



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

December 2022 Vol. XLV No. 2



President's Letter

Walking Through History

RECENTLY MY WIFE and I had the opportunity to take a trip to Bern, Switzerland. As I walked through the Old City, everywhere I looked was a photo opportunity. Its buildings date to the 15th and 16th centuries and have been maintained and restored ever since. As one may expect, the property is protected by special legislation to preserve the urban landscape. In designating the Old City a World Heritage Site, UNESCO stated: "The Old City of Bern is a unique example demonstrating a constant renewal of the built substance while respecting the original urban-planning concept."

I couldn't help but draw a comparison with Glen Ridge. The oldest houses here would be considered new when compared to Bern, but we, too, respect the original architecture and planning of our town. Like Bern, Glen Ridge balances its historical heritage with the needs of modernization: additions, renovations, alterations, new construction, and developments. The Glen Ridge Historical Society was founded in 1977 with the aim of upholding and advocating the historical nature of Glen Ridge. Our organization educates the community about local history and preserves important archival resources. Ten years later, in 1987, the town established the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to protect and enhance properties within the Historic District.

I noticed dozens of examples of this balancing act during our annual walking tour on Oct. 29. It was a sunny autumn day—perfect weather for a walk. I always find it interesting to see how a house has or hasn't changed over the years. Some houses standing here today are unrecognizable from their original forms. For others, time is marked only by the height of the street trees. The

multitude of architectural styles apparent in the borough and the age of these structures draw people to live here and will continue to do so.

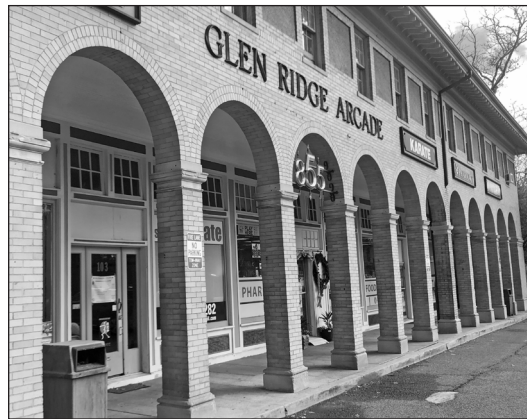
Thank you to everyone who attended the tour and helped to organize it, especially the three docents, Rebecca Hughes, Susan Link, and Karin Robinson, who led us on the informative trip through Glen Ridge, from Summit Street to

Hillcrest Avenue to Woodland Avenue. I would also like to thank the borough's historian, Sally Meyer, for her research and for compiling the information heard during the tour. I myself learned a lot, including where the highest point in Glen Ridge is. One final thank-you goes to Julie and Bob Stolte for hosting the reception at the end of the tour.

I'm also excited to announce that the holiday party is returning this year after a few years off. We've sent all our members a separate mailed invite with the party information. Merchandise will be available, so make sure you bring cash or checks to take care of some holiday shopping. For a catalog of what we sell, see the back page of this newsletter.

The houses on the tour illustrated a harmony between historic and modern architecture. As in Bern, the architecture that is preserved in Glen Ridge is worth protecting and admiring. Centuries from now, tourists may walk our streets (perhaps during the annual tour) and marvel at the historic architecture and steps we took to maintain that character. The Historical Society will continue to bring together people interested in the history of Glen Ridge and the rest of New Jersey and to present information and events that support the advancement of local history. We hope you'll continue to enjoy them!

Nicholas Colello



Kramgasse in Bern, Switzerland (upper), and Glen Ridge Arcade (lower). Photos by the author

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Fireman for a Day

ON APRIL 1, 1920, an “outlaw” strike of Chicago railroad switchmen—one opposed by the unions themselves—spread eastward to tie up all service on the Lackawanna Railroad, including the Montclair line. The company said it would continue running trains if volunteer firemen could be found to shovel coal into the boiler fireboxes to power the steam engines.

A first-hand account of the volunteer effort in Glen Ridge was provided many years later by Harold Kennard, a prominent resident and member of many civic organizations. In an interview for the *Glen Ridge Paper* of Feb. 14, 1936, he said the strike cut Glen Ridge off from the world. Buses were a thing of the future, and the few cars headed into the city were swamped with hitchhikers. When the call for firemen went out, it was resoundingly answered by commuters such as himself and members of the recently organized James A. Moseley American Legion Post. The volunteer stokers assembled at the Lackawanna Terminal in Montclair, where railroad executives and engineers had kept the fires banked. The Glen Ridge “indignation train” was ready to roll.

News of the attempt to run a train

spread like wildfire. Children left school and swarmed to the tracks. “I’ll never forget the sight of the station as we came around the curve from Montclair,” Ken-



Col. Harold Kennard at a sentry post in Perth Amboy during World War II

nard said. “The platform was simply black with people and the bridge overhead was jammed. Everybody cheered and yelled as we brought the train to a stop.... Everybody piled on and we set out for Hoboken. We were stoned going

through the Roseville cut [in Newark], but we made our destination.” When the amateur stokers arrived at Hoboken, they were swamped with gifts from passengers. They changed their clothes in the depot, breakfasted on the company dime, and went to work, returning later to stoke the fires for the journey home. “We had a tough time, a terribly tough time, making the upgrade,” Kennard recalled. “It required a lot of steam poundage, and although we worked in shifts of four, had to go some to do it. After a bad moment at Watsessing, where I thought we would stick, we made it.”

By April 20 the strike was over. In July, the national Railroad Labor Board, appointed earlier by President Woodrow Wilson, approved a general wage increase.

Kennard lived in town from 1916 to 1964. He had been one of the organizers of the Glen Ridge Battalion of the New Jersey Militia Reserve in World War I and served as commandant of the 11th Regiment of the N.J. State Guard in World War II. His collection of reproduction flags flown in the United States, from the St. George flag of 1497 onward, was donated to the Glen Ridge Public Library. **Sally Meyer**



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE GASLAMP

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Our Favorite Houses

Standing Foursquare

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 26 Hillside Ave. I appreciate it, in particular, because it is the purest example that I know in town of an American Foursquare-style house. Best of all, it's located on a block lined with American Foursquare houses. Hillside Avenue between Washington Street and Linden Avenue has 12 variants of the house, all built between 1907 and 1909.

The Foursquare house is often considered to be an American reaction to years of Queen Anne and Victorian-style buildings, whose exuberance and historic charm came to be seen as unnecessary complication and gaudy clutter. Foursquares represented an uncomplicated attitude, but with a dignified presence.

Contemporary academics had difficulty categorizing the style. *The American Architect and Building News*, the most prestigious design magazine of the day, described it as "a pleasant and quiet adaptation of both Colonial and Italian modes." Others looked at the Foursquare chronologically, connecting the Queen Anne Classical Revival style to the Prairie and Craftsman styles.

The narrative that presents the Foursquare house as a revolt of sorts against the chaotic architecture of the preceding era is not the full story, however. This style was not entirely driven by a mania for the newest trend. It was also an efficient and economical Everyman's House. The roughly cubical shape provided the most enclosed space with the least material. It fit better than previous designs on a rectangular suburban lot. Its simplicity provided more control for the developers interested in building economically on sweeping tracts of land. Rambling eclectic houses, in contrast, meant only peril to the back-to-basics builder.

Foursquare houses were thus the cookie-cutter tract homes of the early 1900s. They appeared everywhere across the country almost simultaneously. Pattern books may have helped, but mass-media marketing seems to have played the largest part in the popularity of the new houses. Starting in the late 1890s, magazines that printed house plans, as well as consumer and builders' magazines, all featured the post-Victorian "comfortable house."



The publicity often began with the advertisements. Scaffolding, heating systems, interior woodwork, garden supplies, and even Frigidaire refrigerators were set in new Foursquare houses. In due time, *American Architect and Building News* saw fit to publish them, too.

The Foursquare era was rounded out by the sale of house kits by companies such as Sears and Montgomery Ward. Sears Model 157 cost \$1,766 and included flooring, millwork, siding, building paper, finishing lumber, piping, gutters, hardware, lath, and paint. Cement, brick, plaster, and labor were not included. The Great Depression significantly reduced home construction and Sears discontinued sales of these mail-order houses in 1940.

26 Hillside has all of the elements of a proper Foursquare house. It is approximately a square in plan and a cube in volume. The hipped or pyramidal roof is dominant, with broad overhanging eaves that flare out to provide cooling shade to rooms on the second floor. The attic dormers have matching hipped roofs. One front-facing centered dormer is essential, but many houses, including 26 Hillside, also have symmetrical dormers on the sides. The dormers can have single or double windows, sometimes with diamond-shaped panes in the top sashes. The attic usually is one open, unfinished space.

The interior layout of the house repeats the square structure. The second floor has four boxy bedrooms, one per corner. (Anyone who has lived in a rowhouse knows the luxury of windows facing in two directions!) The original bathroom, if the house had one, was restricted to a small slot between two of the bedrooms. The staircase typically connects both levels of the center hall between bedrooms.

Often the stair landing between the floors is marked on the exterior by a bay window on the side of the house. The surprisingly decorative bay window at 26 Hillside may have been fitted with a window seat. A large window provided light to the dark center hall.

The first floor is similarly divided into four corner rooms: a large entry hall and parlor in the front and a kitchen and dining room in the back. Over the years, the parlor fell out of favor and its space was merged with the hall to create a large living room across the front of the house, reflecting a general transition from 19th-century formality to a more relaxed 20th-century lifestyle.

continued on next page

The Glen Back When

curated by the officers and trustees

Town Line Markers

DRIVERS ON GLEN Ridge Avenue, Woodland Avenue, and Bay Avenue might wonder about the concrete obelisks on the curb strips near the Montclair border. The letters “BL” and “ML” are etched on opposite sides on the pillars.

Montclair was part of Bloomfield until its incorporation in 1868, as was Glen Ridge until 1895. Sometime between those dates, 10 markers were installed to indicate the border between the towns. Six remain: the three obelisks mentioned above and three smaller, less prominent stones on Bay Street, Baldwin Street, and Linden Avenue. The one on Woodland was knocked down and split in two by a driver on June 27, 1977.



Bay Avenue

The lost markers were on Washington Street, Lincoln Street, Bloomfield Avenue, and Watchung Avenue. The 1906 A.H. Mueller Atlas of Essex County indicates the location of each town marker with a black dot and the word “stone.”

Sally Meyer



Squirrel War

GLEN RIDGE BOARD of Health declared war on squirrels, vicious dogs and noisy garbage collectors at its monthly meeting when President Richard C. Smith directed a crusade against borough nuisances, which, members agreed, also included discolored drinking water.

The fate of the squirrels was sealed when Health Officer Otto B. Schalk presented a current list of 20 complaints from residents of all sections of the borough, soliciting official aid to eliminate the infestation of the rodents. The board, on the motion of Herbert B. Lerner, empowered Schalk to destroy the pests. The Board favored shooting as the most efficient agent....

His office has had frequent interference on the part of animal lovers, who termed the shooting needless cruelty. Schalk has been harried by this squeamishness. The Board action gives him carte blanche to shoot to kill.

Glen Ridge Paper, April 11, 1938



Monkey Business

AMONG THE ITEMS reported in the monthly tabulation of contagious diseases by Health Officer Otto B. Schalk, for July, was one cat bite. It was quite common to have dog bites reported but seldom a cat bite. But even a little more unusual was the report of contagious diseases from Mountainside Hospital which listed one person bitten by a monkey.

Glen Ridge Paper, Aug. 16, 1935



Send Us Your Stories

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

continued from previous page

Typically the second floor of a Foursquare house is clad in shingles and the first floor in clapboards. The long front porch often extends past the end of the house, as at 26 Hillside. Broad stairs fit between two of the four or five classical columns across the façade. In some Foursquares, the porch has a shallow gable above the stairs. The individual large double-hung windows are sym-

metrical and aligned, although the front door is always off-center.

The most varied feature of the Foursquare house is the front-facing bay window. It could have one or two bay windows on the front of one or two floors. 26 Hillside has a single bay window on the second floor. Next door at 28 Hillside, the bay window continues to the first floor, running right through the roof of the porch. The bay window

arrangement masks the similarity of adjacent houses.

The design template has proven itself to be very elastic. Its composition does not rely on applied decoration or historical style, but with fundamental elements such as porches, bay windows, and dormers. Within its simplicity, it allows the expression of an individual designer's and owner's creativity.

Karin Robinson

Events Calendar

curated by Tom Coleman

Glen Ridge Historical Society

Holiday party. This year's annual festivities will be held on Dec. 16. Members will receive an invitation by mail.

Archives hours. The Terry S. Webster Archives are open the second Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to noon. We are located on the third floor of the Glen Ridge Congregational Church on Clark Street. To visit at other times, make an appointment with Sally Meyer at glenridgehs@gmail.com or (973) 239-2674.

Neighboring Towns

Montclair History Center. Take a daytime or candlelight tour to see the Israel Crane house decorated for the holidays. Multiple dates available through Dec. 18. montclairhistory.org/all-events

Montclair Art Museum. In "Abelardo Morell: Projecting Italy," the renowned photographer explores the use of camera obscura in a series of interior and exterior views taken in Italy. Also view the recent rehang of the famed George Inness paintings collection. Through Feb. 12. montclairartmuseum.org

Bloomfield Historical Society. If you missed Richard Rockwell's engrossing

talk in October, "The Toll of the Garden State Parkway," you can watch it online. Two hundred houses were torn down to build the Parkway through Bloomfield. bloomfieldhistorical.org

Farther Afield

Newark Museum of Art. "Saya Woolfalk: Tumbling into Landscape" runs through the summer. The artist-in-res-



idence provides personal responses to the museum's outstanding collection of Hudson River School paintings. The museum also has unveiled reinstalled galleries showcasing its distinguished collection of Native American arts. newarkmuseumart.org

Morris Museum, Morristown. "Retro-Blakesburg: Captured on Film, 1978–2008" is a retrospective of the rock 'n' roll scene as captured by career photographer Jay Blakesburg. Through Feb. 5. morrismuseum.org

New Jersey State Museum, Trenton. "New Jersey Arts Annual: Reemergence" features the work of 95 New Jersey artists responding to life as we reemerge from the pandemic. Through April 3. The museum also has a large permanent collection featuring American art, Native American culture, state history, and natural science. nj.gov/state/museum/

New York Historical Society. "The Salem Witch Trials: Reckoning and Reclaiming" displays artifacts of the notorious hysteria and trials in Massachusetts in the late 17th century. Through Jan. 22. Also visit "Holiday Express," a display of trains and other toys from the famed Jerni Collection. Through Feb. 26. nyhistory.org/exhibitions



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

New Member Form

You can join by visiting glenridgehistory.org/join or by 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

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

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HOLIDAY PARTY:
FRIDAY, DEC. 16

Glen Ridge Historical Society Catalog

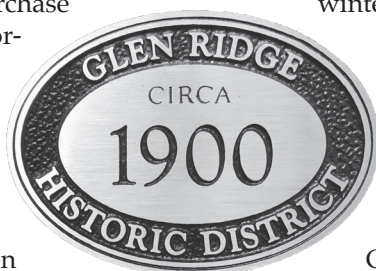
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT for Glen Ridge history by making a purchase from our catalog of Historical Society items.

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. 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 glenridgehs@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 now 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.

