

Newsletter

Volume 6 Issue 2 February 2008

MESSAGE FROM
PRESIDENT LOU MCCALL

Dear Members;

Many thanks to new Wenonah resident Paul Lader for his outstanding presentation about the Civil War along with the local impacts and contributions thereto. We look forward to seeing (and hearing) a lot more of Paul and his family in the future!

This month's meeting will include a wonderful program by Linda Boyd who is going to do a presentation on all the etiquette of serving tea. She is a science teacher that has always had a love for tea but has furthered her love for tea into the whole idea of how tea is served, the china, the food, the type of tables used and of course the types of teas. Please be sure to attend!

Those of you attending our January business meeting will recall Betty Rose's comments for acknowledgement of support and our related discussion of the many ways the Gloucester County Historical Society has always assisted the Wenonah Historical Society, including loaning us many interesting artifacts which help keep our display case full, ever changing and always interesting. Accordingly, I just wanted to share some information with you about the Gloucester County Historical

Society and encourage you to lend them your support. Please be sure to stop by in at 17 Hunter Street in Woodbury to either visit their Library, the Museum, just make a contribution to, or attend one of their upcoming activities!

The Library of Gloucester County Historical Society (where Wenonah's own Barbara Price helps out) specializes in genealogy. They have scheduled the following upcoming genealogy workshops for you genealogy buffs!

WHS OFFICERS 2008

PRESIDENT	LOUIS MCCALL
VICE PRES.	BARBARA CAPELLI
SECRETARY	JO DOMINY
TREASURER	CAROL WILTSEE
TRUSTEE	BETTY MACLEOD
TRUSTEE	VICKI MCCALL

MEETINGS ARE HELD THE SECOND
FRIDAY OF THE MONTH AT THE
COMMUNITY CENTER EXCEPT
JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST

Friday, April 11, 2008, 7 pm-8 pm "Pursuing Your Ancestral Trail: Starting on the Right Path".

Learn the basic standards of good genealogical research. Do it right the first time!

Saturday, April 12, 2008, 9:00 am-10:00 am - Preponderance of Evidence vs. Genealogical Proof Standard - What is the Difference?

Reservations are required. Seating is limited. Please call 856-845-4771 to reserve:

Good researchers examine primary and secondary sources, direct and indirect evidence, original records and documents, including published and unpublished sources as well as records contradicting them. Then and only then have they met the Genealogical Proof Standard or have they?

Saturday, April 12, 2008. 10:20 am-11:20 am - Ten Research Shortcuts Used by Professional Genealogists

You may be amazed that their Library holdings include:

- Vertical files for hundreds of Delaware Valley families
- Over 2,200 microfilm reels of census, wills, deeds, newspapers, church and cemetery records
- Approximately 900 family genealogy volumes
- Over 300,000 vital statistics records

GCHS Library Hours:

Monday thru Friday, 1 - 4 pm

Tuesday evening 6 - 9:30 pm

First Saturday of each month
October thru June, 10 am - 4 pm

The last Sunday of each month,
2 - 5 pm

The Museum of the Gloucester County Historical Society is in the 18th century house that was the home of the Reverend Andrew Hunter, a tea burner and educator of the Revolutionary War era, James Lawrence of "Don't give up the ship!" fame in the War of 1812 and John S. Jessup, a judge and prominent citizen of the 19th century.

A gift shop is maintained in the Museum. Fine reproductions of South Jersey glass and unique items that reflect the collections are available.

Museum Hours:

Monday Wednesday and Friday, 1-4 pm

Last Sunday of each month, 2-5 pm

Admission Fees: Members free

Non-members and adults - \$4.00

Children ages 6-18 - \$1.00

Children under age 6 free

Please visit the Gloucester County Historical Society's website

<http://www.rootsweb.com/njgchs/-index.htm> for more information about their history, programs, contributions and how to join. Many thanks again to the Society for all its support!

The following are some excerpts from their listed history on their website:

In the December 10, 1902 issue of the Woodbury Constitution, it was reported that plans were discussed to form an historical

society in order to protect the Revolutionary War battlefield and Whitall mansion at Red Bank from impending sale. The Federal government intended to sell the tract at public auction. Those at the meeting announced that "the dues will be \$1 per year and it is requested that every person interested in the commendable work, which the Society proposes to take under its care, will not hesitate to come forward and give what assistance they can."

One month later, on January 12, 1903, the Gloucester County Historical Society took life at its first annual meeting. Officers were elected, the Constitution and By-Laws were unanimously approved and thirty-five members were proposed and elected to membership. The object of the newly formed Society was to "discover, procure, preserve and exhibit whatever may relate to the natural, civil, military, literary, educational and ecclesiastical history of Gloucester County, the State of New Jersey or the country, and to protect and preserve the historical landmarks and points of interest within the county."

From its very inception, the Society has been the recipient of many interesting and important gifts. In the early years, these gifts were often recorded in the local newspapers. One of the first so recorded was a "handsome picture of Big Cattle" donated by Mrs. Mary Bradway. The cattle were owned by Edward Tonkin and were carried around in specially made wagons to be viewed by

curious crowds. Named The Earl of Jersey and the Duke of Gloucester, one weighed 3,750 pounds and the other 3,800 pounds. In a society that was primarily agricultural, they were a source of pride. On February 9, 1838, Mr. Tonkin sold the cattle to a buyer from Washington, DC for \$3,500, an enormous sum of money for that time. The Society purchased and installed a cabinet in the corridor of the Court House to display such artifacts.

John Gill Whitall, our first president, held that office until he resigned in 1918. For Mr. Whitall, the Society's fight to retain the mansion and battlefield had special meaning. He had been born in the mansion on the grounds of the Red Bank Battlefield. James and Ann Whitall, who lived there during the Revolutionary War, had been his grandparents. Both are historically important in our county's early history. Following the Battle of Red Bank on October 21, 1777, the house was used as a hospital for wounded soldiers. Many of the Hessian casualties were buried on the grounds. The Battle was one of the most important battles of the Revolutionary War and an important American victory. The famous Jonas Cattell ran from Haddonfield to Red Bank to warn the Americans of the approach of the Redcoats.

On July 11, 1904, the Society held a meeting in the old Whitall mansion with a celebration following on the battlefield grounds. Every citizen of Gloucester County was invited.

Trolley cars carried the guests directly to the battlefield. Music was provided by Jennings' Third Regiment Band. Luncheon was served by the Ladies' Committee. Tours of the rifle pits, battle monument and house were given.

In a speech later that year when the Society held a meeting at the battlefield, Judge John Boyd Avis said, "All honor to the Gloucester County Historical Society which has made these things possible; which by its example has inspired all those who have so gladly and willingly taken upon themselves the work of making this historic field a public park, where all may come and enjoy the prospect, the scenery and God's free air and be filled with the spirit of those who fought on this ground, guaranteeing the perpetuation of those ideals for which the Colonists fought as declared in the Declaration of Independence.

June 21, 1906 promised to be "the biggest day ever seen in South Jersey" according to the Woodbury Constitution of June 6. The new monument at Red Bank was to be unveiled to the public. Harry Lewis, the official decorator for the White House, was engaged to decorate the battlefield. Eighty trolley cars on the Camden, Gloucester and Woodbury trolley road and twenty motor cars on the branch line from Washington Park to National Park were in service. The Committee arranged for William J. Thompson to provide a fleet of eight steamers from the South and Arch Street wharves in Philadelphia to the Sanitarium at

Red Bank, about an eight minute walk to the battlefield. The grounds of the National Park Amusement Company were leased and numerous caterers were secured to feed the crowds. Water barrels containing several tons of ice were placed about the battlefield. Hitching grounds and feed for horses was arranged along the Hessian Road leading to the battlefield. In Woodbury and along the parade route on the Hessian Road, businesses and residents were asked to decorate. Businesses were closed. A re-enactment of the battle was performed. Miss Matilda Whitall unfurled the United States flag donated by the Society, with hundreds of smaller flags dropping from its folds as it was raised. Mr. William Snowden of Alexandria, Virginia, presented the Society with a portrait of Ann Cooper Whitall, the heroine of Red Bank.

Before the year was over, the officers and members of the Society embarked on another preservation effort. The Woodbury Burying Ground, on the south side of Woodbury Creek in Thorofare, was in deplorable condition due to a combination of neglect and vandalism. The cemetery was thought to be the first and earliest burial plot in Gloucester County. Names of our earliest and most prominent families were inscribed on the stones: Thackeray, Cooper, Ladd, Hugg, Matlock, Whitall, Howell, Packer, Hillman, Shivers and of course, Wood.

In those early years, there was much interest in the British frigate

Augusta that sank during the Battle of Red Bank. Trustee Dr. Wallace McGeorge wrote a paper concerning the Augusta in 1905. In 1907, the Society proposed to the Board of Freeholders that they could mount the cannon found during the excavation of the battlefield in a carriage made from timbers from the Augusta and display it on the Court House Lawn. (In 1911, this cannon was placed near the monument at Red Bank.) In 1907, there was again discussion among the members of the Board of Trustees concerning preservation of the remnants of the Augusta. It was decided not to pursue the matter. In July 1909, it was reported in the Woodbury Constitution that Society Librarian Miss Ellen L. Matlock had managed to have the New Jersey in the DAR building at Washington furnished with "beautifully wrought wood" from the Augusta. This was one way of preserving the history of the Battle of Red Bank and Gloucester County. The Society did not yet have a permanent home and met in a variety of places. Some of those early meeting places were the Gloucester County Court House, the Woodbury Real Estate Mutual Loan Association, the Whitall House, the Indian King Tavern at Haddonfield, Woodbury Country Club and the Friends Meeting House at Mickleton, to name a few. Pilgrimages were made to historical landmarks such as Princeton, Brandywine Gettysburg and Valley Forge, often attracting two hundred or more guests. Carriages or special railroad cars

were sometimes engaged to accommodate the large number of guests. Other historical societies or patriotic organizations such as the DAR or SAR would sometimes host or join the Society for a meeting. Members were invited to read papers of historical interest. Sometimes several, each covering a different topic, would be read during one meeting. By 1907, these early speeches were being preserved for the Society's archives.

At the annual meeting of 1911, President Whitall announced that \$100 has been subscribed to care for the old burial ground. Later that year, Dr. J. G. Halsey of Swedesboro, collected donations for the purpose of placing a monument made of Barre granite on a solid concrete base inscribed, "Wood Burying Ground, Henry Wood who first settled Woodbury was buried here in 1806. It was used as a burial place by the Indians before that time. Gloucester County Historical Society." On Saturday, June 27, 1912, over one hundred members of the Society met at the old burying ground to participate in the unveiling of the monument. President Whitall urged those present to consider further donations to install a wall to keep the tide from washing away the ground and for some type of protection from squatters.

At the annual meeting in January 1916, Frank H. Stewart was elected to fill a vacancy on the Board of Trustees. This was the beginning of a new era for the

Gloucester County Historical Society. During that year, Stewart had three pamphlets he had written, printed at his own expense, and then sold for fifty cents each with the proceeds going to the Society. He advocated the inauguration of a publications fund. A Publications Committee was formed.

In January 1918, John G. Whitall stepped down as president after serving in that capacity for fifteen years. Frank H. Stewart was elected to that office. Mr. Stewart immediately announced a plan to liquidate the mortgage on the Society building and formed a committee to proceed with his plan. President Stewart explained that the plan was to sell ten memorial memberships at \$100 each and life memberships at \$25 each. The membership drive was a huge success. In the Gloucester County Democrat of March 14, 1918, it was reported, "The two thousand dollars for the Gloucester County Historical Society has been raised and on Monday evening, March 25 at 8: pm at the Courthouse, an open meeting of the Society will be held to which all are invited with their friends to see the mortgage burned."

In early 1919, following the end of the First World War, the Society formed a Scrapbook Committee. This committee solicited information from veterans of the Civil War, Spanish American War and First World War

By 1920, the Society was bursting at the seams. Two rooms of its home were used for its own

purposes. The remainder of the house was let to a resident caretaker. At the January 1921 annual meeting, it was decided, "... that the Society was in need of larger and fireproof quarters for the proper care of its valuable collections." At that same meeting, President Stewart made the challenge that "anyone who will spend \$10,000 on a fireproof building for the Society will be met by him with a like amount either in cash or in valuable historical documents now in his possession to the value of \$10,000."

In the Woodbury Constitution of November 12, 1924, it was reported that the Society had purchased the John S. Jessup property. The article read in part, "when the houses across the street are removed from in front of the new Central school and the new post office completed, the outlook from the new Historical Society home will be greatly improved." Rooms in the new home were dedicated to the contributors and a tablet was placed on the outside of the building with the names of those who donated \$13,000 towards the purchase of the new building.

Finally, on August 6, 1925, after renovations were completed, the Society moved into its new headquarters. The first book to go into the house was the Holy Bible. One of the acquisitions received that year was a desk from the old courthouse. (This desk holds the guest book in our library today.) There were two curators, the

Misses Nellie Thackeray and Sibyl Tatum Jones. There was also a live-in caretaker.

The building was closed in the colder months during the World War II years due to heating oil rationing. Resident Curator Sibyl T. Jones was relocated to the Newton Hotel with the Society paying the weekly rent of \$8 plus the cost of two meals daily. From June to October during the war years, weather permitting, the Society's home was open on Wednesdays and Fridays with Miss Jones in attendance. The Society lacked publicity during this time since the newspapers had both a shortage of linotype operators and paper. The Society's yearly publications were also suspended during these years. Room 202 in the county building was closed to visitors. In 1944, the Society's income was reduced when savings interest rates dropped as low as ½ of 1%.

With the hard times of war over, the Jessup house reopened on June 1, 1945. Interest in the Society had waned and a \$1 membership drive was begun. Mrs. Henry H. Clark was appointed as Resident Curator in April 1946.

The first exhibit ever held in the Jessup house concentrating on just one aspect of the Society's collections (in this case hats and bonnets) was held for one week during March 1948 with a turnout of 269 guests. At the annual meeting in May 1948, it was announced that the Board of Chosen Freeholders had restored the Society's sole use of Room 202

and the vault in the county building.

At the same meeting, it was also recorded that the Society had finally acquired the deed to the Moravian Church property in Woolwich Township. The Society had met and attended services since its beginning in the church, the oldest Moravian building in New Jersey.

Our next president was long-time Bulletin editor, Mrs. Hazel Simpson, who served a one year term from 1953 to 1954. In 1954, Daniel W. Beckley assumed the office, a position he held until his death in 1965. During his tenure, the Society acquired the doorsill from the first Philadelphia mint. (This doorsill today is at the entrance of our library.) In 1960, the Board, in cooperation with the County, participated in designing the first flag of Gloucester County.

In 1969, L. Kepner Gottshalk was elected President. The library rooms of the Society were filled to overflowing. It was decided by the Board to make their dream of a library a reality. A library building fund was started. During the years that followed, the Society hosted many book fairs, bazaars, house tours and sales of commemorative bottles.

After four years of hard work, on October 13, 1973, the new library building was dedicated with Rev. Parker F. Auten officiating as the Society's new president at the library dedication ceremony.

Once again, the library needed additional space and in 1983, an addition to the reading room was

added. In 1986, the early 18th century Schorn (or Mortonson) log cabin was donated by the Schorn family to the Society and was moved to the grounds of Trinity Episcopal Church in Swedesboro. This cabin was probably used by early Swedes as a granary. After moving the cabin piece by piece to the grounds of Trinity Episcopal Church in Swedesboro and much restoration work, the cabin was dedicated on September 30, 1989.

In 1996, due to continuing growth, the Society was facing a storage problem. In that same year, our Annex building on the corner of Hunter and Broad Streets was purchased to be used for much needed storage and office space.

In 2001, through the generous support of our membership, the Museum was equipped with a climate control system to ensure proper preservation of our irreplaceable artifacts. For the first time, the building was open to the public year round.

Today, the Society has a membership of over 1,300 members. We are proud of the ever-growing collections of the Hunter-Lawrence-Jessup House Museum. Our library is nationally known for its wealth of genealogical and historical materials.

As we begin our second century, the Gloucester County Historical Society is still committed to its original purpose: to preserve, promote and protect the history of Gloucester County.

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Stamp
Here

PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2008

Membership Benefits

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