

All About Blueberries at Ocean Grove Historical Society Meeting

Imagine having a dream that carries you through a long life of 83 years – creating and selling the best blueberries in the world. That's the dream a young girl known as "Miss Lizzie" created for herself on her family's south Jersey cranberry farm over 130 years ago.

Paula J. Newcomer, local New Jersey poet and author, will present a program, "Muncha Buncha Blueberries" from her historical

nonfiction book, "The Blueberry Girl. The Story of Elizabeth Coleman White," at the Ocean Grove Historical Society's annual meeting, Mon., Sept. 28 at 7 p.m at the Francis Asbury Manor, 70 Stockton Avenue, Ocean Grove.

The program is free and features tasting blueberries, and hands-on experience for guests.

Newcomer's presentation is about "Miss Lizzie," a real girl from the south Jersey Pinelands

who tamed the wild huckleberry and created all the blueberries we eat today. Elizabeth White's story is little-known, the remarkable tale of a girl who dreamed in the early 1900's of creating crops of blueberries like the cranberries sold from the White's family farm. Her pioneering dream earned her the title of the "Blueberry Queen," and her home is known as the birthplace of the modern blueberry.

"When I visited Elizabeth's historic home and farm in Browns Mills, New Jersey, I was hooked," Newcomer said. "Here was a feisty woman, ahead of her time, who dreamed of making the world a better place. She was a true entrepreneur. Her determination and drive led her to many firsts for women. She worked with the local Pineys she knew so well to collect the best huckleberries from the woods, and a celebrated scientist to plant and cultivate those berries. She was the



Paula Newcomer, poet and author, will present a program about blueberries at the Ocean Grove Historical Society's meeting Oct. 28.

first to use cellophane on her blueberry boxes, even though others questioned this idea. She honored the Pinelands people

who helped her find berry bushes in the woods they knew so well by naming the berries after them. She was still working on the farm right up to her death in 1954."

Newcomer moved to the Jersey shore from a 15-acre mini-farm in Lakewood, New Jersey more than thirteen years ago. "At our farm, our two sons baked blueberry tarts with me each spring. Like Elizabeth, I've always loved the outdoors and gardening."

A journalist and writer for more than 35 years, Newcomer has published her poetry and fiction in the North American Review, Barrow Street, the Journal of New Jersey Poets, and the new renaissance. Her essays and articles have appeared in The New York Times The Mother Earth News, and others. Her book will be available for purchase at the meeting and attendees have a chance to win a jar of homemade blueberry jam from the General Store at Whitesbog Village.

