

Wenonah Historical Society Newsletter

Next Regular Meeting at 7:30 P.M. on
Friday, January 13, 2012

Volume 9, Issue 9, December 2011

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Charles Horan*

Dear Members,

Happy Holidays to all! To those who have reserved a seat at our Christmas dinner and gift exchange, I look forward to seeing you on Friday, December 9th (5:00 P.M. social hour; 6:00 P.M. dinner). To those who are not attending the dinner, I hope to see you at our first meeting of 2012, which will be on Friday, January 13th at the Train Station Community Center. Our presentation will be "Wenonah before it was Wenonah."

If you need that special holiday gift, consider one from the Wenonah Historical Society. Selections include Wenonah canvas carry-all bags, Wenonah Christmas tree ornaments, and beautiful framed photos of local landmarks such as the Train Station. Please call Pat Sole (468-6661) to purchase or inquire about an item from the WHS store.

And, if you need a New Year's resolution, why not resolve to bring a neighbor to one of our meetings in 2012. That should be a easy resolution to achieve.

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER?

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 (such as the photo below), you will be able to see the colors.



Charlie Horan rings the bell from the Wenonah Inn.

Wenonah's Water (1885–1945) *by Larry Smith*

The following chronology provide's a glimpse of the history of Wenonah's water, which began with the organization of the Wenonah Water Company in 1885. The initial water system included galvanized pipes, a single well, and an experimental fire hydrant at the corner of East Mantua Avenue and North Clinton Avenue (Marjorie K. Lentz, Wenonah, 2009). Water conservation was documented as early as 1891, with restrictions on lawn watering. Wenonah's first water tower--a 100-foot standpipe--- was constructed in 1894. Meters were

installed in 1909, and the "rent" on water was raised from \$15 to \$21 per year in 1913. By 1936, the water system reached all but 22 of the 368 potential customers in the Borough.

For the most part, the chronology has been compiled verbatim from newspaper articles contained in the archives of the Wenonah Historical Society and the official records of the Borough's government (Jack C. Sheppard, Sr., Information about Wenonah, 1991).

April 15, 1885 – “The movement to secure a water supply for the Borough has been revived.”

July 1, 1885 – “In the opinion of the best informed our town will before long enjoy the luxury and advantage of water works. A preliminary meeting has been held at which the matter was fully discussed. It is proposed, if sufficient ‘water takers’ can be got, to go on with the organization, buy the land and water supply, procure estimates as to cost of reservoir construction and machinery, and make the basis of business a capital stock of \$25,000.”

July 15, 1885 – “Water works are among the early probabilities. Last Thursday the ‘Wenonah Water Company’ bought 21 acres of land included in which are the ponds from which will be drawn the water for supplying the Borough. One of the conditions of the sale was that the purchaser should carry out the project of water works.”

August 19, 1885 – “The Wenonah Water Supply Company has organized by electing Stephen Greene, President and Dr. Geo. W. Bailey, Secretary and Treasurer. Plans and specifications have been prepared and the work will at once be proceeded with.

December 1st is the time to which the Wenonah people look forward for an unlimited supply of pure and wholesome water, which they will take plain. And yes, if Woodbury gets its water supply, as it is confident it will, our Wenonah neighbors would not be doing a bad thing to draw from a common supply.”

June 4, 1891 – “The water company has issued a circular to our many citizens containing new rules and regulations governing the use of water. The circulars read---no lawns to be watered either with sprinklers or by hand except between the hours of 4 to 8 in the morning and from 4 to 8 in the evening.”

March 21, 1894 – “The Wenonah Water Company intend on increasing their water supply and are erecting a stand

pipe to be 100 feet and to be situated at the north end of the borough.”

June 5, 1894 – “The first carload of iron (plates) for the new stand pipe in Wenonah arrived last Saturday.”

June 27, 1894 – “Nine sections of the new Wenonah Water Company stand pipe have been put up, the men not stopping even in the very hot weather of last week.”

July 25, 1894 – “The new stand pipe of the Wenonah Water Co. has been completed and has been filled with water. We anticipate a test on Wenonah plumbing when the water shall be turned on with the added force over the old service.”



Wenonah's 100-foot high standpipe.

June 6, 1903 – “The Water Company is drawing off the lake at the pumping station, as a precaution, that in case the drouth keeps up, and the seven 8-inch artesian wells should become insufficient to supply the demand, fresh

water could be gotten from the lake. It seems that this is very unlikely, as they never have as yet, but the precaution is a wise one.”

January 10, 1906 – “Water superintendant Price reports that 16,000,000 gallons of water have been used here the past year, making over 200 gallons to each of the 600 inhabitants. There are now being pumped about 1500 gallons each 24 hours.”

May 16, 1906 – “The Bond Committee, composed of the following gentlemen, T.W. Synnott, E.A. Smith, H.A. Stout, W.P. Cox, R.C. Ballinger, H.S. Leap and J.M. Colbert, appointed by Borough Council to investigate and report as to the advisability of bonding the Borough to purchase the water works and establish an electric light plant in connection therewith, met in council chamber last evening, and, the sentiment of the committee was

strongly against such action. Dr. Stout was made chairman, and stated that the matter should be thoroughly investigated as it had been brought up at different times for several years past and that he had heard several taxpayers express themselves as favoring it and several who did not, and presented figures to show the present income from the water plant.

"T.W. Synnott stated that the plant today stood the water company in \$44,000.00 but that they would sell for \$30,000.00 and as a stock holder he would be glad to dispose of his stock at those figures, but as a member of the committee, he was not in favor of the town buying.

"The probable expenses of operating the plant were found to exceed the income from it.

"R.C. Ballinger stated that he thought the purchase inadvisable unless the principal could be reduced at least five per cent, per annum, and offered the following resolution, which was carried without a dissenting vote.

"That the committee deem it inadvisable to bond the Borough for the purchase of the water plant and establishing an electric light plant in connection, at the present time."

July 13, 1906 – "The pure artesian water which has always been an attractive feature to home seekers and residents here has been so bad for the last two weeks that it is unfit for any use, and pumps around town are having runs upon them like a bank in time of panic. Just what the trouble is seems to be a mystery to those in charge and the stand pipe is being emptied today to see if the new coat of paint recently applied to the inside is responsible. One of the most plausible theories yet advanced is, that one of the iron well pipes has a crack in it large enough to admit the sulphur water from the marl beds through which the wells are driven, as the odor of the water is identical to that of the marl taken out of the wells at the time they were dug. It is reasonable to presume that the Water Company will make every effort to speedily locate and remedy the cause, whatever it may be, as their service has always been of the best in the past, and as management has had a practical demonstration that virtue, patience, has about became exhausted on the part of several residents, an improvement may soon be expected."

November 5, 1909 – "In order to make an equitable charge for water, the Wenonah Water Company will place water meters on the premises of all water takers, charging according to amount used upon a minimum basis. The installing of the meters will be done during the present month and the meter rates will commence January 1st, 1910."

July 3, 1910 – "No one need go dry now as our public fountain is in order and has received a new coat of paint and looked fine on the '4th.' We also see that there is a cup placed there for all persons wishing to drink of Wenonah's cool artesian well water."

March 31, 1911 – "The Wenonah Water Company offers to rent its plant to the Borough of Wenonah for the sum of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per annum, payable semi-annually for the period of ninety-nine years, the Borough to operate the plant and pay all expenses, including taxes, extensions, etc."

April 20, 1912 – "A sample of the Wenonah artesian water, can be seen in the Times window. It was drawn from a faucet in the kitchen of Postmaster English's house and has not been filtered.

"Wenonah has six wells about 128 feet deep, and the machinery is as good today as it was 17 years ago. All the wells have a splendid flow. Wenonah water has brought many people to that place as residents."

September 3, 1912 – "Now that we own our own water plant it's right that we have an efficient one, and to get this it takes money, but it will pay in the long run. It will take at least \$10,000. We should take up all the mains less than four inches, take out all dead ends, put in a new eight inch well and change our plant so it can be run cheaper by installing an oil burning engine. This is a matter for the citizens to take up; not Council, as the citizens bought the plant. But no doubt Council will help, as they are up-to-date and will be ready and willing to have an up-to-date water plant. We regret Council is hampered by the lack of money, in making these extensions. It is also wrong for Council in making extensions by following after the old water company. If they continue to do this in later years it will take thousands of dollars to put things in shape."

May 15, 1913 – "It is reported that an ordinance regulating the operation of the Borough's water plant has been introduced in Council and was passed first and second reading at the meeting of May 8th. It is understood that if this ordinance becomes effective the water rent will be raised from the present rate of \$15 per year minimum to \$20 per year minimum and that the allowance of 50,000 gallons per year will remain the same. In addition to this it is said that \$1 per year will be charged each year for the use of the meter, making the total rental per year \$21 in place of the old rate of \$15.

"If this ordinance is passed at the next meeting of Council it will undoubtedly become effective at once, in which case it is presumed that bills for an additional quarter will be received by the consumers this year.

"It is not thought that this increase will be extremely popular as one of the chief arguments advanced in favor of the Borough purchasing the plant was that the citizens should secure the plant themselves and thereby protect from any increase in the yearly rentals. It seems to be the general impression however that this increase cannot become effective until sanctioned by the State Board of Public Utilities Commissioners."

August 4, 1913 – "The stand pipe, after being painted, looks much better and increases in a way the beauty of the town. The color, as it is now a dark green within five feet of the top, and the other five feet being white, harmonizes with the surroundings."

January 6, 1916 – "The new pumping station was opened for inspection on January 1st, from 2 to 4 p.m."

January 7, 1916 – "According to the Engineer's reports there was 20,601,440 gallons of water pumped during the year (1915), an average of 1,716,786 gallons per month and 56,442 gallons a day. Based on our census of 1915 which gives our population as 840, this would mean that the average consumption of water per capita would be 67 gallons per day or 24,455 gallons per year."

August 13, 1916 – "The inspector from the State Department of Health was down Friday morning to inspect the new artesian well, which has a depth of two hundred and sixteen feet. He filled a bottle with water from the well, sealed it, and shipped it to Trenton."

February 16, 1920 – "Sealed proposals for painting the stand pipe 15 feet diameter by 100 feet high at Wenonah, N.J., will be received by the Water Committee of the Council of the Borough of Wenonah, in the Council Chamber at the Fire House in said Borough on Tuesday, March 2, 1920, at 7:30 p.m.

The outside and inside of the stand pipe to be scraped and wire brushed, removing all scale and rust therefrom, after which there shall be applied one coat of paint or iron coating on the inside of the stand pipe and two coats of paint on the outside of the stand pipe."

May 26, 1923 – "A special session of the Wenonah Borough Council was held last evening and action was taken whereby the borough will supply Mantua with water for domestic purposes. The matter will be referred to the Public Utility Commission for approval but the borough under the circumstances has anticipated their approval, and a pipe has been laid, above ground, connecting the Wenonah water service with Mantua service pipe."

May 31, 1923 – "Until further notice water for household purpose may be used without restriction.

"Water for sprinkling and other use may be used from 7 A.M. to 12 noon daylight saving time. You are urged to use water for real need only."

August 15, 1925 – "George S. Miller & Co., of Pitman, were awarded the contract for laying of water mains for the Borough of Wenonah by the Borough Council of that place and the solicitor was authorized to draw up the contract.

"The work to be done on Mantua avenue consists of laying 6-inch water mains from Clinton avenue to a point 75 feet west of West Jersey avenue, and from Princeton avenue to Woodbury avenue. A 4-inch main will be laid from Garfield avenue to Hayes avenue."

May 15, 1926 – "Steps to relieve the present condition of the Wenonah water plant and the low pumpage of the artesian wells were taken at the regular meeting of the borough council last night. Council was told of the present needs of the plant by Mr. Kauffman, an expert engineer in that line.

"Mr. Kaufmann, who has made a preliminary survey of the water system in the borough, said that the most important thing to be done was to have the wells blown as they were exceedingly dirty, this being the cause of the shortage of pumping. He said that some of the wells were twenty-five years old and that they had not been cleaned, according to records for seventeen years.

"Another cause of the hard pumpage encountered is the fact that the water strata throughout the state has lowered because of the demand for artesian well water. Mr. Kaufmann said that he felt if they were properly cleaned it would solve the problem. In relation to the fact that the water is of a rather milky nature, Mr. Kaufmann said that this also was probably due to the dirty wells.

"He also recommended placing of a water meter at the water plant to measure the water pumped, as well as suggesting several minor remedies that would result in the lowering of the cost of pumping.

"Councilman Morrell reported that he had received a price from Reidpath and Potter for the blowing of the wells. The price quoted was \$3.50 an hour for two men and equipment, borough to furnish fuel and water. Minor details will raise this cost somewhat.

"A motion was then carried that the Water Committee let the contract for the blowing of the wells and to employ engineer Kaufmann to supervise the work and to make further changes."

August 10, 1928 – "Water Committee advised Council of the serious condition of the water pumping facilities, one

steam boiler is broken down and useless, and advise in their opinion Council should replace the old steam boiler with a diesel motor and new pump."

Council authorized an emergency purchase of a 40 horsepower diesel engine and 500 gallon per minute pump.

May 9, 1931 – "An offer of \$500 for the purchase of a privately owned water main on Maple avenue was authorized in a resolution adopted last night by Wenonah council. It was adopted on the recommendation of Councilman Knollin Cox, chairman of the committee that has been investigating the purchase.

"The four inch main is approximately 1400 feet in length and serves nine properties at the present time. It is owned by T.W. Synnott and T.W. Townsend.

"The borough desires its purchase in order to provide fire protection to residents in that section of the borough. The installation of 110 feet of main to connect with the section it is proposed to purchase was also authorized by council."

June 10, 1933 – "The borough of Wenonah will fight against compliance with an order issued by the State Board of Health for the installation of a chlorinator at their water pumping station.

"This decision was reached last night by council, after Councilman Knollin Cox, water committee chairman, reported receipt of the state order, which requires installation of the apparatus by July 15 in order to improve the water supply.

"The order, together with all previous correspondence between the borough and the state department, was referred to Borough Solicitor Oscar B. Redrow.

"I don't know what to make of it," Cox said. "Their laboratory reports on samples of water taken from our system show the water to be free of contamination, and then they send us this resolution ordering a treatment for purification of the supply, declaring the water not fit for consumption. It's all d ___ poppycock."

Tests of water made recently by chemists hired by the borough water department have shown the water to be free of contamination agreeing with last state analysis received by the borough.

"According to Cox, he was told last January by representatives of the state department that 85 per cent of the water supply in the state was chlorinated and that it was the department's aim to have all water given such treatment.

"Test taken at that time showed no contamination and the regular April quarterly report was also satisfactory."

July 11, 1936 – "Only 22 water services in the entire borough are not connected and Wenonah has reached a new high in water customers with a total of 346, Councilman Knollin B. Cox, chairman of the water committee, reported at the regular meeting of council last night."

March 5, 1945 – "Wenonah dedicated its new 12-inch well Saturday with appropriate ceremonies.

"Councilman Knollin B. Cox, chairman of the water committee, called on Rev. Carlton N. Nelson, pastor of the Wenonah Methodist Church, for the invocation. Mr. Cox then introduced A.C. Schultes, the contractor, and Charles Mickle, who did the electrical work, and called on Mr. Mickle to unlock the pumping house and turn the key over to the borough clerk, Charles M. Hobson.

"Mr. Cox then addressed the councilmen and citizens present, explaining the many steps taken from the time of the well's inception, first securing the permission of the State Water Policy Commission for the right to drill the well; then the numerous details necessary to be submitted to the State Board of Health as to plans and specifications drawn up by Borough Engineer Wm C. Cattell and County Engineer Wm H. Baum.

"Then the final approval of the State Board of Health as to equipment and careful analysis of the water supply. All of which passed the test and on February 13, 1945 the State Board of Health notified the borough of their full approval as to plans and specifications and that the water was free from contamination of any kind.

"Mr. Cox then called on Joseph E. Truncer, who started the wheels in motion of the original steam pump of the old Wenonah Water Co. on July 5, 1896, to throw the electric switch of the new electric pump controlling the 12-inch well, 320 feet deep and capable of pumping 600 gallons per minute.

"Mayor William I. Conway and ex-mayor H. Lake Gilmour then threw the electric motor controls and the citizens of Wenonah began to receive the first water from the new well.

"The borough is now in a safe position as to quality and volume of water for years to come. And the well is completely paid for from accumulated funds of the water department without any additional expense to our taxpayers."

WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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WENONAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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