



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

April 2019 Vol. XLI No. 4



President's Letter

Brought to You by the Architect of the Jefferson Memorial

CONGRATULATIONS TO SALLY MEYER and her amazing exhibition committee for their blockbuster exhibit, "Glen Ridge: Then and Now." The exhibit featured over 80 photographs of homes, institutions, and structures no longer standing in Glen Ridge. Well over 400 people visited, including many young families. We were also thrilled so many of you asked to see your house file, too. It was so great to see so many of you pouring over those files! Many of you have suggested archiving the exhibit on our website. We couldn't agree more. We are currently exploring options, so stay tuned.

At the upcoming annual meeting, architect Jim Garrison will be speaking on the domestic architecture of John Russell Pope, using three houses in South Jersey as his case studies. Although Pope is largely known for his public building projects such as the Jefferson Memorial (1943) and the National Gallery of Art (1941), he enjoyed great success as a private architect. In fact, you can see an excellent example of his work right here in Glen Ridge at 26 Old Oak Road. Our speaker is an architect



and author with over 30 years experience and several books to his credit. He lives in the Philadelphia area, where he is active in local and regional preservation.

Prior to the talk, we will have a brief business meeting to approve our budget, elect new officers and trustees (including confirming several interim appointments), and present the annual Preservation Award. The meeting will be April

26 at 7:30 p.m. at the Glen Ridge Train Station. Light refreshments will be served after. I hope you can join us!

I'd like to extend a warm thanks to our outgoing trustees—George Azrak, Alison Lang, and George Musser—and treasurer, Rick Weber. They have all committed countless hours of service and will be missed. I'm thrilled to announce that George has agreed to stay on as editor of *The Gaslamp*, so we will continue to be in great hands!

Spring is here at last and we know how amazing Glen Ridge looks with our spectacular trees and landscapes. I hope you can get out and enjoy the warm sun while taking in all the beauty the town has to offer! **Jennifer Janofsky**

News and Goings-On

Annual business meeting. On April 26 at 7:30 p.m., the Historical Society will hold its annual meeting at the Glen Ridge Train Station, 224 Ridgewood Ave. Members will vote for new officers and trustees. The nominees are:

Vice-President (2019–2021)	Megan Blank
Secretary (2019–2020)	Christine Brennan
Treasurer (2019–2021)	Sondra Lefkowitz
Trustee (2019–2020)	Robert White
Trustee (2019–2021)	Nicholas Colello
Trustee (2019–2021)	Karin Robinson
Trustee (2019–2022)	Rebecca Hughes
Trustee (2019–2022)	Susan Link
Trustee (2019–2022)	Mark Pizzini

Arts Festival/Eco-Fair. Stop by our merch table on Ridgewood Avenue on May 11. See a sample Historic District plaque and order one that is customized for your house. Postcards and other goodies will also be on display, or you can just geek out with us over local architecture.

Seeking writers. Interested in researching and writing a short article on local history for *The Gaslamp*? Please contact the editor, George Musser, at georgejr@musser.com.

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.

The 1919 Senior Annual

AS THE 2019 *Glenalog* is readied for the printer, it is intriguing to go back a century and read the 1919 *Senior Annual*. The impact of World War I and the subsequent influenza pandemic is evident from the opening pages. The editors write: "It has been no easy time during these four years, especially in the last year." And: "As we look back... we can't help noticing, among other things, a lessening of school spirit for which we feel somewhat responsible."

They dedicated the book not to a teacher, as is usual practice, but to former students "who offered the full measure of their services that the world might be made safe for democracy." A list of 93 young men includes siblings of nine members of the senior class. Further into the book, an "In Memoriam" page identifies Lt. James A. Mosely and Lt. Kenneth A. Bailey as casualties.

The yearbook's November calendar summary reports the end of the war: "On the seventh the false peace report was issued and school was closed, after great cheering in the assembly, for the afternoon. On the eleventh, when the true report was issued, school was closed all day. The entire student body paraded along Ridgewood Avenue."

Throughout the year, school was closed for days and

weeks at a time because of influenza. The natural-science instructor, Arva Blend, died in March; the mathematics instructor, Don Nickerson, in April. Blend had been in the system for 10 years; Nickerson, for two. With a teaching staff of only 16, the loss of two members must have been shocking. A bronze memorial plaque to Blend was installed in the science laboratory.

Despite the somber realities of war and sickness, the yearbook does show that students enjoyed many extracurricular activities. A student body of only 89 boys and 69 girls managed to publish a yearbook and biannual literary magazine called *The Comet*, field four athletic teams and a debate team, put on two plays, and hold a junior-senior prom.

The 28 seniors didn't hesitate to poke fun at one another in their personal write-ups. These were quite direct, unlike the coded messages in today's yearbooks. Boys are ribbed about their dancing and driving skills, and girls about fashion sense and chew-

ing-gum habits. Each senior is teased in a personal cartoon sketch lampooning one of his or her well-known traits.

The yearbook staff proved to be good salespeople, too. There are 95 student pages in the book and 17 pages of ads.

Sally Meyer



Caricatures from the 1919 High School yearbook



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Officers

President	Jennifer Janofsky
Vice President	Megan Blank
Secretary	Christine Brennan
Treasurer	Rick Weber
Town Historian (ex officio)	Sally Meyer
Library Director (ex officio)	Jennifer Breuer

Trustees

George Azrak (2019)	Robert White (2020)
Alison Lang (2019)	Nicholas Colello (2021)
George Musser (2019)	Ann Nicol (2021)
Megan Connolly (2020)	Karin Robinson (2021)
Toni Murphy (2020)	

THE GASLAMP

Editor

George Musser

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Neoclassically Classy

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 24 Woodland Ave. (Despite its address, it faces Hillcrest Road.) At first glance, it may look like a fairly simple, symmetrical house, but there is a lot more going on if you look closely.

24 Woodland Ave. was built in 1904. It is a good example of the Neoclassical Style, most often seen on banks and government buildings. The genre is known by its meticulously proportioned classical columns and other classical details. These elements were codified by architects, artists, and scholars during the Renaissance, when the world of Greek and Roman antiquity found a new audience. Books illustrating the mathematical rules behind the compositions were published and distributed broadly at that time.

The house at 24 Woodland Ave. is representative of the revival of Neoclassical architecture—a sort of Neo-Neoclassical style—at the turn of the 20th century. This was an era when many different historical styles were being revived, from Italianate to Tudor. The Neoclassical style was most likely selected for this house to express its preeminence in a time of recycled architecture—after all, Neoclassicism was the architecture of powerful public buildings.

The house is not as rigid as might be assumed considering its ties to exacting reconstructions of Greek and Roman buildings. There's a lot going on in the façade that plays with the rules of classical architecture. First of all, the front of the house is not fully symmetrical. There are pairs of double-hung windows all across the exterior of the house—except just to the left of the front door, where three windows are grouped closely together in a small box-bay window. It's the relentless pattern of windows that allows the architect to make this transgression, and it brings life to the composition.

The prime element of Neoclassical architecture—the column—is used throughout, as is its cousin the pilaster, a flattened column pressed against the wall surface. They appear at different sizes and in different forms. Two large pilasters are placed on each side of the center bay, as if to support the pediment above. They are grand, fluted Ionic pilasters that work with the scale of the entire façade. Tucked between the pilasters is the entry portico. This is a one-story composition relating to the scale of the front door. Although

attached between the pilasters. So it is appropriate that there are round columns rather than pilasters. Even the columns engaged with the front wall are half-round. The columns also have entasis, the slight bulge in the width of the column about a third of the way up, which makes them appear less static.

At the same time, the portico columns are of the Doric order. Doric columns are very plain: no fluting, an unadorned capital, and a simple base. They may be full-bodied columns, but the Doric order is subordinate to the

Ionic order in the hierarchy of classical architecture; they are lesser than the Ionic. Two posts with carved wooden urns—common classical elements—extend above the columns as punctuation.

Even the downspouts serve a visual purpose. They separate the intense central portion of the façade from the wider, plainer ends. The original open porches at each end of the first floor have been

skillfully enclosed. A partition with appropriately scaled panes of glass has been inserted behind the Doric columns and corner posts. This allows the original volumes of those columns and posts to be visible.

The roundness of the columns is what ties the end porches to the center portico. All together there are two compositions woven together across the front of the house—the large-scale center composition and the small-scale full-width composition. All of this might not be noticed under the unremarkable long, low, hipped roof on the face of a simple rectangular volume.

Best of all is the delicate tracery of the sidelights. It is completely out of scale with the other windows, providing instead a contrasting—even capricious—detail at the front door. This wonderful house is a rare thing. It is grandiose and subtle at the same time.

Karin Robinson



the pilasters are calibrated to the entire house, the portico columns are calibrated to a person standing at the entry.

The half-circle of the portico is a wonderful contrast to the flatness of the rest of the façade. It looks as if it has been pushed out between the pilasters or curled around so it can be

Knob Appeal

WHEN MY WIFE, Judy, and I moved to Glen Ridge in 1997, we were smitten by our 1899 home's tiger-oak woodwork, carved fireplace mantel, and wide porch. Yet something else caught my eye. Hiding in plain sight was the original door hardware. Every piece of it. All were intact, from the ornate front-door and foyer doorknobs—complete with their back plates with keyhole dust covers—to the fancy door hinges and pocket-door pulls. And most were dark with sooty tarnish or entombed in layers of paint.

Restoring three floors' worth of hardware was a major undertaking. But I was in no rush. I discovered that the back plates were made of copper-plated brass (*image at right*). And they shined up like a brand-new penny.

The house dates to a time when doorknob and door-hardware design flourished. In the Gilded Age, the emphasis was on over-the-top ornamentation, expressed across a range of design motifs, from elegant Queen Anne to geometrically inspired Eastlake Style, which often incorporated Anglo-Japanese or East Asian elements, such as bamboo, urns, butterflies, and dragons.

As I was refinishing the back plates, I discovered something that made all the months of labor worth it: there, amid a riot of beautiful, embossed Victorian scrollwork, hidden for decades

beneath caked paint, but now staring back at me in gleaming brass, was a fire-breathing dragon.

If you're looking to replace missing vintage hardware, I can point you to the architectural salvage emporium Olde Good Things, which has several

- Dremel polishing kit (optional)
- Paint stripper (optional)

Step 1. After carefully removing the hardware (keeping track of all the mounting screws), coat the surface with metal polish.

Step 2. Use the detailing brush to vigorously brush the coated surface until tarnish begins to fade and the underlying metal becomes visible. Note: If the surface of the piece is painted, use conventional paint stripper before proceeding with Step 2.

Step 3. To get into the nooks and crannies (the more ornate the piece, the more of them there are) or tackle stubborn spots, reapply the metal polish and use fine steel wool to remove the tarnish. A Dremel tool with a felt polishing wheel or pad also works well for this purpose.

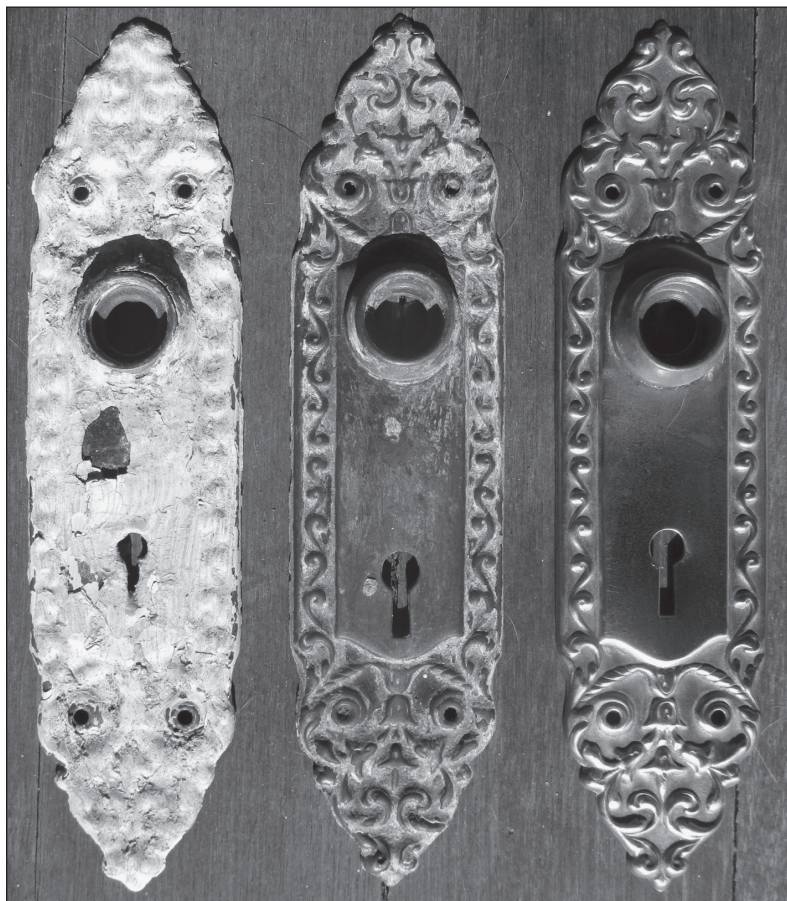
Step 4. Once the piece is relatively free of tarnish, apply a little metal polish to the brush bristles and scrub the hardware once more under running water.

Step 5. When dry, apply jewelers rouge to a rag or cloth and scrub the piece to achieve a mirror-shine finish. To polish the nooks and crannies, use a Q-tip or the Dremel tool.

It's important to be gentle with the underlying metal, which is why fine steel wool is a must. Otherwise, you can end up scratching the copper surface. Also, I got better results by periodically repolishing the hardware rather than sealing it because—unfounded or not—my concern is that the sealant may interfere with or alter the original finish.

Bruce Wotring

Bruce Wotring is an advertising copywriter and recovering antiques collector.



locations in the city. Not surprisingly, eBay is a great source and often a more affordable option. Reproduction hardware is available from many online sources, but the prices are sometimes comparable to the antiques. Why not get the real thing?

The materials you need to restore the luster of antique fixtures are readily available at most hardware stores:

- Brasso or Noxon metal polish
- Detailing brush with nylon bristles
- Fine steel wool
- Rag
- Jewelers rouge
- Q-tips



Why Kitchen Islands Became a Thing

The Open Concept and Its Discontents

WHO ELSE HERE remembers *The Galloping Gourmet*? Graham Kerr's show was my summer lunchtime obsession as a child—a first exposure to cooking as a performance. This was the thin end of the wedge: without realizing it, Kerr and his fellow TV chefs entirely changed the architecture of the ideal family home in the late-20th century.

The kitchen island, with stools lined up opposite the working space—focusing attention on the cook and arranging the family as an audience—became an aspirational essential for middle-class Americans. Islands sold houses, and still do.

This impulse helped to popularize what European Modernist architects earlier in the century called the “free” or “open” plan. The early Modernists built houses for wealthy patrons who employed domestic servants, but who wanted to appear enlightened—free of sentimental attachment to the fusty old boxes in which they had been raised. Open plans integrated many rooms into one space, but they did not exactly democratize it; these households still depended on servants, and kitchens remained isolated from the family.

During the Depression, Frank Lloyd Wright created a new kind of dwelling for the middle-class American family that could no longer afford a servant: the Usonian house. (Glen Ridge has a fine example on Chestnut Hill Place. It is a private dwelling all but invisible from the street.) The Usonian exalted the servant-less family by joining living, dining, library, and kitchen spaces into one highly articulated room, assembled out of modular wood elements and good masonry. But the design still concealed the sink and stove, at least, from the elegant expanse of the living space. This kitchen or “workspace,” as Wright labeled it, could be quite small. It was no performance space.

The high-style Usonian formula

was rendered obsolete with the advent of television, both as a new kind of domestic object—it replaced the hearth as the focal point of a home in a way that the radio had not—and as a cultural conduit. As network programming evolved, cooking segments on morning shows conditioned us to perceive the kitchen as a stage, while sitcoms subconsciously normalized a broader, open spatial ideal for many millions of people. Filmed in front of a studio audience with multiple cameras, sitcoms

Second, in the open-concept plan, if you burn the fish you've fouled the whole nest. A strong hood—of the kind that the building code discourages—will seem necessary if there is no available cross ventilation from windows.

Third, overhead recessed downlighting makes ordinary people look their worst. Table lamps give a much kinder, more task-oriented and pleasant light, but we don't see them used as much now. In the staging of sitcoms they got in the way of the TV camera.

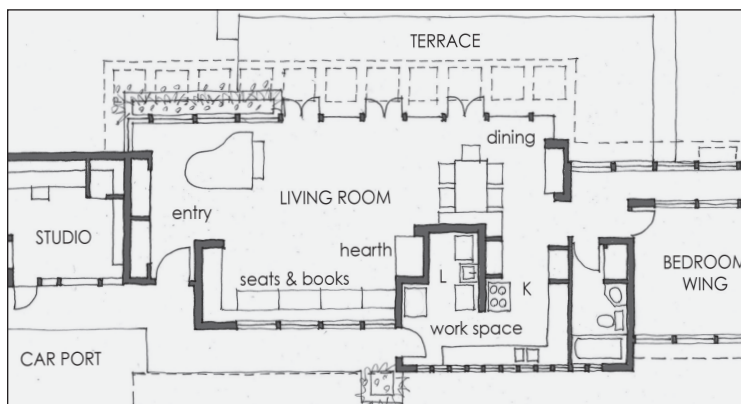
Now we are conditioned to think that they are impractical.

Fourth, when people renovate their houses to open them up, most often the new open plans make moderately sized houses look smaller and more cluttered. Too often all is revealed at the front door, and there is no sequential discovery or calibration of privacy.

Thoughtful design can help with these problems. The older houses in Glen Ridge were designed for families of another age, and every generation tweaks them. The challenge we face is how to make them work better for us without undermining the value embodied in their sound material construction and their inherent character.

A new homeowner might want to put back a few of the walls that a previous owner took down. Small but significant interventions—such as shifting doorways—can transform how the rooms in an older house can be furnished, making the house better serve today's families. You may, upon reflection, decide that you really do want a door on the kitchen after all. We should rethink or let go of some of our mid-20th-century TV-inspired open spatial concepts. We do not live on a dressed soundstage. **Mark Wright**

Mark Wright is an architect, architectural historian, and adjunct professor at the New York School of Interior Design.



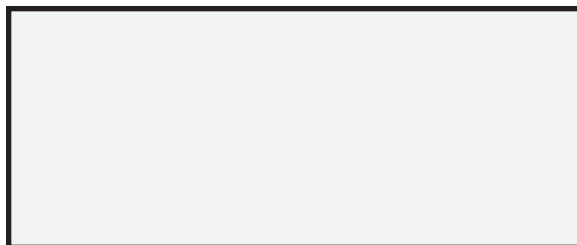
The living space of a mid-century Usonian house by Frank Lloyd Wright. Laundry and kitchen are concealed behind the corner fireplace. Drawing by the author

joined living spaces into an unnaturally expansive continuum where “rooms” might be set off by a few steps up or down, and furniture groups floated free of walls. Overhead lighting was sourceless and remorseless.

In the open-concept plan as it has developed, the cook can demonstrate mastery, see the TV, and keep spouse and children under surveillance. But this has come at a cost.

First, the domestic audience's interest in their cook's performance stops when it gets to the dirty dishes. Putting a sink or cooktop on the island is essential on a chef's set in a TV studio, but in a home it exposes the family to greasy sponges or fire and spattering oil. Shielding this infrastructure from direct view within the open entertainment zone, let alone from the front door, will often take careful planning.

Address Service Requested



ANNUAL MEETING
APRIL 26, 7:30 P.M.
TRAIN STATION

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. 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. 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

Gas-lamp postcards. Full-color 4x6 postcards showing a Glen Ridge gas lamp in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. \$1 each



To make a purchase, email us at glenridgehs@gmail.com or mail your order and payment to P.O. Box 164, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028-0164. Purchases may also be made by visiting our museum during open hours on the second Saturday of each month. It is located above Boiling Springs Savings Bank at 222 Ridgewood Ave.