

Wenonah Historical Society

PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090-0032

Newsletter

Volume 3 Issue 1 January 2005

MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT JACK SHEPPARD

Dear Members;

Happy New Year. The program for the January 14th meeting should be very interesting

The first order of business will be to nominate and elect a slate of officers. The Bylaws require four officers and three trustees to be elected for "terms of two years by a majority vote of those present at the Annual Meeting". Please note the Bylaws further provide that "any member in good standing may make additional nominations from the floor".

I am pleased to report that the nominating committee has selected a slate of qualified individuals and will offer it at the meeting.

At our most recent meeting of officers and trustees I made the comment that the year 2005 may well be considered a "make or break" year that will determine if the Society is to be simply a social organization or if it is to fulfill the aims and objectives set forth in our Constitution. We now have the availability of the full upstairs of the Community Center consisting of one large and two smaller offices. We envision that the smaller spaces can serve as workshops and a headquarters area while the large room can be used to store and display the many historic articles in our possession.

The first order of business will be to survey the furnishings left by the Borough employees when they moved to the new building and determine what should stay and what should be gotten rid of.

Next we need to poll our most recent list of member volunteers to determine areas of interest and capability.

Once these steps are completed we will be able to get on with the business of identifying the papers, photographs and artifacts we currently have on hand and start the process of sorting, identifying, cataloging and storing these items.

At that point we should finally be able to reach out to the surrounding community and say, "please let us have your historic materials".

WHS OFFICERS 2004

Vice Pres.	Jack Sheppard Sr.
Secretary	Eileen Caraker
Treasurer	Carol Wiltsee
Corr. Sec.	Betty MacLeod
Trustee	Vicki McCall
Trustee	Macy Pedersen
Trustee	Lucy Schulz

**Meetings second Friday of the
month at the Wenonah
Community Center except
June, July and August**

In that way we will finally start to comply with that part of our Constitution that essentially calls for us to acquire and preserve the Borough's backlog of historic materials.

JANUARY 14TH PROGRAM

Robert Sandes of Glassboro will speak to us about his recently completed second book entitled *Glassboro*, published by Arcadia Publishing. It captures historic

Glassboro in the past two centuries as a booming southern New Jersey community at the height of its glass industry.

Bob Sandes Jr. has been fascinated with the history of Glassboro from his early years in growing up there.

He is a 1981 graduate of Glassboro High School and graduated from a photography school in Philadelphia. He spent 10 years in the television field as a news director in Atlantic City and in Harrisburg, PA.

Returning home 3 years ago he became the Museum Coordinator for the Gloucester County Historical Society.

Robert is currently working with Barbara Turner, president of the Gloucester County Historical Society, on a book for Arcadia about Woodbury.

He is currently a full time student at Rowan University where he plans to become a secondary education social studies teacher.

HISTORICAL TIDBIT

From the Gloucester County Constitution, March 7th, 1894

Miles Nerve & Liver Pills

Act on a new principle – regulating the liver, stomach and bowels through the nerves.

A new discovery. Dr. Miles Pills speedily cure biliousness, bad taste, torpid liver, piles, and constipation. Unequalled for men, women and children.

50 doses for 25 cents. Samples free at A.S. Marshall's Pharmacy.

WENONAH'S ORIGINS AND OTHER INTERESTING STORIES

WENONAH

Gloucester County Constitution April 19, 1871

This is the name adopted for the new village at Mantua Station, about two and a half miles below Woodbury. The directors have gone to work and in a very short time a surprising change will be seen by those who remember the "truck patches" of that locality. We hear that about 100 acres have been laid out into building lots, those lots 75 x 150 feet each

The two central avenues, West Jersey and Mantua, are each 100 feet wide. On West Jersey Avenue the railroad company reserves 100 feet in the center, and on each side of their reservation will be avenues for carriages and driving of 75 feet width, with sidewalks of 15 feet.

An imposing hotel is now in process of erection. It is to be 45 x 52 feet in dimensions, three stories high with back buildings 26 by 40 feet, and the whole surrounded by a verandah 12 feet wide. Each room is to contain water and gas and furnished in elegant style.

The hotel is to be on the Doric style of architecture, and surmounted with a splendid cupola. This hotel is contracted to be finished in June next, at a cost of \$15,000. During the summer about twelve other elegant cottages are to be completed. All the streets, except the two main avenues, are to be 66 feet wide.

The location of this piece of ground is peculiarly adapted for the building up of a suburban village, being high and healthful with pure and cool wells of water for all domestic purposes. It is 65 feet above Mantua Creek and from its summit can be seen the steeples of Swedesboro and many prominent points in the surrounding country.

The name selected for this young village is Wenonah (Daughter of the West Wind) from Longfellow's "Hiawatha".

The prices of lots have been fixed from \$200 to \$400 and the extensive Improvements contemplated by the company have already given

to the place an impetus, which cannot fail to make it one of the most desirable points along the West Jersey railroad.

Over 600 trees, mostly maples have already been set out along the avenues. The creek in the vicinity affords grand waterpower for manufacturing purposes, which will be at once taken advantage of and converted into use.

Remembering Wenonah's Early Days

By Bob Shryock March 17, 1985

Claire Poff Jones of Woodbury, who will be 83 next month, pleasantly occupies some of her time by reflecting on her early 20th-century upbringing in historic Wenonah. After reading a post-Christmas column about Wenonah nostalgia, Mrs. Jones taped her own memories. The tape belongs in the Gloucester County Historical Society archives.

Mrs. Jones dedicates her thoughts to her brother, Walter Poff, a paperhanger and decorator well known throughout Gloucester County for many years. The longtime Woodbury Heights resident died three years ago.

"Our family moved to Wenonah in 1906, when it was a quiet little town with all dirt streets," Mrs. Jones says. Wenonah, for more than a century, had been a 180-acre farm known as "stone house farm"; then in 1871, it was plotted and successfully promoted.

Mrs. Jones recalls spending 5 cents to attend silent movies at the American Legion hall on North Marion Avenue; spending another nickel on touring car rides from the old Wenonah Inn {now Dr. Churchill Blakey's home on South West Avenue) across miles of farmland to Salem City; frolicking at a huge lake that today is East Mantua Avenue; and graduating from the old Wenonah schoolhouse in 1913 as grammar school valedictorian in a class of four.

Wenonah in the early 20th-century was a quiet, shade-tree summer refuge for rich city folks;

cactus and scrub pines; streams where violets grew; strutting peacocks; the Wenonah Military Academy; and, as it still is today, THE place to be on the Fourth of July.

"In those days, we had dusty Fourth of July parades on Mantua Avenue," Mrs. Jones says. "The bands would be playing, Mrs. Greene would be singing the Star Spangled Banner, and there would be Japanese lanterns in the park. Candles would be lighted at night, and everyone who ever lived in town and had moved away would come back for that day.

"The Fourth of July ballgame was a little different then. Men from the west side of the railroad tracks had to play left-handed baseball, and men from the east side had to wear skirts. It wasn't really fair, because my father, Walter Poff Sr., played for the west side, and he was a left-handed pitcher."

Mrs. Jones explains that the west side of town was known as "Brown Town," which, she says, "was named for Daniel Brown, who built many of the houses, and was the 'poor' part of town. The east side of town was considered the wealthier part."

But most of the county looked at Wenonah as a wealthy community regardless of which side of the tracks you came from.

"We would go through Mantua on hay wagons for Sunday School picnics in Pitman, and the Mantua kids would throw dirt at our wagons and holler, 'We don't know you'. We chanted back, 'Wenonah is just the stuff.'"

The Wenonah Military Academy was one of the premier prep schools in the East before it went bankrupt in the early 1930s. "The cadets would march to the churches in their white dress suits and present us drills at the park on Sundays. We'd all come out to watch. And the Academy had a social center where there were many happy dances for the townspeople."

Mrs. Jones recalls the day William Howard Taft unexpectedly came to town on the train to do a bit of campaigning for the presidency. "How he

happened to come to Wenonah, I don't know. But we were intrigued by this huge man who was giving a political talk at the park, and we stopped to listen. Just then, the new Mrs. Thomas Farr (Farr built and lived in the current George Braun home) rode along in her limousine and asked her chauffeur to stop to see what was happening. "But just then, Mr. Farr walked across the street and really gave his wife a lecture about listening to a politician. They got in the limousine and drove home. It made quite an impression on us because it seemed so rude to Mr. Taft."

Some of Mrs. Jones' fondest memories are of Dr. Harry Stout, a beloved, old-fashioned family doctor who for many years served Wenonah. 'There was no one he wouldn't go to help, regardless of the weather. He brought my sister (Estelle Silver) through spinal meningitis in the days when there were no wonder drugs. My sister was so bad, Dr. Stout even went to church asking for people to give prayers for her. But she recovered and is living in Haddonfield today.

"Dr. Stout was overworked, and he always undercharged. When he died at 58 from a heart condition, there were hundreds of thousands of dollars on his books he never collected. He could never be replaced in the hearts of the people he helped."

And some of the old-timers who read the Gloucester County Times will remember not only Mrs. Jones' brother, Walter, but also her mother. From 1908 to 1935, Lillian Poff wrote a Wenonah column for the old Woodbury Times.

"They paid her three cents an inch to write it, and a lot of it was 'gossipy' stuff," Mrs. Jones says. "My mother's main source of news was the one and only telephone operator we had in town."

Bob Shryock, a veteran Gloucester County Times newsman writes about people and happenings in the county. Bob and his family spent years in Wenonah and is still thought very highly of by his many friends who wish he still lived here.



Wenonah Station Winter 2005

Stamp
Here

Wenonah Historical Society
PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2005

Membership Benefits

- MONTHLY NEWSLETTER MAILED TO YOUR HOME
- MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH INFORMATIVE PROGRAMS
- ACCESS TO HISTORICAL ARCHIVES AND MEMORABILIA
- NETWORK OF KNOWLEDGEABLE HISTORIANS
- HISTORICAL FIELD TRIPS

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

AMOUNT PAID \$ _____

CHECK _____ CASH _____

BRING FORM AND PAYMENT TO MEETING, OR MAIL. THANK YOU

WHS PO Box 32, WENONAH, NJ 08090

DUES: \$15.00 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR
