



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

September 2013 Vol. XXXVI No. 1



## President's Letter

## Welcome to Our New Museum Room

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Our fall event is scheduled for Saturday, October 26th, at 1:30 p.m. It'll be an architectural scavenger hunt entitled "It's All in the Details." Historical Society volunteers have toured the center of town and inspected buildings to find unusual examples of architectural detailing. In the past, participants have identified a terra cotta plaque, an ornate fan window, a weathervane, a Queen Anne style dormer, classical columns, and a Tudor door.

We'll meet at the Glen Ridge train station, where each participant will receive a page of photographs of architectural details that can be found on nearby buildings. We'll then set out on foot, either individually or in teams. Using the photo sheet and a map, we'll search for the designated details by examining our historic buildings very carefully. Along the way you will see the tremendous variety of architecture and history right here in Glen Ridge.

By 3 p.m. we will reassemble to compare notes. Will we be able to stump you with our choice of details? There will be a special award for the first individual or team that brings back a correct list of buildings.

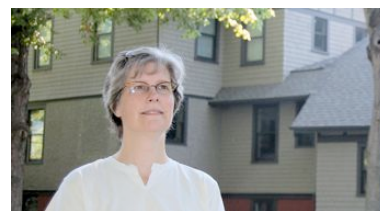
It's a great event for everyone, especially families. If you've participated in the past we hope you'll try our newest hunt. If you haven't, then please join us!

Afterwards, we will have the formal opening of the Terry Webster Museum Room, located on the second floor of the Boiling Springs Savings Bank at 222 Ridge-wood Avenue. Terry worked tirelessly as one of the founders of the Historical Society and we are dedicating the new home of our collection to her. We will also show our appreciation for the generous donations given by many Glen Ridge residents both old and new.

We have moved our collection from the Glen Ridge Congregational Church into the new space and spent the summer preparing it for the public. Now we want to show it off! Whether you participate in the scavenger hunt or not, stop by to see our enlarged exhibit space and ask us about the history of your house. If the scavenger hunt is cancelled due to rain, our grand opening will go on as planned. We hope to see all of you there.

**Karin Robinson**

*Karin Robinson is an architect who has lived and worked in Glen Ridge for 15 years. She has been Glen Ridge Historical Society president since 2010.*



Glen Ridge Hall (downstairs), 1909



Glen Ridge Hall (upstairs), 2013

News from the Town Historian

## From Factory to Football Field

BECAUSE HURRELL FIELD is much in the current news with the issue of artificial turf, it seems a good time to take a look at its history.

For nearly 75 years, a large wooden factory occupied the eastern end of the field. It was built by Samuel Benson in 1852 as a brass-rolling operation, converted by Peter Hayden in 1862 to manufacture castings for horse harnesses, and bought in 1901 by Thomas Edison for experiments with electric-car batteries. One early resident recalled seeing boxes of cement phonograph records from another Edison enterprise stored in one of the outbuildings.



*Hayden's Mill, on the site of present-day Hurrell Field*

On the south side of the field, along Bloomfield Avenue, were Benson's homestead and several other houses. In 1913 the town laid out King Street (after the maiden name of Samuel's wife, Margaret) between Bloomfield and Belleville Avenues, terminating where the gates to the field now are.

The town council purchased these various properties for the creation of an athletic field in 1923. Until then, students had been using a field on what is now the Wells Fargo Bank parking lot. The simply named "Athletic Field" was dedicated on October 1, 1925. Apropos of the current debate, the 1926 yearbook reported that three football games during the first season were played in very muddy conditions.

The bleachers along the eastern side of the field were a WPA project in 1936. Two years later, the field was re-dedicated in honor of the late Alfred Hurrell. Hurrell had been vice president and general counsel of Prudential Life Insurance Company and served Glen Ridge as councilman from 1920 to 1928 and mayor from 1928 to 1932. His legal expertise was instrumental in passing the town's first zoning ordinance. He also proposed scheduled garbage pickup and contracting with the Wanaque Reservoir for our water supply.

Some 7,000 spectators attended the dedication ceremony. The two-year-old high-school band made its first appearance as a uniformed unit. That afternoon, wrote a reporter for the *Montclair Times*, "a dozen heroic Glen Ridge warriors... enshrined themselves in warm niches in the hearts of admirers when, in a scoreless deadlock, they staved off the powerful, ever threatening Montclair rivals"—in a 0-0 tie.

For 25 years, football players dressed and showered in the old fire house on the west side of Herman Street. That changed in September 1950 with the opening of a brick field house, a gift of Winifred and Clayton Freeman.

Freeman was a founder and later president of the W.T. Grant retail chain, the K-Mart or Target of its day. He also donated property on Woodland Avenue for the tennis courts that bear his name today. Freeman Gardens were given to the borough by his children.

A small brass plaque on the announcer's booth honors E. Crommelin Johnston for his 30-year position as football team physician. Johnston attended every football game from 1933 to a week before his death in 1964. When the original electric scoreboard was installed in 1965, it was dedicated in his name.

Hurrell Field has served Glen Ridge athletes well for nearly 90 years. Hopefully, a path will be found to assure its viability for future generations.

**Sally Meyer**

*The Terry Webster Museum Room of the Glen Ridge Historical Society, newly relocated above Boiling Springs Savings Bank, welcomes visitors. To arrange a time, please call Sally Meyer at (973) 239-2674.*



### Glen Ridge Historical Society Officers and Trustees

President	Karin Robinson	Trustee (2015)	Meghan Labot
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*The Gaslamp* is co-edited by Herb Addison (herb.addison@verizon.net) and George Musser (georgejr@musser.com).



## The Original Ridgers

I HAVE HAD an interest in Native American history ever since I was a kid, and for the past seven years I have been teaching a class on the subject at Glen Ridge High School, using a textbook I wrote. Yet arriving at the true story can be difficult, and no more so than when investigating the Native history of our own town.

The original Ridgers were the Yantecaw, who are almost forgotten but for a street name at the north end of Glen Ridge, near Brookdale Park. The Yantecaw were a segment of the Munsee tribe who, in turn, belonged to the larger and better known Lenni Lenape, sometimes also called the Delaware.

Information specific to our area is scanty. Elizabeth Coombs of the Bloomfield Historical Society and Herbert Fisher, who worked on the Bloomfield Historic Sites inventory in the early 1960s, put together anthologies of the available findings—notably, evidence that Brookdale Park was the site of a small transient Native settlement. The Van Giesen, Garrabrant, and Hyde families, who farmed the land where the park is now located, collected dozens of arrowheads, stone fish hooks, and paint pots. They also discovered a stone-lined fire pit and, reportedly, human skeletons while digging a house foundation. Other tantalizing reports speak of stone pylons (perhaps used to mark the seasons) in the park and a rock shelter located under what is now the grandstand.

Even less is known about other Native sites around Glen Ridge. Watsessing Park gets its name from a Lenni Lenape word meaning “Stony Hill.” A handful of late-19th- and early-20th-century histories of Glen Ridge,

such as one by Henry Cordley, speak of “Indian Hill,” a mound-like structure located near present-day Mitchell Place. The original street in Glen Ridge, the “Old Road” along what is now Bloomfield Avenue and Glen Ridge Avenue, is said to have originally been a spur of the Minisink Trail, a major east-west footpath.

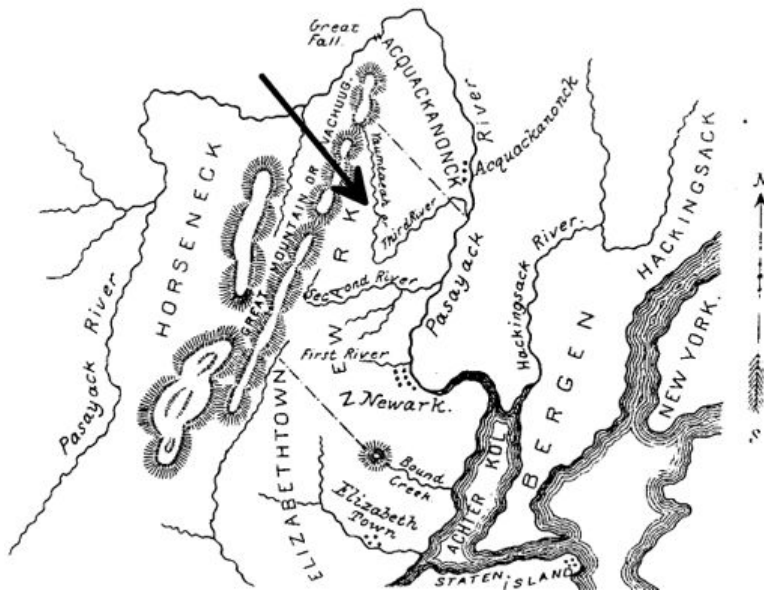
The nearest well-documented settlement to Glen Ridge was Acquackanonk, located on the banks of the Passaic River in present-day Passaic or Clifton. Dutch explorer Jasper Danckaerts visited there in March 1680, by which point Dutch settlers had bought the land; the last Native inhabitants left soon thereafter. The New Jersey Indian Site Survey led by archaeologist Dorothy Cross in the 1930s found evidence of extensive habitation along the Passaic. One site near Dundee Dam in Garfield, just south of where the

Parkway crosses the river, dates back 3,000 years. Local archaeologist Edward Lenik discovered petroglyphs there in 1992. Just northwest of Willowbrook Mall, in the Great Pierce Meadows, is a 3,000-year-old burial site studied by archaeologists Herbert Kraft and Alan Mounier.

Although historians know little about the original inhabitants of our area in particular, they have gathered a good deal of general information about the Lenni Lenape from colonial-era accounts, archaeological digs, and accidental excavations. The Yantecaw constructed large wooden homes many of us know as longhouses. They built dugout canoes to utilize the local waterways for both transportation and trade. The Yantecaw were expert fishermen, constructing



*Sidney Hyde Arrowhead Collection, found on the site of what is now Brookdale Park. Courtesy of Bloomfield Historical Society*



*Prerevolutionary map shows Acquackanonk, a Native American village sold to the Dutch in the late 17th century. It was the last of a chain of settlements that once stretched along the Passaic River. A major tributary, the Third River, runs near Brookdale Park (arrow). Courtesy of Barrows Collection of the Glen Ridge Historical Society*

*continued on page 5*

*The Nolen Report: Part 3*

## Modernizing the Streets of Glen Ridge

*In 1909 Glen Ridge commissioned landscape architect John Nolen to chart a future for the town. The Gaslamp has been reprinting the text of this report in its entirety.*

**Herb Addison**

### STREETS AND ROADS

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION of the streets and roads of Glen Ridge, while it reveals much that is praiseworthy, reveals also in many cases the need of change and improvement. It should be clear that every decision with regard to the street is important,—its location, its width, its subdivision into roadway, planting strip for trees, and sidewalk; its grade, its fixtures. Moreover, these decisions, with few exceptions, concern the general public far more than the individual or group of individuals who happen at the time to reside on the particular street under consideration. Therefore the settlement of these matters should usually rest in public hands and the decisions should be made primarily with regard to public interests. Even in so small and homogeneous a place as Glen Ridge, different streets have different purposes to serve. Some should be thoroughfares, some should be the natural arteries for electric car lines, some are important pleasure drives, some are bordered by large and handsome estates, and some by relatively modest homes. A moment's reflection will convince one that these varying purposes require varying treatment.

Most of the streets of Glen Ridge have been located by the owners of abutting real estate, mainly, if not entirely, with regard to local or neighborhood interests. The result, while often agreeable so far as the neighborhood is concerned, is not always so satisfactory when the need of thoroughfares and other general public interests are considered. It is not necessary in residence towns, or even in residence sections of large cities, to have every street continue indefinitely; indeed, I should go further and say that it is not desirable. Yet the lack of continuity in many of the streets of Glen Ridge will become more and more annoying as the population increases. A number of street extensions are indicated by dotted lines on the general map at the end of this report.

Street junctions and street intersections should also be planned with more regard to continuity. In some places in Glen Ridge awkward and ugly, almost danger-

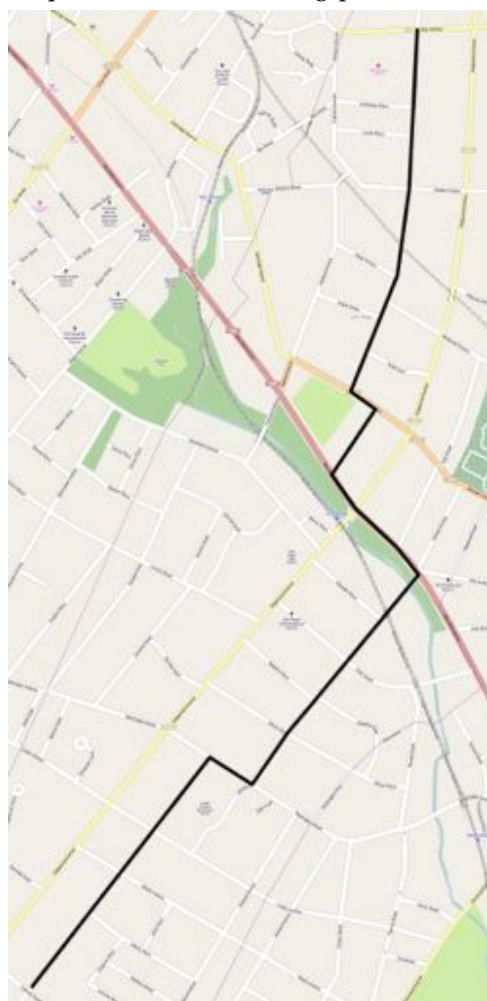
ous arrangements of streets have been made. An example of this is the junction of Park Way with Highland Avenue at Bloomfield Avenue, which should be corrected at once. The expense involved should not be great, since the land needed is small in amount and is obstructed by no valuable buildings. Mistakes in street junctions appear in some cases to be the result of mere carelessness; in others they are the result of some poor shift of economy which has little or no justification. A skilful and common-sense arrangement of street junctions and street intersections is a point of more than ordinary importance, and everything possible should be done to correct the more objectionable existing ones and to exercise greater care to prevent mistakes in the future.

The improvement of Bloomfield Avenue and its regulation for the future is highly important because Glen Ridge's main school, playground and park are located on Bloomfield Avenue. Happily, of the sixty-six hundred feet of frontage on Bloomfield Avenue in Glen Ridge, including both sides of the street, the Borough now owns nearly one-half, so that it is not only to its interest but in its power to fix and hold the Avenue to a high and consistent character of street development.

There are no electric cars in Glen Ridge except on Bloomfield Avenue, and perhaps no need of them at present. It is practically certain, however, that with increased settlement some car line will be needed running in general north and south, the long three-mile axis of the Borough. I have studied the street system carefully and examined several routes which suggested themselves, weighing their relative advantages. As a result of this survey I recommend for consideration the following route:

From Hawthorne Avenue to Washington Street; east on Washington Street to Hillside Avenue; north on Hillside Avenue to Bloomfield Avenue; Bloomfield Avenue to Herman Street; north on Herman Street to Belleville Avenue; west on Belleville to Sherman Avenue; north on Sherman Avenue to Bay Street.

The general width of fifty feet of street in Glen Ridge is reasonable as an average, especially when the houses are well set back, as they usually are. But some streets should be wider, others narrower. Almost invariably the space given to roadway is too wide and that to the plant-



*Streetcar line proposed in 1909, running from Hawthorne Avenue north to Bay and Sherman. Underlying map © OpenStreetMap contributors*

*continued on page 5*



Native Americans (continued from page 3)

fishing lines out of plant fiber and carved bones into the shape of hooks. Their more effective method of harvesting fish would have been the use of nets and fishing weirs. Fishing weirs, whose remains can still be seen at Dundee Dam when the water is low, were complex fish traps constructed of either stone or large wooden stakes hammered into the river bottom and enclosed with nets. The weirs allowed fish to wander in, but because of their design made it difficult for the fish to find their way out.

Across the state, archaeologists have unearthed small Lenni Lenape settlements with no remains of permanent structures—presumably, temporary villages. Many were located near the ocean, and historians suspect that these small villages were for small bands of hunters who visited the sites on a yearly basis. At these sites, they would have buried tools necessary for survival in shallow pits and spent their down-time making new arrow points or skinning and butchering animals.

The food acquired at these second homes depended upon location, but the list is quite extensive. The Yantecaw diet would have included clams, lobster, mussels, and other kinds of seafood if vacationing near the shore. Inland hunters would have brought home bear, deer, turkeys, and mastodon, before they went extinct. Yantecaw women tended the fields and grew maize, squash, and beans.

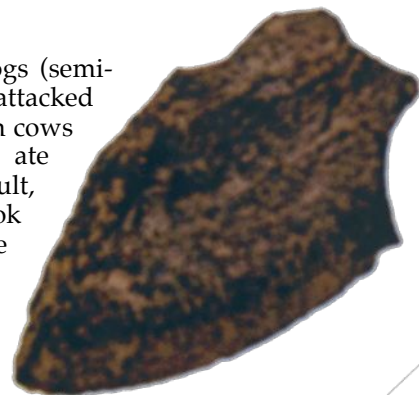
Life went on for our original Ridgers for thousands of years in much this way. After the Europeans arrived, both cultures attempted to live side by side and share the area, but sadly this was not to be. The Dutch often com-

plained that Native dogs (semi-domesticated wolves) attacked their cows, while Dutch cows often trampled and ate Native crops. As a result, treaties ensued that took more and more of the Native land and brought an end to a once-prosperous culture. No full-blooded Lenni Lenape are left today and very few people speak their native tongue.

When you look out your windows or take a walk down one of our town's picturesque streets, think about the original Ridgers. They lived, hunted, farmed, raised their families, loved, died, and were buried right here on the same land we call Glen Ridge. They had very similar aspirations as we do and even summ-  
 ered down the Jersey shore.

**Chris Savio with George Musser**

*Chris Savio is a teacher at Glen Ridge High School. His self-published textbook, Native American History and Culture, is now available on Amazon. You can reach him at [CSavio@glenridge.org](mailto:CSavio@glenridge.org). George Musser is Gaslamp editor.*



*Spear point found in the garden of 60 Highland Avenue in June 1994. Seton Hall archaeologist Herbert Kraft dated it to approximately 500 B.C.*

*Nolen Report (continued from page 4)*

ing strip for trees too narrow. The roadway in Glen Ridge will average, I think, about thirty-six feet and the planting strip less than three feet. Given forty-two feet exclusive of sidewalks, the roadway of streets for local use only need not be more than twenty-four feet (the space required for three vehicles), leaving eight or nine feet on each side for trees and a liberal lawn strip. All of this twenty-four foot roadway, however, should be paved from

curb to curb and not be merely a narrow sixteen foot strip in the centre, as at present. Of course, thoroughfares should have wider paved roadways.

More important than the right proportional subdivision of the street into sidewalk, planting strip and drive, is the method of its location. Most streets are part of a general town plan and should be so located as to contribute to the convenience and beauty of the general plan. Then the different functions that each has to fulfill should be taken into account as far as possible.

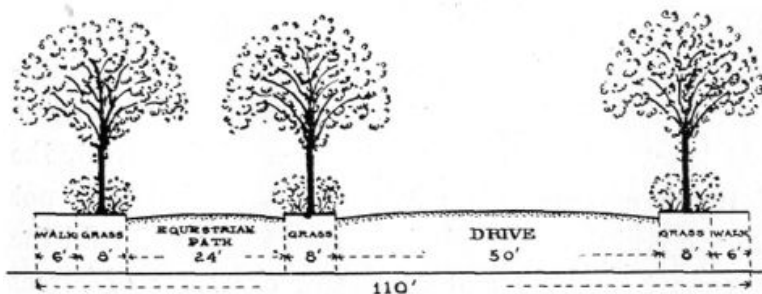
The street trees in Glen Ridge are usually of good species (Sugar Maples and American Elms), but as a rule they are poorly planted and even more poorly main-

tained. For Glen Ridge to longer neglect its street trees is to lose the value of one of its chief assets. A proper street tree ordinance should be adopted, like that of East Orange or Newark, for example; the street trees promptly placed under the care of a Shade Tree Commission, and given that careful and artistic attention which they need and deserve.

Attention also might be turned with advantage to street names, revising existing designations where nec-

essary so as to avoid confusion. These names should be selected, moreover, with some regard to Bloomfield and Montclair, for in this respect, especially for streets running east and west, these places are as one. The names of streets in Glen Ridge, such, for example, as Ridgewood, Hillside and Highland, are significant and attractive. This interest may be increased by a method which prevails in Europe, and, to some extent, in this country, of adding distinctiveness by using appropriately a greater variety of terms for streets. In Germany we have Strasse, Platz, Markt, Ring, Anlagen, etc.; in England, Road, Hill, Square, Crescent, Place, Circus, Row, Drive, Terrace, etc.

(To be continued)



*Proposed cross-section for Ridgewood Avenue*



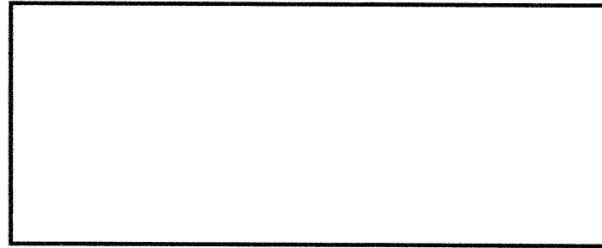
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## ***TERRY WEBSTER MUSEUM ROOM GRAND OPENING OCTOBER 26***

### **Current Events-**

September 15, 2013 – Walking Tour of Upper Montclair: Watchung Avenue and Bellevue Avenue; Montclair Historical Society. Walking tour of sites led by town historian Mike Farelly. During this 2-hour walking tour through Upper Montclair, learn about the houses and people who inhabited them as you discover Upper Montclair on foot. Info at: 973-744-1796. Suggested donation \$5. Tour meets at 108 Orange Road at 1:00 pm.

September 22, 2013 – January 20, 2014 – When Sandy Hit: The Storm that Forever Changed New Jersey. Morris Museum. On October 29, 2012 Sandy came with a fury rarely seen and left unimaginable heartbreak and devastation in her wake. The Morris Museum and the Star-Ledger will present the work of Star-Ledger photographers who fought through floods, power outages, and their own personal losses to document the impact Sandy had on New Jersey.

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### **The American Way of Death in the 19th Century**

Through October 13, 2013 – A Beautiful Way to Go: New York's Green-Wood Cemetery. Predating both Central Park and Prospect Park, Green-Wood Cemetery was one of the most important public green spaces in 19th-century America. The exhibition marks the 175th anniversary of this significant national landmark, exploring how its carefully constructed bucolic landscape reflected changing notions not only of death but of nature, and how Green-Wood helped to inaugurate a rising trend of so-called rural cemeteries and public parks. Its grounds are a museum of monuments and statuary by leading architects and artists -- including Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Richard Upjohn, and Warren & Wetmore, designers of Grand Central Terminal -- working in a wide range of styles.