



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

April 2017 Vol. XXXIX No. 4



President's Letter

In Remembrance of Those Who Came Before

HAVE YOU EVER looked at one of the many bronze plaques in Glen Ridge and wondered whom it is memorializing? It's somewhat ironic that many of those men and women found worthy of recognition are now unknown. At our annual meeting on April 20, I plan to reintroduce you to those who have been honored by our community for their civic contributions.

The meeting will take place at 7:30 in the Mary Raymond Room at the Women's Club of Glen Ridge. A festive celebration of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the historical society will follow the meeting. Come join us as we cut the birthday cake and raise a cup of tea to our successful endeavors!

Before my presentation, we will hold a brief business meeting to review the budget and elect new members of the Board of Trustees. After a year's hiatus, we will once again announce the winner of the annual Preservation Award.

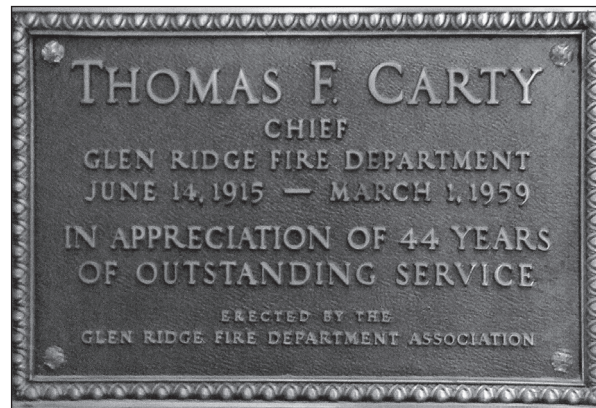
We are very excited to announce a new initiative to recognize houses in the historic district. At the town Arts Festival/Eco Fair on May 13, we will begin taking orders for in-

dividually customized bronze plaques that include the year of a home's construction. The plaques can be affixed to any surface and will be delivered in approximately six weeks. The cost is \$180.

With this issue, Herb Addison regrettably informs he is too busy to continue writing his column on local historic and artistic events (see page 6). Herb has been a member of the Historical Society for all 40 of its years, served as *Gaslamp* editor from 2008 to 2013, and contributed the events column even after moving out of Glen Ridge. He tells us he is consumed with a historic-preservation project. We will miss him.

In closing, I would also like to thank the members of the Board of Trustees for their enthusiastic participation this year in all of our efforts. Two gentlemen in particular who are leaving the Board deserve special praise: David Doernberg and Kevin Sherry. They each brought passion, creative ideas, diligence, and humor to their role as trustees. Meetings just won't be the same without them.

Sally Meyer



News and Goings-On

Annual business meeting. On April 20 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:

Vice-President (2017–2019)	Karin Robinson
Secretary (2017–2019)	Megan Blank
Trustee (2017–2020)	Megan Connolly
Trustee (2017–2020)	Jennifer Janofsky
Trustee (2017–2020)	Toni Murphy

Historic District house plaques. Come to our table at the Arts Festival/Eco Fair on Ridgewood Avenue on May 13 to see a sample Historic District plaque and order one that is customized for your house. The price is \$180 for members. You will need to specify the construction year, but we

are happy to guide you upstairs to our museum to comb through your house history file for this information. Because most of our records give only an estimate of the date, the plaque will state "circa."

Museum hours. Located above Boiling Springs Savings Bank, the Terry S. Webster Museum is open the second Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to noon or by appointment with Sally Meyer at (973) 239-2674. It maintains an architectural and historical file on every house in the Historic District, including old documents and photographs. The museum also features exhibits of town history.



The Historical Society Turns 40

LIKE MANY FANCIFUL decisions in life, the one to form our historical society was made over cups of tea. A small group of socializing preservationists decided in early 1977 to act on an idea they'd been talking about for months. Present on that chilly January day were Jim Brydon, Joann Dixon, Annis Popoff, Terry Trimble, Terry Webster, and Syd Wilson. On April 6, they signed the papers of incorporation for the Glen Ridge Historical Society.

A month later, Terry chaired the first official public meeting at the Municipal Building. She described her vision of the historical society as "an informal, fun organization" whose immediate goal was establishing an historic district. First-year events included an archeological dig in the Glen, a fundraising auction, and a presentation on home restoration. Her future plans envisioned a commitment to ongoing historical research and a museum room with house files and artifacts. She ended her remarks with one of her familiar nudges: "Did you double-up in driving to get here? Historians are usually conservationists!"

Since that meeting, we've spent 40 years living up to Terry's expectations. An historic district on both the state and national registers was approved in 1982 and expanded in 1989. The town passed a local historic-district ordinance in 1987. We've had fun at member-prepared luncheons, Victo-

rian teas, walking tours, holiday parties, craft classes, photo contests, and bus trips. Guest speakers have enlightened us about costume jewelry, the Columbian Exposition, 19th-century

architecture, pottery, landscape design, and Stanford White.

We have promoted our mission to advance the study of local history through slide lectures, school presentations, our website, an historic-district brochure, a quarterly newsletter, and a centennial history. Comprehensive exhibits have showcased mayors and council members, those we honor on Memorial Day, street names, quilts, architecture and artists, business and industry, and Home Front Glen Ridge. Historical research is behind all of these efforts. Eight of the original members are still active: Herb Addison, Paul and Elizabeth Baker, Joan Hayes, Jean Morrow, Cherry Provost, George Webster, and Audrey Wood.

Through the generosity of members and friends, we've managed to pay for two historic-district applications, the conservation of several paintings and atlases, the restoration of the Sunnycrest Gates, preservation materials for the Russell photographs, and the establishment of the Terry S. Webster Museum. We grant an annual Preservation Award and publish a resource guide for home renovation. We look forward to many more years of fun!

Sally Meyer



Article announcing the formation of the Glen Ridge Historical Society in The Glen Ridge Paper, September 9, 1977. Reprinted with permission from Worrall Community Newspapers, Inc./The Glen Ridge Paper



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Officers

President and Town Historian	Sally Meyer
Vice President	Karin Robinson
Secretary	Megan Blank
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THE GASLAMP

Editor	George Musser
Editor Emeritus	Herb Addison

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A Classic of the Second Empire Style

In the last issue, local architect Karin Robinson inaugurated her new column. For each issue, she picks one of her favorite houses in town and explains her choice. We invite guest contributors. If a house strikes your fancy, contact us at glenridge-hs@gmail.com.

George Musser

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 58 Glen Ridge Avenue. It is believed to have been built in the 1860s and was originally located near either Hurrell Field or the Municipal Building. That makes it one of the oldest surviving houses in Glen Ridge. It was moved to its current site in 1885, displacing an earlier house at that location.

58 Glen Ridge Avenue is one of very few French Second Empire-style houses in Glen Ridge. Second Empire houses are often large and imposing, but this one is quite modest, with only one and a half stories. Its characteristic mansard roof, borrowed from French architecture of the time, has a steep lower roof with dormer windows, which allows for usable space on the second floor, topped by a very flat hipped roof. This second roof is usually difficult to see from the street.

The wonderful square cupola on top has survived, allowing light to shine down into the central stair hall. The cupola is actually more typical of the contemporaneous Italianate style. Together, the Second Empire and Italianate styles dominated house construction between 1860 and 1880. They were admired for their European lineage and picturesque appearance.

The porch columns are certainly not original, but they are quite old. In the early 20th century, the Colonial Revival style of architecture came into fashion. It was so popular that many people rebuilt the exterior of their now outmoded, seemingly gaudy houses. They were transformed into sober colonial homesteads. There are quite a few houses in Glen Ridge that once had turrets and brackets and now have unremarkable profiles and symmetrical fronts. Slender classical columns were often used beside doors or

on porches as they are here. The original porch posts were certainly more ornate—in the style of 92 Glen Ridge Avenue, for example.

The first-floor windows come down to the floor and can be opened as doors. This allows easy access from the front rooms to the porch. At that time, a porch was used frequently, effectively becoming another room of the house. In addition, the east and west sides of the house each have a rectangular bay window, which allowed more light into those first-floor rooms.

The second-floor windows have fanciful decoration typical of the period. The arched windows have elaborate frames, with extra layers of moldings around the arches, and the center window gets special ornamentation in the form of an applied gingerbread molding. I find the varied dormers with their carved brackets to be the most charming part of the house. They break the large, monotonous eave of the boxy house and provide an opportunity for more brackets on each side. The windows themselves are very simple, with two panes in the top sash and two in the bottom.

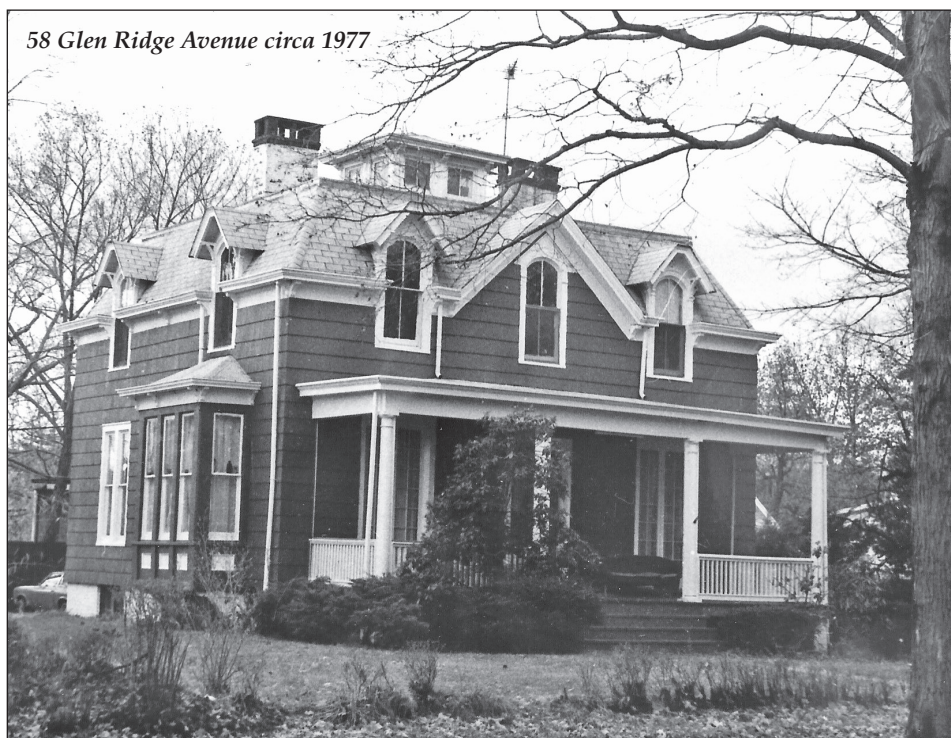
It's not surprising that the original slate or wood shingle roof is gone, replaced by asphalt shingles. It is odd, however, that the house has been re-clad in wooden shingles. The siding should be narrow clapboards with cornerboards. If you look carefully, you can see that the shingles were simply added on top of the clapboards—the window frames and bargeboards right under the eaves are flush with the siding and, in places, set back from the face of the siding. That trim originally stood slightly forward of the siding, giving it more prominence.

I can only surmise what the original porch looked like, as there certainly was one. I would assume it was small, aligned only with the front door, but very elaborate. Other houses on Glen Ridge Avenue, such as #80, have such porches wonderfully restored.

The Second Empire style faded after the 1873 economic depression and, when prosperity returned, the Queen Anne style rose quickly to dominance. You can see plenty of Queen Anne houses in town, but don't miss 58 Glen Ridge Avenue. It is a rare gem.

Karin Robinson

58 Glen Ridge Avenue circa 1977



Escape on Lifeboat #7

IMAGINE YOU WERE able to survive the 1912 *Titanic* disaster, only to be suspected, as a healthy 39-year-old male, of taking the lifeboat place of one of the 166 women and children who perished.

Glen Ridge resident Henry Blank, the original builder and owner, in 1907, of the large Georgian-style home at 138 Ridgewood Avenue and a resident for 42 years, was just this man.

Blank was born in 1872 in Providence, R.I. An eighth-grade education did not stop him from becoming a successful citizen, businessman, and jewelry manufacturer in Newark. He married Phoebe Eve Miller in 1895 and had six sons and a daughter.

To keep ahead of the competitive jewelry market, he traveled often to various countries in Europe to conduct business with stone dealers and watch movement manufacturers.

He was 39 years old in 1912 when he embarked on one such trip. For his return, he booked passage on the *Titanic*'s maiden voyage. He would board at Cherbourg, France. First class, cabin A-31.

At 11:40 p.m. on Sunday, April 14, while playing cards in the smoking

room with two recent acquaintances, he felt a slight "jar," as he later recounted. The ship then came to a stop. The men went down two decks to the squash court and found water rushing in. It was already up to their ankles.

He returned to his stateroom, retrieved a few valuables (although most of his European purchases went down with the ship), put on his life belt at the request of a steward, and proceeded to the deck. The crew were beginning to lower the boats; every woman and child in the area was encouraged to get into one. But there were not enough to fill the boats. Of the 65 openings in lifeboat #7, only 20 were occupied. So, the crew selected eight men to board as oarsmen, and Henry was among them. It was the first lifeboat to leave the ship. Henry got his chance to pull an oar, but only for a short time at the outset, merely "to keep warm."

In those early stages of the disaster, most people didn't think they were in danger. And many women refused to leave without their husbands. Lifeboat #1 rowed off with only 12 people.

Blank and others in his lifeboat thought everyone got off the ship, but later, hearing screams from the *Titanic*, they realized many did not. Blank felt "almost overcome by the horror." The fact that so many were still aboard "left a permanent scar."

The *Titanic* actually carried just 20 lifeboats: two wooden cutters, 14 standard wooden lifeboats, and four collapsible canvas lifeboats. This was far too few for the number of people aboard and, yet remarkably, it was technically

legal; the law at that time based the number of lifeboats required on the gross registered tonnage of a ship, not the passenger capacity.

From a distance of about a mile and a half from the ship, Blank said he "saw her plunge forward then after an explosion of her boilers, she sank." He remembered that there were ice floes everywhere and the water was extremely cold.

Blank's lifeboat was rescued and taken on board by the liner *Carpathia* six hours later. The women were given places in the staterooms and the men bunked in the smoking rooms or on the deck. Phoebe Eve Blank was informed that her husband had survived, but did not believe it until eventually reunited with her husband at the Hotel Seville in New York. She told him he couldn't travel without her on an intercontinental journey again. (Interestingly, they booked passage on *Titanic*'s near-identical sister ship, *Olympic*, a number of times.)

According to a talk by Sam Joseph—a former owner of 138 Ridgewood Avenue, realtor, and *Titanic* collector—the captain of the Bloomfield police sent Blank a congratulatory telegram for surviving.

Blank returned to work in Newark a week later. He never liked to discuss the disaster. In later years, rumors circulated that he had left the *Titanic* dressed as a woman. In 2009 a commenter on a blog about Blank wrote, "How charming the 'brave' Mr. Blank made it into Lifeboat 7 and left other second- and third-class women and children to go down with the ship." Blank fought back against those who gossiped about him.

Phoebe Eve died in 1942 and Henry died from pneumonia on March 17, 1949.

John Debold

John Debold is a board member of the Historical Society of Bloomfield.



Pocket watch that Henry Blank carried on the Titanic. Images courtesy of Samuel Joseph



What's in a Street Name?

The Historical Society's Street Naming Project in 1982 investigated people, places, and institutions behind the naming of local streets. In this and coming issues, we will republish the findings.

SEVERAL STREETS in the south end of Glen Ridge owe their names to the Gallagher family. From 1852 to 1854, the Rev. Joseph S. Gallagher purchased nearly 56 acres in what was then Bloomfield. He lived in a modest farmhouse facing east on Clark Street that was referred to as "Ridgewood." In 1860 the Newark and Bloomfield Railroad built a platform at Prospect Street (now Ridgewood Avenue) and called the stop Ridgewood after the Gallagher homestead. In order to prevent confusion with the town of Ridgewood in Bergen County, the stop was renamed Glen Ridge in 1883.

In 1887 the heirs of the Gallagher property sold 40 acres to the north and west of the homestead to Asabel Darwin, a developer who built 26 houses on Hillside Avenue, Clark Street, Snowden Place, and Woodland Avenue.

Ridgewood Avenue first appears on the 1856 map as Prospect Street. It ran between the Newark and Pompton Turnpike (now Bloomfield Avenue) and the East Orange border, with a wooden bridge over the railroad and Toney's Brook in the Glen. At the time the roadway was mostly dirt with a narrow center aisle of packed gravel and gullies at either side. Sidewalks were either cinders or wooden boards with long intervals of mud in between. The street was widened in 1873 from 60 to 80 feet and extended to Oak Tree Lane (now Watchung Avenue). At the same time the wooden bridge was replaced with a more substantial masonry bridge and its name officially changed to Ridgewood Avenue. For the next 10 years, section by section was macadamized, and by 1917 concrete was laid northward to Bay Avenue.

Darwin Place opened in 1925. When the popularity of the automobile prompted the removal of the porte cochère at the railroad station, the widened path allowed for the construction of this semi-circular one-way street. Darwin Place, of course, is named after Asabel Darwin, the developer who built the nearly Glen Ridge Hall as his offices (now the Boiling Springs Savings Bank) and helped finance the building of the Ridgewood Avenue Railroad Station.

Clark Street is identified on the 1856 map as "Gallagher's Lane." The long narrow path from the Newark and Pompton Turnpike to the Gallagher home passed between two rows of catalpa trees to a bridge over the Glen, through a narrow culvert under the railroad and up the hill to the

homestead. In 1876 Clark Street is mentioned as an existing boundary in the will of Rev. Gallagher. The name was derived from the maiden name of his second wife, Susan Lee Clark of Vermont, whom he married in 1839. In 1889 the Gallagher heirs donated their property on Clark Street for the building of the Glen Ridge Congregational Church. At the same time, the *Bloomfield Citizen* of Jan. 19, 1889, praised Darwin for "the good work of dumping earth into the pest hole" at the junction of Clark Street and the railroad which had "long been an eyesore to all who live in the neighborhood." The street was macadamized in 1897.

Snowden Place was part of the Gallagher property. The street opened in 1883. Snowden was the maiden name of Rev. Gallagher's first wife, Susan Snowden Gallagher of Sackett's Harbor, N.Y., whom he married in 1825. She died in 1837 as her husband was completing his theological studies at Princeton Seminary.

Darwin built the first two houses on Snowden in 1888. The Glen Ridge (Men's) Club was built the same year on Ridgewood Avenue with three tennis courts on the corner of Snowden Place. The Women's Club of Glen Ridge was dedicated in 1925.

Douglas Road was also part of the Gallagher property. The *Bloomfield Citizen* of Oct. 18, 1889, reports that "a new street is being opened in Glen Ridge between Lincoln Street and Woodland Avenue parallel to Ridgewood Avenue." Presumably, the street is named for the son of Rev. Joseph S. Gallagher, Joseph Douglas Gallagher, whose strong arguments as an attorney challenged the plan to secede from Bloomfield in 1895. He lived at 196 Ridgewood Avenue in one of the three houses torn down in 1968 to build the high school. In 1892 Douglas Road was extended to Washington Street. That November the *Bloomfield Citizen* reported that "complaint is made of the shooting of chickens by hunters who traverse the fields west of Douglas Road." In 1919 the street was paved, with concrete curb and gutters installed on both sides.

Marston Place was part of the Gallagher property as well. It opened in the early 1890s and extended into Montclair. It takes its name from the daughter of Rev. Joseph S. Gallagher, Catherine L. Marston. "Kitty" was married to a doctor and lived in Toms River. In 1928 Glen Ridge residents of Marston Place petitioned the Montclair Board of Commissioners to transfer all the property on Marston to Glen Ridge, but nothing came of their request.

Appleton Place was opened in 1889 on Gallagher land. The site included an apple orchard.



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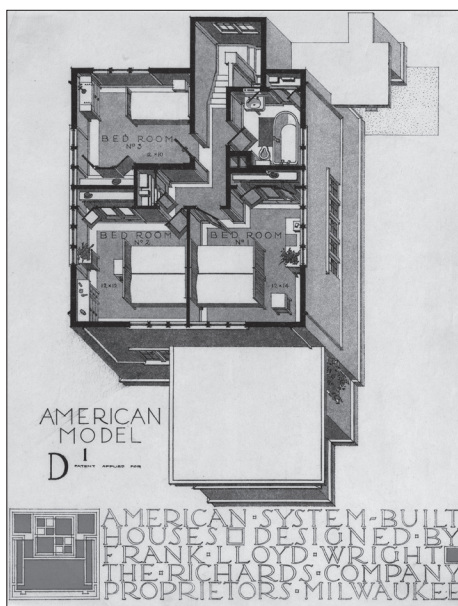
ANNUAL MEETING
THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 7:30 P.M.
WOMEN'S CLUB OF GLEN RIDGE

Current Events

Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive. This exhibition commemorates the 150th anniversary of Frank Lloyd Wright's birth in 1867. It includes 450 works from the 1890s through the 1950s from this prolific and widely influential architect. Items are in many media: drawings, models, building fragments, films, furniture, textiles, paintings, and photographs, among others. Pieces are drawn from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, from the Museum of Modern Art, and from outside collections, including a number of works that have rarely or never been publicly exhibited. The object is to "open up Wright's work to critical inquiry and debate, and introduce experts and general audiences alike to new angles and interpretations of this extraordinary architect." Museum of Modern Art, June 12 through October 1, 2017.

Whitney Biennial 2017. This is the first Biennial at the Whitney Museum in its new Renzo Piano-designed home on the West Side of Manhattan. The mu-

seum points out that it is "the longest running survey of contemporary art in the United States, with a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking lively debate." The exhibit includes 63 artists from emerging (and still not widely known) to established figures and collectives working in many media. Put together by two young curators who, for the first time, are both people of color, it is a must-see for anyone with an interest in the evolution of art. Today's art is a part of tomorrow's history of art. Whitney Museum, ongoing through June 11, 2017.



American System-Built (Ready-Cut) Houses. Project, 1915-17. Model options. Lithographs, each: 11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gifts of David Rockefeller, Jr. Fund, Ira Howard Levy Fund, and Jeffrey P. Klein Purchase Fund