

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

The Carrier Pigeon – Indian Hill's Wartime Newsletter

The “greatest generation” were the heroes of World War II, and they made countless sacrifices overseas. Those on the home front did what they could to support the war effort. Cincinnatians kept in touch with those who were actively serving their country.



In 1942, after her firstborn son and his pals enlisted, Dorothy Rowe informed her husband, “I think I’ll gather up the news of what is 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 their own news to each other. I’ll be sort of a carrier pigeon.” An avid churchgoer, she approached Rev. Francis Moore, rector of Indian Hill Chapel with her idea. Mr. Moore was so enthusiastic that he wanted to have the newsletter 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 included members of Indian Hill Chapel who were currently serving, friends of theirs, and wives of the men overseas. Members of the congregation could pick up a copy of the publication at church.

Mrs. Rowe began saving newspaper clippings and tidbits of news in a box. Renowned artist Charles Dana Gibson, creator of the popular “Gibson Girl” images, agreed to make the masthead for the newsletter. It consisted of a little carrier pigeon whispering all the news into the ear of a grinning serviceman. *The Carrier Pigeon* became the newsletter’s name. Mrs. Rowe found a printer near Milford whose handicapped 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. Every issue featured four departments: Chapel Notes, Friends of the Family, Town Chatter, and Specials. Each was typed by Mrs. Rowe on a different color paper to assist the typesetter.

On October 10, 1942, the first issue was sent. It was introduced as “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, seventeen issues of the *Carrier Pigeon* were delivered to 141 servicemen from the caves of 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 Stephenson, Billie Vanderbilt, and Eleanor Warner. In those days of gasoline rationing, the Rangers delivered drafts 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 servicemen (some of whom had multiple address changes). The Office of Censorship in Washington, D.C. prohibited knowing the precise location of an outfit, so the newsletters were sent to overseas box office addresses.

The newsletter was a link between home and those in uniform, many of whom submitted vignettes about their wartime experiences to the editor. Replete with emotion and humor, the *Carrier Pigeon* boosted morale. News items included one enlistee who got promoted and cabled his bride “I don’t have to salute your father any longer”, a corporal’s account of being bombed at sea, and a lieutenant’s description of his jeep being demolished by a land mine in France. Hometown events – new babies, engagements, parties, and news from Country Day School were regular features.

When 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. The punch bowl was borrowed by Mrs. Rowe’s “boys” for family events over the years until she later donated it to the Cincinnati Historical Society. The *Carrier Pigeon* – an amateur newsletter – created fellowship and echoed the glories and stories of World War II.

THE CARRIER PIGEON

from The Indian Hill Chapel

