



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

April 2015 Vol. XXXVII No. 4



President's Letter

## The Photochronicle of Frank Barrows

OUR FEBRUARY PROGRAM was a most enriching presentation by local architect, Mark Wright, who spoke on Shingle Style architecture. His well-researched and often witty talk made experts out of us all on the historical precedents and well-defined characteristics of this often-seen style in Glen Ridge. Thank you, Mark!

In my April 2014 *Gaslamp* column, I wrote about the Barrows Collection of photographs that are housed at the Glen Ridge Public Library. This April, I hope to bring the collection out of the file cabinets and onto the big screen with a slide presentation at our annual meeting on April 23.

Frank Barrows became something of a local history buff while serving as Mayor from 1936 to 1940, and he began to seek out photos of the borough in its early years. He succeeded in making nearly 400 glass slides that he delighted in showing to local gatherings. The images include early scenes with schoolchildren, the mills, and the Glen, along with maps, streetscapes, public officials, and the country club. Upon his death in

1962, both the photographs and the slides were given to the library. Two years later, the public was invited to contribute additional photographs to the collection. At some point, the collection numbered nearly 1,000 photographs,

but unfortunately many of them have disappeared over time.

I hope you can join us for our annual meeting at the Women's Club of Glen Ridge at 7:30 p.m. on April 23, so you can see some of these delightful pictures for yourself. Before the presentation, we will have a brief business meeting to present the budget and elect new officers and trustees. We will also announce the winner of the annual Preservation Award.

Lastly, I am proud to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website, [glenridgehistory.org](http://glenridgehistory.org). My thanks to trustee David Taylor for his talented efforts on our behalf.

Sally Meyer



## News and Goings-On

**Annual business meeting.** On April 23, members will vote for new officers and trustees. The nominees are:

Vice-President (2015–2017)	Karin Robinson
Treasurer (2015–2017)	Rick Weber
Trustee (2015–2018)	Megan Blank
Trustee (2015–2018)	Meghan Labot
Trustee (2015–2018)	David Taylor

**Civic Conference Committee.** 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). If you are interested, 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 (\$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://facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety).

## School Decorations

THE FIRST GLEN RIDGE school opened its doors atop the hillside along Ridgewood and Bloomfield Avenues in October 1900. Not long after, the principal of Central School (as it was then called), Eugene Bouton, looked to advance the aesthetics of the building. In the annual Board of Education report of March 1905, he stated that “the schoolhouse shall be a center of interest and social activity for the neighborhood.” He proposed installing artwork to be enjoyed by both students and adults. For the walls, Bouton envisioned large photographs, paintings, and frescoes of the noblest subjects, and for the hallways, half a dozen or more life-size casts.

In June the graduating class of six students presented a bas-relief of Thorvaldsen’s “Alexander and Victory in Chariot.” By Thanksgiving, a subscription drive by teachers, pupils, parents, and Board of Education members resulted in the purchase of two full-size casts of Venus de Melos and Apollo Belvedere. And in early 1906, Mr. and Mrs. George N. Bliss gave a bas-relief of the western frieze of the Parthenon, which filled 50 feet of space along the western wall of the corridor. (Perhaps as a result of the new decorations, a compulsory course in art history was added to the high-school curriculum.)

Gifts in 1906 and 1907 included six plaster bas-relief panels from the Lucia Della Robbia “Cantoria” or “Singing Galleries” series for the cathedral of Florence. These were installed between the windows of the Assembly Room. In the 1970s the school planned to discard one of these panels, “Nine Children, Three Playing Different In-

struments,” but it was saved by Pat Pignatello in one of his many acts of service to the town (*see image*).

By 1910 the first and second floor corridor walls showcased over 250 linear feet of bas-reliefs that now included the eastern frieze of the Parthenon, Donatello’s “Cherub’s Dancing, and Playing on Instruments” and Thorvaldsen’s “Triumphal Entry of Alexander into Babylon.” Additional full-size casts of King Arthur, Saint George, Minerva, and Augustus Caesar were tucked into prominent corners. Paintings in the classrooms included reproductions of prominent works by Homer, Millet, Bonheur, Murillo, Reynolds, Turner, and Van Dyck. A work entitled “Autumn Oaks” by local artist George Inness was also on display.

As the town grew, these efforts to uplift and inspire students carried over to the furnishings of Linden and Sherman Avenue schools. With money raised from contributions, public entertainments, and payments for the use of school

buildings during elections, these classrooms and corridors were also decorated with ancient, classical, religious, and Romantic statues, photographs, and paintings.

By the 1950s many of these works of art were relegated to the attic. Student lockers filled the spaces where friezes had been installed. Overcrowded hallways put statuary at risk. And the pulls of Modernism probably made the art seem old-fashioned. Now the students themselves would provide aesthetic decoration with a rotating gallery of hallway murals and ever-changing displays of student art on the walls.

**Sally Meyer**



## GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### THE GASLAMP

Editor	George Musser
Editor Emeritus	Herb Addison

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## The First Houses in Glen Ridge

*In 1918 the Glen Ridge Trust Company published a short history of the borough. It was written by Abijah Brewer, founder and president of the bank and second mayor of Glen Ridge. In this and the next several issues of the Gaslamp, we will reprint excerpts and illustrations from this delightful and informative booklet, which remains the definitive account of the early history of the town.*

**Sally Meyer**

IT IS PROPOSED to give a short account of the early settlement of this section of the State with illustrations of the old houses and other structures still standing in Glen Ridge, or which were standing within the memory of those now living. Also to describe briefly some of the steps in progress from early conditions effected by the people as a whole or by groups of citizens acting together.

The Borough of Glen Ridge embraces a tract of land nearly three miles in length and about one-half mile in average width, stretching along a ridge between Bloomfield and Montclair, N.J., and about five miles from the City of Newark. It is crossed, not far from its center, by a deep ravine or glen, through which run a brook and the tracks of the Lackawanna Railroad. Its population is estimated at 4,250. Until twenty-two years ago it formed part of the Township of Bloomfield and, still earlier, of the "Township of Newark." Its early history is therefore bound up with that of these older municipalities and goes back to the early settlements.

The first settlers in this section came from Connecticut and established themselves in Newark in 1666, seeking, as they said, a place "where they might serve God with a pure conscience and enjoy such liberty and privileges, both civil and educational, as might best advantage them." It was characteristic of those times that while the newcomers conceded liberty to the holders of religious views similar to their own, they were not so liberal to others, and early resolved "that none be admitted freeman or free Burgesses within our town upon Passaic River but such planters as are members of some or other of the Congregational Churches." Under the operation of this plan the local government was largely ecclesiastical and the first three pastors of the church at Newark were chosen and paid by

the Town. Some of these pastors, however, were opposed to the mingling of politics and religion, and with their consent and support ecclesiastical requirements were gradually dropped from the administration of local affairs.

The early settlers did not have any serious trouble with the natives, such as happened to those of New York State and New England. The Indians in this section had been reduced by tribal wars and other troubles before the whites arrived, and were few in numbers. It has been stated that the Indians in New Jersey did not at any time after discovery by the whites number over 2,000. From the remnants of the local tribes the first comers bought the land embraced in what is now Newark, Belleville, Orange, Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, and Montclair, paying therefore in guns, powder, axes, coats, pairs of breeches, rum, beer, wampum, etc., the equivalent of \$750. Having thus established their ownership of the land, these pioneers built their homes along or near the Passaic River and by the end of the seventeenth century began to spread out over the land. The first to locate near Glen Ridge took up land on the slope of the mountain in Montclair and along the streams in Bloomfield.

### THE FIRST ROAD.

The first comers opened roads or lanes to suit their convenience and such of these as met community requirements came afterwards to be adopted as public highways. Naturally the first established road was that to the parent settlement of Newark. This dates back to the year

1700 and is said to have followed an old Indian trail from the Passaic River to the interior. Its route from Montclair to Newark pursued the course of what is now Glen Ridge Avenue from Montclair Center to the intersection of Glen Ridge and Bloomfield Avenues; thence via Bloomfield Avenue to its intersection with Park Avenue opposite the Episcopal Church; thence it followed the course of Park Avenue to Broad Street, Broad Street to Franklin Street, and Franklin Street, Second Street, and Belleville Avenue to Newark.

Much later, when the turnpike was built in 1806, parts of the road were thrown out by straightening its course. Among the parts eliminated was the section between Highland



*House built by Colonel Thomas Cadmus for his son Herman [87 Park Avenue]. Colonel Cadmus gave Herman the adjoining farm, which descended to Herman's grandson, Edward S. Wilde. Mr. Wilde in 1870-80 opened streets through the farm and erected numerous dwellings along them. One of the streets, Herman Street, derives its name from Herman Cadmus. The old house was remodeled about twenty years ago and an addition put on the southern end. During the work a stone was taken from the walls and has been preserved which bears the following inscription: Dec. 28, 1798 – Herman and Sally Cadmus.*

*This is believed to be the oldest house now standing in Glen Ridge [demolished in the 1950s]. Photographed 1917.*



Avenue, Glen Ridge, and Montclair Center. This continued to be used as a public street and was called by the appropriate and descriptive name of the “Old Road” until April, 1887, when the residents on the road, feeling that some odium was cast upon by calling it the *Old Road*, petitioned to have the name changed to “Glen Ridge Avenue.”

#### FIRST HOUSES.

The first houses known to have been built in Glen Ridge are indicated on a map made by the late John Oakes of Glen Ridge, showing the locations of the houses in Bloomfield in 1803 and the names of their occupants. There were then only seven dwellings in Glen Ridge and all of them were on the Old Road or Turnpike, or Bloomfield Avenue, as it has been variously called.

Photographs or drawings of some of them were preserved and are shown here. To these are added views of several other prominent houses which were good examples of the better class of dwellings built about three generations ago, but which have been demolished or moved to other locations within the past twenty-five years.

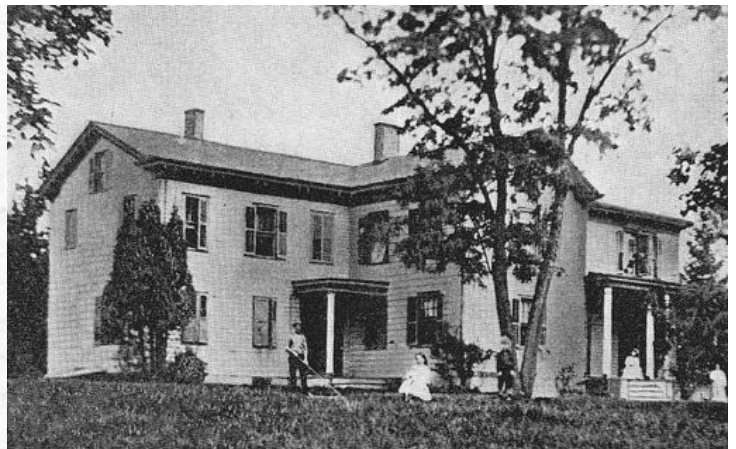
*(To be continued)*



*Gorline Doremus House, formerly on Bloomfield Avenue, opposite the entrance to Highland Avenue. Mr. Doremus for many years maintained a store adjoining his house for the sale of provisions and dry goods. Women came from as far away as Pompton to buy their millinery of him. The store building was demolished many years ago but the residence remained until it was taken down to clear the ground for widening the entrance to [Freeman] Parkway. It was a substantial specimen of American houses of its day with hewn oaken frame, wrought iron nails and open fire places. Photographed about 1913.*



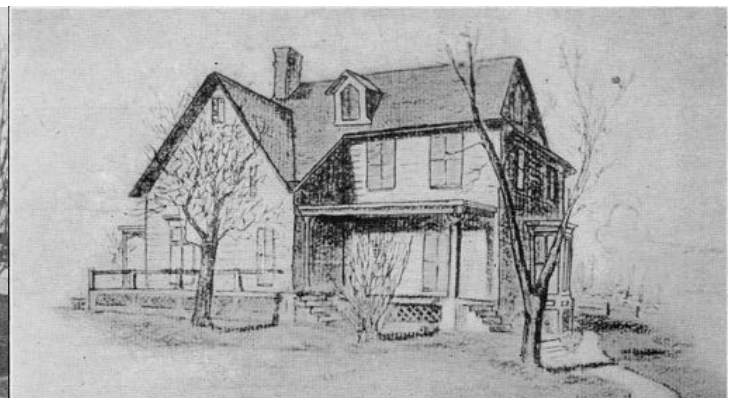
*House of Mrs. Henry King formerly on Bloomfield Avenue between the Glen Ridge Stores location and Highland Avenue [currently Hurrell Field]. Taken down in 1868 to make way for the present Benson homestead [demolished]. From an old drawing.*



*House of the Reverend Joseph S. Gallagher which formerly stood back of where the Congregational Church is now placed. Mr. Gallagher's estate was called “Ridgewood,” and the avenue which was cut through it was after a time given that name. Photographed about 1890.*



*Dr. Joseph S. Dodd House, formerly at the northwest corner of Bloomfield and Ridgewood Avenues. Dr. Dodd took title to the land on July 1, 1829. Dr. Dodd was the father of the late Judge Amzi Dodd who told one now living that in his boyhood the land about his father's house was heavily wooded. The house was demolished a few weeks ago [1918] to clear the ground for the new Library Building. Photographed about 1910.*



*The S.A. Brower House (later Thomas C. Dodd House) formerly occupied the High School site [currently Ridgewood Avenue School]. It and the Dr. Dodd House standing high above Bloomfield Avenue on opposite corners gave a very favorable impression to one, who coming up the steps from the railroad in the early eighties, turned to look toward the north. It was moved to another location [28 High Street] to make room for the High School. Drawn from a faded photograph.*



Jean Van Leer Campbell Memoir

## Surprise! You're Moving to Glen Ridge

*In September 2010 former resident Jean Van Leer Campbell sent us these memories of her high-school years in Glen Ridge during the '40s. She and her husband, Malcolm, returned to Glen Ridge in 1968 and lived at 68 Forest Avenue. They now live in Massachusetts.*

**Sally Meyer**

IN 1940 MY PARENTS picked me up from summer camp and drove to the apartment house on the Upper West Side of Manhattan where we had lived for the past seven or eight years. Before I could begin to get my things out of the car, my father said, "We don't live there!" We then drove out through the familiar New York streets, through the Holland Tunnel, through unfamiliar streets and towns, coming to a stop in front of a small neo-Tudor style house on Spencer Road in Glen Ridge, N.J. "This is your new home now," he said. "Welcome!"

I had a very short time to get accustomed to the idea of new house, new bedroom, an upstairs and downstairs instead of apartment living where everything was on one level, before it was time to register for classes in school and accept the changes that a new school would bring. I started at Glen Ridge High in the ninth grade. I was overwhelmed by the unfamiliar customs, a feeling that remained through graduation. The New York school I had attended had classes of 40 or more students, all girls. Its strict discipline prepared me well for English classes with Miss Pease, whom others found too demanding.

High school is a time of conformity. Few 14-year-olds have the self-confidence to develop individual styles or independent thinking, and I don't believe that Glen Ridge schools in the 1940s encouraged it. The school's undeclared uniform for girls: white bobby socks and brown loafers, pleated plaid skirt, sweater, white Peter Pan collar and pearls. Tan camel hair coat in the winter. Hair was shoulder-length pageboy. I'm not sure whether ninth-graders were part of sororities and fraternities, but the little gold pins that signified membership were very important through high-school years; early on, I learned who was in and who wasn't, and that was as essential a part of school learning as Latin and sociology.

My mother had never driven a car, but living in the suburbs made driving a necessity. Drivers had to coordinate foot brake, throttle, clutch, and accelerator pedals, and if the car had to stop for a red light on a hill, it stalled and the motor died. This was particularly unfortunate if she had driven onto the trolley tracks and an impatient trolley conductor was behind her. After trying to start the car, her usual—and successful—response was to get out of the car, walk around to the trolley, and explain in her best Alabama accent, "Ah cain't get the car started." There was always a gallant gentleman on the trolley willing to hop out to help a lady in distress.

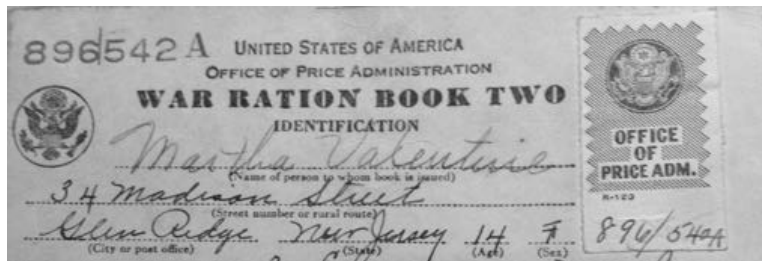
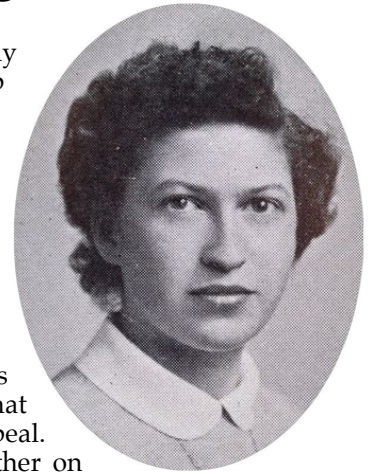
The following summer my father picked me up after camp and drove us back to the house on Spencer Road. Once again, before I could get out, he announced, "We don't live there any more!" That summer, he had been driving around the town and had seen a large house with a "For Sale" sign on the front lawn. I don't remember him as especially impulsive, but that house had an immediate appeal. Before he returned to my mother on Spencer Road, he had bought 175 Forest Avenue.

The war that had started in Europe in 1939 was very close to us. My father was Dutch and, although he had left Holland in 1921, he remained Dutch in his thinking and associations. As of December 7, 1941, America was in the war. We were scared. Yellow ration books were issued to households in May 1942. Meat, butter, shoes, sugar, heating oil, canned goods, and rubber tires were rationed, but the greatest impact was gasoline. 'A' coupons allowed for only four gallons of gas per week, while 'B' coupons permitted eight gallons a week for businesses dependent on their car or truck or businesses to contribute to the war effort. Cigarettes and liquor almost disappeared from store shelves, going instead to military camps. We saved rubber garden hoses, raincoats, and bathing caps for the war effort, as well as kitchen fat, soap, and tinfoil. Heating fuel was limited, and our house, which was always cold, became even colder. My mother hung dark brown velveteen draperies to keep in the heat and placate the block wardens who patrolled to see that house lights could not be seen by enemy planes.

My mother had a Victory garden where she grew tomatoes and green beans, with the help of a man named Hector. He had to make sure he was on his bike and out of Glen Ridge before it got dark. Glen Ridge police did not look kindly on blacks.

This was the Big Band era. Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller, and more played the Meadowbrook club on Route 23 in Cedar Grove. The Women's Club sponsored dances with servicemen from Australia and New Zealand. Stationed briefly in New York on their way to the Pacific, they were happy to spend a weekend with a family.

In June 1944 my graduating class marched down the aisle of the Women's Club to the rendition of "Pomp and Circumstance." There wasn't much pomp, due to the circumstances. Several boys were volunteering for the military and many fathers had already been drafted. I went off to Guilford College in Greensboro, N.C.





***ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 23, 2015***  
***“OUR HISTORY THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS”***

**Current Events**

Ongoing through May 10, 2015: “Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities,” Museum of Modern Art, New York. In 2030, the world’s population will be a staggering eight billion people. Of these, two-thirds will live in cities. Most will be poor. *Uneven Growth* brings together six teams of researchers and practitioners to examine new architectural possibilities for six global metropolises: Hong Kong, Istanbul, Lagos, Mumbai, New York, and Rio de Janeiro.

Ongoing through July 5, 2015: “The Extraordinary Stevens Family, a New Jersey Legacy: 1776–1911,” Hoboken Historical Museum. The exhibit details the lives and careers of two generations of the family that *The New York Times* referred to as “one of New Jersey’s first families.” The Stevenses were inventors and designers, engineers and urban planners, and their influence is still very much felt, and seen, in Hoboken and across the nation. Information at [info@hobokenmuseum.org](mailto:info@hobokenmuseum.org)

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***A Day Outdoors Along the Morris Canal***

Among the great historical legacies of New Jersey are its two major canals, the Morris and the Delaware and Raritan. They were truly the arteries of commerce in the early 19th century, until the coming of the railroads put them out of business. Railroads, after all, don’t freeze over in the winter. Both carried cargoes mostly from Pennsylvania either for delivery in New Jersey or for conveyance to New York City. When they were no longer economically viable, portions were preserved for recreation, and today a walk along the towpath of one of the canals is a great way to spend time outdoors and absorb some of New Jersey’s history. The Canal Society of New Jersey conducts Canal Walks along both canals with information at <http://www.canalsocietynj.org/>. Or you can buy a copy of the *Field Guide to the Morris Canal of New Jersey* by Jakob Franke and conduct your own tour. Ordering information is at the Canal Society of New Jersey, above. Former GRHS member Ron Rice was a contributor to this long-awaited field guide.