

Wenonah Historical Society Newsletter

Next Meeting at 4:00 P.M.

Saturday, October 15, 2016
Volume 14, Issue 5, October 2016

Photographic Postcard to a Wenonah Boy Opens a Window on History by Bob Thomas



Easter in 1906 was on April 15. The next Thursday on April 19th Claire sent a postcard from Atlantic to Master Steuart DeKlyne in Wenonah saying that she would see him on Sunday April 22. Steuart was the adopted son of William H. Steuart and Sarah Alice Steuart.

Perhaps they met in Atlantic City or perhaps in Wenonah. Claire and Steuart probably had little choice in their meeting. Steuart turned six years old in October of 1906. Claire's age is not known to me.

The West Jersey and Seashore Railroad had advanced to the point of installing electric powered passenger rail service during 1906. Going to electric would make for a quick clean ride from Camden to Atlantic City. On the express train you could get to Atlantic City in about one hour which is nearly as good as you can do today by car.

Mr. Steuart can be found in the US Census records for Wenonah as living on Princeton Avenue in 1910 and 1920 and working as a clerk for the Pennsylvania Railroad. From cemetery monuments in Wenonah Cemetery, it can be seen that William and Alice tried hard but unsuccessfully to have a family. Sarah gave birth to Mary Elizabeth in 1879. In 1881 while Mary Elizabeth was just a toddler, Robert Steuart was born. Both children died in August of 1883. I can't determine what carried the two children off. It could have been measles, smallpox, chol-

era, or diphtheria. The bacterium that causes diphtheria was not described until 1883.

On October 28, 1906, nearly 110 years ago, the Steuart family made an afternoon trip to Atlantic City, perhaps to visit Claire's family. They could spend most of the afternoon on the boardwalk if the weather was decent and get back to Wenonah in time to get a good night's sleep before Monday morning. Perhaps William could take his family free using some sort of rail pass offered to railroad employees. William and Alice took along Steuart and found seats in the middle car of three cars. The train had about 94 people on board.

Among those on board there was Tosca's Royal Artillery Band from Philadelphia headed down to Atlantic City for a week's engagement. William Edward of Woodbury and his girlfriend, were also on board.

As they approached the last stop before Atlantic City at Pleasantville, they passed another electric train headed up to Camden. That train had been delayed for a few minutes as a newly constructed swing bridge had been opened to allow the schooner Sinbad to pass along a creek call "The Thoroughfare." Once the bridge was closed the eastbound train proceeded normally.

In Atlantic City a number of people waited for the arrival of the express train from Camden.

In Pleasantville thirteen lucky people got off the train, some without a good explanation of why they got off as they originally intended to go all the way to Atlantic City.

At least 51 of the people who remained on the train never made it to the Atlantic City station alive.

As the train was crossing the bridge the first car derailed and went off the south side of the bridge pulling the rest of the train with it. The second car went under water as did the first, but the third and last car hung on the bridge for a moment and the brakeman in that car opened the rear door and held it open for people to escape. The cars fell into the water and the people trapped in the first two cars had very little chance for escape. Some did get out, and

WHS OFFICERS

President	Charles Horan
Vice President	Nora Taylor
Secretary	Vicki McCall
Treasurer	Scott Barnes
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Meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of each month (except June, July and August) at the Train Station Community Center	

some who got out even dove down to try to rescue others.

Among those who had been reported missing was William H. Steuart of Wenonah, NJ, whose wife and adopted son are included in the list of dead. Steuart was located last night in the city hospital. He was suffering from shock and bruises. He told a remarkable story of his experience. With his wife and their adopted son, Steuart occupied seats in the second coach. When the train plunged into the stream, he saw his wife and son hurled to the floor of the car. Steuart, who had been sitting near a window, was thrown into the water.

When he came to the surface, he floated through an open window back into the coach, and his hand came in contact with the bell rope. Hanging on to this rope, Steuart dragged himself to the door of the car and was soon on the roof. The coach had been completely engulfed, and from his perilous position he was rescued and hurried to the hospital in an unconscious condition. Not until later did he learn that his wife and son had been killed.

The first modern press releases were created by Ivy Lee to cover this story. Lee's agency was working with the Pennsylvania Railroad at the time of the 1906 Atlantic City train wreck. Ivy Lee and the company collaborated to issue the first press release directly to journalists, before other versions of the story, or suppositions, could be spread among them and reported. He used a press release, in addition to inviting journalists and photographers to the scene as a means of fostering open communication with the media.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Charles Horan



Hello to all,

I want to begin by thanking Sue and Larry Smith for once again opening their lovely home to the WHS for our well-attended annual Meet and Greet last month. It was a very nice evening of food, beverage and socializing.

Vice President Nora Taylor has been busy planning the Second Wenonah Cemetery walking tour. This event, despite the Borough Calendar and Newsletter, takes place on **Saturday October 15th** from 4:00 - 5:30. We will meet at the cemetery. This year promises to be even better than last year. Light food and refreshments will follow at the Jack C. Sheppard, Sr. Community Center/Train Station. Feel free to bring an appetizer if you are so inclined. The rain date is October 22, 2016; same times.

Speaking of October 22, the Wenonah Historical Society will have an information table at the Wenonah Fall Festival to be held on October 22, 2016 in the park from 11 - 3. This will be our third year participating in this event.

We now have 451 members on our Facebook group site and a steady stream of visitors to our website at www.wenonahhistoricalsociety.org/.

. If you haven't visited them in a while, please take a look.



Casino Bus Trip

Monday, December 5

\$50 ticket includes transportation, lunch & \$25 for gambling! Call Gloucester County Historical Society for reservations @ (856) 845-4771

WENONAH
A Century Ago

A communication was received from Mr. Knight tendering his resignation to take effect immediately, stating as his reason for resigning, unusual business conditions that would prevent the attention to the duties of Councilman which the residents have a right to expect. The resignation was not accepted by Council.

Luther Chew & Son have installed a Bell phone in their place of business on Wenonah Avenue, Mantua.

For Rent—10 room house on Mantua avenue, Wenonah. Pleasantly located. All modern improvements, Dr. Stout, Wenonah, NJ.

Our members of Battery B returned home from the Mexican border and were warmly welcomed by the townsfolk.

Mr. and Mrs. Shellenberger of Germantown have rented the house formerly occupied by Mr. Porter on Mantua Avenue.

Prof. Curtice Lewis of Philadelphia was in town last week renewing old acquaintance with his former scholars, among them Mrs. Wm. Cattell and Mrs. H. Coles.

The Academy football team will open the season Saturday with the Perkiomen Seminary team on the home grounds.

Mrs. Wm. Hallman and Mrs. W.B. Poff went to Asbury Park this morning to spend three days at the W.C.T.U. State Convention.

The first dance class of the season was opened on Friday night at the Academy. A large number of cadets have joined and many outsiders also attended.

Messrs. Cattell, Beckett and Benj. Leap went reed

bird shooting at Port Elizabeth last Thursday.

Commandant McFeely has rented the home of Mr. Ira Burdsall on Mantua Avenue and will move in shortly. Mr. Burdsall and his family will move to the city.

A very pretty wedding took place in the Borough last Saturday when Miss Evelyn G. Urian and Mr. Stirrett H. Allen of Woodbury were married at the home of the bride.

Don't forget that the masqueraders will be around on Tuesday night, so have lots of "eats" ready.

Dr. and Mrs. William Greene and son Stephen have closed their home and returned to their winter home in the city after spending the summer here.

Thomas McKean and Herbert Titus, desiring to enlist in the US Navy, went to League Island for their examination yesterday.

Ice served to all who wish it in Mantua and Wenonah. Your patronage is earnestly desired with the best of service assured. Mail orders given prompt attention. Ralph Adams, Mantua, NJ.

For Sale—A milk bottler and washer. Walter Kugler, Wenonah. Bell 48-M.

The Street and Sidewalk Committee reported that one car of the cinders authorized to be purchased at the last meeting of Council had arrived and been placed on the street.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Farr and family have returned to their home after spending the summer in Cape May.

The third annual carnival of the Wenonah YMCA was a grand success.

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Stamp

Here

PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2016

Membership Benefits

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

DUES: \$15.00 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR

WHS PO BOX 32, WENONAH, NJ 08090