



The Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives, Inc.

Dudley 52

A Chapter in Academy Street School's History

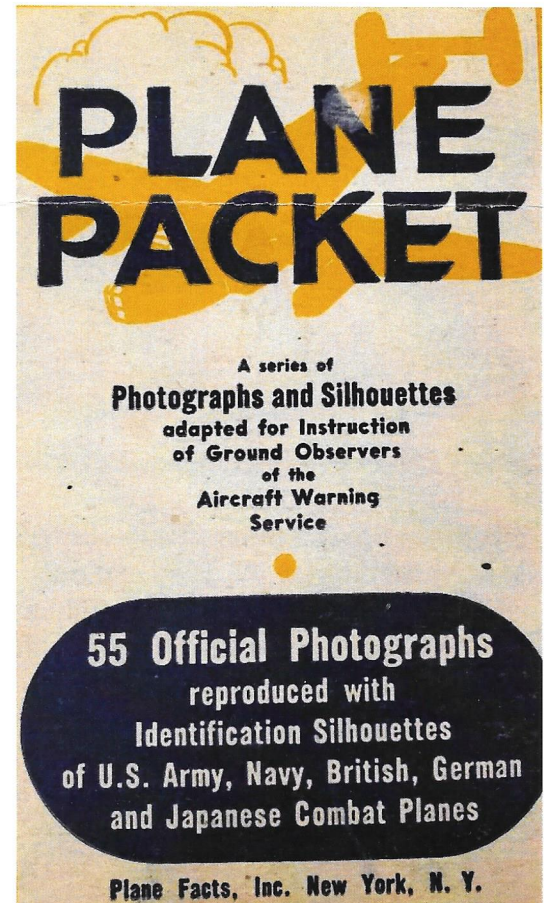
Madison's buildings often have hidden histories. Academy Street School is no exception. While this future community center is well-known for its storied past of educating Madison's youth, lesser known is its role in national defense when it served during World War II as home to Aircraft Warning Service observation post "Dudley 52."

Flashback to November 1940. Germany had conquered most of Europe and Luftwaffe bombs were raining down on London. It was a time when aerial warfare had come of age while new radar technology had shown its limitations. Officially, America remained neutral during this stage of the conflict, but apprehension was growing over the perceived threat of air raids on U.S. soil.

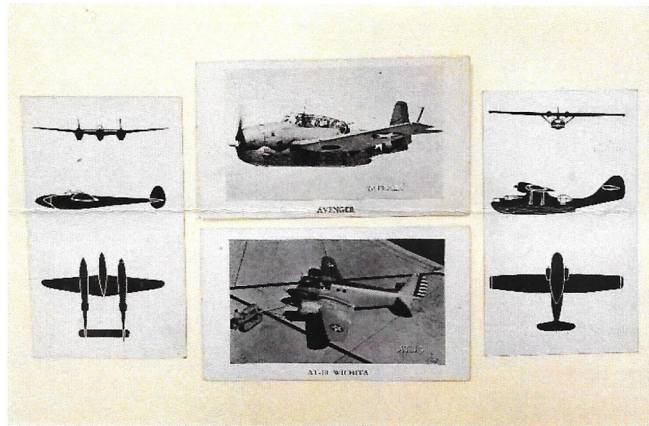
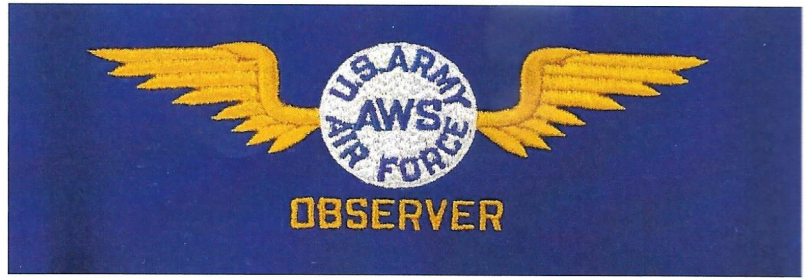
In response, the U.S. Army formed what became known as the Aircraft Warning Service (AWS). While supervised by the military, the AWS consisted of a network of civilian-staffed observer posts, each spaced about four-miles apart. Their function was to detect, report, and track aircraft flying over America's coastlines. The ultimate objective was to provide sufficient intelligence and warning to enable U.S. pursuit planes to intercept attackers. The AWS was considered America's first line of defense...and Madison was part of it.

Green Hill Road and High Hill were selected as Madison's earliest AWS observation post sites. Both posts were built in late November 1940. Next, came Dudley 52. However, a consolidation plan closed all existing posts in Madison on January 7, 1942 in favor of establishing one new post at Horse Pond/Duck Hole. Dudley 52's tower was relocated to form this new post. But the Horse Pond/Duck Hole post didn't last long as noisy frogs interfered with the ability to hear aircrafts. Nine months later, Dudley 52 was restored, and a new, replacement tower built.

Long-time residents remember Dudley 52 as being in the glass-windowed, nurse's office or "Dome" atop the roof of Academy Street School (then known as Hand High School/Hand Consolidated School). A period Shore Line Times news article described the post's 7' x 9' tower as elevated 18-feet above the roof and topped by a glass cupola. While Dudley 52 provided a clear view in all directions, it did have drawbacks. The glass cupola tower was freezing in the winter and excessively hot in the summer. However, patriotic spirit overcame any discomfort.



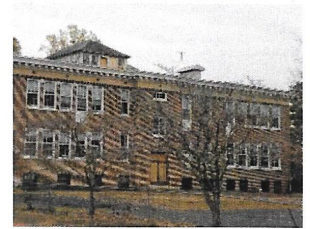
Observers or spotters accessed the post via fire escape or an interior staircase. During a two-hour shift, each spotter would sit in a swivel chair (formerly, the nurse's office dental chair) beneath the cupola, scanning the skies for aircraft, and listening for engine noises. Binoculars, aircraft silhouette charts, and a phone were nearby. If a plane was spotted, a "flash message" containing the number, type, altitude, direction, and distance was telephoned to a filter center. Strategic information was then forwarded to Mitchel Field's Interceptor Command on Long Island.



American Legion Griswold Post 79 sponsored the AWS observation posts in Madison and oversaw recruitment. It took many volunteers to provide 24/7 coverage. By January 1942, there were 75 volunteers, including summer residents and boy scouts. There were no official uniforms but there were AWS armbands and insignia pins. Recruits took their training seriously – after all, there was a lot to protect as Connecticut was home to munitions factories and a submarine base. Information from airplane recognition classes was so well absorbed that Madison's Aircraft Recognition Team won awards at regional and district competitions. The greatest victory, however, was that no

enemy planes ever materialized over Madison.

When America's military focus shifted to the D-Day offensive, the AWS was deactivated on May 29, 1944 and with it, Dudley 52. At a Special Town Meeting on June 26, 1945, the Board of Selectmen authorized the removal of Dudley 52's tower. The Dome is now the only part of Dudley 52 that remains. It can be glimpsed from the school's western side.



In memory of George D. Noewatne



This past April our good friend and fellow CLEMA Board member George D. Noewatne passed away. George was a life-long Madison resident, a decorated Korean War Purple Heart Veteran, and a well-known carpenter. For many years, George could be spotted walking his dog along Bishop Lane and Scotland Road, or visiting with friends at West Wharf. He was an avid walker, cyclist, and motorcyclist, staying active into his 90s.

George was an amazing wealth of Madison history. Anytime there was a question on identifying photographs of Madison people, businesses, or places, he had the answer. Many stories of how Madison used to be were shared by him during open hours at the Archives. We all learned so much and gratefully we have those stories for future generations. Anytime George stopped by he was bright and cheerful, reaching out to strongly shake your hand and ask how you were...that will be missed by us the most.

In memory of George, our Archivist Nancy Bastian is creating a database of Madison Veterans and military unit histories for our website. This new portal of information will be named in his honor.

New Equipment

In our newsletter last year, we mentioned receiving a large collection of antique glass plate negatives. Since then, we have reviewed them with several other local historical agencies and found that 17 were from Clinton, Westbrook, and Branford. These have been transferred to the respective towns and our total CLEMA collection now stands at 311 Madison-Related glass plates.

In order to scan these very delicate and special pieces of history in the most accurate way possible, a new Epson perfection V850 flatbed scanner was purchased. A generous long-time friend of CLEMA provided the funds for this purchase, and it has been put to good use. The glass plates have been scanned to reveal amazingly clear images. One of the images of the Madison Hose Co. Firemen on the Green in 1914 was so clear that the individual badge numbers on their uniforms could be read. This was invaluable to the Hose Company in supplementing a database of member badge numbers that is being compiled this year for their 115th anniversary.



An Epson DS-7700II color duplex document scanner was also purchased this spring with monies from a grant from the Erwin C. Bauer Charitable Trust. This scanner can scan groups of documents quickly and produce searchable PDF files.

Growing and Changing

As with any town, so many things change that we don't even notice sometimes, then we look back and say, "wait, when did that happen?"



Among many changes are building demolitions that make way for new homes or businesses. The former Tuxis Laundromat on Bradley Road was one of the buildings that made way in the last year for a new, larger building with apartments. Not long ago many of us spent a lot of time here before having washers and dryers in our homes, something a lot of people take for granted now-a-days.

The Laundromat was a busy place, with chairs to sit on in the front and wait while clothes were being washed in the

machines. There were various sizes of washers and dryers, all with the metal slide that you would insert the proper amount of coins into and then push forward to begin the wash cycle. Small detergent boxes were available in a vending machine and the scent of powdered detergent being poured into measuring cups lingered in the humid air. It seemed like a simpler time during the 70s, 80s and 90s when we would sit and read books, newspapers, and magazines to pass the time while the washers and dryers ran.

When the building was demolished, a pile of old horse shoes was discovered...these were from an ancient blacksmith shop that once stood on the same site.



Website Upgrades

This year we began the process of reviewing our website that was created in 2013 and worked with our web host to try to make it more mobile friendly. While the website was great for viewing on a personal computer, it did not translate well to mobile devices. We looked at what could be changed and/or upgraded to improve. Once we knew that a total refresh was necessary, we explored funding options. We applied for and received a generous grant from the Madison Foundation for the full amount of this upgrade!

The new site is currently under construction and should be live very soon! Check us out at evartsarchives.org.

A New Era of Commuter Rail Service

In May of 2022, the Shore Line East (SLE) Commuter Rail service finally began using electric trains. When the commuter service was revived in the spring of 1990, legacy diesels were refurbished. For 32 years the low rumble of the engines could be heard throughout Madison as they pulled away from the station. Since the old Madison train station had been sold into private ownership, a new, small wood platform was constructed at the parking lot on Bradley Road. The platform had plexiglass enclosures to protect commuters from the elements. The image above, by Robert Gerard, shows two of the first SLE locomotives on a test stop at the new wood platforms in April 1990.



As the popularity of commuting grew, the need for a better ADA accessible platform and more parking spaces was realized. A new station was constructed farther west on Bradley Road at the old Beebe Bus yard in 2008. Since the Northeast Corridor of Amtrak was electrified in 2000, it has been a long-time coming to have electric commuter service. The new equipment operating is the same Kawasaki M-8 locomotives that the MTA uses from New Haven to New York City.

The M-8s on the SLE have been modified to have their third rail capabilities removed to access some of the stations on the route. The photo above, also by Robert Gerard, shows an M-8 trainset during the testing phase in April 2022 passing along Scotland Road.

Established in 1995, the Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving and making available for public use archival materials related to Madison, CT. Visit us at 8 Meetinghouse Lane, Madison, CT 06443, on the internet at www.evartsarchives.org, or on Facebook. CLEMA's hours are: Tuesdays 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. and Fridays 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. or by appointment by calling CLEMA at (203) 245-5667.