

GLEN ROCK HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY PRESENTS:

GLEN ROCK HISTORY

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WELCOME HOME

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WHAT A WONDERFUL SURPRISE to rediscover something that was thought to be lost forever! The Glen Rock Historical & Preservation Society's (GRHPS) archives contain a newspaper clipping from 1962, which mentions a watercolor painting celebrating Glen Rock's unexpected 1st Place - Best Float finish in the 1911 Ridgewood Fourth of July Parade. The clipping was preserved but the painting had disappeared. It was rediscovered in 2015 in a dank basement and was donated to the GRHPS. The clipping explains that the painting was gifted to Henry C. Smith by the artist, William Frank. This vibrant piece of Glen Rock's history has been conserved, stabilized and re-framed by the GRHPS using membership dues along with a 2016 grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State, through grant funds administered by the Bergen County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs. In 1911, Glen Rock's population was just over 1,000 so it was quite a joyful accomplishment to win the Best Float prize ribbon. The actual ribbon has been conserved as well and is framed with the exuberant painting. The public is invited to view this special painting at the Glen Rock Public Library, where it will be displayed for the month of May 2016.



“THE FATHER OF GLEN ROCK”: HENRY C. SMITH

The 1911 painting was created by local artist William Frank, who had been involved with the float construction that year. Frank included the following inscription on the painting: “To the FATHER OF GLEN ROCK, N. J. - Mr. Henry C. Smith, in commemoration of the day when GLEN ROCK was put upon the MAP, July 4th/ 1911”.

Henry C. Smith, partnering with Dr. John Singer, founded the Smith-Singer Realty Company in 1908. Smith’s vision of a modern, healthful suburban community became a reality as his company bought up large tracts of farmland and built sturdy, attractive housing in well-planned neighborhoods, convenient to shopping and transportation. The Company’s slogan “Watch Glen Rock Grow” was strategically placed on a large banner in the park directly across from the Erie Main Line railroad tracks for all commuters to see.

Smith himself estimated that his company built approximately 700 houses and 21 stores in Glen Rock. A native of Brooklyn, Smith named Rodney, Bradford and Wilson Streets after his childhood neighborhood. His civic service included two terms as Mayor of Glen Rock as well as terms on the Board of Education and the Borough Council. He organized the Glen Rock Savings & Loan Association and was the first president of the Glen Rock Chamber of Commerce. The new Chamber of Commerce pushed to establish a branch post office and a comprehensive sewer system. One of his fellow councilmen described Smith as “a man of great vision and foresight as well as of fine character and real ability.”

The imposing Smith-Singer Building on the corner of Rock Road and Main Street went up in 1912. Originally, it housed the Smith-Singer Realty Company, a grocery store and a shoe store. There was also a large assembly room with a stage on the second floor; the first police station and jail; the municipal offices; and the first library. The building was the center of most town activity until the Municipal Building was completed in 1929 (which happened to be during Henry Smith’s term as Mayor.) The third floor of the Smith-Singer Building was destroyed by fire in November 1973.



1911: FOURTH OF JULY PARADE

The local headline says it all: "Glen Rock Carries Off Two First Prizes and Makes a Fine Showing of New Fire Department - Red Hot Time for Everyone!" In 1911, the Ridgewood Independence Day Celebration featured a parade (expanded to include entries from neighboring towns) followed by speeches, athletic contests and evening fireworks. The parade included Boy Scouts, Brass Bands, Ridgewood Village officials, veterans of The Grand Army and floats galore.



Glen Rock was awarded First Place ribbons for the most school children marching (71) and for the best float. The Glen Rock float depicted the "rugged picturesqueness of the Big Rock and tree, and stalwart attendants"; it was pulled by horses and accompanied by 35 Glen Rockers of various ages and sizes. At this point in time, The Rock was unexcavated and was easily climbed by youngsters to watch over the dirt Rock Road; artist William Frank paints this favorite pastime in his watercolor. Glen Rock's float was so popular that it was subsequently entered in the 1912 and 1913 parades with minor additions. Glen Rock's own IDA Parade was incorporated in 1939.

The float competition was fiercely contested by such entries as "Molly Pitcher", "The May Queen", "The Goddess of Liberty", "The Capture of Major Andre", and the winning entry "Glen Rock".



George Hubschmitt leads a horse pulling the Glen Rock float in the parade photo to the left. George's father, Adolph, was an early Mayor of Glen Rock. Adolph was also one of the organizers of the new Glen Rock Volunteer Fire Department in 1911 and served as the second GRFD Chief. The Hubschmitt family - Adolph, his wife Fanny, and children George, Lilly and Mabel - carefully collected Glen Rock memorabilia and their photographs, school items, documents and written memories form the nucleus of today's GRHPS archives. Adolph was a carpenter by trade and he built the family home, which still stands on Rock Road next door to the Glen Rock Public Library.

G.R.H.P.S.

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The GRHPS Mission Statement:

To heighten the public's awareness of, and
appreciation for, the history, growth and
development of Glen Rock, Bergen County,
New Jersey

Meetings are held on the THIRD Thursday of
the month at 7:30 p.m., September through
June, at the Main Line Station

Please support us through the Amazon Smile program
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THE GRHPS IS A 501(c)3 ORGANIZATION. DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.

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Membership levels: Regular \$10; Supporting \$25;
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Come visit us-
MUSEUM AT THE STATION SCHEDULE
We will be open from 1 - 3 pm on the
following dates:
May 29, 2016 June 26, 2016
July 31, 2016 Aug. 28, 2016