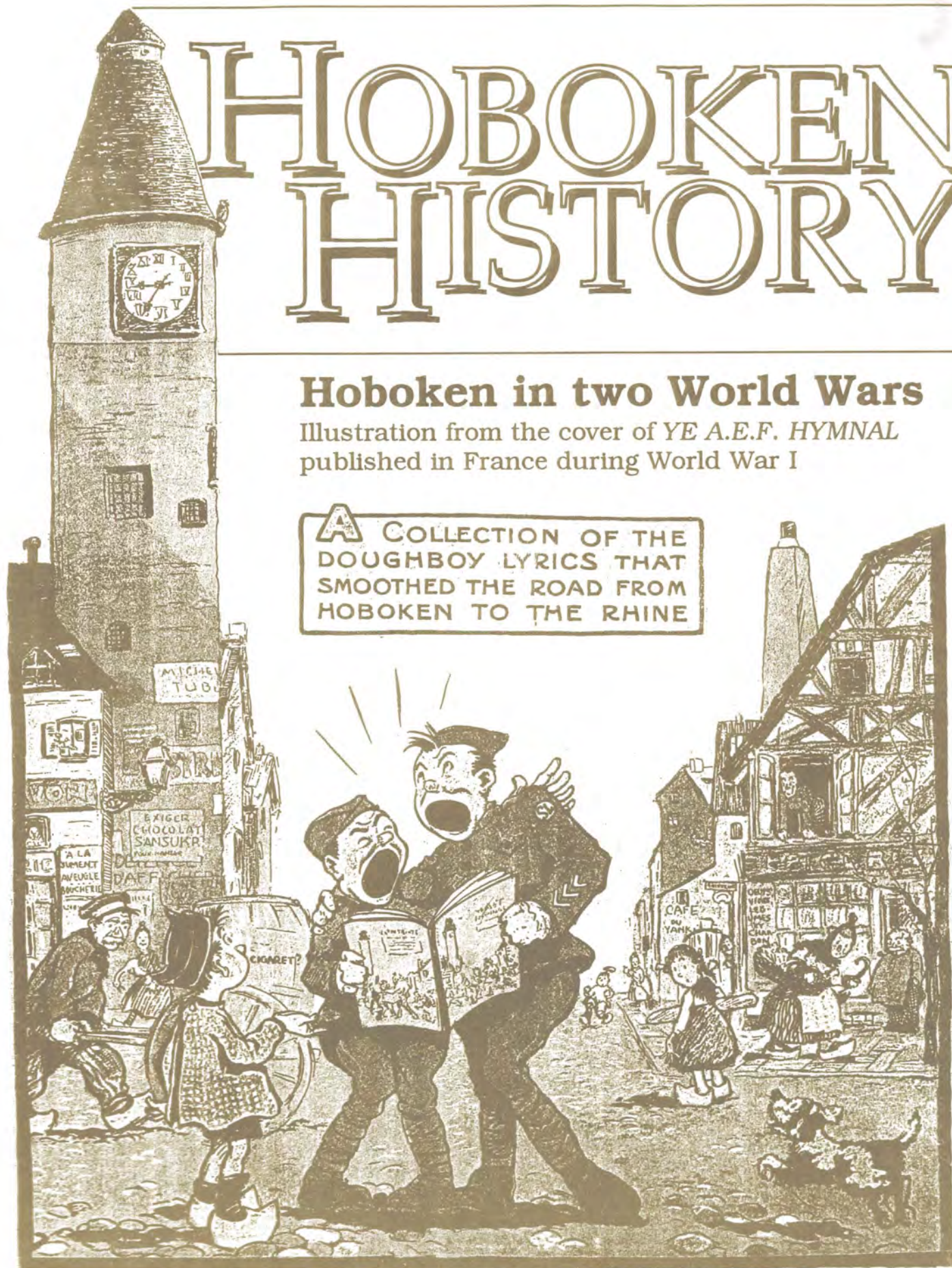


HOBOKEN HISTORY

Hoboken in two World Wars

Illustration from the cover of *YE A.E.F. HYMNAL*
published in France during World War I

A COLLECTION OF THE
DOUGHBOY LYRICS THAT
SMOOTHED THE ROAD FROM
HOBOKEN TO THE RHINE



The Magazine of the Hoboken Historical Museum
HOBOKEN NJ

NUMBER 10

1994

HOBOKEN HISTORY

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NEW EXHIBIT OPENS

Hudson County Goes to War, 1940-1945: Hudson County Residents' Contributions to the War Effort is the title of the Museum's eighth annual exhibition, which opened Friday, May 20, 1994 at City Hall.

At the reception, individual contributions to historic preservation were honored with awards presented by the Hoboken Historic Preservation Commission.

Local World War II veterans spoke about their experiences. Former commanders of Hoboken's VFW Post 107 provided rich portraits of the city in the War years. Thomas Hickey recalled with humor and fondness the gritty, pre-war waterfront city. Stanley Silver, commander of Jewish War Veterans Hoboken Post 55, recounted the contributions of Jewish war veterans and the town's multi-ethnic roots. And William Van Wie encouraged the audience to remember veterans' contributions and sacrifices. We thank them for enriching the evening.

To be commended for help in making the evening

a success are the NJ Historical Commission for financial support; the Jersey Room of the Jersey City Public Library for vintage photographs; the Museum trustees for installation assistance and presentations on Museum projects; Delfino's and Vito's Deli for food donations; the City Hall staff; Bob and Terry Castellano; and Kathy DePalma.

The show was well-covered in local newspapers, including large photo spreads in the *Hoboken Reporter*, *Jersey Journal*, and *Star-Ledger*. Hudson County goes to War will remain on display at City Hall through May 1995. Please visit and pick up a complimentary copy of the 20-page exhibition publication.

HOW WORLD WAR II ENDED FOR

ONE HOBOKEN LONGSHOREMAN

This is part of the talk Thomas Hickey gave at the opening of the exhibit.

"I joined the navy and shipped out from the Todd shipyard. During the Normandy invasion, our LST-384 was hit with a V-2 rocket. Three officers and three enlisted men were killed and many were injured.

"We left the ship and were put in a rest camp in Scotland. From there, home and 30 days survivor's leave. I then got married. Going to take the ferry to New York (and Radio City), I spotted an LST in Todd Shipyard, and lo and behold it was my LST-384, towed from England, being repaired.

"All my fellow workers took my wife and me to the local bars, with all the longshoremen. That was our honeymoon. After 50 years of marriage, we shall never forget. And we never got to Radio City."

MUSEUM SHOP OPENS

Museum T-shirts, posters, and publications can now be bought in City Hall at the Hoboken Historic Preservation Commission office, Room 22, on the second floor. See Kathy DePalma. Payment must be made by check only.

← SOME OF THE VETERANS AT THE MUSEUM'S WORLD WAR II EXHIBIT

From left to right:

Lou Muser, Thomas Hickey, Frank Oberfeld, William Van Wie.

Photo by Lou Muser

More Museum News, p. 22



"HEAVEN, HELL, OR HOBOKEN"

Our town during World War I

by Howard B. Furer

When World War I broke out in Europe in the summer of 1914, the United States experienced a temporary business recession and a sharp drop in immigration. Although immigration would be curtailed for the duration of the conflict, the American economy would not. By 1915, allied war orders had revived American industrial production, and all phases of the economy were being stimulated. Most American cities were immediately affected as the pace of industrial and commercial activity quickened. Hoboken was no exception.

Hoboken, with its excellent ocean port, marine and rail terminals, and varied manufacturing establishments, experienced not only a temporary economic boom, but also a permanent industrial-commercial expansion. Our docks and piers, which served a multitude of luxury liners and steamship companies, were rapidly transformed into a major port for the export of food-stuffs and military supplies to a hungry Europe.

Soon the city appeared to be overrun by brokers and speculators seeking quick profits, contractors and manufacturers wanting to take advantage of Hoboken's maritime facilities, and dozens of farmers and merchants, to make sure their products were shipped out first. Hoboken prospered. Its restaurants and saloons were crowded, its hotels jammed. Employment was high, and the waterfront reverberated 24 hours a day.

The war seemed to be everywhere, once the US entered the conflict on April 6, 1917. Hoboken's harbor, already crowded with cargo vessels carrying goods to the allied powers in Europe, now prepared for war. Battleships, cruisers, and smaller

craft were anchored in the harbor, and aircraft hovered overhead. But what truly gave Hoboken its special wartime flavor were the thousands of soldiers, sailors, and

marines who daily crowded into the small city.

Hoboken's experience with World War I was

unique, for no other US city, large or small, maintained as feverish a pace on its docks and piers. The harbors of New York, Boston, Newport, Charleston, and a dozen other ports were busy as never before, but the immense volume of tonnage that entered and cleared the port of Hoboken outstripped all the others.

The unprepared US built a gigantic war machine

clumsily at first, but steadily and impressively. Nearly 4,000 federal, state, and local government agencies were created to see that men, money, and materials were directed towards the war effort. Troops were raised, trained, and equipped, and the army was enormously enlarged. However, to get men into the armed forces was one thing; to get them overseas quickly was quite another. As early as January 1917, the Department of War, headed by Newton D. Baker, had decided that one East coast port would be used almost exclusively for troop



Corporal Joseph Lippman, former Hoboken resident, father of this journal's editor, in France during World War I.

Troop train at the Hoboken piers. The third story of the building had been added by the government to house the offices for troop transportation.



embarkations. After some consideration and several meetings with Hoboken's city fathers, it was decided that Hoboken would be able to fill this need. Mayor Patrick R. Griffin happily accepted the government's decision, and stated that he would do everything in his power, as chief magistrate of the city, "to help facilitate the transport of American boys to the fighting fronts." Hoboken's city council concurred with these sentiments wholeheartedly. They would soon regret the decision: it would immeasurably increase the city's prosperity, but would also unleash a variety of forces which the city authorities would not like and would not be able to control.

Government control was imposed upon Hoboken, the "most German" of all New Jersey cities.

A number of "known" German agents were arrested by Secret Service men. Federal agents with a company of armed soldiers seized the North German Lloyd and Hamburg-American docks and vessels. At the time, many believed that these ships, including the massive liner *Vaterland*, would carry American troops to the fighting fronts in Europe. "Poetic justice" declared the *Jersey Observer*: "the Huns will get what they deserve..." But, this grand strategy never materialized, as the German crews of the ships sabotaged the engine rooms of their vessels, forcing the ships to remain at their piers until the following June. In addition to the confiscation of enemy property, the government seized the larger portion of the steamship properties of American and British origin as a war measure, and declared that it would hold them for "the duration."

The people of Hoboken joined fellow Americans in raising

funds for Liberty Loan Drives and the Red Cross. Some gave speeches before patriotic meetings, while others participated in community sings to boost morale. During the succeeding weeks, Hobokenites marched in the streets to help collect funds, and to bid farewell to the troops leaving the US through their city.

The first ships carrying AEF troops

were 14 vessels that left Hoboken on June 14, 1917. Aboard were 11,001 Regular Army officers and men, a few nurses, and 103 "casual civilians."

As the soldiers, sailors and marines piled into Hoboken, the total population of the city expanded to an abnormal high. In addition, thousands of workers were brought to the city. They, too, increased the already swollen population totals. Hoboken grew from a moderate sized city of 39,000 people in 1917 to more than 60,000 by the end of the war.

Severe shortages of food occurred, as most of the local foods were bought by the federal government to feed the troops. While butter, eggs, and

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meat were all scarce from time to time, shortages of sugar caused the greatest difficulties. Store owners would not sell sugar to customers they did not know, or to people who did not purchase any other item. Hoarding became quite serious, prompting the city's Commissioner of Health to undertake a door-to-door search for hidden sugar. Basements, attics, and back rooms were all checked, and sometimes a hidden cache of as much as 500 pounds was discovered and confiscated. At the height of the shortage, sugar cards were issued. The first were pink, and the system seemed to be working well until it was discovered that several unscrupulous city employees had sold or given extra sugar cards to their friends. As a result, the pink cards were invalidated, and blue cards were issued, but only to mothers who could prove that they had babies under 18 months old. The scarcity of sugar lasted until the beginning of 1918.

The food shortages caused the city to undertake "heroic" programs. There were "food conservation weeks," during which families ate as little as possible, attended government-financed lectures concerned with conserving food, took cooking lessons offered as a public service, and went to "food saving" meetings. At the cooking classes, they were taught to make "liberty cakes," and use

General Pershing, leader of the American Expeditionary Force in France promised the troops they would be in "Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken by Christmas."

potatoes in a variety of new ways. Groups of Hoboken women canvassed different neighborhoods in the city trying to get people to sign pledge cards which promised that they would conserve food. Citizens reluctant to do so soon found their names published in the local press. The shame of being labeled unpatriotic caused recalcitrant Hobokenites to comply readily. The newspapers even supplied convenient cards that could be clipped out and mailed into the local food conservation office. Thousands of Hoboken Boy Scouts distributed posters containing slogans such as "Food Will Win the War."

Fuel supplies, especially coal, were even less abundant than food. As a conservation measure, "heatless Mondays" were observed in the city. All buildings, both public and private, did

without heat, and, as a result most business establishments in Hoboken were closed down on Mondays. Only the hospitals were permitted to burn coal on Mondays, but even in these institutions, less than the normal amount was used. Sometimes schools were forced to shut down because there was not sufficient coal to heat the buildings. The local press again helped out. Any person needing coal would fill out a form that was printed in the newspaper, stating how much coal he needed, have it notarized, and bring it to the newspaper office. There a specially created department would review his request, and if valid, would assign a coal dealer to service his needs. Very often, those who purchased their coal from private dealers were cheated, receiving 70 to 80 pounds instead of the 100 pounds they had ordered. So serious did the situation become in Hoboken, that the newspapers reported a number of people had frozen to death in their houses or apartments during an especially cold night in January, 1918.

Ice, too, was very difficult to obtain, so the city regulated its sale and established a uniform price of 20 pounds for 10¢. The ice had to be weighed in front of the customer, and ice dealers' scales were periodically checked by city inspectors. This new law, which went into effect in September,

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1917, was published in the newspapers with the hope that all Hobokenites would know their "ice rights."

There was little glory, but a lot of hard work for the Hoboken branch of the Woman's Land Army of America, who fought by "planting seeds and pulling weeds." Home "victory gardens" were encouraged, and growing contests were held. A city farm was started in the western section of Hoboken, and lessons in farming were provided for both men and women. During the summer of 1917, the Junior Industrial Army of New Jersey was organized. It recruited high school boys to work on farms. The *Jersey Observer* carried application blanks, and more than 500 Hoboken teenagers applied. Younger children helped, too, being among the best of the "Peach Stone Savers," [peach stones were used in gas masks] and collectors of bits of coal in ash piles. Projects of a similar nature were initiated from Maine to California.

The charge of poten-

tial disloyalty had been hurled, before America entered the war, at foreign-born residents of Hoboken, especially the Germans, who made up a little over 40 per cent of the population. Most of these men worked at the docks and lived in houses on or around River Street. Most were not as yet American citizens, but they had been here for years, and many had children born in America. These Germans were declared to be "enemy aliens" although their sentiments and loyalty were unquestionably with their adopted country. They had not caused any trouble, but were viewed suspiciously. On the day Congress declared war on Germany, 250 men were fired from their jobs on the Hoboken docks for nothing more than the fact that they were German. River Street, the heart of the German section of Hoboken, was declared a military zone and placed off limits to enemy aliens. German families by the hundreds were evicted, German restaurants and shops were closed, and a series of official raids were conducted to ferret out traitors and espionage agents.

Two hundred Hoboken Germans were arrested and taken to Ellis Island to be deported back to Germany. By Federal law no enemy alien could reside within a half a mile of any government base or military zone. However, this statute proved inoperable because Hoboken was only one mile square, and the law would have required the mass relocation of at least 90 per cent of the German population, not to speak of the Hungarians, Austrians, and Turks who were also well represented in the city. The government rescinded its original order, declaring Germans could remain in their own section of town "if they behaved." The one exception was River Street itself.

Self-appointed guardians of America hunted down "spies,"

even after the initial xenophobia toward Germans died down. They beat up Germans they suspected of disloyalty, and stopped young men on the streets and accused them of draft-dodging. In July, 1918, Hoboken witch hunters conducted a survey of "the Huns entrenched in City hall," but another and less



10M800— Prepaid Wool Diagonal \$3.89	10M802— Prepaid Velvet Corduroy \$5.90	10M804— Prepaid All Wool Mixture \$4.98	10M534 Prepaid Woven Plaid Gingham 95c	10M536 Prepaid Dress with Coat \$2.39	10M538 Prepaid Striped Batiste \$1.59	10M540 Prepaid Lace Cloth \$1.18	10M542 Prepaid Linen 82c
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impassioned study showed that Mayor Griffin's administration was predominantly Irish. At the height of the debacle, Griffin produced his own "statistics" that enabled him to proclaim on August 12, 1918, that the city was "30 per cent more American than a year ago." In spite of Mayor Griffin's statement, military control never relaxed in Hoboken until the peace had been signed. Soldiers guarded the piers, enforced saloon closings, supervised the curfew, and patrolled the city streets "to keep an eye on German sympathizers." Statistics indicate that chaplains performed as many as forty marriages a day.

Grocery store shelves were stocked with "liberty cabbage" instead of sauerkraut, and "salisbury steak" rather than hamburger. Ludicrous as this was, it was a bit less funny to ban German music, including that of Mendelssohn and Beethoven, in some communities. It was not funny at all to arrest Ernst Kunwald, former conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, or to suspend Bruno Walter, the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, simply because they were Germans who had not yet become American citizens. It was frightening to ban the study of German in some public schools, as in Ohio, or to dump all books in German out of some public libraries, as in Los Angeles. Hoboken may not have gone as far as

some other cities, but the city pretty much conformed to the hysterical wartime hatred of everything "un-American."

Hoboken was faced with the problem of providing entertainment and recreation for the thousands of servicemen who daily crowded its streets waiting to be shipped overseas. This already complex problem was compounded when one traditional source of servicemen's entertainment was eliminated. In May, 1917, a federal law closed all liquor establishments within one half-mile of a military zone. This closed 270 bars, saloons, and taverns in Hoboken. Some taverns were permitted to remain open, but they were forbidden to dispense wine, whiskey, or beer. This law proved irksome not only to the doughboys, but also to the foreign-born residents, especially the Germans and the Italians, who traditionally favored the "continental Sunday" rather than the "American Sunday." Despite grumbling and some protests, the law, with few exceptions, was faithfully observed within the half-mile zone.

The soldiers, sailors, and marines sought other diversions. Some took advantage of the variety of clubs in the city, sponsored by such organizations as the Red Cross,

Salvation Army, Knights of Columbus, and the National Catholic War Council. Others frequented the local YMCA, which had hastily set up a temporary service center with hot showers, reading rooms, pool tables, a cafeteria and a soda fountain. The two movie houses in town were jammed nightly, and the public library was quite often filled to capacity. Hundreds of books and magazines were donated for the servicemen's use, while scores of women and girls knitted sweaters and socks for them. On Thanksgiving Day, 1917, more than 500 soldiers were invited to local homes for dinner, and at Christmas time 6,000 gifts were collected and distributed. Occasionally when trucks transporting the soldiers to Hoboken were backed up for hours, families would invite some men in, give them dinner, and sometimes even put them up for the night.

Free public dances were held in the parks or in roped-off streets. One such evening, held in August, 1918, attracted more than 10,000 people, soldiers and townsfolk alike. On another pleasant evening a concert given by the Navy Band on River Street drew an audience in the thousands. But the most spectacular event of all was a gala Mardi Gras replete with the crowning of a King and Queen, a huge banquet, and a glittering ball. All the servicemen in town were invited, and although only soft drinks were

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served, everyone managed to have a good time. The hit of the evening, and an event that shocked the more staid members of the community, was a colorful float upon which rode a lovely young girl dressed "only in a bathing suit."

Doughboys on their way to war, knowing they might never return,

sought out less conventional forms of recreation. Sitting in the parks with the object of meeting the "fair young maidens" of Hoboken became a favorite pastime, one that met with extreme apprehension and disapproval by the local citizenry. A group of Hoboken matrons decided to put a stop to this "terrible" preoccupation. Armed with badges and whistles, they went out to patrol the streets and parks in search of girls in the company of soldiers. If they found a girl who was under 21, they forced her to go home, often under protest and with escort. The girls would be taken to her door, severely admonished, and her parents informed of her behavior. If either the girl or the soldier resisted the matron's efforts, the "guardian of morality" would blow her whistle, summoning a nearby policeman to lend assistance and take the girl home himself. However, in spite of the efforts of these determined paragons of virtue, the dating practice continued. The walk along the river was a favorite spot for pleasure seekers, while Sybil's Cave, a deserted area along the river-front already notorious because of a sensational murder that had taken place there in the 1840's, became a lovers' rendezvous.

A female reporter investigated complaints

that poured into the *Observer's* offices. She made a walking tour of the city's parks,

and later reported the conduct she found there was "shameful." In a series of articles she stated that the girls "behave in a manner that would make a show-girl blush," and warned that the girls of Hoboken were "conducting themselves in a manner that would lead to the saddest of all results. If such things were shown in a theater, the owner and manager would be arrested." These articles appeared on the newspaper's front page topped by an extra large headline which read:

**GIRLS STILL WITH
HAIR DOWN BACKS,
ENCOURAGE AND
RECEIVE ATTENTION OF
SOLDIERS AND SAILORS:
DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS
UNFIT FOR PUBLICATION!**

The "disgraceful behavior" of Hoboken's young ladies

led the city council to enact a number of ordinances within a few days after the publication of the articles. All city parks were to be closed at ten o'clock for all children under the age of sixteen. Hoboken's newspaper girls were forbidden to conduct their business after eight o'clock. Rooms in hotels and private boarding houses could no longer be rented to servicemen with or without female companions, and all restaurants in the town were to close by midnight.



Cover of a clothing catalog, Summer 1917.
Page 6: Illustrations from the catalog.

Despite some protests from local merchants, these ordinances seem to have been scrupulously obeyed. To be sure, an errant girl or two was stopped on the streets after curfew hour, but these were exceptions rather than the rule. Fraternization between servicemen and Hoboken girls under twenty-one during the evening hours was brought to a halt by these laws. No other city in the US took such drastic action as did Hoboken in this matter.

Hundreds of young women came to gape at

the vast assemblage of servicemen, presenting an even more difficult situation. The curious and thrill-seekers from Newark, Weehawken, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Paterson, and other towns, crowded into Hoboken's streets nightly to mingle with the doughboys. Scores of girls from New York crossed the river by ferry and added to the accumulated throng. Those unfortunate enough

to venture onto River Street, a military zone, were placed under arrest by the military police, and handed over to await trial for violation of a federal statute. On August 16, 1918, twenty-five girls, from 16 to 19 years of age were arrested; in a subsequent trial, they were all convicted of trespassing, and sent to a federal prison for 90 days.

Dozens of professional prostitutes, for whom a port such as Hoboken was like manna from heaven,

were included among the females. Plying their trade among men who realized that they might never return, they did a lucrative business. City ordinances made it difficult for them to find proper bases of operation, but restaurants and saloons with back rooms were usually available for the right price, as were rooms in some of the cheaper boarding houses. A lively traffic in commercialized vice existed until a combined effort by local and military authorities brought an end to the mounting trade. Prostitutes were arrested, and either sent to prison or shipped out of town, while servicemen, for the most part, were confined to River Street and its immediate vicinity. No city had as difficult a time with wartime prostitution as did Hoboken, and no place in the nation took such complete and stern

action to curb the problem.

Death came by war and influenza.

The piers of Hoboken began sorrowfully to receive the caskets of the American dead. And Hobokenites grew increasingly tired of "sweetless, heatless, wheatless, and meatless" days. Yet by summer's end in 1918, it was clear that the war would be over soon. Fear, dissatisfaction, and uneasiness gave way to optimism and hope. Then, without warning, a terrifying influenza epidemic struck the nation in October. In New Jersey alone, 300,000 cases were reported. In Hoboken, at least 10 per cent of the population was officially reported sick, while hundreds of the servicemen became ill as well. The death rate in the city in October jumped 500 per cent, and the State Department of Health officially recorded more than 400 deaths by the middle of November. Newly made graves dotted the hillside cemeteries on the outskirts of town.

2:45am November 11: news reached Hoboken that an armistice had been signed

and that the Greatest War in History had come to an end. Pandemonium broke loose; by 5am the city's streets were packed and by 8am they were so crammed with people that traffic could not move, and no one seemed to care. Schools and

businesses were closed that day, and flags flew from almost every window in town. A giant celebration was held in the park that evening, and between 7:55 and 8:05pm all the fire bells, church bells, boat and train whistles, and curfew sirens were sounded. After the combined din had subsided, patriotic songs were sung, speeches were made, and professional entertainment was provided. More than 22,000 people participated in the festivities in the park, while in the Italian section of town another 3,500 held their own victory party. Pent-up emotions broke loose in cities across the nation; a victory was celebrated everywhere.

The first 2,000 returning troops disembarked

on December 12, 1918. As they charged down the gangplanks to the cheers of the local citizenry, a cacophony of bells and sirens welcomes their safe arrival home. Following this initial boat load, American servicemen arrived at Hoboken at the rate of 300,000 a month. Hospital ships began arriving in December, bringing back the wounded and auxiliary personnel. Thousands of Hobokenites would gather daily to meet the newly arriving veterans. They lined the streets and hung from windows, waving flags, handkerchiefs, aprons, and even sheets. By the end of February, 1919, when the last returning

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serviceman, John Loftus, set his feet down on Pier 4, almost 2,000,000 American men and women had come back to the US via Hoboken.

Other ships docking at the port did not evoke cheers and laughter. These were the

ships bringing American dead home to rest. Sometimes memorial services were conducted on the piers as the caskets were unloaded. When the last of the vessels arrived at Hoboken in April, more than 10,000 people, including newly inaugurated President Warren G. Harding, attended a special memorial service held for all those Americans who has fought and died to "make the world safe

for democracy."

Military occupation of the waterfront ended

in the summer of 1919, when the docks and piers were turned over to civilian control. Taverns and saloons began selling alcoholic beverages once more, but the length of their reopening proved to be short-lived as the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect in January, 1920. The harbor once again bustled with commercial activity, although the number of ships arriving and departing dropped sharply as compared with the war years. Yet, business boomed and prosperity seemed to be everywhere.

Things were never quite the same in the city.

The ethnic composition had been altered with a large decline in the German population, and an increase in Italians and Hungarians. An unemployment problem was already becoming apparent, and large sections of the city were slowly being subjected to creeping urban blight. The effects of the war could be seen everywhere, in warehouses, rotting wharves, dilapidated buildings, deserted equipment, and unemployed men. After its massive effort during the war, the city looked old and worn out. Gone were the tramp of army boots and the clatter of tanks and guns. All that was left was a large bronze plaque at the foot of River Street commemorating the city's work as a port of embarkation. Yet, to the people who lived there, and to the thousands of soldiers who passed through, it was much more than that...it was "Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken."

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PERSONAL STORIES HOBOKEN AT WAR

① By John Fitzpatrick

My father, Patrick J. Fitzpatrick, was born in Ireland and arrived here in 1910. In 1916, according to his driver's license, he lived at 1243 Willow Avenue. In June 1917 his draft registration shows that he registered in precinct 2 of the 4th ward. (As a matter of interest, I have his World War II card which indicates that he again registered for the draft, while living at 1217 Washington Street, on April 26, 1942.)

Reading through his papers, I see he served in the Army from December 8, 1917, when he enlisted, until his honorable discharge on July 16, 1919, as a corporal. He completed his basic training at Camp Johnson,

Florida, and left for France from Hoboken. He served with Company 711 of the Motor Transport Corps. A coincidence he got a kick out of: my brother Matthew, during his Army service in the late 1950s was an officer in the re-named Transportation Corps.

My father's 1920 driver's license shows he once again was living in Hoboken, this time at 1216 Willow Avenue, next to his former address. He was very proud of his WWI service and always wore his veteran's pin in his lapel.

He told me how he was transferred out of the infantry after Basic. Following a morning open-ranks inspection all those who held a driver's license were asked to step forward. As he remembered, a goodly number

were counted. The sergeant then asked those who knew something about auto repairs to take one more step. Only a few claimed this ability, including my father. These skills, rare in the early years of the automobile, kept him from the trenches, where most of his company went. He spent his tour in France driving senior officers about the country.

He also used to tell me how he was kidded by men from other parts of the US when they found out he lived in Hoboken, even then a subject of friendly jokes. But, when those destined for France learned they were leaving for overseas from Hoboken, he became a source of information on where to go and what to see in our town. He told them that while Hoboken had its charms, most of his friends wound up across the river in New York. Contrast that

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June 28th, 1919.

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NO. 22.

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C.A. TROTT
Chief of Staff.

I certify that this is a true.

Major W. Jefferson.

2nd. Lt. 11th Infantry.

HOBOKEN HISTORY NUMBER 9, 1994

with a 1990s "visitors' night" in Hoboken.

"Paddy" Fitzpatrick died in 1975 at age 86. He had retired as a property owner and tavern proprietor. His three sons volunteered for service in the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Army, respectively, during and after the Korean war.

There is another recollection I have of my family and World War I. My uncle, Sergeant Michael Fitzpatrick, won the Distinguished Service Cross, a decoration second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor. The DSC is awarded to members of the Armed Forces who distinguish themselves by extraordinary heroism in military operations against the enemy. The act must be "so notable and involving a risk of life so extraordinary as to set him apart from his comrades." This decoration was established by Congress in 1918. Michael Fitzpatrick won this award during the Meuse-Argonne offensive of November 9-11, 1918. He was Regular Army and served with Pershing on the Mexican Border before World War I. He was a bachelor and roomed with family in Hoboken. He died in the late 1950s. Two other uncles of mine, neither Hoboken residents, served in France and with the Army of Occupation in Germany.

When World War II occurred, I was in my teens and early youth and recall the shipping lines and shipyard repair facilities working three shifts around the clock in Hoboken. The noise and lights kept the waterfront alive 24 hours a day. In 1947 with my mother I sailed from New York on the Queen Elizabeth II to visit family in England and Ireland. During the War, the QEII had served as a troop ship and many of the GI passengers had carved their initials into the boat deck rails. The carvings were still there, preserved by the Cunard Line as a memorial to those who had sailed off to war in her.

During the War the Hoboken YMCA was taken over by the Navy or Coast Guard (I don't recall which) and we got to know the servicemen who helped the Y staff with youth programs. I recall them drilling on the basketball court. One young man named Bill was recovering from a U-boat torpedoing of his ship and had spent several weeks in a lifeboat, which, needless to say, fascinated we youngsters. A Mr. and Mrs. Kenney, who lived a few blocks from me and had a son in the Navy, sort of adopted Bill and he used to eat with the family on Sundays.

I also remember the troop trains that passed through along the tracks west of Hoboken where the railroad ran along the base of

Jersey City Heights. We kids would cheer and I recall the troops throwing candy and chewing gum to us. I presume they were on their way to one of the Hoboken piers for embarkation to the European Theater of Operations, an encore to World War I.

For a family member in the service, a small red-bordered banner with a blue star for each serviceman was hung in the front windows of Hoboken homes (and all across the nation). When a family member died in service a gold star replaced the blue one. Our blue star represented my Uncle Tim. One family (Chico?) had four sons serving. We had one gold star on the block (12th and Washington), as I recall. The father of this Air Force man wore his son's uniform shirt and trousers and my mother was appalled at this, which she felt was a callous and thoughtless thing to do. My Mom, by the way, joined many other local women in taking a Red Cross first aid course at the Y to prepare to help out in the event of a bombing of Hoboken by enemy planes, a possibility believed by the government and the public early in the war when Germany and Japan were so successful and had overrun Europe and most of the Far East and the Pacific. At this time U-boats were sinking ships off the Jersey shore.

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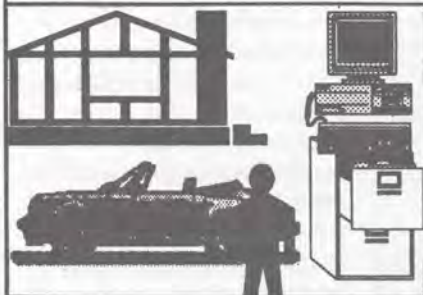
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For many years after the War, you could see left-over war material on the docks and in fenced off areas around town, lifeboats, anchors, ventilation funnels, boarding ladders, duckboards, etc. After a few years of rusting and rotting away they were scrapped or sold. But while they lasted, we had fun playing amid these peacetime relics of war.

You know how come khaki trousers are now worn worldwide by men and women of all ages? Well, when WWII veterans came home many wore parts of their uniforms while finishing school or job hunting. Army-Navy stores sold old uniform articles, including khaki trousers. Most of the guys I know bought trousers in the Army-Navy store then across the street from the firehouse at 13th Street and Washington. Soon clothing manufacturers began making and selling civilian versions of the popular khakis and today they are still a standard item of casual civilian clothing.

In Hoboken's annual Memorial Day parades, in which the uniformed veterans dwindle year by year, there still are men with chests filled with ribbons of World War I, World War II, Korea, VietNam, and Desert Storm, so I would assume Hoboken has won its share of medals in the nation's defense and has proudly seen its

sons serve honorably and heroically around the world.



② By Leonard A. Luizzi

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany to "make the world safe for democracy," and "the war to end all wars" began for America. The tiny city of Hoboken was to play a giant part in that war. Hoboken became the main port of embarkation for the American Expeditionary Force on its long journey across the Atlantic to the battlefields of France.

Patriotism ran high throughout the nation. Young men by the millions joined the Armed Forces. However, one block in Hoboken possibly holds a record for sending men to fight the enemy. Fifty-six men from Eighth Street and Park Avenue volunteered to serve in the AEF.

In my own family, three of my great uncles were in the army: Gennaro, Joseph, and Anthony Lepre, from First and Grand. Anthony had an attack of

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The YMCA Hudson Hut In Stevens Park, built to provide recreational facilities for the troops in Hoboken during World War I.

showers, play billiards, or use its reading and recreation rooms. The National Catholic War Council opened the Admiral Benson Club on Washington Street between Eighth and Ninth. Other groups that provided services to the soldiers were the Jewish Welfare Board and the Salvation Army. The Hoboken chapter of the Red Cross served coffee and doughnuts to the embarking doughboys. The Boy Scouts helped sell War Bonds, named at the time "Liberty Bonds," and distributed posters and flyers. Everyone in Hoboken played their part in the war effort.

appendicitis while in Fort Dix and never went overseas while his elder brothers did.

Gennaro and some buddies were sampling the local vintage at an outdoor cafe in France, when a doughboy came running down the street to tell about a fight that was about to begin between an American soldier and a French one. The group went along to cheer their comrade. Gennaro was amazed to see his brother Joseph was the American fighter. Joseph was only about 5'4" tall, while the Frenchman was 5'9", but in this lesson in Franco-American relations, it was the boy from First and Grand who

prevailed! Neither brother had known that the other was in the same town.

Life in Hoboken would not return to normal for years to come. Overnight our city changed; even St. Mary Hospital became US Army Embarkation Hospital No. 1. The city was alive day and night. Trucks loaded with supplies for overseas lined up at the piers. Uniformed troops seemed to be everywhere.

The YMCA built one of their "Huts" on what is now the Little League field in Stevens Park. In this Hut, troops could eat, take

Most of the departing troops arrived by train at Marshall Street and Paterson Plank Road, then marched along Ferry Street (now called Observer Highway) to the waiting transport vessels at the piers. Others arrived at the piers aboard trains on the railroad that once bordered Hoboken's waterfront. Many stayed overnight in town, spending their last hours on American soil here in Hoboken. Many enjoyed the view of New York's skyline from our waterfront, or visited our many bars and beer gardens, a civilian pastime of today's Hoboken.

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This created a problem for Port Commander Major General David C. Shanks because almost every storefront on River Street from Hudson Place to Fourth Street was a saloon, a legacy of Hoboken's heyday as a seaman's and longshoreman's haven. At the outbreak of World War I the bars were where Shanks' own staff, civilian longshoremen, and ships' crews, and now soldiers, too, would quench their thirsts.

General Shanks wrote to Washington, requesting the enforcement of an existing

Gennaro Lepre, of 112 Grand Street, uncle of Museum trustee Ed Lepre, and great-uncle of Vice President Leonard Laizli. =>

Federal law which prohibited a bar from being within one half mile of an Army barracks. Every time Hoboken Mayor Patrick Griffin learned of Shanks' request, he and other commissioners went to Washington to lobby for a halt to enforcing the law. They feared that Hoboken's bars would be forced out of

business and be unable to pay their municipal taxes. President Wilson finally signed a proclamation to enforce the law and Hoboken went dry from Jefferson Street to River Street. This was the beginning of our country's infamous era of Prohibition.

In *Hoboken of Yesterday*, George Mollor writes "A slogan is born in every war: In the Civil War, ON TO RICHMOND, in the Spanish-American War, REMEMBER THE MAINE. World War I's slogan was HEAVEN, HELL OR HOBOKEN." The conventional way for a city to go down in war history is to be

= Folder of naval insignia given away in Hoboken during World War I.



where a great battle was fought or thousands of people killed. But to millions of our nation's fighting men, Hoboken was a symbol of peace and home.



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Hoboken Overheard – Autumn 1944

by Jennie Carulli

Two teen-age girls are huddled together on a high stoop in Hoboken. They vocalize animatedly in an attempt to imitate the Andrews Sisters:

What's good is in the army

What's left will never harm me...

This popular song of those days describes to a T the dating dilemma of the years of World War II. Men were either *too young or too old*, and teen-age girls rotated among feelings of pride, fear, and frustration. Just when they had finally matured into a datable age, suddenly all the boys were gone. Every day word went around that one or two of the eligible guys who hung around Steve's candy store had either enlisted or been drafted.

Let's listen...

Mary (excited): Did you hear? Tony's 1A but Mike's 4F.

Anita (bewildered): Mike's 4F – you're kiddin'. How can he be 4F? He's got such a nice built.

Mary (emphatically): Yeah? Well, he is. He's got those thick glasses. They rejected him.

Anita (with conviction): Well, I think the draft board's crazy. Mike's a real dream boy even with glasses. Besides, they don't reject you for wearing glasses. (Skeptically) Maybe it's something else and they're not saying.

Mary (disgustedly): Who knows?

Anita: I heard some guys have ways to make themselves get rejected.

Mary: Yeah, I heard that too, but I don't believe it. Now Mike'll have to be an air raid warden. All the 4Fs become air raid wardens.

Anita: Yeah, forget about him. (Excited) Did you see Eddie in his sailor suit? How cu-u-u-ute! I saw him when he came home on

leave. His bell bottom pants were flappin' when he walked and he wears his little white hat right behind his pompadour. What a doll! He smiled at me. I bet you're jealous! Eddie's a good catch. Know somethin'? I heard he can't swim. Why would they let a guy into the Navy if he can't swim?

Mary (knowingly): Sure they would! Because that's where they're short of men. When you volunteer you get to pick your branch.

Anita (amazed): You do? I didn't know that.

Mary: Yup! That's how my brother's in the Air Force. He volunteered too. Besides, I like the Air Force better. Sailors are flirts! They have a girl in every port. But the Air Force is different! They're daring and they have nicer insignias. My brother has a propeller pin and a pair of wings he wears over his left pocket. And besides, his hat has a peak in front.

Anita (sarcastically): Yeah? Well, so what?

Mary (spitefully): Sew buttons – that's what!

Anita: Well, you can keep the Air Force. I still like the Navy better. If I was old enough and allowed to go in, I'd join the WAVES. I love their uniforms. (Regretfully) But my mother would never let me go.

Mary: Neither would mine. But you can keep the WAVES. I'd join the WACS.

Anita (laughing): You're wacky enough now!

Mary (giving her a playful slap): Don't get smart! Did you hear what happened when Johnny's mother got the telegram?

Anita (sadly): Oooo, I feel so sorry for her. Tell me what you heard.

Mary: She nearly fainted when they told her Johnny was dead. Two people had to hold her up. She cried and cried something awful. Somebody said her heart was ⇒



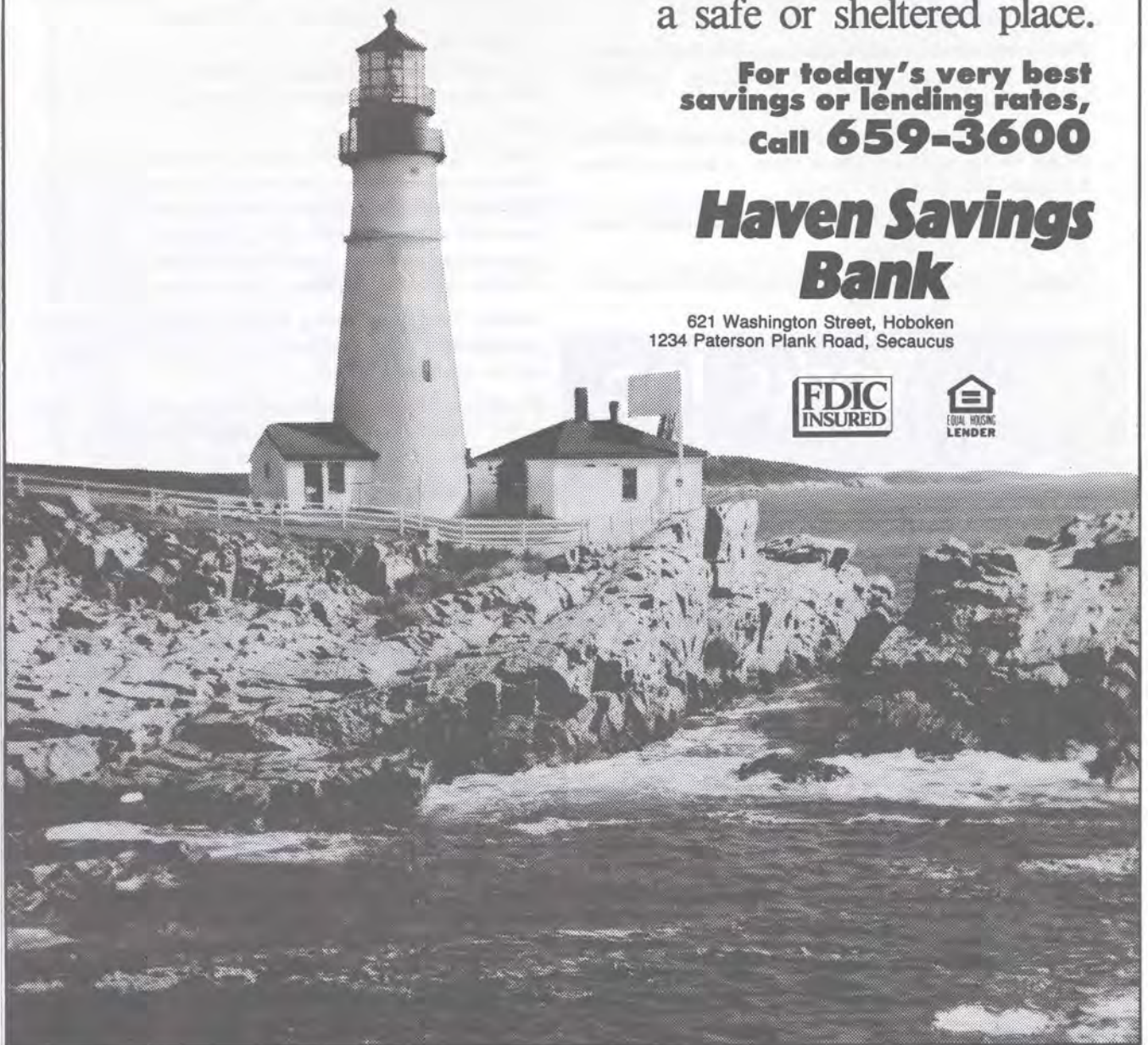
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broken. Poor Johnny! He got killed right on D-Day. He was such a hunk, wasn't he? I can't believe he's dead. His first battle. As soon as he stepped off the landing barge on Normandy Beach he got shot. Didn't even get a chance to fight back. It's all so crazy. *(Reminiscing)* Remember how good-looking he was. Johnny was such a handsome guy! So tall and proud – wow – and those muscles. He loved to box. He was always training. Whenever I'd hear the punchin' bag, I'd quick open the fire escape window, lean out, and watch and watch and watch! He always warmed up in his back yard. Johnny's house is near my building, so I could see him real good. He'd be out there in his blue satin boxer shorts with his big fat gloves on bouncing around and punchin' the hell outta that bag. But he never even got a chance to fire a shot on D-Day. Weird, isn't it?

Anita *(remembering)*: Yeah, poor Johnny. I used to watch him too. I guess every girl on the block watched Johnny.

Mary: Yeah, but I heard he got married. His wife must be in terrible shock now. I hope nothing happens like it did to Tessie.

Anita *(frightened)*: You..you mean the way Tessie is now?

Mary: Uh huh, Tessie's problem started when she

got that 'Dear John' letter from her boy friend.

Anita *(quizzically)*: I thought only guys got 'Dear John' letters from their girls.

Mary *(with disgust)*: Are you kiddin'? Sure, mostly guys get 'Dear John' letters, but girls get 'Dear John' letters too. It happens sometimes. It happened to Tessie. Her boy friend married an Italian girl. How do you like them apples? What's wrong with us American girls? Why would anyone wanna marry overseas? Tessie had wanted to get married before they sent her boy friend over but he got shipped out real fast. She had her gown bought and everything. Then all of a sudden, WHAMO! she's out! Her mother is still worried sick about her. Tessie doesn't go to work anymore. She just mopes around all day. Sits and stares a lot. I heard they call what she's got a 'nervous breakdown.'

Anita *(bewildered)*: Really? *(Worried)* Boy-oh-boy, if the war doesn't end soon there won't be anybody left.

Mary *(agreeing)*: You're right! Another guy in my class joined the army last week. As soon as he was eighteen he enlisted. Our teacher was mad. She wanted him to graduate first. But now he won't be graduating with us. Our class is down to 88. The smallest graduating class Demarest ever had.

Anita: How depressing can you get? Chances of you gettin' a date for the prom are gettin' tougher and tougher every day.

Mary *(shrugs, pretending nonchalance)*: Ah, who cares? *(Confidentially)*: You know what else? At St. Ann's Feast I heard that Julia made a vow.

Anita *(quizzically)*: A vow? What's that?

Mary: A vow is when you promise God something in exchange for a favor.

Anita: What favor?

Mary: Julia made a vow asking that her three sons should return home safely from the war. The little flag in her window has three blue stars on it. Julia promised God that she would go around the neighborhood begging for money to have a mass said once a year for the rest of her life.

Anita *(horrified)*: She's gonna beg...from door to door? For money for a mass? That's awful! Begging is terrible! Why should she beg?

Mary *(importantly)*: Because it's an act of humility and it's very hard to do, that's why. It's her sacrifice! Don't you know anything? Julia has more sons in service than any other mother in her building and believe-you-me, no mother wants her blue stars to turn to gold.



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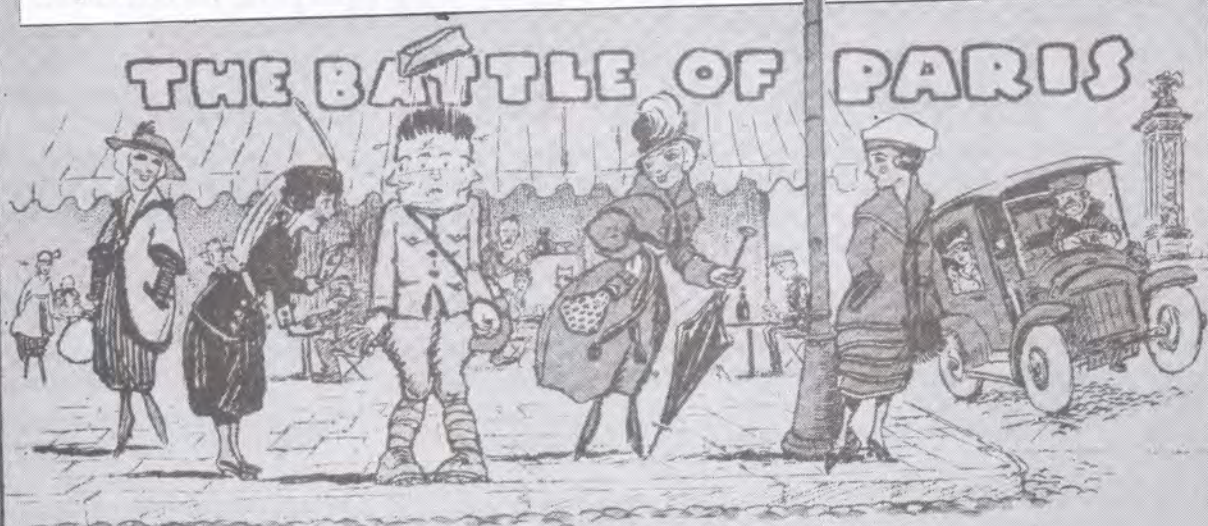
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Page from *YE A.E.F. HYMNAL*, a songbook published in France for the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. Price was 3.75 francs, or about 72¢.



MUSIC BY LT WM C GABRIEL

As I sit on my bank arranging my junk,
with thoughts of Old Paris in mind,

With vivid reflections and fond recollections
of milestones that now lie behind,

While fresh in my ears are the words of those
Dears who openly, mockingly dare us,

To forget home and friends till this awful
war ends and take part in The Battle of
Paris.

They are strikingly neat from their heads to
their feet and have eyes like stars in the skies,

And fresh ruby lips like rose petal tips, how
beautiful you may surmise.

How these camouflaged birds sap the strength
from the words we are told by the Chap-
lain to scare us.

So with vigorous hop we go over the top in
that terrible Battle of Paris.

Now up on the line where the big guns whine
and the 75's are a-smoking,

The Hell in the air fills your heart with
despair and the gas fills your lungs till
you're choking;

But say, on the square I'd rather be there on
the Marne, or the Somme or at Arras,

Far with vin blanc snoot full its hard to be
neutral in That Famous Battle of Paris.

Ethel Kelly remembers Hoboken's Red Cross in peace and war

by Ethel Kelly
former Director, Hoboken Chapter of the American Red Cross

The charter issued in 1916 to the Hoboken Chapter of the American Red Cross described its obligation to the armed forces and service to the community in time of disaster. But its dedicated volunteers served above and beyond their charter obligation.

Its headquarters at 218 Hudson Street was a beehive of activity during World War II. Volunteers came to the chapter every day and sewed or knit clothing for needy families. Social Welfare aides were trained to help persons with family problems, and Staff aides helped with clerical work. Motor Service Drivers provided transportation for children, and aged or disabled people. And much of our focus was on serving

Ethel Kelly was active in the Red Cross during World War II. The Red Cross itself had also been active during World War I.

America's military.

Our canteen during the War was probably the busiest of all the volunteer services. When a troop ship was scheduled to arrive from overseas, the Red Cross was notified and the Canteen staff flew into action. Many times they worked all night in the Chapter House, preparing sandwiches and coffee which were loaded onto our

truck and taken to one of Hoboken's then-active piers. There were other times when we boarded a yacht and met hospital ships as they entered the New York harbor. Red Cross volunteers would climb aboard a hospital ship with cheerful greetings for the sick and wounded, who were given reading material and goodies.



One day when we arrived for ship-arrival duty on a pier in Staten Island I got a surprise. We were never told where the ships were arriving from. For four years I had been expecting the arrival of my son, who was serving in the Air Force as a control tower operator

⇒

⇐ During World War I, the members of this Hoboken unit of the Red Cross could be called on night or day, whenever they were needed.

at an airfield in Burma. As a ship approached the pier, the volunteers spotted a China-Burma-India banner displayed on its side. So they called out, "Is Ed Kelly on board?" The servicemen lining the rails called back: "Yes, we'll get him for you!"

Laughing and shouting, they brought one of their fellow GIs to the rail for me. He was the fattest Air Force man I had ever seen. Surely not my Ed. The joke was on me, but eventually the real and slender Ed came ashore to his mother's delight.

Our Junior Red Cross was active during the war in all the schools in Hoboken. The schoolchildren contributed gift boxes that we sent overseas and to veterans' hospitals.

1945 SAW THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Hoboken Red Cross service did not end with peace. At 2am one day the phone rang with an entirely different request for aid. A boy from a Communist country had arrived as a stowaway on an American vessel. He had relatives living in our area. The American authorities wanted to find out if they could provide him with a home. We made a personal visit to the family and found them not only willing and able, but overjoyed at the prospect.

The Hoboken Red Cross served veterans and their dependents. I recall one case that we became very involved with. A veteran's widow moved to Hoboken from New York. Her change of address had not reached the Veterans Administration and as a result her widow's pension checks were not reaching her either. The woman could not read or write and spoke no English. At the suggestion of a Hoboken neighbor

Red Cross canteen workers of World War I were ready to serve coffee to troops en route.



she came to the Red Cross. We traced the missing checks, and got her new address into VA records. But her troubles did not end there. She sent her financial record card to the wrong address, and once more her checks went astray. We straightened out the situation again and saw to it that her cards were properly sent each year. Later, to make matters worse, a fire in her building destroyed her husband's vitally important discharge papers. We phoned the VA and arranged for her to receive a replacement certificate.

A drama took place almost daily at our Red Cross chapter's headquarters. A lady came into our office, crying hysterically. She spoke very little English and was so distraught it was difficult for us to understand what her problem was. After she calmed down and we heard her story we understood her anxiety. She had just returned to the United States after visiting her parents in a South American country. She had left her baby with her parents. Trouble broke out there and no one was allowed to leave the country. The women had failed in every effort to recover her baby. We got on the job and arranged for the baby's return to the United States unharmed and well. She brought the baby in for us to see and to express her gratitude for all we had done to re-unite her with her child.

Until the 1960s most of our financial support came from large industries in Hoboken, but as our city's industrial base declined, so did the support. We found it impossible to maintain our building on Hudson Street, so we opened a smaller office on Washington Street and continued to operate until 1971. Today two Red Cross chapters in Jersey City and Union City serve Hudson County residents.

But I will never forget how energetically, compassionately, and enthusiastically Hoboken's Red Cross served in peace and war, and am proud to have played a role in its work. 

MUSEUM NEWS

TIME-PIECES UPDATE

The Time-Pieces project to restore the City Hall clock and provide funds for Museum projects has gathered a great deal of public support. We thank Mayor Anthony Russo and City Hall staff, Terry Castellano of the Hoboken Historic Preservation Commission, the Anthony Russo Civic Association, and David Cogswell of the *Hoboken Reporter* for timely press coverage.

Museum President Robert Foster and the Board of Trustees continue to provide strong backing for the project. Since the last issue of *Hoboken History*, the following events have taken place:

- ☉ An ambitious mailing to merchants and corporations to solicit funds.
- ☉ Participation in the Hoboken St. Patrick's Day Parade. (Our thanks to Bob Castellano and Tim Calligy for their help.)
- ☉ Time-Pieces pin-back buttons were donated by Terry Castellano and the Anthony Russo Civic Association.
- ☉ Presentations were made to the Hoboken Creative Alliance and the Rotary Club.
- ☉ Courtesy of Sign Design and McKevin Shaughnessy, a banner was designed and placed outside of City Hall, outlining the project and detailing funds raised.
- ☉ Restoration Studio Jakob/Solter of Hoboken donated their services to restore the exterior of the City Hall clock, at an estimated value of \$3000.
- ☉ Museum Trustee McKevin Shaughnessy donated

Laura Jakob (left) and Corrine Solter of Jakob/Solter Restoration. The Hoboken company is donating services to restore the clock's exterior.



his services to restore the clock face numerals.

- ☉ The clock mechanism will be rehabilitated by Dewey of "Neon Clock World."



Dewey of the "Neon Clock World" standing with McKevin Shaughnessy who is donating his services to resurface the clock's numerals.

Our thanks to the following for contributing to the Time-Pieces project:

Benefactors, \$500 each:

R. John Muller Real Estate,
Citizens First Bank.

Patrons, \$100 each: Gerrino Restaurant, Lee Bresticker Raines, Hank Forrest & Stella Strazdas, PWB Construction, The Rotary Club of Hoboken, Helen S. Manogue, Kevin Houghton, Robert Foster, Hoboken Fire Fighters, Stahl Soap Corp.

Friends, \$25 each: David Sandt, Leo's Restaurant, Sharon J. Stern DDS, Charles Lee, Richard Hadley, Lal Akadhavi Inc., Nancy Wanner, Peter Gartland, The CRRNJ Historical Society. Town & Country.

FLEA MARKET THANKS

Lenny Luizzi and John De Palma would like to thank these volunteers for their help in making our latest flea market a huge success: D. Rae, Lynne Shapiro, Susanna Kopchains, McKevin Shaughnessy, Charles Lee, George and Dolores Kirchgessner, Paul and Barbara Lippman, and Rev. Dan Meeter.

DONATIONS

The following items have been donated to the Museum collection:

- ✓ Sports pin, *Jersey City Observer*, Hudson Bowling Alleys, Hoboken, 1938.
- ✓ Canasta score pad imprinted with address of Joseph J. Garibaldi Agency, 77 River St., Hoboken (from estate of Jacob and Dorothy Green, residents of Hudson County, 1918-1948).
- ✓ Group photograph of unidentified Hoboken social outing, c. 1900, courtesy of Catherine Dugan.
- ✓ Several original oil paintings by Hoboken resident Otto Fritz, pre-world War II, courtesy of his grandson, Louis Muser.
- ✓ Three interior photographs of the Hoboken Savings Bank, c. 1890, from the Washington Savings Bank
- ✓ *Jersey Journal* sesquicentennial edition, from William and Mary Perry.

MUSEUM PURCHASES

The following items were purchased and added to the Museum collection:

- Stand-up lamp, manufactured in Hoboken by the Cooper-Hewitt Company.
- Hand truck, lettered "Maxwell House Coffee," possibly used in store displays.

NEW MEMBERS

Michael T. Buoncristiano (3 years)

Debra Anne Kindervatter (2 years)

Walter Mike Leicken, Jr.

Frederick Lankering

Elizabeth A. Hoch

Jeanne Rotunda

Stephanie Stewart

Suzanne Hetman

Pasqual Caparino

George N. Pappas

Vincent J. Wassman, Entering Army, Feted By Hoboken Friends

A going-away party was held last night for Vincent J. Wassman, 508 First street, one of Hoboken's first young men to be drafted into military service.

The party was sponsored by the Harold Valentine Association, 508 First street, at its headquarters. The committee for the affair was headed by Steve Johnson, and included William Babcock, Louis Jerkovich, Walter Valentine, Louis DeJulio and George Uhl. Frank Garrick, Robert McKnight and Gus Cassirer made the arrangements.

Wassman, with Jerome Driscoll, are the first two members of the Tom Barry-Frank Garrick Association to be called to military service.

← Clipping from
a local
newspaper
in 1941.

Vinny Wassman
is now a
Museum trustee.

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