login' link, fields for 'Username' and 'Password', a 'Login' button, and a 'Submit' button at the bottom. The right screenshot shows the search interface, featuring tabs for 'Index Images' and 'Book/Page', a 'Search Type' dropdown menu set to 'Deeds', a 'Reset' button, and fields for 'Book Number' and 'Page Number' with a 'Load' button. At the bottom of the search interface, there are fields for 'Page(s)' and 'Through' with a 'Submit' button.

Finding Your House's Roots

With a nod to the PBS series, *Finding Your Roots*, you can continue your research to find out, not just more about the kind of house you own, but about the people who lived in your home over the years, too. You have them on your chart as Grantees and Grantors. Here are just a few of the many free or fee-based resources you can use to learn more about your home's history.

1. Architectural Attributes

What qualities of your home make it special to you? Take photos, read up on the features that may be original to your home, or like many homes, have gone through multiple renovations and additions. Do you have unique flooring? Square nails? Any original stained glass transoms or panels? Make a list and document what is historic about your home. Use these features to help determine the architectural style. One book that might save you some time is located in our public library. [Historic Riverton: Notable Architecture, People and Events, 1775-1930.](#)

The HSR has a handy and informative Self-Guided Walking Tours of our town. You can purchase them for a donation of \$1 at the library or Tillie's Treasures. They have a wealth of information of housing styles and architectural design information as well as some brief history about each house on the tour.

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2. United States Federal and NJ State Census

The United States federal government has been completing the US Census every ten years since 1790. Again, for your research, you probably don't need to go back any further than the 1850 US Census. Be forewarned: streets were not named, nor were house numbers standardized until after 1880 (at least in Riverton), so you might find the name of a person by hunting through the early US Census, page by page for the Chester area, but no street name or house number. It may take some time to look over pages of the US Census, but you will find a wealth of information about homeowners – number of people in the house, their ages, their ethnicity, whether they could read and write English, the country of their birth, and the occupations of the people in the household.

The US Federal Census is retained at the [National Archive](#) which has its own search option. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed most all of the 1890 records. The heyday of much construction in Riverton was at that time, so you might want to rely on the 1886, 1890, and 1895 maps for some details until you reach the 1900 US Federal Census.

Birth, death, parish records, migration records, military records, and US Federal Census records can be accessed for free at the online resource created by the Church of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) at [FamilySearch.org](#).

Another, extensive online resource is [Ancestry.com](#). You can visit the Riverton Free Library and access their site using the library's subscription as well as the [resources at the Burlington County Library](#). Of special note is the family tree of many Riverton residents, created by Roger Pritchard, *Early Residents of Riverton NJ*, on the Ancestry.com website. A fantastic site for those who dive deeply into family connections in Riverton.

3. More Resources

Take advantage of many local resources which include Bill Washington's book which is available at the Riverton Free Library, *Historic Riverton: Notable Architecture, People and Events, 1776-1930*, the [1999 National Register for Historic Places Registration form](#), town photos of people, houses, and businesses in the HSR archives, as well as the HSR's excellent walking tour brochures.

4. Historic Newspapers & Town Images

Our own [HSR online resource of historic newspapers](#) can be searched by key word. Due to the condition of the print, access to all relevant articles can be hit or miss, but scanning through newspapers from the time when you know that a resident of your house had a home or business in town can be successful, too.

In the HSR Archives are photographs of the town over the years as well as many residents. Check the Finding Aid on the [rivertonhistory.com](#) website.

5. 1926 *The Romance of Riverton*

Have you ever seen the [HSR's Romance of Riverton](#), the 1926 film? You can see homes and businesses as they looked in the 1920's.

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Happy Searching!

Other References

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