

January 2024

Volume 2, Issue 13

Renewed Remembering: The Newsletter of the Conneaut Area Historical Society



Building on Our Barn Quilt



Last fall, Steering Committee Member Debbie Herbel painted our museum Barn Quilt and it is proudly displayed on the front of our museum. We are thrilled to be a square in the Ashtabula County Barn Quilt patchwork and a traveler on the Ashtabula Barn Quilt Trail. The barn quilts celebrate Ashtabula County's agricultural heritage, including the Underground Railroad network, natural areas preservation, and Great Lakes maritime history. Barn quilts stretch from the Ashtabula Lighthouse to the Pennsylvania borders and into Lake and Trumbull Counties. These trail guides take visitors to the heart and stories of Ashtabula County history. More than 110 barn quilts on both public and private buildings display the tourism and historical attractions of

Ashtabula County. For more about the history, purpose, and quilt creators of the Barn Quilt Trail, go to their website at [Ashtabula County Barn Quilt Trail](https://www.ashtabulacountybarnquilttrail.com/)

We plan to expand our Barn Quilt by using our historical collections to create a notebook library of Quilt Squares featuring people, places, and events in Conneaut and Ashtabula County history. If you would like to contribute material for a quilt square, please contact a member of the Steering Committee.

Time Travel Tuesday

January 16, 2024

6 to 7 p.m.

Villa on the Lake

Michael Edgerly, proprietor of Indie Books, explores why he chose Conneaut to open his small business.

In this Issue: Our first
barn quilt notebook
square

Axis Sally

Remember These
Soldiers

Charlie Ott Saves the
Dav and Several Lives

We Remember

“Remembering” was the name of the original Conneaut Area Historical Society newsletter. Joan Barnett was the last editor, and with her death and the Covid pandemic the newsletter has not been published for a time. It seemed fitting to name this new version of the old newsletter “Renewed Remembering,” in honor of the former editors including Louise Legeza and Joan Barnett who edited and published the newsletter for so many years. We hope you enjoy it!

The President’s Paragraph

The Conneaut Area Historical Society wants to thank you for your continued support. As always, new members are welcome. You can call: 440-599-6011 with further questions or write to Conneaut Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 563, Conneaut Ohio, 44030. Our street address is: 518 Mill Street.

Jim Jones

Museum Officers

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Nancy Lamb

Kathy Warnes

Needed: Museum Volunteers!

We need Enthusiastic and Dedicated Volunteers to help us help the Conneaut Area Historical Museum realize its full historical potential. Even though we are closed for the season, we have not stopped working to improve the Conneaut Area Historical Museum. We could use some help organizing collections and updating the inventory. Lend us your willing hands, hearts, and minds to help our museum grow. Be a Museum Volunteer!

Barn Quilt Square One, Notebook One



Sunday Baseball Father Lived in Harbor Street Home

Although this house at 441 Harbor Street has changed its exterior appearance in the past century, its history is recorded in the abstract of title. The home has been occupied for the past twenty years by Mrs. Margaret Pizzi and her family.

Saturday, March 25, 1967

Margaret Schmidt, News-Herald Reporter

Among those who have owned the property at 441 Harbor Street since 1841 were a ship's captain and a railroader. The railroader was also known by his friends as "father of Sunday baseball in Ohio."

An unusual experience recently turned the News Herald's attention to the home. In answering a knock at the door, its present owner, Mrs. Margaret Pizzi, was confronted by a stranger. The man from out of town introduced himself and stated a relative of his had lived there and he had a desire to once more see the inside. Mrs. Pizzi paid little attention to the visit and soon forgot the man's name. But the series of old homes began to appear in the paper, and since the visitor was an older person, she began to wonder about the age of their home.

The man had told her the house once stood farther south of the tracks, but had been moved. He also said Harbor Street was a mere lane at that time. So Mrs. Pizzi turned to the abstract of title for some dates. On April 14, 1841, for the price of \$1,000, a warranty deed was passed from John H. and Mary D. Hall to Alanson P. Tubbs. The property was listed as one-sixth of an acre situated on the west side of the road leading from Lyon & Gould's Store to the lake. It was further noted Mr. Hall had bought the property from L. Lake.

The next transaction, recorded in 1916 by Charles F. Graham, stated that he was the grandson of Alanson Tubbs. According to the statement, Mr. Tubbs died August 6, 1874, leaving six heirs. Henry C., Cyrus W., and Wallace Tubbs, Esther Ann Devore, Harriet Snow, and Addie J. Graham.

The News-Herald file was searched for the death announcement of Mr. Tubbs. According to this record, Captain Alanson P. Tubbs, age 69, died at his home. He was born in Conneaut and at the time of his death was one of its oldest inhabitants. He followed the lakes most of his life, the story said,

Quit claim deeds of Adelia Graham were signed by five of the heirs and their spouses. This is recorded in 1876 and 1877. B.F. and Addie Graham sold to Charles F. Graham in 1893. Mr. Graham died in December of 1918. Announcement of his death was preceded the day before by word that he was seriously ill in Grace hospital.

“Charles Graham was often proclaimed by his friends as “Father of Sunday baseball in Ohio” through his activities on behalf of the law which gave to communities the right to have the sport if they desired,” the news story reported.

Mr. Graham, a railroad man, spent much of his time in Columbus as a representative of a conductor’s association. The following day, December 21, 1918, the edition carried the news of his death and noted that he was born April 13, 1864, at the family home on Harbor Street. His body lay in state at the home, 441 Harbor Street. Among his survivors were three sons: Frank, Clyde and Dickson, and a daughter Minnie, who all signed off to a Charles E. Deyo. The Deyos sold to Charles B. O’Brien and he to F.H. Jones. It was in 1946, Herman and Bessie Caslor and Margaret K. Caslor, who is now Mrs. Pizzi, bought the home.

A great deal of remodeling has taken place in the past thirty years, Mrs. Pizzi states. Large rambling porches have been done away with and the home is now a duplex.

From history buffs comes the indication that Harbor Street, once known as “the Old Salt Road,” was built in 1804. The first track of the settlers of Ohio lay much of the way along the beach of the Lake, and sometimes the wagons of our fathers ran deep in the sands and its waters. The first regularly surveyed highway was The Ridge Road along Liberty Street in 1800 by Nathan King, first surveyor, and Seth Harrington and Aaron Wright. It was cut open as far as Ashtabula.

The next one, styled “The Old Salt Road,” because it was cut through for a track over which to draw salt, was started from the harbor in 1804, and ran in a southern irregular direction through several towns of the “first range,” one historian wrote.

Dr. Greenleaf Fifield and Captain Ananson Tubbs



According to the biography of Greenleaf Fifield in the Williams Brothers History of Ashtabula County, Dr. Greenleaf Fifield possessed a strong physique, towered to a height of over six feet tall, and had a balanced, resolute outlook and a calm temperament. For nearly thirty years, he faithfully doctored the people of Conneaut and Ashtabula County. Like other physicians of his time, he did not bill people but traded his services for practical items like food, tools, or whatever his clients could pay.

Dr. Greenleaf Fifield also had a sense of humor and fun, and liked to participate in practical jokes. A witness to one of Dr. Fifield’s jokes told his story to the Williams Brothers who included it in their Ashtabula County history. Dr. Fifield and Captain Alanson Tubbs played the leading roles in the story. Captain Tubbs was one of Conneaut’s most stalwart and well-known sailors. One day Captain Tubbs encountered the good doctor on a Conneaut street and consulted him about a minor complaint including a sore chest. Dr. Fifield told him to apply a big

hemlock gum plaster to his chest. The Captain followed the Doctor’s orders, but forgot to shave the hair off his chest before he covered the entire front of his breast with the hemlock gum plaster. For a short time, the Captain felt relief and there was no soreness in his chest. Then as is the way of hemlock plasters, it began to provoke his skin to an intolerable itch. As the Williams telling of the story put it: “The man who puts on that kind of a

plaster to please himself will be pleased twice – when he gets it off, especially if he forgets the preliminary shave.”

Captain Tubbs, courageous mariner who braved the wind and waves of Lake Erie and its companion lakes, could not summon the courage to pull the plaster away from so much hair so he suffered the consequences of his inaction. For several days he went about his daily life and rounds about town itching and grumbling and trying to find a painless way to get rid of the gum plaster.

After days of Captain Tubbs sharing his loud, embellished suffering laced with sophisticated sailor swearing with his family, friends, and Conneaut at large, he confronted Dr. Fifield who had parked his gig in front of one of the Main Street hotels. A crowd quickly gathered to witness the confrontation between the doctor and the sailor. Dr. Fifield immediately realized that the hemlock plaster had to be removed and formulated an on-the-spot plan to swiftly and humanely remove it. His plan involved great physical effort by the captain and focusing his attention elsewhere to make him forget the miniscule pain.

Dr. Fifield called Captain Tubbs over behind his gig and leaning over the side, carefully uncovered the plaster. Quietly and quickly he gripped the top of it and tapped old White, his horse, with his whip. Old White sprang into a run, and Captain Tubbs had to follow. Down the street they flew, but even Captain Tubbs's long legs could not keep up with Old White. The plaster flew off almost abreast of Captain Tubbs.

For years after the race, Captain Tubbs told the story, laughing until he cried. He always said that he had no sooner thrown a big stone at Dr. Fifield than he prayed that the stone would not hit him, because it would have gone through him if the Captain's aim had been true. Captain Tubbs hugely enjoyed being rid of his large hemlock plaster, but he believed that the joke lasted much longer than the plaster. If he now quietly ventured into town, the tavern patrons and other bystanders would inquire about the plaster. Captain Tubbs estimated that he paid for about five gallons of whisky by the glass, before other stories replaced the story of the hemlock plaster.

The source for this story is: Sketches of its Pioneers and Most Prominent Men by Publ. Philadelphia - Williams Brothers - 1878 - Page 127

Captain Tubbs is buried in City Cemetery with his wife and son. His daughter Adelia married Charles F. Graham. Charles F. Graham is buried in Glenwood Cemetery. Charles Graham worked for the Lake Shore & Southern RR and also was a dock foreman according to Ancestry records. His involvement and influence on Conneaut baseball mentioned in the newspaper article has yet to be fully researched.

World War II Stories from Conneaut

1941 and 1942

Seaman “Red” Clancy, Back From Pacific Battles, Is War ‘Veteran’ At Age 20

Stricken twice by malaria at Guadalcanal...at the front line six hours to bring wounded men back under cover of darkness...blinded for 48 hours by sun glare...flaming enemy planes hurtling earthward...

These are but a few of the experiences of a Conneaut youth, Edward “Red” Clancy, 20, seaman first class of the U.S. Navy, now home on furlough. He reports for duty again Monday.

“Red” is a deck force on a U.S. ship which took the first ship of fighting Marines to Tulagi island on the Solomons. His ship touched almost every island in the Pacific area. He was stationed at Guadalcanal for two months during which time he went to the front line for casualties, where he became ill with malarial fever and where he was blinded for 48 hours by the hot sun striking the sand.

While his ship was anchored at an island in the Pacific and during a recreation period, he met John "Spike" Dewey, fireman first class, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Dewey, Buffalo Street, and went aboard his ship. "Spike" is the only old friend seaman Clancy has seen in his travels.

The Pacific Fleet is flying a "well done" flag for Red's ship and crew for loading and unloading faster than any of the ships which entered the islands at the same time.

Seaman First Class Clancy wears three service bars- one for the Coral Sea Battle which includes being in service before the Pearl Harbor attack, one for the Solomon Island Campaign, and a third for Atlantic-Pacific duty near the Americas.

The youth is the son of Mrs. Sophia Clancy, 291 Chestnut Street. He graduated from Conneaut High School in 1941. With Douglas Plank, son of Mr. and Mrs. L.E. Plank, State Street, they enlisted August 28, 1941, in the U.S. Navy.

He was stationed eight weeks at Great Lakes Naval Training School, Great Lakes Illinois, and then was sent to Ford Navy Station, Dearborn Navy Station, Dearborn, Michigan, for duty. After one month, he returned to Great Lakes for a two-week period, and then transferred to New York where he boarded a U.S. Navy ship.

Seaman Clancy was a ship's bugler for six months. While in Conneaut, he belonged to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Drum & Bugle Corps. He entered the V.F.W. organization during a meeting Tuesday night. Three other servicemen have become members of the V.F.W. while on furloughs: Richard Sauerwine, Peter Armeni, and Douglas Plank. Seaman Dewey became a member by proxy.

Having served two years out of a six-year period in the U.S. Navy, "Red" hopes to find out "what Navy life is like in peace time."

A Fighting Man Writes Home

Dear Mr. Dow:

I was very much surprised and pleased today to receive your card and the cigarettes from the merchants of Conneaut. I want to thank you both for remembering me on my birthday.

I am receiving the Conneaut paper and though it is six or eight weeks old, I enjoy it as if I got it on time. I read them all the way thru and then my buddies borrow them and read them too. I usually receive them a bunch at a time.

I've seen a lot of country and water since I left Conneaut last December. I went from Norfolk, Virginia, to a camp in California to be outfitted before going across. We left San Diego in March in went to New Hebrides. We were there a few days and then went to New Caledonia where we set up a temporary camp. We were there about a month, packed up again, and went back thru the New Hebrides to our base which we refer to as "Island X."

I like it here pretty well. It is very warm in the daytime and the nights are rather cool. Some nights it is so cold we have to use two blankets. We have to be careful at nights too because of the malaria mosquito.

The meals are real good over here. We have fresh meat about two or three times a week. Last Sunday we had real chicken. After chow, every night we all go to the movies we have in our camp. We always go early and hear the news broadcasts from the states. That is about the only recreation we have down here. Once in a while when we have a day off we usually go to a native village or to other camps hunting for fellows from back home. So far I haven't found anyone.

I got a letter from Jimmie Lord today. The way he talks, he is very anxious to finish his training and get some action. I'll have to get busy and answer it right away. He also told me he met Dick Kimball there is Texas. I hope they both go thru training together.

I want to thank you again for the cigarettes and I am hoping to be home soon.

Sincerely,

Robert Griffey

(Sent to C. J. Dow, of the Chamber of Commerce, by Robert Griffey, son of Mr. and Mrs. V.K. Griffey, Liberty Street, who is stationed somewhere in the South Pacific.)

1943

Pierpont Soldier With 37th Dies of Wounds

The death of another soldier of Ohio's 37th Division was revealed today. Mrs. Dorothy Renn of Pierpoint Route 2, received word Monday of the death of her husband Private First Class Walter Renn, 26, somewhere in the Southwest Pacific.

Pfc. Renni, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Emil Renn, of Rock Creek, was wounded in action and died of his wounds August 4, in December 1943. He was a member of the 37th Division which was in action on New Georgia Island and had been overseas since May 1942.

He was married to Miss Dorothy Tuttle, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Tuttle, in March 1942, at Lebanon, Pa. Before entering the Army in January 1941, he was employed in Cleveland. He was stationed at Camp Shelby prior to going overseas. The War Department stated that a letter would follow.

Sends New Word From Jap Prison, 1943

W. H. Stillwell, 361 Sandusky Street, has received a second communication from his son Pfc. Robert H. Stillwell, who is a prisoner of the Japanese in the Philippines.

Reading practically the same as the first missive, the card said that he was well and not under treatment. It also read: "Please see that mother, Dortha, and children and all my friends are notified of this card. Hoping you are all in best of health. Please give my best regards to all the relations."

Private Stillwell's family feel further assured of his wellbeing by the receipt of this second card.

One Clean Shirt, Eight Yanks Use It! 1944

Sergt. James T. Gahagan, son of Mrs. Joseph Gahagan, 1042 Oakwood, and seven buddies at an air force transport base overseas trooped into a town recently to have pictures taken for the folks back home. But once in the photographer's shop they discovered that only one of them had a clean shirt. American ingenuity came to the fore. While the irate photographer complained about wasting time, the one clean shirt passed from back-to-back. Each soldier wrote it with a big smile before the camera. Said the native photographer: "Americans some people. Only one clean shirt in whole damn Army!"

Ensign Dorothy Pearson, 1944

Ensign Dorothy Pearson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E.J. Pearson, 298 Rieg Avenue, reported for duty with the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps May 10, at Norfolk Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Virginia.

A graduate of Conneaut High School in the class of 1939, Ensign Pearson graduated from the University of Maryland School of Nursing, Baltimore, Md., February 3rd of this year. She enlisted in the Navy Nurse Corps December 1, 1943.

Ensign Pearson will be stationed at Portsmouth for approximately 15 days temporary duty, and then will be sent to the U.S. Naval Hospital National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md.

1945

September 1945

Welcome Home

George L. Somppi

A machine gunner who went through the campaigns of North Apennines, Po Valley, Sicily, Rome-Arno, Algeria-French, Morocco, and Tunisia, now is back in Conneaut after receiving an honorable discharge from the Army. He is George L. Somppi, 995 Mill Street, who was a private first class. He was discharged September 1 at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

He holds the Good Conduct Medal, European African Middle Eastern Service Medal with six bronze service stars and one bronze service arrowhead, and the Infantryman's Badge.

He was inducted into the Army in 1942 and served almost three years overseas.

Anthony J. Anthony

Back in the United States after 25 months overseas, Anthony J. Anthony, son of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Anthony, 549 Chestnut Street, has been honorably discharged from the Army. Anthony, a technician fifth grade, had accumulated 98 points. He entered the service March 27, 1942, serving with the 135th Service Company, 34th Division, Fifth Army.

Robert L. Marsh

Home after 18 months of service with the Combat Engineers Battalion in the European area, Pfc. Robert L. Marsh is spending a 30-day furlough with his aunt, Mrs. Nellie Wilda, Harbor Street.

He participated in the battles of Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and central Europe. He has been awarded the Presidential Citation, five battle stars, and the Good Conduct Medal.

At the conclusion of his furlough, he will report to Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

Alex Beno

Sgt. Alex Beno is spending a 30-day furlough with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Beno, Hiler Street, after a year and a half overseas service in Europe. He will report to Louisiana at the end of his furlough.

Robert J. Brooks

After nearly five years in service, Staff Sergeant Robert J. Brooks has been honorably discharged from the Army. With 89 points, the sergeant was discharged August 30 from Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

Brooks, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Brooks, Amboy, entered service December 11, 1940, at Fort Hayes, Columbus.

Axis Sally, Traitor, Troubled Soul, or Both?



Mildred Sisk Gillars Kramer Gillars was the first woman to be convicted of treason against the United States. This is her prison photo from 1949.

The December Time Travel Tuesday featured Conneaut Area Historical Museum Board Member Debbie Herbel presenting her research about Mildred Gillars, better known as Axis Sally.

Decades after her death in June 1988, the voice of Mildred Gillars still resonates in the lives and perceptions of 21st Century politics and in Conneaut history. A 2018 Smithsonian Magazine article by Jackie Manske pinpoints a Northwest Front podcast by American Neo-Nazi Harold Covington featuring a 21st century version of Axis Sally. The podcast portrayed Axis Sally as a courageous woman who defied Hitler and carved a successful career for herself, overcoming tremendous obstacles along the way.

Challenging the perspective of “successful career” are the five years that Mildred Gillars spent broadcasting propaganda for the Nazi Radio network as Axis Sally, urging American soldiers and sailors to give up the fight, and taunting them that their wives and girlfriends were at home flirting with 4F men or worse while they were homesick and risking their lives in battle.

Although she did not achieve the fame she craved as an actress, Mildred Gillars skillfully and successfully blended entertainment and propaganda that 21st media replicates. She used her musical talent in her Axis Sally broadcasts so well that the American soldiers listened to her just for her “great jazz.” She developed her reportedly sultry voice into an oratorical siren song that captured listeners even though they might hate her words and ideas.

Part of the story of Mildred Gillars unfolded in Conneaut. Although not a native of Conneaut, Mildred moved to Conneaut with her parents when she was a teenager, graduated from Conneaut High School, and married and spent a few more years in Ashtabula County before she attended Ohio Wesleyan University, moved to New York, and on to Europe and as much infamy as the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Different documents present varied statistics and interpretations of the Axis Sally story. Although even legal and census documents are not infallible, they are basic springboards to compare with differing versions of Mildred’s story. Vincent Sisk and Mary (Mae) Hewitson, both born in New Brunswick, Canada, were married on February



21, 1900, in Portland, Maine and Mildred Elizabeth Sisk was born on November 29, 1900, in Portland, Maine. Some of Mildred’s biographical sources state that her father Vincent Sisk was an abusive alcoholic and mistreated and then abandoned his wife and daughter. The records also reveal that Mildred’s sister Edna was born in 1909 and Robert Bruce Gillars is recorded as her father on the birth certificate. Mary and Vincent Sisk were divorced and Mary married Dr. Robert Bruce Gillars on July 20, 1914, in Huron, Ohio.

The 1910 Federal Census shows the Gillars family living in Bellevue, Sandusky County, Ohio. In a 2011 article in the Columbus Dispatch, Joseph Blundo writes that the Gillars family moved to Conneaut in 1916 and Mildred graduated from Conneaut High School in either 1917 or 1918. The 1920 Federal Census records the Gillars living on Grant Street with Mildred listed as a member of the household.

Mildred spent her formative years developing an interest and a talent in music and the arts. Her biographer Richard Lucas interprets her childhood as filled with disfunction. John Bartlow Martin, a reporter covering her treason trial for McCall's Magazine wrote that she "grew up in the unhappy home of a drunken, incestuous father," referring to her stepfather Robert Bruce Gillars. Her desire for attention and validation and perhaps to escape the bleak reality of her life, motivated her to major in theater at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio. According to some sources, at Ohio Wesleyan she acquired the nickname Millie and played most of the available female dramatic leads copying the actress Theda Bara, an early silent film actress who introduced the sex symbol actress persona and ironically, had Ohio ties. She also excelled in oratory and flirting, with one source saying that she had numerous male but no female friends.

A former Wesleyan classmate noted that she wore her actress persona like a second skin, and that she worked hard to acquire a cosmopolitan personality that her upbringing had not provided her. The classmate said that she compulsively tried out for all of the plays and if a word or attitude fit the social patterns or norms, she would adopt them without really understanding them.

In 1922, during her senior year at Ohio Wesleyan, she suddenly dropped out, without graduating. Most narratives of her life story place her next move to New York City pursuing her dream of acting on Broadway, but

APPLICATION No. 182244		FILED AND MARRIAGE LICENSE ISSUED August 3 1923	
Name	Talbot B. Kramer	Name	Mildred E. Siske
Age	28	Age	22
Residence	1928 E. 86th St.	Residence	1928 E. 86th St.
Place of Birth	Wooster, O	Place of Birth	Portland, Me.
Occupation	Auditor	Occupation	
Father's Name	Jesse W. Kramer	Father's Name	Vincent Siske
Mother's Maiden Name	Elizabeth Talbot	Mother's Maiden Name	Mae Hewitson
Number of times previously married	Once	Number of times previously married	None
	Div. Febr. 2-21 Chicago, Ills.	Married Name	
Marriage to be solemnized by Rev. R.W. Woodruff, Euclid E. 86		License issued by H.W. Beckman Deputy Clerk	
Consent of Filed 19		Consent of Filed 19	
THE STATE OF OHIO, } ss.		RETURN	
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, }		19 23 Mr. Talbot B. Kramer	
I CERTIFY, That on the 4th day of August		were by me legally joined in marriage.	
and Miss Mildred Elizabeth Siske		Rev. George F. Smythe	

a Cuyahoga County marriage license stretches that time frame at least six years into the future.

The Cuyahoga County marriage license reveals that

Mildred Siske, born in Portland, Maine, age 22, married Talbot Bergerman Kramer, age 28, on August 4, 1923. The license stated that Mildred was the daughter of Vincent Siske and Mae Hewitson, revealing that Mildred took a short detour into marriage before she moved on to play her disastrous role in World War II Nazi propaganda.

The documentary records also show that Talbot married Margarette R. Cullen in 1930, so Mildred and Talbot were divorced between 1923 and 1930.

If the accounts of her efforts to establish an acting career are correct, Mildred and Talbot Kramer's marriage lasted for about three years, because they place Mildred performing as a chorus girl in 1926 Broadway musicals and going on to perform in comedies and vaudeville. To continue her Theda Bara sex symbol persona, she dyed her hair platinum blonde. She also enrolled in Hunter College and met Max Otto Kosciwicz, who would have an enormous impact on her life.

Over the next few years, Mildred traveled back and forth between Europe and the United States pursuing her theatrical ambitions. In 1929, she lived in Paris for six months, and either in Paris or New York, she modeled for sculptor Mario Korbel. She spent the next few years working menial jobs, taking acting lessons, and striving to gain recognition, but she could not manage to establish a stable career.

In 1933, Mildred moved to Algiers and found a job as assistant to a dressmaker. In 1934, she moved on to Dresden Germany to study music which would later significantly impact her career. After Dresden, she taught English in the Berlitz School for languages in Berlin, another move that would contribute to her future career.

Events in German and world history would profoundly impact Mildred's personal life and career. An objective view of her early life shows that she based some of her adult choices on the male influences in her life. Established psychological tenets trace the influence of alcoholism and sexual abuse on the choices of abused children in their adult lives. After the divorce from Talbot Kramer, several other men influenced Mildred. While she still lived in New York, she became involved with a married Hunter College professor by the name of Max Otto Koischwitz. He had served in the German Foreign Office during World War I, and he spent years at Hunter College teaching the German language and German culture. They separated when she moved to Europe permanently in 1934.

When Mildred began her career with German State Radio in 1940 her broadcasts were mostly non-political. She was engaged to Paul Karlson, a naturalized German citizen. By 1941, the U.S. State Department advised American citizens to leave Germany and territories that Germany controlled. By 1941, the list of German controlled territories included Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Austria, Danzig, and parts of France and Italy as well as territories in Africa and a few of the English Channel Islands. In June 1941, Hitler launched the German invasion of the Soviet Union, called Operation Barbarossa. War clouds hung over the rest of the world, including the United States.

Most American nationals followed the State Department directive and left Germany. Mildred Gillars did not. Her fiancé Paul Karlson refused to marry her if she returned to the United States and she decided to remain in Germany. It took only a short time for Paul Karlson to be sent to the Eastern Front where he was killed in action. When Mildred refused to leave Germany, the State Department revoked her passport, which meant she could no longer travel. After Paul's death, and especially after the United declared war on Germany on December 11, 1941, four days after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Mildred feared that the Germans would put her in a concentration camp or perhaps even kill her. According to some versions of her story, her German employers forced her to sign an oath of allegiance to Hitler and Germany. She did so to protect herself and keep her job at the radio station.

In the meantime,²² Max Otto Koischwitz had returned to Germany after Hunter College had forced him to take a permanent leave because of his outspoken support of Nazi Germany and his anti-Semitism. The ideal candidate for German State Radio, he became the German-American program director in the USA Zone. Mildred Gillars and Max Otto Koischwitz resumed their affair and lived together in Berlin. He cast her in a new show called *Home Sweet Home* as well as including her in his political broadcasts. She no longer had to read bland copy and advertise mundane products. Following Max's lead, Mildred began to express political opinions and anti-Semitic sentiments. "I say damn Roosevelt and Churchill, and all of their Jews who have made this war possible," she asserted during one broadcast.

Mildred began to directly address American servicemen, telling them to give up the war and go home to reclaim their wives and sweethearts who were consorting with other men while they were gone. Her listeners were curious about her and asked her online to describe herself. She answered that she was "the Irish type, a real Sally." Her GI audience gradually called her "Bitch of Berlin," "Berlin Babe," "Olga," and "Sally." In 1940, in a union dubbed the Axis Powers, Germany, Japan, and Italy had signed a pact defining their spheres of influence and agreeing to mutual military, political, and economic cooperation. Eventually, Mildred Gillars – Sally- became "Axis Sally."

Even though Max Koischwitz scripted her broadcasts, ostensibly with the help of Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister, Mildred as Axis Sally swung her broadcasting pendulum between playing the big band hits of the swing era, denouncing the Jews, Churchill, and Roosevelt, and urging GIs to give up fighting the war. After opening with an playing musical selections, (some sources say Lili Marlene was her theme song), she would say that she prided herself for telling “you American folks the truth and hope one day that you’ll wake up to the fact that you’re being duped; that the lives of the men you love are being sacrificed for the Jewish and British interests.”

Accounts of the reaction of American soldiers and the American home front listeners vary. Some soldiers eagerly awaited her programs because she played such “hot jazz.” Some thought her hilarious and entertaining. Others were angered by her propaganda and some secretly worried that what she said might really be the truth. Home front listeners were incensed that she implied that American women were unfaithful to their men overseas.

Mildred Gillars starred in three radio programs from 1942 to 1945. She broadcast in the Home Sweet Home Hour, from December 24, 1942, until 1945 with the goal of exploiting the worries of the American soldiers about the home front, encouraging doubts about their mission, their leaders, and their lives after the war. Opening with the sound of a train whistle, Axis Sally would speculate about the fidelity of the wives and sweethearts of the soldiers. She would pose the question of whether their wives and sweethearts would remain faithful, “especially if you boys get all mutilated and do not return in one piece.”

Midge at the Mike, broadcast from March to late fall 1943. In this program, Mildred/Midge played American songs and between them she wove in defeatist messages, anti-Semitic rants, and attacks on Franklin D. Roosevelt.

GI’s Letter box and Medical Reports, broadcast in 1944. These broadcasts were directed to the American audience at home and in them, Axis Sally used information about wounded and captured U.S. airmen that she and Max Koischwitz had gathered from interviewing them to bombard their families with fear and worry about them.

Axis Sally broadcast her most famous program on May 11, 1944, a few weeks before the real Allied landings on Normandy beaches. Max Koischwitz wrote a radio play that he called *Vision of Invasion*. Axis Sally played the part of Evelyn, an Ohio mother who dreamed that her son had been aboard a ship in the English Channel on the way to France and drowned during an invasion of Nazi occupied Europe.

In the play, Evelyn and Elmer, her husband, are at home in America talking while their son Allan is aboard an invasion boat on D-Day. Elmer is trying to convince Evelyn that her dream won’t come true. Evelyn replies: "But everybody says the invasion is suicide. The simplest person knows that. Between 70 and 90 percent of the boys will be killed or crippled for the rest of their lives."

At another point Evelyn says to Elmer: "The whole world, waiting and watching for hundreds of thousands of young men to be slaughtered on the beaches of Europe and you -- you laugh!" ...

The broadcast closes with the background sound of church bells and Evelyn asking: "Why are those church bells ringing?"

Another woman answers, "The dead bells of Europe's bombed cathedrals are tolling the death knell of America's youth."

For a time after D -Day, June 6, 1944, Mildred, and Max worked from Chartres and Paris visiting hospitals and camps in Germany. Claiming to be International Red Cross workers, they interviewed captured Americans, and recorded their messages to their families in the United States. Then they edited the interviews for broadcasts as if the interviewees were well treated or sympathetic to the Nazi cause. This touring and recording project that Max and Mildred did together did not last longer than a few months, because Max Koischwitz died in August 1944 of tuberculosis and heart disease.

Axis Sally's broadcasts changed after Max Koischwitz died. Without his creative touch, they became dull and repetitive, probably reflecting Mildred's state of mind and heart. She stayed in Berlin until the end of World War II, broadcasting her last Axis Sally program on May 6, 1945, two days before Germany surrendered.

For ten months after her last Axis Sally broadcast, Mildred struggled to survive and stay under the radar of the Americans. Now, her efforts to worry the GIs and the home front listeners dominated her own life. The Americans were looking for her and dodging them made her life a struggle.

On the orders of the U.S. Attorney General, prosecutor Victor C. Woerheide traveled to Berlin to find and arrest Axis Sally, Mildred Gillars. The prosecutor and Counterintelligence Corps special agent Hans Winzen had just one solid lead. POW Raymond Kurtz, a B-17 pilot that the Germans had shot down remembered that a woman had visited his prison camp looking to interview the prisoners had introduced herself as "Midge at the Mike." She told him that she often used the alias Barbara Mome. Using that slender clue, Prosecutor Woerheide created wanted posters with Midge's picture on them and circulated them all over Berlin. Finally a breakthrough came when an informer told him that a woman named Barbara Mome was selling her furniture in second hand markets all over Berlin. One shop owner had purchased a table from Axis Sally, and after some intense interrogation by the Americans he gave them her address. When she was arrested on March 15, 1946, Axis Sally wanted only to take a picture of Max Otto Koischwitz with her to prison.

The American Counterintelligence Corps held Mildred Gillars at Camp King, Oberursel, Germany, until they conditionally released her on Christmas Eve, 1945. She declined to leave military detention. The United States Justice Department abruptly rearrested her on January 22, 1947, and after detaining her for a year in Frankfurt without charging her with any crime, they flew her to the United States on August 21, 1948, to stand trial on charges of aiding the German War effort. She was indicted on September 10, 1948, and charged with ten counts of treason. When her trial began on January 25, 1949, in Washington D.C., prosecutors used just eight of the indictments, focusing their main argument for conviction on the numbers of propaganda programs that the Federal Communications Commission had recorded and her participation in the activities against the United States. The Communications Commission also had evidence that Mildred Gillars had signed an oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler. The prosecution also presented testimonies of soldiers and sailors whose stories she had written under false pretenses and twisted for propaganda purposes.

The defense contended that she stated unpopular opinions in her broadcasts, but they did not add up to treason. They also argued that she had been under the influence of Max Otto Koischwitz, and not responsible for her actions until after he died.

Mildred appeared at her trial with a bouquet of bright red roses accenting her less colorful clothing and a black bow tying back her long silver hair. Her attire and attitude resembled a Hollywood premiere instead of a trial for treason. Radio broadcasters and newspaper and magazine reporters from the United States and abroad converged on her trial, including McCall's and Time Magazine. The Time Magazine reporter covering the trial expressed the popular scorn of the Defenses' contention that Mildred acted under the influence of Max Koischwitz.

"Little Miss Echo. She described him as a man "who loved the mountains [of Silesia] with the intensity that a man might love a woman." In 1943 he went there to think about Miss Gillars (he had a wife and three children)

Axis Sally's Mother Dies

CONNEAUT, O., March 17—(P)—Services for Mrs. Mae E. Gillars, 71-year-old mother of "Axis Sally" of World War II German propaganda fame, will be held here Wednesday. Widow of Dr. R. B. Gillars, former Conneaut dentist, Mrs. Gillars died late Saturday at her Toronto, Ont., home.

In addition to Mildred Gillars, German's "Axis Sally," she is survived by another daughter, Mrs. Edna Mae Herrick of Conneaut.

and there found that "God favored his love." After that, she echoed his ideas like an empty barrel on a hog caller's porch."

People probably reacted more strongly to Mildred when the prosecution asked her about her relationship with Max Kioschwitz. The Time Magazine reporter wrote, "Miss Gillars lowered her eyes, breathed heavily, and said, "It is difficult to discuss ... It is like discussing religion." But finally, tossing her long silver-grey hair, she admitted, "Of course I loved him." She added: "I consider Professor Koischwitz to have been my destiny . . ."

On March 10, 1949, the jury found Mildred Gillars guilty of just one count of treason, her action in making the Vision of Invasion broadcast. The judge sentenced her to ten to thirty years in prison, a \$10,000 fine in 1949 dollars, with the stipulation of eligibility for parole after ten years in prison. The judge did not impose a harsher

sentence since there was no proof that she had taken part in high level Nazi propaganda policy conferences like other American collaborators. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld her conviction in 1950.

Mildred Gillars served her sentence at the Federal Reformatory for Women in Alderson, West Virginia, becoming eligible for parole in 1959. She did not apply for parole until 1961, and she was released on June 10, 1961. While serving her prison time, Mildred had converted to Catholicism, and after her release she went to live at the Our Lady of Bethlehem Convent in Columbus, Ohio. The church operated St. Joseph Academy where she taught German, French, and Music. Fifty-one years later in 1973, she returned to Ohio Wesleyan University and completed her degree, earning a Bachelor of Arts in speech.



On June 25, 1988, Mildred Gillars died of colon cancer at Grant Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio. She is buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Lockbourne, Franklin County, Ohio.

Mildred's mother, step father and half-sister are buried in Glenwood Cemetery, in Conneaut. Mary (Mae) E. Gillars died in March 1947/

Thirty-six years after her death, the life of Mildred Gillars is still controversial and still resonates in today's political and social climates. Writer and short-wave radio enthusiast Richard Lucas believes that Mildred Gillars was neither totally a traitor to her country nor totally innocent in her choices. "I was really trying to have a nuanced story of her and make her seem like a human being rather than a caricature," says Richard Lucas. "Especially today. People are not black and white; there are all kinds of tradeoffs that lead them to become who they are."

Was she a premeditated traitor who had a deep-seated, long-lasting hatred of America and its ideals or was she a situational traitor with an overpowering need for attention and validation, who made poor choices of men and based her decisions on her feelings for them instead of moral and patriotic reasons?

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Gillars' wartime broadcasts and trial : the 2021 legal drama *American Traitor: The Trial of Axis Sally*

Andrew Carnegie and Charles Ott



Charlie A. Ott

Charlie Ott, who was motorman on the streetcar that nearly plunged through the East Conneaut Bridge looks over the letter of commendation he received from the company. It was believed that only quick action on the part of the crew saved 60 passengers from plunging into the gulch.

Charlie Ott probably did not know Andrew Carnegie personally, but Andrew Carnegie shaped his careers on the Conneaut & Erie Trolley and the Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock Company.

Andrew Carnegie had plans almost as large as his fortune for Conneaut, Ohio. He and his partners had forged Carnegie Steel in 1892, establishing a network of steel mills in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area and gradually expanding to control transportation facilities in the Great Lakes ports that shipped ore and his finished steel

This newspaper clipping that tells this story is from the Whipple scrapbook in the Louise Legeza Collection in the Conneaut Area Historical Museum.

Charlie Ott, 264 Harbor Street, electrical superintendent of the P & C Dock Company, worked on the construction of the Conneaut & Erie line and later navigated it as a motorman.



The Conneaut Daily Post-Herald described the dramatic afternoon of Sunday March 19, 1906, in its March 19 edition. "It was a sunny Sunday afternoon, March 18, 1906, when twenty-year-old Charles Ott began the special trip which left Conneaut at 12:35 p.m. traveling eastward to West Springfield. On board Car #3 with motorman Charles Ott was Lester Hess the conductor and 62 Maccabees, a fraternal organization dedicated to providing low-cost insurance to its members. Male Maccabees were called Knights of the Maccabees and female members were called Ladies of the Modern Maccabees. Both groups were traveling to West Springfield to the funeral of their sister Mary Lee Richards McDonald, wife of David McDonald who was born in 1874 had died a

few days earlier.

The tracks at the time were laid on a platform extending over the north side of the bridge, and the entire structure was not in the best of repair according to concerned streetcar crews. The car had nearly reached the middle of the bridge when Mr. Ott heard snapping and cracking sounds which he identified as timbers breaking. He shut off the power and then received a signal from conductor Leslie Hess to proceed. He gave the trolley full power and the little car pulled itself off the sagging bridge.

The bridge was repaired Mr. Ott recalls and the tracks were removed from the platform and put in the center of the bridge. The line was discontinued in 1922 when automobile traffic had increased to such a point as to make it unprofitable. The last trip was made on September 16 of that year.

A notation in ink across the clipping said that Andrew Jackson Whipple, who was a railroad man, was aboard that trolley car.



Dock Talk March 1981, 75 Years Ago

Streetcar Near Tragedy Averted by Motorman Charles A. Ott

Wednesday Marh 18, 1981 marks the 75th anniversary of a near tragedy on the Conneaut & Erie Street car line which could have shocked the world. This month for our

Conneaut- the Way It Was-we bring you that story.

The Dock Talk story quotes the Conneaut Post-Herald story, sets the scene at the Hi-Level Bridge, and then continues the story.

“Feeling the bridge start to give way under the rear tracks, Ott applied current and the car quickly passed over the bridge. The passengers were not aware of the collapse until the car was safely over the bridge. Realizing their near brush with death, they all “chipped in” and gave motorman Ott and conductor Hess each a purse of twenty dollars.

The trolley tacks were originally located on a special section extending over the north side of the bridge the tracks were relocated to the center of the bridge. After the collapse and repair of the bridge by the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, While the bridge was closed, an East Conneaut resident W.A. Tuller. Operated a horse drawn bus shuttle from Conneaut to meet the C & E cars at East Conneaut, charging ten cents for a one-way trip. By February 13, 1907, C & E cars had resumed their schedule to Conneaut over the repaired bridge.

The C & E gave Ott and Hess special commendations and the following letter was posted in all company stations and shops:

“The coolness, heroism, and judgment exhibited by Mr. Hess conductor, and Mr. Charles Ott, motorman, while in charge of Car No. 3 on March 18, on the occasion of the breaking of the Pennsylvania & Ohio bridge at Conneaut and the promptness with which they acted in moving the car loaded with passengers, out of danger is most commendable, indicating as it does, a worthy example for all employees who are thus engaged in the work of endeavoring, each the best he can, to contribute to the popularity and success of the Conneaut & Erie Traction Company. The kind words of praise and sincere thankfulness which we have received from many patrons of our line; particularly from those who were passengers on Car No. 3 at that time, service to indicate in a slight measure their full appreciation of the efforts of Mr. Hess and Mr. Ott. Officially, the Conneaut & Erie Traction Company herewith extend to Mr. Hess and Mr. Charles Ott our full appreciation and thanks for their action in sagely guiding their passengers and themselves to safety.”

Signed C.E. Flynn, Vice President, April 4, 1906.

On July 11, 1907, Charles A. Ott, the C & E Motorman, began his employment at the Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock Company as a lineman. In 1912, he became motor tender foreman. In 1916, electrician foreman, and in 1921, chief electrician. On May 1, 1951, he was promoted to electrical superintendent and held this position until he retired on February 10, 1956, with nearly fifty years' service.

During these years, Mr. Ott served on the Conneaut School Board for eighteen years and was its presidents for three successive terms. He was one of the first members of Conneaut's First Assembly of God where he taught Sunday School and served as its treasurer for many years.

Mr. Ott died November 22, 1978, of complications following a lengthy illness.

Patron's Pages

Join Our Patrons Program!

The Conneaut Area Historical Museum is excited to announce a new Merchant Patron program which is available to any local business who desires to help our museum to function and improve. For \$50 per year (January to December) we will include your business name and phone number in the publications the museum produces, including a monthly newsletter, any future books the museum produces, and our website.

If interested, send your donation of \$50.00 to P.O. Box 563, Conneaut, Ohio 44030. We will include you in our list of great merchants and businesses in this area.

American Legion Post 151
262 Broad Street
Conneaut, Ohio

Angela's Café
268 Lake Road
Conneaut, Ohio 44030
440-593-6060

Biscotti's Restaurant
186 Park Avenue
Conneaut, Ohio 44030

Castaways
877 Broad Street
Conneaut, Ohio 44030

Chris Brecht, State Farm Insurance
Agency
216 Main Street, Suite B
Conneaut, Ohio 44030

Conneaut Dairy Queen
1009 Main Street
Conneaut, Ohio 44030

Conneaut Creek Vet Clinic
 382 West Main Road
 Conneaut, Ohio 44030

Crafty Shanty
 183 Park Avenue
 Conneaut, Ohio
 Jennifer Betts

Gerdes Pharmacy
 245 Main Street
 Conneaut, Ohio 44030

Kathi's Golden Retrievers of Albion
 11790 Penside Road
 Albion, PA 16401
 814-756-5432

Leslie & Donald O'Bell
 2 Bretenahl Place
 Suite C
 Bretenahl, OH 44108

Lynn Armington
 48 Ranch Road
 Willoughby, OH 44094
 440-951-3122

Marcy Funeral Home
 208 Liberty Street
 Conneaut, OH 44030

Photo Cabin O' Bliss taken in 1925.
 Grandparents Irus and Ellen Sheldon. Bliss
 experienced as they grew up in Conneaut in
 the early years of the 20th Century.

Port Conneaut FCU 1002 Broad
Street
Conneaut Ohio 44030
440-593-7350

Susanne Trigg Canfield, OH

Conneaut Coastguardsman Aids in East Coast Rescue

Frederick W. Curtis, Seaman First Class, (QM) U.S.C.G., former member of Conneaut's former temporary Coast Guard Reserve, returned today to his base after a enjoying a short leave at his home at 169 ½ Poplar Street.

Seaman Curtis is serving on a Coast Guard cutter on the East Coast where the U.S. Coast Guard contributes toward victory by keeping our shores safe. A story of Coast Guard rescue on the high seas was told by Seaman Curtis on his short leave.

On the night of February 11, a 7,244-ton British freighter foundered off the coast of Maine, and was pounded to pieces in raging seas. The freighter sent out an SOS call which was answered by Coast Guard boats. The bitter cold sixty-five mile an hour wind and fifty-foot-high waves made rescue operations hazardous. Twenty members of the 44-man crew were saved.

Thirteen survivors were hospitalized at Portland, Maine, while the other seven were taken to Portsmouth New Hampshire Naval Hospital. Seaman Curtis's ship took survivors to Portsmouth, New Hampshire Naval Hospital. The other 24 men, including the ships master were lost in the mountainous seas. Of the 24 who perished, only 14 bodies were recovered.

Seaman Curtis has been a member of the Coast Guard Reserve for seven months, having served in the temporary Reserve in Conneaut previously. He was graduated from the Quartermaster School at Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, New York, and has been stationed on a cutter for about two months.

The seaman was employed at the Nickel Plate shops before he entered active service.

Conneaut Area Historical Society
Membership Application



The dues period runs from January through
December. Single \$15.00 _____ Couple
\$20.00 _____

Family \$25.00 _____ Patron \$50.00 _____

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone
Number _____

Would you be willing to volunteer at the Museum during
the summer months or help us with winter projects?

We are open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon
until 5 p.m., starting on Memorial Day and ending on
Labor Day.

What day or time is best for you?

Thank you for your membership.

P.O. Box 563

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