Bustles & Handle-Bar Mustaches Will Be in Style

Gay Nineties Songs, Styles Planned for U.S.O. Affair

Replete with bustles, ruffles, handle-bar mustaches and gay songs, plans are going ahead full swing for a Gay Nineties Party that Sterling House U.S.O. Committee is giving at Red Men’s hall, Stratford, on Thursday evening.

This is the first “big affair” the committee has in store following last Thursday’s Barn Dance. As the space at Sterling House is somewhat limited for as large a party as the Gay Nineties Party promises to be, it was decided to have it at Red Men’s hall.

A program of entertainment has been planned for the evening. Lieutenant Patrick Flanagan of the Stratford Police Department, Leo Fagan, Robert Erie and Vernon Bond have been drafted as judges to decide which is the outstanding skit.

Hariette Merhill has chosen, as her specialty to sing, “The Bird on Nellie’s Hat.” She will be assisted by a chorus of Gay Nineties Girls consisting of Mary Stewart, Peg Cummings, Anne Jones, Martha Burns, Helene Hamilton, Mary Hardy, Nora Butterworth, Wilma Coe and Aila Lautala.

Anne Jones will sing saga of “Jennie” made famous by Gertrude Lawrence.

Another specialty act will be a parody on the U.S.O. sung to the tune of “The Band Played On. Seaman Edward Nyborg and Corp. H. Grant Warner will do the vocalization and Wilma Coe and Alla Lautala will be the girls from the U.S.O.

Fred Zisquit and Corp. Warner are going to sing a duet entitled, “Bicycle Built for Two.” Fred Zisquit and Edward Nyborg are with the Coast Guard and Corp. Warner is with the Army.

Many service men and defense workers participate in U.S.O. events regularly.
Sterling House a war-time ‘home away from home’

Sterling House, a community gathering place in every sense of the word, has gone to war. The house, which bears the name of its donor, has served well in peacetime and now has opened its doors to hundreds of out-of-town war workers. Chance Vought people have taken advantage of the many opportunities offered. Almost any time of day or evening, they participate in art classes, study voice or piano, dancing, home economics, languages and pre-flight aviation.

Children of working parents are given adequate supervision and guidance as an important wartime contribution. But most of all, Sterling House is a place where you can have fun. Facilities are provided for almost every indoor and outdoor sport. A home away from home, the house is a place where fireplace parties can be held, dancing and other gatherings.

Mary Sweeney is pictured taking down code during a pre-flight training course. Doors of Sterling House are open for night-shifters early in the morning, and until late at night for those who work days.
Social Aspects in Stratford During WWII
‘As Informed to Me by Mrs. Mary Hardy’

An unsigned account describing aspects of the War Years, 1941-45

My friend and Sunday School instructor, Mrs. Mary Hardy, has been a Stratford resident for many years, and worked and still works for almost as many at Sterling House. She had heard and knew of many incidents occurring in town and at Sterling House during the ’40s, particularly during World War II. I had the pleasure of hearing some of them (all true) as follows as I now know them:

During the 1940s, Sterling House was used as a community service building. It was brought to the attention of [Sterling House Executive Secretary], Mrs. {Huldah] Brown, a woman who lived in two rooms upstairs, that there was no clubs or places to stay for visiting service men.

So a woman’s committee consisting of workers at Sterling House set up a program where Sterling House would be used as a club for service men, as well as a rooming house for them and other visitors.

To accommodate the service, Mrs. Brown would move out when it was crowded to provide them with more room.

Stratford was busy preparing war planes (the Corsair) so that it was necessary to have three shifts at the plant. Since some defense workers had to work at night, and were complaining that there was no place for them to go after work for entertainment, Sterling House opened the to them 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week. There was dancing and food and many other good things. After work, they would go to bed.

Some service men wanted to get married before returning home. Sterling House staff helped them set up tests and secure marriage licenses, etc. Sterling House also provided a place to stay for them as well as for the P-47 builders, until barracks were set up for them in Lordship. Also, workers at Sterling House helped plan the weddings, making flower bouquets and other wedding preparations, as well as attending the weddings.

Across the street from Sterling House was the David Brooks house that ran a tea room and place to rest. Undercover, but obviously FBI agents would go there and ask a lot of obvious questions such as, “I need a place to stay ... it must be private and quiet so I can work. I’m a secret service man. Do you know where one is?”

Then it was found out that this FBI man was trying to find out about war leaks, since Stratford was making war planes, etc. and defense workers would visit the tea room after work.

There was also a ski club that after trips would meet there. There was a woman who wore exotic clothes in the 30s and 40s who had a slight foreign accent. She was very charming and was the manager of the tea room. When the ski clubbers would meet, they would gossip and talk about anything and everything and socialize and have fun.

The woman would ask seemingly innocent questions, like, “Did you hear word from your son? ... Oh, where is he stationed?”

As far as anyone knows, no one was ever arrested for spying.

Sterling USO Planning Valentine Hop

The Sterling USO committee is going to sponsor a Valentine dance in Sterling House Thursday night, Dorothea Heppes is chairman.

Ernest Arvia of Fairfield will be soloist, and besides the dancing a community sing will be featured.

Assisting Miss Heppes will be Wila Coe, Gil Monroe, Dee O’Hara, Frank Matthews, Robert Baker, Jack Hammerschmidt, Leah F. Wilson, and Mrs. John Cummings.

This committee under Mrs. Cummings has planned a George Washington dance on Feb. 17, with Clarence Osgood, chairman. The group for friendly service from Sterling House serves refreshments.

The drawings, above and below right, were part of a 1941 dance class recital costume drawing contest. Below, tap dancing class in the early 1940s.