

Wenonah Historical Society Newsletter

Next Meeting at 7:30 P.M. on
Friday, May 10, 2013

Volume 11, Issue 5, May 2013

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Charles Horan

Dear Members,

This month will be the last regular monthly meeting before "Summer Break". We have a nice program to be presented by local author Lee Ireland. It is described below. Also noted is information on our November 2012 presenter, Dr. Ken Lacovara. He will be in Wenonah this coming Thursday evening. As always I look forward to a good turn out Friday night for an informative and social evening.

Why are there so many places with the word "Egg" and "May" in their name? Isn't it obvious that Atlantic City's Boardwalk was named for the boards that you walk on? What other reason could there be? Did the developer of Vineland and Sea Isle City really try to create a county named for him? Where is the "Harbor" in "Egg Harbor City?"

Lee Ireland's latest book, *Place Names of the Jersey Shore-Why Did They Name it That?* answers these questions and reveals that today's "Shore Road" in Atlantic County was built on an Indian trail and during Colonial times was named "The King's Highway." In Cape May County, it was named the "Queen's Highway." These examples provide just a small taste of the more than 300 place names described.

"Place Names of the Jersey Shore" is an authentic, local title, written by a life-long resident of the area whose family in America goes back to at least the 1700s (Grandfather was a conductor on the Shore Fast Line). All of Atlantic County is covered, as well as, all of Cape May County.

Dr. Ken Lacovara will be addressing the Gloucester County Nature Club (GCNC) on Thursday evening. Members of the Wenonah Historical Society are invited to attend.

Dr. Lacovara's program, "The Fossils at Inversand and the KT Boundary Mass Extinction" will be on Thursday, May 9th at 7:00 P.M at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church at 3 Lenape Trail, Wenonah. All GCNC programs are free and open to the public. The nature club's is also having its annual plant sale at the church that evening at 6: 00 P.M. Anyone who comes a bit early can check that out too.

2011 WHS OFFICERS

President	Charles Horan
Vice President	Paul Lader
Secretary	Vicki McCall
Treasurer	Carol Wiltsee
Trustee	Betty MacLeod
Trustee	Louis McCall

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

Our annual WHS Picnic is scheduled for June 14th. Try to keep that evening open. Details to follow.

2013 WHS DUES ARE DUE

Dues for 2013 are now due and are still a bargain at \$15 per family. The dues can be given to any WHS officer or mailed using the membership application on the last page of this newsletter.

The following article was researched and written by Jack C. Sheppard, Sr. Source materials were from Milton H. Webb and Marjorie K. Lentz.

DR. GEORGE WASHINGTON BAILEY
DECEMBER 5, 1840 – DECEMBER 10, 1916
Pioneer of Wenonah Elementary School and Sunday Schools Worldwide
by Jack C. Sheppard, Sr.



Dr. George Washington Bailey

Following my “time-travel” voyage to Wenonah in 1904 on the opening day of the Military Academy I was so pleased with my Stephen Greene interview I decided on another trip. This time I wanted to go all the way back to the earliest days of our town to meet Dr. Bailey, another of the handful of men who were its founders, movers and shakers. I had already done some preliminary research before making my trip back in time and learned the following:

George Washington Bailey, son of William and Lydia (Densten) Bailey, was born on his father's farm near Clarksboro, Gloucester County, New Jersey, December 5, 1840. His early education was in the public schools of Gloucester County and the State Normal School in Glassboro. In his early years he carried a musket in the Civil War serving on the Union side loyally and faithfully as a sergeant in Company E, Twenty-fourth New Jersey Volunteers with distinguished service at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. After the Civil War he entered the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania from which he graduated in 1868 with the degree of M. D. He then engaged in the general practice of his profession in

Philadelphia. In 1872 his health began to fail under the strenuous labor in which he was engaged, and he was compelled to abandon his practice. He then for a time engaged in the real estate business in Camden, New Jersey, and after this in the wholesale coal business in Philadelphia. Finally he entered into the business of mining and shipping coal. As a result of his business activity he was for many years an influential member of the boards of directors of a number of business corporations. He was one of the prominent organizers of the Camden National Bank and served on the Boards of the Bridgeton and Glassboro National Banks. The latter brought him into Gloucester County.

I set the time machine dial for September, 1871 and the location as the front yard of the Wenonah House Hotel which was under construction and only partially completed. The intended opening date was to be the following year on Independence Day July 4, 1872. I went there to interview Dr. George Washington Bailey whose accomplishments in the early days of Wenonah, especially its scholastic and religious activities are legendary.

I opened the time machine door and found myself in front of the hotel, surrounded by construction materials and workmen hurrying to take advantage of good construction weather. The partly constructed hotel appeared to be less than half the size of the Military Academy building that it later became. I looked beyond the park limits to see what the town looked like and all I could see were a few houses in the process of being constructed and a railroad station a short distance from the park. Everywhere else was just farm fields and a few isolated farm houses. Horses and wagons passed by on Mantua Ave., a dirt road.

The park in front of the hotel was just raw earth and was split in two with a street (to be Park Avenue) running through it to Clinton Avenue (also under construction). I asked one of the workmen where I could find Dr. Bailey and he pointed toward a very dignified, bearded gentleman standing nearby, observing the construction. He looked to be in his early thirties. In response to my request to speak privately with him he nodded agreement, led me to a pair of rocking chairs away from the construction and that is where the interview took place.

I introduced myself and said to him "Please don't ask me to explain how I know, but I already know you are a native of Gloucester County born on your father's farm near Clarksboro. I know of your early education and that you served honorably in the Civil War. I know you are a medical doctor but that you left that profession and are now in the business of coal mining and shipping with an office in Philadelphia. But what I want to learn more about is why you are here, in a tiny town to be, surrounded by sweet potato fields, and with an uncertain future. What do you have in mind?"

Dr. Bailey: For some time now I have had a business relationship with Sam Whitney, who owns and operates the Whitney Glass Works in Glassboro. He told me of his relationship with the West Jersey Railroad Co. which he makes use of to improve the delivery of his glass products to the Camden and Philadelphia markets. It was Sam who told me the railroad company was starting a town called Wenonah to stimulate passenger travel along its new rail line and asked if I would be interested in investing in it.

During my life thus far I have been extremely interested in education, especially religious education. I believe a good education is going to be necessary for success in our fast-growing young country. I also believe strongly in the teaching of religion for moral development of American youth and this can best be achieved in Sunday schools. What better opportunity could I ever have to start one of each kind of school that hopefully will grow as the town grows. I am so enthused about the prospect I am investing in Wenonah by buying land and building a home here. If you look over your shoulder the house being constructed on the corner (southeast corner of S. Clinton and E. Mantua Aves) is mine. Although I have a home and an office in Philadelphia I intend to commute frequently by train to and from Philadelphia and live full-time in Wenonah during the summer months.

I am already heavily involved in Sunday school related activity as president of the New Jersey State Sunday School Association and chairman of its executive committee. I also serve as treasurer of the International Sunday School Association, and member of the executive committee of the World's Sunday School Association.

Question: Do you mind my asking what is your religious faith?

Dr. Bailey: Not at all. I am a Presbyterian by birth and by choice and have for several years been a member of the board of trustees of the general assembly of that denomination as well as vice-president of the general assembly's board of education. I'm a member of the board of trustees of the Presbyterian Hospital and vice-chairman of the West Jersey Orphanage for Destitute Colored Children. I am also conferring with two other Wenonah founders, Thomas Synnott and Andrew Carey, about starting a Presbyterian church here in Wenonah. To get started we plan on bringing Glassboro's Presbyterian Pastor up the tracks on a "hand-car" and holding services in the train station. We even have plans for a Presbyterian Chapel to be built up Clinton Avenue near Andy Carey's house. This is all very exciting for me.

Question: You make it sound as if Wenonah is going to be a great family town. Any prospects for marriage and family in your future?

Dr. Bailey: Yet another reason for my building a residence here in Wenonah. My marriage date is already set for December 8, of next year 1872. My intended is Rebecca (Hyder) Hurff, daughter of Thomas W. Hurff of Hurffville, Gloucester County. Mr. Hurff is a farmer who at one time served in the house of the New Jersey legislature.

Question: Is it just you, Stephen Greene, and the other fellow you mentioned, Andrew Carey that are leading the development of this new town?

Dr. Bailey: No, there are a few others. In fact we have organized a company, the Mantua Land and Improvement Company to further our objectives and sell building lots. We incorporated it by an Act of the New Jersey Legislature in February of this year. In addition to Steve Greene and Andy Carey there are Thomas Yorke and Gen. William Sewell who are the President and Vice-President of the West Jersey Railroad Company, Horatio Mulford, John Starr, Edward Warne, Samuel Hopkins and Thomas Carr.

The two homes under construction over there, and there (pointing to two other construction sites a short distance away) are for Tom W. Synnott from Glassboro, a nephew of Sam Whitney, also of Whitney Glass Co., and Andy. Carey, general manager of a dental manufacturing firm in Philadelphia. I wasn't aware of the town creation project in February nor was Andy Carey so we are not directors of the Land Company. We are however maybe even more enthused about the prospects for Wenonah than the Directors themselves. That is why Andy and I intend to be the first Wenonah residents.



Dr. George W. Bailey Residence -- 1 South Clinton Avenue
circa 1872

Question: Dr. Bailey, I am sorry to say I have to leave now. But your information about the role you have played in the creation of Wenonah and the people involved in it so far has been interesting and helpful to me. May I return at a later date and talk with you to learn more about the status of the town and your part in its development?

Dr. Bailey; You certainly may and let me say it has been a pleasure talking to you about what we hope will happen on this very small part of a large and great country. Come back any time.

Editor Comment: Of course I know about the growth of the town in the years following my interview with Dr. Bailey, mostly based on historical information compiled by local historians Milton Webb and Marjorie Lentz and a few other research resources. But I wanted to know more from him about some of the more important details.

So I returned to the Time Machine and dialed in a new date, 1910, the year where in Washington D.C. Dr. Bailey was elected president of the World Sunday School Association. Truly the lifetime achievement he had sought and worked so hard for.

This time instead of meeting him at the hotel, now in its sixth year as the Wenonah Military Academy, I simply walked across the park to his house on Mantua Avenue across from the Wenonah Free Public Library. I found him sitting on his porch. He seemed startled to see me and said "why you don't seem to have aged a day since I last saw you 39-years ago. Please sit down and we can resume our conversation about the early days of Wenonah".

Question: When last we spoke you had retired from your career as a physician and appeared to be doing very well in the coal business. Are you still in that business?

Dr. Bailey: No I am not. In fact I did so well in business it enabled me to retire early and devote full-time to my Sunday School work. My Sunday School activity began here in Wenonah where on September 15, 1872 at my request citizens of Wenonah and guests of the Wenonah House met in Dr. Garrison's office to create a

Sunday School. Twenty adults and twenty-one children arrived the first day. At the meeting I was elected superintendent, Andrew W. Carey became secretary-treasurer and Thomas W. Synnott was made librarian.

I immediately sought out scholars and arranged for classes to be held. I rounded up everyone in town who had any capacity to act as teachers. We held classes in my house but soon had to move to the train station where there was more room. Preaching was held at irregular intervals, sometimes in the afternoon following Sunday School. Curiously, although I and the Presbyterians organized the Sunday School, the first sermon preached in Wenonah was by William S. Cattell, a Methodist. However as a community we were of one mind, no friction, each willing to work, no one seeking preferment. We were indeed a happy family."

Question: With all your obvious talents for teaching religion and general education were you also in charge of musical education?

Dr. Bailey: I could have probably taken care of that too but we were blessed by having several individuals with greater talent in that regard than mine.

The singing for the Sunday vespers services was often led by Dr. Henry L. Gilmour of Wenonah, a song leader who was in such demand that he led conventions and camp meetings as far away as Chicago, and by Methodist Church Rev. Henry J. Zelle also a popular song leader. They were so capable and enthusiastic it was rumored the singing in Wenonah park was so spirited it could be heard as far away as Mantua. While in Wenonah the two of them wrote literally hundreds of gospel songs and edited innumerable gospel song books. Among their works which gained nationwide recognition were the gospel songs, "Heavenly Sunlight" and "I've Anchored My Soul to the Haven of Rest." All of this out of little Wenonah. It was just amazing.

Question: You obviously had the religious education well in hand. What about primary general education for the youth of Wenonah?

Dr. Bailey: With regard to general education, children of some of the new residents in Wenonah attended boarding schools in Philadelphia while other children walked to the Mantua School even though it was not in Deptford Township. However in 1875 the parents hired Charles Buckman to drive our school-aged children to the one-room Monongahela School where my sister Sallie Bailey was the teacher. This school was three miles east of Wenonah down a lane that passed the former Benjamin Clark brick farm house.

However Wenonah was growing quickly so in 1876 I proposed a school for Wenonah. I sent a letter to William Milligan, Gloucester County Superintendent of Public Instruction, outlining a plan. I said we are holding classes in a private dwelling. On October 31st we expect to occupy a part of the Wenonah House hotel. Please send us books and blanks which as I understand the matter are furnished by the state. We then began holding classes in Joseph Noblitt's building on North Clinton Avenue commonly called Noblitt's Hall, and in the winter classes met in the dining room of the hotel. I remember our school budget for the first year was \$605 which included my sister Sallie Bailey's annual salary of \$360.

Two years later in 1878 we built the two-storied school on the edge of the town plot just behind the Presbyterian Chapel where it is now. By the end of the first year 55 of our 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.

**** Jack Sheppard's interview of Dr. George Washington Bailey will continued in the next newsletter. ****

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PO Box 32
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Here

Wenonah Historical Society

Membership APPLICATION 2013

Membership Benefits

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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

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RECEIVE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL: YES OR NO _____

AMOUNT PAID \$ _____ CHECK _____ CASH _____

DUES: \$15.00 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER

BRING FORM AND PAYMENT TO MEETING, OR MAIL. THANK YOU
WHS PO Box 32, WENONAH, NJ 08090
