

OLD TOWN MUSEUM

353 Main Street, Old Town, Maine 04468
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 375
(207) 827-7256

Established 1976

www.theoldtownmuseum.org

SUMMER 2021

The Old Town Museum is a volunteer effort dedicated to preserving Old Town's history.

Military Donations to the Museum

Every museum always seeks to expand its collection in accordance with its mission and the Old Town Museum is no exception. The Museum is actually fortunate that it already harbors numerous items that reflect life in the Old Town area for much of the time since the first settlers arrived. As is the case for every museum, however, the Museum also has notable gaps in its collection. Specifically, the Museum does not have many items related to the history of Old Town's involvement of more recent military history. Old Town counts many veterans among its residents, but our collection does not reflect that. We have some material on WWII, but no items whatsoever for any conflict fought after 1945.

We know that there are many interesting stories to be told about Old Town's more recent military history. Just recently, for instance, we received a donation that included materials about the war-time service of Pauline Audrey (Turner) Brissette (1922-2020) as a member of SPAR, the all-female "auxiliary" of the Coast Guard. SPAR was established in 1943 with the explicit goal of having women take over administrative duties from the men, so that the men could fight the war at the various fronts.

Pauline joined SPAR on March 25, 1943. After her basic training at the Biltmore in Palm Beach, she went through pay and supply training at the same place and then was stationed in Boston and later Portland. When she left SPAR by the end of the war, she had attained the rank of SK2c (= Shopkeeper, 2nd class). After the war, she used the GI Bill to go to cosmetology school, but it seems she was a homemaker for much of the rest of her life.

SPAR in some ways was the poster child when it came to women working in the service. It was a good place for women to help out with the war effort, but SPAR was also under some scrutiny. Unlike other parts of the military, the Coast Guard chose to not treat female enlistees differently from male enlistees and to maintain the exact same ranks and payments that had existed before the war for SPAR as well. Female SPAR officers were trained at the Coast Guard Academy, just like their male counterparts were. Also, following an opinion from the Judge Advocate General's office, commands by (female) SPAR officers had to be obeyed by lower-ranked (male) Coast Guard servicemen. None of these practices were put in place in any other branch of the military until much later. At the same time, not everybody in the general public accepted that women should be in uniform to begin with. In fact, there were some nasty and rather persistent rumors about what the women in uniform were actually asked to do in the military. As a result, SPAR leadership was careful to project a very "wholesome" image of its enlistees and any publicity on SPAR was tightly orchestrated. Even more so than for any other other branch of the services, very few non-staged photos of SPARs (as the women in SPAR known exist).

Interestingly, some of the publicity that SPAR actively sought consisted of getting "SPAR girls" on the covers of military magazines and the distribution of "glamorous" posters. Apparently Pauline just fit the bill. Her likeness appeared in a SPAR recruitment advertisement published in the Bangor Daily News (and presumably other newspapers) and the Museum now also owns a poster of Pauline along with an (as yet unidentified) newspaper clipping that shows that the poster was actually distributed among the troops. Clearly the original photo for the poster was retouched. Some parts of the poster look like they were colored in. The photo was also slightly rotated and Pauline's scarf is colored green, whereas her actual scarf

(which the Museum received too) is black. In short, every effort was made to project a glamorous image not just of Pauline, but of SPAR as a whole. In that sense, this poster is a lot more than just a pretty picture of Pauline.

Stories like Pauline's are the icing on the cake for military donations, but we love all of them and we would love to learn more about each and every service man and service woman involved. For instance, how many Old Town women served in SPAR? Well, the only other Old Town SPAR we have been able to find was Virginia McPhee (1922-2018) of French Island, who actually was in Pauline's cohort at Old Town High School and joined the service around the same time as Pauline did. After the war, she married Fred A. Morin of East Milinocket and spent the rest of her life in that town. In 1982, Virginia and sister-in-law Ruth Morin (who appears to have been from Massa



Polly's Poster

Coast Guard Cover Girl



Story Completed and Footnotes on Back Page

Victory Field 100 years Old – 1920-2020

(Dates and quotes from Old Town Enterprise 1919-1924) Researched by Mary Gibouleau

For their Community Service Project, the JROTC at Old Town High School has made arrangements for the rededication of Victory Field during Homecoming 2021. With the inclusion of a memorial to all veterans, this rededication is designed to celebrate in an appropriate way 100 years of VICTORY FIELD at the site of what once was just known as Webster Park.

“We spend a lot of time and resources and personal pride on developing and maintaining top notch facilities for our community, staff, and students to use” wrote Mr. Bousquet, Old Town High School Athletic Director. (Penobscot Times , 5/21/2020).

These words echo goals written 100 years ago when the concept for Victory Field took shape in 1919, the year the Victory Field Association was established. Previous to this in 1918, The Old Town Commercial Association appointed a committee to study the play and recreation facilities in Old Town and found them quite deficient and suggested solutions. At the end of WWI there was a general movement to establish recreation facilities and memorials. Old Town was no exception. By the fall of 1920 events were being held at Victory Field.

In 1919 The Old Town Committee began to locate and purchase property for a memorial park or recreation field and to raise funds. The committee established By-Laws which were published May 17, 1919 in the Old Town Enterprise summarized as follows:

Article I defined the Name and Purposes “This organization shall be known as the Victory Field Association. Its purposes shall be to provide a field or park in Old Town to be designated Victory Field in honor of American soldiers, sailors and marines from this city who served in the Great War with Germany; and Victory Field to be dedicated and used for the educational, recreational, athletic and public use”

Article II defined membership as being those who subscribed to the By-Laws and those who contributed funds for the proposed field.

Article III named the standard officers and a board of three who would act on behalf of the Association to receive donations and purchase real estate.

Article IV described weekly and annual meeting times and locations.

Article V described the conditions for the procured property to be deeded to the City of Old Town. The conditions of the ‘trust’ deed were very specific to ensure that the intent of the Association would be met. There would be a board of seven directors to include representatives of the city and school department and three general citizens, one of which would be the athletic director for the city. The city and school board would share expenses for budget purposes. There was a condition that no veteran of the Great War would ever pay a fee for any activity held at Victory Field.

Article VI dictated that once the goals of the Victory Field Association were met, the property and any remaining funds would be transferred to the City of Old Town as stated in Article V.

Article VII permitted the Association to make By-Law amendments at regular meetings.

Enthusiasm for the Victory Field was promoted and throughout 1919 there were appeals for donations from individuals and businesses. A \$15,000.00 goal had been set for initial purchase of land and improvements to make it an ac-

ceptable “field “or park.

Support was so strong that the Old Town High School senior class of 1919 donated the entire funds they had raised for their senior trip to Boston. An example of non-residents’ support of the financial appeal was the comment included with a donation by Mrs. H. Martin, a former teacher and resident of Old Town . She wrote “I think the idea of a recreation field as a memorial to our soldiers is very wise and fitting”.

Since the Victory Field was to be a memorial to WWI veterans, the Victory Field Association envisioned a suitable monument to be erected. “The entrance to our park will be a memorial to our soldiers and sailors of the late war and it is planned to make it a very hitting one” (page 4, Enterprise 6/21/19).

However it was not until 1924 that the Victory Field Association addressed funding of the Memorial to the veterans. (5/8/24 p.1) Fund raising for the Victory Field Memorial was designed “to erect a memorial which every contributor may justly be proud to say ‘I helped to erect it’”. To achieve this, the Victory Field Association sponsored events and contests to raise the funds for the proposed Victory Field Monument which would involve all levels of the community. The funds were raised by selling tickets to these events and enthusiasm was developed through essay contests at the schools.

A Victory Field Association meeting on May 5, 1924 decided how they would like the memorial “to Old Town’s defenders of the liberty of the United States and the world. It is to be a fine granite monument, designed by men of high standing in the art, which shall bear a bronze plate dedicating the field to them. Other plates will be inscribed with the names of every soldier, sailor, nurse or other enlisted person of Old Town who respond to his country’s call. Gold Stars will designate the names of those who gave their lives to the cause”.

It was in 1920 that the vision for the Victory Field became clearer . Progress was being made on the design of the new school (Herbert Gray) which would abut Victory Field. In March 1920 “Sheffield A. Arnold, a well-known landscape gardener was in town a day this week. Mr. Arnold is one of the best known architects in the country and will make plans for the Victory Field and Recreation Park”. (Enterprise 3/13/20). At the April 6, 1920 meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, a request for proper drainage to the Victory Field and school properties was communicated by the Street Board to prevent future problems. A pond for swimming and for skating in the winter was a result of proper draining and damming a brook.

A June 22, 1920 (Enterprise) “Have you seen the preparations for the Victory Field and Recreation Park?...When the plans are all completed it will revolutionize the city between Stillwater Ave. and Veazie St. and put Old Town in a class by itself”.

By the 25 of June 1920 (Enterprise) there was a sense that the work was well under way. Finances were low so there was another appeal for donations. Though unreasonable, just \$1.00 per capita of the city population of 6630 just might meet the goals for the season.

July 24, 1920 (Enterprise) “The members of the Association are very enthusiastic over the outlook and will continue the work until the park is completed. The work is slowed up

Victory Field (continued)

some now on account of the haying season after which it will be pushed to completion, as fast as men and teams can be obtained. A field day of some sort will be arranged for the early fall season. More money is needed for the work, and it is hoped that everyone will assist financially and otherwise to the best of their ability as this Association is doing something for our city no other town or city has ever attempted to do and it is will be something every citizen will view with pride”

5/18/22 Enterprise 1920 page 6 describes a pretty complete picture of Victory Field, first saying that it is rightly named for the “valorous deeds” of those who went to war and to the citizens who “have made in conquering the wild and chaotic condition, found where our splendid Victory Field now lies” The item goes on to describe the chaotic condition:

“It was low and boggy acreage covered with water and alder bushes, whereas now in its stead we have a well elevated piece of land, well drained and level, having within its metes and bounds a \$100,000 school building of the latest architecture ... It goes on to describe the baseball fields, the track “which will be second to none in the state”, and the entrances to the property as well as an attractive 2 acre body of water. The entire field will be a monument to its promoters, The Old Town Improvement Co., “whose loyalty to their city, their courage, their love of children and humanity in general urged them on in this good work”

This short review of items printed in the “Enterprise” make it quite clear what the intent was in developing Victory Field. There was immense enthusiasm for the project. The school department, the city and the Victory Field Association cooperated to achieve the goals of each and since the City would eventually control the Field and the School there were few conflicts of interest, if any.

The original Victory Field Association’s goal of an impressive memorial to the veterans of the Great War will be complete with the addition of the memorial plaque.

A source of community pride, as in the past, Victory Field is a complex of athletic fields that reflect the hard work and financial support of the community.

**VICTORY FIELD
BENEFIT TEA
Sunday, October 17
At**

**The Old Town Museum
353 Main Street
Old Town, Maine**

**1:30 p.m. Museum Tour
2:00 Tea Served
(Scones, Savories, Sweets)
Sunday, October 17, 2021**

**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED
Can accommodate groups
Of 2, 4, 6 or 8**

**NO TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
THE DOOR**

**Admission \$20.00 per person
Make check payable to
Old Town Museum**

**CONTACT: Mary Gibouleau,
827-2435**

Old Town Museum, P.O. Box 375, Old Town, ME 04468

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State and Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

OLD TOWN MUSEUM

353 Main Street
P. O. Box 375
Old Town, Maine 04468

Established 1976

Individual \$30	Senior \$20
Family \$50	Life \$400
Group or Business \$175	Donation: \$ _____

Membership entitles you to voting rights at the Annual Meeting.

The Old Town Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization.

If you are interested in volunteering at the Museum, please check here

OLD TOWN MUSEUM
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Museum Website Overhaul

The Museum's website (<https://www.theoldtownmuseum.org>) has a new look! The last time the site had a major make-over was 10 years ago, which – as you know – is an eternity in the digital world, so it was high time for an update. Let us know if you like it! Not all content has been rewritten yet, but that should happen soon. As we got to work on a new appearance, we decided to implement a number of new features as well:

- **It is now possible to donate directly from the website.** Just click on the big button on the bottom right of any page of our site or click the Donate! on the top right. You can make a one-time donation or set up monthly payments, if that is what you prefer. Donations can also be made in memory or in honor of a loved one. Payments can be made through PayPal or using a credit card.

- **You can now consult the Museum's internal catalog.** Just click on the Catalog button on any page of the Museum's site. This will bring you to the front end of our internal collection management system. As our catalog is far from done, this front end only

shows about 400 items, but that should be enough to give you a good idea of its capabilities. At first sight, this front end looks like any ordinary catalog. However, there are quite a few additional features. Particularly the option to organize items in so-called collections is quite nice. It is also possible to “share” the details of an item by directly sending an email from the description page of that item to whomever you would like to share that information with. We may post a video on how to get the most out of the catalog at some point, but for now we invite you to explore its features for yourself. For registered users, there are additional options such as the ability to create sharable private collections in the form of so-called lightboxes and to create web-based slide shows with all or most of the graphics drawn from any such lightbox. This is a feature that shows great promise for lectures or student presentations. If you are interested in exploring this option, we can make you a registered user.

- **Instead of one blog, we have two blogs now.** Just have a look at the footer of any page of our site. One blog will

be reserved for news, while the other will be dedicated to short sketches on the history of items in the Museum's collection or the history of Old Town in general. For the time being, this blog is called Sketches, but suggestions for a better name are welcome. We are hoping to publish one or two stories per month, but currently the project is still in the planning stages. If you would like to contribute as well, just contact any of us.

For the near future, the plan is to make a few more resources available on the Museum's website that currently can only be consulted internally. In particular, we are hoping to post all information that we have on the vital records of Old Town veterans for all major conflicts (up to and including Vietnam) in such a way that the public is able to easily correct and add to that information. We will keep you posted on that project.

Eisso Atzema (on behalf of the Publicity Committee).

MUSEUM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Eisso Atzema, Joe Ayotte, Barbara Connors, Pamela Dorr, Robert Dorr, Philip Dunn, Margaret (Peggy) Manzer, Carol May, Cassandra Pool, Bill Osborne, Carolyn Smith, Robert Stanley, David Wight

Military History from pg 1

know for sure that Pauline and Virginia were the only Old Town SPARs, but most certainly they were the only SPARs from Old Town ever mentioned on the pages of the Penobscot Times. Since the Penobscot Times followed Pauline's and Virginia's military careers and leaves quite closely, it seems unlikely the paper would have completely overlooked any other SPARs in town.

In conclusion, if you have any military memorabilia with an Old Town connection and you do not really have a place for them in your life, please consider donating them to the Old Town Museum. We are interested in most anything as long as there is a clear provenance that shows an Old Town (or Old Town area) connection.

Eisso Atzema (on behalf of the Acquisitions Committee)

1. See John A. Tilley, A History of Women in the Coast Guard (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, 1996)(20 pages), pp.3-8 (Also see <https://media.defense.gov/2017/Jul/02/2001772358/-1/-1/0/WOMENINCG.PDF>)
2. See Sachem 1940, p.14 (Virginia) & p.19 (Pauline). This was the same class from which sculptor Bernard Langlais (1921-1977) and State Representative Eugene Paradis (1923-2002) graduated.
3. See <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/227856654/pauline-virginia-morin>
4. See <https://umaine.edu/folklife/archives/mf-040-maine-women-during-the-depression-and-world-war-ii-project/>. The interview is #1627.

chusetts) were interviewed by the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History at the University of Maine about their lives as SPARs, of which a five-page written summary has been preserved. We do not