



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
THE GASLAMP



Illuminating Our Past

April 2023 Vol. XLV No. 4

President's Letter

Time Flies When You're Celebrating History

HAS IT BEEN a whole year since I was elected president? It certainly feels a lot shorter to me. Ironically for a historical society, we are always looking toward the future: As each event reaches completion, we are already working on the next one. I am very proud of what the Historical Society has accomplished this past year and am excited for what is to come. Highlights of recent months include a successful walking tour, the return of the holiday party, and most recently a lecture from past president Jennifer Janofsky. In March, she spoke about her archaeology project at Red Bank Battlefield Park, where last summer her team discovered a previously unknown mass grave. If you missed the event, you can check out the video on our new YouTube page, [youtube.com/@GlenRidge-HistoricalSociety](https://www.youtube.com/@GlenRidge-HistoricalSociety). Be sure to keep checking back, since we will be posting other relevant videos.

Looking ahead, we will hold our annual meeting on April 28 at the Women's Club. Our guest speaker will be Angelica Diggs, executive director of the Montclair History Center. She will present a virtual tour of Rosedale Cemetery. Famous and interesting people are buried there and, excuse the pun, I am dying to find out who.

We will also be presenting the Preservation Award, which acknowledges work that is done to the exterior of a house to restore and repair it. Homeowners often refer to the file photos that are part of the Historical Society's archives to see what their house once looked like. Who will win this year's Preservation Award? Have you walked by the house or even been inside? Only

one way to find out: Show up and find out firsthand! For additional information on the meeting, see page 5.

The annual meeting marks the end of terms for three of our trustees: Jean Boland, Toni Murphy, and Michael Sagg-es. I have gotten to know them over the years and am sad to see them go. I want to thank them for their time and involvement with the Historical Society. Their help with the Arts and Eco Fair and the holiday party was immeasurable. Thankfully, Jean has agreed to stay involved to develop new products for our members and the community at large.

Sandra Lefkovits's term as treasurer will also be ending, but I am glad that she has agreed to continue on as a trustee. Sandra has kept the Historical Society on a prosperous

track that will benefit the future of the Society and we thank her for doing so. Tom Coleman has agreed to continue on as vice president—we are a good team. The annual meeting also means electing new trustees. I am excited to bring them into the fold. They come with their own experience and expertise for our group.

I look forward to the upcoming year, with the traditional annual events and a new exhibit planned for spring 2024. If you are interested in the Historical Society, but cannot dedicate the time to become a trustee, you are absolutely still welcome to help out at events and with research projects. Please share any

ideas you have to improve what we are doing. The Historical Society is a beneficial resource for Glen Ridge, and by listening to our members we will continue to be for years to come.

Nicholas Colello



Jennifer Janofsky's lecture on March 1

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News From the Town Historian

The Greatest Mother in the World

SHORTLY AFTER AMERICA joined World War I—the “Great War”—in April 1917, propaganda efforts began in earnest to encourage support from a reluctant citizenry. The American Red Cross, in particular, recruited artists to create posters promoting a series of War Fund drives. The most popular was “The Greatest Mother in the World,” with more than 60 million impressions. The creative mind behind its slogan was a Glen Ridge advertising executive named Courtland N. Smith.

Smith worked at the Joseph Richard Agency in New York City. When the Red Cross commissioned it to promote the second War Fund drive, Smith was given the assignment. He knew well the important role the Red Cross played in alleviating worldwide suffering. For several months in 1917, he was a business manager for the organization at its national headquarters in Washington, D.C. He also had written copy for Liberty Loan drives and war-savings stamps.

Some 20 years after the war, Smith was asked by *The Newark Evening News* to explain the origin of the slogan. While riding the train to work, he said, “all of a sudden I got the idea I wanted. I pulled out a piece of paper

and drew a sketch of an allegorical figure of a woman dressed in a Red Cross uniform, holding in her arms a wounded American soldier on a stretcher.” She was “heroic in size to typify the service of the Red Cross in caring for our wounded soldiers.” His emotional pitch to accompany the image ex-

claimed: “The Red Cross is today the greatest mother in the world. It is the mother of millions, while millions of mothers wait and pray at home.”

Alonzo Earl Foringer, an engraver and muralist in Cliffside Park, was contracted to produce the artwork for the poster. Many have noted similarities between the poster and Michaelangelo’s *Pietà*, his famous sculpture depicting Mary cradling the lifeless body of her son, Jesus. The poster helped the Red Cross raise over \$150 million in the spring and summer of 1918. It was printed in full and half-sizes for public spaces, published in women’s magazines and weekly newspapers, and shown on billboards and sky signs that floated above city streets. The Red Cross used other versions of the poster for subsequent fund drives.

Smith lived at 353 Ridgewood Ave. He was a graduate of Princeton University in 1908. He died on Dec. 31, 1985, in Columbia, Tenn., at the age of 99. His wife, Helen, was a two-time winner of the N.J. Women’s Amateur Golf Championship and seven-time winner of the Glen Ridge Country Club Women’s Championship. Four generations of their family have lived in Glen Ridge.

Sally Meyer



Red Cross promotional poster from 1918



GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE GASLAMP

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Our Favorite Houses

Tudor Without the Half-Timbering

TWO OF MY favorite houses in town are 21 Astor Place and 43 Ridgewood Ave. Both constructed in the late 1920s, they epitomize the Tudor style without the added connotations of a Stockbroker Tudor house.

Houses built in the early 20th century were often designed according to a particular historical style. These revival styles—Colonial, Neoclassical, Tudor, and so on—each expressed certain attitudes and aspirations. The revived Tudor style was intended to evoke the architecture of 16th-century England. It had simple, solid materials and handcrafted details. The Stockbroker Tudor variant evolved as the suburbs grew and wealthy landowners chose to express their wealth and status by using the grandest—and perhaps most ostentatious—aspects of Tudor architecture. The houses were very large, with rambling plans that implied they had been enlarged in stages by ancestral families. 21 Astor and 43 Ridgewood are free of all of that additional baggage. They capture the heart of Tudor design in its simplest sense.

21 Astor Place has a tight L-shaped vertical design. The front-facing gable, a key attribute of the Tudor style, is tall and narrow, with a tapered chimney that leads the eye further upward.

Although the house does not have the most common feature of a Tudor house—the half-timbered façade—its rough stucco exterior serves in its place as a display of handcrafted construction. In addition, the trim on the windows and door is dark brown wood as a stand-in for the missing half-timbering.

The collection of different gabled dormers on the long side of the house add a picturesque quality, another aspect of Tudor-style houses. The seem-

impression of one. The bricks scattered through the stucco of the chimney are also meant to look unstudied. The sturdy wood door with its wrought-iron hinges, as well as scattered bull’s-eye glass window panes, complete the design.

The fundamental design of 43 Ridgewood Ave. is the same, but has different materials and details. It is almost entirely brick, another common material for Tudor-style houses. Only the dormers are stuccoed. The brick is certainly not machine-made. It is rough and irregular in shape and color. Wood lintels span the heads of the large, prominent steel casement windows. The brick chimney is located at the junction of the tight T-shaped volume and is therefore less conspicuous than at 21 Astor Place. The slate roof is very steeply pitched, again emphasizing the vertical quality of the house.

The front entrance is particularly nice. The covered entryway is cut into the solid mass of the house rather than being attached to the front. The wood lintels are slightly arched to distinguish them from the more utilitarian window lintels. Here again is the solid wood-plank front door, this time with a simple round top. Perhaps surprisingly, both houses have garages built into the basement on the sloping lots.

The designs of these houses show off an authentic understanding of Tudor architecture while avoiding the commanding presence of conspicuous Tudor estates. I believe they hold their own beautifully against any Stockbroker Tudor in town.

Karin Robinson



ingly random asymmetrical arrangement of the front door and adjacent windows inside the L-shape of the house suggests that the design was improvised during construction. It is a deliberate design that avoids giving the

The Glen Back When

curated by the officers and trustees

Gang Violence Circa 1939

WHEN THE BOROUGH was incorporated the Lackawanna Railroad was a single track line.... The conductor on the train for many years was George Skidmore. He was very popular with his passengers, especially with the young men of Montclair, Glen Ridge, and Bloomfield, for on Saturday night, having no local places of amusement, many of them went to Newark for a good time, returning home on the last train. There was a kind of rivalry between these groups that led to frequent fights on the train; often windows were broken and other damage done to railroad property. George never had anyone arrested and on Monday night the boys would hand George enough money to pay for the broken glass.

Report by Town Clerk, Jan. 30, 1939



Truth-Challenged

BEFORE FRANK H. Thompson became Glen Ridge tax assessor in 1927, he was in the real estate business. Shortly after he took office a builder who was interested in a piece of property requested Mr. Thompson to ascertain the selling price. The owner gave Mr. Thompson a

ridiculously high price (about twice the amount of its assessment). Not knowing Mr. Thompson had a new job, he asked him to keep it a secret. "I don't want the assessor to know the real value of this land," he said....

A woman taxpayer once remonstrated vociferously with the assessor, who, she thought, had overestimated the value of a lot she owned. He had assessed it at \$500. "The land is valueless," she said. "I'll buy it for \$500," he said. She became indignant. "I wouldn't sell for less than \$5,000," she said and walked out in a huff.

A tenant was assessed \$1,000.... He appealed to the County Tax Board, swearing that he had moved to Montclair before the assessment date. Montclair promptly assessed him (a lawyer) \$2,500. The appellant quickly returned to the tax board and swore that the first time he swore he wasn't swearing to the truth.

Glen Ridge Paper, Jan. 1, 1940



Some Enchanted Evening

AROUND NOON one day during the Christmas holidays, Joe Gonnello, the bank's [Glen Ridge Trust Company] long-time, popular guard, found four

theatre tickets on the lobby floor. They proved to be for a performance of *South Pacific* that afternoon.... The bank telephoned the theatre, supplying the seat numbers. In due course four dejected young people presented themselves at the box office and when their spokesman, close to tears, reported the tragic loss, they were told by the ticket agent that he had the necessary information and would give them passes for their seats....

The group were home from college and included the daughter and son of Antonio and Josefa Escoda, the distinguished Manila newspaper editor and his martyred wife, both of whom had been executed by the Japanese—during the invasion of the Philippines—for assisting the Americans and for working for the Resistance in their country. After the war Bing and Tony Escoda had been sent to the United States on scholarships and Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Griffith, who then lived in Glen Ridge, had made a home for them.

The Glen Ridge Story, 1957



Send Us Your Stories

HAVE A STORY or a thought to share? Email us at glenridgehs@gmail.com.

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Events Calendar

curated by Tom Coleman

Glen Ridge Historical Society

Annual meeting and spring social. Please join us on Friday, April 28, at 7:30 p.m. at the Women's Club of Glen Ridge, 219 Ridgewood Ave. Our guest of honor will be Angelica Diggs of the Montclair History Center, who will tell us about Rosedale Cemetery. When founded 183 years ago, Rosedale pioneered a new movement in how the U.S. took care of its deceased. The old section of the cemetery has striking grave imagery and burials of many historic figures. Prior to her talk, members will vote for new officers and trustees. The nominees are Tom Coleman for vice president, Carmen Pence for treasurer, and Sandra Lefkovits, Bradley Timmers, and Ashley Rose for trustees. Officer appointments would be for 2023–2025 and trustees for 2023–2026.

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 History Center. Check the online schedule for spring walking tours of downtown Montclair, Rosedale Cemetery, and the Crane House. montclairhistory.org/home

Montclair Art Museum. See vanessa german's installation *please imagine all the things I cannot say*, exploring themes of strength, love, and justice in response to racial violence in the U.S.

Through June 25. Also take time out for 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

Greenwood Gardens, Short Hills. These lovely gardens reopen for the season on May 5. greenwoodgardens.org



Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War in Rosedale Cemetery, undated, but late 1800s. Photo courtesy of Montclair History Center

New Jersey State Museum, Trenton. *Beyond the Tangible* is an exhibition featuring non-objective abstract artworks from the museum's large permanent collection, which includes American art, items of Native American culture, state history, and natural science.

Through Aug. 27. nj.gov/state/museum/explore-exhibits

Untermeyer Park and Gardens, Yonkers. Take a spring or summer afternoon to tour these beautifully restored gardens, fountains, and follies set above the Hudson River. untermeyergardens.org

New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. *The Wondrous Willa Kim* is a retrospective of the costumes and related design artifacts of a legendary Broadway costume designer. Through Aug. 19. nypl.org/events/exhibitions

New York Historical Society. *Scenes of New York City* features artworks depicting life in New York from a distinguished collection donated by Elie and Sarah Hirschfield. Through July 23. nyhistory.org/exhibitions

Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick. *The Incoherents and Cabaret Culture* spotlights Belle Époque Paris via the museum's extensive collection of works on paper. Through July 16. Also, *Picturing Jersey City: 19th-Century Views* by August Will through late June. zimmerli.rutgers.edu

THREE WAYS TO JOIN

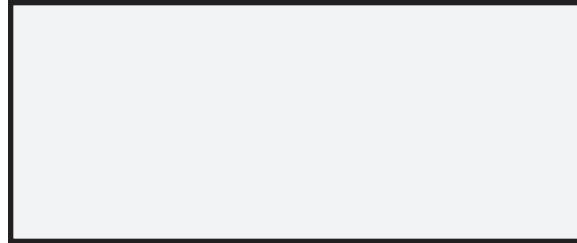
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**ANNUAL MEETING:
FRIDAY, APRIL 28**

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 4x6 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.