



# GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## THE GASLAMP

### illuminating Our Past

December 2023 Vol. XLVI No. 2



*President's Letter*

## It's the Busiest (and Most Wonderful) Time of the Year

IT WAS CERTAINLY a busy autumn and, given what the Historical Society has planned for the New Year, I don't think we will be slowing down anytime soon.

October had the annual walking tour, which "high"lighted High Street. We learned about twin and triplet house designs along High Street and marveled at the before and after photos of two-family dwellings on Hillside Avenue. We also learned of the amazing engineering feat of moving a house to its current location by way of rolling logs. I want to thank the two other docents, Susan Link and Karin Robinson; the borough's historian, Sally Meyer, for compiling the information; and the Board of Education president, Betsy Ginsburg, who suggested holding our reception in Central School. Since the school reopened during the lockdown, few people besides staff and students have been inside. It was a special treat to see the interior.

In November we co-hosted an event with the High School History Club, at which we ate a delicious dinner and watched as an historic re-enactor portrayed American Revolutionary and New Jersey icon William Livingston. I learned a lot not only about Livingston (including his favorite food), but also about what life was like during Revolutionary times. I am decidedly thankful to be living with modern conveniences. I want to thank Dave Majewski, the faculty advisor for the History Club, for reaching out to the Historical Society and coordinating the event. Thank you to everyone who attended to make it a success. I look forward to other collaborations with the club.

December started with a pretty

sweet treat: the Gingerbread House Decorating Workshop, held this year at Central School. Many families enjoyed the event; I know my daughter did. Even for us professional architects, it was fun to see the different designs that people came up with. Let's give a jumbo-sized thank you to Megan Connolly for not only organizing the event, but also securing all the delicious decorations that the house-builders used. I wonder what percentage of candied decorations made it into mouths instead of onto houses.

As we go to press, we are gearing up for the annual holiday party. I want to thank Polly and Marc Murphy for generously agreeing to host the party and giving us a peek inside their historic home. I also want to thank the Event Committee, especially Tom Coleman and Carmen Pence, who have put in countless hours of planning and organizing.

With all the positive events that we have had, I am reflective on the time and effort that went into executing every single one. In the spirit of another fall holiday, Thanksgiving, I am thankful for the wonderful officers and trustees. I get to work with dedicated individuals who volunteer their time to benefit our members and Glen Ridge as a whole. The Glen Ridge community is why the Historical Society does what it does: hosting fun and educational events, while constantly

updating and supplementing our archives of historic documents and Glen Ridge memorabilia. I am also thankful to you, the members, who helped make these events a success. I hope that everyone has an enjoyable (and, if possible, relaxing) holiday season. **Nicholas Colello**



### IN THIS ISSUE

- Take your pick of 4,000 vinyl records
- Exuberant, even for a Queen Anne
- Documenting history before it's gone
- Our calendar of local history and arts

News From the Town Historian

## 78s, 45s, and 33s

GLEN RIDGE PARENTS in the late 1970s might recall borrowing both records and books for their youngsters from the public library. The record collection disappeared soon after, but for 30 years it had played a valuable role in the educational and cultural life of Glen Ridge.

Record-loaning was the brainchild of Marjorie Crunden of 47 High St., a registered nurse and a mother of two children who had a life-long interest in music. After completing a course in musical education for children at the Vassar College Summer Institute of Family and Community Living in 1944, she founded the Community Child Study Group of Montclair.

In 1948 she convinced the group to sponsor a Children's Record Loan Library (CRL) to be housed in Glen Ridge for two years, with borrowing privileges for Bloomfield and Montclair patrons as well. She argued that such a library would allow children of all ages, preschool through high school, access to the best available recordings of nursery rhymes, picture books, novels, poetry, dra-

ma, speeches, and a wide variety of music. The collection would be funded by donations.

Soon after, appeals to parent-teacher groups, civic groups, and the Davela Mills Foundation brought in \$1,800, allowing for an initial purchase of 1,000 records. Borrowers paid one cent per day to cover the cost of cataloging, repair, and replacement. After one year, the collection had 2,000 records. At the conclusion of the two-year agreement, the three libraries established separate collections. By 1965, Glen Ridge had 4,000 records.

Crunden avowed that the CRL

helped children become more proficient in "the art of living" by furthering the exploration of new interests and fields. As a music lover herself, she rejoiced that a rich musical education could be achieved at little cost. Parents, teachers of every subject, babysitters, scout leaders, religious leaders, the YMCA, and hospital volunteers all availed themselves of the CRL, borrowing everything from operas to beginner's Spanish to bird songs.

The library files provide no account on the demise of the CRL. Board of Trustees minutes from Nov. 10, 1970, mention the purchase of a cassette player and a preliminary supply of cassettes. Audio formats were changing. The birth of LP records in 1948 coincided with the founding of the CRL. Their popularity peaked in 1978, the same year the library budget proposal noted "a record collection of 700." A good idea had come to the end of its useful life. But the library still has a wide range of media; vinyl lovers can even borrow a turntable.

Sally Meyer



Marjorie Crunden's children and friends listening to a vinyl record in 1950



# GLEN RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Officers

President	Nicholas Colello
Vice President	Tom Coleman
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Treasurer	Carmen Pence
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<i>Gaslamp</i> Editor (non-voting)	George Musser

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## THE GASLAMP

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Our Favorite Houses

## A Queen Anne With a Little Something Extra

ONE OF MY favorite houses in town is 34 Hillside Ave., located on the northwest corner of Washington Street. This Queen Anne Style house appeals to me because its overall composition is as creative as the small details found all across the exterior of the house. It was awarded the Historical Society's Preservation Award in 1988.

The Historical Society archives don't record the exact construction date, but the house was hooked up to the water line in 1886. The property was originally 2 acres before being subdivided. The portion of the lot facing Hillside Avenue (now 38 Hillside Avenue) served as the formal garden for 34 Hillside. The portion of the lot facing Washington Street (now 271 Washington, along with the properties stretching up the hill) first served as a carriage turnaround and later was replaced with a tennis court.

Today the house appears to face Washington Street, but the Hillside façade is actually the front of the house and the official address. It has a primary front-facing gable with a long ridgeline that aligns from the front to the back of the house. Shed dormers, gable end dormers, hip roofs, and three chimneys attach themselves to the long steep roof in a picturesque way typical of the Queen Anne style. There are two cross gables, one of which is easily seen from Washington Street. And don't miss the tiny dormer adjacent to it, hiding in the corner where the roof slopes meet.

The one-story bay window facing Hillside Avenue is very unusual. It is a box bay window (rectangular rather than angled), but with rounded corners. The corners are wrapped with the same siding, trim, and cornice as the wall, as if the surface had been

pulled and stretched around the corner.

The bay window, along with the rest of the house, is overlaid with a grid of trim boards. Those boards establish the house as a "Stick Style" variant of the Queen Anne style. The style was categorized and named in 1955 by the Yale architectural historian Vincent Scully in his book *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style*. In the 1880s, most houses were designed and built by carpenters using pattern books that were widely available. The exteriors of the houses reflect the wood post system used to

windows are varied. Some are standard single-paned double-hung windows. Some are casement windows with very small square panes. Some are double-hung windows with small squares of glass around the perimeter of the window sash. It's difficult to know which windows are original, but it's almost certain that the square 16-paned windows facing south in the stair hall are.

This leaves the porch, which has been altered, but not for the worse. The pair of decorative brackets at the

top of each column are not original and are more appropriate as a High Victorian rather than a Stick Style detail. According to the archives, they were added at some point after 1956. The square column posts are original, although two additional posts have been removed from the Hillside face of the porch. The first porch railing had a baroque balustrade, original but oddly inappropriate. I like the new railing more.



build them. The continuous network of trim aligns with the window floors, jambs, and sills. Architects usually consider Stick Style to be an "honest" style, in that it reveals the wood frame structure rather than hide it, as the Tudor revival style does. To be sure, the style is not entirely honest. The grid lines are superficial and do not form the actual frame of the house.

The space between the grid lines is where the fun happens. Bands of clapboards and fields of shingles, including prominent polygonal shingles at the attic level of the gables, are mixed together. The large gable facing Hillside Avenue has a sunburst pattern above a row of vertical boards resembling a cornice. The porch and bay window brackets are very closely spaced. The

dividual supports, a flat board runs horizontally between the porch posts. The board has large circles cut out of it—seven holes between each porch post. It looks like a floating ribbon, not touching the porch floor or the hand-rail. The railing is partly hidden by bushes, so I couldn't get a good photo of it. You'll just have to stop by and see for yourself.

This detail is the best part of this wonderful house simply because that railing is so inventive. It's unlike any detail you could see on a house of this age. It does not follow the rules of the house, but ventures beyond them, while not distracting from the original details. It was designed with a free hand and an open mind.

**Karin Robinson**

Local History by Local Authors

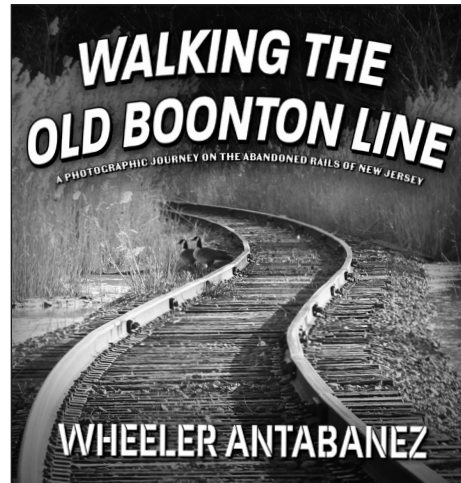
## Book Nook

MONTCLAIR RESIDENT *Wheeler Antabanez is an urban explorer and writer for WeirdNJ magazine. He has documented local industrial history, most recently in his book Walking the Old Boonton Line, published last year. He spoke to Gaslamp editor George Musser in October.*

**When did you start to explore the forgotten byways of New Jersey?** I grew up in West Caldwell within easy walking distance of the Essex Mountain Sanatorium, an abandoned tuberculosis hospital. The decaying institution looked like a real-life haunted house, and the sick wards and tunnels nearly scared me to death before I eventually fell in love with them. The county knocked the sanatorium down when I was a teenager, and I never quite forgave them for it. Since then, all the abandoned buildings of my youth have been razed. Seeing my favorite spots demolished imprinted on me an urgency to preserve the places I love through writing and photography. I try to capture the parts of New Jersey I care about before they no longer exist.

**What brought you to the Boonton Line?** I am working on a book about the Passaic River called *Wheeler on the Passaic* (currently unpublished). I kept my boat at Rapp’s Boatyard in Kearny. As I cruised the lower Passaic, the WR Draw and the NX Bridge [two aban-

doned rail bridges] helped inspire the current book and an earlier one, *Walking the Newark Branch*. The abandoned beauty I found along the tracks led me to explore further inland to see where



the rails would take me. Turns out, when I left the Passaic River and started exploring the tracks, the old Erie line led me right back home to Montclair.

**Tell us about the line.** This section of track between Montclair and Jersey City was originally part of the larger New York and Greenwood Lake Line. These tracks weren’t part of the Montclair-Boonton Line until much later, but almost everyone around here refers to the abandoned tracks as the Old Boon-

ton Line. There are currently plans to develop the line into a paved bicycle path and a mass transit line, known as the Essex/Hudson Greenway.

**What are some of the discoveries you made on your journey from Montclair to Jersey City?** I found an incredible diversity of wildlife that rely on the abandoned tracks as their last refuge in our overdeveloped landscape. The line has become the last-ditch habitat for herds of deer, turkey, fox, and coyote.

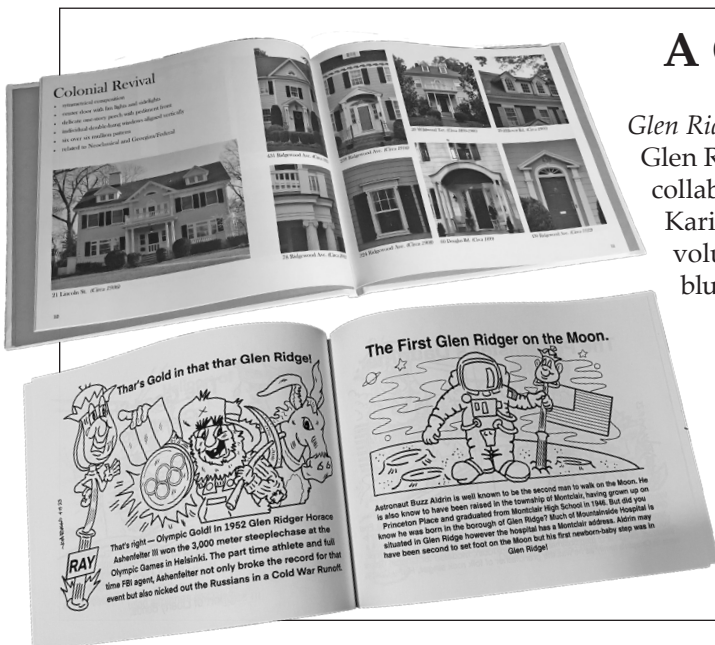
**What inspired you to turn your travels into a book and movie?** When I moved to Montclair in 2007, my apartment was on Lackawanna Plaza, just a couple blocks from where the abandoned tracks start on Pine Street. I’ve been using the rails for long walks ever since, but it wasn’t until around 2020 when I started hearing a lot of talk about the proposed bike path, that I knew another one of my favorite abandoned spots was in danger. From that point on, I wasted no time documenting the rails from Montclair to Jersey City. The photographs, video, and audio recordings I took along the way became the book, movie, and live presentation known as *Walking the Old Boonton Line*. The film is available for free on my website, luckycigarette.com, and the book can be purchased directly from Amazon.

## A Gallery of Local Historic Homes

*Glen Ridge: Living in History* explores the diverse architectural styles of Glen Ridge. Published last spring, the richly illustrated volume is a collaboration between Historical Society trustees and local architects Karin Robinson and Nicholas Colello. Some 93 homes appear in the volume, so yours may be in there. For a preview, and to buy, visit [blurb.com/user/GRHS](http://blurb.com/user/GRHS).

## Smidges Coloring Book

Jon Russo has packaged a selection of his famous “Smidge of Glen Ridge” cartoons as a coloring book. The cartoons originally appeared in *The Glen Ridge Voice* from 2008 to 2014, and Russo redrew them as outline diagrams so you can color them in. The book is on display at the library and can be purchased for \$18 at Historical Society events and in our Museum Room.



## Events Calendar

curated by Tom Coleman

### Glen Ridge Historical Society

**Archives hours.** The Terry S. Webster Archives is open the second Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon. It maintains an architectural and historical file on nearly every building in town, including old documents and photographs. You can also buy merchandise (see back cover). 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.** Move quickly to see the Crane House decorated for the holidays. The center is also hosting Zoom presentations on Jan. 18 about colonial taverns and on Feb. 1 about the Howe family, a freed Black family whose Claremont Avenue home is now the subject of important preservation efforts. [montclairhistory.org/home](http://montclairhistory.org/home)

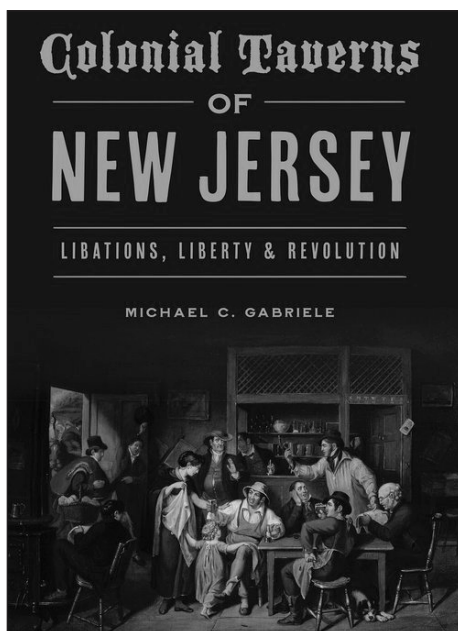
**Montclair Art Museum.** Don't miss Joel Meyerowitz's *Photographs of Cape Cod*, Siona Benjamin's *Lilith in the New World*, and the recent re-hang of the museum's George Inness paintings. [montclairartmuseum.org](http://montclairartmuseum.org)

### Farther Afield

**Montclair State University.** MSU's Cali School of Music draws world-class musicians, including violinist and musical activist Vijay Gupta during the week of Feb. 5. [montclair.edu/theatre-and-dance](http://montclair.edu/theatre-and-dance)

**Newark Museum of Art.** The historic Ballantine House has reopened after two years of extensive restoration and showcases new installations of local art and artists. Also on display is an outstanding group of glass and ceramics from New Jersey, through Jan. 10. [newarkmuseumart.org/on-view](http://newarkmuseumart.org/on-view)

**Morris Museum.** Current exhibits include a selection of paintings donated by W. Carl Burger, the noted New Jersey abstract artist and teacher who died in 2023 at age 97, and *From Flame to Flower: The Art of Pal J. Stankard*, featuring glass artworks such as nature-themed paperweights and assemblages. [morrismuseum.org](http://morrismuseum.org)



Author Michael Gabriele will speak Jan. 18 in the Montclair History Center lecture series.

**Morven Museum and Garden, Princeton.** Tour the permanent collection and gardens of Gov. Richard Stockton's colonial home. A current exhibition *Striking Beauty* features exceptional tall case clocks. Through Feb. 18. [morven.org](http://morven.org)

**New Jersey State Museum, Trenton.** An upcoming photography exhibit, *Discovering Grant Castner*, will display more than 200 images of everyday life in New Jersey from 1890 to 1910. The images were derived from glass plate negatives of a little-known amateur photographer. Opens Feb. 3. [nj.gov/state/museum/explore-exhibits](http://nj.gov/state/museum/explore-exhibits)

**New York Historical Society.** Current exhibitions include *Acts of Faith: Religion & the American West*, which explores undercurrents of the U.S. westward expansion in the 19th century through more than 60 artifacts and artworks (through Feb. 25), and *Kay Walking Stick/Hudson River School*, which creates a dialogue between art of a leading Native American artist and the society's iconic Hudson River paintings (through April 14). [nyhistory.org/exhibitions](http://nyhistory.org/exhibitions)

**The National Arts Club, New York.** The venerable club is showing *A Sense of Place: The American Art Colonies*, highlighting the role of art colonies in advancing American painting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Through Feb. 9 [nationalartsclub.org/exhibitions](http://nationalartsclub.org/exhibitions)

**Morgan Library and Museum.** Among the changing exhibits at this Midtown Manhattan treasure house is *Morgan's Bibles: Splendor in Scripture*, displaying rare medieval illuminated manuscripts. Through Jan. 21. [themorgan.org/exhibitions/current](http://themorgan.org/exhibitions/current)

## THREE WAYS TO JOIN

**MAIL YOUR CHECK TO** Glen Ridge Historical Society, PO Box 164, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028

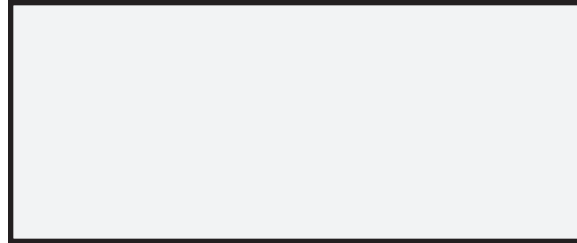
**or JOIN ONLINE AT**  
[glenridgehistory.org/join](http://glenridgehistory.org/join)

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**HOLIDAY PARTY:**  
**FRIDAY, DEC. 8**

## 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, four for \$3



**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](mailto: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.