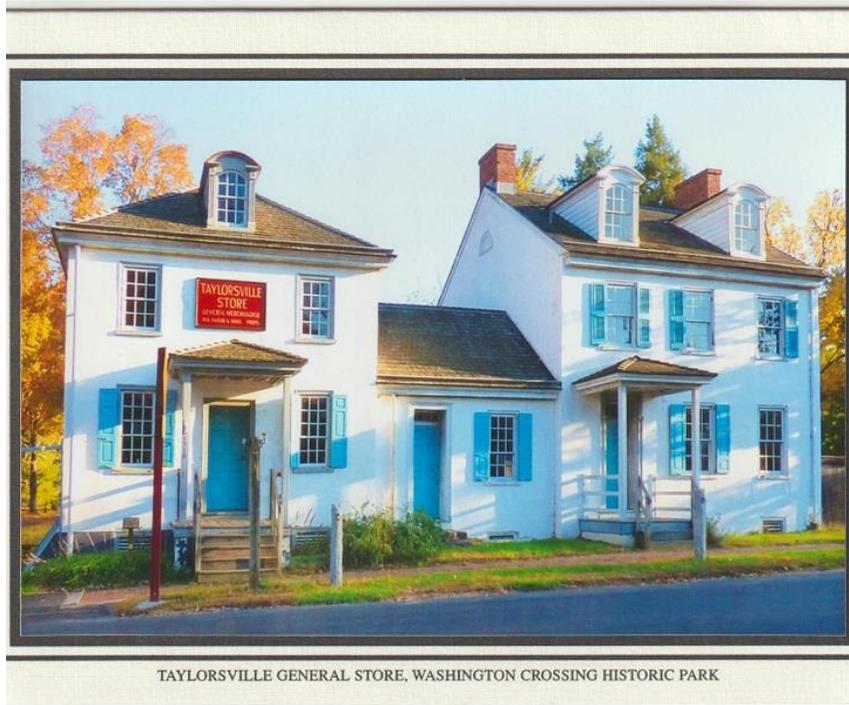


GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO
E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB
THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION



THE COLONIAL TIMES ISSUE
MARCH 14, 2019

THE SET-UP

Hello fine listeners, and welcome once again to the mythical confines of the GRTR Studio where we broadcast information and inspiration about radio, music, nostalgia, personality, books, and beyond. Terry Gross continues to be our inspiration. Listen to her “Fresh Air” radio show, live or podcast; check your NPR listings for a station where you can tune in.

It's the time of year when geese are flying and squawking and landing on meadows and yards. They're pecking around across the lawn here, and a great number were resting and splashing along the canal over at Yardley the other day. Mild skies and wispy clouds. Chuck and Joanie and I are having coffee and carrot cake in the Mud Room.

Chuck is piping in the soundtrack to Michael Mann's 1992 film *The Last of the Mohicans*, an orchestral selection called "The Promontory," with long brooding passages which portray the expanse of northern forest: who is marching towards the fort, and who is darting among the trees, observing their every move?

Today we'll be talking about one of my favorite shows, *Cavalcade of America*, and the breadth of research and scripting that went into the enterprise. Then we'll look further at the Club's "signature moments" harking back to the time when Sally Stephens was a guest in the studio. Sally wrote a fine reminiscence for the broadcast, and Joanie is ready to read it on-the-air.

The dusty courier pouch brought us two newsletters recently: first, the colorful bulletin from the Milwaukee Area Radio Enthusiasts, with a nice write-up on Jack Benny, whose 125th birthday was February 14; more on that in a while. The equally colorful *Radio Recall* arrived; Martin Grams spans the globe with information about links to shows from Germany and Australia. There's an article about Cary Grant on radio; and Karl Schadow leads off with a discussion about the "Sergeant Preston" series.

Joanie has her eye on the clock as it sweeps towards network feed; we scurry down the hall and settle in. Chuck fades the plaintive strings of the forest.

ON-THE-AIR

Hello everyone, and welcome to the broadcast! History was in good hands with the writers of the *Cavalcade* series. DuPont sponsored their efforts, which was to cover all aspects of historical events, well-known, and obscure; the people who went ahead and gained fame, and the hard-working yet unsung folks as well. Several episodes recount the struggles and the valor of our country's early colonial times and the Revolutionary War. Although not in the canon, the story of the events at Washington Crossing in 1776, as recounted in the Taylor family history of the era, has the ring of a *Cavalcade* episode:

For the colonists, America was regarded as the land of opportunity. Samuel Taylor of eastern Pennsylvania knew that river traffic was an essential part of that vision, and he made it his life's work to run a ferry across the Delaware River. With that success he and his fellow Quakers built houses and a general store at a place called Yardley across the river from New Jersey a few miles north of Trenton. During the Revolutionary War, General Washington brought his troops to the river, knowing that the British and their Hessian allies were occupying Trenton. Taylor and his friends gave his troops shelter in

their homes; they gathered all their boats, for two reasons: to prevent the British from seizing them, and to let the Army use the boats to transport themselves across the river. The operation was a surprise, happening among the ice floes on Christmas eve, and the battle of Trenton was a victory which gave renewed hope to the beleaguered colonial cause.

Martin Grams' documentation of the many aspects of the *Cavalcade* phenomenon is encyclopedic in nature and fun to read.

Here are a few episodes from the early years of America, with the essence of Martin Grams' descriptions:

"Young Major Washington," episode 467, 2/18/46: A diplomatic assignment becomes a hazardous journey across western Pennsylvania.

"A Voice in the Wilderness," #216, 3/5/41: The story of a Quaker named William Penn (Henry Hull) and the settling of Pennsylvania. Cast included: Jeanette Nolan, Elliott Reid, Agnes Morehead, William Johnstone.

"Washington and the Traitor," #423, 2/19/45: After the misery of Valley Forge and the victories at Saratoga and Trenton, the General (Herbert Marshall) must deal with a traitor up around West Point: Benedict Arnold.

"Signal to the World," #629, 11/8/49: A prosperous Quaker merchant (Cary Grant) works as a spy for the Colonies and gains the confidence and the plans of British General Clinton.

"Theodosia Burr," #226, 5/12/41: The brilliant daughter of Aaron Burr had been educated in an atmosphere of patriotism, political idealism and the young Republic's planning for the individual happiness and collective freedom for millions of Americans. Her father discounted her viewpoint, taking no counsel other than his own. His ill-starred plan to establish an empire in the southwest caused the nation to turn against Aaron Burr. Theodosia stood by her father through hours of chaotic despair, and by her efforts sought to account before history for the lamentable mistakes of an American patriot strangely misguided by the current of his peculiar erratic genius. Anne Sterrett, John McIntire, Kenny Delmar, Alfred Shirley, Agnes Morehead, Gertrude Crippen.

SOURCES:

- Bye, Arthur Edwin, *A Friendly Heritage Along the Delaware: The Taylors of Washington Crossing and Some Allied Families in Bucks County*. New York: Vantage Press 1959. Archival quality reprint, Higginson Books, Salem, Massachusetts.
- Grams, Martin, Jr. *The Official Guide to the History of The Cavalcade of America Presented by DuPont*. Kearney Nebraska: Morris Publishing, 2000, 1998.

I have proffered this idea before, that I fervently hope that the Club Players will choose an episode from *Cavalcade of America* the next time they have the opportunity to perform scripts at one venue or another. Martin Grams might well advise them on the matter.

MUSIC BRIDGE AND COMMERCIAL

Chuck pipes in the wonderful “Appalachian Spring” by Aaron Copland. Joanie is tapping her clipboard, so let’s go to our sponsor, The Dayton Dragons.



The big event for the Dragons is the 20-Year Celebration Game on Saturday March 30. Many elder stars who played for the Cincinnati Reds and variously coached for the Dragons will be at the ballpark for a friendly game with the young Dragon players; good times and lots of memories. Among others, Ken Griffey, Sr. will be there; the crowd and the players will greet him warmly. Griffey, Sr. was a great player for the Reds in the 1970s, on that amazing team (The Big Red Machine) that won the World Series a couple of times. He’s happy and doing his best to help the youngsters, who are working hard to gain experience and find that elusive batting touch.

It's a promising outlook for the Dragons; and the events that the front office organizes are just great, and keep the crowd entertained. The Radio Club Players enjoyed a fanciful day at the Park a couple of springs ago, for Heritage Day. The Lawrence Kandrach Singers sang the Anthem, and Sandra Pitts-Malone took to the mound and threw the first pitch.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

February 14, 2014 was a landmark day for the GRTR Studio. We had a guest in the studio, Sally Stephens visited us for the afternoon. And we had a folk musician and his sideman in the room, the first time we broadcast music live. Clarence Greenwood was his name, he had an open day during his tour with his band, Citizen Cope. It was a wonderful and heartfelt day, with Sally reading her reminiscence and Clarence singing his American roots ballads. Sally of course is still active with the Club; and Clarence is still writing songs about love and family and the hardscrabble life, and Citizen Cope has become a major draw on the concert tour.

Joanie has her copy of Sally's pages in hand and she now steps to the microphone:

I call my essay "A Valentine to Radio."

"My earliest radio memories involve my family and me riding in the car. After that, I certainly remember listening to the Oldies music station and belting out the tunes with my brother. But even more memorable are the times we'd manage to just catch "Guy Noir" on Prairie Home Companion. Or, we might come in just as "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me" kicked off.

I soaked it all in. I loved the storytelling, the sound effects, and the imagination that radio sparked. I wanted to hear more, and I wanted to hear it all.

"When I discovered Ed Walker's "The Big Broadcast," I was about eight or so years old. I fell in love with the program and managed to convince my parents to let me stay up just a little bit later on Sunday nights to catch my favorites - "Suspense," or "Inner Sanctum."

"The Big Broadcast encouraged my interest in radio, and I began hunting for programming anywhere I could. I wanted to share my love of radio

with everyone I knew. During every storm and power outage, I would pull out the board games and the “Abbott and Costello” shows. I played programs in the archeological labs where I worked, sharing “Candy Matson” and “Richard Diamond” with my lab mates. And I still make it a point to bring radio programs to the children I babysit. We sit together, listening, sparking a new generation’s interest.

“When I found the MWOTRC, it was as though I’d found the long-lost friends I’d been searching for. They are the folks that can talk radio with me, and not give me strange looks when I get excited about finding a new album or discovering obscure shows like “Ghost Corps.” It’s fun and wonderful, being part of the Club – participating not only by attending the meetings but leading a program; and writing my own radio dramas!

“Radio has been such an important interest and force in my life. I not only enjoy casually listening to programs, but I love the history and background of them, as well. One of my goals is to complete my doctorate, writing my dissertation on women in radio and early television. When I am passionate about something, I want to collect it all and study it all – be active in its history. And my love affair with radio is still honeymooning!”

Very nice reading, Joanie, thanks so much! So many people will echo Sally’s feelings about the value and enjoyment of radio. We trust that she’s working hard and that her studies are going well. Chuck is cueing up a ballad by the stalwart Clarence Greenwood, and wishing him well, too; he’s touring in New England these days. A few chords from “Hours on End,” “Oh I lost and found my anchor / In good old New Amsterdam / Been looked at like a stranger / And put myself in danger / By my own helping hand...”

THE 39-MAN MARCH

Getting back now to the recent Milwaukee Club newsletter, it really is a nice write-up about Jack Benny, February 14, and his career and ageless appeal. From the GRTR Archives I found a letter that Melanie Aultman had sent to us in the dusty courier pouch. Melanie wrote about the International Jack Benny Fan Club and their efforts to get Jack Benny on a 39-cent US postage stamp.

This GRTR piece is from the April 7, 2013 issue. I wrote it up, so I shall read it here:

Jack Benny Helps Us Cross Over

Melanie Aultman writes us a cheerful letter, keeping me up-to-date with the International Jack Benny Fan Club. The latest news is that soon on the market there will be a box DVD set of the "Lost Jack Benny Episodes." Release date is summer; however, if you want to make sure that they will not be lost anymore, early purchase details are available at <http://www.jackbenny.org>

Remember the 39-Man March, on the Mall in D.C. on February 14, 2006? I wrote about it in these pages, knowing that the cause was just. The campaign was for a 39-cent postage stamp featuring Benny, and the timing was critical, because stamp prices were due shortly to rise to 41-cents. Laura Leff, Club president, coordinated the March and other activities, which included a tour of the Smithsonian. These days, Laura and the IJBFC keep an active and dedicated presence for all of us who have listened, watched, collected, and admired the wonderful fellow.

I think that "Jack 39" did not make the commemorative stamp cut. However, old friend and Club member Al Smith told me back then that August 1991 was the time when Benny got his due, in a pane of 29-cent stamps featuring Laurel & Hardy; Fanny Brice; Bergen & McCarthy; Abbott & Costello; and Jack Benny. I dug out my albums just now (I was avid once) and found the pane. How delightful to see again those legendary personalities, in exquisite Hirschfeld drawings. There's Jack: eyebrows arched and a bit of a grin; bow at the ready, violin tucked under his chin.

MUSIC CUE AND OUT

That wraps up our broadcast for today. Chuck is piping in an orchestral piece from the soundtrack to *Last of the Mohicans*. It's called "The Courier." Thanks for listening, keep those cards and letters coming! Soup and sandwiches in the Mud Room? Thanks ever,

Mark Anderson

