THE MAGAZINE OF THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

HOBOKEN HISTORY

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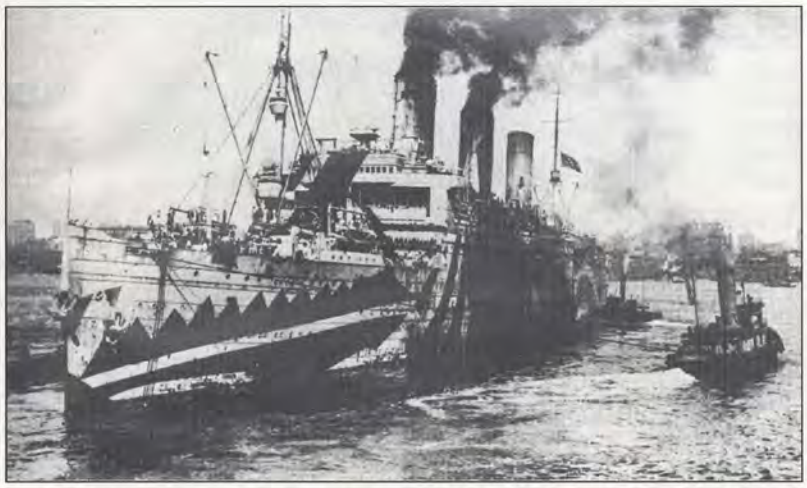
On the Cover

June 12th, 1919. Having just arrived from France on the U.S.S. Leviathan *at the Port of Demarkation, Hoboken, NJ, the 826th Aero Squadron pose for a press photographer. Lt. James L. Snedecor (front and center) commanding.*

From the collection of the Hoboken Historical Museum—donated by Ken Schultz in the name of the Class of 1956 A.J. Demarest High School.

In this Issue...



The confiscated German vessel Der Vaterland, *repainted and renamed the* U.S.S. Leviathan, *sets off for France. See story on page 2. Photograph courtesy of Leonard Luizzi, Sr.*

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A large type edition of this magazine is available by writing to us at: P.O. Box 707, Hoboken, NJ 07030.

Heaven,

On April 2, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. It was General John J. Pershing who first sounded the cry "Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken by Christmas." The third part of this dire prediction by the commander-in-chief of the AEF became the fondest wish of every doughboy who served in France during World War I.

The best way **Hoboken History** can commemorate the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the War to End All Wars and Hoboken's essential part in that conflict is by reprinting an essay that first appeared in *The Hoboken of Yesterday,* written by George Long Moller in 1964. Mr. Moller was Hoboken's first City Historian, a position he held from 1961 to 1967.

HELL,

World War I

Hoboken — Main Port of Embarkation for the American Expeditionary Forces

Headquarters of the General Commanding the Port

In World War I, the city played a leading role. The tremendous importance of this role in the nation's war effort of 1917-18 can be better understood if we consider these facts and figures.

It was from Hoboken, on June 14, 1917, that the first American troops left for the battlefields of France. Aboard the transports that sailed for Europe that day were men of the 16th, 18th, 26th, and 28th Infantry Regiments, the 2nd Field Battalion Signal Corps, Field Hospital No. 6, Ambulance Company No. 6, a detachment of stevedores, 16 casual officers, 103 nurses and 60 civilians. The combined strength of these groups totaled 11,991 officers and men. On June 14, 1917, this force sailed for Europe aboard the following ships: *Antilles, Dakotan, El Occidente, Finland, Lenape, Edward Luckenback, McClellan, H.R. Mallory, Momas, Pastores, San Jacinto, Saratoga, Tenedores,* and the *Havana.* (With the exception of the *Finland*, none of the ships had ever crossed the Atlantic Ocean before, all being coast-wise vessels sailing between New York, the West Indies, the Gulf Coast, and Mexican ports.)

The US government was compelled to use such ships as these, for when we entered World War I there were only two ships on the Atlantic Coast available and equipped to transport troops; they were the Army Transports *Buford* and *Kilpatrick.* These two ships became the nucleus of a fleet that in time numbered over 200.

Of the vessels carrying troops only 11 were sunk and this with a loss of life of fewer than 500. (Most of these perished on the *Tuscania.*)

Just 14 months after the convoy we were just discussing left for Europe, an all-time embarkation record for World War I was set

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when on August 31, 1918, a total of 51,356 left the port of New York aboard 17 vessels for the battlefields of France.

The majority of these men sailed from Hoboken.

Another record Hoboken participated in was when the huge *SS Leviathan* (formerly the German liner *Vaterland*) took aboard 10,000 men in 2 hours!

All in all, before the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, 1,777,109 American troops had come to Hoboken, embarked on the Army transports, and sailed for the conflict in Europe.

On April 15, 1917, nine days after the United States declared war on Germany, President Wilson approved the seizure of the piers and ships of the North German Lloyd and the Hamburg-American Lines. Both of these lines were located in Hoboken.

OR HOBOKEN

On April 18, 1917, a battalion of the 22nd Infantry formally took possession of the German piers and ships along the Hoboken waterfront.

On July 30, 1917, Major General David C. Shanks arrived and began his duties as Commander of the Port. At that time the Port command consisted of 77 officers.

But as more transports became available, and troops began assembling at the Embarkation Camps of Merritt (Tenafly, NJ) and Mills (Garden City, Long Island) this group gradually increased to a figure of 2,500 officers, 17,000 enlisted men, and 14,000 civilians. This figure includes the entire Port Command and Camps Merritt and Mills.

Besides handling this large force of men and seeing to it that the troops were gotten safely aboard transports, General Shanks had other problems. One of these were the saloons where the crews of the German liners were in the habit of quenching their thirst. These saloons lined the waterfront

The troopship Leviathan *leaves Hoboken bound for France in 1917. Its disguise was intended to confuse German U-boats. Courtesy of George Kirchgessner.*

directly opposite the Embarkation Piers and were a great temptation to the men of the Port Command and to the ocean weary sailors who manned the transports. After a couple of troublesome months General Shanks wrote to Washington requesting that the law, which prohibits a saloon within one-half mile of any barracks occupied by soldiers, be invoked. This law requires a Presidential proclamation to make it binding. But, every time President Wilson was about to issue such a proclamation, a committee of Hoboken officials, who at that time were Mayor Griffin, and Commissioners Bach, Londrigan, Schmuling, and McFeely, would rush to Washington and plead that the City's schools and streets would be imperiled if the City lost the taxes it received from these saloons. The struggle between Shanks and the city officials went on for

The battle-scared Leviathan *returns to Hoboken at the close of the war. (Her rusted hulk remained here into the 1930s until she was sold for scrap metal.) Courtesy of George Kirchgessner.*

some time but was resolved in Shanks's favor when President Wilson finally signed and issued the requested proclamation. The next day, 237 Hoboken saloons closed! They were all within a half mile of the Army Piers! Overnight, almost the entire City of Hoboken from Jefferson Street east to the Hudson River piers on River Street had suddenly gone "dry." It would stay that way until the end of the war.

Another minor problem that came up quite unexpectedly for General Shanks was one concerning Christmas Boxes.

It seemed that the War Department thought it would be nice if on December 25, 1917, the troops overseas received a Christmas Box from home.

The public was informed of the idea and circulars were sent out telling the home folks what size package might be sent and strictly forbidding them from sending any article of a perishable or inflammable nature.

In the meantime, General Shanks was notified by the War Department that when the "boxes" arrived in Hoboken he was to have each one of them opened and searched for any forbidden articles, bombs, or infernal machines.

The general, knowing the warmheartedness of the American people, prepared for this by bringing down 6 officers and 250 men from Camp Merritt whose sole duty would be to search the "boxes" for contraband.

These men had no more arrived in Hoboken when the first trickle of "boxes" began to come through the mail. In a few days this trickle became a river and by the time ten days had passed the 6 officers and 250 men were helplessly swamped under a tidal wave of Christmas packages.

When this wave was at its height, a double line of mail trucks containing "Christmas Boxes" extended from the Lackawanna Ferry in lower Hoboken to the delivery platforms on the piers. AND THIS LINE WAS THERE DAY AND NIGHT.

On one evening alone the New York City Post Office sent over 53 truck loads with the request that the trucks be unloaded and sent back immediately as there were thousands of more "boxes" waiting to be delivered.

By this time General Shanks's inspection force, which he had increased hurriedly every day, now came to 70 officers and 1,160 men who worked around the clock on 8-hour shifts.

The group managed to cope with the avalanche of "boxes" and by Christmas Day the vast majority were either in Europe or on their way.

We have the feeling that General Shanks and his inspection crews never forgot that Christmas, and that they developed a feeling of sympathy towards the Post Office clerks who have to handle the Christmas rush year in and year out.

For the next 11 months, troops poured into Hoboken, marched to the Embarkation piers, boarded the transports, and sailed for Europe. Then, on November 11, 1918, after 18 months of fighting, an Armistice was signed by the Allies and Germany and the war was over. The hundreds of

Soldiers gather at the end of Hoboken's U.S. Army Transport Service on Pier No. 4 and await their transports to Europe. Photograph courtesy of George Kirchgessner.

thousands of men comprising the American Expeditionary Force were now able to come home. To get them there would be no small job. It was to take 13 months and 730 trips by the transports before it was accomplished. But finally on January 24, 1920, the *SS Northern Pacific* arrived at its Hoboken pier with the last contingent of fighting men.

After these men came the wounded. About 120,000 of them returned through the Port and were transferred to various hospitals throughout the land.

Of the 75,955 Americans who lost their lives in the conflict, 45,459 were brought home, while the bodies of 30,496 men remained on foreign soil.

The following is a detailed account of the arrival of the first bodies to return to the USA.

The Last Ones Home

The Dead of World War I Return to Their Native Land

The night of November 13, 1919, was cold and raw and out over the Atlantic Ocean a heavy fog had cut the visibility to almost zero.

Moving cautiously through this fog, the American freighter *Lake Daroga* made her way slowly past the Ambrose Lightship and headed into New York harbor.

After passing safely through the Narrows and the Upper Bay, the freighter then proceeded up the North River where, a short distance upstream, she was met by several tugboats. Due to the strong tide running, these tugs put lines aboard the freighter and began easing her towards the Army's Port of Embarkation piers in Hoboken. A short time later, the *Lake Daroga* was safely moored to one of these piers and the tugs had moved on to their next job. It was then close to midnight.

The inside of the long silent pier that the *Lake Daroga* was tied up to was a colorful and impressive sight. Wherever you looked there were

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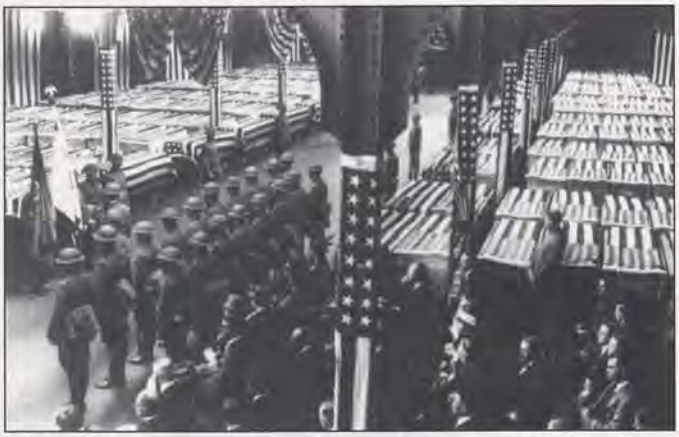

On Pier C, Hoboken receives the war dead in flag-draped caskets. Photograph courtesy of the Hoboken Public Library Picture Collection.

American flags. They were seemingly everywhere. Some were draped like bunting from the pier's steel cross-braces, while others, huge ones, hung suspended at intervals along the entire length of the pier. These huge ones reached from the ceiling to the floor.

Why this ceremony for one American freighter?

Because in the holds of this freighter was a cargo which this country wished to receive with the deepest respect and the highest honors.

The *Lake Daroga* was bringing home the first of our war dead.

Months before, this same pier had echoed to the sound of marching feet as the men of the American Expeditionary Force returned home from France. After these men, came the hospital ships with the wounded. And now, tonight, came the dead. The last ones home.

Aboard the *Lake Daroga* were 114 bodies. Most of them were Michigan men who had served with the 339th Infantry Regiment. The 39th had been attached to the 85th Division. This division had been commanded by Col. Wilds P. Richardson and had gone into North Russia in 1918 to support the government of Alexander Kerensky, who at that time was in danger of being overthrown by the Bolsheviks.

As Kerensky, who had proclaimed Russia a republic after the revolution, was more acceptable to the United States government than the Bolsheviks, the 85th had been sent to assist him. Much of the division's time had been spent guarding the lines of communication and supply from the seaports to Kerensky's troops.

This task had been done under extremely difficult weather conditions, with the temperature frequently dropping to 20 and 30 degrees below zero. This extreme weather, along with unusual living conditions, caused most of the 339th's casualties.

Now, on the night of November 13, 1919, these men of the 339th who had not survived, lay quietly in the hold of the *Lake Daroga*.

On the following morning, November 14, gangs of longshoremen quietly boarded the ship and began removing the 600-pound caskets from the holds to the flag-draped pier. Once the bodies had been removed by the longshoremen, no other civilian hands would touch them, only uniformed soldiers.

As each casket came out of the hold and reached dockside, it was gently placed on a hand truck, which had been equipped with rubber tires to prevent jolting, and then carefully heeled to its assigned spot on the pier.

Here it was placed on a small platform and covered with a new American flag while an honor guard stood nearby ready to maintain a 24-hour watch.

The next afternoon, still covered with the flag they had fought under and died for, the bodies of the men of the 339th were quietly put aboard a string of baggage cars to begin the last stretch of their long journey home.

As the train made its way slowly up the Shore Road and thence along Hudson Street to the uptown rail yards, many Hoboken citizens, glimpsing the flag-covered caskets, stood with their heads bared.

It was a melancholy day for the nation, and particularly for Hoboken, whose sad duty it was to receive these men back into their homeland.

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A Young Boy's Memories

Sights and Scenes During World War I

I was 14 years old when the war with Germany was declared and I lived at 1028 Hudson Street, just where the Manufacturer's Railroad slanted down the Shore Road towards the Hudson River. North of the Shore Road, between the river and Hudson Street, were a group of long, low, corrugated tin warehouses extending from 11th Street to 1st Street. When war broke out, these warehouses were hastily constructed for the US Army. They contained miscellaneous supplies (camouflage paints, etc.) for the transports that sailed from the Embarkation piers in lower Hoboken.

The warehouses had been built on the city's only baseball field, a nondescript dirt affair with the tracks of a railroad siding running through the outfield. On weekdays, the field was used by kids in the neighborhood, but on Sundays it was the home of a semi-pro outfit known as the OLGs. The big game of the season was when the OLGs played the Inner-Seals, a team representing the National Biscuit Co. of New York.

But all this was gone now and in place of the ballfield with its old wooden fence were these one-story warehouses. The warehouses were enclosed with a wire mesh fence topped by three strands of barbed wire. Outside this wire fence were sentry boxes spaced about 200 yards apart and manned by armed guards 24 hours a day. These sentry boxes extended from 14th and Hudson Streets down the Shore Road to the Embarkation piers at 5th and River Streets. The troops engaged in this duty were, I believe, Massachusetts National Guardsmen.

Besides the continuous sight of these sentries, there were other scenes to constantly remind the Hoboken citizen that the nation was at war.

On the day the transports sailed, the thud of marching feet could be heard for many hours as thousands of combat-laden troops trudged up 1st Street from the railroad siding near the L.O. Koven plant to the piers on River Street.

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Other days huge truck convoys would thunder into the City and head for the piers where they would be loaded aboard waiting freighters.

Sometimes this line of trucks would extend up and down Hudson Street as far as the eye could see, and it took so much time to load them aboard the ships that the drivers were compelled to spend the night in the cabs of their trucks.

When this took place, many of the families with private homes on Hudson Street would invite the drivers in for a hot meal and put them up overnight.

Another scene familiar to the City's residents was the sight of large groups of sailors sitting in the waterfront parks enjoying the sunshine and a breath of fresh air. These were US Navy men who had the tedious and dangerous duty of manning the 43 transports that used Hoboken as their departure point.

Of course, there were other places the transport crews and the soldiers manning the Port could go to relax. The YMCA. had a wide, rambling frame building on what is now the Little League baseball field in Stevens Park. This service center provided the men with hot showers, reading rooms, pool and billiard tables, cafeteria, soda fountain, etc. It was the finest of its kind to be built in America during the war.

Another fine social center for the men was the Admiral Benson Club, located between 8th and 9th Streets on Washington, which was operated by the National Catholic War Council. Also available were the services of the Jewish Welfare, the Salvation Army, and the Red Cross. The Red Cross also supplied the embarking and returning troops with coffee and doughnuts. (The returning men also received Safe Arrival cards that were to be filled out and sent to their loved ones at home.)

The war days were busy ones for the citizens of Hoboken, too.

Women knitted socks and sweaters for the troops, prominent men made speeches from patriotically decorated floats urging the populace to buy War Bonds, the Boy Scouts delivered thousands of Red Cross and War Bond posters for display in store windows. And so it went throughout the war with the City swarming with sentries, soldiers, and sailors, and the population rising beyond the 70,000 mark. Then, on November 11, 1918, came the wonderful news that an Armistice had been signed. Hoboken went wild with joy. As the factory and steamship whistles blew, the people poured into the streets to discuss the exciting news. Impromptu celebrations sprang up all over town, and the next 24 hours were probably the noisiest and happiest in Hoboken's history!

The Return of the Troops

During the war, a troop-train would occasionally come down Hudson Street on its way to the piers from the rail yards bordering the northern end of town. These trains were of great interest to the uptown youngsters not only because they were jammed with soldiers but also because they were hauled by big steam engines instead of the little electric train that was usually used on this stretch of road.

It was one day around noon time, some weeks after the Armistice had been signed, when the short, sharp blasts of one of these big engines aroused the neighborhood in the vicinity of 11th and Hudson Streets. This was unusual as the trains up till now had gone by quietly. People rushed to the windows to find out what was going on. Arriving there, they discovered the train had just rounded the bend on the Shore Road near the Penn Shops and was slowly approaching Hudson Street. Behind the engine was a long string of passenger cars loaded with troops. This was peculiar because up until now all troop trains had headed towards the piers. None had ever come from that direction. Again, the whistle blew a series of short, sharp blasts. Then, suddenly it dawned on the people as to who these troops were. These were the first men to arrive home from Europe! These were the soldiers who had been fighting on the battlefields of France! As if by magic, it seemed that every window on Hudson Street from 10th to 14th Streets was occupied by someone waving a flag, an apron, a sheet, or anything they could get their hands on

that was waveable. Later, the troop trains would pass at a rate of two, three, and four a day, but no one who saw the first one go by will ever forget it! It was a memorable moment in Hoboken's history.

These trains continued to pass through Hoboken for many months. Then, one day the big engine came up the Shore Road much more quietly than usual. When it reached Hudson Street, the reason for this could be seen. It was a hospital train containing severely wounded soldiers. They too continued to pass through Hoboken for many months. There was no cheering as these trains passed through town.

Then came the dead.

The long line of baggage cars, with their doors open so the carefully spaced coffins covered by the American flag could be seen, passed slowly, as the people who had waved so joyously to the first train now stood silent, many with their heads bared.

Bringing the dead home was a long and arduous job, and as late as the middle of August 1921 the baggage cars carrying these honored men were still quietly passing through Hoboken to the railroad yards at the northern end of town.

It was 1922 before the last traces of war disappeared from Hoboken, and the City once again resumed its peacetime role.

However, one thing is certain. Hoboken will never be forgotten by its countrymen who fought in World War I. For in some mysterious manner a slogan is born in every war that catches the fancy of the troops. In the Civil War it was "on to Richmond," in the Spanish-American War it was "Remember the Maine," and in World War I it was: "Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken." Every soldier in the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), and there were over two million of them, knew this slogan, and to them Hoboken meant the United States. What finer way could a City go down in the history of a war than to have it recorded that it was not a city where a great battle was fought or where thousands of men were killed or wounded, but that to millions of its country's fighting men it was a symbol of home!

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To Whoever Met My Sister & Brother at St. Ann's Feast,

I am the youngest of four children who grew up in Hoboken but the only one who entered this world via St. Mary's Hospital. This great event in my life occurred on September 3, 1938. I don't remember it at all, even if the start of my mother's labor was precipitated by a burning mattress. My father had fallen asleep with a lighted cigarette. My mother told him not to bother going to bed, the baby was coming. It was early and my father asked the milkman to take them to the hospital. So he did and they kept me, although they threw away the mattress. My mother always said I was no bigger than a milk bottle. I am just one of many kids born in Hoboken and have no outstanding standing in my home town. I have never met Frank Sinatra, but I did peek through the window when Ava Gardner was at his parents' home. (Or was that just a fantasy?) I was also one of the mob of teenagers who played hooky when *On the Waterfront* was being filmed across the street from my high school, Demarest. When old man Stover, the principal, came out and shouted, "Stop! I've got you surrounded!" I'm afraid that I was one of the unruly ones who laughed and paid no attention. Marlon Brando was a dream even with all that make-up and I've had a crush on him since then, in spite of all his publicity. I also loved Charlie, Joey, Chi Chi, Neil, Ritter, and numerous others at one time or another. I was at Tenth Street Park when Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis came and played ball. I never liked them but I did that day. Anyway, the reason I am writing to you is that my sister, Glenda, told me to and, after all, she is older than I. She took care of me a lot. I don't know whether you can use these remembrances but here they are in any case. I wrote them when I was taking a poetry workshop and could not think of anything to write. When I hit a dead end and my mind went blank, out would pop one of these. So these are prose poems.

Rhoda Mae Evans

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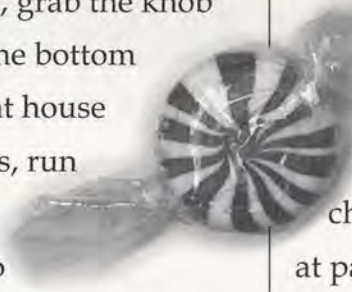
If you live at 832 Willow Avenue like me and come flying down the banister, out the door, leap down the stoop, grab the knob on top of the post, sail off the bottom step, run past the apartment house where your best friend lives, run past Pierro's butcher shop on the corner, make a sharp left, run like lightening past the brick wall where the girls throw a Spaldeen to play donkey and the boys play Johnny-on-the-pony, on past the barrels where the boys give each other a pink belly, and run on down the block, you will come to the Ninth Street Candy Store, owned by Charlie and Lizzie. This is our store, the Ninth Streeters' store, at least for most of the year. But Charlie and Lizzie always take the summer off. Then we have to go across the street to Kramer's. It is with a certain sadness that we see them leave on vacation. But we move through the excitement of the change, like the roaches ever-present in the store.



All us kids, the ones they trust, help get Charlie's ready to close. Everything has to be sold. What doesn't sell or will spoil, we'll get. We wish for potato chips but they always sell—5 cent, 10 cent, quarter size, fresh, crisp, scooped out into brown paper bags. The penny candy has to be packed: licorice strings, Maryjanes, Kits, wax bottles of syrup, chocolate babies. All rules are suspended at packing time and I get to wait on customers, walk behind the counter. "May I help you out?" It's only Jeanie from up the block but I'm in charge, responsible. She wants a Mello Roll. I take the ice cream cylinder from the freezer, remove the cardboard, and press it into a sugar cone. No fuss, no measuring, the beginning of the instant age. Well, almost.

It is the little kid season of pretzels, Bit-O-Honey, more candy than we'd buy all year, not like the winter evenings, when you see the older guys hanging around the radiator at Charlie's, smoking, joking, pushing each other around, talking of mysterious things that we little kids can only guess at, things that we will know only when we can hang

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around that radiator ourselves. The big guys always kick us little kids out, won't let us stay long, just long enough to buy a Nehi or Pepsi.

But the end of school and the beginning of summer is our time, the world of transition, free candy, free ice cream until the store is empty.

Charlie, with his wire-rimmed glasses, and Lizzie, in her cover-all apron, are gone now. They looked the same in the fifteen years that I knew them. There's a great comfort in that. We kids all grew up and left, but they watched the new ones come along and stayed on Ninth Street until they died. Their images flash, like turn signals, in my mind when I pass a 7-11 store. There I see young children, shoving each other, laughing at something tremendously funny. Some play the talking videos while others crowd around the pinball machine, hitting the sides, cursing at the tilt. I wonder if they talk of Mars or Saturn on cold wet nights or of love and other mysterious things.

Rhoda Mae Evans

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Pierro's

I was sent home from school. Bugs again.
Instead of home, I hung around by Pierro's.
Old man Pierro was the butcher on the corner.
His sons, Al and Danny, worked under
The omniscient eye of the old man, who wore

A straw hat all year round, his mustache
A sure mark of authority. That shop was spacious
In a crowded city, where all other stores
Seemed close and airless, like Brody's across
The street, a department store, where every square

Foot of space was packed with boxes of blouses,
Stockings or socks. Brody would get your size
By wrapping a sock around your fist. It would fit
Perfectly, he said, if the heel and toe met
Over your knuckles. He was always right.

But Pierro's had room to move and sawdust
On the floor, perfect for a soft-shoe routine.
It was always exciting there with people moving
Through their lives of pork chop suppers,
Roast beef Sundays. Old Italian women, young

Italian women, neighborhood women. Danny,
Charming, talked to the ladies, showed them
Center cut, rump roast, thick red steaks,
All cleaned, cut and perfect, plopped on the counter.
"Don't take all the fat off, Danny. Leave a little

For flavor." "Give me a good piece of meat, Al.
It's my mother-in-law's birthday. Something special."
They had long thin knives, silver power that could
Slice from my mind the memory of old Palumbo,
The fruit peddler, who chased me down the block

With a butcher knife, after I stole the plum
From his stand. I couldn't eat that plum.
How easily Al could chop a chicken into all
Of its parts with a cleaver that stood in relief
As it rose and fell, rose and fell. Splitting

An atom seemed unremarkable. Danny and Al were
Surgeons, wiping blood on their red aprons,
Smiles of successful operations on their faces.
"These are nice chickens, Mrs. Palmieri. Just look,
Perfect." You never knew when they would grease

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The poles holding the awnings outside the shop.

The kids were always running around the corner,

Leaping up to swing on the poles and sticking

A toe out to catch the window ledge of the store

Front. I didn't think it was fair to grease the pole.

You could see, through the window, the Pierros, laughing.

It was Danny who stood behind the counter, sharpening

The knives on the long metal bar, that day that I

Was sent home from school. I looked through the window,

Afraid to go home, and stared at the string of sausages

Hanging on the wall behind him. I was hungry. They were

The pure kind like the ones you bought off the pushcarts.

Danny saw me and opened the door. "Hey kid, you should

Be in school." He smiled. "Here, wanna hot dog?

Now, get outa here."

Poem by Rhoda Mae Evans

Editor's Note Concerning ***On the Waterfront***:

Frequent contributor Jack Fitzpatrick tells us that Ed Coyle, who was, he believes, the Deputy City Clerk, played the presiding officer at the Crime Commission hearing in On the Waterfront.

Perhaps even more arcane, Vinnie Russo, a member of Theatrical Teamsters Local No. 817, informs us that a fellow union member named Dave Cobb was behind the wheel of the prop truck as it cruised down Willow Street in the movie. Cobb was not from Hoboken but was working on the film when he was drafted into becoming a part of movie trivia.

If anyone can identify any other Hobokenite who appeared in the film, please let us know.

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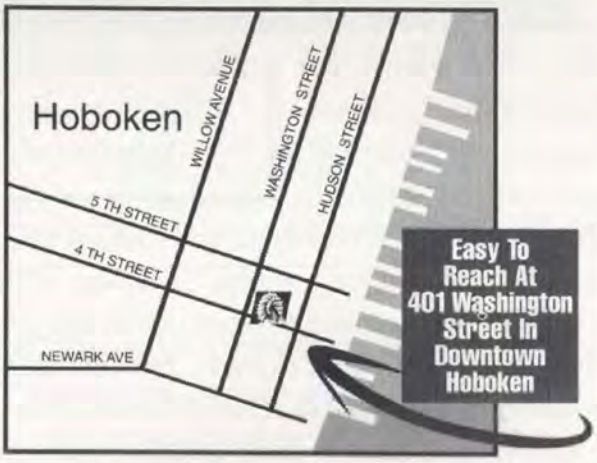

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George McClellan

By Lenny Luizzi, Sr.

Engraving courtesy of John DePalma

Politics, it seems, has always been a passion for many Hobokenites. Many Mile Square Citizens have held, or sought, a variety of public offices. But only one man who lived and worked in Hoboken ever ran for President of the United States.

Gen. George Brinton McClellan
Commander of the Army of the Potomac

George Brinton McClellan, the candidate of the Democratic Party in 1864, was born in Philadelphia, Pa, in 1825. The son of a wealthy doctor, McClellan entered West Point in 1842, was graduated second in the class of 1846, served with distinction in the war against Mexico, left the Army to become chief engineer for the Illinois Central Railroad, returned to uniform when the Civil War broke out, and rose to command the largest Union force in the Civil War. (Charles S. Stewart, who ranked number one in the class of 1846, never rose higher than the rank of colonel of engineers and reached that level only after the Civil War.) Other classmates included Stonewall Jackson and George Pickett (who stood at the bottom of the class); both would achieve considerable fame as Confederate generals.

McClellan was a clever tactician, and was noticed by President Abraham Lincoln. In 1861, Lincoln appointed McClellan Commander of the Army of the Potomac, the largest of the Union armies. This was the high point of his military career. McClellan was able to bring organization and order out of chaos in the Union forces in the early days of the war. In effect, he molded a ragtag assembly of men in uniform into a well trained and highly disciplined fighting force. And his men adored him for it. It was his reluctance to use this force to destroy the enemy that prevented him from being remembered as one of the great generals of his time. McClellan's problem was that, on the battlefield, he was overly cautious. Repeatedly, after victories in West Virginia, at Antietam, and in the Peninsula campaign, he failed to press his advantage and pursue the rebel Army. His inevitable assumption that he was outnumbered, his constant pleas for more reinforcements, and his inaction put him at odds with Lincoln. Finally, McClellan was relived of his command on November 10, 1862.

In August of 1864, the Democrats choose McClellan to be their Presidential candidate and Ohio Representative George H. Pendleton as his Vice Presidential running mate. The Republicans renominated Lincoln for a second term and chose US Senator Andrew Johnson of Tennessee for Vice President. With the war going badly for the North,

almost everyone, including Lincoln, thought McClellan would win the election. But just as things were at their worst for Lincoln politically and for the North on the battlefield, the tide of the war turned. General Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia and William T. Sherman in Georgia began to win key land battles, and Admiral David Farragut won the naval Battle of Mobil Bay.

Lincoln went on to win in November, with an electoral count of 212 to 21 for McClellan and a majority of more than 400,000 votes. The only northeastern state McClellan won was New Jersey. After his defeat, McClellan and his family took an extended European vacation.

McClellan's Hoboken connection actually began in Paris, France. In September of 1867, Edwin A. Stevens, the founder of Stevens Institute of Technology, wrote to McClellan asking him to come to Hoboken to work on the *Stevens Battery*, an iron clad vessel that had been under construction in one form or another for thirteen years. The reason Stevens wanted a career army man to work on a navy vessel was simple: McClellan was one of the best engineers of his day. Although Stevens died in 1868, he provided money in his will for this project, including an annual salary of $12,000 if McClellan accepted.

McClellan moved his family to Hoboken. The Stevens family arranged for them to live at what was then 108 River Street, between what are now Third and Fourth Streets, on the site where Marine View Plaza now stands. The *Battery*, as the vessel was called, lay in dry dock at the foot of Fifth Street, later the site of the Holland-American Line and soon to be a public park. The vessel never was completed and, after eighteen months work, the money Stevens had left for the project ran out. McClellan moved to New York City, where his son George B. McClellan, Jr. would later become Mayor of that city. McClellan senior must have been a restless soul, because he was to move back and forth between New York and New Jersey twice.

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In 1878, McClellan was elected Governor of New Jersey. He served one two-year term ending in 1881. His tenure was undistinguished; in fact, three months before he left office, he again moved to New York City, making him the only New Jersey Governor to live out of the State.

McClellan returned to Hoboken for the last time in 1885. His visit was in response to an invitation from Martha Bayard Stevens to attend a meeting at her home, Castle Stevens, now the site of the Stevens Institute of Technology Student Center. The meeting of prominent citizens was for the purpose of forming the Industrial Education Association of New Jersey. The goal of this group was to train the schoolchildren of Hoboken to work with their hands as well as their minds and to obtain a skill that they could use later in life. The results of this meeting, which McClellan chaired, is the Hoboken Industrial School, still in operation today at 506 Park Avenue. (Hoboken Historical Museum trustee Vincent Wassman is also a trustee of the Industrial School). Unfortunately McClellan did not live to see the Industrial School open. Two months after the meeting, on October 29, he died at his home in Orange, New Jersey. He is buried in Trenton's Riverview Cemetery overlooking the Delaware River. Among the Civil War veterans attending his funeral was General Joseph E. Johnston, McClellan's best friend at West Point and later the Confederate commander who opposed McClellan in the Peninsula campaign.

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We also invite you to share your own memories of Hoboken history with us. If you have some old photographs to share, a story to tell, or an idea for an article for the magazine, please call Leonard Luizzi, Sr., chairperson of the Hoboken Historical Museum's magazine ***Hoboken History*** at (201) 420-1803.

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