

Newsletter

Volume 6 Issue 3 April 2008

MESSAGE FROM

TRUSTEE VICKI MCCALL

Dear Members;

March was designated as National Women's History Month. This recognition of Women in History was established nationally to ensure that the history of American women will be recognized and celebrated in schools, workplaces, and communities throughout the country. The stories of women's historic achievements present an expanded view of the complexity and contradiction of living a full and purposeful life. American women have played a unique role throughout the history of the Nation by providing the majority of the volunteer labor force of the Nation.

In honor of Women's History Month, I want to share memories of moments with some very special Women of Wenonah, who are no longer here with us. My membership in the Historical Society is a result if the influence of these women.

First, I wish to remember Jane Ramsay. Jane took me into this special fold of people when I came back to Wenonah. I wish I could say I remember when I first joined the Historical society, but I do not. What I DO remember are the people, the members. Jane Ramsay took me under her wing and shared with me not only her love for life, but her love for Wenonah and its people. She opened a door to the past that opened my eyes to this town in another dimension.

Her group of friends soon became people I truly admired. Her own family is a prime example of what happens when you are a true "Wenonian".

Not only do you grow up here, but you come back to raise your own families! Jane raised five children and several still live here in Wenonah or close by.

Jane and I served for four years together as officers. Under her leadership, we brought the Display cabinet that is now located in the Wenonah School. This program was implemented to educate and inspire our youth to take a closer look at their history. Many helping hands have served to procure and set up the rotating displays.

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

Betty Rose has done a magnificent job over the last several years and has stepped up the program to bring not only local displays, but many unique items the Gloucester County Historical Society.

Another woman having a profound impact on many if us was Lucy Schulz. A life long Wenonah resident, Lucy's knowledge of this town and her contributions to this town are unrivaled. She also served some mean "after Meeting" refreshments! I so enjoyed her stories from her youth

and her escapades regarding the Military Academy Cadets! She was one of the few who remember Cedar Field as a horse racetrack.

Lucy and Jane truly exemplified what our town is about. They volunteered for so many organizations and serve as role models for all to follow! We could all take a lesson from them and their commitment. We thank them and miss them!

HISTORICAL FACT

Wenonah Women in the News circa 1900 Woodbury Daily Times

"There was much interest manifest in school matters in our borough Tuesday evening. It was rumored no women were to be placed on the board and this aroused the women of our town to action and the result was the highest vote ever cast at a school election. 70 were cast for Mrs. Annie Johnson, 65 for Eldora Hurff and 62 for Ed Farr. 23 of the ballots had written on them "no taxation without representation".

APRIL MEETING PROGRAM

PATTI HRYNENKO
GLOUCO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Patti will speak generally about the operations of the very successful County Historical Society, and specifically about an 18th century desk and fireplace, an 1806 sampler, and how the objects are related.

"WENONAH"

On pages 2 and 3 more of the Marjorie Lentz 1976 book "Wenonah"

For those who want a "whole" book, an updated version is currently being written, available late 2008.

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

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

The new railroad station along the west side of the tracks of the West Jersey Railroad stood incongruous among the fields that surrounded it. Farmers had eyed the station with interest because they anticipated it would be a convenience in transporting their sweet potatoes to the Philadelphia markets. However, as the newspaper, *The Constitution* stated, the station looked far "too elegant for sweet potatoes because it boasted of "two compartments, one for the sale of tickets and joined by a comfortable passenger saloon."

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. By a special act of the State of New Jersey, the Mantua Land and Improvement Company was incorporated on February 21, 1871. The Company was authorized to lay out building lots as well as boulevards, alleys and parks. It could erect buildings for residences as well as sell and mortgage them and it could make regulations "to prevent the manufacturing or sale of intoxicating liquors" or "the carrying on of offensive trades."

The capital stock of the Company was \$150,000 with permission to increase the stock to \$300,000 if needed and it was to be divided into shares of fifty dollars each.

On March 15, 1871 the first eleven directors were elected. They were Samuel A. Whitney, General William J. Sewell, George Wood and Horatio J. Mulford who had helped formulate the resolution to organize the Company. Also elected were George S. Harris, John F. Starr, Edward Warne, Samuel Hopkins, Thomas P. Carpenter, Stephen Greene and Thomas Jones Yorke, President of the West Jersey Railroad.

In addition to the farm land in the 572-acre tract purchased by the Company, they secured a grist mill with its miller's house, the Stone House Farm dwelling as well as several other farm houses. The entire tract stretched from the Mantua Creek to

Glassboro Road and from Dilk's Pond to Bark Bridge Road. From this tract the company selected one hundred acres to be divided into building lots.

The railroad station was the core of the rectangle, one-half mile in length and one-third mile in width which comprised the original town. West Jersey Avenue bisected the town plot north and south with a seventy-five foot avenue on each side of the railroad tracks "for carriage and driving." Bisecting the plot east and west was Mantua Avenue, one hundred feet wide. All other streets, Jefferson, Monroe, Clinton and Marion extending north and south and Elm, Poplar, Cherry, Willow and Cedar extending east and west were sixty-six feet wide. Traces of Henisey's Landing Road were erased.

The Mantua Land and Improvement Company marked out the town plot into fourteen squares of twelve building lots each measuring seventy-five feet in front and one hundred and fifty feet deep. It was agreed that "only the even numbers of lots should be sold" first and only lots within the one hundred acre boundary. However Joseph D. Bates of Mantua requested a lot outside the town limits and his request was granted. The original sketch of his house with a "French roof, wooden ornamentation and 4 light windows" still exists.

A scrap of paper with jagged edges has been carefully preserved among the earliest Minutes of the Mantua Land and Improvement Company. The scrap is covered with the scribbles of names proposed by members, no doubt as they sat around a table pondering for the right word to name this "new suburban town" The names scrawled on the scrap of paper are Rosedale, Winona and Wenonah. In the Minutes of April 3, 1871 it is recorded that it was "resolved that the name of the town and lake be Winona Wenonah."

Sixteen years before 1871, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, was published. In the poem Nokomis, swinging on a grapevine on the moon fell to earth when a jealous woman severed the vine.

There among the ferns and mosses,
There among the prairie lilies
on the Muskoday, the meadow,
In the moonlight and the starlight
Fair Nokomis bore a daughter.

And she called her name Wenonah
As the first-born of her daughters.

The name Wenonah or Winona is derived from a Santee dialect word meaning a first-born daughter. The Santee Indians lived along the shores of Lake Superior where the part legendary, part historic Hiawatha lived. In 1823 Keating in his work, *The Narrative of Long's Expedition to St. Peter's River*, which is in the Lake Superior region, relates the story of a Sioux named Wenonah who committed suicide because her family insisted she marry some one she did not love. Henry Schoolcraft, a geologist and ethnologist who was a prolific writer on Indian lore, wrote *The Myth of Hiawatha and Other Oral Legends* in 1839. In the work he named Wenonah as Hiawatha's mother. Longfellow openly acknowledged he based his *Song of Hiawatha* on Schoolcraft's writings and he too named Wenonah as Hiawatha's mother. In all the stories of Wenonah or Winona her life ended tragically in early womanhood. However the words that are remembered most about Wenonah are the words of Longfellow's poem when he wrote that she;

Grew up like the prairie lilies
Grew a tall and tender maiden
With the beauty of the moonlight
With the beauty of the starlight.

In its first Annual Report in 1871 the Mantua Land and Improvement Company stated that Wenonah's lots had been measured, six hundred shade trees, mostly maples, had been planted along the avenues, streets had been graded, and a hotel was being constructed. There were already a "handsome passenger depot and freight-house and convenient turnout and wagon-sheds" at the railroad station. Also during the same year the Gloucester County Board of Freeholders was contacted concerning building a bridge across the Mantua Creek "on line of the road lately laid out leading from Wenonah to Mantua." William F. Allen, now treasurer of the Company, ordered a special train to transport the Freeholders to inspect the location. Consequently the Board of Freeholders agreed to construct the bridge and plans were developed to build "an elegant roadway" between Mantua and the railroad station. No longer was the station known as the New Mantua Station. It was now the Wenonah Station.

The Wenonah House was opened for guests in the spring of 1872. The forty-room hotel rose three stories and was crowned by a square cupola. Iron Doric columns reaching all the way to the roof surrounded three sides of the hotel and a veranda twelve feet wide provided space for promenades. From the veranda guests could stroll across South Clinton avenue to an open space being developed into parks divided by a lane. Running water and gas were installed in every room and, according to a newspaper article; it was "furnished in elegant style."

A board walk reached Clinton avenue to the railroad station where six trains a day brought guests from Philadelphia to the hotel as well as prospective buyers for Wenonah's building lots. Prospective buyers were offered free round-trip transportation on the railroad and they were personally greeted by DR. J.E. Garrison, the resident agent of the Mantua Land and Improvement Company. His annual salary was \$200 plus three percent commission on every lot he sold. Lots facing West Jersey Avenue, Mantua Avenue and the parks were priced at \$400. All the other lots were \$200. To encourage building on the lots the company loaned "one thousand dollars and the price of the lot upon mortgage for one year without interest."

An advertising brochure issued by the Company noted that Wenonah is a "favorite place for all those who are seeking country fresh air and cheap living combined with the advantage of close proximity to the city. The claims of New Jersey over Pennsylvania in respect to taxes are too well known to need more than passing mention and the notable strictness and impartiality with which the laws are administered cannot fail to recommend it to all peace-loving and law-abiding citizens." Another brochure advises that "before making your arrangements for the summer or for the year" to consider Wenonah, and that there is "no healthier location in the vicinity of Philadelphia, fine rolling country and the best of water." Also there are "boating and fishing." A statement issued by the Mantua Land and Improvement Company foretold that the towns which "hug the railroad" invariably succeed and the towns a mile away from the railroad are doomed to failure.

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
