

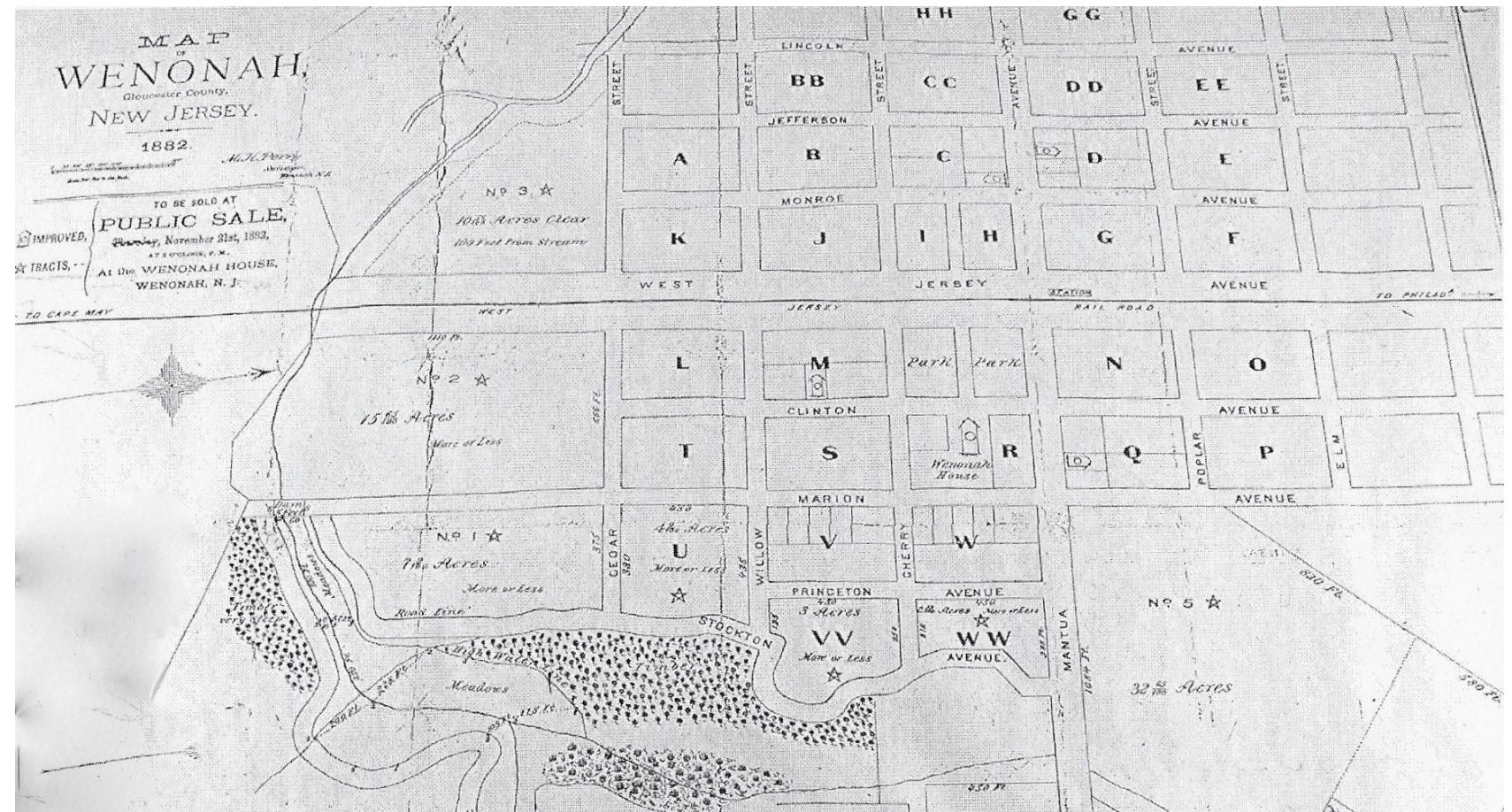
The Wenonah Historical Society is pleased to participate in StoryWalk.®

Our story is “A Town Is Born.”



This is the first of several stories we will present on the unique history of our town. The story will show you the roots of Wenonah in the 19th century, 150 years ago. Follow the storyboards to discover the vision of a “new suburban town” and how the vision turned into reality. Meet our founding fathers of Wenonah, see their homes, and visit some of the early organizations and businesses that served the community.

Enjoy our story and your walk!
And, stay alert – some of what you
are about to see is still here in
Wenonah.



The Vision of a New Suburban Town



New Mantua Station

In 1870, a new train station sat on the west side of the tracks of the West Jersey & Seashore Railroad, surrounded not by houses and roads, but by acres and acres of sweet potatoes. The train station was known as the New Mantua Station.

Civil War General William J. Sewell, a vice president of the West Jersey & Seashore Railroad, and William Frederick Allen, the railroad's resident engineer, conceived the idea of laying out a town along the railroad tracks. Their objective was to stimulate business for the railroad.

On December 14, 1870, Allen invited 21 businessmen to the Camden office of the West Jersey Railroad to consider a plan to organize a land development company.

Five days later, the businessmen boarded a special train that took them to the New Mantua Station surrounded by the sweet potato fields. There they visualized a "new suburban town."

A local newspaper reported that "from the known energy of the gentlemen at the head of the enterprise, there is no doubt of its success." On February 21, 1871, a land development company, the Mantua Land and Improvement Co., was incorporated in the State of New Jersey. General William J. Sewell was the president and William Frederick Allen, the treasurer. One of the first directors was Stephen Greene, a name you will see again.



General William J. Sewell
(1835-1901)

William Joyce Sewell was born in Ireland. He immigrated to the US in 1851 and became a Union Army officer during the Civil War. After the war, Sewell became vice president of the West Jersey Railroad Company before being elected to the NJ state senate. He later served as a US senator from NJ. The town of Sewell is named after him.



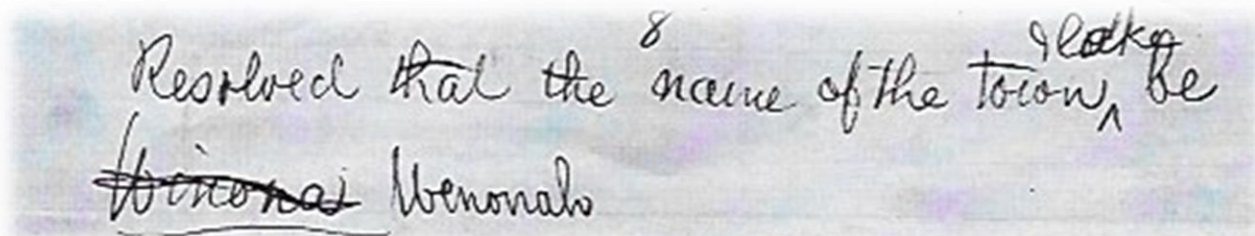
William Frederick Allen
(1846-1915)

William Frederick Allen was born in Bordentown, NJ. Allen, a civil engineer, began a railroad career in 1862 and became resident engineer for the West Jersey Railroad Company in 1868. He was responsible for the original street layout for Wenonah. Allen is also credited with creation of standard time and time zones that are still used worldwide.

Turning the Vision into a Real Town

The Mantua Land and Improvement Company purchased a 572-acre tract, generally bounded by Mantua Creek, Glassboro Rd., Bark Bridge Rd. and Wenonah Lake. From this land, the Company selected 100 acres to be divided into building lots.

The town to be developed was named "Wenonah" to honor the area's first settlers, the Lenni Lenape Indians. Wenonah means first-born daughter. The minutes from an early meeting of the Company, shows the town name was almost spelled differently.



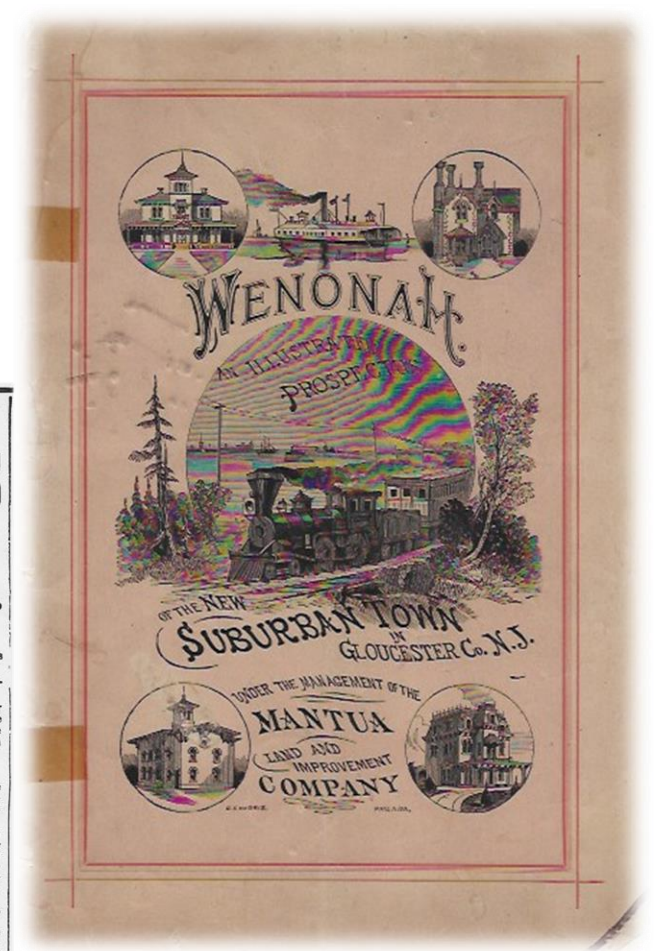
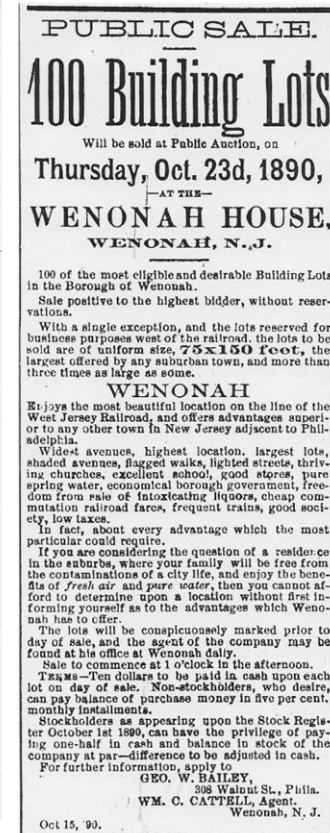
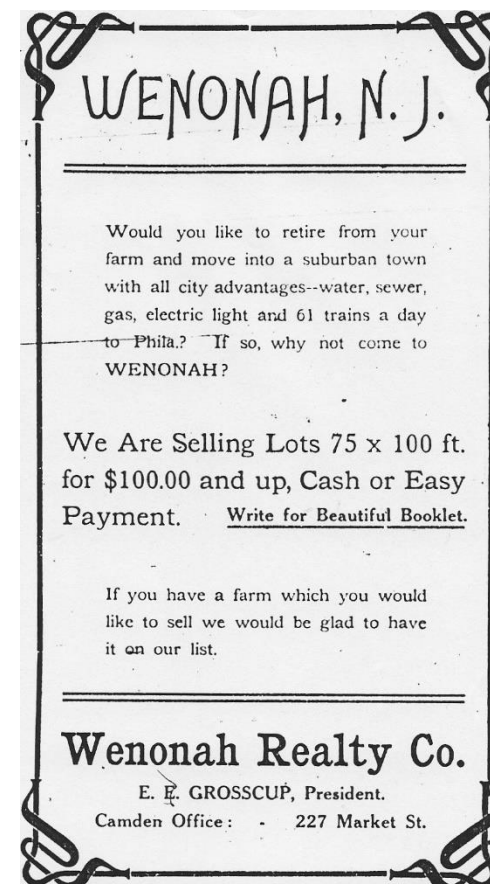
From Minutes of Mantua Land and Improvement Company Meeting on April 3, 1871

The Company's first annual report in 1871 stated that Wenonah's lots had been measured, 600 shade trees planted, streets graded, and a hotel was being constructed. Construction of 4 houses and the hotel was completed in 1872. The New Mantua (Train) Station was re-named the Wenonah Station.

Brochures to promote Wenonah's development cited numerous

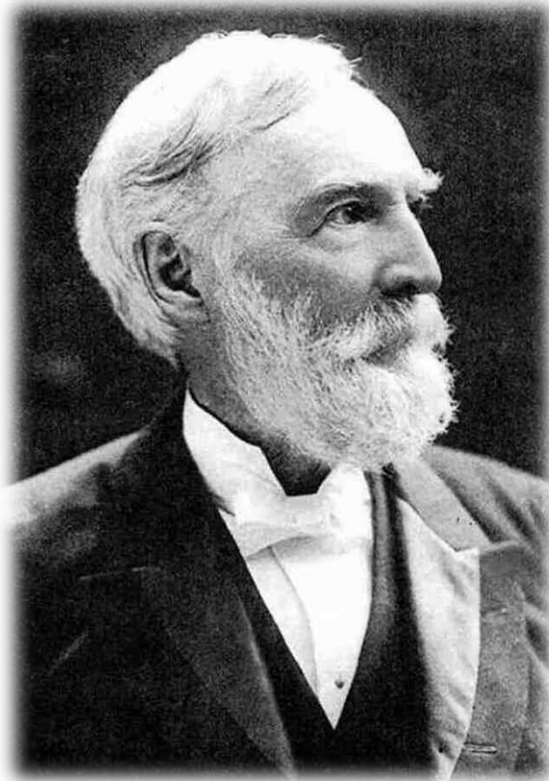
advantages of the new town, including the following:

- Frequent train service between Wenonah and Philadelphia
- Wide and thoroughly shaded streets
- Artesian water and scientific sewerage
- Country air and cheap living
- Healthy climate
- Flag walks and electric lights
- A large hotel – more on this on another storyboard



Promoting the "New Suburban Town"

Founding Father: Stephen Greene



Stephen Greene
(1831-1908)

Stephen Greene was born on September 25, 1831 in Bainbridge, NY.

Although Greene had an intense interest in the education of young people, he decided to pursue a career in printing. He worked his way up the business ladder from the bottom, and in 1881, Greene started his own printing company – the Stephen Greene Company in Philadelphia.

In 1870, Greene invented a method for printing a new type of railroad ticket with consecutive numbering. During his research, he met with General William Sewell and William Frederick Allen of the West Jersey Railroad and was impressed by their vision of a “new suburban town.” Greene became one of the original members of the board of directors for the Mantua Land and Improvement Company.

Greene purchased a significant amount of property in Wenonah, primarily in the southeast quadrant of town and played a significant role in its development. He built his own house on the

southeast corner of Clinton Ave. and Willow St. in the 1870’s. Other contributions to our town included:

- Lake Cornelia (Greene’s Lake)
- First sanitary sewer system
- Methodist Episcopal church and parsonage
- Sports complex at Cedar St. and Clinton Ave.
- Wenonah Inn
- Wenonah Military Academy
- Wenonah Water Company
- Wenonah Park Association

Greene died on May 20, 1908 at the age of 77.



Stephen Greene’s House on S. Clinton Ave.

Stephen Greene’s house still stands although a fire in 1923 damaged the structure and it was restored as two houses – 201 and 203 S. Clinton Ave.

Founding Father: Thomas Whitney Synnott



Thomas Whitney Synnott
(1845-1941)

Thomas Whitney Synnott was born on September 8, 1845 in Glassboro, NJ.

After completing his education, he began working as an assistant bookkeeper in a glass manufacturing company founded by his great grandfather. In 1872, he became a partner with ownership of a quarter of the company. The business was incorporated in 1887, and Synnott

became its first president. He retired 4 years later at age 46 to enter the banking and investment business. During his career in glassworks, he received numerous patents for innovations in manufacturing glass bottles.

Synnott served on the board of directors for the Mantua Land and Improvement Company and purchased nearly 25% of the land holdings in the entire town.

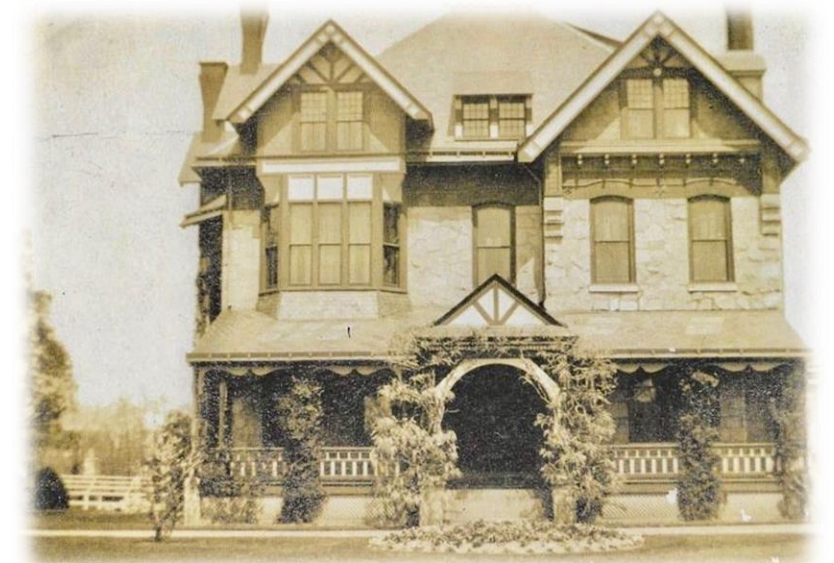
Synnott built 1 of the first 4 houses in Wenonah, located at the northeast corner of Mantua and Clinton Aves., directly across the street from Dr. George Bailey's residence. In 1884, he built a larger

stone mansion at the northeast corner of Mantua and Marion Aves. on a tract of land extending all the way to Glassboro Rd.

Synnott was among the first 18 members of the First Presbyterian Church of Wenonah, originally located on N. Clinton Ave. Later he built and donated the current Memorial Presbyterian Church at the corner of Mantua and Princeton Aves. in memory of his mother.

Synnott served as Borough Commission president for 5 years, another 2 years as commissioner, and 14 years as a council member after Wenonah changed to a Borough Council form of government.

Synnott died on March 19, 1941 at the age of 95.



Thomas Whitney Synnott's Stone Mansion
on E. Mantua Ave.

Thomas Whitney Synnott's first house was demolished and the land was used to build the Wenonah Free Public Library. His stone mansion still stands at 201 E. Mantua Ave.



Dr. George W. Bailey
(1840-1916)

Founding Father: Dr. George W. Bailey

Dr. George W. Bailey was born near Clarksboro, NJ on December 5, 1840.

After serving in the Civil War, Bailey graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1868. However, health concerns forced him to abandon his practice in Philadelphia 4 years later. He entered the coal

mining and shipping business, which introduced him to the railroad's vision of a "new suburban town."

Bailey became secretary-treasurer for the Mantua Land and Improvement Company and built his summer home in Wenonah on the southeast corner of Mantua and Clinton Aves. in 1872.

Bailey was greatly interested in the organization and advancement of Sunday school work, and he was a prominent and active member of some of the most important associations and organizations in the world.

Locally, Bailey was instrumental in incorporating Wenonah as a Borough Commission in 1883. He served as the first president of

the commission and later as 1 of the commissioners. He also contributed significantly to bringing the following to Wenonah:

- Presbyterian church
- Sunday school
- Public school system
- Wenonah Inn
- Wenonah Military Academy
- Wenonah Water Works

Bailey died on December 10, 1916 at the age of 75.



Dr George Bailey House on S. Clinton Ave.

Dr. George Bailey's house, which was one of the first constructed in Wenonah, still stands at 1 S. Clinton Ave.

Founding Father: Edward Lincoln Farr



Edward Lincoln Farr
(1861-1924)

Edward Lincoln Farr was born on October 25, 1861 in Manchester, ME. He moved to Wenonah in 1875. Farr's ancestors in Maine bought old clipper ship sails, treated them with resins and pigments, and then sold the product for use as floor and roof coverings. The material was commonly known as oilcloth. In 1875, the family purchased a factory in Camden, NJ, and as Farr & Bailey, produced and sold oilcloth and eventually, linoleum. Upon the

death of his father, Edward Lincoln Farr took over as president.

In addition to the business, Farr was a bank president and board chairman of Cooper Hospital, which he helped found and develop in honor of his first wife. A philanthropist, he shared his fortune with those in financial need and assisted with an orphanage.

In 1897, Farr completed his house in Wenonah on the southeast corner of Mantua and Princeton Aves., and expanded it in 1910 to

accommodate one of the town's largest families (11 children). He named the house "Littlegrange."

Locally, Farr served as clerk of the Wenonah Board of Education for 25 years and as president of the Wenonah Free Public Library. He built and donated the library building at Mantua and Clinton Aves. in his mother's honor. He was also instrumental in achieving borough status for the Wenonah, thereby, separating it from Deptford Township.

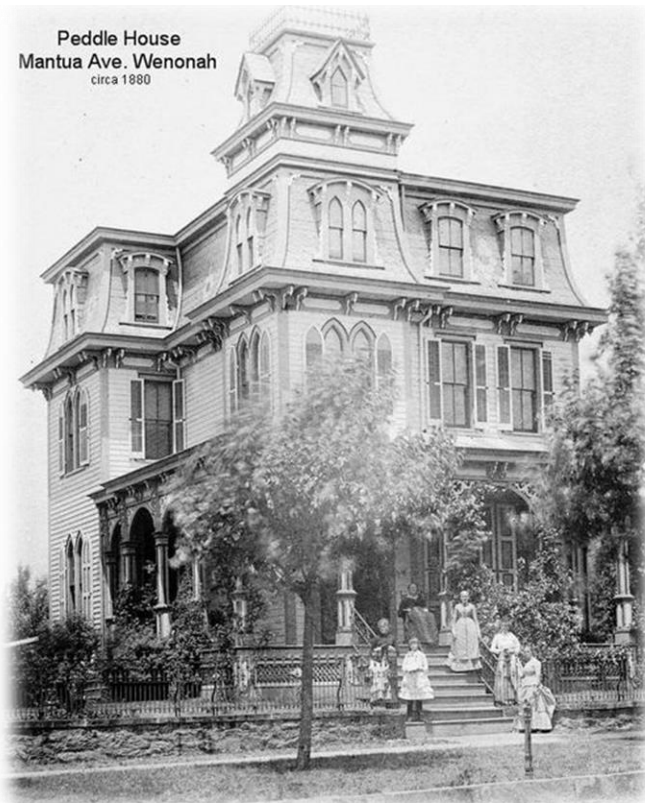
Farr died on August 31, 1924 at the age of 62.



Edward Lincoln Farr's Residence "Littlegrange" on E. Mantua Ave.

Edward Lincoln Farr's mansion at 300 E. Mantua Ave. still stands ... and is still known as "Littlegrange."

A Glimpse of Wenonah in the 19th Century

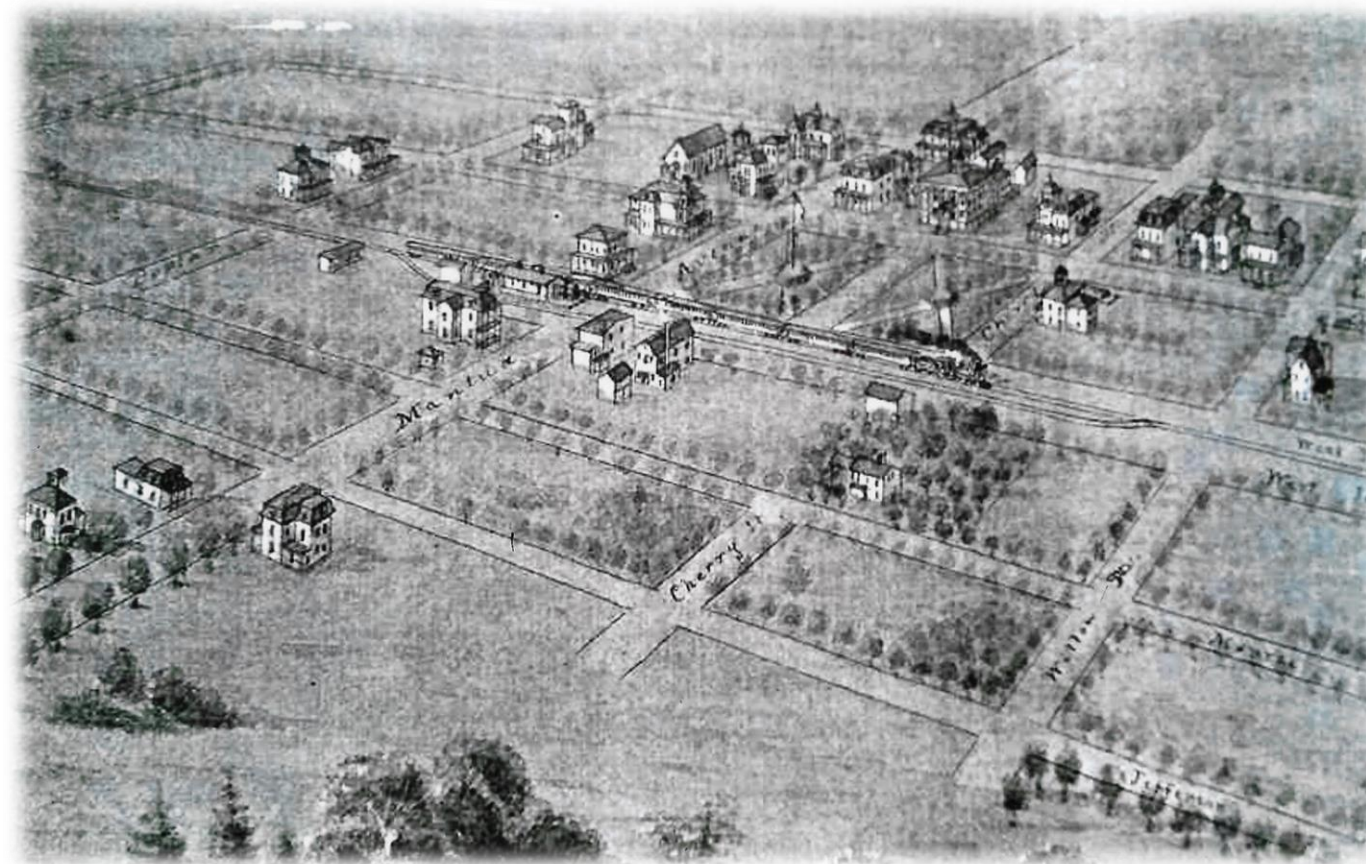
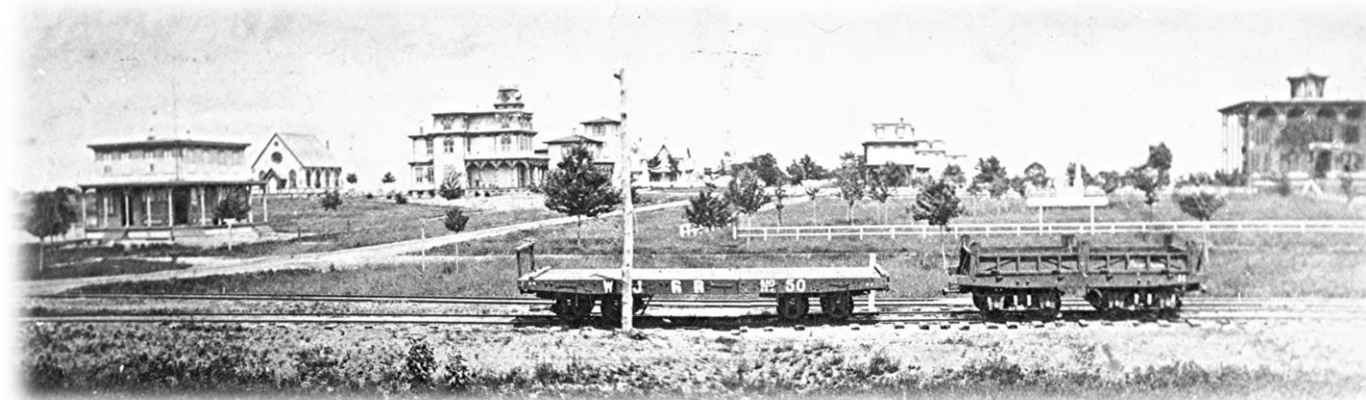


Peddle House
Mantua Ave. Wenonah
circa 1880

J. Frank Shull House on E. Mantua Ave.
(also known as the Peddle House)



Grocery Delivery



Wenonah in 1874



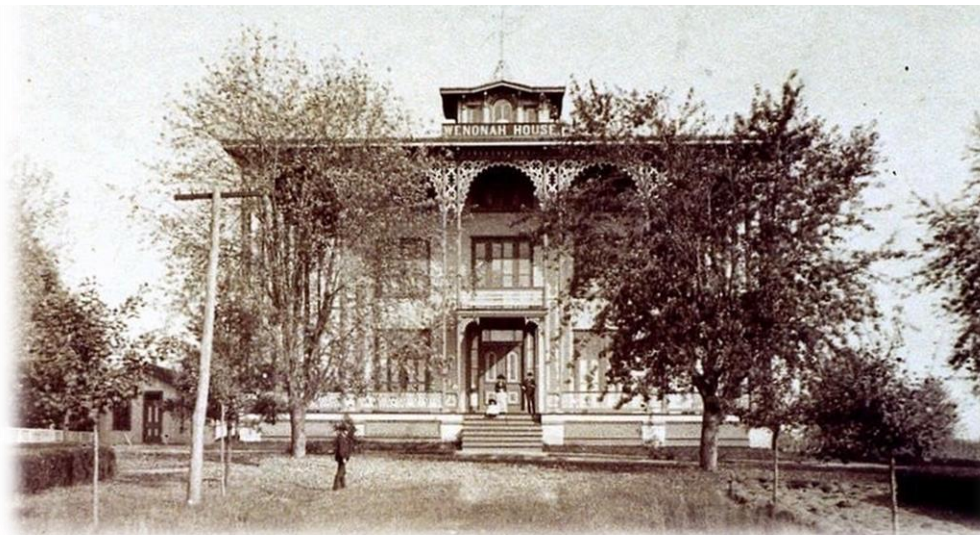
First Car in Town



School Day on N. Marion Ave.

Wenonah House and Start of a Favorite Tradition

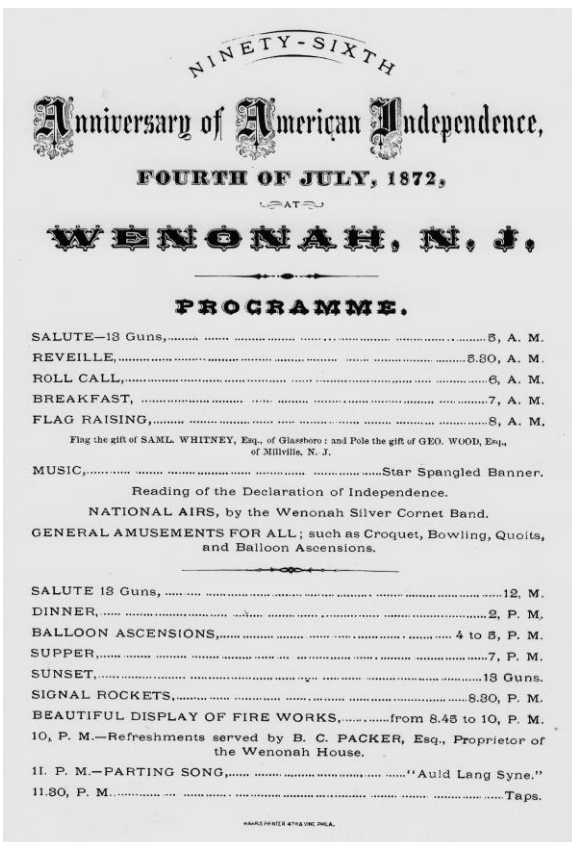
The Wenonah House, a majestic 3-story structure with 40 rooms, opened for guests in the spring of 1872. At the time it opened, there were only 10 houses in Wenonah. The hotel was located on S. Clinton Ave. across from the park. A boardwalk connected the hotel to the railroad station 2 blocks away.



Wenonah House

arrived by train from Philadelphia. Advertisements for the hotel often included a train schedule for travel between the city and Wenonah. A monthly train pass cost \$7.50. Rooms cost \$7-\$12 per week.

The hotel was completely full in its very first summer season.



Program of Wenonah's First Independence Day Celebration in 1872

The opening of the Wenonah House was just in time for the hotel to take a leading role in the town's first Independence Day celebration.

The program for July 4, 1872 shows the initial celebration lasted from 6:00 A.M. to 11:30 P.M. Dinner, supper, and evening snacks were served by the Wenonah House.

The Wenonah House was open only during the summer. Most guests staying at the Wenonah House

Although summer business at the Wenonah House thrived until 1887, it changed ownership multiple times, and finally closed before being sold to founding father Stephen Greene for \$5,000.

The Wenonah House was demolished and replaced by a larger, more modern hotel – the Wenonah Inn.

GO TO WENONAH

WENONAH HOUSE.

The New Town on West Jersey Rail Road
11 MILES FROM PHILADELPHIA,

Before making your arrangements for the summer or for the year. No healthier location in the vicinity of Philadelphia; fine rolling country and the best of water; Boating and Fishing.

After May 1st, trains will leave foot of Market Street,

PHILADELPHIA, FOR WENONAH, at	8.15 A. M.
" " " "	11.45 " "
" " " "	3.30 P. M.
" " " "	5.30 " "
" " " "	6.30 " "
WENONAH FOR PHILADELPHIA, at	7.15 A. M.
" " " "	8.45 " "
" " " "	1.45 P. M.
" " " "	4.44 " "
" " " "	10.20 " "

Monthly Commutation Tickets, only \$7.50. Family and Yearly Commutation Tickets for sale at low rates.

COTTAGES AND BUILDING LOTS FOR SALE.
AGENT ON THE PROPERTY.
WENONAH HOUSE ALWAYS OPEN.

Advertisement for Wenonah House

Wenonah Inn and a New Train Station

The Wenonah Inn Company, headed by founding father Stephen Greene, demolished the Wenonah House and built a new hotel on the same site across from the park. As part of its plan to replace the hotel, the company convinced the West Jersey Railroad to replace the Wenonah Station with a “handsome” new train station.

The new train station opened in 1893 on the opposite of the tracks from the original station. Constructed of wood and masonry, it was faced with Pompeian brick to blend with the surrounding town.

The Wenonah Inn opened in 1894. The new hotel accommodated 150 guests and included a barber shop, laundry, amusement hall, billiard room, and bowling alley.

The hotel became an instant success. On several occasions special trains from Philadelphia brought patrons for large dances and other affairs. There even was an opera. Business was described as “booming.”



Wenonah Inn

However, the boom was temporary. Trains, which previously transported guests to the hotel, were now transporting more of them to seashore points. When automobiles became more common, fewer visitors spent their summers at the Wenonah Inn because of the ease in traveling to more distant destinations.

The Wenonah Inn closed in 1899.



New Train Station

The original train station was moved to West Ave. in 1893 where it served various uses, including a post office, blacksmith shop and bakery. It is now a private residence. The new train station was abandoned after World War II. Purchased by the town in 1973 and restored by Wenonah volunteers, it is now the Jack C. Sheppard, Sr. Community Center.

Our First Schools and Churches

Schools



First School Building on N. Marion Ave.

At first, children from Wenonah attended school in a variety of locations – boarding schools in Philadelphia, a school in Mantua, the Howard Building on W. Mantua Ave., and the dining room of the Wenonah House. In 1879, a 2-story school was built on N. Marion Ave. Fifty-five children attended in the first year. The school was used for 15 years.

The growing number of children required a larger school. A new school, constructed of stone, opened in September 1894 on N. Clinton Ave.



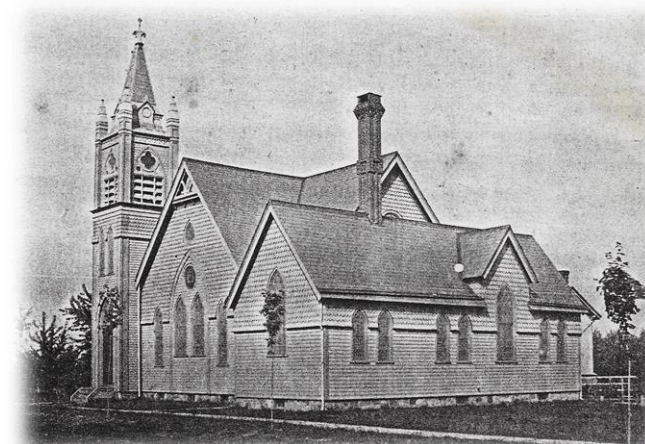
Stone School Building on N. Clinton Ave.

Churches



First Presbyterian Church and Sunday School Annex on N. Clinton Ave.

Early worship services were held in the train station. Members of the First Presbyterian Church of Wenonah organized and built a chapel on N. Clinton Ave. in 1873. An adjacent Sunday school annex was added in 1883. Initial church membership was 18. Ten years later there were 67 members with a Sunday school class of 150. Methodists worshipped together with the Presbyterians for 9 years until the Wenonah Methodist Episcopal Church opened on the northeast corner of Clinton Ave. and Willow St. in 1885.



Methodist Episcopal Church on S. Clinton Ave.

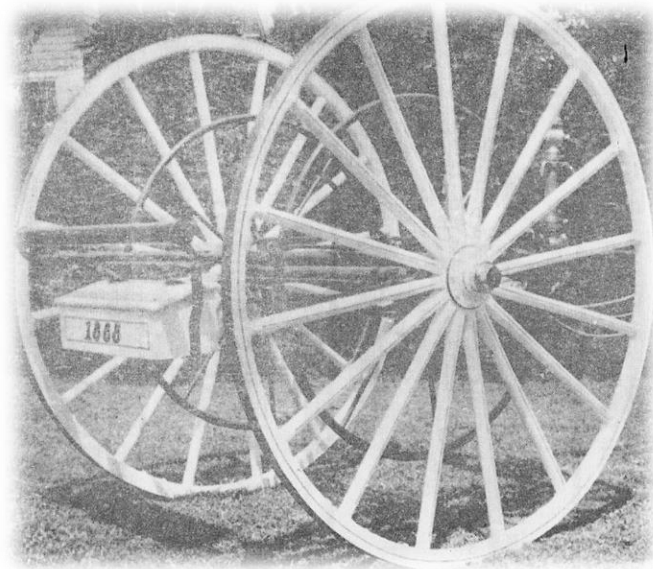
The structures used for our schools and churches in the 19th century still remain. The original school building is now a private residence at 6 N. Marion Ave., as is the First Presbyterian Church at 5 N. Clinton Ave. The stone school building remains part of Wenonah Elementary School on N. Clinton Ave. The Presbyterian Sunday school annex was moved to W. Mantua Ave. and became our town's first public library. It is now 8 West Yoga. The United Methodist Church closed in 2019 after 135 years and is expected to re-open soon as another denomination.

Fire and Police Departments Are Born

Fire Department

In its early years, Wenonah relied on a bucket brigade and assistance from as far away as Camden to help extinguish fires. Fire-fighting items included 22 buckets and 2 ladders stored in the cellar of the school building on N. Marion Ave.

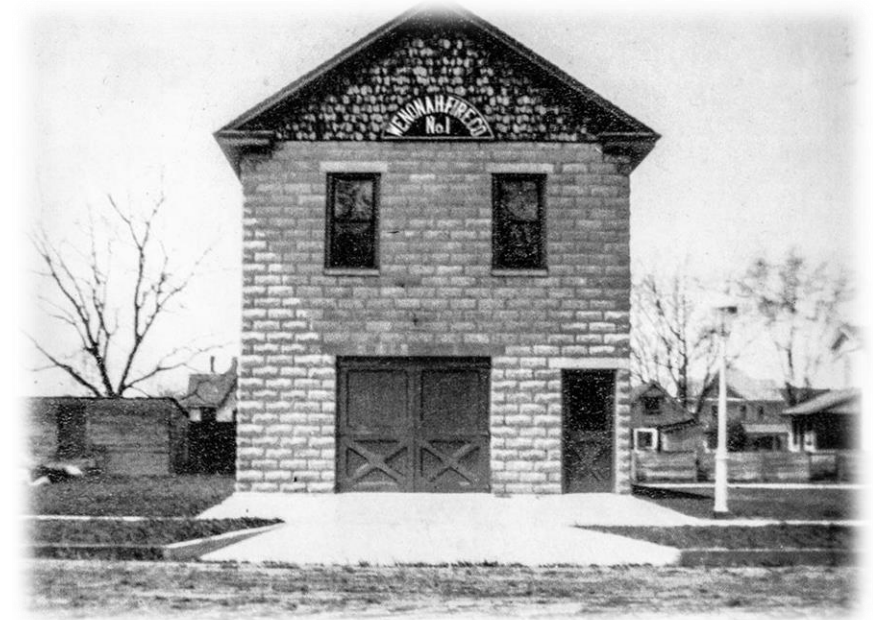
The town recognized that it should have its own fire equipment after a barn at the Wenonah House caught fire. Thus, the Wenonah Fire Company was organized in 1888. The town's new fire-fighting equipment consisted of a wooden cart called "Mareshanks" with 45-50 feet of hose.



Wooden Hose Cart

Alarms were sounded by striking a suspended locomotive wheel rim with a sledge hammer. At one time, the church bell at the Methodist Episcopal Church was the town's fire alarm, so each fireman carried a key to the church.

A fire house was built in 1909 on S. West Ave. at a cost of about \$1,600. The builder was Daniel W. Brown, who was a prolific builder of homes in Wenonah and happened to be president of the fire company at the time.



Wenonah Firehouse (1909)

The town purchased its first fire truck in 1910 – a horse-drawn hook and ladder vehicle. Its cost was \$400.

Police Department

The town hired M. Hayes Perry as its first policeman 1891. His salary was \$12 for the year. The hiring appears to have been precipitated by the need to enforce an ordinance prohibiting stray chickens. Another early enforcement issue concerned dogs running loose without muzzles.

The town jail was in a barn near the corner of Mantua and East Aves.

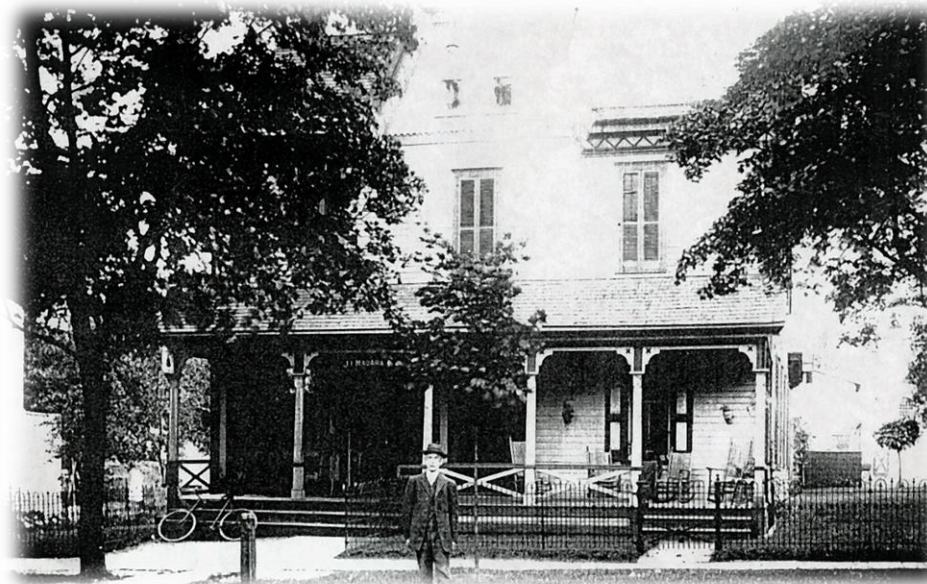
Clark's Store: "Honest Goods at Honest Prices"

In 1884, Lavander Bateman constructed a building on the north side of E. Mantua Ave. across from the park. The building was a general grocery store until it was sold to Richard J. Clark in 1888.

Clark expanded the store to include dry and fancy goods, notions, furnishings, boots, hats, and other items shown in the photo of the store's interior. (The gentleman in the photo is Richard Clark. His son Herbert Clark, who was born in the house, is in the baby carriage.) Advertisements for Clark's Store boasted that the store sold "honest goods at honest prices."

At one time, the store housed the office for a newly formed telephone company to serve the 30 telephones in Wenonah.

Clark's Store served the residents of Wenonah into the 20th century. It remained



Clark's Store on E. Mantua Ave.



Interior of Clark's Store

a general store under different owners until 1925 when it was sold to Bill Seiders and Milton Webb. The new owners called their store "The Little Hardware Store Around the Corner." Merchandise included sporting goods, tools, hardware, cutlery, paints and building materials. The store closed in 1937 because of the Great Depression.

The once Clark's Store still stands at 3 E. Mantua Ave. When the economy improved after the depression, the building re-opened and served Wenonah in many different ways, including as a grocery store, hobby shop, music studio, coffee shop, luncheonette, and hair salon. The building is now the home of Wenonah Nails Spa.

Two More Early Business Buildings in Our Town

Benjamin Packer Store

The Benjamin Packer Store was the first store in Wenonah. The store was located on the southwest corner of Mantua and West Aves. The photo shows the store around 1872. The roads are dirt and lined with short posts. The posts are hitching posts used for tying up horses while shopping.



Benjamin Packer Store at Mantua and West Aves.

The Benjamin Packer Store was razed a long time ago. Multiple businesses now occupy another building at the corner site.

Howard-Wentzell Building

In 1873, Ransom Howard built a 3-story building on W. Mantua Ave. The first floor was for a restaurant, the second floor for a school, and the third floor for public purposes.



Howard-Wentzell Building on W. Mantua Ave.

The Howard Building briefly was used as a school until our town's first school building was completed on N. Marion Ave. in 1879. The third floor was used by a newly organized YMCA chapter from 1877-1916.

In 1910, Walter and Elizabeth Wentzell opened a store on the first floor. They advertised selling vegetables, fruits, pickles, fruitcakes, ice cream, and oysters. In 1913, the Wentzells added an ice cream pavilion next to the building – the first ice cream parlor in South Jersey.

The Howard-Wentzell Building still stands and is now a duplex at 7 and 9 W. Mantua Ave.

The End

This concludes the story walk. The Wenonah Historical Society hopes you have enjoyed reading about the early years of our Wenonah – the “new suburban town.”

Coming in May ... “The Wenonah Military Academy”

Did you know that Wenonah was the home of a prestigious military academy in the first half of the 20th century? Many credit the military academy for putting Wenonah on the map and helping the town survive the Great Depression that devastated so many other communities.

