



# GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

April 2016 Vol. XXXVIII No. 4



President's Letter

## Saving the 18th-Century Plume House

OUR YEAR is coming to an end. At our upcoming annual meeting, historian and Glen Ridge resident Robin Foster will speak about efforts to stabilize Newark's Plume House. The early 18th-century stone building, one of the oldest extant homes in Newark, is located on the opposite side of I-280 from the Broad Street train station. Its foundation is threatened by road traffic vibration, soon to be exacerbated by the expansion of the Route 21 interchange. On this 350th anniversary year of Newark's founding, Foster will also talk about the James Street Commons Historic District.

Foster received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Rutgers in 2014 and currently teaches world history at Kean University. Her book *The Age of Sail in the Age of Aquarius: The South Street Seaport and the Crisis of the Sixties* was published last month. She serves on the board of the Friends of the Plume House and has worked at other local historical and cultural institutions, such as the New Jersey Council for the

Humanities and the Museum of Early Crafts and Trade.

The event takes place on April 21, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. at the Women's Club of Glen Ridge. We will have a brief business meeting before the lecture to present the budget and elect new officers and trustees.

Next April marks the 40th anniversary of the Glen Ridge Historical Society. I would like to thank current members of our Board of Trustees for their dedication. Once again this year we have succeeded in bringing together people interested in local history, promoting its advancement through education and activities, and fostering the preservation of historic

sites, documents, and artifacts.

If you plan to visit the Terry Webster Museum during open hours on the second Saturday of

each month, feel free to bring your children. They will enjoy looking at our exhibits and seeing early photos of their house. Our selection of children's books about architecture might inspire a budding architect.

**Sally Meyer**



*The Plume House in 1936. From Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Historic American Building Survey NJ,7-NEARK,2-1*

## News and Goings-On

**Annual business meeting.** On April 21 at 7:30 p.m., the Historical Society will hold its annual meeting at the Women's Club, 219 Ridgewood Avenue. Members will vote for new officers and trustees. The nominees are:

President (2016–2018)	Sally Meyer
Secretary (2016–2018)	Megan Blank
Trustee (2016–2019)	George Azrak
Trustee (2016–2018)	Vivian James
Trustee (2016–2019)	Alison Lang
Trustee (2016–2019)	George Musser

**Delegates needed.** The Historical Society is looking for six

delegates to the Civic Conference Committee. The CCC is a volunteer organization of Glen Ridge residents that meets monthly to review, nominate, endorse, and support candidates for local elective office. For more information, visit [glenridgeccc.org](http://glenridgeccc.org). The Historical Society is also looking for a delegate to attend meetings of the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey. If you are interested in either position, please contact Sally Meyer at (973) 239-2674.

**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).

## Defiance Manor

IN 1932 IRENE WARREN, the owner of 928 Bloomfield Avenue—near the site of the Parkway House apartments today—sought permission from the Zoning Board to lease her property to an oil company for a gas station. When the board refused, the battle was on, and “Defiance Manor” soon made the national press.

Warren transformed the sedate house into a hideous eyesore. According to the July 18, 1933, edition of the *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, she smeared her home from eaves to foundation in wavering stripes, swirls, blotches, and daubs of “yellow, jaundiced-looking paint, pink paint, purple paint, paint of a gangrenous hue, and paint of an odious red.” As these images from our collection show, she hung red flannel underwear and other unmentionables from the windows and strung them across the front yard. She adorned the windows with grotesque figures and painted inscrutable messages on the siding. Two policemen were stationed in front of the house to keeping the traffic moving as drivers slowed to gape at the spectacle.

A fast-moving fire on a cold, windy day in January 1934 put the issue to rest. A crowd estimated at more than 1,000 people cheered as the house went up in flames. The next day, children vandalized the house, smashing dishes, ripping upholstery, and jumping on a grandfather clock. Warren stood on the porch and called them ill-bred. She told the *Montclair Times* “she would build a fire-proof house and decorate it worse than the old one with, possibly, a picture of the ‘Seven Little Pigs’ on it.” She and her husband, Daniel, instead moved to Montclair.

Sally Meyer



## GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Officers

President and Town Historian	Sally Meyer
Vice President	Karin Robinson
Secretary	Barbara Kalemkerian
Treasurer	Rick Weber
Library Director (ex officio)	Jennifer Breuer

### Trustees

George Azrak (2016)	Kevin Sherry (2017)
Alison Lang (2016)	Megan Blank (2018)
George Musser (2016)	Meghan Labot (2018)
Megan Connolly (2017)	David Taylor (2018)
David Doernberg (2017)	

### THE GASLAMP

Editor	George Musser
Editor Emeritus	Herb Addison

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Stained Glass Windows

## Stories in a Sunbeam

SINCE THE CORNERSTONE was laid for the Glen Ridge Congregational Church in 1889, the building has undergone several transformations, not least the installation of stained glass windows. Originally all the windows in the sanctuary

ary were made of diamond glass, the remaining example being a small cross above the northeast window. In 2008 the church restored the Doane and Meeker windows, covering them with tempered glass. **Geoffrey Darby**



**Doane Window.** The first window was installed in 1912 on the southwest wall. Designed by the famous glassmaker Louis Comfort Tiffany, it was a memorial to Mary Moffett Doane, great-granddaughter of local mill owner James Moffett, and her mother Harriet Norris. Allegorical figures represent Faith, Hope, and Charity. Several sections display the plating technique that Tiffany was famous for, using multiple layers to achieve unique colors and textures.



**Minasian Window.** Installed in 1935 in the northeast wing, facing Clark Street, this window is a memorial to Sophie Minasian, who lived at 10 Clark. The figures represent Righteousness, Truth, and Beauty. One panel shows the image of a woman teaching a child and holding a Bible, recognizing the Minasian family tradition of presenting a Bible each year to a church school class. The window was designed by Clement Heaton in Valley Cottage, N.Y.



**Meeker Window.** Installed in 1959 across from the Minasian Window, the next window was designed by Glen Ridge resident Maxwell Kimball, an architect, sculptor, and musician. It was a memorial to Martha Rolands Meeker, a longtime church member and avid gardener; and the window depicts clematis, trumpet vines, candleberry bells, and other flowers she grew. This window was built by FX Zettler Company of Munich, Germany, noted for creating the Munich Style, in which the scenes were painted on larger sheets of glass and then fused to the glass by firing in intense heat.



**Salter Window.** Installed in 1964 on the west wall, this window was in memory of John Lowe Salter Jr. It shows a bright Nativity scene and was designed by Frederick Cole of Canterbury, England, who directed the restoration of the stained glass in Canterbury Cathedral in the early 1970s. The window was built by the Franz Mayer Studio of Munich, successor to the FX Zettler Company. The Munich Style allowed for a blending of colors not attainable by the old medieval style, in which any change of color in a scene required a separate piece of colored glass. The design camouflages the leaded seams.



**Leverage Window.** Also installed in 1964 was the smaller square window near the south lawn entrance, given by Edith Ann Leverage in memorial to her parents. Designed by Kimball, it depicts a phoenix and flowers like those of the Meeker Window.



**Klemtner Window.** The final window was installed in 1965 on the northwest wing as a gift from Mary and Paul Klemtner. Also designed by Cole, it depicts Jesus teaching his message to people of all races all over the world. A globe at the top reinforces this message.



*Remnants of 18th-Century Bloomfield*

## On the Banks of the Morris Canal

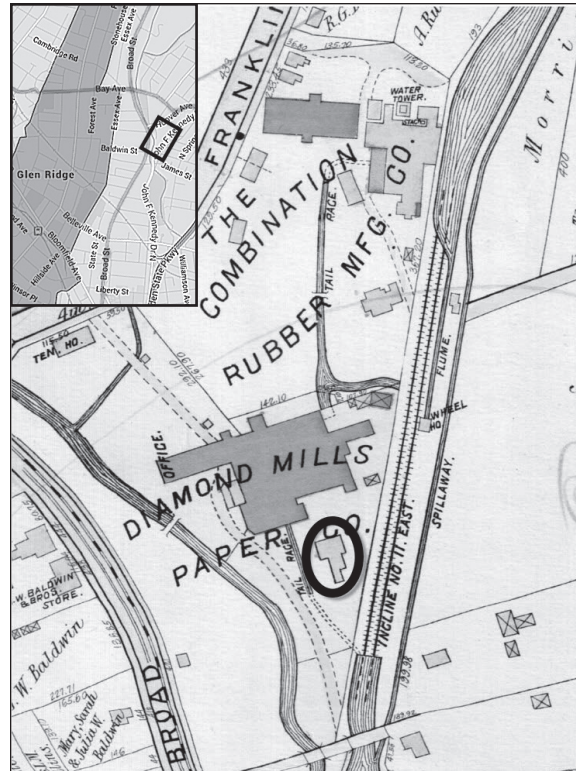
TUCKED BETWEEN BROAD Street and John F. Kennedy Drive in Bloomfield, fenced off and unknown even to many long-time residents, is one of our area's most significant historical sites: the Collins House. Few other local homes have survived from the 18th century, let alone one that played such a pivotal role in the operation of the Morris Canal, among the engineering marvels of its day. Though abandoned, dilapidated, and vandalized, the house still retains much of its original fabric and its setting along the banks of Third River. Through the efforts of Bloomfield council member Carlos Pomares and mayor Michael Venezia, the town covered it with tarps in 2014 and added roofing in 2015 to arrest its decline until those of us working to save the house can raise enough money to complete its restoration. Our efforts took a leap forward this past November when the house was officially added to the State Register of Historic Places.

Built around 1790 by John Collins, an immigrant from Ireland and a Revolutionary War veteran, the house is a rare surviving example of an architectural style called East Jersey Cottage, a hybrid of Dutch and English heavy timber framing. The style is distinguished by one and a half stories with a front gable roof

over a three-bay façade. In 1820 John's son, Isaac, built an addition in the same style. The house originally sat on 11 acres of farmland, but the area rapidly became industrialized. Third River—so named because it is the third tributary of the Passaic River, counting up from Newark Bay—provided hydropower for a string of mills. Part of the Collins property was flooded as a mill pond through much of the 1800s.

In 1824 Isaac Collins sold a little over two acres of his tract to the Morris Canal and Banking Company. It became the site of one of the canal's most remarkable features, Inclined Plane 11 East. Normally a canal uses locks to handle a change in elevation, but locks are practical only for rises or drops of about 10 feet, and the Morris Canal had to climb a total of 914 feet from Jersey City to its highest point near Lake Hopatcong. Instead the canal relies on inclined planes.

Inclined Plane 11 East—the 11th counting eastward from Lake Hopatcong—was designed by Bloomfield resident Ephraim Morris. His design won an engineering competition and was awarded a patent. It even made the front page of *Scientific American*. The system was essentially a giant cable car. It operated by water power from the ca-



*Collins House (circled) on the 1906 Mueller Atlas. Today the inclined plane is J.F.K. Drive, Diamond Mills is Kinder Towers, Combination Rubber is a condo complex, and Franklin Avenue is Hoover Avenue. Inset from Google Maps*

*Collins House in the 1960s. The right section dates to circa 1790, the left to 1820. Photo from Bloomfield Cultural Resource Survey, 1982.*



*The house today. The Township of Bloomfield has added a new roof to the main house and covered the remainder with tarps.*



nal itself. At the top, a flume channeled water into a plane house, where it spun a turbine that hoisted a cable up or down the slope. The boat rode on a flatbed cradle, and the trip lasted four minutes, ascending or descending 54 feet over a linear distance of 1,600 feet. The plane was much faster and more compact than an equivalent series of locks.

In addition to providing land for the canal, Isaac Collins and his son, John, were carpenters on the project. They built and maintained the plane as well as bridges, boats, and aqueducts. The family sold the house in 1891 to the adjacent paper mill. A succession of paper mills used the house as caretaker's quarters until the last, Marcal Paper Mills, sold the property to the Township of Bloomfield in 1981. A cultural resource survey determined the house to be historically significant, so the town kept it and sold the adjacent property for a senior residence, which became known as Kinder Towers. The last Marcal caretaker, Ollie Kemp, and his wife lived in the house until 2004. After they moved out, the house was left empty and quickly deteriorated.

When the Morris Canal was abandoned in the 1920s, the town bought the right of way in hopes of building a high-speed trolley system. The transit system was never constructed and the land remained vacant until the 1950s,

when it was used for the Morris Canal Highway, now J.F.K. Drive. The street follows the path of the canal from Liberty Street to Hoover Avenue. The curves near Foley Field trace the original topographic contours, and the slope from Baldwin Street to Hoover Avenue was the site of the inclined plane.

Throughout the state, volunteers have organized to preserve what remains of the canal. In 2015 Bloomfield designated the path of the canal through the town as a greenway and formed the Morris Canal Greenway Committee.

It and a nonprofit group, Friends of the Morris Canal Greenway in Bloomfield, have been working to stabilize and restore the Collins House. We hope to make it the centerpiece of the greenway in Bloomfield, with space for public meetings, exhibits, and a caretaker's residence.

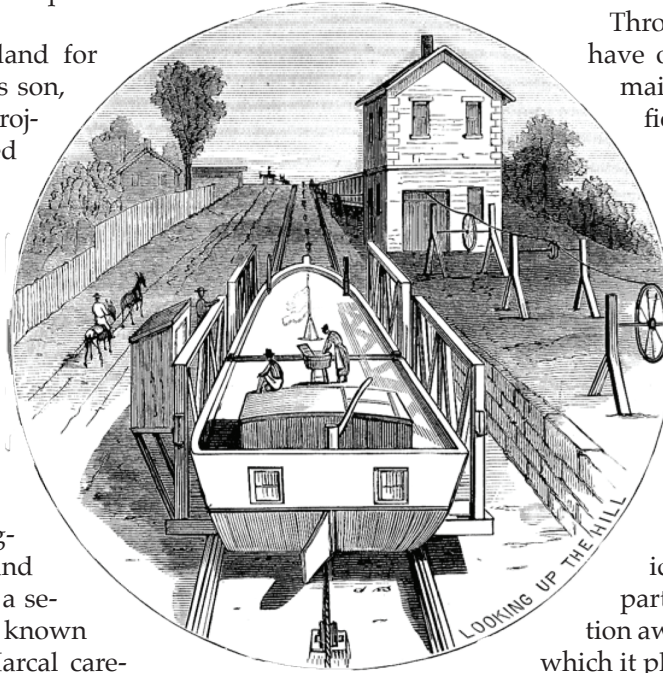
In February, the state Department of Environmental Protection awarded the town a \$24,000 grant, which it plans to use for wayfinding signs and historical interpretive kiosks along the path of the canal, keeping the history alive.

If you'd like to learn more about the house or contribute to the preservation efforts, visit our website, [CollinsHouse.org](http://CollinsHouse.org).

**Richard Rockwell**

Rockwell is chair of Bloomfield's Morris Canal Greenway Committee and author of *Bloomfield Through Time* (Fonthill Media, 2015). His next walking tour of the Morris Canal is Saturday, April 30. To sign up, email [MorrisCanal@gmail.com](mailto:MorrisCanal@gmail.com).

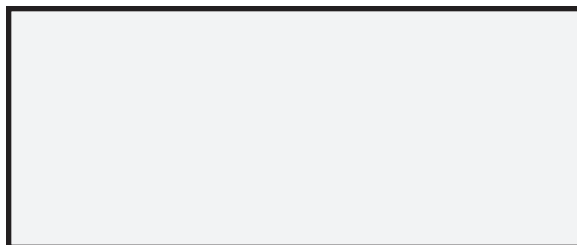
*The Bloomfield inclined plane, from Scientific American, May 20, 1882*



*Postcard from circa 1910 shows the foot of the inclined plane near the Baldwin Street bridge. The Collins House (arrow) is left of the bridge.*



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**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 7:30 P.M.**  
**WOMEN'S CLUB OF GLEN RIDGE**

## Current Events

**Guggenheim Museum.** The Guggenheim has prepared a multimedia guide to the architecture of its Frank Lloyd Wright building. Designed especially for children aged 7 to 12, it explores the landmark structure from various points of view and helps kids to discover locations and architectural features, including the exact center of the rotunda and a staircase shaped like a football. The guide is available on devices borrowed free at the museum or for download on visitors' personal devices.

**MoMA.** *A Japanese Constellation: Toyo Ito, SANAA, and Beyond* runs through July 4. The exhibition explores the work of Pritzker Prize-winning architects Toyo Ito and Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates (SANAA), as well as the network of architects that has developed around them. It

features 44 designs ranging from houses to museums, including Ito's renowned library and art gallery in Sendai (*right*)—tracking his career and his influence as a mentor to a new generation of Japanese architects. Their collaborative approach provides an alternative model to the star-architect system that dominates the profession today.

**Brooklyn Museum.** Up on the fourth floor is a group of 23 American period rooms ranging from the 17th to the 20th century. Interspersed with them are galleries that display an outstanding collection of American and European decorative arts. It's a unique opportunity to see the evolution of American interiors through the centuries—and, by inference, the evolution of domestic family life.



*Toyo Ito's Mediatheque in Sendai, Japan.*  
Photograph © Naoya Hatakeyama.  
Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art