

Wenonah Historical Society Newsletter

Next Meeting at 7:30 P.M.

Friday, April 10, 2015
Volume 13, Issue 3, April 2015



*Woodbury High School, circa 1916-17 after the second fire
Courtesy of Gloucester County Historical Society*

As the school year was winding down on Sunday evening, April 25, 1915, boys standing on the corner of Newton Ave. and Broad Street saw flames coming from the southern corner of the five-year old Woodbury High School building. One ran to the firehouse on Delaware Street to sound the alarm. Meanwhile two passers-by began fighting the flames with a stream of water using a line of hose in the school building.

Firemen responded promptly but it was several minutes before steam could be gotten from the steamer. Streams of water were directed to the third story corner of the school. Not much progress was being made due to a sudden change in the wind and it was feared that the entire building would soon be engulfed. Flames were being fed by an easterly wind blowing through the loft under the building's roof. A decision was made to cut through the Assembly Room wall and into the west end of the loft to fight the advancing flames. The fire was contained after assistance was given by Gloucester City firefighters who climbed up a ladder to the front dormer windows and pushed a powerful stream of water from their auto engine into the very heart of the fire.

Meanwhile, school officials, high school students and others went through the building removing school records and furniture. Two fireproof doors on either side of the burning rooms prevented flames from spreading into hallways and stairwells.

The fire damage was confined to the chemistry room and freshman rooms on the third floor. One classroom on the second floor was damaged when the ceiling collapsed allowing wreckage from the floor above to enter the classroom below. The front part of the school sustained heavy water damage.

Early on Monday morning, the Board of Education held a meeting. They appointed a force of men to clean out the water and debris and selected the school principal and secretary to appraise the lost furniture. Insurance on the building was \$75,000 which was sufficient so that the city would not sustain a monetary loss. Boilers were started to blow warm air through the building to aid in drying. A temporary roof was installed over the slate shingles. The expensive electric clock system which ran to all parts of the building was no longer functioning. The ventilation system would need to be renewed and the

WHS OFFICERS

President	Charles Horan
Vice President	Paul Lader
Secretary	Vicki McCall
Treasurer	Carol Wiltsee
Trustee	Scott Barnes
Trustee	Louis McCall

**Meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of each month
(except June, July and August)
at the Train Station Community Center**

electrical wiring had short circuited. The maple flooring throughout the damaged section would have to be replaced.

There were several theories about the cause of the fire which was believed to have originated in the chemistry room. The warm temperature of the day combined with chemicals in the room exposed to direct sunlight from a skylight could have started the blaze. Other theories included faulty electrical wiring and spontaneous combustion. Arson was mentioned but there was no evidence to support it.

After inspection by the Board of Education, it was decided that school would resume on Wednesday in the undamaged section of the building. Those students who had occupied the damaged freshman classrooms were sent to the existing Centre Street school on the northeast corner of E. Centre and S. Broad Streets. Students were assigned to "split sessions" with the first session meeting 8:30am to 12:30pm and the second session from 1:00pm to 5:00pm.

This fire was the second one that had occurred at the high school. The William Milligan High School, the first high school on the site, was built in 1909 and totally destroyed by fire on December 19, 1910. Previous to 1909, high school students attended classes at the Centre Street school and graduating classes were very small.

Over the next fifty years, high school graduation became more commonplace. The well-regarded Woodbury High School consisted of a large student body from the communities of Woodbury, Woodbury Heights, Wenonah, National Park, Westville West Deptford and Deptford. In the mid-1960s, Gateway Regional, Deptford and West Deptford High Schools were built and Woodbury High became a hometown school.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Charles Horan

Although Spring has sprung the nice weather is reluctant and behaving in a pessimistic fashion. I, on the other hand, am being optimistic. So much so that I've dragged the patio furniture from the basement to our soon to be temperate back yard.

Our new slate of WHS officers is listed in this newsletter. Many thanks to Scott Barnes for coming on board as a WHS Trustee. Thanks also to Betty MacLeod for her many years serving in the Trustee position. Recognition is also in order for all executive officers who take time from their busy schedules to serve our fine organization. I would be remiss if I didn't also give kudos to Larry Smith who heads up the WHS Museum as well as (along with Bob Thomas) our Facebook and website. Thanks to all.

Vice President (and Wenonah Councilman) Paul Lader will not only conduct the business meeting this Friday, April 10th, but give the presentation as well!! Most of us know he is a dedicated Civil War historian and re-enactor. The title of his program is:

***The Civil War: Oddities, the Strange,
the Unusual and the Useless.***

NOTE: The April meeting will be the last business meeting and presentation of the 2014-15 season. In May we will have our annual WHS Picnic.



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WENONAH

A Century Ago

Mr. and Mrs. Norman Schoch of Wilmington, Delaware, formerly of our Borough, are receiving congratulations on the birth of a daughter.

Miss Elinor Stout has left the Bucknell College and will enter Swarthmore.

The Pitman Glee Club delighted the audience at the YMCA Hall on Saturday evening with their singing, which was interspersed with moving pictures.

Harry B. Darlington and family have moved from Mantua to the house on So. Lincoln Ave. formerly occupied by Mr. Albert Porter.

The Boy Scouts will give their annual entertainment. Don't forget the date and help the boys out.

The community chorus will render Dudley Buck's "Story of the Cross" in the Presbyterian Church this evening.

The Camp Fire Girls are preparing for "the Old Maids Convention" which they will give soon.

Mr. and Mrs. William Leeds of Leeds Point spent the week end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Holt.

Don't forget the Easter supper to be given by the Ladies Aid of the ME Church on Monday, April 5th from 5 to 8 in the recreation room of the church. Tickets 25 cents.

Earl E. Edliher, a sophomore in the Wharton School, and George N. Miller, Class of 1917 Medical, both students of the U of P, spoke in the YMCA Hall on Sunday afternoon and at the community service in the ME Church in the evening.

Mr. Ellison Coles quietly celebrated his 82nd birthday Friday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Harris Coles, who together with his other children and grandchildren, gave a dinner in honor of the event.

The Communion service in the Presbyterian Church on Sunday morning was largely attended. Fourteen new members were received, which is the largest number that has ever been received at any one service.

The stork left a daughter at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Ogden (nee Stella Prickett) at Pitman last week. Mr. and Mrs. Ogden are both former residents of our borough.

Mrs. Josephene Miller has returned from her year's delightful and wonderful trip to the Congo States, Africa, where she had been visiting her daughter and husband, Rev. and Mrs. Springer, who are missionaries there.

Mr. Abram McVaugh and family have moved from Willow Street to Mantua Ave. with Mr. Wm. Fleming.

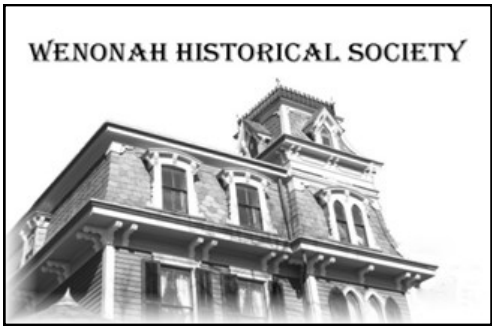
Mr. Ogden has moved into his newly furnished home on N. Jefferson Avenue.

Mrs. George O. Swartz is entertaining Miss Florence Leech of Montana who is working as Field Organizer for the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association. Miss Leech is a voter in the Equal Suffrage state of Montana and is spending this week in Gloucester County where she will speak in various towns.

The Wenonah Military Academy nine lost the first game of the season on Wednesday when the Penn Freshmen won out in a close game by the score of 3 to 2.

It is rumored that a Dr. Shaffer has moved into Mr. Howard Urian's new house on the Glassboro Road and will open an office.

Mr. Oliver T. Justice and family of Woodbury have moved into Mr. Harry Paris' house.



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PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2014

Membership Benefits

- MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
- MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH INTERESTING PROGRAMS
- ACCESS TO HISTORICAL ARCHIVES AND MEMORABILIA
- INFORMATION BY KNOWLEDGEABLE WENONAHIAN

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

RECEIVE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL: YES OR NO

AMOUNT PAID \$ CHECK _____ CASH _____

DUES: \$15.00 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR

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

WHS PO Box 32, WENONAH, NJ 08090