



# GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE GASLAMP

## Illuminating Our Past

September 2015 Vol. XXXVIII No. 1



### President's Letter

## Join Our Fall Tour of the Historic Bloomfield Cemetery

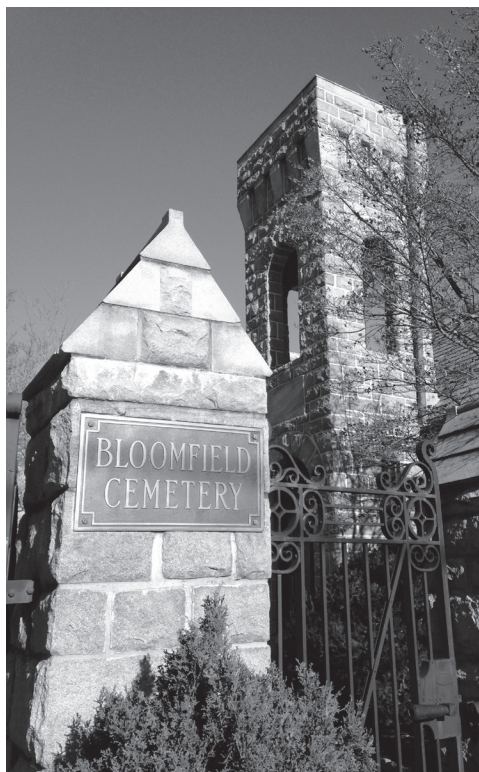
WELCOME TO THE start of a new year of events! The wrapup to last year was our annual Grandmother's Trunk presentation in June at Ridgewood Avenue School. For 32 years I have had the pleasure of revealing the history of Glen Ridge to our fourth-grade students through oversize photographs, clothing, and assorted artifacts that bring the story to life. Educational outreach is an important part of the Historical Society's mission and the enthusiastic response of these students proved its value.

The lazy days of summer were much enjoyed by those interested in local history. The Terry S. Webster Museum was busy with visitors, who often spent several hours researching the history of their homes and enjoying the displays. Some came

from out of town with information and photographs of their Glen Ridge ancestors—including Susan DeGress Maynard from Colorado, whose great-great-grandfather was Captain Francis DeGress (at left), aide-to-camp to General

William T. Sherman in the Battle of Atlanta.

With \$1,500 that was given to him by Sherman, DeGress built and lived at 79 Forest Avenue.



Fall now beckons and our annual walking tour is on the calendar. We are partnering this year with the Historical Society of Bloomfield for an exploration of Bloomfield

Cemetery. Its picturesque grounds on Belleville Avenue were listed this year on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. They shelter the remains of many from Bloomfield's earliest families. Wear comfortable shoes to navigate the winding pathways and hilly terrain and prepare to be inspired by stories of industrialists, entrepreneurs, soldiers, artists, politicians, educators, and... ghosts. The tour will take place on Saturday, October 17 at 1:30 p.m. Refreshments will follow in the recently restored gatehouse. The rain date is Sunday, October 18.

In another partnership, next spring we will co-host a program with the Glen Ridge Public Library on the 50th anniversary of the National Register of Historic Places.

Special thanks to trustees Meghan Labot and David Taylor for their efforts last spring in the colorful redesign of our membership brochure. The response from our townwide mailing has been gratifying. The

"Getting Involved" page brought lots of volunteer offers and clearer indications of interest in our events.

Sally Meyer

## News and Goings-On

**Fall walking tour.** On Saturday, October 17, meet us at 1:30 p.m. at Bloomfield Cemetery for a walking tour of these historic grounds. Refreshments will be served.

**1906 maps for sale.** Reprints from the famous 1906 A.H. Mueller Atlas of Essex County are available for \$100, or \$80 for members. Email us at [glenridgehs@gmail.com](mailto:glenridgehs@gmail.com).

**Gaslamp ornaments.** A beautiful brass ornament featur-

ing the iconic image of a gaslamp is on sale for \$15. It is similar in style to ornaments we offer of the Ridgewood Avenue train station and the gazebo in the Glen.

**Museum hours.** Come read your house file and browse the exhibits in the Terry S. Webster Museum. Located above Boiling Springs Savings Bank, it is open the second Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to noon or by appointment with Sally Meyer at (973) 239-2674.

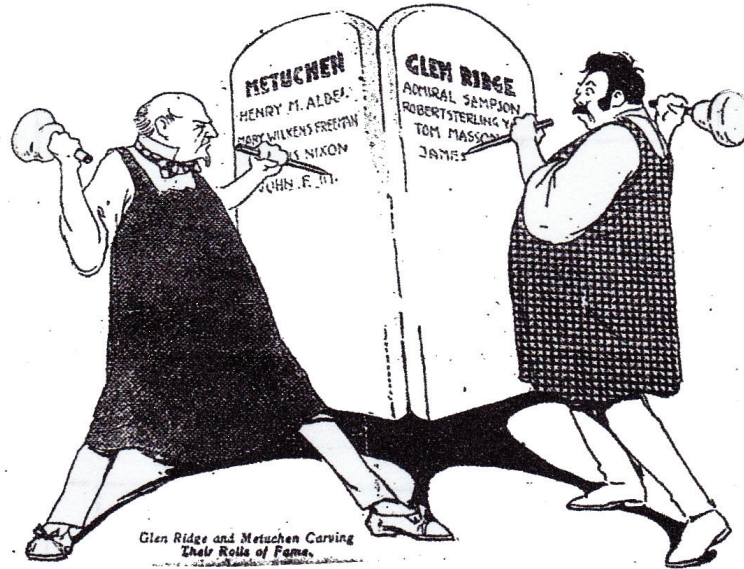
## Who's the Brainiest of Them All?

IN EARLY JULY I received an email from Tyreen Reuter, chairperson of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee, asking me whether I knew about a “war of words” that took place between our two boroughs in 1914 and 1915 for the title of “Brainiest Borough.” I knew nothing about such an affair and asked to hear more. She sent me the draft of a soon-to-be-published booklet that recounts a fascinating and unexpected story.

The development paths of Glen Ridge and Metuchen had much in common. Metuchen was incorporated in 1900, just five years after Glen Ridge. The towns grew rapidly after the establishment of regular train service to Newark and Hoboken, with two independent lines serving both communities. Fine-looking homes, healthy air, exclusive clubs, and opportunities for cultural, social, and scholarly pursuits attracted a highly educated class of people to both towns.

Around 1908 Metuchen began to be referred to in the local newspapers as the “Brainy Borough.” A self-described freelance newspaper correspondent named Truman T. Pierson claims to have been the first to use the

moniker. In the early 1910s the editors of *The Metuchen Recorder* and the *Bloomfield Independent Press* held a lively debate on a commuter train about which borough truly deserved the title, instigating an editorial battle.



*Glen Ridge and Metuchen Carving Their Rolls of Fame.*  
Battle of the brainy boroughs, as caricatured in the New York Press Sunday Morning, April 25, 1915

On March 3, 1914, the *Press* editor allowed that Metuchen might be the “Brainy Borough,” but claimed the nobler title of “Brainiest Borough” for Glen Ridge. He proposed that the papers take turns naming and expounding on their boroughs’ “mental celebrities” until one or the other ran dry. Thus began a 20-month “combat journalistique.” The papers named artists, clergymen, editors, authors, engineers, attorneys, philanthropists, architects, educators, scientists, and businessmen, as well as a shipbuilder, lexicographer, and jurist. On November 5, 1915, the *Press* listed its 20th—and final—name for Glen Ridge, tying the score (see below).

No follow-up declarations of victory appeared in either newspaper, and the contest seems to have ended in a draw. To this day, Metuchen residents are reminded of their town’s old nickname when they mail a letter at the U.S. Post Office’s “Brainy Boro” branch. **Sally Meyer**

### The Brains of the Brainiest Borough

Edward Page Mitchell  
Editor, New York Sun  
325 Ridgewood Avenue

George F. Fearons  
General Attorney, Western Union  
364 Ridgewood Avenue

William J. Aylward  
Artist/Author  
87 High Street

Edward A. White  
Clergyman, Christ Church  
Christ Church Rectory

William T. Sampson  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy  
117 Clark Street

Thomas Masson  
Editor, Life magazine  
261 Ridgewood Avenue

Laura Stewart  
Philanthropist  
335 Ridgewood Avenue

Wendell M. Strong  
Mathematician  
175 Ridgewood Avenue

Johnson Martin  
General Manager, General Motors  
65 Ridgewood Avenue

Frederick Ballard Williams  
Artist  
31 Highland Avenue

Conrad Rossi-Diehl  
Artist  
42 Hawthorne Avenue

Jean Christie Root  
Educator/Author  
159 Ridgewood Avenue

Clemens Herschel  
Hydraulic Engineer  
152 Ridgewood Avenue

Francis Horace Teall  
Lexicographer  
93 High Street

A. M. Reynolds  
Park Engineer  
45 Douglas Road

Charles Lowell Cooder  
Clergyman  
14 Hamilton Road

Robert Sterling Yard  
Editor, Century magazine  
41 Douglas Road

Lawrence Perry  
Journalist/Author  
12 Rudd Court

George Earp-Thomas  
Bacteriologist  
258 Washington Street

Abijah R. Brewer  
Vice President, Western Union  
36 Highland Avenue



Hermann Zapf (1918–2015)

## A Giant of Typography

HERMANN ZAPF WAS not a resident of Glen Ridge, but we at *The Gaslamp* owe a special debt to him. You are reading this item as your eyes are flowing across the individual letters in a typeface called Palatino. It was designed by Hermann Zapf, who died this past June 4 in Darmstadt, Germany, at the age of 96.

Although few readers are aware of the names and designers of the type they regularly read, in the world of typographic design Zapf was, in the words of the *New York Times* obituary writer, Bruce Weber, a “giant.” Born in Nuremberg in 1918, he designed his first type in 1938 for a foundry in Frankfurt. In 1948 he created the initial version of Palatino, named for the Italian writing master of the 16th century, Giambattista Palatino. Zapf went on to design many other types that are still widely used, such as Optima, which is remarkable for how it subtly suggests the bars or “serifs” at the top and bottom of letters, without actually having these serifs. Optima was used for the names on both the Vietnam Veterans

Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C., and the 9/11 Memorial in Lower Manhattan.

In the early 1960s Zapf realized that computers offered a high level of precision in type design. Finding no interest in Germany, he came to the U.S. and was enthusiastically received and offered many opportunities. He decided to live in Germany, while commuting to the U.S., and remained active well into his 90s. He gained worldwide recognition in 1985, when Apple incorporated the PostScript page description language into its LaserWriter printer. Built into the printer were three type families designed by Zapf: Palatino, Zapf Chancery, and Zapf Dingbats. The latter gave computer users easy access to ornaments that printers had used for centuries.

The *Times* obituary also quoted Matthew Carter, a typographic designer and recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the so-called genius award, in 2010: “Last Thursday, all the rest of us moved up one.... That’s my way of saying Hermann was on top.” **Herb Addison**



Hermann Zapf in 2007. Photo courtesy of Lovibond on Wikimedia Commons



# GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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*The Stewarts of Glen Ridge*

## Gardens, Golf Clubs, and Guilds

A YEAR AGO I had never heard of Glen Ridge, let alone been aware of my ties to the town. Earlier this year, however, I was contacted by two local historians who were searching for photos of my great-grandparents' homes in Asharoken, N.Y., and on Block Island, R.I. All of a sudden, the boxes of trinkets, letters, and photographs I had dutifully carried from house to house over the past 15 years became what my sister and I refer to as our rabbit hole. We got lost for hours or days in the world of our family's past. Every answered question unlocked one mystery, while causing several others to emerge. It was there I discovered 335 Ridgewood Avenue in Glen Ridge and my family members who once lived there.

The home on the picturesque lot was a three-story Victorian with a large, inviting porch. Many of the photographs reveal scenes of family and friends gathered on the veranda. The greenhouse and carefully selected plantings were telltale signs of the passion of its residents. From 1892 until the era of World War I, this was the home of John Wood Stewart; his wife, Laura Safford Stewart; their adopted sons, Lewis and Pliny; and John's sister, Carrie Stewart. While the house and the people who lived there are gone, their legacy of civic involvement lives on. Born in 1856 in New York City, John Wood Stewart was the son of businessman Asa B. Stewart. He started as an errand boy for a dry-goods wholesaler, rose through the ranks at a succession of firms, and eventually acquired a controlling share of the Phillipsburg Silk Mill, which he merged

with other mills to create the Stewart Silk Company.

John's equally successful wife, Laura, was born in 1847 in Evansville, Ind., to Myron Webb Safford and Lucretia P. Morton. Myron was a Presbyterian preacher and schoolteacher who was an early adopter of school

gardens. Lucretia was the sister of Levi Parsons Morton, a politician who served as U.S. Vice President in the 1880s. Her father's passion and her mother's connections set Laura on a career path to become a philanthropist. In 1885, while living in Philadelphia, she learned of the Needlework Guild of England, which helped disaster victims by sewing clothing. She gathered her friends to found a similar group. From modest beginnings, the Needlework Guild of America has collected hundreds of thousands of garments for those in need, and it is still active to this day.

John and Laura married the following year at ages 30 and 39, respectively. Glen Ridge made a logical place for the couple to live, being located between John's office in New York City and his factory in Easton, Pa. The couple adopted Lewis from a family in Virginia and Pliny from one in Minnesota. Census records corroborate that both boys were raised in Glen Ridge.

As ambitious as he was, John wasn't all work. Golf was his game of choice, and on October 10, 1894, he and 13 other local

golfers assembled at his house to establish the Golf Club of Glen Ridge. The area near the intersection of Ridgewood and Bay avenues was the site of the original nine-hole course; the clubhouse was located on what is now



*John Wood Stewart, circa 1915, and Laura Safford Stewart, circa 1895, courtesy of the author*



Oxford Street. The clubhouse moved to its current location in April 1911 and was renamed the Country Club of Glen Ridge; it took its current name, Glen Ridge Country Club, in 1920. John and Laura also played an active role in founding the Golf Club of Montclair.

In 1891 Laura was carrying a bouquet to a mission church in the Lower East Side of New York City when a street child requested a flower. The child's delight caused her to consider the joy that flowers from country gardens could provide city dwellers. In 1893 Laura began an experiment in Glen Ridge, involving women moving throughout the community to collect flowers and bring them to city dwellers and those too infirm to leave their homes. Delighted with the results, she again gathered her friends in her Victorian home, and the National Plant, Flower, and Fruit Guild was born. Laura convinced six major freight carriers to transport flower bundles—along with fruits, jellies, vegetables, and plants—for free. The Guild then expanded its focus to cultivating school and children's gardens, installing window boxes in poor neighborhoods, and establishing gardens at army bases. The articles she penned for the Guild include notions that have withstood the test of time, such as encouraging and educating the masses about urban farming and rooftop gardens. Laura and John themselves put

a greenhouse addition on the Ridgewood Avenue home.

With the onset of World War I, both of the guilds refocused their efforts to aid refugees and soldiers in Belgium and France by shipping clothing, medical supplies, and other items. The Bloomfield *Independent Press* named Laura one of the "brainiest" residents of Glen Ridge [see page 2]. After the war, the guilds worked to rebuild the city gardens and orchards of war-torn Saint-Quentin, France. For her efforts, the French government awarded Laura the Médaille d'Or de La Renaissance Française.

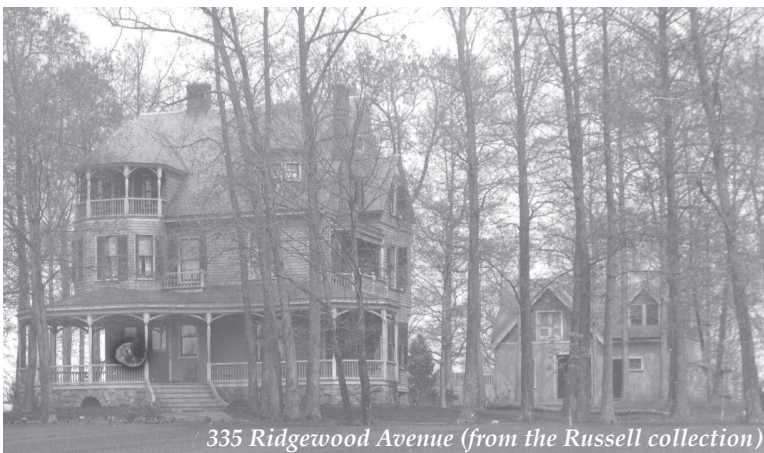
John and Laura moved to the West Village in Manhattan, where he died in 1922, leaving control of his firm to his sons. (The Easton mill has long since closed, but the buildings still stand.) Laura died in 1931. Their former residence in Glen Ridge was torn down in 1924 and replaced with what is now 333 Ridgewood Avenue. As I continue to admire the artifacts they left behind, I revel in the thought that their shared love of a simple day on the veranda and do-good spirit are still very much alive today.

**Jacqueline Stewart Kollinger**

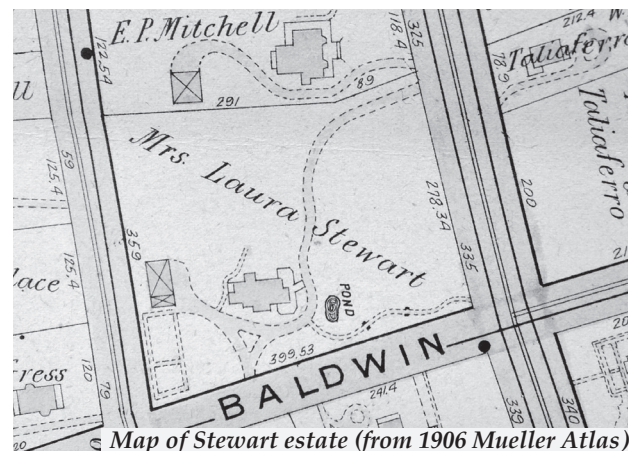
*Jacqueline Stewart Kollinger lives in Highland Park, Ill. She wrote this article with her sister, Sarah Stewart Cunningham, and daughter, Erika Kollinger.*



*The Stewarts, circa 1910,  
courtesy of the author*

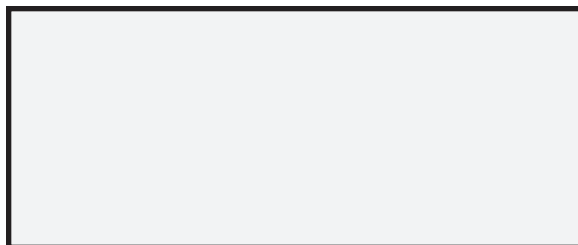


*335 Ridgewood Avenue (from the Russell collection)*



*Map of Stewart estate (from 1906 Mueller Atlas)*

Address Service Requested



**FALL WALKING TOUR  
AT BLOOMFIELD CEMETERY  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2015**

## Events of Interest

**Book signing.** On Saturday, October 3, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Oakeside Bloomfield Cultural Center, 240 Belleville Avenue, local historian Richard Rockwell will be signing copies of his new book, *Bloomfield Through Time*.

Part of the America Through Time series published by Fonthill Media, which specializes in history, *Bloomfield Through Time* includes 192 photographs, including many digitally enhanced from the original century-old negatives. They show the development of the town from a farming community through an industrial center to a mostly residential town—shaped by transportation starting with

the Morris Canal, then electric trolleys and railroads, and then the Garden State Parkway. The images also show the heartbreaking loss of so many large Victorian houses, either demolished to be replaced by apartment buildings or stripped of their character and covered in siding.

Rockwell is co-founder and chairperson of the Bloomfield Morris Canal Greenway Committee. He serves on the boards of the Historical Society of Bloomfield, Bloomfield's Historic Preservation Commission, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Proceeds from the sale of his book will go to the Friends of the Morris Canal Greenway.

**Provocations: The Architecture and Design of Heatherwick Studio.** This exhibition is being held at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum through January 3, 2016. It introduces the imaginative work of British designer Thomas Heatherwick and his London-based studio. Heatherwick is known for his unique design concepts ranging from products, infrastructure, and temporary structures, to large-scale architecture projects around the world. Highlights include:

- The cauldron for the London 2012 Olympic torch

- The Learning Hub at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University
- The 2014 Bombay Sapphire Distillery in Laverstoke, England
- The 2012 redesign of London's double-decker buses, known as the New Routemaster
- Architectural models and large-scale renderings for Pier 55, a public park and performance space to be constructed on Manhattan's West Side
- Demonstrations of the Rolling Bridge, London