

# Fairview Register

Monthly publication of the Costa Mesa Historical Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3)

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## The Society Shuffle

No, it wasn't a two-step dance and it certainly wasn't a cakewalk. But this Society Shuffle was performed at the Society's downtown museum September 22 to 26. Under the direction of Archivist Mary Ellen Goddard, the Society's storage area for collection items was cleared out and cleaned, and boxes were re-shelved after checking their numerical order. This was a major effort, preparing the Society for reviewing collection holdings and making space for new items.



After confirming the boxes were in numerical order by accession number, Mary Ellen Goddard checked the items against catalog records in the Society's PastPerfect database (top). Storage boxes were then placed back on cleaned storage shelves (bottom).

— Art Goddard

### Donate Online

You can now contribute to the Society online. The Costa Mesa Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization. Visit [costamesahistory.org/donate](http://costamesahistory.org/donate) to make your tax-deductible contribution. Thank you for helping to preserve local history!

### SUNDAY SPEAKER SERIES

#### Fred McDowell on World War I · 2 p.m. Sunday, November 18

Join us as Fred McDowell, Costa Mesa Fire Captain, helps us commemorate the "War to End All Wars." In a presentation featuring authentic military artifacts, costumed re-enactors, and a slide presentation, McDowell will discuss America's largest battle (the Meuse-Argonne Offensive), the "The Lost Battalion," and Sgt. Rochester, the young Costa Mesan who tragically lost his life in that battle. You won't want to miss this!

#### Do You Love Working with Old Photos?

We're looking for volunteers to assist us in the preservation of our local history. Do you like old photographs? Do you enjoy seeing them come back to life? We need your passion and your skills!

Photo preservation and restoration is a key part of the Costa Mesa Historical Society's mission. If you would like to learn more about this fun and gratifying volunteer opportunity, give us a call at 949-631-5918 or drop us a line at [costamesahistory.org/contact/](http://costamesahistory.org/contact/). Thanks for your help!

#### Society Elections November 18th

The Costa Mesa Historical Society elections will take place at the beginning of the Sunday Speaker Program on November 18th. The slate of current candidates will be presented at the meeting. Nominations from the floor will be accepted at that time. The election will take place in public and anyone can nominate someone from the floor. The positions open for nomination are: President, 1st Vice-President of Programs, 2nd Vice President of Membership, Secretary, Treasurer and Board Director.

Promoting and preserving Costa Mesa's history is our mission

FAIRVIEW REGISTER, FAIRVIEW, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, MARCH 2, 1889

# The World War I Diary of George Vincent Fox

## Battery E, 148th Field Artillery

One of the treasures of the historical society's collection is the daily diary kept by George Vincent Fox, an artilleryman in World War I. Fox documents his journey across the Atlantic, his time on the front lines, and his postwar duty as peacekeeper. Although the prose is sparse and matter-of-fact, it vividly captures both the thrill and the tedium of war and peace.

Fox, a soldier in Battery "E" 148th Field Artillery, begins his diary in January 1918 as he sets sail from New York. Even before he arrives in Europe, he gets his first taste of war. Another ship traveling with Fox is torpedoed 200 yards behind him just off the coast of Ireland.

On the continent, he trains, convoys, and parades for the first five months. He even sees "the sweetheart of the AEF," Elsie Janis, in concert. But this respite ends at the beginning of July. He must leave for the front.

He arrives on July 7<sup>th</sup>. The battery barely establishes its position before a German shell explodes 300 yards away. "Our first initiation, and it was never to be forgot." At first German shrapnel flies over them, and Battery E is complimented on its accuracy. This changes July 14-15, when the Germans "pour a rain of shells" into the camp for ten hours. "War is sure hell," Fox writes. Undaunted, the 148<sup>th</sup> returns fire, sending 500 rounds back to the Germans.

The Germans are forced to retreat. The 148<sup>th</sup> follows. Sadly, on August 5<sup>th</sup>, Battery E suffers its worst attack of all. A stray shell falls among the tents, killing three and sending 12 to the hospital. Of the wounded, only three will live to see their families again. One will be crippled for life. "When Sherman said war is hell he still left something out," Fox writes. "Captain Nelson broke down and cried. We fired all night in the rain."

Altogether, Battery E will spend four months at the front. Orders are given then withdrawn. Rumors spread before they're proven false. Troops advance only to turn back. "Nothing is certain in this army. You have to see to believe."

They manage to enjoy a few halcyon days while resupplying. They hear the regimental band in concert or talk with the chaplain. Others play baseball or horseshoes. And still others drink themselves senseless with *vin blanc*. Faced with the prospect of returning to the front, Fox says, "Suits me alright. It's the only way to bring this conflict to an end."

At the front, if he's not firing shells, he's marching. The battery must lug their mortars through the rain, across

swampy roads, usually at night. They spend weeks without a full night's rest. At one point Fox goes three days without sleep. At times they keep company with rats, "many of them were wearing 3 to 4 service stripes." Planes harass them from the skies, and every day ever more German shells rain down around them. "Old Fritz sent over some of his favorite souvenirs," Fox likes to say.

As the war progresses there are more quiet days, and more Germans taken prisoner. Finally, armistice is reached on November 11. "The Kaiser has kicked thru," Fox writes. "Cheers and celebration all over."

Despite the peace, Fox's tour does not end. He's told the 66th Brigade is the only unit of the army that was "entirely satisfactory." This distinction earns the soldiers the "honor" of following the Germans across the Rhine and guarding the border. They stay in Germany another six months.

Between the drilling, target practice, guard duty, equipment cleaning, and inspections ("Everything is inspections these days"), life settles down. There are dances, concerts, lectures, church on Sunday, boxing matches, and baseball, basketball, and soccer games. He can take a bath again, and, when it's not canceled by influenza fears, he attends noncom school. He takes several trips up the Rhine to Koblenz, and is allowed to travel to England. The only blight of his stay, besides its length, is the misfortune of having to fill in for the furloughed supply sergeant.

The battery is billeted, at least at first, in the homes of German families. He is amazed how "the people here show more hospitality than the French folk did." He is treated to waffles, potato dumplings, and hot cakes. He stays a few days with a family whose 19-year-old son served 10 months on the front in the German army. Fox understands enough of the language to converse, and the two get along well. Fox, the son, and the father talk long into the night. After this, Fox no longer writes "boche," "huns," or other derisive terms. He simply writes, "Germans."

Fox's final entry is dated at the end of May. He's on his way home. He lists the towns he's passed through along the way: Trier, Oberbillig, Conflans, Saint Aignan, Clermont... He reaches the port town of Sant Nazaire at 11:30 p.m., May 28, 16 months after sailing from New York. ■

*Note: Fox's dog tag and a copy of his diary were donated to the Costa Mesa Historical Society in 1983 by George's wife, Berineance Bunch Fox. View it at the Historical Society Museum. Pictured: Fox's dog tag*





### Three Generations Tour Museum

Three generations of special women toured the society's boatbuilding exhibit in September: Jeani Hibbard, Katie Hibbard, and Bonnie Murray.

Bonnie Murray's husband Arland "Buzz" Murray was a key player in the Costa Mesa boatbuilding industry. Together he and Mel Potter built Mel-Craft dinghies and sabots. The family posed for a photo (left) next to a model of one of Mel-Craft's most popular crafts, a 12-foot sailing pram.

A fun bonus came when Mary Ellen Goddard helped find a picture of Bonnie's sister in the society's archives!

Boatbuilding played a significant role in Costa Mesa's postwar industry. Plan a visit to the society museum and explore this fascinating history yourself.



As the days get shorter and the air gets cooler, we remember the fun we had last summer. Thank you, Estelle Hughes, Jean Nomura, and Augustin Espinoza for manning the booth this year at the **Concerts in the Park**. From a booth decorated with large historic photos of Costa Mesa, the volunteers handed out candy, sold memorabilia, and promoted the society, all while benefiting the Costa Mesa Foundation.

### Share Your Story

We'd love to hear your Costa Mesa stories. Many changes have taken place and we want to hear from those who lived through them. Write the memories yourself or come to the museum and we'll transcribe them for you. It's that simple!

### Temporary Parking Instructions

Entry to the historical society parking lot is currently limited to Anaheim Avenue, but this is subject to change. If Anaheim is closed, try Park Avenue. There is no estimated completion date at this time.

### Make a Difference – Volunteer

We're looking for a volunteer to **set up refreshments** at our monthly programs as well as members to sit on two committees: the **Newsletter Assembly Committee** prepares the newsletter for mailing, while the **Adobe Committee** recruits volunteers to plan an event, become a docent, or work on exhibits. Committees meet monthly and are chaired by board members. Interested? Visit [costamesahistory.org/volunteer](http://costamesahistory.org/volunteer). Isn't it more fun to work as a team?

### Ganahl Lumber, the Society's First Lifetime Business Member

Thank you, Ganahl Lumber, for becoming the society's first lifetime business member. Ganahl Lumber invites all historical society members to visit their new store on Bristol Avenue, which has been decorated with photographs from the society's archives. Help support businesses like Ganahl Lumber that are committed to preserving our local history.



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### Dues Overdue?

Make sure your dues are up to date by looking at your **dues expiration date** on the address label to the right of your name. If your dues are due, renew online at [costamesahistory.org/membership](http://costamesahistory.org/membership), mail in a check, c/o Susan Weeks, Treasurer, or drop it off on a Thursday or Friday from 10am to 3pm. Membership dues are listed on the back page.

V I S I T U S

**Diego Sepulveda Adobe**

1900 Adams Ave.

Open 12-4 p.m. Every 1st and 3rd Saturday\*

Explore centuries of history when you visit one of Orange County's oldest buildings in its gorgeous setting at Estancia Park.

**Costa Mesa Historical Society Museum**

1870 Anaheim Ave.

Open 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Every Thursday and Friday\*

View a mind-boggling array of artifacts from 5,000 years of Costa Mesa history – from the first peoples to the City of the Arts.

\* Or schedule an appointment at 949-631-5918.

I N S I D E

Fred McDowell on World War I, George Fox's WWI Diary, the Society Shuffle, Board Elections, Concerts in the Park & More!

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— *Membership Form* —

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	<b>Annual</b>		<b>Lifetime</b>	
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Make your checks payable to the Costa Mesa Historical Society.  
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