

THE LIZETTE GAZETTE

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



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Thank you for picking up a copy of the *Lizette Gazette* created by Brittany Rae of the Riverside Historical Society.

HAPPENING NOW

What's happening nowadays in the 08075!

We've Gone Digital!

We were once again selected by the Burlington County Board of Commissioners for the County History Partnership Program (CHPP) grant to benefit the future generations of Riverside! This year's grant award has gone towards the start of digitizing our collection!

Written by President Brittany Rae, the \$9,000 grant began with prioritizing newspapers, microfilm, and a few other printed items like *Rivues* from our collection. Seeing that many of these items were not easily accessible for visitors to aid in their research, they are now loaded onto a searchable hard drive and can be browsed by names, subjects, or any other simple text with just a click!

The Crowley Company, based out of Frederick, MD, has been our partner in this endeavor. Throughout the past year we have been corresponding with various representatives who have meticulously met our needs and wishes. Their dedication to providing this service to us and our organization is priceless; during the proofing process, both Treasurer Joanne Smith and Brittany have found news articles, advertisements, and other printed items from their families inside old editions of the *Riverside Press*, the *River Front Advertiser*, and more!

At this time, we'd like to thank Joanne and Rob Smith who spent hours aiding Brittany with counting pages of additional individual newsprint sides to be included, our Thursday Archive group led by Vice President Alice Smith who gathered and indexed the items for pickup and aided with newspaper research, and the Riverside Public Library who loaned us a few microfilm rolls to complete some missing pieces of our now newly digitized collection- they really put the "partnership" in the "County History Partnership Program" Riverside is all the better for it!

Funding for the grant is provided by the New Jersey Historical Commission/Department of State, the Burlington County Board of County Commissioners, Department of Resource Conservation, and the Burlington County Division of Parks.

Right: A hand-stamped medallion donated this summer.



A MEDALLION'S MYSTERY

On Thursday, July 24, 2025, this 1947 aluminum blank, hand-stamped medallion donated by Bettyann Bishop Melvin arrived at the museum. The piece measures 4" diameter and is 1/8" in thickness. The Keystone Watch Case Company presented the award to "Min" Wilhelmina Melvin, mother-in-law to Bettyann, on October 28, 1947 for five years of service. Min's son William married a local Riverside girl - Elizabeth "Bettyann" Bishop. Let's learn more about Min and try to uncover the story of the mystery medal.

In 1940 Min Melvin, Wilhelmina E. aged 33, lived on Mulberry Street in Bridgeboro with her husband Russell, an employee at the Riverside Metal Company, and her two children William and Anna. The daughter of Gottlieb, the local baker and Anna Trautz Ziegler, Wilhelmina grew up in Bridgeboro. Called by her nickname Min, she may have answered the "Help Wanted" advertisement in the *Riverside Press & Tribune Advertiser* on July 22, 1943, or found her job through her husband's employ.



Our collection of Watchcase papers at the museum for the years 1941-1945 disclose the following about Riverside's contribution to the War Work: *Riverside Metal/Keystone contributes to our nation's defense efforts in two wars and begins work on the largest single contract in its history, a \$1,500,000 order for Army "work horse" fuses. An entire floor of its plant is devoted to this contract recently signed with the U. S. Army Ordnance Department.* Min's family told us that she worked on shell casings.

STORY CONTINUES ON REVERSE SIDE

From the Desk of the President

As we close out the year and I conclude my term as President of the Riverside Historical Society, I can't help but think how much has changed since the first RHS meeting I attended.

It was the late Fall of 2011; I was a Senior in college at Arcadia University majoring in Interior Design. I contacted Alice, who was President at the time, to see if the Society could help me find dimensioned plans and other research about the Watchcase to use in my Senior Thesis. My capstone project guidelines required us to adapt an existing building into a new use; the Watchcase was my first choice. Alice invited me to a meeting which were then held in the (now former) Methodist church on Spring Garden Street. I walked in and was immediately greeted by so many smiling, friendly faces of members welcoming me into what would become a large chunk of my post-graduate life.

Soon Alice was able to connect me with the Watchcase's then owner, Mr. Wayne Lippincott, who was every bit as helpful and excited that I was interested in using the building for my project. I couldn't believe everything was coming together so fast; it felt kismet. In fact, that's how a lot of the interactions I've had volunteering with the Society over the last 13 and a half years have felt. From my first meeting, to forming bonds with other members, to the very first time I threw my hat in the ring as an Officer. It happened nonchalantly with no other thoughts than to help like it was predestined. I didn't do it for the title, or the acknowledgments, I did it because no one else volunteered for the position of Secretary and I naively thought if there wasn't someone in that position that this wonderful Wednesday night group I joined upon moving back after college would cease to exist.

I know now that it would have still continued and yet, that single decision to join the Board would lead me into several terms and over a decade on the Board serving first as Secretary, then Vice President, before assuming the Presidency in July 2023 and then being duly elected that December. It has been a wild ride to say the least but through it, I've met friends of all different ages I cherish, I've learned more about our town and the people who have come from it than I ever could have thought, and I was even a part of securing the Society's permanent home at the historic former train station. I'll never forget the day I opened that email from Virtua and got to tell Alice: "It's really happening!" It was our fondest wish being granted after a year or more of correspondence with Virtua!

We've come a long way since that first meeting in the church. I have found joy in starting our social media pages and email accounts, our website, presenting programs, and eventually creating our newsletter, the *Lizette Gazette*. It's been rewarding to mix my art degree where I could along the way like by designing the military banners for the Military Walk of Honor and working together with Alice on the booklets learning more about the Veteran and Active-Duty residents of Riverside.

I have been proud to be one of the many, many thoughtful and hardworking individuals of our group. There are so many inside our organization of today and the past who have volunteered their time and talents without hesitation and without receiving the kudos they deserve. Their contributions are priceless. I am thankful to have had this opportunity to lead our group and I will cherish the memories and lessons along the way. Frost wrote "nothing gold can stay" and while that may be true now as my current term comes to an end, I know I will continue to be a lover of history forever.

With gratitude,
Brittany Rae
President, Riverside Historical Society



SHOP LOCAL HISTORY ANYTIME AT:

Flip over to see who Lizette is and what our area was like decades ago.

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HAPPENING THEN

LIZETTE'S CORNER



FROM LAUGHING TO LAUGHING STOCKS

Lizette Zurbrugg who knew the news of the day, becomes the news of the day in 1908!

RIVERSIDE. March 25, 1908 – Three visitors at the home of T. Zurbrugg, President of the Philadelphia Watchcase Company, were laughing at all of Riverside yesterday. All of Riverside is laughing at them today.

It came about thusly. Finding things rather dull, the three misses sought a mean to dispel their ennui.

And so a dummy woman was constructed and dressed in gorgeous raiment and jewelry. The scheme worked splendidly. The girls nearly laughed themselves into fits. Then they went to dinner, leaving Miss Dummy chill on the veranda. When they returned, oh, horrors! "she" was gone.

Meanwhile Charles R. Borton, a policeman, found a handsome silk waist, a black skirt and picture hat with ostrich plumes in the bushes near Rancocas Creek. A woman told of hearing a cry of "Murder!" the previous night. "Ah, a fearful crime has been committed," said the policeman to himself as he started for Magistrate Zeigler's house.

On the way he passed the Zurbrugg home. Three misses rushed out. "Where did you find them?" they asked, grabbing the clothes. Then came explanations. But Riverside is laughing because the person who removed the dummy still has a hatpin set with several diamonds, an expensive fur and other valuables.

Story taken from the *Star and Newark Advertiser*, Newark, NJ, Volume 77, page 12.

One silver lining for our Lizette, she did not have to read the story in the *Riverside Press* because the hometown newspaper chose not to print the story of the three giggling girls!



who stitched and mended the Military banners earlier this year to give them some additional longevity.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS:

Riverside Historical Society Board Members beginning January 1st, 2026:

Officers:

Tom Rust, President

Vince Malecki, Vice President

Jim Snow, Secretary

Treasurer – to be nominated and elected in 2026

Alice Smith, Program Secretary

Trustees:

Joanne Mongon, 2024-2026 term

Bud Maurer, 2026-2028 term

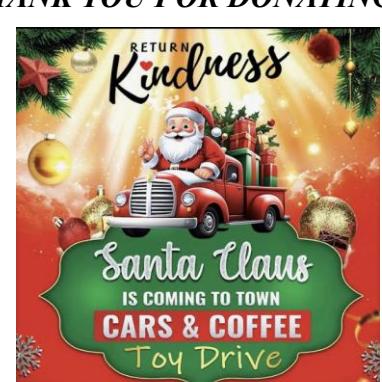
Herman Maurer, 2026-2028 term

Dave Speegle, 2026-2028 term

Bill Stanley, 2026-2028 term

(2) Trustee positions
to be nominated and elected in 2026.

THANK YOU FOR DONATING!!



OPEN HOURS AT THE MUSEUM

Every Thursday from 9am-4pm.

Every second and last Saturday of the month from 1-4pm.

COMING UP IN & AROUND 08075

WEDNESDAY, January 21st, 2026 7pm

January Meeting of the Riverside Historical Society@ American Legion #146

Join us at our monthly meeting! This will be the first meeting for the new 2026-2028 elected Board Members.

SUMMER 2026

America's 250th and Riverside's 175th Birthdays!

Stay updated with how our town will be celebrating these milestones! Join us or following online by scanning the QR code to the right!

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!



RIVERSIDE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

3 FRANKLIN STREET

RIVERSIDE, NJ 08075

riversidehistoricalsocietynj@gmail.com

Contributing Editors:
Brittany Rae and Alice Smith

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A MEDALLION'S MYSTERY (continued)

The ordnance floor occupied the entire 4th floor according to a 2001 interview by Dave Speegle with Harold Klingler, now deceased. The "fuse tip" and ordnance machinery occupied the length of Pavilion from the back to the front of the floor of the Watchcase Company starting with the cone-o-matic, broaching, bodine drilling machines and quality control at the front. Min may have operated one of these machines. In 1942 the Keystone Watchcase Division dissolved and became part of the Riverside Metal Company. It was during this time that some employees at the factory worked on a top-secret project. We've heard stories about the manufacture of a component for the top-secret weapon but have not been able to find the written evidence, just oral stories.



Wilhelmina E. Melvin
1907-1990

With the government contracts during WWI & WWII security increased surrounding the factories. Some readers may recall that the WWII plant was lit with floodlights as sabotage threats rose in the industrial plants throughout New Jersey. A front-page *Riverside Press* article dated September 23, 1943, tried to ease tensions in the Burlington County factories: *Spies Not Responsible for Industrial Sabotage FBI Agent Declares*. Reviewed cases by FBI agent Kenneth B. DeLavigne declares that all sabotage cases involving destruction at different plants appear to be "horseplay, laziness or actions by disgruntled employees." Making security a priority at the Keystone Watch Case they hire their own security team called Keystone Guards. Whether working the day or night shift, the added security made for a safer workplace for women like Min and the extra employees working around the clock.

Min's aluminum medallion prize has two holes in the top of her medal. Was it made for a ceremony with a colorful ribbon laced through the holes and placed around her neck? Did all women assembling fuses and shell cases receive one or was this something made especially for her by her husband Russell at the mill? Are there more of these medallions out there? What are your stories? Please let us know and help us write the story of our community women who contributed to the war effort in Riverside, New Jersey.

To help us keep history alive, keep donating.
Thank you Bettyann Melvin and family!

