

Newsletter

Volume 7 Issue 3 March 2009

A MESSAGE FROM
PRESIDENT BARB CAPELLI

Dear Members;

This coming spring reminds me that I have some housekeeping to do. With that being said, I have some reminders and some thoughts to share with you about our Historical Society.

Please, don't forget the Membership dues are past due now...so please, be sure to fill out your membership forms for us. We are updating our current dues list and hope that we all are up to date!

Our February meeting was a HUGE success and we thank Frank Colburn for his wonderful presentation. Although the food was totally yummy for this special – Valentine-Lincoln's Birthday celebration, I want to remind everyone that our refreshments need only to be a few snacks or sweet treats and a beverage of choice. With the difficult economic times we want to keep things simple as we enjoy the social time after a presentation.

We are also very, very excited about the buzz surrounding our Train Station Restoration, bids for the work to be done is being reviewed and I am confident things will be progressing quickly. Since we have been advised that restoration could start soon, I want to let you all know that our April and May meetings will be held in the Municipal building to ensure all of our safety. Our June picnic location will be decided and that information passed onto you soon.

Founders Day is going to be another super celebration of our Train Station and it is moving along very well with so many great ideas and volunteer involvement. Don't forget to save April 18th on your calendar.

Something else we might want to consider, Clean Communities Day is May 2nd We need to have at least ten volunteers in order to qualify for the \$500 that is donated to our Society. If anyone is interested, please let me

WHS OFFICERS 2009

President	Barbara Capelli
Vice Pres.	Brenda Birkland
Secretary	Vicki McCall
Treasurer	Carol Wiltsee
Trustee	Betty MacLeod
Trustee	Louis McCall

Meetings are held the
second Friday of each month at the
Community Center
except June, July and August

know. We can decide if we want to join in the effort if we have enough volunteers.

The speaker for our next meeting is Katherine MacGregor, she promises a great surprise for us...so many surprises that she wouldn't even tell me what she is bringing! Her father, Dave Knight, was an instructor at the Wenonah Military Academy. She is going to present an interview with the oldest living cadet of the Academy. I am sure she will be bringing a variety of show and tell items from that interview.
Barbara Capelli

BOOK SIGNING BY MARJORIE
LENTZ AND JACK SHEPPARD
HISTORY OF WENONAH

As many of you know who were at our last meeting, we had a surprise unveiling of the History of Wenonah book by Marjorie Lentz. Both Marjorie and Jack Sheppard, Sr., who provided consultation and technical assistance on the book, have agreed to a book signing at our next meeting on Friday, March 13. The books are \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. The book was first written and published in 1976, in time for both the nation's Bicentennial and the dedication of our railroad station/Community Center. What a timely release of this new second edition with all the upcoming restoration at the train station.!

TRAIN STATION REHABILITATION

Bids were received February 25th and there was a successful bidder, Aliano Brothers from Vineland, and the bid was well within the amount of the grant. This should mean all of the hoped for repair work can be done and there may be money left over for some extras. This was an excellent outcome for the future of the building and we are hoping for a Grand Opening on the Fourth of July.

FOUNDERS' DAY

Do you have any photos, fun stories, and wonderful memories of the train station restoration from 1975? We would love to use them for Founders' Day. Please contact Stephanie Berenato at 464-8686.

MILTON WEBB'S CHILDHOOD
MEMORIES IN WENONAH
1938 TO 1944

(continued from the February 2009 newsletter)

Previously the topic was the farming done in what is now the Woods of Wenonah. Tommy Synnott opened up a chicken farm here. Mr. Hendrickson built a chicken house which later became the site of many police and fireman's banquets. There were many fond memories here. In the barn there was a large carriage which was a beauty, a sleigh and a little sulky. Tom had a 1904 Chalmers automobile which I believe was bought from George Fredrick.

Tommy also had a twelve cylinder Lincoln car. Anyway the business was not profitable as we developed our own egg route. Another dividend to the town was the harvesting of the runaway chickens. Mrs. Synnott spent a fortune buying food for us. Once a month we had open house in the basement where we could dance, play pool and watch movies thanks to her. It seems to me that on VE day (Victory in Europe) Tom sold the chickens to either Rode or Demme. I remember the sadness we felt when we loaded them on the truck. On the subject of chickens, quite a few people in Wenonah had them, also pigeon lofts, and a house was not well appointed if it didn't have a grape arbor.

If you got what they called a contagious disease you would get a sign put on the house so informing the public. This was quite a prestigious addition to your house. It seems almost appalling the number of diseases that went around town including head lice (Mrs. Lapp, the school nurse would check you periodically), ring worm which the whole gang got supposedly from playing with Hop sons' dog Ziggy, the nastiest dog in town. Also mixed in with this were impetigo, pin

worms, chicken pox, measles, mumps, pink eye, flu, and a variety of ailments which are unknown today.

The Legion hall was a big center of activity for the kids. Friday night we would have movies which were of an earlier vintage with Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd. On Saturday you would go to Woodbury to the Rialto Theater. Our friendship with Joan Hill whose dad was the owner paid off with free passes, otherwise it would have cost 11 cents, however the train fare was ten cents. Sky King was our hero at the movies. A big occasion was when Earl threw up over the railing in the balcony. Also there were dances, strawberry festivals, Legion covered dish suppers, plays and a super drum and bugle corps run by Les Webb. They were all World War I veterans and they were looked at as the kids today view the Vietnam veterans. Doctor Black was in the Spanish-American War.

The train played a big part in the life of the community, the big thrill being the first trip to Philadelphia without your parents. The electric trains had a third rail which was a fascination to the kids. Every year in school a representative of the railroad would give a talk to the kids about the power in the rail, stating there was more electric in this than in the electric chair in Trenton. Smart little kid Earl Cox called him a liar which sent him to Miss Tonkin for dismissal from school. Practically every boy carried a penny in his pocket which was squashed by the wheels of the steam locomotive.

Included in the treasures you carried was tar to chew on out of the street and the white paste that was in cloak room in each class. (I often wondered why they called it a cloak room) and marbles. The marble matches were held in front of the American Store. Mrs. Wentzell wouldn't allow us in front of their store. She was awesome to say the least. If you were really good you went to Wildwood to the marble tournament. I think Donny Rowland

went one year. Mrs. Wentzell had a goldfish pond out front of the grocery store which was a fascination to us. We would throw stones at the fish. One day she hit Earl Cox so hard with the broom that he went in the pond head first. Louis Fink, the brains of the outfit informed her that we were going to sue her so he also went in the pond. Next door Miss Wilan had penny candy in big glass jars. She would always check your hands for cleanliness before you would reach in but would be very kind and say Earl let me get the candy for you. She also sold spools of thread. But the greatest of all stores was Foster Mullins drug store on the corner where Duffield Realty is today. Before him was Doc. Sheisser who I remember had a goatee. Foster's store had an old fashioned fountain made out of marble and ice cream chairs with matching tables. A coke was a nickel, a soda a quarter and he dished out ice cream. Foster had a Ford Phaeton automobile. A thrill to us was when he would race through town and clear all four tires off the road at the railroad crossing. Bill Scank, the colored man from parts unknown, worked for him. The last time Foster saw him was when he was entrusted to make a deposit at the bank in Woodbury.

We spent a lot of time in the park. One section up in the front we called bums paradise where we sat. Walter Zigwolf was the state policeman from the Mantua Barracks; he worked along with a man named Montgomery. Zickwolf was like a god to us, he wore leather boots and gloves and rode on a motorcycle. When he would drive through town we would watch with awe. He would always gun the motor when he passed us.

On Sunday there was a regular list of taboos, one being mowing your lawn, playing baseball and even fishing. Sunday was truly the Sabbath. The churches had morning and evening services, also one on Wednesday night. This could have been because of the beginning of the war. Sunday was the

day for visiting. I don't remember Rev. Gage unfortunately but through the scouts Rev. Taylor and Rev. Mervin Campbell became good friends. Our scout meetings were Friday night in the Presbyterian Church basement, this was troop 31. This was an active organization. Then the explorer scout unit formed and the architect Dick Erskine gave us the building behind his house to use. I wasn't a charter member by two years but Frank Eggert was, also Bob Sundt who later in life moved the London Bridge to Arizona. On Saturdays once a month during the war we would go around on the borough truck picking up what was called salvage. One item was cans of cooking grease. I never could figure what this was used for.

A big event in Wenonah was the washout of the culvert in the south end of town. Labor Day weekend we had a record breaking storm. All railroad travel stopped at Wenonah because of the washout. They had a shuttle bus at Wenonah station which took the commuters to Sewell to get back on the train. Equipment arrived to erect the trestle including a crew of laborers. The work train was on the railroad siding across from the present post office. We spent hours watching the construction and out of this there was an outbreak of swearing among the kids at the school. Miss Tonkin took harsh action by expelling several of the students. I can remember all day and night you could hear the steam pile driver.

Radio programs had great importance to us. The highlight of the day was Jack Armstrong, the all American boy. We all sent in a box top and twenty five cents to get the secret decoding ring. At the end of each program they had a secret message to be decoded.

Earl Cox punched Brud Sundt in the face and to the day when Brud operated on the President of the United States, Ronald Regan, he wore the scar on his forehead of the imprint of Earl's

decoding ring. Another favorite program was the Shadow on Sunday night at seven. We were listening to the Shadow when we heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed.

A favorite place to sled was at Farr's house. We would start at the steps of the house and go down the drive and past the little pond into the woods. Also we would sled on the hill at the cemetery. Unfortunately the Lewis boy got run over by a bus there while sledding. Most people remember ice skating at Warners' and Little Lake which was a big community affair. However on our side of the tracks we used Synnot's pond. It was really two ponds and the upper one ended up in a stream which went up around the area of Jack Sheppard's house. We would take hot dogs and marshmallows to cook over the bonfire. Each night at eight o'clock the fire whistle would blow. This was sort of an unofficial curfew and at our house you had it if you weren't home.

May Veach was the postmistress and also an ardent democrat. It was a terrible affront to the good republicans in the town to walk in and face the huge picture of FDR on the wall. She even smoked cigarettes in a holder like President Roosevelt. Meade Glading was before her but he took a trip to the Federal penitentiary for absconding with funds. May Veach helped us kids with our stamp collections and she was a good friend. Mr. Carr had a mule and he would go around town and plow the sidewalks. A big thrill was to ride on the triangular wooden plow. We would take turns.

Mr. Napper ran the water works down at the lake. When he filled up the standpipe he would watch the top of the standpipe to see it overflow and then he would stop pumping. Sometimes he would get preoccupied with something else and the standpipe would overflow and if there was a wind it would be like a rain storm in the school play ground - this was one of our small thrills.

We all went to school on a bike. It would be a demeaning experience to have your parents take you to school unless it was to get you back after being suspended. Discipline was no problem in school; teachers were highly respected and were put on the same plane as your parents. Punishment was to be put in the cloak room where we would eat the paste or worse be sent to Miss Tonkin. My teachers were first grade Miss Jorden and Miss Engler, second, Ann Woolman (Sellen), third Mrs. Tucker who had to go to the hospital and we had a class trip to visit her, fourth Miss Ella Jorden, fifth was tough Mrs. Reeves. Sixth, Mrs. Long, seventh Elsie Stratton, eighth Miss Shishoff, we worked on her farm planting onions. She was probably the strongest teacher ever to be at Wenonah Grammar School. She had muscles like a weight lifter which made her a good principle.

Dr. Peters was the head of the school board. Many dogs followed the kids to school so it was the site of many famous dog fights. Everybody went home for lunch. Arbor Day was a big occasion and May Day. We had a May pole in the park, you would be dressed up either like a robin or a blue bird and we would put on a play. In second grade we had a rhythm band, I played the triangle. We made a lot of things out of paper mache. Dave Knight was our manual training teacher and we all made pump lamps. At the beginning of the war we made plane models for the Air Force for plane identification. The girls had a sewing room. Class trips included going to Glassboro Normal School to the production of Peter Pan and visiting the windmill in Pitman. These are but a few memories of growing up in a beautiful town by an appreciative person, Milton Webb.

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2009

Membership Benefits

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER MAILED TO YOUR HOME

MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH INTERESTING PROGRAMS

ACCESS TO HISTORICAL ARCHIVES AND MEMORABILIA

INFORMATION BY KNOWLEDGEABLE WENONAHIANS

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

RECEIVE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL: YES OR NO _____

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
