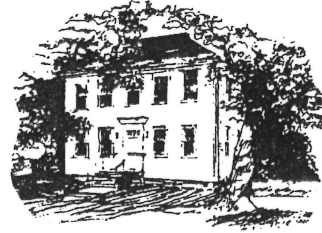


IMAGES

. . . then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

The Carrier Pigeon – A World War II Saga

During World War II, village resident Dorothy Rowe started a newsletter, *The Carrier Pigeon*, to keep her soldier son and his friends informed of local news. It documented news of Indian Hill servicemen and contained tidbits from the home front.

When her firstborn and his pals enlisted, Mrs. Stanley Rowe informed her husband, "I think I'll gather up the news of what's going on at home, and send it out to Stanley and his friends so they won't be so homesick; and, when they write back, I'll send out their own news to each other. I'll be sort of a carrier pigeon." An avid churchgoer, she approached Rev. Francis J. Moore, the rector of Indian Hill Chapel (predecessor to today's Indian Hill Church) with her idea. Mr. Moore was so enthusiastic that he wanted to have the publication mailed to the entire diocese, but Mrs. Rowe persuaded him that it should be limited to just the boys and their friends in the service. The church agreed to pay the printing costs, and the mailing list was made up of members of Indian Hill Chapel in the service, friends of theirs, and wives of the men overseas. Members of the congregation were also able to get the newsletter at church.

Mrs. Rowe began saving clippings from newspapers and noting events of interest, which she saved in a box. When renowned artist Charles Dana Gibson (who was visiting his daughter, Irene Emery) heard of the plan, he drew a masthead of a wise little carrier pigeon whispering all the news into the ear of a grinning serviceman. Mrs. Rowe found a printer near Milford whose deaf and dumb sister-in-law set the type. Communications between the two ladies were a bit tricky, and there were some mistakes, but the four-page rag had a homey touch. Each issue's four departments (Chapel Notes, Friends of the Family, Town Chatter, and Specials) was typed by Mrs. Rowe on a different color paper to assist her typesetter.



On October 10, 1942, No. 1 was ready, with the words "This is the first of a number of papers specially published for you – the boys and men in the services who have gone from our families... You are always in our thoughts and prayers and we want you to know it..." Over the next three years, approximately seven weeks apart, the *Carrier Pigeon* was delivered to 141 servicemen from Chunking, China, to the jungles of Burma, the swamps of

Okinawa, the deserts of Africa, and the front lines in Italy, France, and Germany.

Helping Mrs. Rowe with the addressing and mailing of the publication were wives of servicemen including Evie Brooks, Jean Deupree, Polly Deupree, Betty Hobson, Anne Stevenson, Billie Vanderbilt, and Eleanor Warner. The Rangers, in those days of gasoline shortages, delivered issues between editor Rowe and her staff. The team cut the printed pages, stuffed and addressed envelopes, and maintained a card catalogue of addresses of the boys (some of whom had 7 address changes). Since the Office of Censorship in Washington prohibited printing the precise location, destination or number of an outfit, the newsletter used the overseas box office addresses supplied.

The newsletter was a link between home and servicemen, many of whom wrote appreciative letters to Mrs. Rowe, including vignettes about their wartime experiences which were printed in subsequent editions of the *Carrier Pigeon*. Replete with emotion and humor, it boosted the morale of all involved. News items included: one serviceman who received a promotion and cabled his bride, "I don't have to salute your father any longer;" reports that one of the 141 was in a POW Camp in Germany; and the death (killed in action) of the youngest boy on the mailing list. Hometown events – new babies, engagements, parties, and news from Country Day School were regular features.

Once the war ended, returned servicemen presented Mrs. Rowe with a large silver punch bowl, signed by all 141 subscribers, the names of the four deceased, and her initials. This was borrowed by Mrs. Rowe's "boys" for family events over the years before being donated to the Cincinnati Historical Society by Mrs. Rowe. Her *Carrier Pigeon* – an amateur newspaper, created fellowship among readers and writers alike, and echoed the glories and stories of World War II.