



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

February 2015 Vol. XXXVII No. 3



President's Letter

Nominate a Home for the 2015 Preservation Award!

MY SINCERE THANKS to Debbie Lebow and Tom Altier for hosting our annual holiday party. Our members were warmly welcomed to their 100-year-old Craftsman-style house at 105 Forest Avenue with an open invitation to wander throughout.

Recent sales of our new brass gas lamp ornament have exceeded all expectations. Several hundred of them brightened up Christmas trees both here and around the country. I'd like to thank board member Alison Lang, who helped design, package, and market the ornaments to great success.

For the past 30 years, the Historical Society has recognized historically accurate restoration projects with our annual Preservation Award. Project of all sizes and complexity have included the reconstruction of a derelict porch, the replacement of asbestos siding, the repair of original windows, and the restoration of a front entry. (Photographs of the original 1985 award winners are

shown here.) Last year the award was given to Jeff and Alexandra Spritzer of 380 Ridgewood Avenue for their careful design and construction of a replacement porch.

To nominate your own project or that of a neighbor, please contact Karin Robinson at karinrobinson.arch@verizon.net for an application. The deadline for submission is April 1. We'll present the award at our annual meeting on April 23.

Our February program will feature a presentation by Mark Wright, AIA, Glen Ridge architect and member of the Historic Preservation Commission. Mark's talk, "The Shingle Style in Glen Ridge," will take place on February 26 in the Ridgewood Avenue Railroad Station at 8 p.m. (see below).

Lastly, I am pleased to announce that Essex County and the New Jersey Historical Commission have awarded the Historical Society a \$450 grant, which we will use for general operating support in 2015.

Sally Meyer



News and Goings-On

February lecture: "The Shingle Style in Glen Ridge."

On Thursday, February 26, in the Ridgewood Avenue Railroad Station at 8 p.m., local architect and preservationist Mark Wright will tell us about the Shingle Style. In the 1880s, America's avant-garde architects brought order and discipline to the bumptious fancywork of the Victorian Queen Anne style. They draped the Queen Anne's exoticism in warm, dry cloaks of weather-stained cedar shingles with prim Colonial-inspired details. This new sobriety lent the holiday houses of prosperous families an air of abstemious Yankee rectitude. Known in its time as Modern Colonial, the Shingle Style, as we call it

now, spread rapidly across the continent. Glen Ridge boasts a number of terrific Shingle Style houses.

Museum hours. Come read your house file and enjoy the exhibits in the Terry S. Webster Museum Room. Located above Boiling Springs Savings Bank, the 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.

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.

Historic Bloomfield Cemetery

GLEN RIDGE DRIVERS racing down Belleville Avenue towards Broad Street often ignore the beautiful grounds of Bloomfield Cemetery. In spite of its name, over two-thirds of the property lies in Glen Ridge. Perhaps the news of its recent acceptance on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places will inspire a visit.

The cemetery was established in 1796 as the burial ground for First Presbyterian Church on the Green. The property consisted of five acres donated by church member Isaac Ball. Around 1851, the Ball family sold the church another 20 acres for \$1,500. In the latter part of the 19th century, the church purchased a number of smaller parcels to complete the current 30-acre layout.

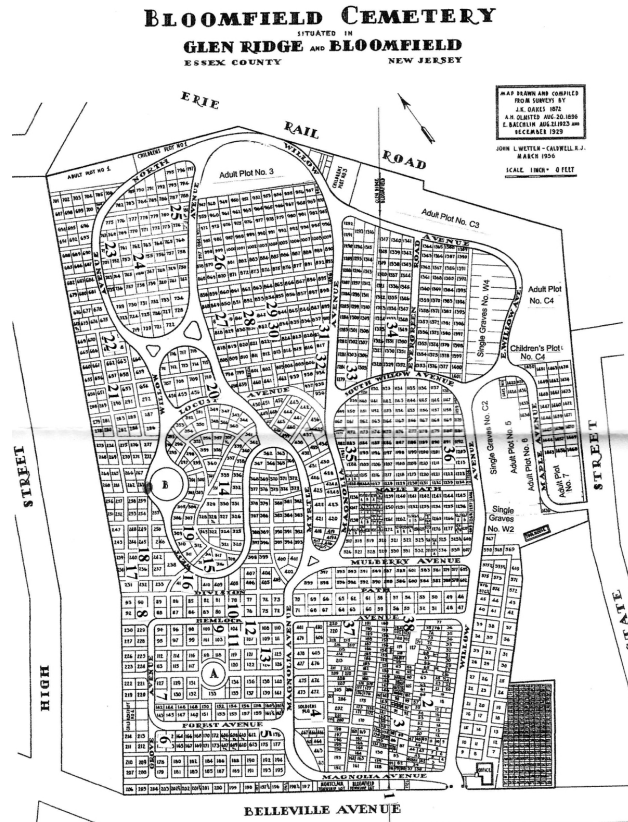
In 1853 the church transferred ownership of the graveyard to a newly formed corporation, the Bloomfield Cemetery Company. The property at this time was unkempt and much in need of oversight. The realignment coincided with the beginnings of the American landscape design movement. Along with public parks and gardens, cemeteries began to be laid out as places where families might walk and picnic during their leisure hours. In 1870 the company president, Joseph Davis, hired his famous cousin Alexander Jackson Davis to design a Gothic-style gatehouse and

newer grounds. The circular pathways he created in the upper cemetery are similar to those in his layout of Llewellyn Park in nearby West Orange. Each of these “avenues” bears the name of a common species of American tree. The pathways were designed for both pedestrian and carriage traffic. The identification of Bloomfield Cemetery as part of the rural cemetery movement and the involvement of Davis justify its historic listing.

History abounds in the cemetery. Its former clay pits produced bricks for Seibert Hall at Bloomfield College. The brownstone walls along Belleville Avenue were quarried in the Glen. The wrought-iron entrance gates came from Military Park in Newark. Soldiers are entombed from every American conflict. And many members of the original Bloomfield families rest here: Dodd, Ward, Davis, Oakes, Cadmus, Baldwin, and Morris.

When Alexander Jackson Davis died in 1892, he was buried in an unmarked grave. After nearly a century of disregard, the site is now marked with a headstone that was given by the Bloomfield Historical Society and the Victorian Society in 1977. Unfortunately, Davis’s gatehouse was torn down, but its replacement, built in 1909, has been lovingly restored.

Sally Meyer



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Walking Tour: The North End

A Battle of Revival Styles: Colonial vs. Tudor

WE THINK OF Glen Ridge as one town, unified by charming neighborhoods of houses built in a range of historical styles. If we dig a little deeper, however, we will see that the town has developed in discrete stages, with different patterns of development at key points in our history.

On Sunday, October 26, 2014, the Glen Ridge Historical Society led a tour of the North End, walking a loop of Forest and Ridgewood avenues north of Bay Avenue. Added to the historic district in 1989, the North End is one of the newest neighborhoods of Glen Ridge, occupied by houses built primarily in the 20th century. Despite the youth of its houses, it maintains the high-quality architecture and stylistic diversity found in the original historic district.

The story of the North End begins in the South End. Glen Ridge is one of the country's oldest railroad suburbs. Evolving from an agrarian settlement of early vernacular and Italianate farmhouses dotting the outskirts between Crane town (present-day Montclair) and Bloomfield, Glen Ridge began to take its current form in the 1870s and '80s when town fathers Asabel Darwin and Edward Wilde built the two train stations. Serving the Morris and Essex and the New York and Greenwood (Erie) Lake Railroads, respectively, the stations stimulated the building of residential neighborhoods. Darwin and Wilde started the process of dividing old farms and homesteads into smaller lots for sale, laying down streets, and building houses.

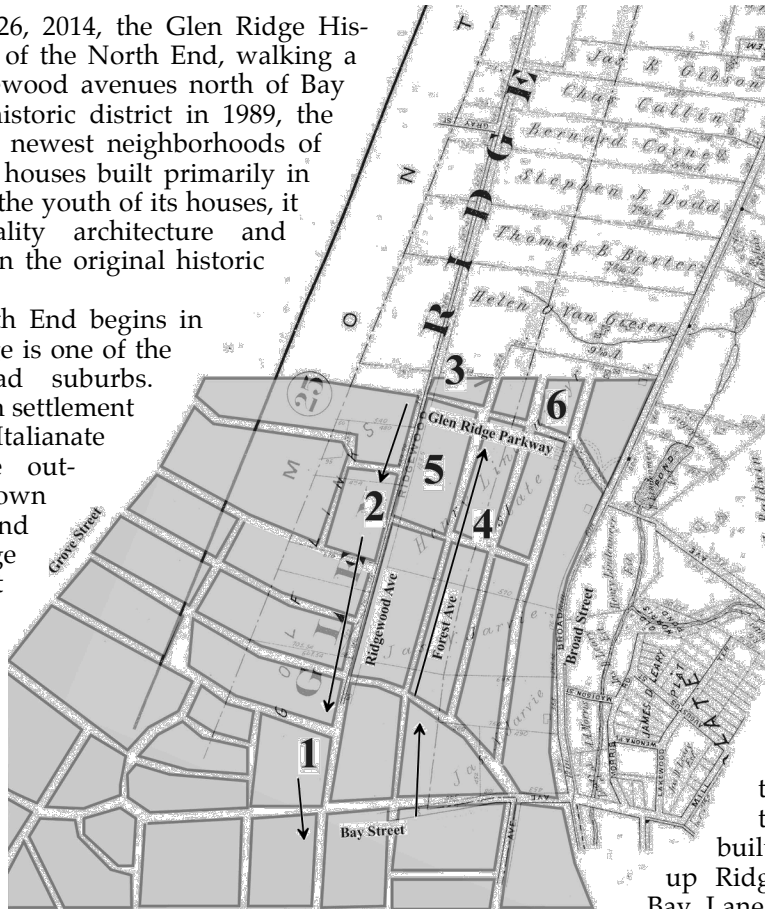
This was 25 years before Henry Ford's introduction of

the Model T in 1908, and your only modes of transport were the two train lines, the street cars on Bloomfield Avenue, your horse, and your feet. Accordingly, Glen Ridge's oldest houses are clustered in the neighborhoods around the stations. These early houses were predomi-

nantly Queen Anne, a style that developed from the new industrial economy, which allowed carpenters to build in a more flexible, economic, and rapid way. Builders took advantage of mass-produced, standardized lumber, wire-cut nails, and factory-made fixtures brought by the railroads. Often built without the assistance of a trained architect, houses of this style are massed in picturesque asymmetric ways, with turrets, irregular roof lines, a profusion of architectural details, and varied materials and surface treatments.

By the early decades of the 20th century, many of the lots for houses around the train stations had been built on. But a mile and a half up Ridgewood Avenue, north of Bay Lane, vacant land still existed: the future North End.

This area was initially settled by residents who bought property along Grove Street in Montclair and along Broad Street in Bloomfield. This pattern changed when Ridgewood Avenue was extended to Watchung Avenue in 1873. Significant building of houses



Walking tour map overlaid on 1906 Mueller Atlas of Essex County

Ridgewood Avenue before development, in 1912



Colonial Revival house at 458 Ridgewood Avenue (built 1938)





Tudor Revival house at 497 Ridgewood Avenue (built 1930)

did not begin until the early 20th century, when Forest Avenue north of Bay and other smaller streets in the area were established. Today, for the pedestrian walking through these neighborhoods, a stylistic theme immediately emerges. Namely, there are no Queen Anne houses in this neighborhood! Instead, houses were built from one of the two important early 20th-century styles, Colonial Revival and Tudor.

These styles emerged as a response to the Queen Anne. Two national exhibitions, the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia and the World Columbian Exhibition of 1893, exposed builders, architects, and the general public to styles of architectural history from around the world. For the new middle class, a house of a specific and accurate historical style was a desirable product. The Colonial Revival alluded to the symmetrical and classical Georgian architecture of the early colonies, tapping into the public's sense of national identity. The Tudor was inspired by the medieval building tradition of England, with its irregular massing, steep slate roofs, and half-timbered walls.

Forest Avenue has the most direct story to tell. Walking north on Forest from Bay is remarkable: the houses alternate, one after the other, between Colonial and Tudor. The majority of these houses on Forest were built within a very short time frame (1920–1929) and, in many cases, in groupings by real-estate developers or single builders. Although the houses sit on identical lots and are similar in size, they have an incredible diversity of massing, façade compositions, and architectural detailing.

Ridgewood Avenue has a different story to tell. It is

Colonial Revivals and Tudors built on Ridgewood in 1930s



Colonial Revivals and Tudors along Forest Avenue, circa 1932

the wide central artery of Glen Ridge, with larger lots of higher value where houses are required to be set back at a greater distance from the street. These physical parameters resulted in houses being built over a much longer span of time, often by individual owners with the help of architects. The Tudor-style houses on Ridgewood were built almost exclusively before the Second World War, whereas the Colonial Revival houses were built through the '50s and '60s to the present-day—illustrating how a style so strongly rooted in our national history proved to be more enduring.

The growing population in the North End demanded civic buildings. Forest Avenue School, designed in 1929 by the Newark-based school architects, Guilbert and Betelle, exemplifies the Tudor style. The Glen Ridge Country Club, which dates to 1894, established its second location in the North End on Ridgewood Avenue in 1911.

The construction of the Garden State Parkway between 1946 and 1957 connected this neighborhood to the larger interstate highway system. That was important for a neighborhood that is more than a mile from the nearest train station.

Glen Ridge is a historic district because its houses collectively create a public realm of consistent high-quality and well-composed architecture. The North End, largely a 20th-century creation, continues the historic qualities of the South End, seamlessly completing our town.

Sargent Gardiner

Sargent Gardiner is an architect and partner at the New York-based firm Robert A.M. Stern Architects.

Forest Avenue School, built in Tudor style in 1929



On the Lighter Side

Best of the Smidges

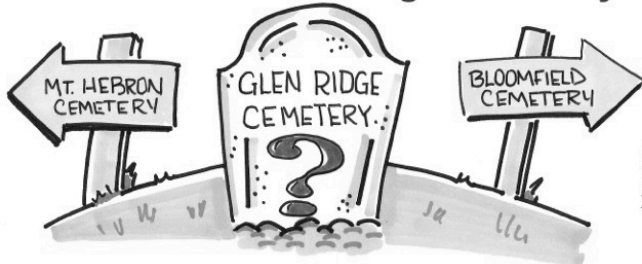
"A Smidge of Glen Ridge" has run for six years in the Glen Ridge Voice. Each week it offers a historic fact in a cartoon

format. Creator Jon Russo sends his greetings from Paris, where he is on an extended sabbatical. **George Musser**

A Smidge of Glen Ridge

by Jon A. Russo

Where is the Glen Ridge Cemetery?

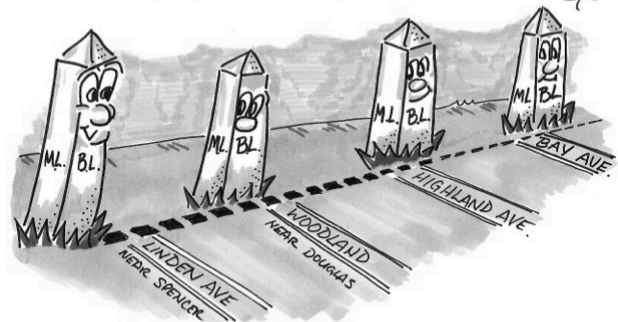


The Glen Ridge Cemetery opened its gates in 1902 and a number of famous names can be found there. There's jazz singer Sarah Vaughan, best known for songs such as "Misty" and "Send in the Clowns." You can also find George "Mule" Suttles, a Negro Baseball League Hall of Famer whose powerful bat swing was like a "mule kick." But the name you can't find is "Glen Ridge Cemetery". Located at 28 Hoover Ave. in Bloomfield, Glen Ridge Cemetery changed its name to Glendale Cemetery in 1913 for reasons unknown to this cartoonist—despite his best efforts to find out why!

A Smidge of Glen Ridge

by Jon A. Russo

Follow that Time Line.



Years before Glen Ridge separated from Bloomfield in 1895, markers were installed at Bloomfield's western boundary to designate its border line adjacent to Montclair. These concrete markers were stamped "M.L." for Montclair line on one side and "B.L." for Bloomfield line on the other side. They can still be found on our western border, a relic of times gone by.

A Smidge of Glen Ridge

by Jon A. Russo

"The Gentleman Burglar" of Glen Ridge

Noted criminal and Glen Ridge resident, Raymond Vogel was once referred to as the "Gentleman Burglar" by the New York Times. Vogel used a device called a "noiseless jimmy" to quietly break into homes and had averaged \$2,000 per robbery in stolen goods. On one heist Vogel got away with over \$10,000. But Vogel's crime spree came to an end in 1935 when he was arrested with two other men. They were found with \$25,000 of stolen loot from nearby wealthy homes for a fencing operation located in Manhattan. Vogel was no stranger to prison having spent 19 years there before this arrest. Thus the Gentleman Burglar traded the gas lights of Glen Ridge for the search lights of prison.



A Smidge of Glen Ridge

by Jon A. Russo

The Postmaster's Daughter.



Winifred Tobin's youthful image lives eternally on the mural in the Glen Ridge Post Office. The artwork entitled, *The Glen*, was painted by renowned artist and one-time Glen Ridge resident James Ormsbee Chapin in 1937. The work features a young Winifred in a white dress enjoying a picnic party on the banks of Toney's Brook. Winifred, daughter of then postmaster C. Stuart Tobin, modeled for Chapin. And Chapin was the grandfather of folk rock singer, Harry Chapin.

A Smidge of Glen Ridge

by Jon A. Russo

The Gator of Glen Ridge

"Little Willie, Willie won't--go home!" Remember that song from 1972? Those lyrics applied to Glen Ridge on July 23, 1905. Charles Rolfe of 180 Midland Ave., (now 193 Midland), kept a pet alligator captured in Florida tied to his apple tree. The three foot reptile, named Willie, escaped when he slipped his collar giving the "willies" to residents of southern Glen Ridge. Willie was "inclined to be ugly" as he was known to have bitten Mr. Rolfe once before causing a "slight" wound. The missing reptilian mystery hasn't been solved but it is believed he was last seen on Fifth Ave. as a pair of high-heels.

WANTED!



A Smidge of Glen Ridge

by Jon A. Russo

BUS-ted in the Borough.



It was the early hours of November 16, 1959 in which a lone passenger aboard a public service bus waited for the bus driver who stopped at a diner for a cup of coffee. But the passenger, Edward Flynn, age 31 of Nutley, just couldn't wait any longer. He hopped behind the wheel of the bus and drove off leaving the bus driver. However, the bus was found minutes later smashed against a tree in front of 25 Highland Ave., Glen Ridge. Mr. Flynn was arrested despite pleading his innocence. Certainly his patience was worn thin as he spent more time in jail than on the bus.



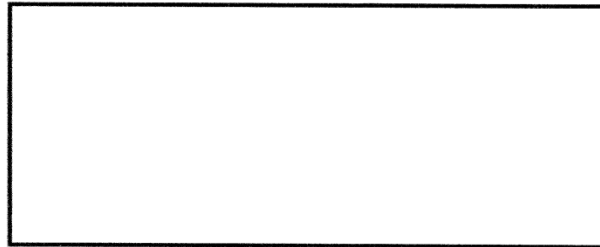
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WINTER PROGRAM: FEBRUARY 26, 2015
“THE SHINGLE STYLE IN GLEN RIDGE”

Current Events-

Ongoing through end of May – Program of house tours, walking tours, lectures, historic cooking demonstration, and other events of local historical interest – Montclair Historical Society. Full list with dates and times available on their website: www.montclairhistorical.org/events/. Or call them at 973-744-1796.

Sunday, March 29, 2015 – Morris Canal Walk – Passaic County Department of Planning and Economic Development. The county department is offering three walks along the Morris Canal Greenways, of which this is the first. For more information visit www.passaiccountynj.org/, or e-mail Joe Macasek at macgraphics1@verizon.net.

The Whitney Museum Has Moved to its New Building

On May 1, 2015, the Whitney Museum of American will open the doors to its new building designed by Renzo Piano at 99 Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking District on the West Side of Manhattan. This culminates a long process during which it became clear that it would have to leave its Marcel Breuer designed building on Madison Avenue because of a successful effort to preserve several adjacent historic brownstone buildings. All parties came up winners. The Breuer building was preserved and taken over by the Metropolitan Museum of Art for its growing collection of modern and contemporary art for eight years; the brownstones were preserved; and the Whitney got a fine new building that will allow it to display more of its collection. The opening exhibition will present new perspectives on art in the United States since 1900. The new Whitney is adjacent to the High Line, a public park built on a historic freight rail line elevated above the streets of New York on the West Side. Visitors will have an opportunity to see how imaginative planning can integrate the historic and contemporary in a new urban synthesis.