



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November 2010 Vol. XXXIII No. 2

THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

www.glenridgehistory.org



A Hunt and the Photo Contest Results

President's Letter

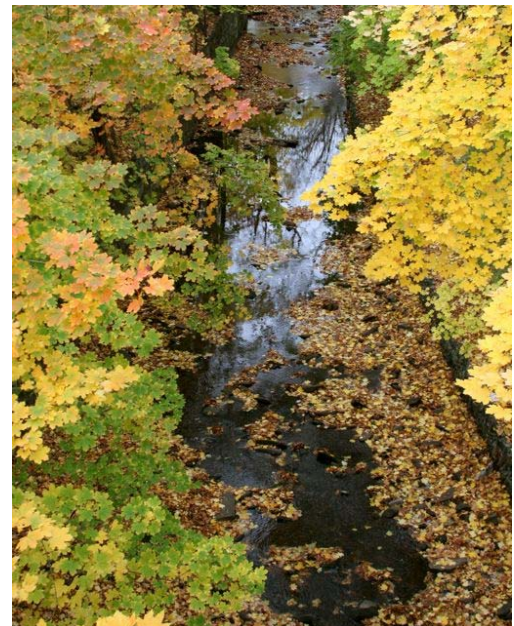


Historical Society members and other Glen Ridge residents, along with their families and neighbors, were able to spend a beautiful October afternoon on our Architectural Scavenger Hunt: armed with photo sheets, they scoured the neighborhood between Ridgewood and Highland in search of architectural details. Our congratulations to the Phelan family for finding the most details, and to the Gardiner family for coming in a very close second. They spotted the brownstone pediment at 276 Ridgewood, the diamond shingles at 23 Highland, the Palladian window at 68 Highland, and many others.

Congratulations also to the winners of our 2010 photo contest: Megan Giulianelli, David Doernberg, Jon Russo, and Cherry Provost; and thanks to our three-time judge George Steinmetz for taking time out of his busy schedule to evaluate all of the entries. The winners and other entries are on display at the Glen Ridge Library. All of the photos submitted will be preserved in the Historical Society archives and will provide useful information about Glen Ridge in 2010 for future researchers. So start thinking now about your entries for 2011!

Karin Robinson

A special thanks: George Webster sent the historical society a very generous gift in memory of Terry Webster, who did so much to initiate and sustain historic preservation in Glen Ridge.



Second Place prize for Public Buildings and Spaces
By Megan Giulianelli

Holiday Party

The Holiday Party will be held on December 9, 2010, at 7:30 pm at Edith Payne's beautifully restored Frank Lloyd Wright house at 63 Chestnut Hill Place. The Glen Ridge Historical Society will present Mrs. Payne with a bronze plaque commemorating the extraordinary care that she and her late husband, John, undertook in restoring their home.

Our Dynamic First Mayor

News from the Town Historian



Plot outline for proposed TV series: a young New York lawyer reads a tempting real estate ad and decides to move to the suburbs. He buys a fabulous house quite close to a newly built railroad station and moves there with his wife and infant daughter. With the dream of expanding his family, he immediately enlarges the house to twice its original size.

Within a short time, he fathers two sons and another daughter. He promotes the building of a church and helps establish a social club. He invests in real estate. Life is good but there are definite problems with living conditions. He joins the town council to encourage solutions but fails to win them over. Disappointed, he uses his powers of persuasion to argue for secession. When the votes are counted his ideas prevail and he is elected mayor of the fledgling community.

Robert Schell Rudd is the hero of this real life story. He was born to Joseph and Eliza Barnes Rudd on May 14, 1857 in New York City. He graduated from Hamilton College in 1879 and earned his LLB from Columbia College in 1883.

In 1884, a year after his marriage to Kate

Skeer of Chicago, the Rudds moved to the Glen Ridge section of Bloomfield. He was 28 years old. A real estate brochure described their home at 276 Ridgewood Avenue as "...a large sandstone house, spacious and elegant and complete in all its appointments...an ornament to the town." Rudd built a large addition on the house and their children – Naomi, Robert, John and Althea - soon filled the enlarged space. He practiced law in New York City, commuting downtown by rail and ferry.

Rudd quickly became involved in the community. He was a founder in 1885 of the Glen Ridge (Men’s) Club and served as its first vice-president. He led the movement in 1888 to build the Glen Ridge Congregational Church. He formed the Glen Ridge Land Improvement Company in 1890 for the purchase and resale of land in the Clinton Road area. And in 1891 he was elected to the Bloomfield Town Committee.

By 1894 the movement to secede from Bloomfield was in full swing. Roads were muddy, sewers were non-existent, and schoolchildren were without a school. Rudd’s strong character and leadership skills were effective in swaying public opinion. When the votes were counted on February 12, 1895 the citizens declared for independence. Rudd was appointed mayor and credited with creating the borough ideal of a residential community second to none.

Rudd resigned on April 18, 1902 during his second term as mayor because of a controversy over expenditures. He died at Roosevelt Hospital of typhoid fever on October 22, 1903 at the age of 46. His widow and four young children returned to New York soon after his death.

Sally Meyer

Officers and Trustees

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Editor’s Note...In this issue Karin Robinson reports on the results of the Architectural Scavenger Hunt and the Photo Contest. Congratulations to all winners! Our peerless Town Historian, Sally Meyer, describes the life and contributions of Glen Ridge’s first mayor, Robert Schell Rudd. And architect Sarge Gardiner, a Partner at Robert A.M. Stern Architects, explains how important railroads were to Glen Ridge’s growth in its early years.

Herb Addison -- herb.addison@verizon.net, or 973-748-5012.

Railroads Spur the Growth of Glen Ridge

More than 150 years ago a farming neighborhood of West Bloomfield began its transformation into the modern town of Glen Ridge. Two men and two railroads were instrumental in that transformation.

New Jersey played an early and central role in the development of America's railroads. The state was a natural crossroads between the industrial centers and ports along the Atlantic seaboard and the raw materials to the west. The transport of freight was more profitable than passengers and a great race was on to build railways across the state of New Jersey after the discovery of massive Anthracite coal beds west of Mauch Chunk Pennsylvania. The newly formed Morris and Essex Line joined the race for coal but ultimately was a victim of its own success. Its steep right of way over the Watchung Mountains and increased passenger traffic generated by the suburbs of Newark hurt its viability as freight line.

Instead, in 1856 the Newark and Bloomfield railroad was established as a passenger line branch of the Morris and Essex Line with a single track starting in Newark and terminating in Montclair where each train would be turned on a large turntable for its return journey. James Moffett arranged for the eight daily trains to stop each way in Glen Ridge at his Mill on the Glen. A more permanent stop was established in 1860 when the railway built a wooden platform at Prospect Street (present day Ridgewood Ave) called Ridgewood after Reverend Gallagher's estate surrounding the station. In 1872 a wooden station house became a center of commerce and social life that included a ticket window, agent residence, and barber shop. In 1882 the post office inadvertently coined our future town name when it changed its name to Glen Ridge to avoid confusion with Ridgewood, New Jersey.

New Jersey's high level of industrialization and population meant that most towns had not one but two major rail lines. In 1872 the New York and Greenwood Lake Railroad became town's second railway with a single track originating in Jersey City and terminating Greenwood Lake on the border with New York. A dispute over the bonding for the line served as a catalyst for West Bloomfield to secede from Bloomfield and become Montclair.

In the 1880s, these two railroads began to transform the physical landscape of Glen Ridge.

Two men; Edward Wilde and Asable J. Darwin were the catalysts, each building a station, plotting new roads and house lots, and constructing speculative houses. Wilde grew up on the Cadmus Homestead at 87 Park Avenue with property extending west to present day Benson Street and East to Bloomfield Cemetery. The northern edge of the Cadmus property became the nucleus of Edward Wilde's development named "Chestnut Hill." Wilde had opportunistically supported the bonding effort for the NY and Greenwood Lake Railroad in the late 1860s and was able to negotiate the building of a station on his land in return for donating the right of way to the railroad. Wilde had elaborate plans for a station drawn up by London architect Maurice Adams. When the railroad refused to build the plans Wilde paid for a less elaborate structure, the Benson Street station. The same year Wilde established Wildwood Terrace linking the station with Ridgewood Avenue and building a house for his family at number 27 in 1886. Wilde's development ultimately proceeded slower than Darwin's development across town.

In 1877 Asabel Darwin moved to Bloomfield. Experienced from a successful career with several western railroads, Darwin understood how to capitalize on the opportunities that railroads provide. In 1886 Darwin purchased the 40 acre property of Reverend Gallagher which extended both west and east of the Ridgewood Avenue Station. Darwin followed his purchase by contributing thousands of dollars for a new train station deeded to the railroad on the condition that trains would always stop at the station. Designed by Montclair architect Jesse Lockwood, and considered "the finest station on the Morris and Essex Line," the station remains a center of Glen Ridge life to this day.

Over the next six years Darwin created a new center for this burgeoning railroad suburb. He established two new streets, Woodland Avenue and Snowdon north and south of the station, building 26 houses in this new neighborhood. Immediately south of the station Darwin built Glen Ridge Hall, a location for his real estate office and an upstairs room for the public library (most recently it housed the PNC Bank). Finally his own house located across the street at 204 Ridgewood Avenue on the present site of the Glen Ridge High school completed the group. Tragically Darwin died of pneumonia in 1892, but his physical legacy, built in such a short time, remains at the center of Glen Ridge's daily life today.

Sarge Gardiner



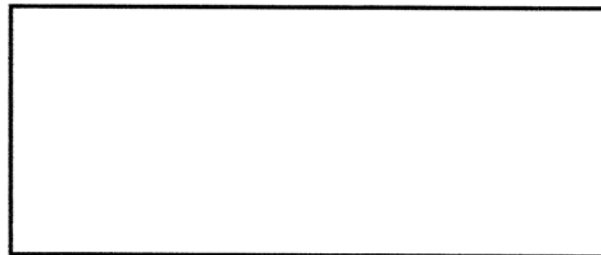
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*Holiday Party
December 9*

Coming Events

Through January 2, 2011 -- The Newark Museum is presenting an exhibition of 100 rare masterpieces of Gustav Stickley's furniture, metalwork, lighting, textiles, architectural plans, and designs. More information at jerseyarts.com/stickley/

The Newark Museum is also conducting a raffle, the winner of which will receive a Queens Size Stickley spindle bed worth \$7,500. No purchase necessary. Details at: www.newarkmuseum.org/bedraffle.html

News Briefs

The state of New Jersey operates an excellent website that includes many aspects of New Jersey history. It provides links to a narrative history of the state, a list of governors since 1664, the Underground railroad in New Jersey, information on the Genealogical Society of the state, New Jersey historical maps, New Jersey National Landmarks and Historic Site, and a number of other topics of historical interest. Their website: www.state.nj.us/nj/about/history/