

Wenonah Historical Society

PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090-0032

Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 2 February, 2003



Wenonah Free Public Library - See Page 2

FEBRUARY MEETING

Friday February 14th, 2003 7:30 p.m. at the Wenonah Community Center, Mantua Ave. at the Railroad.

The program for the evening will be a presentation by Victor Anderson of the history of his home at 13 West Mantua Avenue, Wenonah.

Victor will describe the rooms and features of his home in words and photographs.

Should provide for a very interesting meeting with refreshments following.

A Message from the President Rocco Doto

Dear Members,

In my first month as your new President I have found that the job of President is both exhilarating and difficult. I sincerely respect my predecessors, especially Vicki McCall and the Late Jane Ramsey. Vicki still serves on our executive board and has been a life saver with her guidance and availability with any questions that I have... And I have many.

I am also lucky to have the support of our other officers and already have

reaped the benefits of their various talents, experiences and expertise.

We have many ambitious plans for 2003. Our plans include;

- Displaying Memorabilia/learning exhibits in our elementary school.
- Exhibiting historical artifacts in our Library
- Creating a permanent museum in our beloved Train Depot, once the municipal building is completed.

WHS OFFICERS 2003

President: *Rocco Doto*
Vice Pres. *Jack Sheppard*
Secretary *Eileen Caraker*
Treasurer *Carol Wiltsee*
Corr. Sec. *Betty MacLeod*
Trustee *Vicki McCall*
Trustee *Diane Magarelli*

Meetings second Friday of each month at the Wenonah Community Center except June, July and August

We also plan to continue to offer informative programs each month and to actively publicize these programs to get as many residents interested in attending our meetings.

In fact, I have made it a personal priority to increase our membership. I have delivered Historical Society welcoming packages to all new residents that moved to our Historic town during 2002.

I think that it is so befitting or ironic that the first building by the Mantua Land & Improvement Company was the Wenonah Inn in 1872, one hundred and thirty years ago.

In addition we are planning to have Wenonah Historical Society Posters

around town announcing the date, time, and place of our meetings.

All of our meetings will be advertised in the Gloucester County Times and we will always have a message in the Wenonah Newsletter.

I also plan to add all of the major Borough organizations to our mailing lists so that our Newsletter reaches as many involved residents as possible.

I ask all of our membership to help me with increasing the membership of our organization. Please invite your neighbors and friends to join the Society.

I can't imagine why anyone living in such a jewel of a town with such a rich history not wanting to be a part of the Historical Society.

I thank all of you for being supporters and members of The Wenonah Historical Society.

Future Meetings

The March meeting program will be a presentation of the "Gibson Girl Friday meets the Victorian Lady" that you won't want to miss. Because of the anticipated larger attendance the meeting will take place at the Wenonah Elementary School All-Purpose Room. The date March 14th at 7:00 p.m.

The topic for April will be "Preservation Problem Shooting: Maintaining the Older Home" by Margaret Westfield of Westfield Architects and Preservation Consultants Co.

Did You Know?

The lands that are Wenonah today were farms specializing in the growing of sweet potatoes. The railroad delivered manure to the farmers who picked it up in the center of town.

WENONAH FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
by *Ann Zuber*

Much of what I have learned about our library has been passed on to me from those who have spent years in service to the library; Lucy Schulz, Dave and Meta O'Connor, and Carol Wiltsee.

I also spent some time reviewing documents including the minutes of the organizing body of this library-the Wenonah Library Association. This organization was the brainchild of the Sorosis Club in Wenonah in the 1890's and was formally organized and chartered in 1900. The funding for the first collection of books came from the Sorosis Club, \$150.00 raised for this purpose, plus the initial investment of the "members" of the association. The members of the original board included familiar names such as Edward Farr, Thomas Synnott, H. Lake Gilmore, Mr. Stout, Mr. Gage, and Mr. Wilkins. Meetings were held at the homes of the committee members until a room was rented in the house of Mrs. Lashley (Wenonah's Quality Shop?) behind the post office in June of that year. The committee drew up a constitution; which stated that members could have lifetime library privileges for \$50.00 or join annually for \$5.00. They hired Emma Lichty, our first librarian. In 1902, the Association hired Miss Mortie Stokes, who saw the library through many changes.

By 1905 more space was needed and the former Presbyterian Sunday school Annex was received as a donation and moved to its current

location at 8 W. Mantua Ave. The original building was half the size of the building that we now know as September Rose Studios. Between 1906 and 1908 the library was used for borough council meetings. In 1914, the Association became the Wenonah Free Public Library, a public entity to be supported in part by the Borough of Wenonah.

In a report submitted to borough

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.

council in 1921, the library claimed 600 card-holding members.

The board of trustees of the library began negotiating the purchase of the property at Clinton and Mantua Aves. with the Bilderbach family. The land was purchased and the house razed to allow for the building of the current library building, which

was donated by the Edward Farr family in 1927.

In 1988, an idea for an expansion to the building was discussed. The idea was investigated with estimates from builders and a public questionnaire and was ultimately decided against.

In 1998, in conjunction with the automation project at the Elementary School, the library set up Internet access for the public and planned to automate the collection.

One of the most interesting things I discovered while reviewing the library's history is the number of people that have been devoted to this library. The longevity is impressive. I didn't document dates for the Farr family's tenure, but there were at least 2 generations involved and their financial contribution cannot be equaled. Mortie Stokes was our librarian for 42 years, from 1902-1944. Lucy Schulz has been on the library board since April 13, 1961-that's 41 years. Meta O'Connor and Carol Wiltsee have been the mainstays at this library since 1986, when Dorothy Nugent retired after 18 years. Most of our librarians and board members have worked with the library for more than 10 years.

The library has benefited from the attention of many groups and individuals over the years. Mrs. Edward Farr and the Women's Club hosted an English Country Fair in 1923 and raised \$600.00 for the library. A Paul Stankard paperweight and a trip to Mexico were raffled to benefit the library. The Women's Club has continued to support the library with monetary, furniture, and book

donations. The Junior Women's Club has joined in this tradition.

Many families from town have chosen to suggest a library donation in memory of their deceased loved ones. The Hobson family donated the beautiful bookcases, which make up our children's section downstairs. The Hopkins/Bennett family donated the round table in the junior section downstairs. Another table in that section was donated in memory of Louise Wiler, our librarian from 1966-1978. Most recently the family of Dorothy Nugent, our librarian from 1978-1986, suggested donations be made in her name to the library. The David Ramsey family donated the audio and video display racks to the library in recent years. Mr. Ramsey has used his talents to help maintain the special atmosphere by crafting many of the improvements to match the original architecture of the building. Often families that have participated in programs at the library, such as story time, choose to donate books as a remembrance. Daniel Navins, one of our young residents, chose to refurbish the grounds of the library last year as part of his Eagle Scout Project. The project included a bench for the back yard and an irrigation system and perennial flowers for the border gardens.

While the grounds were being improved, the library board moved forward with the installation of a technology based card catalog and circulation system by hiring Anne Zuber, part time Elementary School Librarian. The system chosen is the same one used in the Wenonah

Elementary School and so would be familiar to those students. In July of 2000, the shelf list was reviewed and updated and sent to the Follett Software Co. for conversion. In January 2001, volunteers helped apply the barcode labeling necessary to use the computerized system. We began to use the system in June 2001. Since that time we have recovered many books missing for up to two years, but the biggest benefit to having the computerized system is in its search capabilities. Not only will the computer search by keyword, but it will also show if the book is checked out.

Some of our expectations for the future of the library include making connections with more of the citizens of our town. One way might be to showcase some of the historical memorabilia of Wenonah. We have been in contact with members of the Historical Society and have discussed the showcase they have had installed at the Elementary School and the possibility of something in the library. We are shopping for appropriate cabinetry. Having the library entered into the Historic Buildings Registry is being investigated.

The next step technologically would be to put our Card Catalog on the Internet. This would make it possible to search our collection from your home computer. At last spring's Ice Cream Social at the elementary school, an opportunity was given to see a demonstration of OPAC. OPAC is the On-line Public Access Catalog system.

Each book, audio book, or videotape that the library has available for circulation is

recorded. The display provides the same information that a card catalog card would show but is located by the computer in a great variety of search methods. The card drawers provided cards for each book listed under Title, Author, and Subject, with the possibility of added subject entries and series. The computer can search by Call # and Keyword. Keyword is an invaluable search tool.

Some of the services this library can provide include; quick and easy search for materials, timely access to current adult fiction, interlibrary loan access to material not on our shelves, copier and internet access, expanded hours on Wednesday (9AM-9PM), and Story Time. Story Time is growing! We have offered both Wednesday and Thursday Story Time at 10AM for Fall, Winter, and Spring sessions. We have great expectations for a really fun Summer program. Our theme is "Library Safari"! We are in the planning stages and hope to enlist the help of many local residents in whatever area they may choose to help. Those of you with artistic ability are especially welcome! We are having a planning meeting this Wednesday 3/13/2002 at 12:00 at the library.

This presentation was made before the Woman's Club of Wenonah on 3/9/2002 by Anne Zuber, director of Wenonah Free Public Library.



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Here

Wenonah Historical Society
PO Box 32
Wenonah, New Jersey 08090

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2003 – 2004

Membership Benefits

- MONTHLY NEWSLETTER MAILED TO YOUR HOME
- MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH INFORMATIVE PROGRAMS
- ACCESS TO HISTORICAL ARCHIVES AND MEMORABILIA
- NETWORK OF KNOWLEDGEABLE HISTORIANS
- HISTORICAL FIELD TRIPS

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
