

Rye Historical Society

Newsletter

Summer – 2014



www.ryenhistoricalsociety.org

[E-mail- info@ryenhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@ryenhistoricalsociety.org)

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1. WHY NOT PLAN ON:

New Rye History Trolley Tour Saturday July 5th

On Saturday July 5th from 10-11:30 AM RHS will sponsor a new tour covering the central and northern parts of town. The tour will proceed down Central, onto Locke and Harbor Roads, up the Boulevard to Odiorne and back to museum via Brackett and Washington roads. There will be five stops along the way, ongoing narration of history and stories and historic photos for you to reference. A museum visit at the end to see the HOT, NEW RYE HISTORY EXHIBIT is an option. Proceeds support the Rye Town Museum.

Reservations must be made by sending your name, number in your party and telephone number to: info@ryenhistoricalociety.org. by July 3rd. ten people need to sign up for the tour to be on. You must arrive at the museum by 9:45 AM and then pay when you board. The trolley will leave promptly at 10 AM. Cost is \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and persons under 18.

Please do not make reservations by telephone, but if you need further information call RHS at 997 6742



2. RHS Welcomes You to Join

Time for Members to Renew Dues

RHS is a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization and all contributions, membership and otherwise, are tax deductible. Dues are payable in April when the annual meeting is held. We are trying to get all members on the "April to April cycle." If you have made a membership contribution in the last six months it is good until April 2015. If you made a membership contribution in 2013 it is time to renew now. You may do so at the individual (\$10) or family (\$15) levels and any additional contribution is greatly appreciated. Payment is via Pay Pal on RHS website – www.ryenhistoricalociety.org or by check made out to: RHS and sent to PO 583, Rye. Thank you for your continued support.

For those who are not members but are considering it, please review the benefits below. We look forward to having you join us. There are many different opportunities to participate in the life of the society and the museum.

Membership also offers a very inviting way to connect to the life of the town.

Benefits

- ✚ Quarterly E-newsletter (sent bcc) to keep you in the Rye history loop.
- ✚ Invitation to special events and alerts on issues relating to Rye history.
- ✚ Participation and voting on important decisions at April annual meeting.

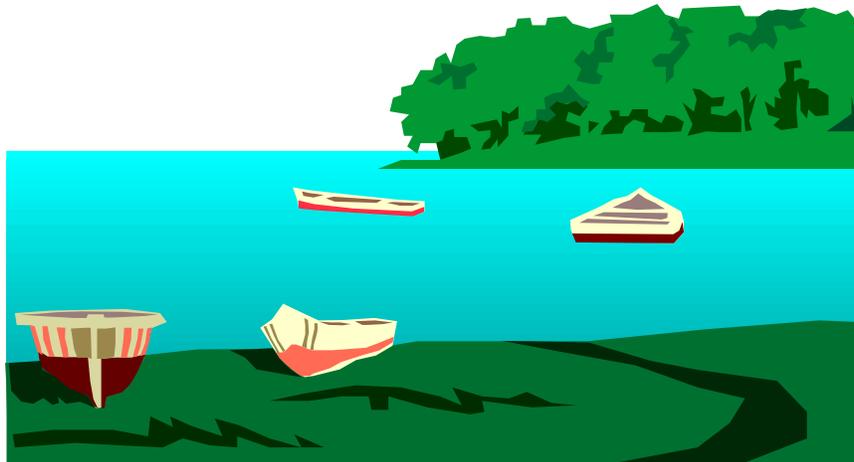
- ✚ 10% discount on items from the museum's gift shop (listed on website).
- ✚ Invitation to RHS Board meetings: quarterly.
- ✚ Discovery that one of your interests or talents matches one of RHS needs (listed on website).
- ✚ All members of RHS have a standing invitation to a specialized tour of the museum's collection in whole or in part.
- ✚ Knowledge that you are helping to keep the town museum open and vital.

The Rye Historical Society is active in co-sponsoring programs with the Rye Public Library and Friends of the Library. We work with the Rye Heritage Commission, the Historic District Commission and Rye Schools. Current projects: writing a new town history, supporting student research, preserving old graveyards, documenting older houses, archiving church records and textile collection, making the museum's collections more accessible to the public in the museum and on our web site.

3. **Battle of Rye Harbor Remembered**

Although there was no re-enactment, Harry Lowell, Alex Herlihy and the Portsmouth Herald reporter gathered at the historic 1805 Rose Arbor house at Rye Harbor and heard from Harry about how Samuel Mowe fired at the British boat that had come toward shore looking for supplies on May 30, 1814. Parsons history has a lively account of the event and the museum also has a British point of view from one of the sailors who was fired on. Word eventually reached the town center

where balky horses caused the wagon carrying the cannon balls to upend and spill down Center Hill, causing all sorts of chaos as militia rushed to the Harbor. News even reached Portsmouth, but their militia turned back when they got word that Rye musketry had driven off the British. As the beleaguered British sailor on the Jolly boat said “Yankee musketry was intense. These boats need more firepower!” The Herald carried the story on the exact bi-centennial of the battle, May 30, 2014.



4. **Museum Receives Historic Rye Postcard Collection**

Many are aware of the “Rye and Rye Beach” Arcadia book edited by Lewis Karabatsos and sold in the museum gift shop. This contains images from Rye postcard collectors including Bev Armstrong who donated her entire collection of almost 1000 cards to the museum this spring. This is the largest collection we know of and many of the images were new to us and will do much to enhance our exhibit and our ongoing “Illustrated History of Rye.” Visitors to the museum will be able

to view the postcards and slowly they will start to see enlarged versions of them on the walls of the exhibit. Equally interesting are the messages penned on the back, recalling a bygone time when carefree, seaside vacationers wrote their family and friends and evoked the Rye Beach of old.

RHS is very grateful to Bev Armstrong for her generous donation which may now be seen by all.



5. Congregational Church Loans Historic Records

Recently the Rye Congregational Church made a long term loan of documents and artifacts dating back to the origins of the church in 1726. This collection mirrors the history of the town which had its religious and political beginning when the Provincial legislature granted Sandy Beach parish status in this year and the town name was changed to Rye. RHS staff will be cataloging the collection and soon it will be available for research. This is an invaluable asset to the town museum and we are grateful to the church for its loan. We look forward to

visitors who want to examine these historic records of our original church which gave birth to our town.

6. **The Prodigal Rye Son Who Didn't Return**

John Parsons, son of Rye town doctor Warren Parsons, was born in 1816 and twenty years later he was in Florida fighting in the 2nd Seminole war. He rose to the rank of Major and later settled near the gulf about 50 miles north of Tampa Bay. He became active in commerce and was soon a big landowner. Missing Rye, he built a town called Bayport at the mouth of the Weekiwatche River and was soon in charge of a lively commercial trade taking advantage of the navigable rivers that flowed into the Gulf of Mexico. He built a large commercial building to the north on what today is Cedar Key and it survives as the Island Hotel. During the Civil War he raised a company of Union volunteers who intercepted eleven Confederate blockade runners. After the war he was instrumental in bringing the railroad to this area in the 1880's which caused Bayport to decline. He died in 1888 and is buried in New York City.

David Herlihy asked his brother Alex to check out Bayport in April and he found that it is no longer a town on the Gulf, but a lovely delta area with public boat ramp, fishing pier and an historic sign marking what was once a thriving port town built by a prodigal son of Rye. Photos of Bayport today may be seen in the museum.

7. **A Long Overdue Visit to Rye NY Historical Society Museum**

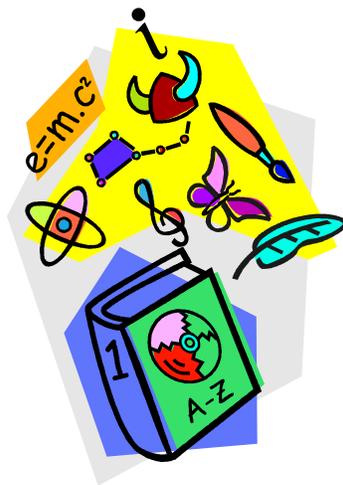
For years RHS has been getting inquiries from NYC grad students and others about names and place names foreign to us and soon enough we realized that when they Googled Rye Historical Society, it was us and not NY who came up first. Having never visited our sister town, in March Nina and Alex Herlihy stopped by for a tour of the Square House museum, originally a tavern in the 1700's. It is located on the edge of a small downtown commercial center of shops on both sides of the street. Their current exhibit highlights the great sacrifice of Rye, NY (current population 15,000) during WWII when they lost 42 men, all of whom are pictured with bios along with war posters found in the building's basement during restoration in the 1960's. In 1980 both Ryes hosted a visit from the mayor of Rye, Sussex, England and in 1981 RSH reciprocated the visit. The two museums have exchanged brochures and some publications and we look forward to a return visit to see their Rye Beach on Long Island Sound to compare it to our beach. Photos of Rye, NY, their museum and the war posters may be seen in our museum.

8. **Hot New Rye History Exhibit in Update Mode**

On May Day there was a lively opening reception for the hot new Rye history exhibit at the museum. The nature of the exhibit lends itself to change. Both the chronological story and the thematic sections are fluid and can easily be edited. With the new postcard donation and many other images constantly being uncovered in our collection, change is

inevitable and good. Exhibits need to be refreshed. Since the opening reception, the Isles of Shoals now concludes the chronological story plus thematic sections have been added on: the 1970's, climate change impact on Rye, the history of land conservation, a historic "Rye People" portrait gallery, history of civic and political life and a three dimensional exhibit which depicts the coming of the Railroad to the seacoast and how Rye Beach visitors made their way to the sea.

It takes more than one visit to fully appreciate your town museum so we hope to see you soon.



9. **Seventh Graders Visit Museum for “Sense of Place” Project**

Each year the 7th grade researches and writes on a local/regional topic and last month a few of them came to the museum to look for topics. Later, school librarian Mary Coombs borrowed several museum books on these topics for students to use in their research. This project harkens back a bit to the great “Our Town” project in the 90’s in which

8th graders spent the whole year working in groups on Rye topics and presented them to the town at an end of the year celebration.

RHS is looking for volunteers or people working under a grant to identify and scan RHS photos and documents to be posted on the museum website so that students and teachers could do far more research from the convenience of their computers. While nothing can replace an actual museum visit, we recognize the importance of digitizing our collection to make it user friendly.



10. **Odiorne Needs Help Interpreting Their Rich History**

RHS and the Seacoast Science Center are teaming up to seek volunteers to interpret the many layers of exciting history at the point. Much research has been done, but with the SSC focused on science interpretation, it is important for the local history organization to try to fill the gap. Many come to Odiorne and have no idea of the colorful

history dating back long before the World War II bunkers. If you are interested in helping with this effort contact RHS.

11. Annual Meeting: New RHS Board and Defeat of Oil Refinery

At the annual meeting in April the following board members were nominated and voted in by RHS members in attendance and the board voted in the following officers in May: Steve Cash (treasurer), Tom Clarie, Rich Davis, Alex Herlihy (president), Andrew Hickey, Becky Marden, Robina Mitchell (vice president), Chris Remick (secretary), and Sue Reynolds. Former Board member Beth Yeaton has agreed to continue to do the final edits, format and publish our quarterly newsletter for which we are grateful.

Dudley Dudley's presentation on the 40th anniversary of the defeat of the Onassis proposed oil refinery was given to a packed house. She showed many photos and recounted the intense political, media and grassroots effort that led to the defeat of the proposal all in the space of six months between October 1973 and March 1974. Dudley concluded her talk with the story of how one of the refinery's lead proponents came over to her at a restaurant after it was over and said: 'The right side won!'

There were many stories from the audience that related to Rye's direct involvement in the battle against the refinery and the impact it would have had on Rye and the seacoast. One person gave a sober reminder to the audience that we need more citizen struggles like this with the growing threat to the environment of industries like fracking. It is hoped that there will be a book detailing the oil refinery struggle in the near future and providing lessons that can be applied to today's

struggles such as the Sea 3 proposal to ship propane by rail through the seacoast.

12. Rye History Projects: Present and Future

There are many Rye history projects. Here are a few current and future ones that need volunteers and grant writers.

- a. Odiorne history interpretation - already mentioned above
- b. Pre-WWII house documentation and photography – on going
- c. Archaeology in Rye – there are many potential sites – who will take the initiative here?
- d. Interpretation of Rye through road side signs - Rye Heritage commission has been discussing this
- e. Rye history on line for students and others – identifying town museum documents to be put on line so they would become curriculum materials for Rye students and teachers. Goal – to make Rye history and culture an integral part of the curriculum: K through university and beyond to the general public.
- f. Oral history project – interviewing Rye residents about their direct experiences as well as what they learned from family and friends no longer with us.

Why do we need this information and these stories? If Louis Armstrong was asked this question he might respond the same way he did when someone asked him to define jazz: “If you have to ask you will never know.” Who cares is the cynical answer from those who look only ahead and do not see the value of what the past can teach us. But there

are many of all ages who recognize the importance of oral and other kinds of history: It has inherent interest by itself.

It also can answer questions that people have about land, political history, school policy, protecting water resources, how Rye people responded to crisis in the past, etc.

Oral history also connects us to our ancestors and others who came before who have many lessons and much wisdom to offer.

It is intergenerational and our fragmented, nuclear family society has become disconnected from older generations and we are all the poorer for it.

13. **Thanks to Rye Ridge and Green Penguin**

For many years now these two local businesses have donated their labor and materials to keep the town museum looking great. Every spring Barbara Obrien and her staff at Rye Ridge Greenery spend a solid day cleaning and cutting and mulching to make our gardens, which they originally panted over a decade ago, look so good. Green Penguin Landscaping has been mowing our lawn as a public service for longer than we can remember. We are very grateful to both of these businesses! Thank You!



14. **Farragut Hotel Woodwork Donation**

Just before publication of this newsletter, Alex Herlihy and Tom Clarie went to the woodshop of master architectural woodcarver Michael A. Dow on Pudding Hill Rd in York. Michael had written to RHS offering some woodwork from the Farragut Hotel which he salvaged in 1975 before the venerable grand dame of Rye summer resorts was razed. We were very impressed with the quality of his artistic wood creations, some of which is on display in the current exhibit at the Discover Portsmouth Center. To see examples of his fine work go to: www.archcarving.com.

Then he took us back into his storage shed where he very generously filled our car with two of the grand stairway Newel posts, railings, balusters, stairway treads and various other adornments of this central feature of the hotel. Michael also has all of the paneling from the Farragut office and is interested in selling this woodwork to someone who wants to use them in one place. Go to his web site above for contact information.

And just the other day we received four cocktail lounge glasses from a former employee in the 1960's which will be featured in the next

newsletter with his Farragut memories. Along with our two Farragut signs, dishware, menus and many photos, including interiors, we can safely say the Farragut, like Jacques Brel, is alive and well and living in - the Rye Town Museum!

RHS is very grateful to Michael Dow for his generous donation.

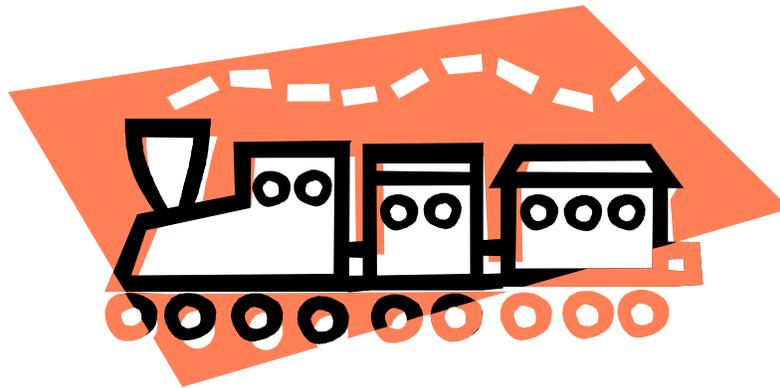


15. **Railroad Returns to Rye**

Tom Clarie's fine book "Oceanside History of Rye Beach and the Farragut" chronicles the great impact of the railroad coming to the seacoast and continuing to serve us right up through the mid-20th century. Tom and Alex Herlihy thought it would be appropriate to find some model trains with a bit of history to them, to display at the museum to show how tourists and others experienced such amazing

mobility after 1840 when the first train of the Eastern Railroad came to Portsmouth. The display is now on view with illustrations of the old depots in North Hampton, Greenland and Portsmouth and the coaches that connected them to Rye.

All Aboard! for yet another reason to visit the town museum.



16. **Rye Town Flag is a Success**

Thanks to former RHS Board member Mike Mittleman's efforts, the Rye Town Flag contest is a success.

Description of flag design:

Earlier this year the official seal of the Town of Rye was corrected and updated to include the three most important dates in our town's history: settlement in 1623, 1726 when the area became the Parish of Rye and 1785 when we were incorporated as the Town of Rye.

The Board of Selectmen, having been requested by Dr. Michael Mittleman to make the final decision on the choice of flag design, felt strongly that the corrected/updated seal should be part of that design. Of the numerous flag design proposals received, it was the submission of Junior High School student Willem Gerrish that was selected to serve as inspiration for our official Town flag. Willem sketched a seal on a field of blue which was framed top and bottom by ribbon-like banners of yellow. Featuring the new official Town Seal in the center, TOWN of RYE will be added across the top banner and NEW HAMPSHIRE across the banner at the bottom to complete the flag design.



17. **Excerpt from New Rye History**



Town Reports Sampler

One of the sources used in the 100 page time line guide to write the new Rye history are the town reports starting in 1863. Here are a few samples to give a flavor of the political life of the town during the last 150 years.

Note –two constant items in all reports up until the 1930’s: “building and maintenance of roads and bridges” (biggest budget item). Also is the category - “Demands against the Town” with a list of names and dollar amounts. (We are trying to determine what this means; some amounts are quite substantial; do these people owe the town taxes, did they loan the town money to meet the budget demands or what?)

1863 – 33 Rye residents paid \$200-400 bounty to a substitute to avoid service in the Civil War; during war fishermen declared exempt from service along with farmers – Rye gains 18 new fishermen.

1871 – (School reports were part of town report at this time) – school officials decry decaying condition of East school – “kids freezing; they will need a graveyard there soon!”

1886 – Oren Green on West School com. where he meets Clara Harvey teacher there; - later married and their son Charlie Green (b. 1893) would become one of the great Rye “townies of the 20th century; he knew the town’s business and everyone else’s business too!

1894 – 363 horses, 18 oxen, 583 cows, 49 neat stock, 49 sheep, 2005 fowl, 74 carriages; TH - theater (“Freezing a Mother in Law” in ’95

1901 – land/bldgs. - \$600,000; 82 carriages - \$5700; Old Home week Celebration - \$19; enforce liquor laws - \$160; Town Hall rental: Every Other Tuesday Club, Basketball games, Seacoast literary society, Speares Coronet band, Grange Dance, Odd Fellows,); BOS – Goss, Parsons) FF and Whidden; teachers paid \$343 a year; new state law – town must pay tuition for students going to HS out of town (1890-91 HS in TH failed)

1913 – carriages/autos - \$13,,380, this is first year autos are listed, (same value as 355 cows!); Mrs. R. Jenness saves church when she spots furnace room ablaze (not so luck in ’59); Bob Goss born –later

legend on BOS; Newall Marden back on BOS; Dr. White notes 33 cases of bad teeth among students

1920/21 - vehicles value – only \$800 (recession) but next year auto permits (reg.) \$1575; Library gets \$1000 a year from town; maintenance of state highways - \$196; Wedgwood school adopts Jr. High section; poor relief - \$380

1932 – Wedgwood school furnace explodes sending burning textbooks down on Dona Berry's house across the road; aqueducts valued at \$10,000; 6 on poor relief=\$1680; Rye Grange park approved\$100; plans for new consolidated school; bus to Ports. For students \$2400; 18 born, 13 marry and 24 die in the worst year of the Depression

1942 – Abbot Drake fire chief - \$2000; school janitor Horace Berry; 154 dogs in town; Ed Herlihy resigns school board and into Army Air Corps, Carl Small, Bill Moulton and Phil drake home on leave; new school boiler after only 10 yrs.; school over-crowded – gym used for manual training and storage; school addition turned down; Hazel Seavey interim principal, penny milk for all students; metal/rubber collection=20,000 lbs.; School nurse Hay on leave to Army Air Corps

1952/53 – new central fire station committee – need \$30,000; Zoning passed and Planning Board established (after passing and then rejecting it in early 40's); long time selectmen Newall Marden dies; PHS tuition \$250; Gear Grinder's club race jalopies on Burkes pond; land/bldgs. Valued at \$4.1 mil.; big tax hike in '53; 1352 cars, 314 dogs; out of town booze parties on beach; dogs running wild on beach, visitors complain roads not marked; planning board complains of lack of ordinances; Harry Green provide wood for library because he was sweet on librarian Helen Drake; beach ordinance – no nude bathing, no litter,

need fire permit, no horses/vehicles on beach or any games that interfere with beach enjoyment

1963 – Sawyers Beach made town beach with \$1 lease from Susan Sawyer Clark; new refuse burner voted in; town gets land from state for rec. area; land across from school rezoned for coming bank; 24434 autos; Eli Perry police chief - \$5600; Conservation Commission established; school report now separate from town report; Agnes Brown, long term town treasurer, dies at 86

1975 – Town report dedicated to Gil Spaulding – 43 years on DPW; warrant article – beginning of study to establish new recycling center; Town hall – citizen petition to use federal funds to create office space, retaining wall built, septic system replaced; Parsons 50 acres of land in center proposal to buy; Farragut Hotel built 1883, razed; Abbot Drake, 85, dies

1984 – tension between BOS and Rye Civic League and others over BOS stone entrance, arch and base for bandstand built without HDC approval, arch spray-painted in protest by local, abomination finally removed by vote in '85; Stinky Creek dredged; Police – 500 violation for booze/20 for other drugs; Ralph Brown donates his land to state across from Odiorne; Pl Bd approves 39 new lots; Cemetery locked at night to prevent vandalism in back; Tony's Diner, next to Lago's, closes after 14 years; huge municipal complex proposed for Parsons Woods – overwhelmingly defeated in town meeting vote in gym (over 500 people) in 1985

1995- proposal to give one of parsonage apartment buildings to RHS; auto reg. fees - \$624,000; juvenile offences up 500% (mostly booze related); 4th of July event held and enjoyed by all (where did it go?); Planning Board approves 23 lots for WCC and 33 new building lots in

town including new PO; Library expansion approved; Rye and Rye Beach by Bill Varrell published

2005 – Selectman John Moynahan resigns and Craig Musselman appointed to fill vacancy; 7455 cars, 971 dogs, 1724 beach permits; Conservation commission says state keeps granting wetland permits when we say no!; “Just Rye Harbor” published; new fire/ police station built

2012/13 – through citizen petitioned warrant article, town votes to have main town board meetings taped and accessible through video streaming on line; town votes to move forward with schematic design for addition to and renovation of town hall; auto registration fees \$1,148,000+ for 7,730 vehicles

18. Honoring Rye Residents Who Served & Died in World War I

As the centennial of the outbreak of WWI approaches in early August, it is important to remember those from Rye who served and the three who did not return. Their names are listed on the war monument in Rye Center and all those from Rye who served in the nation’s wars are listed in the museum’s military section, except those from Korea, those from the Vietnam war who returned, (we have the two who died) and

those who have served since Vietnam. If you have any information on these missing names, please contact the museum.

The Great War unleashed more than a century of violence around the world as rotting colonial empires toppled. The imperial legacy and the war's disruption still reverberate in the violence and wars that continue to plague the world today. "The Vertigo years: Europe 1900-1914" and Barbara Tuchman's two books: "The Proud Tower" and "The Guns of August" and excellent background as is the new book, "Franz Ferdinand Lives," a "what if" historical interpretation. More important are the wealth of studies that deal with practical peace building, violence reduction and conflict resolution. We would do well to honor the memory of all those who served and died in this war by trying to understand its causes and work for more forceful and creative ways to give peace a chance so that a hundred years from now a future generation will be able to celebrate a more peaceful 21st century.

Founding family names are very evident on the monument in the center of Rye.



Rye Residents Who Served in World War I

Arthur L Brown

Rollo A

Charles W Brown

Charles W Parsons

James W Brown

William Brown

Phillip Davidson

Willard Drake

Ernest G Eaton

J Russell Elwell

Donald L Finlayson

Herbert O Foss

Wallace H Garrett

Forrest G Jenness

Maurice A Jenness

Thornton W Jenness

Burleigh Johnson

Harry Keltchner

Calvin Lear

Thomas D McLaughlin *

George F Parsons

John L Parsons

George O Philbrick

Manning H Philbrick

Seth E Rand

Willard E Rand *

Albert M Remick

Austin F Remick

Erwin G Seavey

Maurice Smart

Norris Trefethen

Phillip W Tucker *

Ernest M Varrell

Jesse M Walker

Garland F Wynott

Maynard L Young

* On monument, this symbol is a star; it is assumed that these men died in the war.