

Newsletter

Volume 5 Issue 7 October 2007

MESSAGE FROM
PRESIDENT
LOU MCCALL

Dear Members;

It was great to see everyone on September 14 at our now traditional opening meeting of the year at our Porch Party. We had a great evening in spite of the threat of rain. Everyone enjoyed the slide presentation by Karl Anderson. Thank you to everyone who brought refreshments. People stayed into the wee hours of the morning, so I take that as a sign folks enjoyed themselves.

We are looking forward to seeing you all at the October 12th meeting at the Community Center. World-renowned artist Paul Stankard, whose family has roots in Wenonah, will share his talents with us as he speaks about Glass art. For anyone who has not experienced hearing Mr. Stankard, you are in for a very uplifting evening. His works are a reflection of his true eye for the beauty and miracles in nature. His paperweights are displayed in many museums including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Arts, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, just to name a few. His poetry is thought invoking and gives insight into his artistic designs. Vicki and I have had the honor of meeting him and greatly look forward to seeing him on Friday.

Be sure to visit his website at www.paulstankard.com

We hope to see all of you there. Please bring a friend~ they will be glad you did!

We want to thank all of our hard workers who generously gave their time at the Harvest Fair. They did well selling our items; our hats, bags, and books are becoming quite popular! We will have some items on hand at the meeting if you missed out! Remember...Christmas is coming!

WHS OFFICERS 2007

President	Louis McCall
Vice Pres.	Barbara Capelli
Secretary	Jo Dominy
Treasurer	Carol Wiltsee
Trustee	Betty MacLeod
Trustee	Vicki McCall
Hon. Trustee	Lucy Schulz

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

Please remember to find time for writing and compiling your pictures for the Wenonah Album! See you on Friday!

UPCOMING

MEETINGS AND EVENTS:

NOVEMBER 9th: South Jersey Ghost Research ~they're ba-ack!
DECEMBER 14th: Christmas Party!

WENONAH 101 YEARS AGO
OCTOBER 1906

Mrs. W.G. Peddle is visiting in Bridgeton.

Mr. Edward Knight was in town last night.

There is much complaint about the night telephone service here.

The Academy football team went to Glen Mills today to play a game.

For Sale – An Oldsmobile, very cheap. Apply to Dr. Lean. Reason for selling, does not have time to use it.

Mrs. Eisenburg of Baltimore, who has been visiting at the home of her sister Mrs. Wm. VanMeter, returned home today.

The third rail club have moved their headquarters to the second story back room in Noblit's Hall. Donations of coal would be very acceptable.

The Glassboro, Pitman and Clayton Gas Co awarded the contract Wednesday evening for the extension of their gas mains to Mantua and Wenonah. Work on the operation will be started in about 60 days.

The Academy 2nd team overwhelmed the Pitman team yesterday by the score of 21 to 0 in 15 and 10 minute halves. Fox and Housel did the best work for the Academy while Lefebvre of the Pitman first team did the best work for Pitman.

FOR SALE – 2 organs, also 2 organ boxes, just the thing for sweet potatoes. Geo. W. Locke.

COUNTY VITAL TO BEGINNING OF RAILROADS

South Jersey had role in development

By GLENN KOPPELMAN, Staff Writer, *Gloucester County Times* 5/28/95

(First in a three-part series.)

It's an old question that was first raised by a group of ambitious businessmen.

"Why would people want to drive from Gloucester County to Philadelphia if they could ride the rails?" they asked themselves. After all, they reasoned, train travel is quicker and safer, plus there's the added benefit of avoiding all those traffic jams.

So they set about building a bridge linking the area's existing passenger rail lines to provide a solid steel ribbon leading from Center City to Woodbury, Glassboro, Newfield and beyond, and ran out of money.

That was some 80 years ago. In the years since, turnpikes and superhighways have risen to provide what passenger rail promised. But as choked roads have become more commonplace, the plan attempted by those entrepreneurs back in the days of the Model T has received new attention.

"What goes around, comes around," says Don Wentzel. "Eventually, we're going to have to go back to some light rail form of transportation once again."

Wentzel, railroad editor for South Jersey Magazine in Millville, has written much about the dreams of would-be South Jersey railroad barons and their efforts at empire building. In the process, he has traced the area's rail history that began with a number of small lines and evolved into a network connecting Camden to Cape May.

Although the elusive passenger route to Philadelphia remained only a dream in those days, electric trains eventually would transport county residents to virtually any other commercial center on the Jersey side of the river. The trains were touted as quicker, more efficient and safe.

"I'm not aware of any serious accidents once electrification was in place," Wentzel says. "A few people stepped on the third rail, a few cars got in front of the train, but those were the exceptions."

According to Wentzel, Gloucester County's passenger rail history starts around 1836 with the chartering of the Camden and Woodbury Railroad. The first steam-powered trains arrived on the line two years later, but not long afterward were replaced by horse-drawn trains in an apparent cost-cutting move.

In 1850, the Camden and Woodbury Railroad's tracks were torn up — the state's first railroad abandonment. It was an ignominious start to the county's passenger rail legacy.

But other lines soon moved in to fill the void. In its heyday, which Wentzel places from the turn of the century until just after World War I, the area's passenger rail system connected most of the major towns in South Jersey, and the steel links stubbornly held together for several years after the train was dethroned by the automobile as the chief source of local travel.

"Until '31, you could get on an electric train and go to Atlantic City from Glassboro, Wenonah or Woodbury," Wentzel says.

Before it disappeared, passenger rail left its mark on Gloucester County, bringing about the early 1900s version of a development boom. Wentzel notes that the site of Glassboro Normal School, now Rowan College of New Jersey, was chosen in part because the town was a rail junction. Passenger lines also contributed to the birth of communities such as Woodbury Heights and Newfield, and sprouting neighborhoods like Glassboro's Chestnut Ridge Estates relied heavily on their proximity to passenger rail as a major selling point.

Meanwhile, the rumble of railway cars was echoing loudly through Woodbury as train tracks combined with roads to reshape the county seat into a transit core. "You have an awful lot of transportation in Woodbury in the early 1900s," Wentzel says. "It was definitely quite a transportation hub ... an early transportation center. All this was largely due to the efforts of local businessmen who started banding together around the mid-1800s to see that the iron horses that were spreading the Industrial Age made it to their neck of the woods. Across South Jersey, small railroad companies started popping up, though these tiny enterprises hardly looked like the makings of another Union & Pacific.

Take, for example, the Swedesboro Railroad Company. Incorporated in 1866, the firm boasted 11-9 miles of track running from Swedesboro to Woodbury. Under its equipment inventory, however it listed a big zero — no engines, no cars, nothing. The company simply leased its rail line to another railroad company.

The Swedesboro Railroad Company was typical of the area, says Wentzel. Businessmen from a town chipped in to build a rail line to that town, connected it with an operating railroad's already existing lines, then either leased it to the railroad or sold it outright. The procedure was more cost-effective than having the railroad build the lines itself and the businessmen were assured of an outlet for their goods and a new source of customers.

"In some cases here in South Jersey, they turned (the track) over the day the line was completely built. In some cases they held on to them for a few years," Wentzel says.

In the case of one railroad, Wentzel notes, the impetus was provided by one family, the Woods, who operated everything from an iron works to a cotton mill and bleachery in Millville. In 1860 when the family completed the Millville & Glassboro Railroad, it resulted in one of the earliest examples of a connector flight: Families traveling from Camden to Millville rode the train to Woodbury, hopped aboard the stagecoach to Glassboro and switched to a train again for the rest of the trip.

The following year, the West Jersey Railroad linked its Camden and Woodbury tracks to the Millville & Glassboro line completing a vital leg in a network that would eventually extend to Cape May.

UPDATE ON MUSEUM CATALOGUING PROJECT BY CHAIRPERSON JULIE REAM

Since the original survey of the WHS Museum holdings and storage needs in December 2005, I have worked on and off with several volunteers to catalog and store the collections of the Wenonah Historical Society. We are currently up to about 200 objects at last count. This number does not include the 114 architectural maps and drawings that Jack Sheppard took flattened and housed in the flat files storage facility.

We have completed work on the most cumbersome objects (ex: uniforms, 3-D glass and metal objects) that require more complicated storage plans and catalog descriptions. We have more recently begun to tackle the vast number of photographs, which will go faster (each item is similar to the last entry and storage is simply a choice based on size of folder). While in numbers we are probably just over halfway through, we have completed the most time-consuming items and with

more regular volunteers we'll be able to finish cataloguing the current holdings within the next several months.

In addition to myself and of course support by Jack Sheppard, volunteers over the past (almost two) years have included: Jo Dominy and Bud Rose, Brenda Birkland, Anne Zuber, Sue McNally and Melissa Eckstein.

All of the volunteers have been very adept, but few have been able to work often enough to become proficient. Since my schedule is limited (by my full time job and kids' activities), I would say the greatest need remains to find a few volunteers who can reliably offer a weekly presence to the project.

In writing this, I looked back over the report I made upon completion of the initial survey. Several of the recommendations I made have been followed and it reminded me how much progress has been made. There is one step that remains, and it is a crucial one before we can begin to ask Wenonah residents to donate items to our museum:

- ❖ The Executive Board needs to write a concise mission statement that allows for objective evaluation of present holdings and future acquisitions. We must have guidance and decisions about what to keep before spending time/money for accession and storage.

A committee would ideally be formed to write the mission statement and be responsible to consider items offered for donation to determine their appropriateness for the collection. We do not have the space or resources to store objects that bear no direct link with Wenonah's history and there should be a plan in place to accept or decline donations on that basis. Most of the items so far have been Military Academy, but we already have a sizeable group of items separated out that require a decision by the Society officers as to whether or not they should be catalogued, since they do not apparently meet this criteria.

I share your concern for the condition of the train station and its ability to provide a stable environment for the museum holdings. I would be happy to offer any support on that topic as repairs proceed. I continue to enjoy working on this project and plan to stick with it, ever hopeful that more people will see the value in it and decide to join the cause!

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

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Here

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2007

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: _____

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
