

**THE GASLAMP****Illuminating Our Past****President's Message****Two Ways to See History**

For those of us who call Glen Ridge home, local history is just part of the background. On a daily basis, we jog through neighborhoods built when Grover Cleveland was president, walk our kids along aging slate sidewalks to the same schools that some of our parents attended, and catch the train at a station that opened in 1887. Glen Ridge's historic fabric is all around us, and it's easy to take it for granted.

This month, we invite you to examine Glen Ridge history a bit more closely by entering our first-ever photo contest. The Glen Ridge Historical Society will award ribbons and prizes for the best pictures of local people, homes, and public places, with separate awards for professional photographers (of whom Glen Ridge has a surprising number) and for photographers under age 18.

Why are we sponsoring a photo contest? One of our goals, as an organization, is to promote an appreciation of the history of our community, and there is no better way to appreciate that history than by taking pictures. The humdrum details of everyday life—the garage out back, that odd-looking tree down at the corner, that child illegally skateboarding on the steps of the Municipal Building—come alive when you try to frame them through a lens.

The photo contest has another motivation as well: we want to bring members, and their children and friends, to our annual walking tour on Saturday,

October 18. After borough historian Sally Meyer and docents lead us on a tour of Glen Ridge's forgotten industrial past (see page 2), we will gather at the train station on Ridgewood Avenue for refreshments. At that time, we'll announce the contest winners and hand out the prizes, and the winning photographs will be on display.

To enter the photo contest, pick up entry forms in the lobby of the Municipal Building or at the Glen Ridge Public Library. Students at Glen Ridge High School or the Ridgewood Avenue School can also get entry forms at their school. The deadline for delivering your mounted 8x10 prints to the collection box at 198 Forest Avenue is Friday, September 26.

Marc Levinson

***Mark Your Calendar*****WALKING TOUR****Saturday, October 18****“Glen Ridge's Industrial History”****Meet at Glen Ridge Community Pool  
at 2:00 pm****Parking available in municipal lot on  
Hillside Avenue at Bloomfield Avenue**

## News from the Town Historian

For many in Glen Ridge, the arrival of property tax bills prompts the familiar lament...*if only we had more ratables!* At one time in our history, we did.

For most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several businesses were in operation on either side of the Newark and Pompton Turnpike. This thoroughfare that we now call Bloomfield Avenue ran east/west through the area which became Glen Ridge. South of the Turnpike, Toney's Brook provided water power for the mills that lined its banks: Bromley's saw mill, Brower's pasteboard factory, and Moffett's brass rolling mill. Just north of the Turnpike, the Glen Ridge Quarry & Mining Company, Hayden's harness factory, and Benson's brass rolling mill (pictured below) rounded out the industries in the center of town.

During the same years, Midland Avenue was the site of operations for other flourishing businesses. John Rassbach & Sons, Florists; the Edison Torpedo factory; and Nevins-Church Press provided flowers, railroad flares, and product labels for local and commercial customers. Early maps of the south end of Glen Ridge also mention the Beneke Factory, the Marble Novelty Factory, and a sand and gravel company.

The remains of this earlier industrial age are evident in the foundations of several existing buildings and along the banks of the upper Glen at the site of Moffett's mill. One by one the mills either fell down or shut down. Rumors of a proposed amusement park in the Glen sparked the formation of the Glen Park Association, a civic-minded group of local bigwigs who bought up the former mill properties for preservation as parkland. Meanwhile, the businesses along Midland Avenue sold out to developers.

Unlike many communities, the industrial age in Glen Ridge preceded housing development. By the time the railroad stations were built and neighborhoods began to fill in, many of the businesses were closing down. While we love our residential profile with over 90 percent of the town listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places, we do miss those ratables.

If you want to learn more about the rise and fall of our industrial past, please join us on October 18 for our fall walking tour. If you would like to schedule a visit to the Museum Room, please call **Sally Meyer** at (973) 239-2674.



### Officers and Trustees

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**Editor's Note...** Readers will no doubt notice that this newsletter has a different look. I have tried to organize it for quick reference. Specifically, new are the title and subtitle (page 1), the list of officers and trustees above, this editor's note, a box with a calendar of GRHS events, and a box for news briefs. This month I have written the featured article and I cordially invite any member to submit an article – with illustrations – about Glen Ridge history for future editions (limit 600 words – illustrations reduce the word limit). **Herb Addison** (comments welcome to: [herb.addison@verizon.net](mailto:herb.addison@verizon.net))

## The Roman Connection I Didn't Know About

I confess that I've walked through the arched entrance to the Municipal Building many times without giving much thought to its design. But when I photographed the building for the *Guide to the Historic District of Glen Ridge*, and then gave a talk on the history of the building at the annual meeting, I began to wonder exactly what kind of a design it is. What I learned is that the design has a long and distinguished history and is closely related to a number of windows found in Glen Ridge homes and elsewhere.

It was my good luck to address the question to Glen Ridge architect Mark Wright who knew all about the design. He told me that it's a "Serliana," named for Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554) an Italian architect in the Renaissance who included the motif in his influential book, *L'Architettura* (1537-1575). But there is much more to the story.

Architectural historians believe that the motif was actually first used in a Renaissance building by the Italian architect, Donato Bramante (1444-1514), who was also the first Renaissance architect to borrow and adapt ancient Roman architecture to the buildings of his time. Bramante no doubt learned of the motif from the ancient Romans, who used it on the Baths of Diocletian (302 AD) among other buildings. But it was Serlio who helped to propagate the motif through his book, and later Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) who helped spread its use in his work and his even more influential book, *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* (The Four Books of Architecture - 1570). Today the motif as an entry or arcade is usually known as a Serliana but when used as a window it is "Palladian."

What then is this motif? Figure 1 shows it in its purest form. It is a three-part opening with a semicircular arch over the central opening supported by two entablatures that are in turn supported by two Ionic columns each that form two flanking openings.

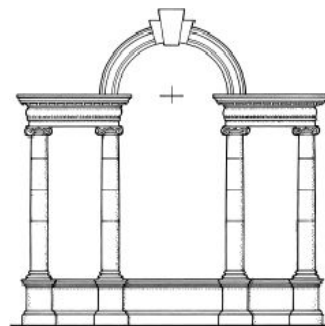


Figure 1 - The Serliana

The entrance to the Municipal Building closely matches the drawing, except that the two outside columns are square and not free-standing, and are in the Doric order while the inner columns are Ionic (Figure 2).



Figure 2 - The Municipal Building

Mostly through the influence of Palladio on generations of architects in Europe, Britain and the U.S. (Jefferson adapted Palladian design to the University of Virginia and Monticello), the window motif has come down to us in a form that is found on Glen Ridge homes (Figure 3).



Figure 3 - A Glen Ridge Residence

Knowing this, we can trace this widely-used motif back to the ancient Romans.

**Herb Addison**

## Coming Events

October 18 – WALKING TOUR: “Glen Ridge’s Industrial History.” Meet at Glen Ridge Municipal Pool at 2:00 pm. Reception at train station at 3:30 pm. Announcement will be made of photo contest winners

Early December – Holiday Party: date and location to be announced

February 24, 2009 – Public Program

April 22, 2009 – Annual meeting

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## News Briefs

- Sally Meyer reports that two realty companies have recently bought copies of the *Guide to the Historic District of Glen Ridge* in bulk quantities (50 and 100). The *Guide* is available for \$2.00 each, and for \$1.75 in quantities of 100 or more.
- The Nolen Report of 1909 detailing a plan for the development of Glen Ridge is now available in digital form. It will be included on the GRHS website and the GR Library website when they are up. If you are interested in getting the report on a CD-ROM call Herb Addison at 973-748-5012, or e-mail at [herb.addison@verizon.net](mailto:herb.addison@verizon.net).
- The Glen Ridge Historical Society is seeking a computer-savvy volunteer to help create a website. If you're able to lend a hand, please call Marc Levinson at 973-748-0456.