

# Newsletter

Volume 8 Issue 8 November, 2010

## OCTOBER MEETING PROGRAM

Barbara Conway and Charles Horan will present a program about the NJ Leni Lenape Indians and will include information about her father James Conway, and how he began his life-long hobby of searching for and collecting Indian relics. They will display samples of artifacts from her father's extensive collection, many of which were found in and near Wenonah.

Barbara will also relate some history about the Conway family in Wenonah starting when her grandfather, a Pennsylvania Railroad accounting employee, was transferred from the "Penny" offices in Pittsburgh to its offices in Philadelphia.

William Conway served on Borough Council from 1931 to 1944 and as the 12th mayor of Wenonah from 1945 through 1959.

Barbara Conway continues the long-tradition of involvement in the affairs of Wenonah that started with her grandfather and continued through her father.

## RUTH INEZ SHUSTER FORMER WHS MEMBER

Ruth Inez Shuster and Irma Shuster Coates, Reunited in Death

Former WHS member and long time Wenonah resident Ruth Shuster and sister-in-law Irma Shuster Coates are now interred in the same

location, Eglington Cemetery in Clarksboro. They both died within six months of each other, Ruth most recently on October 7, 2010, Irma on April 25th of this year.

Ruth's husband Oram was the son of James Shuster who at one time was both Wenonah Tax Collector and a barber with his shop and office in the former ticket office for the West Jersey Railroad Co., known to many as the Wild Iris flower shop.

## WHS OFFICERS 2010

President	Barbara Capelli
Vice President.	Charles Horan
Secretary	Vicki McCall
Treasurer	Carol Wiltsee
Trustee	Betty MacLeod
Trustee	Louis McCall

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

The father, James, in addition to being a barber, was also an avid photographer, merchant and postcard creator, and many of his postcards appear from time to time on the EBay computer auction and at flea markets in New Jersey.

We are thankful to the Coates family for the many contributions of historic materials to the Society, and to Ruth Shuster for being a devoted member of the WHS until her illness took her away from Wenonah.

## THE HOTELS OF WENONAH BY MILTON H. WEBB

Last month's newsletter provided the first of two installments describing the first structure in Wenonah, the "Wenonah House", a hotel intended to attract people to this new town along the tracks of the West Jersey Railroad. The first article described the early days of the hotel starting in 1872 and the period through the early 1890's when the advent of the automobile caused doubt about the future of the hotel. We continue with the concluding installment.

In May 1891, there was a public sale of the House and its furnishings by M. Thomas and Son of Philadelphia. The sale was a disaster; only the furniture was sold. Charles Middleton of Philadelphia held a \$7,000 mortgage on the building and foreclosure soon followed. The building was put on the market and sold for \$5,000 to Stephen Greene of Philadelphia and Wenonah.

Stephen Greene was one of the early pioneers of Wenonah. He was the owner of Helfenstein, Lewis and Greene, one of the largest printing firms on the East Coast. Mr. Greene and his family vacationed for several years in Wenonah as guests at the Wenonah House. In 1880, he purchased a tract of land and built a large home with many outbuildings including a barn, stables and a greenhouse suitable for him to go into the florist business. His love was Wenonah and he became very supportive of the growth and

betterment of the new village. One large philanthropic gesture was the financing of the construction of the new Methodist Episcopal Church (E. Willow St. at S. Marion Ave.).

In 1892, Stephen Greene created a syndicate incorporated as the "Wenonah Inn Company" made up of himself, Thomas Whitney Synnott, Dr. George Washington Bailey, J. Frank Shull, and Charles M. Wilkins. Mr. Synnott was the president of the Whitney Glass Works of Glassboro and had retired that year. Dr. Bailey, a Civil War veteran, had been a medical doctor, but because of overwork had health problems; he then went very successfully into the coal business and amassed a considerable fortune. J. Frank Shull was the owner of the wholesale grocery firm of Shull, Wireback and Company, Philadelphia. Charles M. Wilkins was the owner of Partrick, Carter and Wilkins, manufacturers of electrical supplies.

Plans were formulated to build a new hotel on the site of the old Wenonah House, which was to be demolished. It was designed to accommodate one hundred and fifty guests, three times as many as the old hotel. The total cost would exceed \$70,000, a considerable amount of money in that period. The paper reported "a sufficient supply of water has been secured and the electrical apparatus is of the latest design, the plumbing, always one of the most important in a public house, has been put into the most competent hands." There was a bowling alley, billiard room, barber shop, a 32 by 60 foot amusement room, laundry and engine-dynamo room.

The West Jersey Railroad started construction of a new "handsome"

station as part of the agreement with the syndicate in their guarantee to build a new larger hotel. This still stands today as the Wenonah Community Center.

Other improvements followed the 1892 construction of the Wenonah Inn. In 1894, servants' quarters were built on South Marion Avenue. Additional "shedding" for carriages and horses of the guests was erected on East Cherry Street. A large athletic field with a grandstand was laid out on East Cedar Street. An extensive sewage system, remnants of which still exists today, was built not only for the hotel, but also for the houses of the community. A park area called "Camel Back" was



The Wenonah Inn was originally opened in 1872 as the Wenonah House Hotel. It was one of the first buildings in the town. Eventually expanded becoming the pictured Wenonah Inn, it was converted into the Wenonah Military Academy opening in 1901

created for the hotel patrons and the citizens of the town. This is now known as the Frank Stewart Estate acquisition, Comey's Lake. A wooded area on West Cedar Street called the "Glen" was cleared and "put into good order" for the visitors of the Inn. A new lake was formed at the foot of South Clinton Avenue with a large boathouse. This created accessibility to the Great Mantua Creek for canoeing which was quite popular during this period. This pond was called Greene's, then Lake Cornelia, and later Parker's Lake. A small golf course was built extending from the recreational field to "Camel Back." Flagstone sidewalks replaced the old wooden walkways.

The hotel was an instant success and business was described as "booming." This brought back memories to the townspeople, of the Wenonah House under the management of Mahlon Newton in the 1880's. The staff consisted of a manager, chief clerk, room clerk, night clerk, chef, headwaiter, head cook, head engineer, head porter, master of ceremonies, waiters and bellboys.

On several occasions special trains were put on the railroad siding for large dances and special affairs for the convenience of the patrons. One such affair was the performance of an opera advertised in July 1890: "Wenonah Inn. Extraordinary event grand opera "FAUST" by Gounod sung in concert by the Wolffunger Grand Opera Company of Philadelphia [with a] chorus of 40 people"

Another interesting account was in 1895: "A novel parade took place last Saturday afternoon by the guests of the Inn who have their teams here. There were about 35 turnouts and these were gaily decorated. The occupants carried flags and flowers while handsome horses held their heads high and seemed-to feel they were engaged in the novelty as much as their owners. After parading through Wenonah they drove to Mantua and Woodbury." In 1899 the Wenonah Inn Company sold their real estate holdings back to Stephen and Martha Greene for an unknown reason. It could have been that there was a growing apprehension that trains previously carrying guests to the Inn were now transporting them to seashore points. The railroads during this period had created spurs to most of the off-shore islands, giving access to the growing

popularity of salt-water bathing. The advent of the automobile after the turn of the century gave freedom to explore new vacation spots. Wenonah was no longer considered a summer resort destination

In 1903, Stephen Greene started extensive restoration of the first floor of the building and the grounds. Rumors circulated that he was going to build a large swimming pool. These changes seemed strange considering the dim outlook for the future of the building. These doubts were answered on September 20, 1904 when the Inn building opened under a new name - the Wenonah Military Academy.

*Milton H. Webb*

WENONAH 110 YEARS AGO  
AUGUST, 1900

Plover gunning is much enjoyed by many of our sportsmen.

The quoits fever has struck the town, and it is said some of our enthusiasts don't have time for their meals even.

One of the Western Union telegraph-wires was found burned out at the depot yesterday, from the storm the night before.

E. Ward Wilkins, wife/and daughters, and son, are on an extended trip to Niagara. Falls, New York State, and other summer points of interest.

The building of the lockup must have had a very salutary effect here as it has not yet had an occupant. But our evil doers — of which we have very few — will have to keep a sharp look out for Constable Drummer for he is a determined sleuth.

During the heavy storm Tuesday night the water pipes in Dr. Gilmour's residence seemed all aflame. At nearly every flash, of

lightning, the current would snap and crack from the faucet and sparks would shoot out several feet.

Watches, clocks and jewelry repaired. Called for and delivered on receipt of postal. A.F. Jenkins, Wenonah, N.J.

*Woodbury Daily Times*

WENONAH 110 YEARS AGO  
NOVEMBER, 1900

A masquerade ball was held in Noblitt's Hall last night. There were about thirty present from Mantua, Westville, Woodbury and Wenonah.

Butter prices are going up but Turner and McCormick are keeping their prices as low as possible.

The Junior Athletic Club will open their football season tomorrow with a game with Sterling Junior of West Philadelphia. Admission to the ball grounds will be free.

The democrats of the borough think they will poll something like fifty votes next Tuesday. Time will tell just how many are of that persuasion however.

Stephan Greene has moved some of the furniture of the Inn to his boathouses in Atlantic City.

All the arrangements have been made for the vaudeville entertainment and food by the Republican Club in Noblitt's Hall. The club members are looking forward to the best time in the history of the organization. Cards of admission have been issued. The program will be interspersed with returns by telegraph when they come in.

Headline: *McKinley and Roosevelt Chosen by the People to Conduct Affairs of State -- A Republican Land Slide*, Wenonah results, McKinley 89 Bryan 21.

REWARD The subscriber will pay \$5.00 reward for information which will lead to the conviction of a party or parties who alleged to burn Noblitt's Hall on Saturday evening-Joseph Noblitt, Wenonah

A new telephone is being put in the depot to connect to the marl pits.

Regular services in the churches tomorrow with prospects of large congregations. Our pastors are quite popular with their people and the houses are always nearly full.

The cottage prayer meeting of the ME congregation was held at the house of W.J. McGowan last evening. Tonight it will be held at the home of Mrs. Cline.

An extension of South Marion Avenue is to be laid out across the meadows (Mantua Creek) making a more direct course and shorter drive.

The entire number of lots of land of the Mantua Land and Improvement Company —268 lots—were sold at their recent sale. Dr. Bailey, Stephen Greene, and Thomas Synnott were the principal buyers. This practically puts the land company out of business as they have nothing more to be in business for and it will probably be disbanded.

George Dilkes lost a valuable cow Saturday. (He would graze it in the park.)

Who would bother with a horse? No one after a ride in Blair Smith's Locomobile. Mr. Smith almost froze a Times representative on a trip from here to Woodbury this morning. Most of the time the speed was fully 20 miles per hour.

*Woodbury Daily Times*  
Milton H. Webb archives



PO Box 32  
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

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# WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2010

### Membership Benefits

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

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL: YES OR NO

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

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