

The Riegelsville Academy

1177 John Leidy Riegel was born in 1819 and was the son of Benjamin Riegel (miller).¹ Mr. J.L. Riegel was found of the Riegelsville Academy originally located in the “Riegel Building” at 91 Delaware Road next to the canal. It is a three story stone building designed by John L. Riegel. This building housed a variety of businesses and organizations including a drug store, general store, and school, printing house, Lutheran Church, military post and more.² In more recent times the building has been the location of various restaurants, most recently the Boarderline Café. The School was started on September 3, 1883 on the second floor of this building until it moved to the new premises in 1886.

In 1885 John L. Riegel started construction on a new building just north of town. He conveyed to the trustees of St. John Reformed Church, in trust, a tract of land containing two acres and 67 perches for one dollar.³ Then began the construction of the new Academy building where the southern end was to be the residence for the principal and the second floor of the Academy end for the public library. Mr. Riegel thought the Academy might be more valuable tot he community, if the members of the community were to be instrumental in the funding of the building. He devised a plan to pay for 90%, allowing the community to subscribe to earning the remaining funds. In the end he paid for the building in full totaling \$7,809.66 and used the \$605.36 raised by the community for the building of a stone wall in front of the building and other expenses.⁴

The Academy was designed for both boys and girls.⁵ The purpose of the school was preparation of the students for further work. A thorough discipline in education would prepare the students for their futures. The cooperation of teachers and students in schoolwork, and “association with good books made possible by the possession of a large library, exert a powerful influence in moulding ideals and character.”⁶ Many of the students graduated and went on to institutions such as Lafayette, Cornell, Lehigh, Franklin and Marshall, Gettysburg and Ursinus.⁷

The building was dedicated September 11, 1886 being known as the Riegelsville Academy since that time. The first class had 20 students in attendance and began on Monday, September 13, 1886.⁸ The students in attendance were: Annie J. Adams, Charles F. Althouse, Lizzie Angell, Alexander C. Bonnell, John B. Case, J. Sweeney Glendhill, Harry W. Griffin, Marion H. Griffin, Webster Grim, William E. Ivey, Emily Morrison, Ryan Rapp, Clara Riegel, Ida J. Riegel, Mary E. Stiles, Elbridge Walters, Tinsman.⁹ The Principal was Professor B. F. Sandt.¹⁰ John Leidy Riegel died in 1893 having given much to the town and the education of the students in the area.

¹ Kathleen K. Cook, Riegelsville, PA Its buildings and early inhabitants (New Hope, PA: Riegelsville Academy Library Fund, 1991). 29.

² Ibid. 28-29.

³ St. John Reformed Church of Riegelsville, p. 93.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Announcement of Register of Students, Riegelsville Academy, Riegelsville, PA 25th Anniversary 1883-1908. p. 6.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Letter from B.F. Sandt to Mr. Fackenthal, dated September 14, 1901. p.1.

⁹ Osborn, Arthur W., Riegelsville People, Places and Events p. 43.

¹⁰ Announcement and Register of Students

The opening of the Durham School in 1901 was the cause of fewer students to attend the Academy¹¹ and in 1916 the Academy closed because of poor attendance.¹²

The Library was located on the second floor of the building occupying two rooms. The management of the library was by the trustees of St. John Reformed Church and the principal acted as librarian.¹³ In 1895 the books were classified and a printed catalog was issued with supplements in 1897 and 1898. The Library at that time contained 3,327 volumes.¹⁴ In 1906 the books were classified according to the Dewey Decimal System. In 1911 the Library contained 4,588 volumes, a number of government publications and "a dozen of the best current periodicals,"¹⁵ in the reading room.

After the closing of the Academy in 1916 the library remained open to the public. In 1925 a Library Club was formed and they removed the wall so that the library would be one large room (1,700 square feet), added more bookcases and a Mercer Tile Fireplace. At this time the building was used for meetings, dances and various community functions.¹⁶

The Library was open to the public until the late 1950's or 1960's when St. John Reformed Church leased the building to the Riegelsville Fire Company.¹⁷ The Library was still on the second floor, but not used. The deed is dated February 1, 1971 when the Academy Building became the property of Riegelsville Borough Council bought for \$1.00 from the St. John United Church of Christ.

In 1976 a group of concerned citizens became involved in rescuing the library from being dissolved.¹⁸ On September 8, 1976 a Resolution was signed by the Borough Council of Riegelsville declaring the Riegelsville Library to be a legal official Government Agency of Riegelsville Borough and authorized Trustees of the Library to operate it.¹⁹ The Board consisted of 9 members, who developed By-laws to run the Library.

The volunteer group worked on dusting, stacking and sorting items in the library to prepare for a re-opening. In less than two months the group set up a story hour on Saturday mornings for children and library hours on Friday evenings for families. At the time of the re-opening the library housed approximately 2,000 volumes.²⁰

The library received help from the Easton Area Public Library. The Easton Library is located in Northampton County approximately 10 miles from Riegelsville. The Director of the Easton Library donated 500 books to the lending Library program. They also supplied the Library with storytellers and plans for the month of May when they had their re-opening.²¹ The Bucks County Free Library provided help by means of a movie for committee members and programs for the volunteers to follow.²²

¹¹ St. John Reformed Church of Riegelsville, p. 94.

¹² Riegelsville PA Its buildings and early inhabitants p.136.

¹³ St. John Reformed Church of Riegelsville, p. 96.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ St. John Reformed Church of Riegelsville, p. 136.

¹⁷ Daily Intelligencer, by Kathy Finegan Clark, dated Saturday May 1, 1976.

¹⁸ Daily Intelligencer, by Kathy Finegan Clark, dated Saturday May 1, 1976.

¹⁹ Resolution dated September 8, 1976.

²⁰ Daily Intelligencer, by Kathy Finegan Clark, dated Saturday May 1, 1976.

²¹ Daily Intelligencer, May 1, 1976.

²² Ibid.

A History of Riegelsville

In the northeastern corner of Bucks County, along the Delaware River lies a picturesque piece of property that was once occupied by the Shawanese Indians in a village called Pechoqueolin. The Shawanese were placed in certain areas around the country where there was something to watch over. In this area they were entrusted to watch over the iron ore. A large acreage of the land the Indians occupied became part of a land grant in 1682 through "The Free Society of Traders". After being surveyed some time near the turn of the century, part of the land grant became known as Durham Township. The land being very valuable with mineral resources, The Durham Iron Co. was organized in 1726 with the intent of making iron. The township became organized on June 3, 1775 after the Durham Iron Co. dissolved and partitioned the lands. (Bell, Herbert C., Durham Township, p. 17).

The founders of Riegelsville originated in the Rhineland-Palatinate district in Germany. Johannes Cornelius Riegel (b.1674-d.1750) and Gertrude (d.1760) were the parents of seven children. Johannes was a miller by trade in Germany. He and his wife migrated to America with five children to Tulpehocken Township, PA in the fall of 1733. (Brower, Mary Riegel, The Riegel Family 1975, preface.)

The eldest sons, Matthias (b.1704-d.1775) and George William (b.1706-d.1778), migrated to America the previous year in September 1732 on the ship Adventurer, with Captain Robert Curson landing in Philadelphia. Both signed the "Oath of Allegiance" when arriving in America. (Brower, Mary Riegel, The Riegel Family 1975, preface.)

George William settled in the Tulpehocken area. **Matthias** Riegel settled on Saucon Creek and founded Lower Saucon Township, PA in 1743. (The Riegel Family, p. 90)

Brief Genealogy (Fackenthal, Jr., B. J., The Riegel Family)

Matthias Riegel (b.1704-d.1775) married 1st Margaret (Marie); 2nd Sabina Catherine
Children - Rebecca, Hannah, **Benjamin**, John and Magdalena.

Benjamin (b.1736-d.12-1-1778) married 1st Catherine Rothrock; 2nd Mary Barbara Haas
Children - **Matthias**, Anna Magaretha, John, Jacob, Catherine, Elizabeth, and **Benjamin**
"farmer"(b.12-15-1777-d.7-22-1848)

Matthias (b.12-15-1765-d.10-15-1830) Married Catherine Kram
Children - Susanna, John M., Jacob, Catherine (died young), **Benjamin "miller"**(b.4-17-1792-d.12-4-1860), Elizabeth, Catherine, Magdalena, Margaret, George, Daniel, Joseph, Samuel.

Benjamin Riegel "farmer" – (1777-1848)

Children – Hannah, Jesse, Sarah, Eli, William, Lydia, Isaac, Susanna, Mary, Elizabeth, Benjamin, Samuel.

Benjamin Riegel "miller" – (1792-1860)

Children – John Leidy (b.5-1/1819-d.12-27-1893), Eliza Catherine

When the lands of the Durham Iron Co. were partitioned, 2 tracts eventually became the town of Riegelsville. Tracts 32 and 33 were in Durham Township near the Delaware River. In 1774 Wendell Shank purchased tract 32 along the river and began Shank's Ferry across the river. On April 9, 1806 Benjamin Riegel "farmer" bought a tract of land from Wendell Shank containing 167 acres 103 perches located to the south of the then Main Street. This purchase changed the name of the town from Shank's Ferry to Riegelsville. Another Benjamin Riegel, "miller" purchased other properties and for this reason they were called "farmer" and "miller". "Benjamin Riegel, miller" was "Benjamin Riegel, farmer's" nephew. Benjamin Riegel, farmer was a stone mason and "Benjamin Riegel, miller" was the owner of a SawMill and later operated the Paper Mill. (Fackenthal, Jr., B. J., The Riegel Family)

Benjamin Riegel, farmer purchased the Shank property in 1806, in 1814 he built a large barn and the stone dwelling-house was built in 1820, which was maintained as a hotel until 1838, when he built a new hotel near the entrance to the Delaware River Bridge, The Riegelsville Inn. The canal opened in 1832 and in this same year Benjamin Riegel, miller erected the brick house along the riverbank. Michael Fackenthal surveyed the town on January 15, 1934 locating 24 village lots. ((Fackenthal, Jr., B. J., The Riegel Family, p. 123.)

Due to heavy traffic across the Delaware River, it was decided to put a bridge across the river where the ferries were located. In 1935 the Riegelsville Delaware Corporation was created. A wooden covered bridge was built across the Delaware connecting Riegelsville, PA to Riegelsville, NJ. This bridge had two driveways for carriages or wagons for eastbound and westbound traffic. On December 15, 1837 the bridge was opened for business. Floods were the cause of much damage to the bridge. The first flood occurred on January 8, 1841, the second in 1862 and the third on October 10, 1903. After this flood the firm of John A. Roebling's Sons, of New York were hired to build a steel rope suspension bridge, which was completed and opened on April 18, 1904. The next flood hit the area on March 11, 1936 where damage was done to the piers and the bridge was closed for a few days while the repairs were made. The worst flood in the river's history occurred on August 19, 1955. No damage was done to the bridge at Riegelsville, although other bridges were hit very hard and some destroyed. (Bridges over the River Delaware, Frank Dale, pp. 11-14.)

History of the Riegelsville Library

The Riegelsville Public Library is found in the same location as it was originally situated when John Leidy Riegel created the building in 1885-1886 as a school for the children of the community. The building was known as the Riegelsville Academy and was known for its preparatory education in the student's futures. The cooperation of the teachers and students in schoolwork, and association with good books made possible by the possession of a large library, exert a powerful influence in molding ideals and character. (Announcement of Register of Students, Riegelsville Academy, 1883-1908 p.6) Many of the students graduated and went onto colleges such as Lafayette, Cornell, Lehigh University, Franklin and Marshall, Gettysburg and Ursinus. The opening of the Durham School in 1901 was the cause of fewer students to attend the Academy and in 1916 the Academy closed because of poor attendance. The Library was located on the second floor of the building occupying two rooms. The management of the library was by the trustees of St. John Reformed Church and the principal acted as librarian. In 1925 a library Club was formed and they removed the wall so that the library would be one large room (1,700 square feet), added more bookcases and a Mercer Tile Fireplace. At this time the building was used for meetings, dances and various community functions. The Library was open to the public until the late 1950's or 1960's when St. John Reformed Church leased the building to the Riegelsville Fire Company. The Library was still on the second floor, but not used. The deed is dated February 1, 1971 when the Academy Building became property of Riegelsville Borough Council bought for \$1.00 from St. John United Church of Christ. In 1976 a group of concerned citizens became involved in rescuing the Library from being dissolved. On September 8, 1976 a resolution was signed by the Borough Council of Riegelsville declaring the Riegelsville Library to be a legal official Government Agency of Riegelsville Borough and authorized Trustees of the Library to operate it. The Board consisted of nine members, who developed Bylaws to run the Library. The volunteer group worked on dusting, stacking and sorting items in the library to prepare for a re-opening. In less than two months the group set up a story hour on Saturday mornings for children and library hours on Friday evenings for families. At the time of the re-opening the library housed approximately 2,000 volumes. The Library received help from the Easton Area Public Library. The Easton Library is located in Northampton County approximately 10 miles from Riegelsville. The director of the Easton Library donated 500 books to the lending Library program. They also supplied the library with storytellers and plans for the month of May when they had their re-opening. The Bucks County Free Library provided help by means of a movie for committee members and programs for the volunteers to follow.