



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

November 2019 Vol. XLII No. 2



President's Letter

Get Ready for the Holiday Party!

THANKS TO EVERYONE who came out and enjoyed our annual walking tour held on Oct. 13. The "Stylish Glen Ridge" tour highlighted the amazing architecture on Highland Avenue, one of the oldest streets in Glen Ridge. Over 60 people enjoyed the tour! Thank you to Megan and Ryan Blank for hosting everyone for post-walk refreshments. I'd like to especially thank our fantastic tour docents, Sarge Gardiner, Karin Robinson, and Nicholas Collelo. They put a lot of time and energy into researching, writing, and offering the tours.

December is a busy time at the Historical Society. We have two great events coming up. On Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m., our annual holiday party will be hosted by Nicole and Michael Quinn at 350 Ridgewood Ave. This is always a fun evening. We love to see all of our members at the holiday season and are looking forward to seeing faces old and new. And the holiday season wouldn't be complete without our annual gingerbread house decorating event. It will be held on Saturday, Dec. 7, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Central School. This event is fun for kids of all ages, includ-

ing teens. Adults can join in, too. Join us for decorating fun!

Speaking of the holidays, the Historical Society has many shopping opportunities for the history lovers in your life. Our always popular historic maps make a wonderful gift. We also have our very popular gas-lamp ornaments ready

to go for the holiday season. Memberships make a great gift and a perfect stocking stuffer! Ornaments will be on sale at the library. See the back page of *The Gaslamp* for the details.

Did you know that, through the Blue Foundry Bank's Community Alliance Program, the Historical Society earns money based on the number of supporters who bank with Blue Foundry? We receive quarterly donations as long as 20 members have desig-

nated their accounts as supporters. If you bank with Blue Foundry, you can ask them to add you to the list. Donations come directly from the bank and funds are not withdrawn from supporter's accounts. To date, the Historical Society has earned \$1,302.27 through the program. Thank you, Blue Foundry Bank!

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. 6, at 350 Ridgewood Ave.

Gingerbread decorating event. Come to Central School on Saturday, Dec. 7, at 1 p.m. Capacity is limited, so please sign up as soon as you get our email or contact us at glenridgehs@gmail.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. It maintains an architectural and historical file on every house in town, including old documents and photographs. The museum also features exhibits of town history.

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.

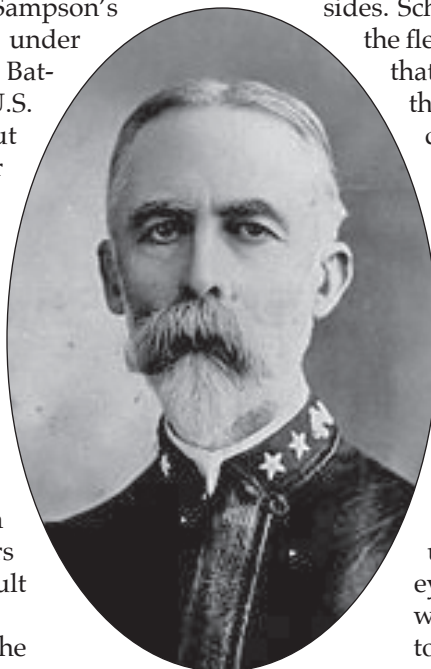
Facebook. Visit us on Facebook for news, event notices, or just to Like us: [facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety).

A Hero's Welcome

ON AUG. 27, 1898, a large and boisterous crowd at the railroad station on Ridgewood Avenue awaited the arrival home of Rear Admiral William T. Sampson. Strings of flags festooned the façade; patriotic songs filled the air. Eight weeks earlier, on July 3, American naval forces under Sampson's command had defeated the Spanish fleet under Admiral Pascual Cervera y Topete at the Battle of Santiago de Cuba, thus securing U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War. But did Sampson deserve a hero's welcome for that victory? It's complicated.

Sampson graduated first in his class at Annapolis in 1861, served for the Union in the Civil War, and held a number of commands. When the *Maine* was sunk on Feb. 15, 1898, President William McKinley appointed Sampson head of the naval board of inquiry. Around this time—none of his biographies says precisely when—he and his wife, Elizabeth, rented a house at 117 Clark St. in Glen Ridge. Their family included two daughters and two sons. Sampson also had two adult daughters from an earlier marriage.

When war was declared on April 25, he was appointed rear admiral (bypassing 10 more senior officers) and commander of the North Atlantic Fleet. On the morning of the battle at Santiago, Sampson was ashore planning a coordinated land-sea attack. During his absence, Commodore Winfield Scott Schley was in charge. Schley met and destroyed the Spanish fleet in a running sea battle that lasted five hours.



Rear Admiral William T. Sampson,
U.S. naval commander
in the Spanish-American War

In Sampson's famous message the next day, "The Fleet under my command offers the nation as a Fourth of July present, the whole of Cervera's Fleet!" he neglected to mention Schley's role. Schley was furious, and the rank-and-file took sides. Schley's advocates noted that he commanded the fleet during the battle, while Sampson's noted that he had laid down the strategic framework that led to victory. A court of inquiry in 1901 decided in favor of Sampson, but the question of credit remained controversial.

None of this mattered to Sampson's friends and neighbors in Glen Ridge. On Aug. 20, he steamed up the Hudson aboard the *New York*, his flagship, firing a dramatic salute over Grant's Tomb. A local diarist reported that "the young people from Glen Ridge viewed [the parade] from Weehawken where they went on their bicycles." The admiral hosted hundreds of people on his lawn and greeted them from his porch, "a truly heroic figure with a closely cropped beard, level grey eyes and thoughtful mien, his erect stature warped a trifle by the rigors of his career." A town-wide reception was held at the Men's Club and a banquet in Glen Ridge Hall.

Sampson returned to Cuba in September and came home again at the end of the year to convalesce from malaria. He commanded the North Atlantic Fleet until October 1899, when he was appointed commander of the Boston Navy Yard. He died in Washington, D.C., on May 6, 1902, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. **Sally Meyer**



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE GASLAMP

Editor George Musser

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Elizabeth Meets James

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 276 Ridgewood Avenue, built in 1884. It is perhaps best known as the home of Robert Rudd, one of the leaders of Glen Ridge's secession movement. After Glen Ridge broke away from Bloomfield in 1895, Rudd became the first mayor of Glen Ridge.

The house itself was built on spec by Edward S. Wilde, a prominent developer of the north end of town in the 1890s [see page 4]. The property at 276 Ridgewood Avenue extended 336 feet along Ridgewood Avenue, from the current street number 272 to number 290, and ran the full distance back to Sherman Avenue. Wilde hired the British architect Maurice B. Adams to design the house.

It was advertised for sale as a "new Brown Stone Residence" with rock-face ashlar walls, tooled window jambs and mullions, and a red slate roof. The ad announced that the house "will compare favorably to the best attempts in this style which have been made in this country."

The style, unnamed in the advertisement, is "Elizabethan," after Queen Elizabeth I, or "Jacobean," after her successor, King James I. These styles are sometimes grouped together as "Jacobethan," a term coined in the 1930s. The style is rare enough in the U.S. that it is often excluded from surveys of American architecture or is simply considered an anomalous example of the Tudor Revival.

The style originated in England as an Anglo-Dutch hybrid. The Dutch had adopted simplified elements of the Italian Baroque in building houses for affluent merchants in the 16th century. These houses had steep roofs and gables with stepped or sloped parapets (rather than eaves), and their

distinctive silhouettes lend character to Amsterdam today. King Henry VIII brought Flemish masons to England to build country homes for his court on land recently taken from the Catholic Church, and their work continued to influence English architecture into the 17th century.

The style arrived in the Americas in 1665 with the construction of a large

extends past the ridgeline of the roof. These walls have a dramatic decorative shape accommodating lower curves and an upper pediment, giving the house its characteristic bold silhouette.

The walls are made of locally quarried rough-cut red sandstone that has been chiseled smooth around the windows and doors. Architectural renderings of the house show the stone

mullions separating pairs of tall case-ment windows from leaded glass transom windows. American domestic architecture has a long tradition of using double-hung windows; this is distinctly European.

The house that stands today is twice the size of the original house. The left gable and the wing to the left of it comprised the core of the house. The original front

entrance is behind the proper Elizabethan arcade of bulbous carved columns resting on a half-wall. There is a carved tympanum, or semi-circular decorative wall surface, at the center of the porch roof with a swag motif.

The house was enlarged by the Bloomfield architect John Capen sometime after 1890. Capen meticulously duplicated the sculptural front gable and then centered the front door behind a small arcade of Tudor arches. When it came to the windows, however, standard American double-hung windows were used instead of case-ment windows, although there are leaded glass transom windows above.

After Rudd's death in 1903 the property was subdivided and developed. A street was cut through the site from Ridgewood Avenue to Sherman Avenue. Despite a proposal to name the street Lynwood Place, the name Rudd Court prevailed.

Karin Robinson



brick house across the James River from Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. Known as Bacon's Castle or Allen's House, it is considered the first brick house built in North America.

276 Ridgewood Avenue has a pair of striking parapet-gables facing the street. The roof does not extend over the front façade, but rather the façade

Pioneer of Glen Ridge

MY GRANDMOTHER HELEN Collingwood lived in Glen Ridge in her childhood and was an amateur historian. When she died in 1948, her only child—my mother, Beatrice—saved her boxes of papers and lugged them through several moves across the country. When she died in 1969, they became mine. It is doubtful that Mom ever looked at the papers. She never discussed them with me. As her only child, I dutifully lugged those boxes through several moves of my own. Finally, in 2015, I decided to write up a history of Mom's life and dug into the boxes. I discovered numerous family mysteries.

In particular, I have pieced together the history of my great-grandfather Edward Seymour Wilde, who was pivotal to the development of Glen Ridge. He opened Ridgewood Avenue north of Bloomfield Avenue and built numerous houses and the Benson Street (Chestnut Hill) Station, now a private residence. He also undertook a now-forgotten experiment with a "horse car" railroad, one of many examples of a somewhat impractical and romantic nature.

Wilde was born on Dec. 30, 1838, the only child of Eliza Cook Cadmus Seymour and James Wilde. Eliza's family provided the real estate for Edward's development activities. Her lineage in Essex County extended back to the earliest colonial days. Wilde came to America around 1825 after the Lud-dite riots in England. He and his father and brothers rebuilt an abandoned mill on Toney's Brook in the area of what is now Bay Street Station. But the advent of steam power made the mill obsolete by 1838. As it closed down, James and Eliza seem to have settled into a life of comfortable domesticity. They lived with her parents, Herman and Sarah Cadmus, on the northerly side of Park Avenue at the junction of Bloomfield Avenue, opposite Christ Church. There, my great-grandfather was born.

According to my grandmother's notes, Edward was born into a family "where education was almost a religion." He was probably homeschooled

at first and then attended Bloomfield Academy, now part of Bloomfield College. In one of the cardboard boxes is an autograph book in which his friends and classmates recorded, from 1852 to 1856, their pearls of wisdom in beautiful handwriting. Such as: "I think it



*Edward S. Wilde and his granddaughter, Beatrice, the author's mother, circa 1905.
Photo courtesy of the author*

was in olden time/ That someone said in funny rhyme/ Tall aches from little toe-corns grow/ Large screams from little children flow."

Edward enrolled at Princeton. He was one of the honorary orators of the junior class and graduated in 1861. He stayed to get his master's degree in 1864, was admitted to the bar that year, and became a lawyer in Newark. In that same year he married Helen Amanda McComb, granddaughter of the prominent New York architect John McComb Jr. Helen and Edward met in Bloomfield at the home of her aunt Matilda

McComb Peters. (That home is now Richards Hall at Bloomfield College.) In 1865 they had their first child, a son, Jamie, followed in 1867 by a daughter, my grandmother's older sister, Frances Gale ("Fanny") Wilde.

When Herman Cadmus died in 1869, Eliza and her husband inherited all his property. It appears they were content to have Edward handle it. According to my grandmother, the real estate "took most of his time after 1873 to manage." The 1870 census lists its value at \$26,000 which, by some measures, could be worth as much as \$60 million in today's dollars. I also have a copy of a tax collector's list from Sept. 6, 1882, that shows 11 parcels with a total valuation of close to \$62,000.

It is not surprising that Edward was an advocate for railroads, as they meant more access and therefore more land value. He was one of the founders of the Newark, Bloomfield and Montclair Horse Car Railroad in 1867, when he was not yet 30 years old. This innovative transportation mode was a streetcar pulled by horses. The line meandered from Newark to Bloomfield, terminating at the southeast corner of Bloomfield Cemetery. But it was unsuccessful for entirely practical reasons. Because a typical horse worked for only four or five hours a day, each car required 10 or more horses. They had to be housed, groomed, fed, and cared for. They also produced prodigious amounts of manure.

Edward advocated for railroads of the steam locomotive type as well, particularly the Montclair Railway, later renamed the New York and Greenwood Lake Railroad. (Its western section is now part of the Montclair-Boonton Line.) He led a faction in favor of having all the towns along the route issue bonds to pay for the railroad. Bloomfield opposed this proposition, and this fight led to the secession of Montclair from Bloomfield in 1868. The bonds were duly issued and the railroad, completed in 1872, proved to be a boon for suburban development along its route. That was also the year

my grandmother Helen, Edward's final child, was born. Later, he was elected to the state legislature, where he introduced bills on railroads.

To make his land more attractive to suburban commuters, in 1880 Edward hired an English architect, Maurice B. Adams, to design the Chestnut Hill railroad depot in Glen Ridge. In exchange for a right-of-way through Wilde's property, the Montclair Railway Company had an obligation to build a depot at the intersection of Wildwood Terrace and Benson Street. On Dec. 28, 1889, the *Bloomfield Citizen* reported: "This pretty depot upon the New York and Greenwood Lake Railway is now nearing completion... Soon trains will begin to stop and it will then assume the prosaic duties of a railroad station." During a complicated series of negotiations involving street abandonments and bridges over the tracks, it was proposed that the railroad contribute \$1,000 toward the building, but this proposal was defeated and Edward ended up paying for the station himself. One result of his having to pony up the cash was that the station became much less ornate than shown in Adams's original drawings.

Edward placed this ad in the *Citizen* on Feb. 23, 1889:

Mr. Edward S. Wilde is prepared to build Houses on his property at Glen Ridge, on Ridgewood Avenue, Wildwood Terrace, West Belleville Avenue, and Herman Street, from plans selected by the persons purchasing. The terms will be made easy. An opportunity is in this way afforded for individual wants and tastes to be satisfied, either in high or medium cost dwellings.

One of Edward's early homebuilding ventures was the Rudd House at 276 Ridgewood Avenue, for which he again hired Adams and which still stands [see page 3]. The brownstone apparently came from a quarry on family land, on the present site of Central School. Robert Rudd bought the house in 1885. A later advertisement states: "This pleasant home was the hobby of its late own-

er, a wealthy lawyer. No expense was spared in making the home a delightful one." Edward built his family home nearby at 27 Wildwood Terrace in 1888.

In 1892 he and his wife suffered the devastating loss of their son, Jamie. He was just 27 years old, a budding architect, and recently married. Apparently he had tuberculosis. It's easy to speculate that Edward lost enthusiasm for property development and instead devoted more time to the humanistic occupations of history and politics. His inattention to business resulted in an inexorable and catastrophic decline in the family's fortune. His second child, Fanny, who married in 1890, showed a gutsy talent for housebuilding, and perhaps Edward was happy to have her carry the torch in that department. (Her story is worth an article in itself, even though she died young, at 47, from breast cancer.) Edward devoted much of the final years of his life to two quixotic causes, the Boer War and his book, *The Civic Ancestry of New York—City and State*.

The Boers, farmers of Dutch origin in South Africa, fought from 1899 to 1902 to kick the English out of South Africa. It is unclear how Edward first became involved in their struggle, but he likened it to the American Revolution. Perhaps his involvement came through the Dutch—Cadmus—side of his ancestry, perhaps through his study and admiration of the Dutch settlement of New York, and perhaps because other Democrats also favored

Original plan for the Benson Street Station



the Boer side. Whatever the origins of his involvement, Edward became president of the Boer Independence Association in the U.S. and the issue took up a lot of his time and energy. He and other Boer supporters were agitated by concentration camps and other British war atrocities. Edward suggested that the Boers blow up the gold mines in Johannesburg to weaken England. In a letter dated May 20, 1900, he wrote: "The apple in the eye of Great Britain today is the gold of the Rand—the gold and diamonds in your soil—and you can touch her nowhere so effectively as by taking away the dearest object of her greed."

His second major project was intensely scholarly, a major retrospective study of the insignia and official seals of the city and state of New York. This resulted in a private printing in 1914 of 210 copies of the aforementioned book. It is an exhaustive study and some copies are beautifully color-blazoned. My grandmother's cardboard boxes contained one final printed copy and all the proof sheets.

One does wonder how Edward dealt with the decline of his fortunes as a land baron. By 1910 he and his wife, daughter, and granddaughter (my mom) had left the area for a much humbler life at Indian Falls Farm, near Dover. His wife remained devoted to him to the end, and my grandmother lionized him in her later writings.

Edward died of a heart condition on March 2, 1916, less than 10 months after Fanny died. His will left all his property to his granddaughter—my mother, then a teenager—but all that remained were a few pieces of antique furniture and his papers stashed in those cardboard boxes. His widow died from a cerebral hemorrhage seven years later. She and Edward were buried in the Bloomfield Cemetery. There was no grave marker whatsoever. I had a stone made in 2017.

Abbie McMillen

Abbie McMillen is a board member of the Brooksville Historical Society in Maine.

Address Service Requested



HOLIDAY PARTY
DECEMBER 6, 7:30 P.M.

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 the Blue Foundry Bank branch at 222 Ridgewood Ave.