



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

April 2014 Vol. XXXVI No. 4



## President's Letter

### Come Hear Mark Hewitt, Author of *The Vintage House*

OUR FEBRUARY PROGRAM was another terrific event researched and presented by Sally Meyer. Entitled "Architecture 101," it was an introduction to architectural styles and terms, all illustrated with buildings located in Glen Ridge. It was a great reminder of the richness and variety of architecture right here in town. And I was glad to see that the program drew an audience of all ages. I think it's never too soon to start learning about architectural history!

Our next event will be take place on Wednesday, April 23, at 7:30 p.m. at the Women's Club of Glen Ridge. The speaker will be Mark Hewitt, an architectural historian and preservationist based in Bernardsville. He is the author of *The Architect and the American Country House*, *The Architecture of Mott Schmidt*, and, most recently, *The Vintage House* (coauthored with Gordon Bock). Hewitt's books are available at the Glen Ridge Library or through BCCLS. This event will be of interest to anyone living in a vintage house.

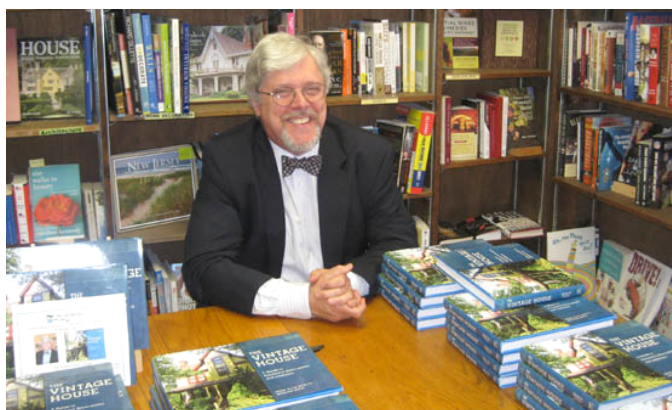
*The Vintage House* is subtitled "A Guide to Successful Renovations and Additions." In it, Hewitt explores ways to create practical yet stylistically appropriate additions to historic houses. He acknowledges the difficulty in upholding the character and integrity of old buildings, and he presents a wide range of information to make it easier. He covers both technical and stylistic issues, such as installing new heating and cooling systems discreetly, se-

lecting authentic materials, and implementing sustainable building practices. He writes: *Most old houses exhibit telltale evidence of service utilities or systems that were state-of-the-art when the house was built but are no longer used and frequently long forgotten. These may be in the form of quirky features or spaces—even whole small rooms—that serve no apparent purpose in today's lifestyles.... Though the passage of time has often mythologized early examples of such features with fanciful purposes—such as calling any small or unusual door or space part of the Underground Railroad—more than likely the origin is far more prosaic and utilitarian.*

The April event will include our brief annual meeting, which includes voting for new officers and trustees (see below). April will mark the end of my term as president. I must give tremendous thanks to Sally Meyer and Alden Provost for their valuable and well-considered advice. I could always turn to them for insight and assistance. I must also thank Herb Addison and George Musser, who have taken our humble newsletter and expanded it into a valuable and relevant source of information and enjoyment. They've made a huge contribution to our society and its members.

I expect to continue hosting the museum open hours. It will be open again on April 12 and May 10. I have really enjoyed meeting the many visitors and am continually impressed by how much Glen Ridge residents love their houses.

**Karin Robinson**



## News and Goings-On

**Historical Society business meeting.** At our annual meeting on April 23, members will vote for new officers and trustees. The nominated individuals are:

President (2014–2016)	Sally Meyer
Secretary (2014–2016)	Barbara Kalemkerian
Trustee (2014–2017)	David Doernberg
Trustee (2014–2017)	Kevin Sherry
Trustee (2014–2017)	Megan Connolly
Ex Officio Member	John Baker

John Baker is our delegate to the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey.

**Museum hours.** Located above Boiling Springs Savings Bank, the Terry S. Webster Museum Room is open the second Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to noon or by appointment with Sally Meyer at (973) 239–2674.

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

**Facebook.** Visit us on Facebook for news, event notices, or just to Like us. [facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety).

News From the Town Historian

## The Closest We Have to a Time Machine

THE GLEN RIDGE Public Library has a remarkable collection of historical photos that let us travel into our town's past. The core of the collection was assembled in the 1940s by Frank E. Barrows. Barrows was born in Augusta, Maine, in 1889 and moved here with his wife, Susan Johnson Barrows, in 1923. They lived first at 79 Ridgewood Avenue and later at 21 Hillcrest Road. They were the parents of six children. Having studied both chemical engineering and law, Barrows practiced patent law in New York City and held several chemical patents in his own name.

As Glen Ridge councilman from 1930 to 1936, Barrows chaired the committee for the planning and construction of the municipal building. He served as 12th mayor

*Barrows Collection image number 13, showing Moffett's Mill*

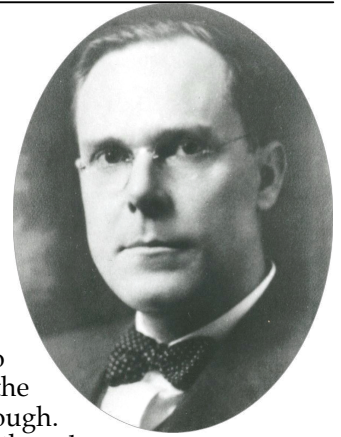
of Glen Ridge from 1936 to 1940. For the first two years of his term he oversaw the building of the U.S. Post Office on the site of the former Glen Ridge Men's Club.

In 1945 Mayor George Minasian asked Barrows to chair a committee to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the borough. As part of his efforts, he gathered hundreds of photographs of early Glen Ridge and made them into 350 glass lantern slides. They included scenes of mills, the glen, railroad stations, schools, churches, social clubs, and public buildings.

There were also pictures of police, firemen, soldiers, and schoolchildren. The photographs of student athletes on display at Fitzgerald's 1928 Restaurant are reproductions from this collection.

On his death in 1962, Barrows left the slides and 50 additional photographs to the Glen Ridge Public Library as the Barrows Collection. Two years later, as part of the borough's participation in the New Jersey State Tercentenary Celebration, the town historian, Syd Wilson, indexed and catalogued the collection. In order to make the images easier to view and present, he made film negatives, contact prints, and 35-millimeter slides of the original glass slides. Wilson also decided to incorporate other images into the collection. Today it includes some 1,000 photographs. (A second collection organized by Wilson, containing a photograph by Nathan Russell, an early realtor, contains about 1,500 images.) All are available for public viewing on the library's digital archive, preserving the visual history of our town.

Sally Meyer



Frank Barrows



# GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Officers

President	Karin Robinson
Vice President	Sargent Gardiner
Secretary	Barbara Kalemkerian
Treasurer	Alden Provost
Past President (ex officio)	Marc Levinson
Library Director (ex officio)	Jennifer Breuer
Town Historian	Sally Meyer

### Trustees

John Baker (2014)	David Taylor (2015)
David Doernberg (2014)	Nelle Jennings (2016)
Andrew Grisafi (2014)	Alison Lang (2016)
Meghan Labot (2015)	George Musser (2016)
Elizabeth Baker (2015)	

### THE GASLAMP

Editor	George Musser
Editor Emeritus	Herb Addison

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## Historic District Expansion

## Completing the Preservation of Glen Ridge

THIS SPRING THE Borough Council will hold a public hearing to discuss enlarging the Glen Ridge historic district for the second time since it was established in 1980. Last month the borough sent certified letters to property owners affected by this proposed change. The expansion has been in the works for several years. The town hired a consultant and prepared the application, and in 2012

the district stretched from Washington Street on the south to Bay Avenue on the north. In 1988 it was extended to Carteret Street on the south and Stephen Street on the north. This area constitutes one of the largest historic districts in New Jersey and includes houses from 1827 through 1935, a period over which the town grew from an agrarian community to a robust suburb.

The current proposal, known as Boundary Increase #2, would cover nearly the entire town. The northern section begins at the Glen Ridge Country Club and includes the blocks north from Yantecaw Avenue to Watchung Avenue and east along Stonehouse Road. The Glen Ridge Country Club is specifically commended for its original central section. The blocks north and east of the country club include an eclectic mix of Dutch Colonial, Tudor, and Colonial Revival styles. More recent styles such as post-World War II Cape Cod are also now included in the district.

The southern portion includes Ridgewood Avenue almost as far south as Reynolds Road. To the west it includes Willow Street, Cross Place, and Reynolds Avenue; to the east, Victor and Sommer avenues. Hawthorne Avenue contributes Cape Cod-style houses built in the 1940s. The eastern blocks have a series of small-scale box-type Colonials and veneered Tudor Revival style houses. To the west, several houses have Craftsman Style details such as bracketed rafter tails and stained glass windows. (Chestnut Hill Place is not part of the expansion.)

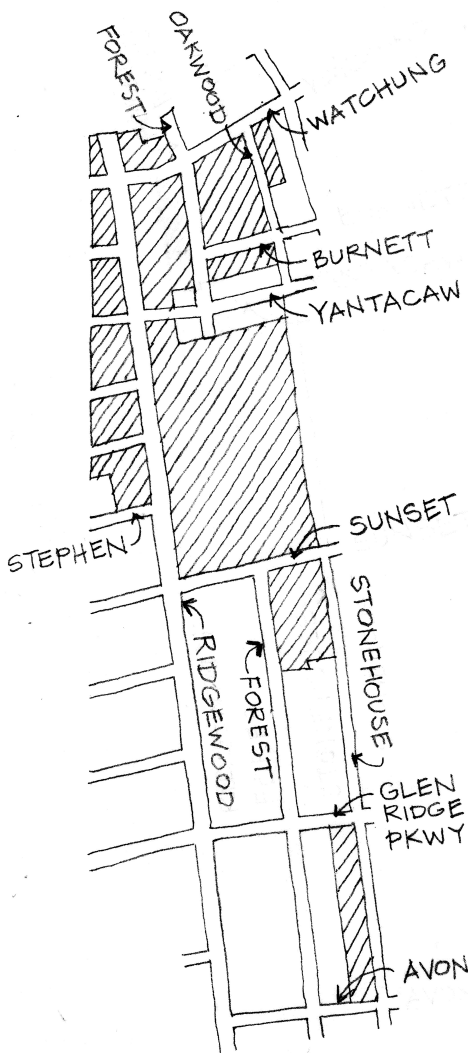
Boundary Increase #2 generally reflects planned neighborhoods from the '30s and '40s as well as more contemporary postwar houses. These developments reflect the midcentury aspirations of the middle class toward home ownership.

Glen Ridge has long been a pioneer in historic preservation. The Borough Council enacted a building code in 1910 and a zoning code in 1921—among the first in New Jersey. The nation's 1976 bicentennial celebration spurred a new interest in local as well as national history, and the following year, a group of resi-

dents founded the Glen Ridge Historical Society. They were particularly interested in nominating the oldest areas of town for the national and state registers of historic places.

Rather than designate individual buildings for recognition, they proposed identifying entire neighborhoods. In these areas, house façades were aligned, utility poles were located at the back of properties rather than along the curbs, the original cobblestone gutters and bluestone sidewalks remained, and the system of gaslights was still in use.

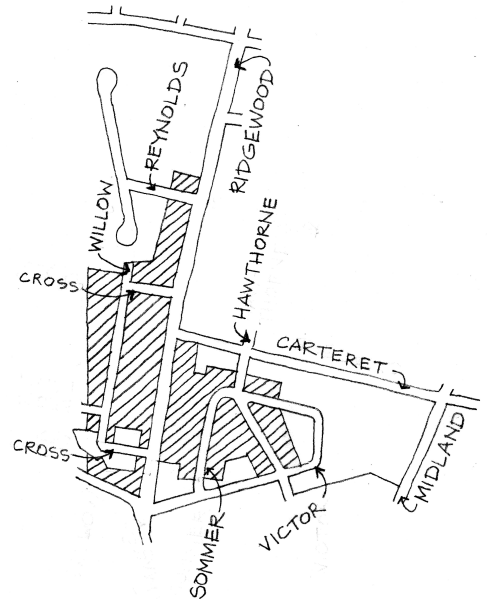
Historical Society members raised money to hire a consultant who could lead them through the complex application procedure. The Borough Council supported the project, but provided no funds. While the



*Proposed North End expansion*

both the state and the U.S. Department of the Interior held public hearings and approved the project.

So why wasn't the entire town included in the historic district from the beginning? Simply put, some neighborhoods weren't old enough. For the state and national registers, the majority of buildings must be more than 50 years old. Originally



*Proposed South End expansion*

consultant prepared a written report, volunteers took on the task of documenting every building within the town limits. All this information is now available for interested residents to view in our museum room.

Once the district became official, the borough took over its management and set up the Historic Preservation Commission to review all visible changes to district buildings. The Society plays no legal role.

For more information on the expansion plans, visit the webpage [glenridgenj.org/hpcexpand.htm](http://glenridgenj.org/hpcexpand.htm).

**Karin Robinson**



## How to Identify Your Home's Architectural Style

*In the last issue, Gaslamp editor George Musser described how you can dig through historical archives to trace the history of your house and its former residents. Here, Historical Society Vice President and architect Sargent Gardiner gets you started on ascertaining your house's architectural history.*

THE GLEN RIDGE that we know today is defined largely by the houses that were built between the Civil War and the Second World War. Three major architectural styles dominate: Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival. Learning to identify the style of your house can connect you to a larger history of economic and artistic currents that transformed the architecture of cities and towns when your house was built.

New industries and railroad networks brought wealth to New Jersey and created a need for places to live. Standardized lumber, wire-cut nails, and labor-saving tools became affordable as they were produced on an industrial scale, stimulating growth in towns such as Glen Ridge. In the 1850s the town's first property developers, Edward Wilde and Asabel Darwin, established the town's two train stations (one of which, Benson Street, has since closed) and sold house lots on nearby lands. Our town's rapid transformation from an agrarian town



VERNACULAR ITALIANATE:  
289 Washington Street (c1850)

on the outskirts of Newark to one of the country's earliest railroad suburbs resulted in a dizzying array of houses. Farmland that was punctuated by simple vernacular farmhouses began to be divided into lots for houses.

**Pre-Civil War.** The Bradbury Langstroth at 289 Washington Street exemplifies the homes that preceded the building boom. Built in the 1850s, this simple design illustrates how prewar carpenters were limited to traditional wood materials and techniques. Characteristic details of this carpenter's style include symmetry of both the exterior façade and the central hall plan, simple classical details, and moldings.

**Queen Anne.** This style provided a flexible, economic, and rapid way for carpenters to take advantage of the new industrial materials. Queen Annes are massed in an asymmetrical way, often with signature turrets and a profusion of different architectural details. Their irregular plans allowed builders to customize houses to owners'



QUEEN ANNE: 74 Douglas Road (1892)

needs. The style is rooted in the English medieval building tradition, and the name refers to the reign of Queen Anne in the 16th century.

Queen Anne houses in Glen Ridge date to 1875 and are concentrated near the train stations. 74 Douglas Road, built in 1880, is a great example. It has a picturesque combination of multilevel roofs with deep overhangs, turrets, projecting bays, and an asymmetrical porch. This irregular composition is reinforced by changes in material that differentiate the parts: brick at the base, horizontal siding above, and a combination of shingle and metal roofs. Details continue the theme: tall chimneys with terracotta panels, small paned windows, and cornice line dentils. The interiors of Queen Annes have similar concepts as the exteriors: asymmetrical, modern plans with rooms adapted to the specific use of each owner. Continuing the theme from the outside, the interiors showcase many different materials.

Many Queen Anne houses have signature classical details that relate them to the later Classical Revival—an example of how boundaries between styles can be fuzzy.

**Colonial Revival.** As Queen Annes proliferated in the 1880s, a new style joined the fray. Architects became enamored of English and Dutch colonial houses on the At-



COLONIAL REVIVAL: 190 Ridgewood Avenue (1898)



lantic seaboard. Their interest culminated in the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago—the famous “White City” where the major architects of the age constructed monumental symmetrical exhibition buildings, complete with the classical columns, pediments, and details found in Georgian buildings of the early colonies.

Colonial Revival houses are found all over Glen Ridge. They have simple geometric massing with symmetrically organized façades. The design emphasizes centered front doors with simple columned porch pavilions. Interiors of these houses are often symmetrical center-hall configurations like those of the Vernacular Italianate; however, classical columns, decorative windows, brackets, and moldings make these interiors far more elaborate. A prime example is 190 Ridgewood Avenue, up the hill and across the street from the Glen Ridge Congregation Church. Built in 1898 and designed by the prominent architect Warrington Lawrence, an alumnus of the great classical firm McKim Mead and White, the house’s simple geometric massing is reinforced by a clearly organized symmetrical façade. The composition is focused at its center with a semicircular porch of columns and classical pediment. Regularly spaced windows, columns, and a unifying cornice complete the composition.

**Tudor Revival.** Even as the Classical Revival was taking hold in the 1880s and ’90s, a third major style of architecture started to appear. The Tudor Revival marked a return to handcrafted domestic architecture, again with English medieval roots. Tudor Revivals are best known for half-timbering, the technique of exposing the dark brown heavy timber frames of the structure, while painting the walls between the structure a contrasting white or cream. Lost from the Tudor Revival are the references to classical Greek and Roman architecture provided by the columns, pediments, and cornices often found in the Queen Anne. Interior layouts are like those of the Queen Anne: asymmetrical with rooms of varying size containing rustic medieval details, such as rough-hewn wood beams, leaded glass windows, and rough-troweled plaster finishes.

Houses in Glen Ridge in this style date to as early as 1890, mostly north of Bloomfield Avenue in areas of town that developed around this time. We can see it well-executed at 140 Forest Avenue: asymmetrical massing, masonry construction, steeply pitched slate roofs, half-timbering concentrated on the upper stories or gable ends, which are often projected over the first floor. Detail-



TUDOR REVIVAL: 140 Forest Avenue (1924)

ing of the house included tall, narrow, multi-pane windows, often in groups and with cast stone trim.

Some Queen Anne houses were Tudorized. 255 Ridgewood Avenue is one example and illustrates how the irregular massing ideas of the two styles are similar, although the detailing vocabulary was far different.

**American Four Square.** This is a smaller house type typical in railroad suburbs. At its simplest, this style incorporates elements of the Prairie and Craftsman styles. The simple square shape takes maximum advantage of narrower lots on side streets. Hipped roofs create eaves on all four sides and help emphasize the square composition. American Four Square houses can adapt elements of the Queen Anne, Classical Revival, and Tudor Revival styles. 292 Ridgewood Avenue, 16 Rudd Court, and 79 Sunset Avenue are delightful examples.



FOUR SQUARE:  
292 Ridgewood Avenue (1901)

So we challenge you to learn the history of your house, when it was built, and its style. Visit the Terry S. Museum Room of the Historical Society and look through the historical file that volunteers have assembled on your house. Successive owners may have demolished or added porches and changed exterior siding and windows, so photographs taken when the houses were first built can help you understand the original style hidden within the house of today.

**Sargent Gardiner**



TUDORIZED QUEEN ANNE: 255 Ridgewood Avenue (1915)



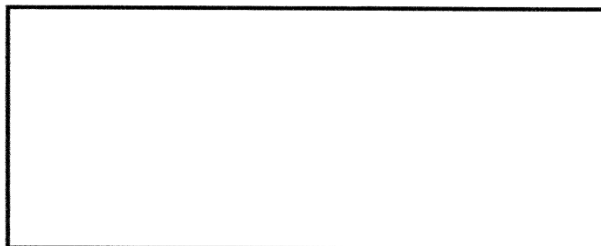
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### Current Events

To May 26, 2014. "American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell." Newark Museum. Though not directly connected to historic preservation, Rockwell's art nevertheless captured images of an ideal past that may or may not have ever existed. The exhibit traces the evolution of Rockwell's art and iconography throughout his career to powerful consciousness-raising images like "The Problem We All Live With" (1964), documenting the traumatic realities of desegregation in the South.

March 26 to September 7, 2014; "Palaces for the People: Gustavino and the Art of Structural Tile." Museum of the City of New York. Throughout the five boroughs are more than 200 long-overlooked marvels of engineering and architectural beauty built by Spanish immigrants Rafael Guastavino, Sr. (1842-1908), and his son, Rafael Jr. (1872-1950). This is a major exhibition exploring the innovations the Guastavino Fireproof Construction Company (1889-1962) brought to the science and art of building.

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### Frank Lloyd Wright and the City

Through June 1, 2014, Museum of Modern Art; "Frank Lloyd Wright and the City: Density vs. Dispersal." Through a selection of drawings, films, and large-scale architectural models, the exhibition examines the tension in Wright's thinking about the growing American city in the 1920s and 1930s, when he worked simultaneously on radical new forms for the skyscraper and on a comprehensive plan for the urbanization of the American landscape titled "Broadacre City." Highlighting Wright's complex relationship to the city, the exhibit reveals Wright as a compelling theorist of both its horizontal and vertical aspects. His work, in this way, is not only of historic importance but of remarkable relevance to current debates on urban concentration.