

Newsletter

Volume 7 Issue 4 April 2009

APRIL MEETING TENTATIVELY
SCHEDULED AT THE
TRAIN STATION

Dear Members,

Due to the renovation of the train station, we are tentatively planning to have our April 10 meeting there. It does not appear the contractor's work will prevent our use of the building for April. However, if there are any last minute changes, a note will be posted on the door of the train station and we will have our meeting at the Municipal Building.

Our May meeting will definitely be at the Municipal Building. And we will be having our year end picnic on June 12 at the Wenonah Lake.

Clean Communities Day will be May 2nd. If ten volunteers participate, we will qualify for the \$500 that is donated to our Society. If anyone is interested, please let me know.

The speaker for our April meeting is Stephanie Berenato. She will be discussing the program for the Founders' Day event on Saturday, April 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with a rain date of Sunday, April 19. The theme of the event is "A Step Back in Time: A Celebration of Wenonah's Train Station." There will be a story time about trains for children, a presentation by Jack Sheppard, Sr., on the Trains and Origins of Wenonah, crafts for the children, model train displays of the Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore

Line, which ran through Wenonah, train memorabilia, and live music. At our meeting, we will play the trivia contest that the children at Wenonah Elementary are currently doing. Prizes will be given for the most correct answers at our meeting. HINT: Read the new book about Wenonah's history by Marjorie Lentz. All answers are found in her book which can be purchased at the Wenonah Library.

Brenda Birkland

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 (Train Station)
except June, July and August

WENONAH ADVANCE, THE FIRST NEWSPAPER OF WENONAH

Are any of you acquainted with Lester Shoemaker of Mullica Hill? He has several fragments of the Wenonah Advance newspaper, the first newspaper of Wenonah. They contain beautiful illustrations of Wenonah and points of interest in our area. I have contacted him and he is searching among his collections for the newspapers. If any of you know him, perhaps you could encourage him in his search. Please contact me if

you can help 415-0985 or
sbbirkland@verizon.net.

DO YOU HAVE THE HISTORY OF
WENONAH BY WILLIAM
CATTELL?

William C. Cattell was a prominent citizen of Wenonah and a surveyor-engineer. His home was built in 1902 at 200 West Mantua Avenue. His map of Wenonah is our earliest complete map. He also wrote a history of Wenonah with an account of lifestyles of that period. We are not sure what form the history is in, perhaps it is only a handwritten account, perhaps it is in book or pamphlet form. Jean Ehlers referred to his written history in the Historic House Register book. Howard Hendrickson also quoted from Mr. Cattell's written history in his article entitled "History of Wenonah." Sadly, we are unable to locate his written history and are wondering if you may possess it in your collection? We would love to have a copy for our museum and membership use. It may be useful for you to know that Jean Ehlers' maternal grandmother was a Cattell.

DO YOU HAVE A HISTORIC
PLAQUE AND AN OLD PHOTO OF
YOUR HOUSE?

Frank Eggert is making a display for homes with historic plaques. The display will include the plaque, an old, original photo of the home and a current photo. If you have an old photo, please contact Frank at 468-6465. He will make a copy and return it to you.

INTERVIEW WITH MARJORIE LENTZ ABOUT HER NEW BOOK "WENONAH"
AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT THE WENONAH PUBLIC LIBRARY AND WHS MEETINGS

Why did you originally decide to write a book on Wenonah's history in 1976?

In planning for the Centennial celebration of our town, a committee realized there was no written history of Wenonah. I was part of that committee and I volunteered to write the book.

How did you write the first book?

I took two months off from work and totally dedicated myself to the task. Everyday, I would go to the Woodbury Courthouse and I read 100 years of the Constitution, the oldest newspaper available for our area. I brought my typewriter along everyday and I catalogued on index cards every article that had anything to do with Wenonah. I also used interviews with residents who had lived in Wenonah for many years, letters, diaries, minutes from innumerable organizations, and private conversations as source material for my book.

How did you write the second book?

First, I reread all the index cards in one lump sitting to get an overall picture of Wenonah's history. It would have been much easier to write a book with chapters labeled "The History of the Wenonah Fire Company" or the "History of the Wenonah Military Academy." But I wanted to write a book that described the history of Wenonah as it evolved so you could feel what it would be like to live in a particular period.

Second, I used new source materials such as letters, diaries etc. so the second book contains new information that was not in the first book. Also, I went back and corrected any errors that were found in the first book.

As for both the first and second book, I made sure I included little details, ones that are not necessarily of historic importance but ones that give you a feel for what it was like to live in a

period of time. For instance, Jennie Fox told me a story that when she was growing up in town, the children would follow the ice wagon around town so they could catch slivers of ice when the ice man was cutting it. There's another funny story about the boys removing the burs from the wagons in front of the Methodist church. These stories tell you what the children were doing at different periods of time.

I understand Jack Sheppard, Sr. helped you with the second book. How did you work together?

Really, the second book would not have been possible without Jack's help. He gave advice, used his computer skills and provided written material for the book, photos, and emphasized the importance of accuracy. He also wrote the afterword of the book which documents more recent history of our town.

What was one of your greatest challenges in writing the book?

Because it is a history book, it was difficult to sometimes determine the accuracy of stories, even those found in newspaper articles. Sifting through stories and written material to determine their accuracy led me down some interesting investigative paths. For instance, an oral history existed that claimed the mansion torn down by Mr. Farr where he built the Wenonah Public Library was a replica of the Hollybush mansion in Glassboro. But upon further investigation, including using the only known photograph of the mansion, which is an aerial shot, revealed they were not exact replicas, not even close. I also visited the Hollybush mansion and had lunch with the President's wife to familiarize myself with its layout.

When you were conducting research for your books, did you discover anything that surprised you?

All the prominent men of Wenonah, Synnott, Farr, Comey, Greene, and Bailey were very religious and integral to the churches here in Wenonah. I read once that Mr. Comey had a Bible class of 70 people in his boat house. George Bailey was internationally known for his Sunday School Association work. Their dedication to their faith was inspiring to me.

I also thought it was interesting how even though many of these men were from Philadelphia and quite wealthy, they seemed to happily comingle with the farmers and locals who also lived in this area. George Bailey stated “we are all one happy family.” I find that remarkable.

If you could go back in time, what period of Wenonah’s history would you like to live in?

I would like to live during the period of the Wenonah Military Academy. There was so much activity in town during this time period. There were drills and parades, athletic events and dances, concerts and lectures.

What one message from your book would you like to convey to the people of Wenonah, both young and old?

The message I would like to convey is contained in my foreword. There are so many people in this town and we all have talents and skills to share for the good of our community. The original purpose of the written history, found among almost discarded papers, states it clearly “The purpose would be to share some of the enthusiasm, the love of the natural resources, the wisdom and the cultural background of the early fathers (and mothers) who dreamed of the kind of town they would want to live in themselves.”

This concludes my interview with Marjorie Lentz. If you have ideas for future newsletters, any old newspaper clippings or photos that you believe would be of interest to our membership, I would welcome your ideas. Please contact me at sbbirkland@verizon.net or 415-0985. You may also contact us at WHS, PO Box 32, Wenonah, NJ 08090.

Brenda Birkland

DID YOU KNOW:

The grist mill at Wenonah Lake was started by Abraham Dilks before the Revolutionary War.

Stephen Greene, owner of the Wenonah Inn, had a golf course laid out extending from the present Cedar Avenue ball field to the Comey Lake area in 1900.

The first improvements to the streets of Wenonah were laying down cinders from the West Jersey Railroad and oyster shells brought in from Port Norris.

The original street plan for Wenonah was created by William Fredrick Allen, Chief Engineer of the West Jersey Railroad, and father of Standard Time.

Mantua Avenue was a gravel street until 1925.

The street lights in Wenonah were gas until the 1920s.

There were 14 veterans of the Civil War living in Wenonah at the turn of the century.

Compiled by Milton Webb, October 30, 1997

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Stamp
Here

PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2009

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
