



# GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## THE GASLAMP

illuminating Our Past

November 2018 Vol. XLI No. 2



### President's Letter

## See You at Our Annual Holiday Party!

THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY party will be held this year on Friday, Dec. 7. Our hosts are Jane Francisco and Colin Faulkner. Built in 1886, their house at 120 Ridgewood Avenue showcases the wonderful architectural detail of a Queen Anne home. Look for your invitation in the mail!

Our annual fall walking tour highlighted the rich architecture of Hillside Avenue. Well over 50 history enthusiasts (including many children) enjoyed learning about the unique histories of these homes. A scavenger hunt entertained both children and adults. A special thanks to Karin Robinson, Sarge Gardiner, and Sally Meyer for their hard work to make this event a success.

Please join us for our fourth annual gingerbread house decorating workshop on Sunday, Dec. 9, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Linden Avenue School. This is a great way to kick off the holidays and keep those little hands busy! The event is limited to 40 families, with priority given to members. We will send an email soon with details about how to sign up.

Following on the success of last year's fashion exhibit, we are offering another pop-up exhibition in our museum space this February. Learn about Glen Ridge's evolving 19th- and 20th-century landscape and what became of its long-lost treasures. The exhibit will feature beautiful photo-

graphs from our archives showcasing the many intriguing buildings and homes no longer present in town. The exhibit will be held Feb. 16 and 23. We hope to see you there!

Holiday shopping is now upon us and we hope you will consider a purchase from the Historical Society. We have the perfect holiday gifts, including gas lamp and gazebo ornaments and hand-colored seasonal Glen Ridge postcards.

See the back cover of the newsletter for details. These items are on sale at the library and at our museum. Still don't know what to get that certain someone? Looking for the perfect stocking stuffer? A membership—at only \$20—makes a thoughtful gift, too!

Did you know that in addition to being a research library, our museum also has a large collection of historic objects, images, photographs, and maps? Practically each month a new donation finds its way into our ever growing collection. Recently, a family contributed a scrapbook documenting a baby's first years in early-20th-century Glen Ridge. Not ready to donate? We're happy to scan images and add them to our files. If you have items you think would be of interest to the society, please contact us!

Wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season and hope to see you at the party!

**Jennifer Janofsky**



### News and Goings-On

**Annual holiday party.** All members will receive a mailed invitation to our party at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 7, at 120 Ridgewood Avenue.

**Gingerbread decorating event.** Come to Linden Avenue School on Sunday, Dec. 9, at 1 p.m. Capacity is limited, so please sign up as soon as you get our email.

**Photography exhibit.** Come view (and mourn) the spec-

tacular buildings that were lost to development before the Historic District was established. The exhibit will be open on Saturday, Feb. 16, and Saturday, Feb. 23.

**Museum hours.** The Terry S. Webster 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. It maintains an architectural and historical file on every house in town, including old documents and photographs.

## Dancing in the Brig

IN THE SUMMER of 1944 a group of Glen Ridge High School students launched an effort to establish a weekend recreation center run solely by them. A state movement to open such clubs had already spawned the Chandelier in Montclair and the Hub in Bloomfield. The students rented space in the former post-office annex at the rear of the Glen Ridge Trust Company, which the Postal Service had vacated in 1937 when it moved to its present building. In a tongue-in-cheek nod to the arched metal grates on the windows, students called it the Brig.

They spent hours in the long-neglected space painting the walls and waxing the dance floor. A town-wide appeal raised money for furnishings, the construction of a soda bar, and the rental of a jukebox. The organizers set membership dues at \$2 a year and established rules; smoking was allowed only in the lobby, for instance. On Sept. 30, 1944, after the first victory of what became a championship football season, the Brig officially opened its doors. About 200 revelers, including opposition players from Clifford Scott High School in East Orange, danced to the music of a local swing band called the Melodaires. Volunteers from the Women's Club served as chaperons.

The Brig was open on Friday and Saturday nights from 8 o'clock to midnight. Its president, Bill Keeley, described it rather sardonically as "just a place to go when you haven't anything better to do." Members planned special events

such as Sadie Hawkins dances, a Pan-American program, and an open house urging "everyone from eighth-graders to 80-year hepsters... to quit the swing shift for the evening."

In spite of its great success, the Brig's one-year lease at the bank was not renewed. The Board of Education offered a temporary home at 245 Ridgewood Avenue, a house it had purchased to build a new high school on the site of the present-day Ridgewood Avenue School. Students

rehabilitated the space, updated the rules, and opened the new Brig with a holiday dance in December 1945. The next May, though, it closed for good. In the fall the high school began a supervised recreation program on weekend nights.

The BOE abandoned the plan to build a new high school and razed 245 Ridgewood in 1951 for a science wing and auditorium. The postal annex building was torn down in 2012. The Historical Society tried but failed to save one of the Brig grates for posterity.

**Sally Meyer**



*"The Brig" student-run dance club was located in the former post office—the site now occupied by the Boiling Springs drive-through. Photo by Herb Addison*



## GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## From the Designer of the Jefferson Memorial

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 26 Old Oak Road. It was designed by John Russell Pope and is one of only three houses in town designed by nationally prominent architects, the other two being Thomas Carrère's 57 Hillside Avenue and Frank Lloyd Wright's 63 Chestnut Hill Place.

Pope was born in New York City in 1874, the son of a wealthy portrait painter. He originally pursued a degree in medicine at the City College of New York, but when he excelled at the art classes required of medical students at that time, he transferred to Columbia University to study architecture. Upon graduation he was awarded the inaugural architectural fellowship for study at the American Academy in Rome, known as the Rome Prize. After 18 months in Rome, he entered the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He was one of the first academically trained architects in the United States and took on classical design as his personal calling. Pope believed that the classical forms of Greek and Roman architecture had an intrinsic, unmitigated beauty.

Pope's career began with designs for very large houses for influential bankers, businessmen, and other prominent people. His work quickly gained national renown and he was ultimately rewarded with important commissions for classical buildings in Washington, including the National Gallery of Art, completed in 1939, and the Jefferson Memorial, completed in 1941.

Pope's work appealed to the conservative tastes of wealthy clients, which led him to Glen Ridge and the task of designing a house for insurance broker George W. Will in 1931. Will owned a piece of the former Beach Estate between Ridgewood Avenue and Ham-

ilton Road. The original house on the site was demolished in 1930 to make way for a small development along the new semi-private Old Oak Road. The master plan for the wooded property, designed by Pope for the Windsor Realty Company, proposed large lots for the construction of six houses, al-

ing to the modern International Style.

The house nicely represents the Neo-Georgian and Federal style. It is built of brick, the predominant construction material for that style in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern states. It has a simple, perfectly symmetrical façade. Single windows with shutters

are aligned both vertically and horizontally in a grid around the front door. The windows have many small panes of glass: eight over 12 on the first floor and eight over eight on the second floor. The side gables of the slate roof are framed by large matching chimneys.

These requisite features are a backdrop for the extraordinary front entrance. The paneled front door has an elaborate transom window with interlaced mullions. A pair of substantial Ionic columns with entasis—the elegantly curved silhouette of classical columns—support a traditional segmental pediment. The standard dentil moldings of the cornice are repeated on the pediment. This small portico is typical of the style and Pope has produced an exquisite example.

I consider one aspect of this house particularly interesting: the attached two-car garage. When this house was built, two-thirds of the automobiles on the road in the U.S. were still Model Ts, and few families had two cars. Attached garages were an innovation. Pope gives the garage the neoclassical flourish of carved sunburst panels over each door. This detail remains although the garage was recently converted into living space.

With Pope's death, interest in his brand of architecture virtually ceased. Whatever your opinion of Pope's stylistic choices, I think you will find 26 Old Oak Road is an impeccable piece of architecture.

**Karin Robinson**



though only one was built at that time.

For his residential designs, Pope worked primarily in the Neo-Georgian and Federal variants of Classical Revival architecture. The original Georgian period in American architecture (1714–1780) was named for kings George I, II, and III, who ruled England and its colonies at that time. The Federal period (1780–1820) followed it. I have always seen them as a single evolving style divided in two by political affiliations. There are differences, but I find them to be minor and inconsistent.

Reviving colonial-style architecture became popular in the United States after the Centennial Exposition of 1876. It was the dominant style of the first half of the 20th century, reaching a peak between 1910 and 1930. At the time that Pope designed 26 Old Oak Road in 1931, however, interest in revival styles was waning and architects were turn-



## More Than Just a Name

*The Historical Society's Street Naming Project in 1982 investigated people, places, and institutions behind the naming of local streets. Since the April 2017 issue, we have intermittently republished the findings, updated with new research.*

GLEN RIDGE STREET names reflect the local trees (Linden and Hawthorne) and local topography (Hillcrest and Hillside). Presidents are obvious (Washington and Lincoln), but what about the less familiar names? The Historical Society has records for all 25 streets named after local residents.

**Baldwin Street** runs east from Glen Ridge Avenue to Ridgewood Avenue and Broad Street in Bloomfield. Strangely, it does not appear in the official county road-building records, so we can only guess at its construction date. An 1850 map shows no such road, an 1856 map indicates the route as "proposed," an 1865 map shows the street with its two sharp curves down the hillside, and an 1871 map labels it as Baldwin Avenue. The street was later extended farther east.

The street runs along the southern boundary of the property that Benjamin Baldwin, one of the original Newark settlers, bought from the colonial

*Local industrialist Samuel Benson ran a metalworking mill on the site of Clay Field (below left) and lived on what is now Hurrell Field (below right). Both photos are circa 1900.*

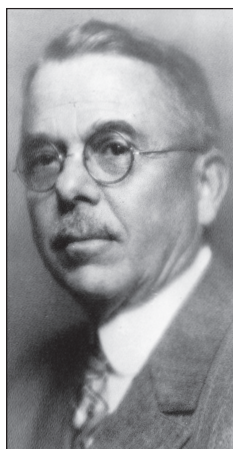
authorities in 1712. Among the many prominent members of the family was Benjamin's great-great-grandson Warren S. Baldwin (1812–1873), who served as the first president of the Bloomfield Savings Institution (later the Bloomfield Savings Bank). His residence was located at Broad and Warren Streets in Bloomfield.

**Benson Street** is another of the earliest streets of what is now Glen Ridge. It was laid out on Oct. 6, 1868, connecting Broad Street in Bloomfield to Highland Avenue (itself new) at the top of the hill [see map on facing page]. There was no train line at the time, but two years later the plans for Wildwood Terrace show the jog around the future Benson Street Station of the Montclair Railway, as it was first known. In 1906 Benson Street was divided in two when the Erie Railroad added a second set of tracks to the line, widening the cut into the hillside. Both sections kept the name Benson Street until the upper end was renamed **Mead Terrace** in 1925.

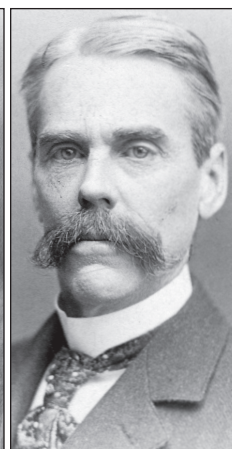
Benson Street was named after Samuel Benson, an early industrialist who owned all or part of three mills at what are now Clay and Hurrell fields and under the Freeman Parkway bridge. In 1913 the Benson family deeded part of their property to the borough to build King Street, which ran from Bloomfield Avenue across Hurrell Field. "King" was the maiden name of Benson's wife. No houses were ever built on the road, and the borough eliminated it in 1924 (along with the spectacular house that dated to the 1850s).

The family not only were successful entrepreneurs, but were also an integral part of community life. The earliest official record of an election in Bloomfield is that of 1871, when Benson took office as a member of the town committee. The position was later held by his sons, Henry and Frank. After the secession from Bloomfield in 1895, Henry served on the Glen Ridge Board of Health, and Frank was borough tax collector.

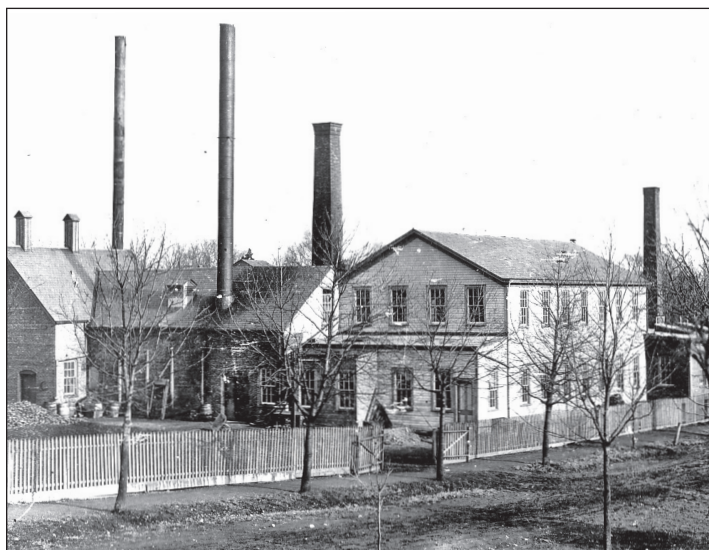
Mead Terrace was named for Giles



Giles Mead



Henry S. Chapman

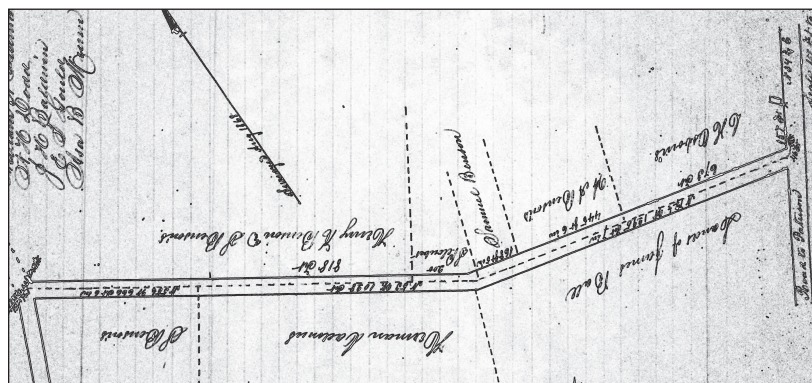


Mead, the fifth mayor of Glen Ridge, serving from July 1909 to January 1912. Born in Swanton, Vt., in 1866, he co-founded the Union Carbide and Carbon Company and served as director, vice-president, and treasurer. Mead began his civic career as a councilman in 1907. He was president of the Glen Ridge Trust Company from 1920 to 1925 and a member of the Board of Directors of the bank from 1916 to 1920. He was also a trustee of the Glen Ridge Congregational Church and of the Glen Ridge Country Club. He lived first at 271 Ridgewood Avenue, later moved to 30 Hillside Avenue, and eventually retired to Beverly Hills, Calif., in 1935.

Mead's term as mayor was a time of change for the young town of Glen Ridge. The first building code became effective in 1910. Voters approved the library in 1911. The borough established the Shade Tree Commission to plant trees along Ridgewood Avenue, formed the Water Department, and hired the first paid firefighter. The Glen Ridge Stores opened for business in the Arcade Building in 1911. The South-End School (later Linden Avenue

School) was opened in September 1911. Welsbach System mantle gas lamps were installed in place of open-flame gas lamps, improving street illumination in town.

The Historical Society files contain a record of Ordinance 163 signed by Giles Mead in 1909. It prohibited "throwing or depositing any garbage, ashes, pa-



Benson Street originally ran from Highland Avenue (left) to Broad Street (right).  
From Essex County Road Book F, page 329

per, old iron, tin cans or rubbish of any character or description in any of the streets" of Glen Ridge, subject to a fine of up to \$10 or 90 days in jail.

**Chapman Place** connects Adams Place and Lorraine Street. It existed before 1918 as an ungraded and unimproved road known as Oxford Street.

In 1924 the Glen Ridge postmaster was troubled having two Oxford Streets in the borough and requested that the council change one of the names. The council decided at first to keep the name, but relented in 1930 and renamed the street in honor of Henry S. Chapman. Chapman had come to Glen Ridge in 1891 and purchased the Darwin Estate on Ridgewood Avenue as his new home.

He owned a chemical company in Arlington which manufactured products such as celluloid combs, mirrors, and collars. It was the largest of its kind in the United States when he sold it to DuPont in 1915. Chapman was very involved in community affairs. He

saw the need for a permanent library building and contributed the money to build it. He helped to form a company to purchase land for the town; the Arcade was built on one such property. He helped organize the Country Club in 1894 and was its first president. He built the chancel of the Congregational Church. After his wife's death he contributed the money to build the Women's Club as a memorial to her.

**Karin Robinson with George Musser**

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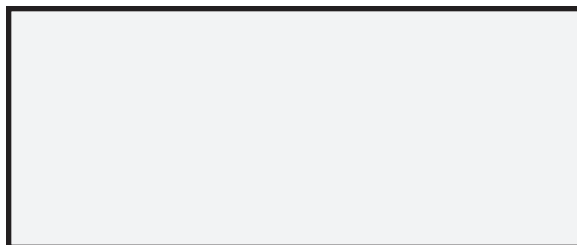
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**ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY**  
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7**

## Glen Ridge Historical Society Catalog

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT for Glen Ridge history by making a purchase from our catalog of Historical Society items.

**Historic District house plaque.** Celebrate your home's history with a custom cast-bronze plaque denoting the Historic District of Glen Ridge and your home's circa construction date. The order form is available on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety](http://www.facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety). Delivery takes approximately six weeks. Member price \$180

**Holiday ornaments.** A beautiful custom brass ornament featuring the iconic image of the Glen Ridge gas lamp is available for \$15. Each ornament comes in a red presentation box and includes a brief town history. Order online at



[www.glenridgehistory.org/glen-ridge-gas-lamp-ornament](http://www.glenridgehistory.org/glen-ridge-gas-lamp-ornament). You may also purchase ornaments at the Glen Ridge Public Library. We also offer the older gazebo and train-station ornaments for \$15.

**1906 maps.** Reprints of the famous A.H. Mueller Atlas of Essex County are available for both the north and the south ends of town. Member price \$80

**Glen Ridge Memory and Matching Game.** A classic handcrafted memory game with 48 tiles showing historic sites and buildings in Glen

Ridge. The storage box includes a description of each image. Suitable for all ages. \$15

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