

WENONAH

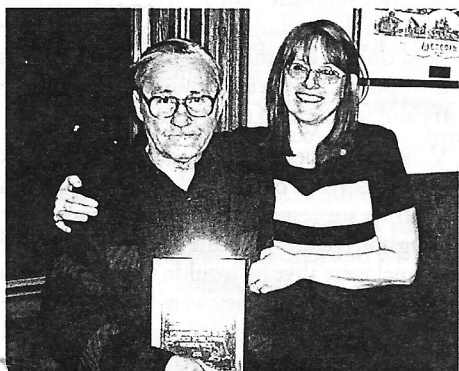
Historical Society Newsletter



August 2001
Published by the
Historical Society
of Wenonah, NJ

THOUGHTS ON THE PASSING OF MILTON H. WEBB, JR.

By Jack C. Sheppard, Sr.



Milton receiving the Society's Millenium Award from President Vicki McCall at the March meeting.

Since there are many people on the Wenonah Historical Society mailing list who are not from this area, a copy of the *Gloucester County Times* obituary for our friend Milton H. Webb, Jr., is enclosed.

Although the obituary is very much complete and factual, to some extent it fails to convey the full relationship that Milt had with his region and his community.

Although I was a classmate of Milt's sister Marjorie, Woodbury High Class of 1944, I didn't come to know Milt until Helen and I moved into Wenonah in the early 1950's and I was elected to Wenonah Borough Council.

Milt was extremely interested in the flora and fauna of Wenonah and encouraged Planning Board members George Eldredge, Nat White, and others to acquire parts of bordering woodlands using funds made available through the estate of Woodbury resident and naturalist Frank H. Stewart.

Once lands were acquired Milt was appointed to the Wenonah Woodlands Council, which at his urging became the Wenonah Environmental Commission. Milt was it's first chairman and a member for over twenty-five years.

Milt's knowledge of the origins and history of Wenonah was legendary. He spent countless hours in Wenonah and at the County Historical Society library researching and photocopying information related to Wenonah from the old newspaper records of the *Gloucester County Constitution*, *Democrat* and the *Woodbury Daily Times*.

Anyone researching Wenonah history or simply curious would stop by Milt's family home on South Marion Avenue and almost instantly Milt would produce one or more articles or photos on a particular point of interest.

My own personal relationship with Milt and his family was a great source of satisfaction to me. Many visits to Milt and his mother before her passing were very enjoyable as well as educational.

For those who haven't heard this story before, I was passing the house on my bike one day and saw Mrs. Webb, then in her eighties, on her hands and knees under the shrubs in front of the house. I stopped and asked if I could help her and that was my first experience with "Martha", the just acquired family kitten. Since that time Milton and Martha and I have spent many hours on Milt's porch, Milt and I talking about Wenonah and Martha attempting to gnaw through my shoe. Milt would just roll his eyes and tell me another tale about Martha's latest conquest, usually a chipmunk, squirrel or bird that Martha had dragged to, or into the house.

Milt's overwhelming interest in resisting change to the Wenonah he so fervently loved caused him to call me for discussion and advice many, many times.

He had spent a great many hours as part of the volunteers restoring the former train station and he hated to see it not being properly maintained or being altered in some way that was inconsistent with it's origins.

As development growth occurred in town he spent many hours perusing the plans and making constructive suggestions to the Planning Board and Borough Council.

He loved Wenonah absolutely and without concession.

I said at an ash scattering ceremony in the Wenonah woods that "heaven" is different things to different people and not necessarily just a wonderful place "up there". Some folks believe we can spend eternity in a place that was heaven to us while we were on earth. If this is possible then Milt is now a resident of Wenonah back at the turn of the previous century and will spend eternity roaming the streets of his favorite place in the universe, Wenonah.

We will all miss Milton H. Webb Jr. and I am sure I speak for all members of the Wenonah Historical Society in saying we extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to his family.

The Executive Board and membership would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all of those who have so graciously contributed money to the Wenonah Historical Society. Your thoughtful donations will continue to enable us to preserve and promote the wonderful history and priceless artifacts of our town through projects such as this newsletter, the Archiving and Preservation Committee, and future endeavors. Again...

Thank You!!!

President's Letter

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter. As most of you are aware, we lost a very dear member this summer. We are all deeply saddened by the loss of Milton H. Webb. We sent our condolences to his family and to his numerous friends. We will miss him terribly.

As we go forward into this new year, I hope you will take a moment to think about the amount of time and effort that Milton so freely gave to our Historical Society. There are not many places in this town that you can go and not be reminded of Milton. He touched so many of our hearts and it was his tireless efforts to keep this town true to its roots that have made Wenonah what it is today. In that spirit we must continue these efforts to keep the historical integrity of our town that Milton fought so hard to keep.

Take a close look around you ... at your own home and those surrounding it ... at the beautiful woods and nature trails that surround this town. Wenonah truly represents one of the few towns that can still boast a sense of community, a spirit of camaraderie, and a commitment to the town and its people. Let us never lose sight of that and let us renew our own promises to enrich this town.

In Milton's honor and in the honor of all our members who have passed that have shown such a commitment to this town (Jean Ehlers, Dorothy Fiege, and the many others) please, please, please volunteer your time and commit to continuing the efforts of those before us.

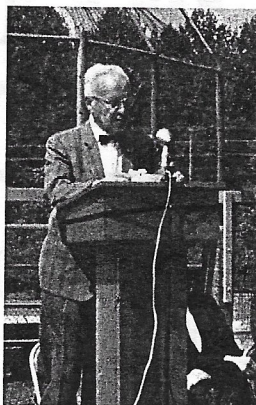
Join us at the annual Porch Party at Littlegrange on September 14, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend and hopefully you will come prepared to help us in our efforts to immortalize and honor this town.

As part of the evening's events, I would love it if you could bring a written story about how Milton Webb may have touched your life so that we can put his story forever in our archives as he put Wenonah forever in his heart.

-Vicki McCall, President

History of the Athletic Field

By W. George Gehring (July 4, 1969) [Edited for space considerations]



W. George Gehring giving this speech at Langston Field, 1969.

Langston Field was originally the Wenonah Military Academy Athletic Field. The Academy was located in the block bounded by Mantua Avenue, South Clinton, East Cherry, and South Marion Avenue. The stone wall in front of the home of a former teacher at the Academy, Captain David Knight, on South Clinton is the original wall of the Academy grounds and thereon is a plaque marking the site. Langston Field is where the cadets played football and baseball, held track meets and military maneuvers, and practiced horsemanship. It had an enclosed grandstand. The Academy was founded in 1905 and lasted until 1935. Old-timers will recall that a baseball pitcher by the name of Herb Pennock attended here and went on to become a star in the Major League, pitching winning ball for 23 years and making the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. Another famous graduate was State Senator Frank Farley.

After the Academy closed its doors in the famous depression of the 1930s, the Wenonah Athletic Association played ball there and many were the battles with Woodbury, Paulsboro, Pitman, and Glassboro. A few remaining residents of Wenonah performed on that team. In the 1940s and 50s, the Wenonah Boys' Club was organized by Bill Queale and myself. Our best pitcher was Gordon Scargle, who was signed by the St. Louis Cardinals.

In the early 1950s, the Lions Club International came to Wenonah and what a lucky day for us. One of the finest deeds they offered to do was to take on the responsibilities of the athletic field and the organization of the various teams. We now have an immaculate diamond, replete with well constructed backstop, dugouts, grandstand, a refreshment house with water and electricity, and also a basketball court. Three years ago [1966] the Lions Club sponsored the formation of the Wenonah Athletic Association which is now operating baseball under the capable guidance of many men and women of the Borough.

Now, let us go back 21 years and I'll acquaint you with a most unusual incident that took place in June of 1948. We were playing ball when a bulldozer came on the field and began digging a hole right through the cinder track in left field. We ran out and asked the man what was going on. He told us that the ball field had been purchased and was to be sold into building lots. Mrs. Samuel Langston heard of this and within a month's time convinced the new owner to sell her all but a half-acre in the outfield. She did this to save it for the girls and boys of Wenonah. A little over a year later she sold it to the Borough of Wenonah for a thousand dollars less than she paid for it. So it is now public property because of the generosity and foresight of this great woman.

When Bill Queale and I went around to thank her in 1948 on behalf of the Wenonah Boys Club, we suggested that the field be named the Langston Memorial Athletic Field. She said if Samuel were alive he wouldn't agree to it. This is the kind of people they were. I remember during the formation of the Wenonah Playground Association around 1940 that most of the large equipment was purchased by the Langstons.

On September 30, 1967, Mrs. Langston departed from this mortal life of nearly 87 years of fruitful living. Immediately we began a movement to perpetuate the memory of this great benefactor of Wenonah with a fitting memorial. The Lions Club was very happy to do this and now our dreams have come true.

Truly our community is enhanced as a nicer place to live by her deeds. This town has been blessed with a great spirit of patriotism and local pride and we aim to safeguard it by instilling such a spirit in our youth. They take over when we are gone. The finest example of such a spirit during my 40 years in Wenonah was accomplished in 1948 by your friend and mine, Jessica Wood Langston.



Letters to the Editor

Please see below right for where to send your letters. Thank you!

Dear Editor,

It has been a great pleasure to receive the Wenonah Historical News. My husband and I thoroughly enjoy reading the news that brings back a flood of memories.

We have lived in Florida for forty-one years this coming New Years' Day. I was forty years old when we arrived and my husband was forty-three, so you can imagine the expanse of time that has slipped by since living up North.

My family moved to Wenonah when I was two years old, and I can recall the day of arrival, Momma and Papa with their five children. Needless to say, we had a wonderful up-bringing in the small town of Wenonah. For my own experiences, I recall living in many different homes, with the exception of our one home on S. Monroe Ave. and Willow St. My parents built this and the one next door and we lived there until the homes were lost due to the great depression of those days. We moved to Woodbury for a short span of time, but soon returned to Wenonah and lived there until the day I was married and moved elsewhere only to return to Wenonah for approximately three or four more years with our two young children. After this, we had to leave my beloved town so that my husband could locate closer to his place of work.

During all the years of my absence from Wenonah, my memories of my home town dwelled on thoughts of my young years. There was never a lack of things to do, for in those days,

we had the wooded areas to play in, and very often, all of us kids when living on S. Monroe Ave., would have a great time climbing down the trunk of a big old tree on the Mantua Creek which was on S. Jefferson Ave, at the Cann's residence. At that time, there were other woods where we would pick Violets from the great expanse of tiny flowers peeping up at us near the swamps on the north side of Lincoln Ave. On the west side of the street, we used to cross the swamp area on logs. Of course, there was Warner's lake and all the activities there through out all the years I lived there, namely swimming, ice-skating and just walking around the lake. I still recall all my grammar School Days and my Sunday School activities at the Wenonah Presbyterian Church and all the youngsters we knew and played with. My memories are endless and of course, how well we remember the Millitary Academy and the performance of the Cadets on certain occasions in town. During my absence from my home town, I often thought of returning, but it was not to be. My thoughts and memories were quickly revived thru the Newsletters we now receive. My brother, Sylvanus Beucler's name is inscribed on the Veterans list in the park. I have no family left except our very own. Hank and I have two children, four grandchildren, and four greats. All are our hearts' delights and deep in filling joy. Now our home is in Jupiter, Florida, and we love it very much here.

Gods love and blessings,
Janet and Hank Picucci

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Archiving and Preservation Committee

Our committee is going strong. The *PastPerfect* software has been tested and thus far there have been no problems. It is very clear to us that this endeavor will take much more time than first expected. We have already located over 500 items and numerous collections. Our next step will be to produce the computerized database and photography for all members to take pride in and see our vast holdings. Now we have to think about ways of storing and displaying our artifacts.

Rocco F Doto · 415-1215
rockracc@aol.com

To Submit Your Committee's Report, Letters, or Articles to the WHS Newsletter

• **Provide a Disc**
to Curt Kapus (464-2485)
with your file saved as a
text or MS Word file

• **eMail Your File**
wenonahhistoricalnews@home.com

Your report or article must be
received three weeks before
our monthly meeting for
inclusion in the newsletter.

WENONAH

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM • 2001-2002

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

eMail Address _____

Amount Paid \$ _____ Check # _____ Enclosed Cash Enclosed

Please bring this form with your payment to any meeting or mail. Thank you!

RETURN TO WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY • P.O. Box 32 • WENONAH, NJ 08090-0032

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Monthly newsletter mailed to your home
- Monthly meetings with informative programs
- Access to various archives and memorabilia
- Network of knowledgeable historians
- Historical field trips

COST: \$10 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR

Annual Porch Party Meeting

Next Meeting will be held Friday, September 14th, 2001 • 7:00pm
Littlegrange • 300 East Mantua Avenue (The McCall Residence)



September's meeting will be our annual Porch Party at the McCalls' home. Please feel free to bring food or beverages to this opening of our "season." We look forward to seeing everyone at this always social and casual event.

Dues notice

Please note that yearly membership dues are due at the September Porch Party. Please accompany your payment of \$10 with the form on the inside of this newsletter. Thank you... your dues are what make everything possible for us!

How to Contact Us

Mail: WHS • P.O. Box 32 • Wenonah, NJ 08090-0032

E-mail: wenonahhistoricalnews@home.com

THE MISSION OF THE WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The objectives of this Society shall be:

1. To acquire and preserve historic documents, records, artifacts and memorabilia of the Borough of Wenonah.
2. To locate and acquire a suitable place for the storage and display of such materials.
3. To encourage the protection and preservation of historical landmarks and points of interest within the Borough of Wenonah.
4. To encourage historical and genealogical research, and publication of its results.
5. To encourage interest in history generally, and in Wenonah history in particular, among the youth of Wenonah.
6. To make all information and acquisitions of the Society available to the public.

Ralph + Rachel Knisell
100 W Mantua Ave
Wenonah, NJ 08090

WENONAH
Historical Society
Newsletter Committee
P.O. Box 32
Wenonah, NJ 08090-0032

