

Wenonah Historical Society Newsletter

Next Meeting at 6:00 P.M. on
Friday, September 9, 2011

Volume 9, Issue 6, September 2011

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Charles Horan

Greetings fellow members. I trust you have enjoyed this wet and wonderful summer and have survived recent calamities (earthquake and hurricane) in fine fashion. We now look forward to the 2011 - 2012 Wenonah Historical Society season. The October and November meeting programs are planned (details in the next newsletter). But first things first.

Our September "Meet and Greet Kickoff Classic" is scheduled for Friday, September 9 at 6:00 PM. Sue and Larry Smith have generously offered to open their home at 110 S. Clinton Ave. for this annual event. I ask that attendees bring appetizers and desserts based on the first letter of your last name:

- A through M - please bring an appetizer.
- N through Z - please bring a dessert.

Beverages will be provided.

This event is an excellent opportunity to invite a friend or neighbor who may be a prospective new member of the WHS.

I look forward to meeting again and reuniting after our "Summer Break."

See everyone on Friday, September 9th at 6.00 PM at the Smiths!!!

Thank you.



WENONAH MEMORIES ON FACEBOOK

There are lots of nostalgic memories being shared on Facebook by the group "You know you are from Wenonah if . . ." There are more than 390 members in the group. Some nice photos have been posted, including one of Margie's, as well as interesting recollections of G. Wayne Post, The Wenonah Swim Club, Wenonah School, The Military Academy, and of course, the July 4th parade. Dave Brangan even came up with this idea for July 4, 2012:

"OK all of you Wenonah folks still living in Wenonah, here is a project for you. At the next Fourth of July, set up a couple of tables in the park, or better yet, in front of the Fire Station, with a big sign: 'Facebook Reunion.' We can all gather there and exchange stories in person!"

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)

DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE
YOUR NEWSLETTER
ELECTRONICALLY?

If you would like to receive an electronic version of the newsletter instead of a copy delivered by the U.S. Postal Service, let me know at smithlr@att.net. The newsletter will arrive sooner, reduce our printing and postage costs, and if there is something in color, you will be able to see the colors.

SUNSHINE NEWS
by Vicki McCall

Please forward any news of a member's illness or surgery to me at vmccallpc@comcast.net so we can send cards and well wishes. I will forward the information to the newsletter editor, Larry Smith.

HISTORY OF POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN WENONAH
by Jack C. Sheppard Sr.

During the formative years following Wenonah's creation in 1871 there was little need or funds available for a formal police department. From old newspaper reports it is apparent most residents had guns for hunting and for personal protection and did not hesitate to use them whenever a threat, perceived or real, manifested itself.

At most there was one person who acted as a law officer or constable. For many years our lawman was John Drummer who later, in 1914, was elected to serve on Borough Council. During the early years before the turn of the century there was very little crime reported in Wenonah. Gloucester County towns were fewer then, separated by considerable open space, and travel was by train, horse or on foot. What crime there was seemed to be caused by hobos arriving and departing on the numerous freight trains passing through town or just walking the rails (proposed DRPA High-Speed Line extension to Glassboro?).

Strangers were viewed with suspicion, usually being called upon to furnish an acceptable reason for being in Wenonah. One report had it that Constable Drummer didn't accept the reason provided by a stranger so he locked him in a boxcar on the rail siding in the center of town with the intent to question him further

when he had time. He apparently forgot about the man until the next day when he returned to the siding and the freight car was gone, along with his lock and the stranger.

One or two people on call seemed to provide all of the police protection necessary until sometime in the 1930's when E. J. Truncer was hired by Council with the title "Borough Marshall." About 1934/35 he was replaced by George Bowker Sr. To assist him, Council took on George Eggert (member Frank Eggert's father) as a patrolman. Patrolman Eggert was eventually replaced by Donald Fiske in that position. Then in 1954 Marshall Bowker retired and was replaced by Walter Hain with the title "Chief" thereby becoming Wenonah's first "Chief of Police". Chief Hain continued to handle Wenonah's formal policing needs utilizing assistance from volunteers when necessary.

On May 14, 1954, Borough Council approved the creation of a volunteer group with the name "Wenonah Police Reserves." State laws at the time permitted such groups to carry weapons and perform public safety functions. The Reserves were trained in the legal aspects and handling of firearms by Jim Conway (father of WHS member Barbara Conway), firearms instructor for the Gloucester County Sheriff's

office. The Police Reserves assisted the chief and his volunteers when called upon to do so, especially during special occasions such as the 4th of July and Memorial Day.

This arrangement seemingly satisfied the policing needs of the town until after WWII when the part-time patrolman James Miller was hired full-time to assist Chief Hain. When I moved into Wenonah in the early 1950's all of the policing was provided by the Chief, patrolman Jim Miller and the Reserves. The photograph below shows Chief Hain and the members of the Police Reserve organization at a meeting in Tom Synnott's barn where annual meetings of the Reserve were held.

Over the years the state Legislature imposed more rules, regulations and training requirements on the police volunteers rendering such volunteer police activity nearly impossible. More trained and licensed policemen (and ultimately women) had to be hired. By the time I stepped down as mayor after 1990 the force consisted of Chief Miller, four patrolmen and two police cars. This amount of staffing and equipment was entirely adequate for our police needs satisfying shift-staffing, illness, holidays and vacations as long as the policing was confined to Wenonah. Chief Miller issued standing orders that patrolmen were not to leave town, even disciplining one who did. It was the Chief's belief that



Wenonah Police Reserve ca 1954. Front row left to right: Bill Queale, Walt Hain, Charles Frederick, George Bowker Sr., Tom Synnott; back row left to right: Paul Sargent, Barney Lorence, Jerry Hammond, Donald Fiske, Porter Fay, Jim Conway, Tom Shearer, Joseph Toce, George Bowker Jr.

Wenonah's tax base was insufficient to afford the additional costs that would result from "regional" policing. I concurred. Apparently that thinking has now changed as Wenonah's force is considerably larger, routinely responding to calls for assistance from police in adjoining towns. Obviously such outside activity imposes significant additional manpower and equipment costs plus added danger to our officers and increased insurance liability exposure.

Research into past newspaper reports on Wenonah law enforcement activities provide the following items of interest and historic curiosity;

February 1889 – "A meeting of citizens was held on Thursday night to devise means of protecting against burglars."

June 1900 – "The question of a lockup is now agitating the public mind. Offenders when arrested at night should not be chained to a post until taken to Woodbury in the morning."

July 1900 – "Council has taken steps toward establishing a lockup and Mrs. Lashley's barn is to be leased and refitted to that use."

August 9, 1900 – A report in the *Woodbury Daily Times* advised the construction of a "lockup" in Wenonah saying ". . . it has had a very salutary effect as it has not yet had an occupant. But our evil doers – of which we have very few – will have to keep a sharp lookout for Drummer as he is a determined sleuth."

June 1901 – "Officer Drummer still keeps his eye on tramps and locks them up overnight if they have any suspicious looks."

December 1901 – *Woodbury Times* report – Watchman J. J. Drummer "was kindly remembered by the townspeople in the gift of a handsome Smith & Wesson revolver to show that his work is appreciated."

December 1903 – "Four boys ranging in age from 10 to 14 years were discovered in town by officers Drummer and Chew begging for their supper. They were charged with vagrancy and Mayor Lorence committed them to the county jail for ten days. (Talk about tough love). They claim to have homes in New York."

March 17, 1904 – *Woodbury Times* – "Officers Drummer and Chew received word to arrest two men who had stolen a gun near Glassboro and were walking up the railroad tracks. Drummer fired several revolver shots at two men who started to run as soon as the officers made known their business. They were arrested and taken before Mayor Lorence who bound one over for the Grand Jury and gave the other ninety days in the county jail."

March 1904 – "Constable Drummer found a couple suspicious characters loitering around McCormick's grocery about 2 o'clock this morning. They said they were looking for work. Mr. Drummer put them in the lockup until daylight knowing they could not find much work in the dark."

September 1904 – *Woodbury Times* – ". . . four men were seen attempting to force entrance into the R. C. Ballinger residence. Word was sent to Watchman Drummer. They saw him coming and the only thing he could do was to shoot at them as the rogues fled."

March 1938 – A delegation of women from the local Woman's Club and the Parent-Teacher Association attended Borough Council with a plea that a daytime traffic officer be assigned to the borough to halt speeding and reckless driving.

February 1954 – Wenonah Council took steps to provide more adequate police protection with the appointment of a second regular officer.

November 1954 – Wenonah officials, police and police reserves joined in ceremonies Saturday when the borough’s new police car was placed in service. Attending were Thomas Synnott, president of the Police Reserves, Police Chief George Bowker, Councilman Charles Fredrick, Mayor William Conway, Roland Fay, Assistant Chief Walter Hain, Jerry Hammond, Paul Sargent, George Bowker Jr., Tom Shearer and James Conway.

February 1958 – Councilman Charles Fredrick announced the Wenonah police headquarters has been set up in the original West Jersey RR ticket office on N. West Avenue. It was used previously as our tax office, Shuster’s Barber Shop and more recently as the Wild Iris flower shop.

**LETTER OF THANKS TO THE
WENONAH POLICE FORCE**

Take a close look around you...at your own home and those surrounding it.... at the beautiful woods and nature trails that surround this town. Wenonah truly represents one of the few towns that can still boast a sense of community, a spirit of camaraderie, and a commitment to the town and its people. Let us NEVER lose sight of that and let us renew our own promises to enrich this town.

It is in this spirit that I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Wenonah Police Force. Their presence in this wonderful place we call home is as integral to its essence as the surrounding woods, trails, and homes.

In the 35 plus years we have called this place home, the police have played an integral role in shaping our town, and our children. As a child, I remember the police being not just authority figures, but our neighbors and friends. There was a sense of safety that we have taken for granted.

As parents raising our children here, we are thankful for their presence at the Easter egg hunts, the Fourth of July, at Halloween, as part of the DARE program, as educators for our scouts, and as behind the scene officers who patrol and make sure we sleep safely at night.

For anyone who is not familiar with the Haunted House fundraisers the police department did, they were truly events to be seen! These events raised over \$30,000 for programs to benefit our children.

They are the unsung heroes of our town and we thank them for all they do and trust that they will be able to continue to be an integral part not just of Wenonah’s history, but of its future.

Lou and Vicki McCall and Family

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

Stamp
Here

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2011

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
