



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 27 Number 4

April 2004

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Wednesday, April 21
7:00 PM**

The Angel Quilters of the Underground Railway

James Perry has been studying quilts and this connection for years. Come to learn of the Angel Quilters.

Refreshments.

Carleton Hall

**1006 Old Bass River
Road, Dennis**

**Saturday, May 15
1:00 to 4:00 PM**

Capt. Seth Crowell From Sailor to Sena- tor. Special maritime exhibit telling of Capt.

Crowell's extraordi-
nary life, including
time in Dartmoor
Prison in the War of
1812.

**Josiah Dennis Manse
77 Nobscussett Road
Dennis**

June Openings

**Josiah Dennis Manse
June 26th 1-4 PM
Jericho House &
Barn, June 27th 1-4**

Music Makes History Come Alive

At the February covered dish luncheon we were tempted by the most wonderful dishes, including "The Empress of Trifles". (We're wishing we had ALL those great recipes, but if we don't hear from Mrs. Roland Kelley soon, we're going to hunt her down for that trifle!) Mary Kuhrtz set up an interesting display of ceramics as a result of her "dig" on the old Crowell property on Quivet Neck, and after lunch Ben Thacher taught us to appreciate how the music of World War I presented a picture of those days and times. Following Ben's talk Nancy Thacher Reid led us in a sing-along of the old tunes. Ben has graciously allowed us to print his talk for those of you who missed it, but it just won't be the same. He sure can tell a joke and sing a song!

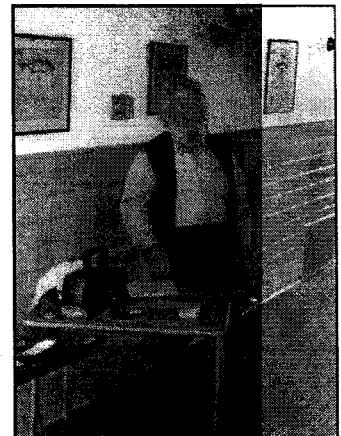
Ben Thacher's Short History of World War I Through the "Sounds of Music"

1914—War started in Europe between the Central powers, mainly Germany and Austria, and the Allies, France, England, Italy, etc.

President Wilson proclaimed US Neutral and urged citizens to be "impartial in thought as well as action," and "We are too proud to fight!!"

It was rather a calm summer over here. A man was arrested for appearing on the beach in a sleeveless bathing suit. A girl was arrested for doing a split on the dance floor. Eddie Rickenbacker won a prize for auto racing. There was a little fracas when we briefly invaded Mexico. The Castles danced; there were tango teas. Mostly the songs in 1914 were gentle songs: *By the Beautiful Sea, The Missouri Waltz, There's a Little Spark of Love Still Burning*. But one song at least spoke in a fun manner of the Army. A ditty called *Sister Suzy's Sewing Shirts For Soldiers* was a big hit for singer Al Jolson.

Before we got into the war, a lot of anti-war sentiment was in the songs. A sentimental number was *The Mother Land, The Father Land, The Land of My Best Girl* and *Lorraine, My Beautiful Alsace Lorraine*.



Ben Thacher
Photo by Nancy Howes

(Continued on page 2)

We were a little mixed about which side to be on. There were a lot of German immigrants, good people, and it was hard to hate the good-natured grocer, the butcher at the corner, the brewers of that fine German beer, the Hamburger, and even the good old American hot dog which was just a piece of bread wrapped around a German wiener.

1915—The Lusitania was sunk by a German sub; the song: *When The Lusitania Went Down.*

1916—Wilson was reelected. “He kept us out of the war.” So, *Our Hats Are Off To You, Mr. Wilson.* A group of songs, not written to be a set, started the pre-war days with *I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier.* As war neared a lyric said, “It would be a different story, If they trampled on Old Glory, Then I'd be proud to be the mother of a soldier.” Then as war became inevitable, *America, Here's My Boy.*

Strangely, there was a rash of Hawaiian songs which became popular preceding and during the war: *Yak a Hula Hicky Dula; Down Honolulu Way; I'm Down in Honolulu Looking Them Over.*

1917—On April 2nd the US declared war on the Central Powers “to keep the world safe for democracy.” On June 5th there was the first draft and our army began to grow—from 200,000 in 1914 to 4,800,000 by the war's end. The stock market, as well as businesses, closed on this Draft Day, and also on the next Draft Day in September of 1918. By June there were US troops in France, and by October 1917 there were American soldiers in combat.

Herbert Hoover was appointed Food Administrator with his slogan “Food will win the war!” he urged women at home to save, and to grow home gardens, and to can produce for home use. “Eat all you can, and can what you can't.” There were special meatless, wheatless, and heatless days declared as a form of rationing. Wall Street and most nonessential businesses kept closed for the heatless winter days. Used cooking fat was collected, and peach pits were saved to make filters for gasmasks.

Liberty Bonds and stamps were sold to support the war. Bond drives were held with famous people present. Kids were urged to buy stamps: “Lick a stamp and lick the Kaiser!”

In 1917 you could buy a Model T Ford for \$525, and many of the topical jokes concerned the “Tin Lizzy”:
When one Ford passes another Ford, what time is it? Tin past tin!
F. O. R. D. = Found On Road Dead

Radio was in its infancy, but piano rolls were popular and most homes had some instrument, even if just a harmonica (Oops, they were German.), or ukulele or guitar. Of course there was the phonograph. A record cost 50-75 cents, but you could buy a red “Cameo” (not the best bands) for 39 cents, and “Little Wonders” (about the size of a CD with only one song) for a dime. There were singers and piano players down at the Five and Ten to demonstrate the latest songs and sell you the record or sheet music.

Silent movies were very popular, with a piano or, in big theatres, an organ to supply musical accompaniment. The show, as well as nearly all public gatherings, started with a sing-along with lyrics projected on the screen—sort of a mass karaoke.

There were songs about everything. **Fear:** *When the War is Over, Will There be any Home Sweet Home-*

and *If I'm Not at Roll Call*. **Funny songs:** *If He Can Fight Like He Can Love, Then Good-Bye Germany* and *They're All Out of Step But Jim*. There were **fighting songs and love songs**. They sang about the girls they left behind: *Good Bye, Sally; Give Me a Kiss, Mirandy; K-K-K Katy*. They sang about the girls that went with them—the Red Cross nurses, the Salvation Army “Sallys”, and the “Hello Girls” who manned the AEF switch board. They sang about performers such as Elsie Janus of Broadway and Vaudeville fame, who was called “the Darling of the AEF. *Rose of No-Man's Land; I Never Believed in Angels; and That Salvation Lassie of Mine*. Then there were the girls they found “over there”—*Oo La La, Oui Oui; Oui, Oui, Marie; Charmaine; I'm Crazy Over Every Girl In France; My Belgian Rose*.

They sang about leaving for war—*Good-Bye Broadway, Hello France; We're All Going Calling on the Kaiser; Just Like Washington Crossed the Delaware, General Pershing Will Cross the Rhine*—and what they were going to do when they got there: *We'll Knock the Heligo out of Heligo into Heligo Land* and *We're Going to Hang the Kaiser*.

There were songs about being in the service. *Good Morning Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip* and *Would You Rather be a Colonel with an Eagle on his Shoulder, or a Private with a Chicken on his Knee?*

Give My Regards to Broadway was popular, though it was written in 1904 for **Little Johnny Jones**. And of course, *Over There* which was written on the day the US declared war on Germany, April 6, 1917. Cohan received a Special Medal of Honor for this song which was presented by FDR in 1940. Israel Baline, born in Russia, moved here in 1892 at the age of 4. He was drafted into the Army and asked by the “brass” to write a show for the Army. The show called *Yip Yap Hank* netted \$80,000 for the war effort. The song? *Oh, How I Hate to Get Up In the Morning*. And Israel of course was Irving Berlin. He wrote another song which didn't make it into the show but was revived in 1939: *God Bless America!*

Group sing-alongs were encouraged by the government as good for morale and song leaders were supplied with books of lyrics which were given away. Singing was big time—here and with the troops abroad. In fact there were reports that the armies on both sides in the trenches sang hymns together on Christmas, 1917—and then went back to the killing.

Many of the songs contained war propaganda, urged by the government. At least two songs were censored. On the Orpheum Vaudeville Circuit *It's a Good Time for the Old Men When the Young Men go to War* and *I Don't Want to Get Well, I'm in Love With a Beautiful Nurse* were not considered to be in the best interests of the draft. Federal officers forbade them to be sung and demanded the publisher destroy all copies. As the draft progressed, the Government banned all songs with a peace theme as being German propaganda. By the way, a firm in Baltimore, the Fuld Factory, couldn't keep up with the demand for Ouija boards. The most often asked question? “When will the boys come home?”

A Zeppelin flying low over the North Shore dropped prize tickets as a promotion for the Bond drive. The winner received a German helmet complete with the legend “Gott Mitt Uns” or God is With Us—to which the Doughboys replied, “We got mittens, too.” By 1918 anger at the Germans, now called Huns, had swept the country. Sauerkraut was popular, but like French fries a year or so ago, the name was changed. They called it “Liberty Cabbage”. A former baseball player, now called Preacher Billy Sunday, had his own war against Satan and Demon Rum. He was against the whiskey kings, the German warlords, and Suffragettes.

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The Way We Were World War I and its Music, cont.

Thanks to Ben Thacher

At least one song was published in 1918 which looked toward a future war. *Every Day Will Be Sunday When The World Goes Dry* forecasted the coming of prohibition, which was pretty much settled before the "Boys" were home to vote.

Life in the trenches was ugly. The boys had a slogan that summer: "Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken by Christmas!"

November 7, 1918 was a strange day. There were signs in the store windows saying such things as "Closed for the Kaiser's Funeral!" and "Too Happy to Work!" There were parades and huge bonfires and great crowds gathered. Then word came down—"False Alarm!", or in this case, "False Armistice." Then just a few days later, the real peace was finalized.

November 11, 1918, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month World War I ended.

By the end of 1919 *Johnny Came Marching Home!*

