



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE GASLAMP

Illuminating Our Past

February 2023 Vol. XLV No. 3



President's Letter

Make a Historical Resolution

HAPPY NEW YEAR! At the close of 2022, we threw the annual holiday party for the first time since the COVID lockdown. I want to thank John and Carly Murphy not only for hosting the party but for providing "before" and "after" photos to illustrate the amazing transformation their house has undergone. I have planned improvements to my own house that I never seem to get to—one of many New Year's resolutions that, this year, I really do vow to keep. The Historical Society is here for you to achieve your resolutions, too.

1. Save money. Become a member of the Historical Society. Members receive discounts on merchandise and events.

2. Join a club. I always look forward to Historical Society events to catch up with the friends I've made.

3. Volunteer regularly. Research shows that pitching in can lead to less stress and lower blood pressure. The Historical Society is always looking for assistance with events, research, and logistics. We welcome contributions to *The Gaslamp*, which could be as short as a paragraph—a fond memory, a wry observation—for our semi-regular column "The Glen Back When." We welcome any time that you are willing and able to spare.

4. Read more books. Why not start with *Glen Ridge: Living in History*, which documents the many architectural styles throughout our little borough with photos of houses in town. The book was a collaboration between me and trustee Karin Robinson. Purchase a copy through www.blurb.com/user/GRHS.

5. Take the stairs. Get some easy exercise by visiting our archives at

the Glen Ridge Congregational Church. Discover information on your house within our files. See page 5 for details.

6. Start walking more. Join our annual walking tour in October and enhance your architectural knowledge about a section of town. This year, we plan on releasing an audio version of the 2022 walking tour, so if you missed it you can do it on your own.

7. Decorate with family history. People often display items from their families' past. What about your house's past? The Historical Society has original blueprints and historic photos of many houses in town.

8. Give yourself—or your house—a new look. You may find yourself the recipient of the Historical Society Preser-

vation Award, which is handed out during the annual meeting in April.

9. Exercise your brain. Join us on March 1 for past president Jennifer Janofsky's lecture about what she did last summer. Find details later in this newsletter issue.

10. Start a Gratitude Journal. The Historical Society is made of volunteers. We are here to provide information and research topics you are interested in. Be sure to thank the person for their help to show that you appreciate their time.

11. Eat healthier. Unfortunately, the Historical Society can't help you with this one—to the contrary, we have usually lots of treats at our events.

Resolutions help us plan for the future. One way to do that is by learning from the past. Engage with the Historical Society, and who knows what this year will bring.

Nicholas Colello



Board of Trustees at the 2022 holiday party

IN THIS ISSUE

- How best to memorialize
- The house with the weather vane
- Round-up of local art exhibitions
- Public lecture—see pages 4 and 5

A Functional Memorial

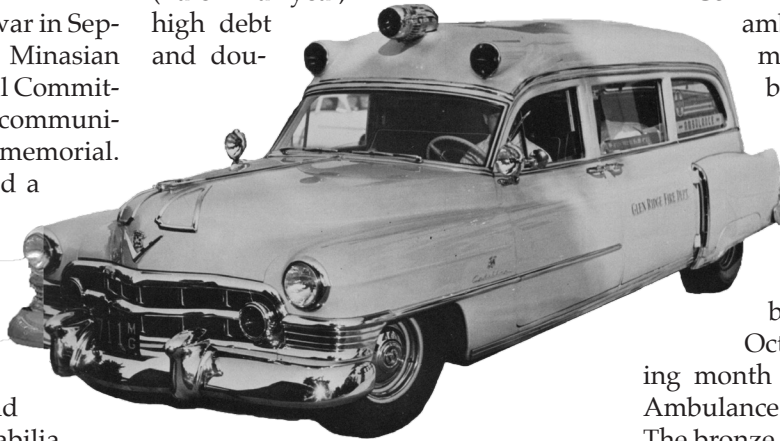
MEMORIALIZING WAR HEROES is an expected civic obligation, yet can be difficult to carry out. It took five years from the end of World War II for Glen Ridge to implement a plan, and by that time America was already embroiled in the Korean conflict.

Soon after the end of the war in September 1945, Mayor George Minasian charged a Veterans' Memorial Committee to gather input from the community for a "truly appropriate" memorial. By November, ideas included a wing on Mountainside Hospital, a community and teen center on the former Benson Mill property on Belleville Avenue, and a one-story addition to the public library with a reading room and displays of military memorabilia.

Although the committee favored the library plan, the estimated cost was prohibitive, and it was put aside in 1946.

Approval of a \$920,000 bond issue in May 1945 for the tear-down and replacement of the original Glen Ridge High School inspired another idea for the war memorial: designating the school auditorium as Glen Ridge Memorial Hall. The committee published architectural sketches and began a

fundraising effort. But by January 1949, it concluded the project would take years to complete and went back to the library-addition idea. A new fundraising effort never gained traction, however, and the plan was abandoned. (Later that year, high debt and dou-



bling cost estimates also scuttled the new school-building plan.)

The resolution came from a tragedy. On Feb. 22, 1950, second-grader David Roberts Jr. was sledding down a driveway on Hamilton Road when a station wagon drove past. His sled slid under the rear wheels and he hit his head on the back undercarriage. Police came quickly, but there was a long delay—one newspaper reported 45

minutes—before an ambulance from Montclair arrived. The general feeling was that, if the ambulance had gotten there sooner, he might have survived. The borough set about raising funds for its own ambulance. The Memorial

Committee suggested making the ambulance a "functional memorial" to World War II, with bronze markers on the exterior with the names of the

33 men who died. A lectern and bronze plaque would also be placed on the steps of the World

War I Memorial. The ambulance was delivered in

October 1950 and the following month the Glen Ridge Volunteer Ambulance Squad was established. The bronze markers and the lectern are no longer in existence.

On Memorial Day in May 1955, the borough unveiled a seven-foot long pink granite memorial engraved with the 33 names of those Glen Ridge men lost in World War II and the two names of those lost in the Korean conflict. In September 1975, the four names of those men lost in the Vietnam War were added to the monument.

Sally Meyer



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Officers

President	Nicholas Colello
Vice President	Tom Coleman
Secretary	Megan Blank
Treasurer	Sandra Lefkovits
Town Historian (ex officio)	Sally Meyer
<i>Gaslamp</i> Editor (non-voting)	George Musser

Trustees

Jean Boland (2023)	Karin Robinson (2024)
Toni Murphy (2023)	Jennifer Janofsky (2025)
Michael Sagges (2023)	Rebecca Hughes (2025)
Christine Brennan (2024)	Susan Link (2025)
Tiffany Ludwig (2024)	

THE GASLAMP

The Gaslamp is normally published four times per year (twice in 2020 and in 2021) by the Glen Ridge Historical Society, P.O. Box 164, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028-0164. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Glen Ridge Historical Society, P.O. Box 164, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028-0164.

Except where noted, images come from the article author or the Historical Society collections.

© 2023 Glen Ridge Historical Society
glenridgehistory.org
glenridgeghs@gmail.com
facebook.com/GRHistoricalSociety

Our Favorite Houses

A House Fit for the Addams Family

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 197 Ridgewood Ave. My first impression is that it belongs in a Charles Addams cartoon—the iconic cartoon where the family leans over the tower ledge with a cauldron full of boiling oil, ready to soak the trick-or-treaters below.

197 Ridgewood was constructed in 1877 at the height of the very popular Italianate style. Nathan Russell, a prominent real-estate agent, had it built for himself. The house gave Russell a prominent presence not far from his office in the center of town.

The tall and very narrow tower with its steep hipped roof is the focus of the design. The roof ridge is lined with elaborate cast-iron cresting—ornamentation that points the roof further upward. The gabled dormers have similar finials and the back dormer has a weather vane. The dormers are small, with half-circle windows seeming to peep out of the attic. The principal roof is hipped and was originally clad in slate, now replaced by scalloped asphalt shingles.

The primary windows on the house are single units, but quite tall, letting in plenty of light. The panes are arranged in a two-over-two pattern, which emphasizes the large pieces of glass. Originally the wood trim along the top of each window was more elaborate, closer to gingerbread trim than the simple cornice that exists today.

The Historical Society archives has two of Russell's photographs of his house. The earlier photo shows a porch that spans the width of the house, with broad steps at the center as well as at the south end. The porch roof is a single slope or shed roof that is hipped in front of the tower. The later photo, taken sometime after 1899, shows that the south stairs were removed and the

porch extended past the front of the house to the south. The extension has a hipped roof, but the original shed roof can still be seen at the north end. The porch roof is supported by simple square posts, with Italianate brackets providing a little decoration. The brackets are aligned with the carved ends of the porch roof rafters in a continuous pattern around the porch. The detail is replicated around the second-floor roof eaves as well as the tower roof eaves.



Apart from that stylish carpentry work, the exterior of the house is quite severe. The clapboards are narrow with corner boards that align with the porch posts and run all the way up the tower. The corner boards have brackets identical to the porch posts. The massing of the building is very simple, similar to the “cube and cupola” category of Italianate houses. The two-story bay window is very shallow and does not dramatically expand the house's volume.

There are some carpentry details almost lost to time—or to many coats of paint. The side walls of the shed roofs at the back of the house have a cut-out pattern of a large circle surrounded by eight small circles. Careful examination of the dormers reveals a similar pattern

over those windows—one large circle with a small circle on each side. These touches are very apparent in the older photo in the file. The original south end of the porch roof had a side wall with many incised circles, which were lost when the porch was enlarged.

The house file also tells a lot about attitudes toward the house in the 1940s. One potential buyer, Charles Moreau, wrote to the real-estate agent that he liked the interior, but the outside less

so. He had “qualms” about the cost of upkeep, traffic on Ridgewood Avenue, and the possibility that apartment buildings might be built on the large lots across the street (currently the site of the high school). He also listed the costs that will be incurred to “get the minimum of things in the house that Mrs. Moreau has always said she wanted,” including more closets and bathrooms, a basement recreation room, an open-plan living room, and roof insulation—demands that are all very familiar to a buyer today.

In a second letter, Moreau noted that the window draperies must remain since “the large windows in this type of house probably make all of our hangings useless.” He reported that the Bloomfield Savings Bank had determined that “it is an old house of a type not appealing to many people, on a heavy traffic street, and only has one bathroom.” Moreau dropped his demand for a rec room and roof insulation. This time, his offer was accepted.

In 1998, the homeowners George Freimark and Gratia Pellacotti showed that an old house does, in fact, appeal to many people. They completely restored it and received the Historical Society Preservation Award for that year.

Karin Robinson

The Awfulness of War

IN SPRING 2012 I taught a graduate seminar in public history at Rutgers University. For their final assignment, my students offered presentations on a historic site they had visited. One student presented on Red Bank Battlefield, and I was stumped. As a history professor, I have a good sense of what historic sites are out there, but Red Bank Battlefield? Never heard of it. This wasn't Red Bank the cute shore town, but Red Bank, South Jersey, about 90 minutes down the Turnpike from Glen Ridge.

I didn't think much of it until the following month, when I spotted an advertisement for a new position at Rowan University. The job included teaching courses in public history as well as directing Red Bank Battlefield Park. This certainly felt like serendipity. As I prepared for my interview, it became clear to me this battle was one of the greatest upsets of the American Revolution. How had I missed this?

The story goes back to 1748, when the Quaker Whitall family established a 400-acre plantation at Red Bank known for its fruit orchards. It occupied a bluff overlooking the Delaware River—the perfect site for a fort to protect Philadelphia.

In April 1777 the Continental Army seized the property and constructed Fort Mercer to guard the river approach to the city. It succeeded at that, but the British Army captured Philadelphia by land in September. They began to target Continental Army forts so that they could get their ships in.

Hessian troops led by Col. Emil von Donop attacked Fort Mercer on Oct. 22. Hired by the Crown to supplement the British Army, the Hessians were the world's premiere fighting force of the 18th century. Defending the fort was the Rhode Island Regiment led by Col. Christopher Greene. This was no ordinary regiment. It was fully integrated:

African American, Native American, and white soldiers fought side by side. But it included just over 500 men, whereas the Hessians numbered 1,500. If you were placing a bet that day, you would not have bet on Greene's men. A brutal 45-minute battle ensued. It was an unexpected and staggering Hessian loss, with just under 300 dead or injured, including van Donop.

As the current park director, I have been looking for new ways to get our visitors excited about history. In 2020 a family offered to sell the park an adjoining quarter-acre lot. We quickly discovered that the fort's trench system

and said, "I think I found a bone." We looked at each other with confusion—this was not a documented burial site. We brought in the State Police Forensic Anthropology Unit. Soon, we were finding more remains—in all, at least 15 individuals.

It was exciting but sobering. The condition of the remains demonstrated the absolute horror of a Revolutionary War battlefield. We did not have complete sets of people. Rather, we had skulls, legs—pieces of people. One had a musket ball lodged in his lower back, lead canister shot in the middle of his back where his vertebrae should have

been, and iron grapeshot in his left arm. His legs were just gone. The man next to him had been hit twice in his knee, once in the mid-section, and once in the arm.

We are awaiting confirmation from the Forensic Anthropology Unit, but we believe these were Hessian soldiers who were buried in a fort ditch. A field analysis of one individual's teeth indicated he was 18 to 20 years old. This is the age of my students and of my own children. Somewhere in Germany a mother and father mourned the loss of their son. As a historian, I've always considered it my job

to be a voice for the voiceless. I was overcome with emotion knowing my job is to share this young man's story.

We hope to reinter the remains and memorialize the area. Until now, the park tours have essentially followed the one-sided "victory against all odds" narrative. We now have the opportunity to share a "victory with a tremendous loss of life" narrative. It complicates the story, but in a good way—a way that holds tremendous potential to connect with our audience in discussions of war, violence, and humanity. There is no other Revolutionary War site in the country that is telling this story.

Jennifer Janofsky



The author (right) and archaeologist Dana Linck (left) at their excavation last summer

appeared to extend into the new acquisition. And the ground looked undisturbed. In 2021 the N.J. Historical Commission awarded the park a \$19,000 grant to perform an archaeological survey. Working with Wade Catts of South River Heritage Consulting, we coordinated over 100 volunteers last summer. They recovered assorted musket balls, a knee buckle, and an extremely rare 1766 British gold guinea coin.

On June 26, we were wrapping up the dig, when around 2 p.m., one of our volunteers approached Wade and me

Events Calendar

curated by Tom Coleman

Glen Ridge Historical Society

Lecture. Please join us on Wednesday, March 1, at 7 p.m. at the Glen Ridge Congregational Church for a program offered by Jennifer Janofsky. She will be presenting her fascinating archaeology project at Red Bank Battlefield Park (see page 5). Members free, non-members \$5. Donations accepted at the door.

Archives hours. The Terry S. Webster Archives is 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 Art Museum. Take time out to see the museum's new salon-style re-hang of its world-class collection of paintings by George Inness, including a recent gift. montclairartmuseum.org

Farther Afield

Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick. The Zimmerli is showing "Surface Tension: Paintings and Sculpture from the Collection," focusing on how artists use surface and texture to realize their vision. Also: "Picturing Jersey City: 19th Century Views by August Will." Both through late June. zimmerli.rutgers.edu

Morven Museum and Garden, Princeton. The historic colonial home of Richard Stockton features an exhibit, "Ma Bell, the Mother of Invention in New Jersey," through March 5. Also take time to tour the permanent collection and gardens. morven.org

American Folk Art Museum. "What That Quilt Knows about Me" shows some 40 of the museum's vast collection of antique and modern quilts, with a focus on how they tell intimate stories. Opens March 17. folkartmuseum.org/exhibitions

New York Historical Society. "I'll Have What She's Having: the Jewish Deli" is a look at the history of Jewish delicatessens in New York City and the immigrants who founded them. Through April 2. nyhistory.org/exhibitions

New Jersey State Museum, Trenton. The state museum's large permanent collection features American Art, Native American culture, local history, and natural science. nj.gov/state/museum/explore-exhibits

Hystercine Rankin (1929–2010), Untitled Family History Quilt, Port Gibson, Miss. c. 1990–2000. Cotton with ink, 40 × 62 inches. American Folk Art Museum, N.Y., gift of Evelyn S. Meyer, Oct. 3, 2005. Photo by Gavin Ashworth



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:

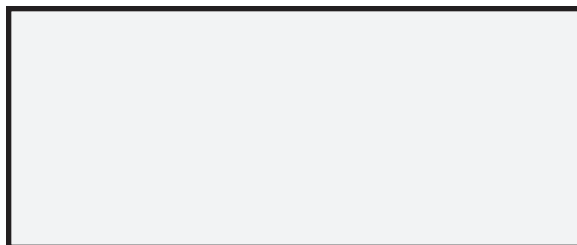
☐ Senior \$10 ☐ Household \$30 ☐ Patron \$75 ☐ Sponsor \$125

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

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

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address Service Requested



**HISTORICAL LECTURE:
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1**

Glen Ridge Historical Society Catalog

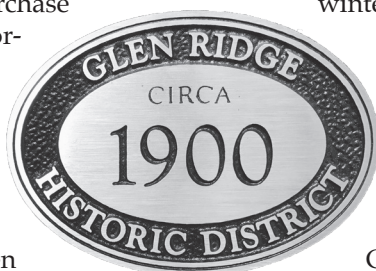
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT for Glen Ridge history by making a purchase from our catalog of Historical Society items.

Historic District house plaque. Celebrate your home's history with a customized cast-bronze plaque denoting the Glen Ridge Historic District and your home's year of construction. Delivery takes approximately six weeks. Member price \$200

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 red 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 is 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.