

WENONAH

Historical Society Newsletter



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of Wenonah, NJ



Another woodcut from the turn-of-the-century Times.

JANUARY MEETING TOPICS

Happy New Year! We have a lot of exciting things happening for 2001, and this first meeting of the new millennium will be an important one for everyone who wishes to have a voice in the Society to attend.

For "entertainment and education" Rocco Doto will be presenting a slide presentation that he prepared for the historical preservation course he attended at Burlington County College. We may also have another surprise guest (which you will have to attend to find out who!) to participate in a question and answer session.

Many topics will be on the table for discussion, including ideas for future meetings, ideas for special Society events, and the formation of a few committees for various purposes (sorry for the vagueness...but we'd like to put these ideas to the membership at the meeting before making them public).

Also, I'm sure you've noticed that the newsletter has expanded by two pages for this issue. We hope you enjoy the new features, and if you have anything you'd like to submit, we'd be happy to publish it!

See you at the meeting.

WENONAH 100 YEARS AGO · JANUARY 1901

Compiled by Milton Webb

The birth of the new century was welcomed in here last night with a great deal of gusto and flourish. The churches were well-attended and deep spiritual feeling exhibited.

Our people are all happy in the beginning of the new century and there seems to be bright prospects about for all.

About 40 young people attended the masquerade ball at Noblitt's Hall. There was a watch night service at the Methodist Church.

Pastor Cobb has been presented with a handsome new watch and Mrs. Cobb was remembered with a handsome silk umbrella.

Icehouses are being filled here and we understand Dr. Stout, Will Stevenson, Frank Hendrickson and Turner and McCormick are among the number. (There were numerous icehouses in Wenonah including a large one at the Wenonah Inn and Joseph Warner's at the Wenonah Lake.)

George Sawyer is carrying a pretty severe cut

across his eye from being hit over the head with a lantern in the hands of the brakeman on the 6:40 southbound train. It is said the trouble arose over an altercation over Sawyer's ticket, which he refused to give up and the later was intoxicated.

The telephone exchange is to be located in Richard Clark's store where there is now a pay station. (This is now Mary Kaye hair dresser, 3 East Mantua Avenue.)

We understand parties are negotiating toward starting a laundry here in the near future. (This never happened however there was out of town laundry picked up and delivery for many years in town, White Star and Cascade being two of them.)

Mrs Hamilton Turner surprised her guests with a dinner of fish and oysters and the good things that go with them. The occasion was greatly enjoyed by the ladies. The merry laughter proving to the passer by that there were other good things beside the dinner.

The snow hangs on well.

As February nears the Rail Road men are experiencing a sort of dread for fear the blizzard of two years ago may be repeated.

It is reported that some of the scholars put red pepper in the heater at the school yesterday to shorten the session but their session is now somewhat extended.

Rudolph's big Camden bakery is delivering free samples of bread here today.

There is someone harboring my black and tan hound dog, Therefore I give notice that I will prosecute to the full extend of the law any person or persons in whose possession he is found. -WH. Sithens

It is reported that a certain well-known contestant for fancy skating had to go to the doctors after a rather severe effort a day or so ago.

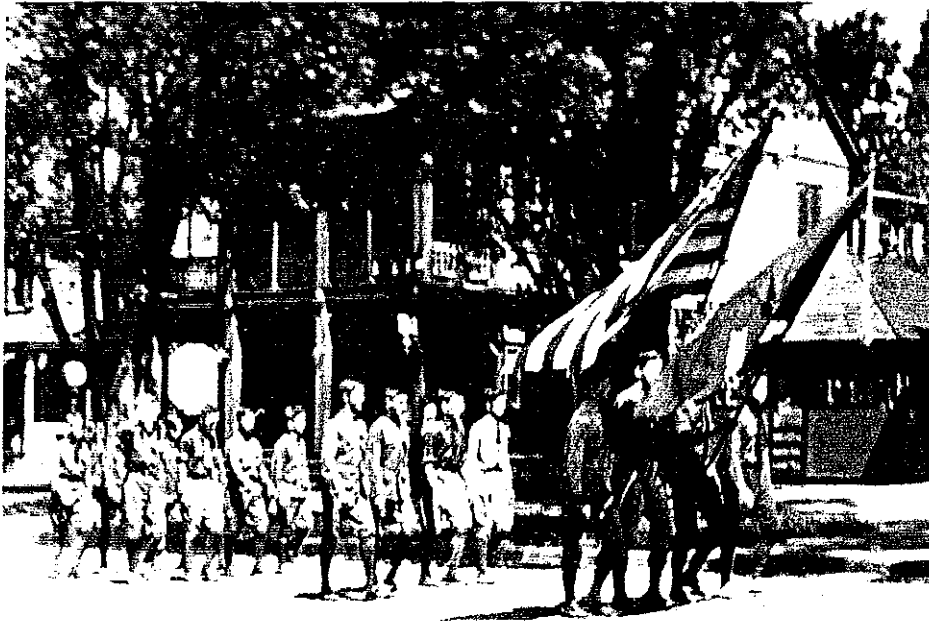
From the Woodbury Daily Times · Woodbury, New Jersey

THE HOWARD-WENTZELL BUILDING

7 West Mantua Avenue

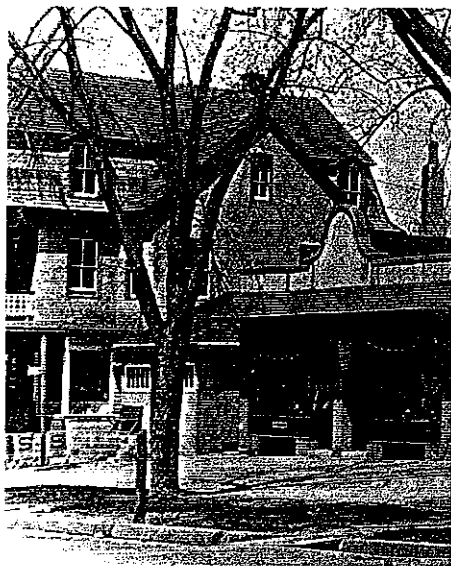
First in a series of articles detailing the histories of some of Wenonah's more notable structures. By Milton Webb

If one were asked what is the most historically significant building in Wenonah a likely candidate would be the Howard-Wentzell Building in the business district of our town. The old timers in Wenonah have known this for many years as the Wentzell apartment house. However there is much more to be told about this building than its role as an apartment house.



The Wentzell building with the 1914 Fourth of July parade passing in front of it...

...and another photo taken during its life as a store.



In December of 1872 the "Constitution", printed in Woodbury, stated "Mr. Ramson Howard is building a handsome three story store at Wenonah, the raising taking place Saturday last. The basement will be used for a restaurant while the third floor will be devoted to public purposes." This was an ambitious project considering the new village of Wenonah having less than two dozen houses was only a year old.

The Howard building was finally erected after a bad start when a twister destroyed the partially weather boarded unfinished structure, completely leveling it, a loss estimated at \$1,000. Completion was accomplished in the year 1873, a giant step forward for the vision of creating a new town along the tracks of the West Jersey Rail Road.

One of the first tenets was newly formed School District 54 of Wenonah who rented space for schooling. Previous to this, teaching took place in a private home (Dr. Garrison's), the rail road depot and a room set aside in the "Wenonah House." This space was used for two years, from 1876 until 1878 when a new permanent building was put up on North Marion Avenue. Many years later, Edward Farr in reminiscence of his early

school years refers to the building as "Daddy Howard's school. History does not record why it was called thus.

In 1878, the newly formed YMCA moved into the third floor. The "Wenonah Advance" reported, "The YMCA is now fully organized and is a fact. The association has a cozy room in the Howard Building and has upon its tables magazines, newspapers, games for the profit and pleasure of its members and its primary object viz to provide a comfortable room for the improvement of the young men of Wenonah and vicinity. The room is open on Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings of every week." This use lasted until 1916 when they moved into what later became the Legion Hall on North Marion Avenue.

A new era evolved in the building when Walter and Elizabeth Wentzell opened a store on the first floor in 1910. Previous to this he was the local huckster who was noted for having a mule to pull his cart. His specialty was seafood, particularly oysters brought in by rail from Port Norris-Bivalve on the Delaware River. Upon opening, they advertised selling vegetables, fruits, pickles, fruitcakes, ice cream and oysters. As time went on they became a Purina feed dealer, the Inquirer news distributor and pumped Gulf Gas out front. They afforded home delivery to their customers for many years.

In 1913, they built an ice cream pavilion next door where Keller's insurance office is sited today. This was a favorite of the academy boys where they reportedly were allowed privileges not allowed elsewhere such as smoking. The pavilion was a great place to go not only for them but also for the people of Wenonah. This stood for many years until the Wenonah Food Market building was erected. Out front there was a cast iron horse-watering trough, which was the donation to the citizens of Wenonah by the local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

The Wentzell heritage extended into later decades, when after the new store next door was built their daughters Francis and Jennie ran it as a food market. They later married becoming Fran Sweeney and Jane Bowker. Tony Sacca joined with Jane and her husband George later and opened up a meat department in the store. Jane and Francis' brother Earl, a graduate of the Wenonah Military Academy, became a doctor and was our local physician for many years until 1965. He was one of the primary founders of the Memorial Hospital in Woodbury.

Fortunately, Rocco and Colleen Doto, members of our Wenonah Historical Society, now own The Howard-Wentzell Building. Their love of our local history has been expressed in the efforts they have made to bring it back to its former appearance.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

New to the Newsletter...

Each month this space will be reserved for reports from the various committees which are forming in the society. It can be a place to update the membership on what you have accomplished, on what you need volunteers for, or any other pertinent information you would like to share. To submit your reports, please either provide a disc to Curt Kapus (464-2485) with your file saved as a text or MS Word file, or just eMail it to wenonahhistoricalnews@home.com

We look forward to hearing about your progress.

Archiving and Preservation Committee

Attention all Members: Do you have memories of Wenonah's past that you think should be recorded for future generations? Are you interested in donating pictures, letters or other mementos that can be used for exhibits or for cataloging our town's history for others to enjoy? If you or someone you know is interested in preserving our past—Wenonah's past—please contact Rocco Doto, Chairperson for the Archiving Committee. Also, if you are interested in joining our newly formed committee please call Rocco at 415-1215.

LIFE A CENTURY AGO

Reprinted from the January 3, 1901 issue of the Woodbury Daily Times.

One hundred years ago a man could not take a ride on a steamboat.

He could not ride a bicycle.

He could not send a telegram.

He had never crossed an iron bridge.

He had never taken a ride in an elevator.

He had never heard of an automobile.

He had never used anything but a wooden plough.

He had never seen his wife using a sewing machine.

He could not call in a stenographer and dictate a letter.

He had never received a typewritten communication.

He had never struck a match on his pants or anything else.

He had never seen a McCormick reaper or a self-binding harvester.

He could not go from Washington to New York in a few hours.

He had never seen an electric light nor dreamed of an electric car.

He never looked (sic) pleasant before a photographer or had his picture taken.

He had never heard of the germ theory nor worried over bacilli or bacteria.

He couldn't take an anaesthetic and have his leg cut off (sic) without feeling it.

He had never imagined such a thing as a typesetting machine or a type writer.

He couldn't talk through a telephone, and he had never heard of the hello girl.

He never heard a phonograph talk or saw a kenescope turn out a prize fight.

He never saw though a Webster's Unabridged Dictionary with the aid of a Roentgen ray.

He had never purchased a 10 cent magazine which would have been regarded as a miracle of art.

He could not buy a paper for a cent and learn everything that had happened the day before all over the world.

In short there were several things he could not do and several things he did not know.

WENONAH

Historical Society Membership Form • 2000-2001

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

eMail Address _____

Amount Paid \$ _____ Check # _____ Enclosed Cash Enclosed

Please bring this form with your payment to any meeting. Thank you!

Membership Benefits

- Monthly newsletter mailed to your home
- Monthly meetings with informative programs
- Access to various archives and memorabilia
- Network of knowledgeable historians
- Historical field trips

Cost: \$10 per family household per year

Join today and enjoy the benefits of getting to really know your town!