Dedication of the World War I Plaque on Cuttyhunk

From The Morning Mercury, New Bedford, Mass., Monday, June 17, 1929

At the end of last summer Elaine Tilton Doran gave the Society several items she had found while cleaning out her late uncle, Wilfred Tilton’s house. Among them was a rolled up, tattered newspaper with the following account of the dedication of a plaque honoring the Gosnold men who had served in what was then called the World War. We are grateful to Elaine for passing the article along. It is a pleasure to share this splendid celebration complete with a brass band, many speeches and the school children singing “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean” under the direction of Louise Taylor, whom many of us remember as Mrs. Haskell.

Ethel Twichell, President

Destroyer Carries Audience to Gosnold Dedication

Handsome Tablet on Island to Commemorate Service of Island’s Eleven Sons in World War Is Unveiled Before Large Gathering

Eleven stalwart sons of the sea-island of Gosnold, men, who when this country entered the World War, dropped their seines, their lines and lobster gear to enter the Navy, that branch of service where they were of most value, were honored yesterday by townspeople and Legionnaires from this city when a handsome bronze tablet was dedicated with full military honor and pomp. Ten of the 11 men who changed from oil skins to blue in ’17 are alive and a majority of them were present on the island yesterday to receive the honors of townspeople and visitors. A large granite boulder from “The Point,” where for untold centuries it alternately basked in the sunlight and bathed in the tempestuous seas that have swished and swirled about it, serves as a base for the tablet in its new position in front of the Town Hall.

Three hundred people yesterday noon formed a hollow square around the flag-draped monument where the exercises were held. The monument and tablet were given by the townspeople. The dedication ceremonies were in charge of the American Legion of this city, a special committee of which had arranged the program.

Lieut. Harold S. Bowie, a frequent visitor to the island of Gosnold as far back as when it was known as Cuttyhunk, was one of the leading factors in securing the formal dedication. Through the assistance of Congressman Charles L. Gifford in Washington, Lieut. Bowie secured the presence in these waters of the U.S.S. Converse. One of Uncle Sam’s modern destroyers, the Converse, is named in honor of the late Rear Admiral George A. Converse, U.S.N.

The Converse came to New Bedford Saturday afternoon from its summer base at Newport and yesterday morning shortly after 9 o’clock steamed out of the harbor here with over 100 Legionmen and a scattering of auxiliary members. The Converse was in charge of Lieut. Commander A.S.

The destroyer U.S.S. Converse brought Legion members and guests to the island for the occasion.

Photograph courtesy the U.S. Naval Institute.
Wotherspoon. Members of the local Naval Reserve unit under Lieut. Milton S. Borden started out at the same time on Eagle boat 19.

Threats of fog outside were realized soon after the sharp prows of the government craft passed Fort Rodman. It was necessary to cut down speed and the two boats soon lost sight of each other as each one felt its way across the bay with fog sirens sounding almost continuously. Halfway across the bay the destroyer passed the handsome steam yacht Warrior of New York which had anchored apparently because of the dense fog.

Half an hour later, however, both craft emerged into clearer atmosphere and the island was reached shortly before 11 o’clock. A fleet of fishing boats, a majority of whose masters were being honored, were on hand when the two vessels dropped their anchors a mile outside the harbor. These sturdy fishing craft were used to ferry the guests ashore and as soon as all had landed a line of march was organized at the pier and Gosnold was witnessing its first parade.

Led by the Legion band from Post One, the local Naval Reserve unit and color bearers and color guards from the post with the Legionnaires bringing up in the rear, the parade wound its way through the town’s one narrow street to the Town Hall. It was a big day for Cuttyhunk. The island’s one gasoline-propelled land vehicle of the type made famous by one Henry Ford, served as a reviewing stand for exactly 1/20 of the island’s normal population – four people.

Even the few animals on the island seemed to sense that something very unusual was going on. The two cows and lone horse, contentedly grazing when the visitors docked, quit their grass to watch the parade and listen to the unfamiliar strains of a brass band. As the last of the parade passed them all three animals fell in on the rear and continued on as far as their enclosed field would allow them. At the top of the hill Walter Allen’s spaniel, Brownie, stopped begging for cake and bow-wowed a noisy greeting.

The ceremony was started immediately. Lieutenant Bowie announced that the ceremony was planned to honor the 11 men of the island who were in Uncle Sam’s service during the World War. He announced that the boulder and monument had been given by the townspeople and, at their request, the American Legion had arranged the program.

The Legion band then played a selection after which the 11 school children of Gosnold, every one of them related to the 11 men being honored, sang “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean” under the direction of their teacher, Miss Louise Taylor.

The school children who were grouped on the steps were Alpheus P. Tilton, Jr., Wilfred R. Tilton, Carlton O. Veeder Jr., Robert Sanborn, Kenneth Cornell, Barbara A. McKay, Hazel E. McKay, Gladys E. Snow, Mary Sanborn, Annette Stetson and Donald McKay. Alpheus Tilton, chairman of the Gosnold Board of Selectmen, was then introduced by Lieutenant Bowie and on behalf of the town he presented the memorial.

As he concluded his brief remarks informally turning over the memorial, two of the school children, Barbara and Hazel McKay, drew the
halyards that lifted the American flag draping the monument to the top of the staff. This with full military dignity and ceremony – the Naval Reserve unit of this city at attention – the Color bearers and guards grouped to the right of the monument with the Naval Reserves drawn up in company formation directly in front of it.


District Attorney William C. Crossley, the orator of the day, was next introduced by Lieutenant Bowie. “The men of this island, like so many hundreds of thousands elsewhere, when they took up arms in defense of Democracy for the world, proved that our forefathers were right when they sent down word to us that this is a nation not of materialistic conquests but a nation of ideals,” said the District Attorney. “We have proof of this on every hand. Even here today many of us come as strangers to do honor to those who have given service. The United States of America is today the greatest country of all times because it is a country of service.

“We have seen this from the very beginning. There was George Washington, a man of wealth, who gave his time, his brain and his money, that this nation might live. He too had an ideal. We can pass along to more modern times – to the man who has just vacated the greatest office in this land – former president Calvin Coolidge. He stood for an ideal and he came from almost nowhere into the chair of the chief executive of these United States because he believed that a policeman has no more right to strike than a soldier.

“So too with the 11 young men who left this island when their country called. Theirs too was the urge of an ideal – the urge that Democracy should rule in this world rather than a few leaders whose ideals were directly the opposite to Democracy. Now that they are back here among you it is fitting that we should gather here to do them honor. They went ‘over there’ for nothing in the nature of materialistic gain but simply to help others put right above wrong.”

District Attorney Crossley was followed by Commander Solomon Rosenberg of Post One who on behalf of the Legion formally accepted the monument. “I dedicate this monument to them,” said Commander Rosenberg, “and with it I dedicate this post to the eternal service of our country and the preservation of the memory of those who died that liberty might not perish.

“In the name of New Bedford Post One of the American Legion I now dedicate this memorial. I dedicate it to the memory of those who fell in the service of their country, by land and by sea. Their lives are glorious before us; their deeds are an inspiration. As they served America in time of war yielding their last full measure of devotion, may we serve America in time of peace, so living that justice, freedom and democracy may endure forever.”

The ceremony closed with another selection by the school children and then the Star Spangled Banner by the band.

The Bosworth House and the Poplars were the next points of interest. There are fewer lobsters and
fish in the vicinity of Gosnold today than there were Saturday. After dinner and until 2:30 when the fishing boats gathered at the wharf to ferry New Bedford guests back to the destroyer and Eagle boat, the Legion band provided a concert in front of the town hall.

In addition to the members of the Naval Reserve outfit there were other jackies on the island helping swell the population of the day. Nearly 100 of the crew of the Converse and a few from the Eagle boat had shore liberty. Lieutenant Commander Wotherspoon was the guest of Lieutenant Bowie during the exercises and the dinner.

Lieutenant Bowie acted as chairman of the committee that arranged the ceremony. Others on the committee with him were Commander Rosenberg, Fred Hewitt, Milton Baylies, and Paul S. Kane.

The Legion color bearers who assisted in the ceremony were Harold Lawton and Davis Kaplan while the color guards were Herbert Bucklin and Enos Paul.

The fishing boats that acted as a reception escort to the naval craft and then ferried the guests ashore, were Hazel, Capt. John McKay; Elmardo, Capt. I. W. Hall; Doris, Capt. Herbert Stetson; Barbara, Capt. Charles Tilton; Mildred T., Capt. I. C. Tilton.

Edward K. Cornell A brother of William Cornell, Edward Cornell was also a fisherman who served in the Navy.

John A. Olsen He is presumed to be the John Olsen (sic) who worked on Naushon, and later as caretaker at Pasque.

Russell W. Rotch Married to Carrie Allen, Russell Rotch was a Cuttyhunk pilot. He served in the Navy.

Roland S. Snow A Cuttyhunk Coast Guard regular, Roland Snow married Estella Bosworth, who ran the Bosworth house for many years.

Charles W. Tilton One of Cuttyhunk’s first bass guides, Charles Tilton served in the Navy.

Robert R. Tilton Another of Cuttyhunk’s first, famous guides, Bob Tilton was a brother of Alpheus Tilton. He was a motor mechanic in the Navy.

Isaiah C. Tilton Bob Tilton’s oldest brother, Isaiah Tilton was a Cuttyhunk fishing guide and builder. He served in the Navy.

Harold S. Veeder Harold Veeder, an uncle of Elsie Bauer, fished at Cuttyhunk and joined the Navy as an ensign. He died of influenza in 1917 and within a year his only brother and sister had also died.

Gosnold Men Who Served in World War I

Alvah H. Akin A son of Capt. Timothy Akin who was drowned in the Aquatic disaster and an uncle of Alpheus Tilton, Alvah Akin was in the Navy and served in the Atlantic under Capt. David N. Bosworth, who is not on the tablet because he was not then from Gosnold.


John B. Cornell An uncle of Carolyn Borges, Anita Brown, and Richard Cornell, John B. Cornell served in the Navy. He was a Cuttyhunk fisherman.

Curator/Manager Carolyn Powers found the biographical material on the eleven men who served in World War I in the Historical Society’s files.