

The Milford Historian

===== Newsletter of the Milford Historical Society =====

March 2003

Mission Statement: *We are organized exclusively **for** educational purposes. We bring together those people who are interested in history, especially the history **of** the Village of Milford and Milford Township.*

Wreck on the Wabash'

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, March 20, 2003@ 6:15 pm

Laurie Dickens is a Michigan historian and is the author of the book Wreck on the Wabash: The 1901 Railroad Disaster in Lenawee County. She will present her story to our general membership and explain many of the details about one of Michigan's worst railway calamities. Get ready for a true tale about a local event that took years of research and study by the author.

Our general membership meetings are open to the public and all are invited. You don't have to be a member to enjoy this good time with people who like history!

NOTE: Our potluck dinner and meeting will be held at The United Methodist Church on Atlantic Street. This is our new meeting location as voted on at the November meeting.

Our evening starts with a sumptuous potluck dinner at the Milford United Methodist Church, 1200 Atlantic Street (set up at 6: 15 p.m., eat at 6:30 p.m.) We will have our membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. The featured speaker is at 8:00 p.m. Bring your own table service and a big dish to pass based on the first letter of your last name.

Milford Historical Society 6:15 p.m.

Thursday, March 20,2003

A-F Desserts

G-Q Salads

R-Z Main Dish

From the President's Desk:

Greetings from your new (and returning) president! Aren't fresh beginnings wonderful! Your Board begins this year with renewed energy and a determination to increase the presence and relevancy of the historical society in our community. We have been gathering momentum. The rewards of service have come with a lot of hard work and dedication. The time is right to "share the wealth."

By now you have received a letter asking you to consider the proposal to expand the MHS Board. Our hope is to add four more people, both long standing "Milfordites" and fresh faces, which will bring fresh ideas as well as the important connections to our unique town's past.

If the above applies to you, consider getting "on board!" Yes, you'll be committed to work.. and you'll be part of the power train that helps shape the historical society's important role in our community. With 27 years of track record, we have the history and momentum to do great things.

So, first of all, please support the resolution at the March meeting to increase Board membership. And then, seriously consider offering your good time and talents to stoke the fires of this organization that has so much to offer.

Your President, *Judith Reiter*

Feature Story: Milford and World War II

(Editor's *note*: oral histories are a great source of information about the people of Milford. It's important to capture these stories while the people who experienced life-changing events are still around and can still remember what happened! This reporter is now launching an effort to include in the next few newsletters some of these accounts as told by the Milfordites who were in some way involved in World War II.

As we know, wars tend to amplify historic documentation. News accounts, photographs, letters to home, and first hand observations that get etched in the witness' mind are some of the various ways war gets from the battle fields back to those at home who are worrying and wondering. War disrupts our normal routines and that makes us pay attention and remember these kinds of events.

In our last two newsletters, we discussed the use of horses and tractors in and around Milford. One of the contributors to that story, Art Hill, just happens to be a Navy veteran of World War II. Our thanks to Art for contributing his oral history- and being the catalyst for this series that covers an important era in Milford's history!)

Our first WW2 story revolves around Art Hill, a lifetime resident of the Milford area. Art's parents, grandparents, and other relatives were Milford farmers in the area of Commerce and Garner Roads. Art was drafted in 1942 and left Milford for the recruiting office in Detroit. From there he went to basic training at the Great Lakes Navy Base near Chicago.

Then, traveling by train, Art Hill ended up in Long Beach, California awaiting orders for duty in the Pacific. His group was assigned to an aircraft carrier heading for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This carrier had no airplanes on it. It was entirely filled with men and supplies. Art relates that there were so many sailors on the ship that he and some of his comrades had to sleep on top of the supplies during the several days voyage to Hawaii.

When they arrived in Pearl Harbor, Art and his fellow sailors saw much of the damage that was still evident from the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack. He wasn't long in Pearl Harbor before

being assigned to the USS Bailey, a Navy destroyer that would see immediate duty in the south Pacific. If you have Internet access, go to <http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Base/1250/bailey.html> for a picture and description of this ship.

The Bailey was a relatively new vessel and perhaps that is one reason why the Admiral was frequently on board. Art said they liked having him on board because the food was better. When the Admiral was there, they had beef. When he wasn't, they had Australian lamb.

The Bailey assisted and escorted the barges and LST's that were landing troops on occupied islands. Art had good vision so one of his jobs was as a lookout from the observation room directly above the captain's station. During a landing escort operation, he spotted a gun flash from an enemy artillery placement up on the hillside. Art relayed the location and the ship's "gun computer" was given the data to aim its 5" guns at the target. The captain gave the order to fire and a direct hit was scored on the cave where the enemy's gun was. Art soon after was given a sharpshooter rating and his pay was increased by \$5.00 per month.

In October 1944, the USS Bailey was hit at night by a strafing attack. Damage was extensive, 9 men were killed and 16 were wounded. The ship was hit below the water line and a storage compartment was taking on water. Art said that to assist in the flood control, many of the crew including Art spent most of the night bailing water by passing buckets and anything else that would hold water up and down stairways. Finally, by transferring fuel internally from one side to the other, the ship was purposefully made to list and get the damaged area above the water line.

The wounded were transferred to a nearby hospital ship. Those who died would be buried at sea. Another of Art's jobs was to make the body bags for these burials. Art had his own quarters and his room was equipped with a sewing machine. A special plastic like material on a roll was used. Art said you'd unroll about as much material as you thought you needed and then stitched up the edges. A 5" shell was placed in

each bag to act as a weight. It was one of the grim tasks that war brings to bare.

As the Bailey limped back to Pearl for repairs, Art's duty was about up. He traveled via a crowded troop ship to Seattle and then by train back to Michigan. Art remembered well the overwhelming care shown by American farmwomen to the servicemen traveling back across the top tier of the 48 states. Each time the train stopped along the way, there were huge spreads of food - cakes, cookies, sandwiches, you name it - provided to the soldiers and sailors by the local women.

We'll have to end here as Art had more to tell than could be squeezed into our newsletter. But at least we have this much to share with our readers as provided by Art Hill, a fine gentleman of Milford who served his country in WWII!

News Updates

Look for the Membership table at our March 20th meeting. At this table you will find a greeter, some nametags, membership envelopes, and other information as needed. Dues collection (due on a calendar year basis) will be available if you haven't paid yet.

Also on the table will be tags for our Granny's Attic sale. The plan is to have members tag items at home and price them so they're ready to bring to the museum yard sale in July. Granny just wants to help you with your spring-cleaning!

Board Action

Your Board of Directors has decided to propose a Bylaws change that will increase the board from 9 members to 13. You received the proposal via mail recently and the vote by the membership will be completed at our March 20th meeting.

Once the proposal is passed, the board will solicit and appoint four members to fill the new positions. The proposed increase in board members will help our organization complete its many community objectives that face us each year.

Museum

Repair work on the footing along the west wing of the museum is now complete. Gary Sparks, a

contractor from Highland who specializes in this type of work, completed the repair work. The repair costs were shared with our landlord, the Village of Milford. The Village paid 60% of the costs. We are now faced with doing some inside repair to the second floor wall and getting the A/C units reinstalled where the excavation was done. A big thanks goes to Bill Shimmel for guiding this important task to completion.

Powerhouse Project

The Pettibone Creek Hydroelectric Station rehabilitation project is proceeding under the watchful eye of chairperson Judith Reiter. Construction drawings and specifications are 95% complete for the building restoration and site work. With sufficient funding in place, the restoration could start this spring. Construction duration is expected to be one year. The MHS board voted to support the project with an additional \$5000. Updates will be forthcoming in our next newsletter.

Part of the funding is coming from a grass roots effort supported by our local citizenry. What's really exciting is to see how the Paint-A-Tile fundraiser has taken off! Cathie Irish has turned this project into a community wide event! School groups, scout troops, grandkids, grandparents, adults, and families have participated with great results. The Paint-A-Tile endeavor has so far raised over \$2500. If you want to participate or just see how it's done, be at the museum on Saturday, March 22 and Cathie will help you. Her number is 248-685-9537.

Dates to Remember.

March 20, 2003 - General Membership Mtg.

May 15, 2003 - General Membership Mtg.

July 4, 2003 - MHS sponsored Independence Day Parade on Main Street

July 11 & 12 Granny's Attic Yard Sale at the Museum. Bring tagged items July 10th.

July 13, 2003 - MHS Annual Picnic. Location To Be Announced.

September 18, 2003 - General Membership Mtg.

September 20 & 21, 2003 - Home Tour

November 20, 2003 - General Membership Mtg.
