



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

www.glenridgehistory.org



When Tudor Met Victoria

President's Letter

Glen Ridge took shape at a time of trouble.

The late 1880s, when grand mansions began to dot the high ground above the center of Bloomfield, and the 1890s, when the fast-growing community became an independent town, were good years for the affluent industrialists and financial executives who made their homes in Glen Ridge. Their growing wealth, and the widening divergence of their interests from those of the working-class community of Bloomfield, may have had something to do with Glen Ridge's decision to separate from Bloomfield in 1895.

For most Americans, though, these were years of extreme difficulty. Economic historians Paul A. David and Peter Solar have estimated that the buying power of an unskilled worker's hourly wage was 7 percent lower in 1895 than it had been at the end of the Civil War, three decades earlier. Working conditions in the nation's mines and factories were horrific. Child labor was widespread. The panic of 1893 was perhaps the worst economic downturn the nation ever experienced prior to the Great Depression: in 1895, one in eight Americans was unemployed.

This was the period Mark Twain satirically dubbed the "Gilded Age." The unique circumstances of this extremely difficult time gave rise to the extraordinary architectural styles that make Glen Ridge distinctive today.

On April 28, our annual membership meeting will feature a presentation about how this eclectic architectural mix came to be: "When Tudor Met Victoria: American Architecture in the Early Years of Glen Ridge." Our speaker will be Kevin Murphy, a professor of architectural history at City

University of New York. Professor Murphy is an authority on American and European architecture and visual culture of the nineteenth century. His talk will relate Glen Ridge's rich architectural heritage to broader developments in Europe and the US from the last quarter of the nineteenth century until World War I.

Our meeting will be at the Glen Ridge Congregational Church, starting at 7:30 p.m. Please join us.

Marc Levinson

Nominees for Officers and Trustees

The following nominees will be voted on by the membership at the Annual Meeting on April 28, 2010

President – Karin Robinson
Vice President – Sarge Gardiner
Secretary – Alden Provost
Town Historian – Sally Meyer
(Ex-officio)

Trustee 2011 – Margot Macdonnell
Trustee 2012 – Jon Russo
Trustee 2013 – Herb Addison
Trustee 2013 – Nell Jennings
Trustee 2013 – Robin Westervelt

1910: A Pivotal Year in Glen Ridge History

News from the Town Historian



In 1910 Glen Ridge was a flourishing work in progress. The borough was 15 years old and incurred changes and growth spurts that were both gratifying and challenging. Since secession in 1895 the population had tripled to over 3,000. The school enrollment was 550.

The Nolen Report was the impetus for many initiatives begun in 1910. Its introduction advised "...that there is a real art in the making of a town; and that it behooves this generation to master and practice it." In response, the Glen Ridge Realty Company signed a contract for construction of the Arcade Building, and purchased land for the future municipal complex. The town began negotiations for double-tracking the rail bed. Plans were made to widen both the Ridgewood Avenue bridge and the Clark Street underpass, and to abolish the Hillside Avenue grade crossing.

Mayor Giles W. Mead (1909-1912) and his Council enacted a building code after petitioning the State Legislature to pass an Enabling Act. The new regulations would benefit the community "...in

added safety of construction and in general appearance of new structures."

Meanwhile, the Fire Department purchased a horse drawn chemical truck and hired its first paid fireman. The Police Department acquired two police dogs from Belgium: a black Trondael and a brown Malinois. Several miles of streets were resurfaced with stone, and over 4,000 feet of bluestone sidewalks laid. The Board of Health worked to eliminate typhoid fever and dysentery.

The Glen Ridge School enjoyed the use of four new classrooms, a laboratory, and two recitations rooms in its new addition, and employed 22 faculty members. Beyond the standard curriculum were classes in drawing, manual training, music, and domestic science and arts. Third graders read Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and eighth graders read Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Latin was required for the four years of high school with French, German, and Greek offered as electives. Diplomas were awarded for both the general course and college entrance course. In 1910 there were 8 graduates.

In November 1910 the Board of Education approved the construction of Linden Avenue School. A design competition was held and won by local architect, Gregory Burkitt Webb, of 48 Woodland Avenue. Two years later he would also design Sherman Avenue School.

Perhaps the most rewarding occurrence of 1910 was the final resolution in the borough's favor of the litigation between Bloomfield and Glen Ridge over the financial aspects of secession.

The Museum Room is open by appointment. To schedule a visit, please call **Sally Meyer** at (973) 239-2674.

Officers and Trustees

President	Marc Levinson	Trustee (2011)	Andrew Grisafi
Vice President	Karin Robinson	Trustee (2011)	Lana Keppel
Treasurer	Geoffrey Darby	Trustee (2011)	Alden Provost
Secretary	Martha Orbach	Trustee (2012)	Sarge Gardiner
Town Historian	Sally Meyer	Trustee (2012)	Margo Garrison
Trustee (2010)	Herb Addison	Trustee (2012)	Suzanne O'Connor
Trustee (2010)	Chuck Graziano	Ex-officio - Past President	Carolyn Badenhausen
Trustee (2010)	Karen Palm	Ex-officio - Library Director	John Sitnik
		Ex-officio - Delegate LHSNJ	Gerry Addison

Editor's Note...The feature article in this issue is a history of one of Glen Ridge's gems, Freeman Gardens, by its current president, Lawrence B. Stauffer.

The editor reminds members that *The Gaslamp* is always seeking feature articles on aspects of Glen Ridge's history. If you want to discuss contributing an article, please contact: **Herb Addison** at herb.addison@verizon.net, or 973-748-5012.

A Garden for Glen Ridge

Freeman Gardens, a 1-1/2-acre public garden and rose arboretum at the southwest corner of Hawthorne and Maolis Avenues, along with a substantial portion of Glen Ridge, is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and is recognized as a "notable garden" by the Smithsonian Archives of American Gardens.

Glen Ridge resident and internationally-known landscape architect Ethelbert Furlong designed the gardens in 1935 for Clayton E. and Winifred Brownell Freeman, on property purchased by the Freemans in 1929 at the rear of 83 Ridgewood Avenue where they had lived since 1912. The house still stands.

Clayton Freeman, who was a founder and president of the W.T. Grant Company of "25 Cent Stores" and a director of L. Bamberger & Co., had been using the former cow pasture and apple orchard as a place for his children to garden and raise chickens. Mrs. Freeman planted a 100 x 150-foot rose garden, which was the precursor of Furlong's formal gardens and today's rose display.

Ethelbert Furlong's credits in a 60-year career included more than 1,000 gardens; collaboration with famed architect Philip Johnson on a Japanese garden at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; and awards from Ladybird Johnson for his work on two White House gardens.

Furlong's design for Freeman Gardens and some of his original plantings have been maintained, and natural areas such as a lawn and a woodland trail remain. The design was inspired by the beaux-arts and arts and crafts movements, with proportion and axial symmetry found in the Italian Renaissance style.

Among Furlong's original decorative features remaining in the Gardens is a centrally positioned dolphin fountain that empties into a small stone trough and is mounted in a small arch-



Dolphin Fountain

shaped, grotto-style niche on the rear wall of a raised rectangular terrace.

Also original is a small red brick amphitheatre where Mrs. Freeman held tea parties and which has been used as the stage for theatrical performances. Another small patio nearby is scheduled to be reconstructed in 2010.

Furlong created a long-term master plan for the gardens, with detailed guidelines and instructions about when and what to plant. Today's Garden volunteers strive to be faithful to his original design.

Freeman Gardens is the only remaining Ethelbert Furlong garden open to the public. It owes its continued existence and longevity to heirs of the Freemans who deeded the private gardens to the Borough of Glen Ridge in 1968, and to a group of determined citizens led by Mrs. Milford Kime who were successful in defending the gardens against proposals for development.

One historic element of Freeman Gardens was not in the original design. The 8-foot-tall ornamental iron gates and 80-foot length of wrought iron fencing that enclose the Gardens along much of their Hawthorne Avenue perimeter have their own Glen Ridge history. The gates were once one of five entrances to the Sunnycrest estate owned by Henry Stanton Chapman, an early benefactor to Glen Ridge who funded construction of the Glen Ridge Public Library, the Women's Club and the chancel of the Congregational Church.

The Sunnycrest estate became the Sunnycrest School for Girls and the Sherwood School, before being demolished in the mid-1960s when the current high school was erected in its place. The gates from the Hillcrest entrance were purchased by an anonymous donor who gave them to a coalition of the Glen Ridge Historical Society, the Borough council and the Freeman Gardens Association, which manages the gardens.

The gates and a combination of original and reconstructed fencing were installed at Freeman Gardens beginning in 2005. Funding for the associated repair, sanding, painting and installation of the gates and fencing, and construction of historically authentic brick supporting pillars, was provided by the **Glen Ridge** Historical Society and a fund-raising campaign led by Glen Ridge resident Cherry Provost.

The Freeman Gardens Association is a non-profit volunteer organization with 18 trustees that was formed in 1969 to manage and maintain the gardens. Freeman Gardens is a popular site for weddings, wedding pictures, birthday parties, a community Easter egg hunt and other celebrations.

Lawrence B. Stauffer

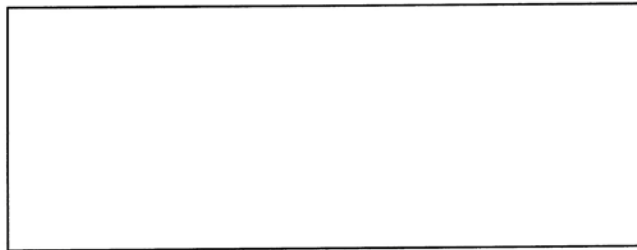


GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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*Annual Meeting
April 28, 2010*

Coming Events

Wednesday, April 28, 2010 - Glen Ridge Historical Society Annual Meeting – Talk by Kevin Murphy titled “When Tudor Met Victoria: American Architecture in the Early Years of Glen Ridge.” Also, the annual Preservation Awards will be announced and presented. 7:30 PM at the Glen Ridge Congregational Church.

Wednesday, June 2, 2010 -- Sustainable Past: Sustainable Future - The 2010 annual Historic Preservation Conference - Hosted by Union County College, Elizabeth, NJ.
Info at: www.state.nj.us/dca/preservationconference/

News Briefs

Global Patterns: Architectural Photographs by Daniel Nadler - Continuing exhibit of fifty years of photographing “who we are through what we have built.” Morris Museum, Morristown, NJ, through April 18, 2010.
Info: 973-971-3700

The Question of Landscape - Exhibition using Chinese and Western landscape works from the 12th century to the present to examine what is meant by the term landscape. Princeton University Art Museum, through April 18, 2010.
Info at: 609-258-3788