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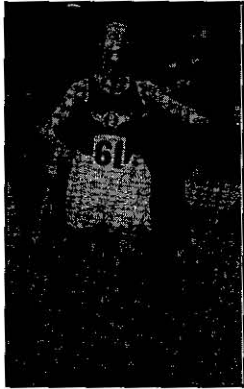
... then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

Remembering "Mr. DeMarathon"



"From Marathon"

The DeMar family, for whom the road is named, had many talented members. Clarence Harrison DeMar, born 1888, spent his childhood in Indian Hill's environs and gained national and international fame for his athletic prowess. The oldest of 6 children, he attended school in Madisonville and preferred to jog or dogtrot rather than walk there. When he was 10 his father died. To help his family, he peddled pins, needles, thread, and soap in neighboring towns – walking 10-20 miles per day unless someone with a horse and buggy offered him a ride.

Their finances depleted, the family moved to Massachusetts and lived in a relative's rent-free house. Clarence continued selling household items to locals, but the situation worsened. The family separated and Clarence was sent to the Farm and Trade School on Thompson's Island in Boston harbor. In 1904, he left and went to work in Vermont for a fruit farmer. Then he entered the University of Vermont, paying his way by doing chores. He jogged from job to job – to save time and stay warm. He ran competitively for the first time at college when he raced in a few cross-country meets. In the middle of his junior year, DeMar turned 21, left college, and went home to help support his mother. There he lived for 20 years, working in the printing

business and becoming a self taught runner. He ran 7 miles to and from his job in his work clothes, and sometimes chose a longer route of 15 – 20 miles.

In 1910 he won the local Old Armory Athletic Assn. 10-mile race and then completed his first Boston Marathon, placing second in 2:29. That summer he ran in a race to win a new suit of clothes, but placed 5th. Before the Marathon in 1911, doctors worried about his heart murmur (diagnosed the previous year) and urged him to give up the sport. He went on to win the Marathon in 2:23:29, followed by 10 more victories, including 2 marathons, and earned a spot on the 1912 US Olympic Team.

After the Olympics, DeMar took a rest from marathoning for about 5 years. He needed to focus on earning money; and, also, as a devout Baptist, he questioned whether running was a vain search for praise. During his hiatus, he took extension courses at night at Harvard and Boston University, and received an Associate of Arts degree. As World War I loomed, Clarence decided to have a little fun and entered the BAA Marathon again, placing 3rd in 1917. Drafted in 1918, DeMar entered the Army and was stationed in England, France, and lastly in Germany with the Army of Occupation.

Returning to the states, DeMar landed a job and entered the 1922 Boston Marathon. Though he was not the favorite, he won. And he won again in 1923. Sponsored by the American Legion, he ran races in San Francisco and other US cities. The next feather in his cap was winning his third Marathon in a row in 1924. Clarence represented the US in the Olympic Games in 1924 and 1928 (earning a bronze medal). Working at typesetting in print shops, he marathoned in Boston and other eastern cities. He mentored Boy Scouts and taught a mission class in Boston's North End, where he met Margaret Isley. They married in 1929 and eventually had 5 children. DeMar won the Boston Marathon again – he called it the "big marathon" – in 1929 and 1930. They then moved to New Hampshire, where he became a teacher and the school printer at Keene Normal School.

While in NH, he commuted to Boston University at night, hitchhiking or walking the 90 miles twice a week, and earned an MA in 2 years. DeMar never drove a car and transported his children to church on the back of his bicycle. When their farm was taken by eminent domain for an airport, they moved back to Boston, where DeMar worked two jobs to send his children to college.

Known for his determination, DeMar never dropped out of a race. An independent person, he disliked being distracted by spectators or photographers, and was known to be brusque if interrupted during competition. He believed that his power of concentration was the most important factor in his victories. A working class man who surmounted a poverty stricken childhood, DeMar became a legend. He trained in the dark or on the way to work, and did not have fancy footwear. Routinely he worked an 8-hour night shift at the *Boston Herald* after racing.

Clarence DeMar ran the Boston Marathon 34 times, won it 7 times and three-peated in the 1920s. His victory at age 41 in 1930 establishes him as the oldest winner in history. His nickname, *Mr. DeMarathon*, is fitting for the man who enjoyed the long grind of the 26-mile foot race, and who used to say, "I'll keep on running just as long as my legs will carry me."