



# WOMPATUCK NEWS

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## Taming of Christmas

*Boston Globe Editorial of 2008*

The Puritans of Massachusetts had no use for Christmas. "Whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like," declared the General Court in 1659, "either by forbearing of labor, feasting or any other way...shall pay for every such offense five shillings, as a fine to the country."

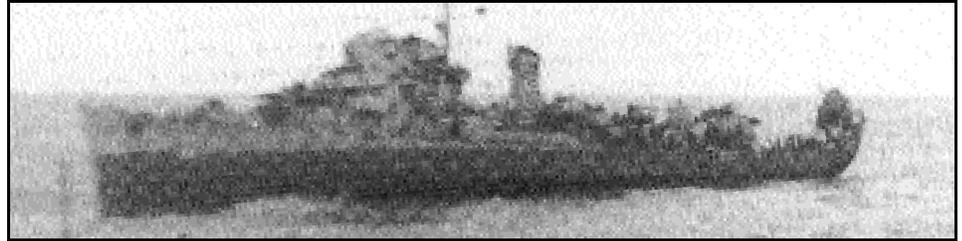
The law lasted on the books for 22 years, and resistance to the holiday continued for a century longer, until Puritanism evolved into a less rigid creed.

In the 17th-century England from which the Puritans emigrated, Christmas was a multi-week bacchanal. A remnant of the pre-Christian past that had been imperfectly tamed by the church, Christmas marked the time of year in agricultural society when work slowed, cattle were slaughtered, beer was brewed, and inhibitions were unfettered. Men would dress in women's clothing, and vice versa. Crowd singers would roam from house to house demanding food and drink. This custom is recalled today in songs about "wassailing," a word from the 17th century that has lost its coercive connotation.

The Massachusetts Puritans, eager to stamp out this behavior, made sure that Dec. 25 was an ordinary day. Their yearly almanacs noted that courts were in session and other business was conducted. But the spirit of disorder could not be contained, Cotton Mather, the famous Puritan clergyman, noted in 1711: "I hear of a number of young people of both sexes, belonging, many of them, to my flock who have had on Christmas night this last week a Frolick, a revelling feast, and Ball."

By 1750, Anglicans and members of other less rigorous denominations had moved into Massachusetts. The almanacs referred to Dec. 25 as Christmas, and young people began to mimic the riotous behavior of their English cousins on a more elaborate scale. Wealthy Bostonian Samuel Breck reported on the depredations of the Anticks, masked revellers who forced their way into homes - wassailing without music. "The only way to get rid of them," he wrote, "was to give them money and listen patiently to a foolish dialogue between two or more of them."

Christmas as we know today had vanquished the lords of misrule. ■



*USS Donnell (top photo) after torpedo hit stern. John Folino pictured below in 1943 and 2009.*

## Small World Connects Hingham Shipyard and Annex Veterans

*By Jim Rose, FOW News Editor and Historian*

When I first started interviewing veterans for the U.S. Library of Congress, I gradually discovered how small the world is for World War II veterans.

A number of these war interviews have uncanny coincidences to them. Here's one concerning my late father James S. Rose who worked at the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot, his best friend John Folino, Hingham resident Stanley Hersey, park director Steve Gammon's aunt Ruth Todd and former park employee the late Leo Parenti.

During World War II, Folino was assigned to the destroyer escort USS Donnell (DE-56). The ship was built at the Hingham Shipyard in 1943. While on convoy duty off the coast of Ireland on May 3, 1944, the Donnell was torpedoed by the German submarine U-473. The Donnell's stern was blown off with 29 sailors killed and 25 wounded. Folino was blown out of his bunk. He was unin-

jured, other than a welt on his knee. But tragically, his best friend died in his arms.

"When the torpedo hit, all my shipmates in the back part of the ship got cut up," Folino said. "My friend Jim Haworth got hit pretty bad. I gave him artificial respiration, but it didn't work. He died."

The Navy caught up with the sub three days later and sent it to the bottom.

Because Donnell's stern was blown away and couldn't patrol anymore, she was towed to Cherbourg, France in August of 1944 and turned into a power station for the shore installations. Much of the city's power source was destroyed during the D-Day invasion. The Donnell provided a much-needed power back-up.

Stan Hersey, who worked at the Hingham Shipyard before joining the Navy, boarded the Donnell while on leave in Cherbourg. He was surprised to find a "Made at the Hingham Shipyard" label fastened to the ship.

**Small World** continued on page 2

## Small World (continued from page one)



*Leadingman James S. Rose working with VT fuses in the Mine Anchor building of the Annex. Now removed, the building was near marker NW13 at Wompatuck State Park.*



*John Folino pictured in World War II exhibit at the present shipyard shopping mall. He is halfway up next to British Navy Officer Ian Menzies who worked at the shipyard and is now a Hingham resident.*



*Leo Parenti (on left with cigarette) and his wife partying with my parents James and Dorna Rose (on right).*



*Ruth Todd posing with her group in front of the depot's Administration Building. She is in the second row on the far left side (see arrow).*

"The USS Donnell was built in 1943 at the Hingham Shipyard the year I worked there," Hersey said. "No telling, I might have had a hand in building this one. I was really proud when I saw the nameplate on that ship."

**Stan Hersey**

He also said his grandfather Reuben Hersey owned a farm along the Back River in Hingham where the U.S. Navy acquired land for the development of the ammunition depot. It's highly probable the depth charges that sunk the U-473 came from the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot since the depot was the major source of ordnance for the Allies during the Battle of the Atlantic.

My dad held many jobs at the ammunition depot. I never asked what he did because he wouldn't tell me. Most of his jobs were classified TOP SECRET. After he passed away in 1984, I discovered one of those secret jobs was the VT fuse project. VT stands for "variable timed." The fuse was designed to explode an artillery shell in the air before ground impact. In other words, a foxhole wouldn't provide

protection for the enemy. The Navy rated the VT fuze second only to the atomic bomb in scientific feats. This revolutionary fuze helped turn the tide for the Allies during the "Battle of the Bulge."

Former park employee Leo Parenti served with the 26th Yankee Division during the "Battle of the Bulge." He fired artillery and said he was amazed when he discovered on a VT shell: "U.S.N.A.D. Hingham MA."

Leo worked with my father at the Annex from 1951 to 1962. He was employed at Wompatuck State Park and Boston Harbor Islands State Park from 1974 to 1980. He died in 2007.

My dad met Folino in the 50s through



*Crew of the USS Charles Lawrence gather at reunion in 2003. The ship helped rescue the USS Donnell. It was also built at Hingham.*

my mother who also worked at the depot. My father had many a party with both Folino and Parenti. They enjoyed lots of laughs together with their high balls and Chesterfields. Talk about salty language! Their boozy banter is truly missed.

John Folino now resides in Cape Cod and works as a restaurant manager. He reflects back: "The USS Donnell was a great ship. Whoever built it did a fine job. I love that DE. It's too bad those damn Germans didn't."



**Ruth Todd**

when she worked at the Depot.

"It was TOP SECRET and very 'hush-hush' of course," Todd said. "But, the war broke out and I did my duty."

Yes, they all surely did do their duty. Most of us wouldn't be here without them. It's a small and appreciative world for the greatest generation. ■