

WENONAH

Historical Society Newsletter



October 2002
Published by the
Historical Society
of Wenonah, NJ

Speak of the Devil

Over the past century, the Jersey Devil has been sighted throughout our area—including in Wenonah.

Move over, Dracula and Frankenstein. When Halloween comes to South Jersey, trick-or-treaters in the know tremble at the mention of our own local monster: The Jersey Devil. Sightings of the creature have been recorded throughout the 20th century, from 1909 to 2000. The list is long in Ocean and Atlantic counties (Winslow Township, Bamber Lake, Whiting, Leeds, and Mays Landing) but also closer to home in Salem and Gloucester counties (Salem, Greenwich, Woodstown, Gibbsboro, Bridgeton, Penns Grove), including right in our own backyard (Sewell, Barnsboro, Woodbury, Mantua, and yes, even in Wenonah!)

The appearance of the creature and its behavior varies only slightly. It is portrayed with a horse or monster turtle's head on which eyes glow. Its slimy, feathered body stands 3-1/2 to 6 feet high, on long back legs, crane- or frog-like. Its front legs or arms are short, and bear sharp claws. Its bat wings always help it to fly away. It lets people know of its presence by howling, hissing, or barking and can also produce unearthly, chilling screams. It has left behind strange giant prints of cloven hooves.

Even though it is accused of savagely killing many domestic animals, it has never injured a human being. Instead, it stalks unfortunate hikers in dark woods or peeps through windows at night.

Though many Wenonah residents have heard of the Jersey Devil, some may be unfamiliar with the macabre legend of its birth and life. According to South Jersey lore, a woman liv-

ing in the Pine Barrens near Leeds Point gave birth to a child in 1735—her thirteenth. Its freakish anatomy included a horse's head, the wings of a bat, cloven hooves and a serpent's tail. Originally called Leed's Devil, and later dubbed the Jersey Devil, the newborn beast is said to have flown away into the woods, where it has been hiding ever since. Through the years, it has been the subject of many a fireside story, and has even inspired two recipes: the Jersey Devil sandwich (eggs, pork roll, cheese and fried peppers and onions on a roll) and a Jersey Devil chocolate cake.

In 1909, the year a rash of sightings occurred throughout South Jersey, Wenonah had its very own sighting. According to the Gloucester County Times, "There was a skating carnival last night at Green's Lake. It was largely attended by the boys of Wenonah. They declared that they saw the (Jersey) Devil. They said it spit fire and had a head on it like the Gorgon Medusa."

In the same year, mysterious tracks were reported throughout South Jersey towns, including in Wenonah, and Professor Breikoph of Philadelphia identified them as those of a Jurassic lizard, *Peleosaurus Cattelleya*. He recommended feeding the creature fish and milk. If you are inclined to follow his advice, you could be the next observer of the Jersey Devil. As long as we preserve Wenonah's woods, we have a good chance of seeing it again.

For more information on the Jersey Devil, you can visit the web: www.pressplus.com/pineland/folklore or www.parascope.com/en/cryptzoo/predators03.htm

President's Letter

We have a busy and entertaining evening ahead of us. Come prepared for a work session and then enjoy the program as South Jersey Ghost Research joins us with tales of the paranormal and shares with us the scientific instruments used to measure paranormal activity. Our own Train Station seems to be alive with "traces from the past!"

Our agenda for the evening will include nominations for officers for the upcoming terms, program scheduling, Christmas party discussion, and the purchase of memorial items.

We will be reviewing our accomplishments of the past year and setting goals for the new term. As many of you are aware, there are some major changes that may be taking place in our town over the next several years. The town's new Community Center will mean changes for our Railroad Station. Many of you spent a LOT of effort and time in preserving the Train Station and it is our hope that we continue in this vein. Jack Sheppard is serving on the Committee that will review how a grant that was received will be used for the Train Station restoration. Roco Doto is also working on having the train Station recognized as a State Historic Structure.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to share ideas and time. **We need your support!**

We hope to see all of you at this meeting and please bring a friend. We have been fortunate in having a lot of new members that have contributed to the growth of the Historical Society. Each new face brings new and welcome ideas.

Refreshments will be provided.

Reminder: Please be sure to send or bring your dues: \$15 per family. (We have increased dues from \$ 10 to \$15 per year. If this causes difficulty for any member, please contact our treasurer for alternatives.)

-Vicki McCall

How to Contact Us

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

E-mail: wenonahhistoricalnews@comcast.net

The Wenonah Fire Company

Condensed by Vicki McCall from "Wenonah" by Marjorie Lentz and an article from Wenonah's "100 Year Celebration" pamphlet



The first record of the Wenonah Fire Company was on April 17, 1883 in a report from the Fire and Lightning Committee to Borough Council that 22 galvanized fire buckets were in good condition at the freight station. At the same meeting, Council passed a motion to purchase a 15' and 25' ladder for a cost of \$9.25!

On December 11, 1883 the cellar of the Wenonah School (later the Legion Hall and now a private residence) on N. Marion became the first fire house. Three years later, the Wenonah Water Works was built adjacent to the dam at Warner's Lake and the first fireplug was installed. Also in this year, official formation of the Wenonah Fire Company was initiated. The first piece of equipment, was purchased in this year, a one hose cart and 45' of hose. These were housed in the barn of the Wenonah Inn (which later became the Military Acade-

my). The first test for this equipment was done by setting fire to a pile of barrels on the outskirts of town. Within 9 minutes, the hose cart and team arrived and extinguished the fire.

On April 6, 1888 it was recorded in the Borough minutes that the Wenonah Fire Company had been officially formed. The first Fire Chief was E.R. Winthrop. The equipment consisted of two hose carts and hoses. They were stored at Birdall's Garage (located on the site of the present Library) and in Synott's Ice House. After one year of existence, there were NO fires!

In 1905, the lot where the Fire House now stands, known as Harrison Lot, was purchased for \$150. On June 21, 1906, the Fire Company was incorporated with ten charter members. In 1908, the building was constructed for a cost of \$1,420. This is the front por-

tion of the older section of the present firehouse.

During the early years before electric sirens, striking a suspended locomotive wheel rim with a sledgehammer sounded the alarms. This was eventually replaced with a rope pull bell. And for years the Methodist Church bell was used as a fire alarm. In 1918 the first siren and tower was placed at the corner lot of S. West Ave and Cherry St.

In 1918 the Fire Company purchased its first piece of motorized equipment. In 1921 a new Stutz fire truck was purchased giving Wenonah two motorized trucks.

Beginning in the early 1920's, a carnival was held every August as a fundraiser. This continued until 1942. In 1940, Wayne Ralston suggested an annual get together dinner. The first banquet was December 2, 1941. This eventually

evolved into a "Stags Night" and a "Ladies Night".

In 1943, an application was made to The American Red Cross. This was approved and Wenonah became one of the first Fire Company's with an official rescue squad in the State.

In 1960, with the increased equipment purchases it became necessary for the Fire Company to build an addition. This was completed in 1963. An upstairs game room was completed in 1969 with an original bar from the Telford Inn.

The first female member of the Fire Company was Susan Auerbach

In 1976. As a member of the ambulance squad and a fire fighter, Lorraine Geston became the first female line officer. Today, the Fire Company is open to men and women and welcomes all volunteers.

The Fire Company has served our community for over 100 years. It is through the support of volunteers, Borough Council, and the community that we are fortunate enough to have our own Fire Station.

The Wenonah Historical Society thanks all of our Fire volunteers for their service and commitment.

Be sure to see the Historical Display presented by the Fire Company in the Wenonah Elementary School in honor of Fire Prevention Month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Archiving and Preservation Committee

Photography is still underway to accompany the recorded written records in our database. As the cooler fall evenings and shorter days come upon us, we will have more time to work indoors to get back to the task of photographing the remainder of the archives.

If you have any ideas or items that you would like to contribute to the Historical Society please contact me.

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

HELP STILL NEEDED!

We need help in contributing to the newsletter. Anyone who can spare an hour a month to do an article, interview a longtime resident, or can contribute in any way PLEASE CALL. This is a great opportunity to get to know your town!

THANK YOU!

- To the children from Wenonah who participated in the dedication of the Japanese Tea House by singing songs from THE MUSIC MAN. We truly enjoyed the performance. The Gloucester County Times did a nice write up on the Tea House and the event on September 26, 2002.
- To Diane Magarelli, Roco Doto, Bernadette Faix, and Eileen Caraker for running the cart at the Wenonah Craft fare. They sold Historical Society bags and flags.
- To the Wenonah Fire Department for their display of archives in our cabinet at the Wenonah Elementary School. Be sure to stop in for a peek.

WENONAH

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM · 2002-2003

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!

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: \$15 PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR

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

October Meeting

Friday, October 11, 2002 • 7:00pm

GUEST PRESENTATION BY SOUTH JERSEY GHOST RESEARCH

Free lecture with photo displays, equipment displays, EVPs and videos.

SJGR is a group of investigators that can trace it's roots back to 1955. They conduct discreet investigations, assist people in need, educate the public, conduct field research and promote the learning and understanding of ghosts and other psychic phenomena. They use the latest scientific methods and tools as well as psychic investigators in our research. SJGR members come from all walks of life, from nurses and psychologists to grandmothers and teachers. Most have years of personal experience dealing with ghosts and hauntings. SJGR routinely investigates documented hauntings and conducts field research to gain more knowledge of the phenomenon.



Future meetings

November 8, 2002.....**No Program Set as of Yet**
December 13, 2002.....**Annual Christmas Party**

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.



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

Wenonah, NJ 08090-0032
PO Box 32
Newsletter Committee

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