

WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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From your president, Joyce Nordhielm.

HEAR YE! HEAR YE!
February Meeting—February 28, 2005
7:00 p.m. Presbyterian Church, 105 Elm Street

The February program will present the “History of Holt”, Best and Early Caterpillar” by Nicole Thaxton on February 28 at the Presbyterian Church at 7:00p.m. Join the fun!

Last month we mentioned the website of WACOHI.com designed and maintained by Don and Dee Lott. Many of you have taken a look and like what you see. There is a new link on that site that will allow you to view 40 sepia pictures of old Washington. The pictures, suitable for framing, are labeled. These pictures are from calendars which the society had printed some years ago. We are offering all four years for \$10.00 a set if you pick them up at the Zinser House. If you are not in the area, we can mail them for an additional \$3.75. Drop a check for \$13.75 to WHS, Box 54, Washington, IL 61571 or come by the Zinser House during open hours and pick up a set for \$10.00. What a lovely, nostalgic grouping they will make!

Gotta brick? Getta brick! Everyone’s doing it! We will be entering this year’s order on March 1, 2005. \$100.00 buys a brick with three lines of 13 characters with the wording of your choice.

From your editor, Kit Zinser.

February—the month of love. Interestingly, Valentine’s Day was celebrated as early as 270 A.D. commemorating the burial of Valentine. However, the British and French during the Middle Ages commonly believed that February 14th was the beginning of birds’ mating season which added to the idea that this should be a day of romance. The oldest known Valentine is still in existence—a poem written by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1415. And the British for all their staid consciousness developed and promoted the writing of sweet notes and giving of gifts for Valentine’s Day. However, Esther Howland, a Mount Holyoke student, became one of the first U.S. manufacturers in 1847 and expanded her Valentine card business to a hundred thousand dollar enterprise. During the 1800’s, Valentine cards were hand painted delicate affairs with corpulent cupids, couples with yearning, ardent stares and bedecked with satin ribbons, lace trim, dried flowers, feathers, jewels or tassels. Later, much to the delight of the sarcastic card sender,

Penny Dreadfuls appeared on the scene. For a penny, one could insult the receiver with lines such as:

“Tis all in vain your simpering looks, you can never incline
With all your bustles, stays and curls, to find a Valentine.”

One of the great songs of the 40's was: “My Funny Valentine, sweet comic valentine... a romantic lamentation? If I delved into the romances of Washington, I could write until the sun stayed long in the sky. Thanks to Jim, Joyce and Gloria, we get to peek into the love and life of Clyde and Mae Nutty.

Great grandfather Wepler owned a saloon, restaurant and hotel at 121 North Main street. One warm May evening, Elizabeth Wepler Muller sent her husband over to get Doc Zinser since Mae was ready to make her appearance. After losing a bedroom slipper running over the slick bricks, Mr. Muller roused the Doc and both charged up the steps of the hotel. Soon, Mae's lusty cries filled the hotel early on May 29, 1908.



Birthplace of Mae Muller Nutty, May 29, 1908.

Frank and Minnie Nutty lived in Woodford County and Frank was an expert equestrian, raising and training horses. Their son Clyde made his debut on July 26, 1908. Family life involved service to the community. Frank served as mayor of Eureka and when President Reagan was Grand Marshal of the Pumpkin Parade in Eureka, the steed he saddled was one of Frank's. Jim recalls of his grandparents: “I remember going to Grandfather's home in Eureka every Sunday for dinner which consisted of the best fried chicken ever! My dad, Clyde, and my uncle enjoyed horseback riding while my sister Joyce, my cousin and I rode in the goat pulled wagon built by my grandfather.”



Grandfather Frank Nutty and Uncle Jean Noecker on their fine steeds.

Minnie Nutty put her cooking expertise to work and operated in Washington the "Minnehaha Eat Shop." where locals enjoyed her home style cooking and friendly, family service. Marshall's operated their renowned restaurant in the same location many years later.



Minnie and Frank Nutty, a butcher who stopped in from Brunnenmeyer's, two patrons in the back at the counter, seated at the table, Vi Nutty Noecker, Addie Helmuth and Wilbur Habben.

Arriving on the bustling social scene in Washington, Clyde, dashing handsome with a robust theatrical voice, convinced the dark eyed sweet and lovely Mae to take a chance and go out with him in high school.



In front of the high school on Walnut.

She did and was mesmerized with his sense of adventure and daring do! Both graduated in 1925. The courtship flourished. Clyde was the first person in Washington to own an airplane. He flew solo in 1927 at the age of 19. His sense of adventure was steadfast and he and Mae married July 30, 1929. For a honeymoon, Yellowstone Park—with a slow, romantic slog through muddy one lane roads. In 1930, a windstorm erupted one evening and Clyde's beloved plane was destroyed. Jim recalls that many Washingtonians, watching Clyde as he swooped and swirled through the clouds, felt the storm was a blessing and kept Clyde from meeting an early airborne demise.



After the storm...

Clyde was an electrician by trade and during WWII, he and Dick Dingleline offered their services to the U.S. Government in Panama. One evening, they left their base to visit a small island close by. Unfortunately, not taking the tide into account, they became hung up on a coral reef for the remainder of the outing. One can only hope they had enough liquid to make it less baleful. Who from the heart of the country would be studying tides anyway?

During fall festival time, Clyde volunteered his electrical skills for setting up and tearing down the temporary wiring for booths and rides. (I thanked Tom Hexamer for his part in skewering the pronto pups and now I must thank Clyde for his part in getting the fryers up and running!)

Mae worked after high school at Washington Savings and Loan and after 1964 worked at Washington Oil Company. From 1930, she was a loving stay at home mom who could soothe any woe a kid could come up with. An avid bridge player, she was part of a club that played weekly. More importantly, Jim, Joyce and Gloria state, she was an excellent cook who could bake the most succulent Dutch apple pie—warm, creamy, melt in your mouth pie! Clyde was a strict disciplinarian who handled the kids with a slight increase in voice volume when they went astray. “We knew he meant business and Mom was always there as a quiet resource for moral support.”

Clyde, with his good looks and resonant tones, was a natural for the Washington Players. Jim recalls: "It seemed as if he always had the leading roles for the melodramas and comedic productions. He would spend hours studying his part at the kitchen table in his bathrobe. His involvement stemmed from his good friends, Miriam Grimm, Martha and Kenny Jackson, Martha Baer, Suzie and Bob Holtzman, Ron Marshall." Hours of rehearsals, good conversation, improvisation techniques, and set building instilled a sense of family for the actors. Clyde never seemed far from being in character most of the time.



Clyde (without his makeup) and Martha (Clem) Baer rehearsing for *Only an Orphan Girl*, "an evening of gay 90's entertainment" which opened April 27 running through April 28, 1951, at the City Building. Performance time was 8:00 p.m. Tickets were fifty cents for adults and twenty five cents for children. The ticket you received was an ink blotter—stating "Blot out your troubles by seeing *Only an Orphan Girl*."



Clyde having makeup applied by Susie Bacon Holtzman performance night. Mae and the kids would be in the first row opening night, supporting his second love—acting.

Clyde Nutty made a too early exit in 1964. The world was a less happy place when the curtain descended. Mae carried on as the strong woman she was and finally joined Clyde in 1999 and they are buried together in Glendale Cemetery.



On their honeymoon!

Happy Valentine's Day, Clyde and Mae!

My thanks to Jim, Joyce and Gloria who shared so kindly their memories. Jim lives in Kuttawa, Kentucky; Joyce Nutty Hamas lives in Washington; and Gloria Nutty Gerber lives in Wellington, Nevada.