

Newsletter

Volume 6 Issue 5 May 2008

MESSAGE FROM
PRESIDENT LOU MCCALL

Dear Members;

The weather is finally getting warmer and Mother Nature is coming back to life. Nature has been closely aligned with Wenonah's history since the very beginning. After all, the original prospectus given to potential homeowners living in the city areas of Philadelphia and its surroundings touted the healthful qualities of Wenonah's natural resources. Since then much has obviously changed. Wally Farr (born 1905 to Edward and Edith Farr in the house I currently try to maintain) spoke to my wife and I of all the wonderful things the youth of Wenonah did in the woods, lakes and streams of Wenonah and beyond. Wally spoke of the annual canoe trips that would start at the lake that was next to my garage and they would canoe out to the Delaware and back again. He said they always chose mid June to do the trip because of the length of daylight then but could only make it back to Woodbury, where upon George Parks would take the Farr's horses and wagon and pick up all the kids and canoes. Wally also spoke of how in Wenonah School many a boy would lean their guns next to their coats in the back of the room so when school was over, they would all go muskrat hunting.

If you have seen the old photographs of Wenonah, especially aerial ones (every member should own the unbelievable aerial photo turned placemat complements of Jack Sheppard Sr.) it is dramatically clear that much of nature has gone asphalt or at least private. Thus we can not appreciate or thank enough the

foreword thinking by previous Council and Environmental Commission members for the resurgence of our natural resources via unique Wenonah trails and the teahouse. Additionally they have gone beyond their usual Herculean efforts by seizing an opportunity to educate many in the region of the benefits of converting the ex-golf course which adjoins Wenonah to a nature park.

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

PROGRAM FOR MAY

Richard Dilks will speak on the current effort to dedicate the former Maple Ridge Golf Course as a nature preserve and/or recreational area for the county.

Rich, a lifelong Wenonah resident, is chairman of the Wenonah Environmental Commission. He is active in the Gloucester County Nature Club and member of the Maple Ridge Preservation Committee

One of the loveliest places in Gloucester County is nestled away on a 112 acre tract just south of Wenonah in Deptford and Mantua Townships. Once site of Tall Pines Golf Course, later known as Ron Jaworski's Eagles' Nest (of

Philadelphia Eagles fame) and finally as Maple Ridge Golf Club. It is a place of gently rolling country-side, meadows, wetlands, and forest patches. The Mantua Creek flows gently through the center of the tract and wildlife abounds there. Many birds make a home there including warblers, a Bald Eagle and a rare albino Red-tailed Hawk. Beautiful trees, both native and exotic, give one the feeling of being in an arboretum. Those walking the paths are struck by the tranquility and natural beauty of this special place.

When Maple Ridge Golf Club closed in December 2006, the land was sold to a developer who had plans approved for 123 homes on the site. A beautiful place was on the verge of being lost forever to commercial development and sprawl. Many were sad to hear that yet another housing development was about to claim a beautiful property, but some good people were motivated to action. A preservation committee, spearheaded by the members of the Wenonah Environmental Commission was formed in January 2008 and an effort to preserve the entire Maple Ridge tract as a county owned nature park was born. In our presentation we will tell why Maple Ridge is special and deserves preservation. Things have begun to happen and we will provide the latest information on the preservation effort.

We will also talk about the mission and projects of the Wenonah Environmental Commission and about the history and natural beauty of our town's special places in our 135 acre conservation area.

Richard Dilks, President

“A HOTEL, SANDBURRS AND THE 4TH OF JULY” 1871 - 1872

Excerpts from the book “Wenonah” by Marjorie K. Lentz

(continued from the April 2008 newsletter)

By 1872 the Company had spent \$25,417.94 in the building and furnishing of Wenonah House, \$200.44 on parks, \$62.37 on roads, \$3,000.60 on grading and \$1,751.53 on advertising. The farmhouses and the mill property were rented for \$744.68. Some of the land not allotted for building lots was farmed for the Company. Although the Mantua Land and Improvement Company was making a profit on its lots, it knew less about agriculture. It lost nine dollars the first year of its farming operations. Also it was noted that “a portion of the land valued at \$260 per acre has been sold for \$650 per acre.”

Dr. George W. Bailey, associated with the Philadelphia real estate brokerage, William T. Bailey Company, built a “cottage” next to the Wenonah House where he was residing during the summer. Across the street from Dr. Bailey’s house, Thomas W. Synnott, nephew of Samuel A. Whitney and prominent in the glass making industry in South Jersey, built a “cottage”. A block up the street on North Clinton Avenue a “cottage” was built by Andrew W. Carey, general manager of the White Dental Manufacturing Company in Philadelphia. These were the first three houses built on the original town plot.

The Fourth of July was celebrated in Wenonah in 1872. A printed program announced that the celebration began at five o’clock in the morning with a thirteen-gun salute. This salute was repeated at noon and at sunset. At five-thirty in the morning there were reveille and roll call. Resuming at eight o’clock after breakfast the flag was raised followed by the Wenonah Silver Cornet Band. The program notes that the flag was a gift of Samuel A. Whitney and the flagpole the gift of George Wood. The remainder of the day was devoted to “general amusement for all, such as croquet, bowling, quoits and the balloon ascensions.” Following fireworks in the evening, refreshments were served in the Wenonah House. The day ended with the singing of Auld Lang Syne and playing of taps. Although modified in format, the celebration has continued to the present.

On September 15, 1872 “the citizens of Wenonah and the guests on the Wenonah House met in Dr. Garrison’s office” for a Sunday School. Twenty adults and twenty-one children arrived the first day with Dr. George W. Bailey as superintendent, Andrew W. Carey as secretary-treasurer and Thomas W. Synnott as librarian. The Minutes of the Presbyterian Sunday School note that “Dr. Bailey was not slow in gathering scholars and arranging classes and in pushing into the work of any and all who had any capacity to act as teachers.” For more adequate facilities the Sunday School soon after moved to the railroad station. Preaching was held at irregular intervals, sometimes in the afternoon following Sunday School. Although the Presbyteries organized the Sunday School, the first sermon preached in Wenonah was by William S. Cattell, a Methodist.

With the influx of guests at the Wenonah House and the Philadelphia commuters who were building “cottages” within the town plot, it cannot be ignored that Wenonah was still a farming community. Surrounding the town plot was land which the Mantua Land and Improvement Company rented for farming. Charles Buckman rented the former Dilks Mill which was now known as the Wenonah Mill and an advertisement notes that he could do “customer work of all kinds with care and despatch at short notice” including “fresh ground wheat and rye flour, corn meal, etc., of all grades.” Benjamin Packard opened a general store.

Newcomers to Wenonah fought sandburrs. Andrew W. Carey wrote that one needs “a good knife blade to shave off the sandburrs before entering a neighbor’s house. The first year on my residence here we had no sidewalks and the sandburrs were so profuse that one was compelled to take the middle of the road to elude the common enemy.”

However, Dr. Bailey reported that “as a community we were of one mind, no friction, each willing to work, no one seeking preferment. We were indeed a happy family”.

“A CHAPEL, A SCHOOL AND TOMATO CATSUP” 1873 - 1883

Excerpts from the book “Wenonah” by Marjorie K. Lentz

According to the annual report of the Mantua Land and Improvement Company fifteen residential lots and four business lots had been sold and \$75,000 worth of buildings had been erected by May 8, 1873. During the next ten years fifty “cottages” were built. The new houses bordered the parks, faced the railroad tracks and lined up and down Clinton Avenue and Mantua Avenue. They can be identified by the Mansard roofs, some retaining the original slate, Mansard double doors, campaniles, fish scale shingles at the top of the towers and iron cresting along the rooftops.

Not only were houses built but also a chapel. On September 22, 1873 the Presbyterian Chapel was dedicated and on the same day the First Presbyterian Church of Wenonah was organized. For ten years the Methodists and the Presbyterians worshipped together with the agreement that when there were sufficient Methodists in Wenonah they could form their own congregation. In 1882 the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized and the following year the cornerstone of their church was laid. The silver trowel used for the ceremony is housed in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Children of some of the new residents in Wenonah attended boarding schools in Philadelphia. Other children walked to the Mantua School even though it was not in Deptford Township. However in 1875 parents hired Charles Buckman to drive the school-aged children to the one-room Monongahela School where Sallie Bailey was the teacher. This school was three miles east of Glassboro Road down a lane that passed the former Benjamin Clark brick farm house. The following year Dr. George W. Bailey, district clerk and brother of Sallie Bailey, proposed a school for Wenonah. In a letter to William Milligan, Gloucester County Superintendent of Public Instruction, he outlined a plan. “The school during the months of September and October will meet in a room in a private dwelling. On October 31st we expect to occupy a

part of the Wenonah House. Please send the books and blanks which as I understand the matter are furnished by the state.” Subsequently classes were held in the Howard Building, commonly called Daddy Howard’s Hall and in the winter classes met in the dining room of the hotel. The school budget for the first year was \$605 which included Sallie Bailey’s salary of \$360 and also an allowance for the purchase of a stove to heat the dining room in the Wenonah House.

Two years later Wenonah built a two-storied school on the edge of the town plot just behind the Presbyterian Chapel. By the end of the first year 55 children were registered. The one complaint of the new school is recorded when a neighbor declared the school bell a real nuisance and pleaded it be torn down.

In 1877 a Young Men’s Christian Association was organized by George L. McGill which met in a “cozy room in Daddy Howard’s Hall.” A newspaper commented that the YMCA provided a “comfortable room for the improvement and innocent amusement of the young men of Wenonah.” Books, magazines and games were available for the youth who met four evenings a week.

The Wenonah House dominated the social scene. At first it was opened all year with activities such as a pigeon match followed by a “turtle dinner” which was attended by fifty persons in January 1873. Essentially, however, the Wenonah House was a summer resort hotel. Under various managers including Benjamin Packer, Thomas Clark, Joseph C. Yerkes and Isaac Newton, the hotel season began with a hop in early May followed by a continuous round of activities which kept the town humming until the closing hop in late September. When the resort season ended in Cape May on Labor Day some Philadelphians finished the season at the Wenonah House. A newspaper account stated that those with “weak lungs who cannot stand the heavy salt water air” often preferred the Wenonah House to shore hotels.

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

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Here

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2008

Membership Benefits

- MONTHLY NEWSLETTER MAILED TO YOUR HOME
- MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH INTERESTING PROGRAMS
- ACCESS TO HISTORICAL ARCHIVES AND MEMORABILIA
- INFORMATION BY KNOWLEDGEABLE WENONAHIANS

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

AMOUNT PAID \$ _____ CHECK _____ CASH _____

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

WHS PO Box 32, WENONAH, NJ 08090

DUES: \$15.00 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR
