

Newsletter

Volume 4 Issue 8 October 2006

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT DON RALSTON

Dear Members;

On behalf of the members of the Wenonah Historical Society I wish to thank Louis and Vicki McCall for the lovely evening we enjoyed at their home "The Grange" for our September meeting. It provided for a relaxed atmosphere, the fellowship and refreshments were great, and the weather was ideal. The world is so full of turmoil, hustle and bustle it was such a peaceful time we were able to spend there.

Our Historical Society had a table reserved at the Harvest Fair held Saturday, September 30th. Our display of merchandise for sale was set up by a committee headed by Betty MacLeod. The committee consisted of Helen and Jack Sheppard, Betty Rose and Pat Sole.. The sale netted a profit of over \$400.00 in spite of being cut short by some early afternoon rain. Our materials consist of large and small banners, handbags, historical scene placemats, baseball style caps, Chuck Foreman's book on the Map of Wenonah, and packets of historical picture postcards Many of these items continue to be for sale and can be purchased at our meetings, or by contacting Betty MacLeod or myself. They will make wonderful gifts for the upcoming holidays. Help support your organization.

Our next meeting is will be Friday, October 12, 2006. The program will feature vignettes on the past History of Wenonah. Rachel Knisell, a charter

member of the Historical Society and its first secretary has collected news articles, letters, photos and numerous writings about our town. Rachel saves and catalogues them in bound folders. She has donated several to the Historical Society and they are now part of our archives. Rachel is the local historian of Wenonah and is so listed in the Historical Office in Trenton.

At our November meeting we will, according to our bylaws, choose a nominating committee to select officers for the next two years.

WHS OFFICERS 2006

President	Don Ralston
Vice Pres.	Jack Sheppard Sr.
Secretary	Jo Dominy
Treasurer	Carol Wiltsee
Corr. Sec.	Betty MacLeod
Trustee	Vicki McCall
Trustee	Lucy Schulz

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

To keep the Wenonah Historical Society strong, vibrant and growing we must elect officers who have the desire and enthusiasm to perform the duties of the position for which they are selected.

During the business portion of the meeting we will have our committee chairpersons give their reports.

Thank you for your support of the Wenonah Historical Society these past several years.

WHS MUSEUM PROJECT

Many have asked, "how is the creation of the museum coming along and when will it be finished?"

A very good question, in fact two questions in one.

The answer to the first part is that progress is being made. The lead volunteer Julie Ream has put in a great many hours preparing a procedure to expedite entering information into the computer, and training volunteers how to use it. Julie does a lot of the computer entry herself and as a result most of the Wenonah Military Academy artifacts have been added to the computer program along with photographs. Once entered, Julie carefully prepares the items for long-term storage, properly boxed or wrapped, in numbered locations.

As to the second part of the question, when will it be finished, it is much harder to answer. We have been learning that apart from the military academy objects we don't have a great deal of truly identifiable, meaningful Wenonah related items. We are sorting what we have into two sections. Those that have historic value and the others that have dubious connection to the town's history.

What we do have however that we have to decide how to handle are the notebooks and folders holding photocopies of news articles from local newspapers. The quality is poor and many are fading fast.

More reports will be provided as we progress.

Mantua Creek and the Industry of Boat Building

Compiled by H. A. Long

The question how much has Mantua Creek filled up at Mantua during the last fifty years is frequently discussed among some of our citizens. Some say two feet while others assert that in the channel the fill up is not more than six inches.

Having given the subject some thought has enabled me to gather some history of the boats that have been built at the headwaters of Mantua Creek, together with other items of history as far back as we can gather reliable information. In collecting the items we have' no other means to obtain them than the memory and statements of our oldest citizens, and if not true in the whole are true in the main.

In my schoolboy days I recollect the appearance of an old road passing in front of "Old Chase's," a colored family, now owned by Myers. Mrs. Mary White and the Hazlet property, now S. Lewallen's passing back of William Hendrickson's house, across the creek a little way below Eldridge's bridge on the Dilksboro Road, running an easterly direction and crossing the east branch near Wenonah, thence running a more northerly course passing West Jessup's farm, coming out to the turnpike near the Madara property, afterward Garrigues, now L. M. Green's, in the southern part of Woodbury. The South branch of Mantua Creek was called Chestnut Branch, and the crossing was known as the Old Ford. The east was called Cedar Branch and the crossing Spark's Ford. There is no history of vessels being built any further up the creek.

Nathaniel Chew built one vessel near the forks of the creek on Chestnut Branch and named her the "*Eight Brothers*" in honor of his eight sons, Andrew, Nathaniel, Wesley, Elijah and Elisha, (twins), Sylvester, Jesse and Nathan.

He also built two at the Ford on the same branch one of which was named *Industry* and the other *Traveler*. I am not informed what became of the *Traveler*, but the *Industry* went down on the middle ground below David

Whitall's house, (now C. N. Shuster's) and was removed at the time the steamer Daniel Drew was running between Berkley and Philadelphia. Seth Jones was her last captain. Benjamin Allen, grandfather of the late Josiah C. Allen, of Wenonah, built several sloops one of which was built near the forks of the creek. His carpenter was John Christian.

Thomas Sparks built a sloop of 45 to 50 tons burden near Sparks' Ford on Cedar Branch. Elisha Chew was the carpenter. The ground where she was built was much higher than the water in the creek and being more than her length from the water, to use the language of my informant, "she went like wild fire," stuck in the mud, and they were several tides getting her away.

Jacob Swope and Joseph Heritage built a vessel about where Duell & Perry's canning factory now stands, near the road leading from Mantua to Wenonah (this was a site on Mantua Creek just north of the Mantua Avenue bridge, known as Hennisey's Landing). Her name was *Temperance* and John Stotes was her first captain. Others were built on Hennisey's Landing and near the forks of the creek by Leonard Clark, Benjamin Parks; Thomas Sparks, Nathaniel and Elisha Chew and perhaps others of which we have no correct history. Continuing down the creek we next come to Abram Park's wharf, afterward Norris' now Dilkes' where several vessels have been built, some which must have been built near a century ago while others are within the memory of some now living. One, Isaac Durmot, who lived on the hill near the wharf, (the house now gone) was noted as a ship carpenter and builder, and seemed to have a fancy for naming his boats after the common water fowl such as the *Duck, Drake, Grey Goose, Gander*, etc.

In conversation with Mrs. Mary White nee Alfred, who was well along in the 80's we learned that when she was a small girl in the company of other girls went, in the fall of the year, down the creek with Captain William

Hazlett, who was about to lay his boat up for the winter, the children going for the ride. The name of the boat was *Drake*. The captain took her up the creek, laid her at High Hill landing near the forks of the creek where she would lay afloat and be near his home during the winter.

Sometime during the decade of 1840 John C. Eastlack, a ship carpenter and builder, moved to the house on the hill where Louis Carre now lives and followed his trade. Of those that he built one was called the *Rio Grand* for James Jessup. She was owned by Capt. Albert Lodge of Paulsboro at the time of his death, and we believe is still in a condition for use although she was built more than forty years ago.

Another was built for Alexander R. Long, named Mantua and launched during the summer of 1849. Isaac Cowgill Esq. and Joseph R. Paul of Paulsboro were the first to run her. Mr. Long afterward sold her to Spencer McIlvain of Ridley Creek for the stone business. There is scarcely a distance of a hundred feet of the shore between the Tonkin line, now Morgan's and the Bee line, now T.C. Dilkes', but what a vessel has been built upon. On the north side of the creek and about two hundred yards east of the turnpike near a small bridge, a sloop was built by Frances A. Campbell on land owned by T.C. Dilks. Your writer, though a small boy at the time, recollects being on her when she was launched. Among those on the sloop was Jonas Chew who asked the question of those with whom he was in conversation, whether the true name of the dock then growing on the sides of the creek should be "water dock, splasher dock, splatter dock or simply dock, or if it might not be classed as some kind of a lily" when voices were heard saying "there she goes" and the vessel slid into the water. The same F.A. Campbell built another vessel nearer the bridge on the same side of the creek; a canal was dug behind her so as to get her into the water.

On the south side but a few feet from the bridge, and now under the trolley road, a keel

and timbers were laid by John and William Tonkin, but was not launched for twenty-one years, when the decayed parts were taken out and the boat finished sufficient to be placed in the water. She was never completed and went down a short distance below the bridge and was torn to pieces and taken out by a German named Frederic Schrader. At the lower end of the wharf vessels have been built by Charles Clark, Samuel Locke and others. A little below on the opposite side of the creek Stille Chew built the *Nathan* and the *Two Brothers*.

HISTORICAL TIDBITS

Gloucester County Democrat

November 24, 1898

An electric motor wagon ran through Woodbury on Tuesday. It was a four wheel, one seated affair with bicycle tires. A man and lady occupied it with several large sample cases such as are carried by notion drummers. It was going at about a six miles an hour pace and a jet of steam came out about the centre of the hind axle. The man guided it from one side of the trolley tracks to the other and seemed to be as entirely at home as the rest of us would be behind a pair of thoroughly broken high steppers. The natives stared as the queer contrivance passed.

Gloucester County Democrat

March 15, 1900

On Thursday evening a meeting was held [in Wenonah] for the organization of a Fire Company. A number of representative citizens met and elected Councilman William B. Oat, President; Lewis Buzby, Secretary and Treasurer; T.J. Savage, Chief; Joseph Truncer, Foreman.

Now in case of necessity everyone will lend their assistance as before, but there will be a head to the concern, and so save valuable time.

March 30, 1900

The added improvements at the station are rapidly nearing completion. What with the new shed, gates and fence between the tracks, the residents will feel safe as to accidents at the crossing.

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Stamp
Here

PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2006

Membership Benefits

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER MAILED TO YOUR HOME
MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH INTERESTING PROGRAMS
ACCESS TO HISTORICAL ARCHIVES AND MEMORABILIA
NETWORK OF KNOWLEDGEABLE HISTORIANS

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

AMOUNT PAID \$ _____

CHECK _____ CASH _____

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

DUES: \$15.00 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR

WHS PO Box 32, WENONAH, NJ 08090
