



# Gaslight News

[rivertonhistory.com](http://rivertonhistory.com)

January 2018

Historical Society of Riverton

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Founded 1970

Riverton, NJ 08077

Incorporated 1978

Our team first checked with the usual suspects:

- Betty Hahle's [May 1984 "Yesterday" in Gaslight News](#)
- Bill Washington's *Historic Riverton: Notable Architecture, People and Events 1775-1930*
- Riverton's 1999 [National Register of Historic Places Registration Form](#)
- [History of 306 Main](#) by BBH
- [1999 Riverton 4th of July Program](#)
- RFL's own [history page](#).

But this case called for a deep dig into primary sources.



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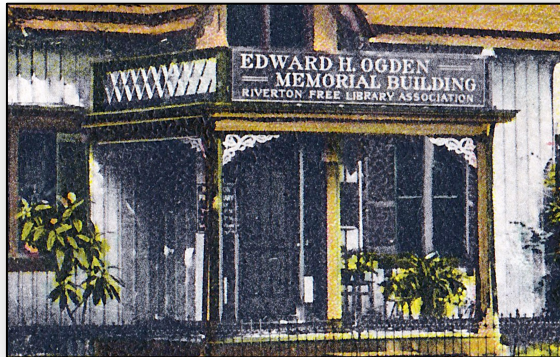
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## History sleuths uncover Library history

Researchers investigate primary and secondary sources to verify facts for a historical marker

Riverton Free Library Association celebrates its 119th anniversary January 12. In vetting background for a historical marker planned for 306 Main, two researchers had two goals - presenting facts and detailing their research process to help other history sleuths.



detail of a scan of undated postcard provided by Nick Morgu

In this collaboration between the Historical Society of Riverton (HSR) and Riverton Free Library Association (RFLA) each agreed to work together to research and fund the marker. HSR member Pat Smith Solin, a former member of the RFLA Executive Board and Roger Prichard, an enthusiastic, long-time history buff and sophomore HSR Board member, volunteered to collaborate on researching and designing a library marker, much like the ones recently installed to commemorate the Clothier Home at 503 Bank and Riverton Yacht Club.

A review of available sources for clues soon led to a deed search for corroboration.

A complete deed search with names and dates of owners opens up a world of research possibilities for it tells which volume and page records the previous deed and shows the chain of ownership through time. However, that proved problematic.

A check of RFLA files yielded no deed, but that was not surprising since the Library has

owned the property for more than a century. Because the property changed hands so long ago, there was likewise no record on [Burlington County Clerk's Deed Website](#). They next went to the Burlington County Clerk's Office in Mount Holly to find the library's deeds.

A labyrinthine search of volumes there led to the most current Library deed (Book 430, p. 121) dated 4 Feb 1908, almost 110 years ago.

The deed shows Sarah Morris Ogden (6 Nov 1831 - 30 Jul 1912) sold her property for \$1.00 to the RFLA with the stipulation that the building be named "The Edward H. Ogden Memorial Building of the Riverton Free Library Association" after her late husband, and Riverton's first mayor.



Edward H. Ogden  
*Philadelphia Inquirer*,  
1895-12-08

The game was afoot.

Our duo used easy-to-use Imagesync software on computers there to trace ownership backward through several deed books. Then, after finding three previous owners, the chain was broken because that deed does not list the information for the previous deed.

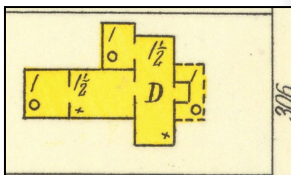
In 1863, Anna Senat bought the property through a Sheriff's Sale after owner Alfonso A. Willits evidently had defaulted on his mortgage. However, Willits' deed does not list the information for the previous deed, which presented an impasse.

Consulting the Grantor- and Grantee Index, which lists all the sellers and buyers alphabetically turned up a listing for Alfonso Willits as a

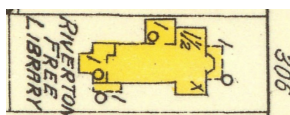
See **LIBRARY HISTORY** on 2



While the preliminary search for Library deeds started online with the [Public Records Electronic Search System](#) on Burlington County Clerk's Deed Website, it would take a trek to the Burlington Co. Administration Bldg., which houses the [County Clerk's Office](#) to find them. Here another time when searching for a deed to her own home, Mrs. Solin's [Research Your House](#) page on [rivertonhistory.com](#) serves as a handy tutorial for the process.



Old [Riverton Sanborn Insurance Maps](#) show how the town has evolved. The 1900 map ([Sheet 2](#)) depicts 306 Main before it was the Library. According to the map's key, the frame dwelling had a slate or tin roof on the one-story sections and a shingle roof on the 1 1/2 story main section.



The 1919 map of Riverton, Burlington County, New Jersey ([Sheet 13](#)) shows the building in its next incarnation as Riverton Free Library.



Find out more about RFL history, programs and events on [Facebook](#) and on [rivertonfreelibrary.org](#).

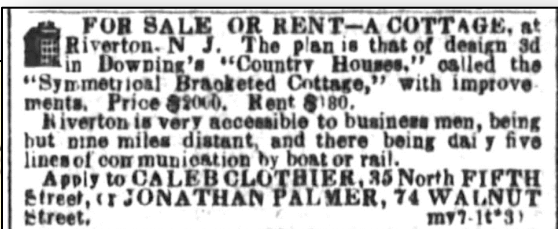
## LIBRARY HISTORY from 1

buyer in a transaction with the "Riverton Improvement Company" as the seller.

This just had to be our transaction, and it was – the lot description exactly matches today's 306 Main Street. A subdivision of the original Joseph Lippincott farm, which the founders of Riverton had bought in 1851, carved out the little lot for 306 Main Street. As far as Riverton is concerned, they had reached the Beginning of Time!

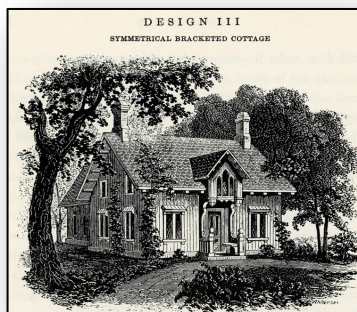
So what could one then learn about this little cottage? Armed with names of the owners and their transaction dates they used ancestry.com, Newspapers.com and Google to research more about the people themselves.

After Riverton Improvement Company (the ten Quakers generally referred to as "the Founders") acquired Joseph Lippincott's farm in 1851, they sold off lots to individuals. Very likely Riverton Improvement Company (RICO.) built the cottage that became the Library on speculation to sell.

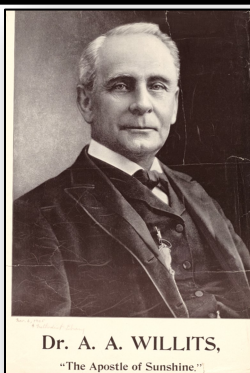


Searching newspapers.com, resulted in a hit on "Caleb Clothier" in the ad above, which appeared in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* 7 May 1853:

Back then, Caleb Clothier was the President of RICO., and the book referred to in the ad is [A.J. Downing's Country Houses](#), an influential pattern book published in 1850. Can there be any doubt that builders used "Design III, Symmetrical Bracketed Cottage" for our Library?



As recorded in Deed Book F6, p. 154, Caleb Clothier signed the deed on behalf of RICO. transferring property to Alfonso A. Willits on 5 Jul 1854. The [Reverend Alphonso Albert](#)



Dr. A. A. WILLITS,  
"The Apostle of Sunshine."

IMAGE CREDIT: [New York Public Library Digital Collections](#), 06 Nov 1905

In late 1862, 306 Main Street underwent foreclosure and sold at Sheriff's Sale. On 21 Feb 1863, Anna Barnes Senat (23 Jul 1786 – 27 Mar 1863) bought the cottage from the Sheriff for \$1,825 (Deed Book W-6, p. 80).

It appears that she moved into it almost immediately along with her son George L. Senat (25 Jan 1817 – 2 Dec 1898). Just one month later, though, Anna died, leaving no will.

George ultimately came into possession of it and continued to live in this little cottage the rest of his life, a total of over 30 years. The lifelong bachelor was a popular figure in Riverton, familiarly known throughout the Borough according to his obituary as "Uncle George."



scan of photo owned by Nancy and Bill Hall. Caption reads, "Uncle George Senat in reading room of present library building, 1887."

Directories listed George as an importer of "white goods" (linens) in Philadelphia on Chestnut Street between 2nd and 3rd Sts.

He was the business partner of Ellison

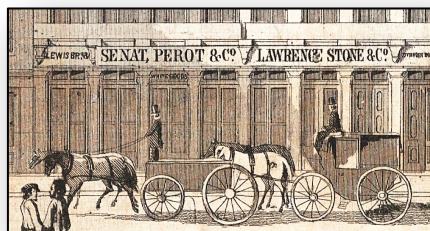


IMAGE CREDIT: Lithograph detail – Senat, Perot and Co. from [Chestnut Street East of Third](#) 1857

CONTINUED →



Perot, brother of Sarah Morris Perot Ogden, who figures prominently in the cottage's next chapter. A friendship between the Senat and the Perot/Ogden families spanned at least 35 years.

After George Senat died in his home at the age of 81 in December of 1898, his niece Mary W. Senat (19 Dec 1849 – 4 Mar 1931) inherited the cottage, lot, and furniture according to George's will, dated 23 Aug 1890. The 1900 Census shows the house rented to a widowed lithographer named Victor Bertram. Mary Senat sold the cottage on 11 Oct 1907, for \$3,750 to the aforementioned Sarah Morris Perot Ogden (Deed Book 426, p. 134) who purchased it to donate to the fledgling Riverton Free Library Association as its permanent home.



Sarah Ogden, [The Quaker Ogdens in America](#), Charles Burr Ogden, Charles Smith Ogden, J.B. Lippincott, 1898, p.148.

The organization was the result of a parlor meeting held in January 1899. Formally organized at a larger meeting held



Lyceum undated photo  
HSR Archive Accession # 86.06.02

later at the Lyceum, the Association began with a collection of some 800 books housed in the Parish Hall of [Christ Church](#). A founding member, Sarah Ogden, also served on the Board,

which consisted of about equal numbers of men and women. Incorporated in 1906, the RFLA took ownership of the cottage in 1908, a gift of Mrs. Ogden.

In over a century of ownership, the RFLA has lovingly cared for and improved the cottage. Electricity replaced gaslights in 1922, and telephone service followed in 1969. The Children's Room addition in 1958 and the large adult/fiction room in 1992 expanded the building's space. A computer gave access to books of other libraries in 1991. The first public access computer came in 1993; Internet for patrons followed in 1996, and adoption of technology has proliferated since becoming a branch of [Burlington County Library](#) in 2003. [RFL](#) remains an independent library predominantly funded by private sources.

Such periodical facelifts, upgrades, and renovations have helped the venerable Victorian building remain a treasured landmark and vital asset in the community it has so diligently served for over a century.

Perhaps the most critical factors enabling our unique not-for-profit volunteer association to thrive and adapt to needs of the public in the 21st century are the faithful stewardship of its dedicated staff of librarians, volunteers, and trustees and officers of the RFLA, plus passionate support by countless donors, friends, individuals, and organizations.

- MR. ROGER PRICHARD & MRS. PATRICIA SMITH SOLIN



Riverton Free Library, Oct. 2017 PHOTO: palmyrasun.com

## President Visits Riverton

Presenter Neill Hartley channeled Woodrow Wilson for an appreciative public at November HSR meeting



Woodrow Wilson is one of eight one-man shows that Mr. Hartley performs for groups. IMAGE CREDIT: Susan Dechnik

At the November 16, 2017 meeting of the Historical Society of Riverton

[Neill Hartley](#) became Woodrow Wilson as he presented his program "Woodrow Wilson and the Great War." Quoting from Wilson's speeches and newspaper articles of the time Hartley dramatically gave a historical picture of America in

the turbulent years before and during World War I.

There was strong reluctance to engage in "Europe's War" by America and Wilson pledged neutrality. Submarine warfare by Germany and intrigue involving the Mexican Ambassador and a plan to form an alliance between Mexico and Germany finally forced Wilson to ask Congress to declare war on Germany.

It would be in Wilson's words, "... a war to end all wars" that would "make the world safe for democracy."

After WWI, Wilson championed the formation of The League of Nations, although the United States was never a part of it.

A lively question and answer discussion followed the memorable program.

- MRS. SUSAN DECHNIK





## THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON



So much to tell—so little space in which to do it.

**S**ANDY MARRONE, owner of the world's largest private sheet music collection, shares part of her extensive archive

in an entertaining and educational program which spans from the early 1800s to the present. The 600,000 items include every imaginable topic and musical genre.

Wednesday, January 17, 2018,  
7pm, Riverton Free Library

**S**TILL FAMILY HISTORY presented by Valerie Still, Wednesday, February 28, 2018, Riverton Free Library, 7pm. More details later on [rivertonhistory.com](http://rivertonhistory.com)



**A** HEARTY THANK YOU to all who renewed their Historical Society membership dues for 2018. A form is enclosed for those who may still wish to support the goals of the Society.



Thank you to all who made an extra contribution: ALAN AND HELENE LILHOLT, JAN AND DENNIS DEVRIES, DR. PAUL GRENA, ELEANOR & RICHARD PALADINO, MATTHEW BROWN & WAYNE CHANG, PAT BRUNKER, EILEEN GILBERT, HENRY PARRISH HACKETT, LYNN JOHNSON, BILL McDERMOTT, GENO MORI, MARY PAT PETERS, REV. ANNE WREDE

**T**ris Gaughan and Keith Betten undertook a huge project in November—sorting out and cataloging paper items in the HSR's archive. The goal is to get the records into a database online so that people can access it. Next, detailing the hard archives - clothing, bottles, old tools and household objects, etc. - will begin.

**W**e have members north, south, and coast-to-coast! Welcome to Betsy Wales in ME. Riverton native Mary Pat Laverty Peters, now living in OR, sent in a real relic—an [RPS Class of '81 keep-sake booklet](#). Student biographies, k-8 class history, class will, and prophecies - they are all there to see and to embarrass the middle-aged adults they have become 37 years later. One former teacher of that class feels so old now!

**E**arly December saw the realization of a goal by Riverton Steamboat Landing Foundation, Riverton Yacht Club, and the Historical Society of Riverton to erect a [permanent interpretive marker](#) to commemorate Riverton Steamboat Landings, one of the last intact steamboat landings on the Upper Delaware today. Roger Prichard's genius idea was to install it on Bank Avenue at the foot of Penn Street where the photographer stood in about 1905 to take a photo of the steamboat Columbia. If you can't go see it, [view it online](#).



Check back in between issues at [rivertonhistory.com](http://rivertonhistory.com) -JMc



**T**HE CAPTION [FROZEN AGAIN](#) introduced a website post about the recent deep-freeze experienced in the Northeast caused by a "bomb cyclone" and prompted several visitor comments and Facebook likes.

Apparently, the Facebook community was psyched about the snow and cold weather. You can see Stephanie Maratea's recent [snow-storm pix](#) and Paul Delaney's very cool [drone video](#) of the frozen Delaware that we shared to our Facebook page.



Aftermath of Winter Storm Grayson



Aerial view of RYC

**A**sking "[What was your childhood phone number?](#)" on our website prompted hundreds of views and a few comments. Sixty years ago in East Camden mine was Woodlawn 4-0502.

Several folks checked in to prove they recalled theirs as well. Back then, Riverton Yacht Club's number was Rivertn-444, and Rivertn-87 rang the school.

We thank Carl McDermott for again sharing his [c.1928 Riverton-Palmyra telephone book](#).

.... Rivertn-756  
.. Rivertn-144-R  
.... Rivertn-703

Rivertn-139-M  
.... Rivertn-768  
Rivertn-1079-W  
.. Rivertn-297-W  
.... Rivertn-975  
... Rivertn-1176

## Gaslight News

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF RIVERTON

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