



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

April 2022 Vol. XLIV No. 3



President's Letter

Passing the Baton

WHEN WE FIRST moved to Glen Ridge almost six years ago, I found myself at a bit of a loss. My husband started a new job. My kids started new schools. After everyone had left the house in the morning, I found myself wandering all around town marveling at the architecture, wondering about the institutions, and asking where I would find my place in our new home. Many days, I walked past the bank on Ridge-wood Avenue and noticed the Glen Ridge Historical Society on the second floor. I looked up the Historical Society on Facebook, visited the website, and found myself taking a deep dive into Glen Ridge history.

I'm an admitted Philly history snob. It's how I was raised: soft pretzels and trips to Independence Hall. But I found myself increasingly interested in Glen Ridge's history and decided to ask whether the society needed any volunteer help. It did. Sally Meyer graciously walked me through the collections, archives, and other historical resources. One thing really stuck with me: This town loves its history.

I was thrilled when the society asked me to serve as a trustee and then president, but my term has come to an end and I'm handing the baton to the wonderful Nicholas Collelo. Nicholas has done a great job managing our membership and has been a wonderful trustee. He works as an architect, serves as a member of the town Historic Preservation Commission (often confused with the Historical Society—these are distinct institutions), and is active in the Boy Scouts. He'll make an excellent president!

Tom Coleman has graciously offered to step into the vice-president position and Megan Blank will shift to secretary. Susan Link and Rebecca Hughes have graciously offered

to serve another term. Christine Brennan will finish out her term, moving from secretary to trustee. I'm also excited to welcome our newest trustee, Tiffany Ludwig. I'll continue on as a trustee.

Little did I know when I agreed to serve as president that we would face historic challenges. The pandemic forced us to suspend programming, we struggled to get issues of *The Gaslamp* to the printer, memberships and donations dropped dramatically, and we lost our beloved home over the bank.

But we carried on. We fulfilled research requests. We posted on Facebook and saw how many people enjoyed reminiscing about happier times. We broke new ground with issues of *The Gaslamp* devoted to history's more challenging subjects. I am thrilled to announce that the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey has awarded us a Kevin M. Hale Publication Award for our October 2021 issue, which featured my article "Demystifying Critical Race Theory," among much else.

Through these ups and downs, I have been lucky to work with a tremendous group of trustees who commit countless hours to ensuring the Historical Society's future. They are a wonderful group of people and I appreciate all of their hard work.

I'm excited to announce that we will at last meet in person for our annual meeting. Mark your calendars for Thursday, April 28, 7 to 9 p.m. at the Women's Club. We are thrilled that Bloomfield Historical Society trustee Rich Rockwell will offer a presentation on the history of the Morris Canal. Light refreshments will be served. Please join us! We are also thrilled to participate in the Arts and Eco Fair on Saturday, May 21. Stop by our tent and say hi!

Jennifer Janofsky



Local architect Nicholas Collelo is slated to take over as Historical Society president from historian Jen Janofsky.

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- NEW COLUMN! The Glen Back When
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Play Ball!

PRIOR TO THE formation of the Glen Ridge Athletic Association in 1956, a three-year experiment with a junior sports league was conducted between 1943 and 1945. Glen Ridge patrolman Howard Devaney was its chief advocate.

In spring 1943, Devaney spoke convincingly to town officials, merchants, and local fathers about the benefits of baseball in keeping young boys busy. From his perspective, undisciplined summer days brought unwelcome interactions with the police. If you “get them interested in some kind of clean and healthy competition... they will be no trouble to the cops,” he said. The idea took hold and three clubs were formed for boys between 11 and 14 year old: the North Side Ridgers, the Carteret Comets, and the Spencer Aces. Devaney became coach of the Ridgers.

Along with intraleague games, the boys played teams in Verona, Caldwell, and Irvington. A highlight of the season was a game between the Ridgers and the Irvington Cubs played in honor of Essex County freeholder Elizabeth A. Harris, a Glen Ridge resident who served

in that capacity for 23 years. Locally, Harris had chaired a committee during World War I that raised the first monies in New Jersey for the American Red Cross. She also convinced Henry S. Chapman to donate \$100,000 for the construction

of the Women’s Club of Glen Ridge as a memorial to his wife.

The Ridgers won the league that first year. Fathers and sons gathered for dinner in the high-school cafeteria to celebrate “the beginning of what may turn out to be a great national movement,” as Devaney put it. Leon Nixon, the high-school baseball coach, donated the trophy.

The North Side Association sponsored Devaney’s team. The end-of-season report he submitted to its board is a testament to the

merit of volunteerism in making the experiment a success. The list of expenses included 16 white sweatshirts from Jacobsen’s Sports Shop in Montclair and copious chewing gum for the entire season—five packs a game. The junior sports league soon added touch-football, basketball, and track. It would continue for two more seasons until the end of 1945.

Sally Meyer



North Side Ridgers baseball team in 1943, with coach Howard Devaney (far left) and assistant coach Bob Baumler (far right)



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Officers

President	Jennifer Janofsky
Vice President	Megan Blank
Secretary	Christine Brennan
Treasurer	Sandra Lefkovits
Town Historian (ex officio)	Sally Meyer
<i>Gaslamp</i> Editor (non-voting)	George Musser

Trustees

Rebecca Hughes (2022)	Michael Sagges (2023)
Susan Link (2022)	Nicholas Colello (2024)
Mark Pizzini (2022)	Tom Coleman (2024)
Jean Boland (2023)	Karin Robinson (2024)
Toni Murphy (2023)	

THE GASLAMP

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Our Favorite Houses

The In-Between House

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 5 Mead Terrace. I don't know of any other house in Glen Ridge like it. It was built in 1926 during a suburban building boom in our area, but displays a new sensibility. In retrospect it seems poised between neocolonial and modernist styles.

When first built, the side volume was a one-story open porch. In the Historical Society's archives are various notes and records debating the need to repair the post pilasters and railing around the sun porch as early as 1938. A 1977 photograph shows the one-story sun porch enclosed by stucco walls with broad casement windows. The second level over the enclosed porch was constructed about 1996.

That means the house was originally a simple block with a tall hipped roof. The shape was more monolithic than it is today. The solid geometry is reinforced by the very smooth stucco walls. There is almost no decorative detail, save a simple horizontal string course along the top of the first floor windows. No attempt has been made to mimic a particular historic period.

That's why the style of the house is a puzzle. It has elements of the Moderne style of architecture, an austere aesthetic that borrowed aerodynamic forms such as smooth surfaces from ocean liners and locomotives. The uniform off-white stucco finish and the simple geometry seem to me to presage the International Style, another variant of modernism that became ubiquitous in academic architecture in the 1930s. Yet the house is not so unusual that it can't fit comfortably among traditional Glen Ridge houses of the '20s.

The front façade is both symmetrical and asymmetrical. The hipped roof

spans the whole volume of the house, with a solid chimney to mark the center. The windows are laid out rigorously, but play games with the strict symmetry. The minimalist bay window on the second floor is centered on the three first-floor windows. The front door is at the far right under the extra second-floor window. Is it a side hall colonial, with three sections making up the visual bulk of the house? Or is it a



5 Mead Terrace

single composition, with the door and bay window secondary flourishes?

5 Mead Terrace has industrial steel casement windows rather than customary wood double-hung windows that had been the standard since the colonial era. They were appealing in their efficiency: With a simple turn of the lever, the window swings open. At 5 Mead Terrace the windows have dark frames and are set back in shadow. They have absolutely no applied decorative and historical trim; the window themselves are the design. The windows are identical, consisting of a pair of sashes each two panes wide by four panes tall. Even the most ornamental element, the bay window, has a matching sash with identical proportions, two panes wide

by four panes high. The first-floor windows are made a little more substantial, with the narrow transom windows atop the 2x4 window pane pattern.

In its early years, the house was caught between being rented and purchased. It was built just before the Depression hit, and it is not clear that any owner lived in the house. Homebuyers were scarce, and houses were routinely rented while the owners lived in small-

er houses or moved in with family members to save money. Real-estate records show that the house was rented to a series of tenants from the mid-'30s to the mid-'40s.

The owner began actively trying to sell the house as early as 1939. Between low demand and high price, it was difficult. One real estate agent's letter lays out the positive aspects of the house: excellent location close to schools, stores, and both of the town's railway stations; four bedrooms; brass piping; and an efficient "Spencer Heater" coal-fired boiler. The house was valued at over \$24,000 when built,

but the owner had to drop the price to half that to find a buyer. In short, the house was caught not only between historical and modernist styles, but also between the economic extremes of the period from the mid-1920s into the '40s.

The Historical Society house file also tracks changes in the cost of building materials. In 1938 the estimate for rebuilding the railings was \$15; for repairing the exterior plaster, also \$15. Repairs to the interior plaster walls cost between \$5 and \$12 depending on the durability of the material used. To us today, these prices sound as quaint as a 45-cent train fare. As a point of reference, in 2004 the asking price for 5 Mead Terrace was \$659,000.

Karin Robinson

The Glen Back When

curated by the officers and trustees

Remembering

WHILE ON THE borough's website, I clicked on a speech that Mayor Stuart Patrick had written for Memorial Day in 2018. Wanting to dig a little deeper, I focused on Capt. Robert J. Stewart. He lived at 20 Hillside Ave., graduated from high school in 1936 as class president, went to Princeton University, and was about to study art history at Harvard when he was drafted. He was a captain in the 7th Armored Division and was awarded the Purple Heart twice.

I spoke with the staff of the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Belgium, sent them the speech, and asked whether they could take a picture of his headstone. Here it is, almost 80 years after Stewart was killed in action on Dec. 20, 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge. He left a wife, Mary, and two sons, Robert and John. Somewhere his family can know that the community of Glen Ridge still honors him for his service and ultimate sacrifice.

Raymond Donnelly



Capt. Robert J. Stewart's headstone at the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery near Liège, Belgium. Photo courtesy of Carl Mathieu



Lost and Found

DURING THE HEIGHT of the snowstorm in the wee hours of Sunday morning, when Jonas Reed, 26, of 129 Main St., Orange, got lost in the Bloomfield Cemetery, Patrolmen Robert Clark and Wilbert Janicke were dispatched by "Friar" Walter O'Neil to bring him to headquarters....

Reed left a tavern about 3 o'clock in the morning. When the police found him, he could not remember anything that happened subsequent to leaving the tavern.... Reed rode into the Cemetery from Belleville Avenue and got lost among the tombstones.... He yelled so loud that three Glen Ridge residents and two from Bloomfield were awakened and called police headquarters.

Patrolmen Clark and Janicke found Reed wandering about in the snowdrifts....

For the trouble he had caused residents and the police, Judge Talmage fined him \$25 on charges of being drunk and disorderly conduct....

Glen Ridge Paper, Jan. 29, 1936



[FRANK] DEL VISCO discovered the loss of the statue early Saturday morning. After reporting the theft to the Glen Ridge police, he proceeded with his business affairs, which took him to 30 Sherwood St., Montclair, to collect rents from a tenant.

While there, he noticed a truck in the driveway with four boys of his acquaintance loading scrap iron upon it. A burlap bag excited his interest. Upon peering into the sack he recognized the fragments of his lost aluminum statue. Del Visco summoned the Montclair police, who picked up the boys.

Glen Ridge Paper, Nov. 25, 1935



MARY AND ALLEN Valentine, aged 5 and 3 years, respectively, children of James Valentine, of Maolis Avenue, Glen Ridge, started out to see the world last Saturday and gave their parents a fright before they reached home again.

Early in the afternoon the little tots asked their mother for some pennies. Mrs. Valentine gave each 2 cents and then went about her work. Immediately after, Mary and Allen left the house and proceeded to the Glen Ridge Depot of the Lackawanna railroad, reaching there just as a New York train pulled into the station. Boarding the first car the little ones nestled down into a seat, their faces beaming with joy....

Then joy was turned to sadness before the train got under way, however, for the conductor, on discovering the unattended juvenile travelers, proceeded to question the tots as to the whereabouts of their parents. After informing the conductor that "mamma and pappa were at home," the children produced their pennies to pay for the ride.

The tots were turned over to Policeman McCarthy and taken to the police station, where they were recognized by Chief Brown, who sent them home....

Independent Press, Jan. 8, 1906



BOROUGH CLERK JOHN A. BROWN of Glen Ridge announced he would sell at public auction a mustang found running at large at Ridgewood and Bay avenues, by Patrolman Dugan, unless the owner put in a claim. The animal had no shoes, but appeared well cared for.

Independent Press, Sept. 26, 1921

A MUSTANG, CORRALLED three weeks before by the police when found wandering in the north end, was auctioned off in front of the Herman Street municipal offices by Borough Clerk John A. Brown. Albert Buettler, a dairyman of North Arlington, got a bargain. He paid only \$44.

Independent Press, Oct. 10, 1921



Send Us Your Stories

HAVE A STORY, a memory, or a thought to share? Don't be shy! Please email us at glenridgehs@gmail.com or post it at facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety.

Events Calendar

curated by Tom Coleman

Glen Ridge Historical Society

Annual meeting. Our first in-person meeting in two years will take place on Thursday, April 28, 7 to 9 p.m. at the Women's Club. Bloomfield Historical Society trustee Rich Rockwell will offer a presentation on the history of the Morris Canal. Light refreshments will be served.

Museum closed. Our new space is too small for standing exhibits. For research requests, please contact Sally Meyer at glenridgehs@gmail.com or (973) 239-2674.

Neighboring Towns

Montclair History Center. The next tour of the historic Rosedale Cemetery will be April 24 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. And don't miss the Wednesday drop-in tours at Israel Crane house every week from 12 to 3 p.m. montclairhistory.org/all-events

Montclair Art Museum. A new exhibit, "Tenacity & Resilience: The Art of Jerry Pinkney," opened on Feb. 6 and runs through June 26. Pinkney, who died last October, was a pre-eminent illustrator of children's books that focus

on issues of social justice and convey powerful messages related to the history of the Civil Rights movement in America. montclairartmuseum.org

Farther Afield

Brooklyn Public Library, Greenpoint Branch. "Lenapehoking" is the first Lenape-curated exhibit in the New York area, featuring beadwork, tapes, and other Lenape cultural artifacts. Through April 30. bklynlibrary.org/exhibitions

Greenwood Gardens. These beautiful gardens in Short Hills, the subject of much restoration and conservation, open for the season on May 1. Check

the schedule and take a guided bird tour! greenwoodgardens.org

Macculloch Hall Historical Museum, Morristown. Historical gardens for this Federal-period mansion are open daily. The home, which contains a large collection of period fine and decorative arts, is open for tours during the week by prior appointment. maccullochhall.org

Morris Museum, Morristown. "A Cache of Kinetic Art" is a juried exhibition of 35 works of kinetic art in various media, staged to complement the museum's renowned Guinness Collection of mechanical musical instruments and automata. Through Aug. 28, 2022. morrismuseum.org



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY New Member Form

You can join by visiting glenridgehistory.org/join or clipping this form and sending it with a check to: Glen Ridge Historical Society, P.O. Box 164, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028. Your membership contribution is tax-deductible.

Please enroll me as a member in the following category:

☐ Senior \$10

☐ Household \$30

☐ Patron \$75

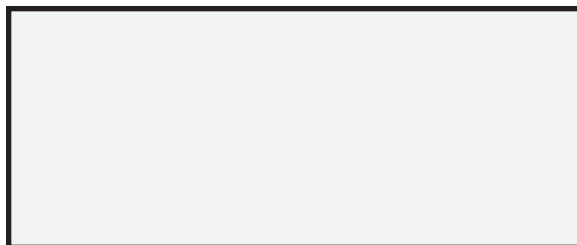
☐ Sponsor \$125

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ANNUAL MEETING:
APRIL 28, 7 P.M.

Glen Ridge Historical Society Catalog

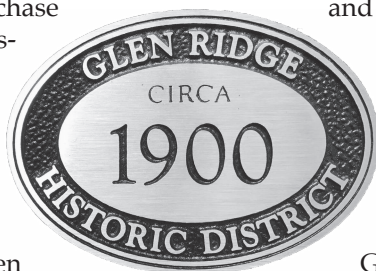
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT for Glen Ridge history by making a purchase from our catalog of Historical Society items.

Historic District house plaque. Celebrate your home's history with a custom cast-bronze plaque denoting the Glen Ridge Historic District and your home's year of construction. Delivery takes approximately six weeks. Member price \$180

1906 maps. Reprints of pages from the colorful and detailed A.H. Mueller Atlas of Essex County are available for both north and south ends of town. Suitable for framing. Member price \$80

Gas-lamp postcards. Full-color 4×6 postcards showing a Glen Ridge gas

lamp in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. \$1 each



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

Holiday ornaments. A beautiful custom brass ornament featuring the iconic image of a Glen Ridge gas lamp is available for \$15. Each ornament comes in a gold presentation box and

includes a brochure on town history. We also still offer the older gazebo and train-station ornaments for \$15.

To make a purchase, email us at glen-ridgehs@gmail.com or mail your order and payment to P.O. Box 164, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028-0164. For house plaques, we will send you a form to enter your details. Purchases may also

be made at our archives by appointment with Sally Meyer at (973) 239-2674. The archives are located on the third floor of the Glen Ridge Congregational Church at 195 Ridgewood Ave. You may also buy ornaments at the Glen Ridge Public Library with a personal check or exact change.

