

CHAPTER TWO

The deWardt Family

The deWardt Story, starts with the tales my Father told me, when I was Seventeen and living with him at the Mansion House in Greenfield, Mass. I would ask him about our family and he would relate what he knew, mostly from his Mother. There are some notes in the family bible, which I have transcribed below:

John Edward deWardt, Amsterdam, Holland b.1787 - d.1860. Married to Elizabeth deWardt, they had 9 children, including a daughter, Sarah Elizabeth deWardt b.1827 - d.1881, of Gravesend, England. She married Robert Osborne Smith Beal b.1824, of Whitstable, England, son of Squire Robert Beal. Her Mother (my Great Great Grandmother) was Sarah Elizabeth deWardt.

Their daughter (my Grandmother) Elizabeth Mary Ann Beal b.1851 of Chatham, England. She married in England, Henry Dennis Lane (My Grandfather) b. 1848 - d.1878. of Camden Town, England. They immigrated to Boston, Mass. In the 1870's. They had four sons, Henry (Harry) b.1873, Edgar b.1875, Cornelius b.1878 and my Father, Andrew Hamilton Lane, b.1879 - d.1945.

The Internet has added additional family. There are other deWardts; John Isaac deWardt,Jr. b. 1862, his father was John Isaac deWardt,Sr. b 1820. He was a publican. His wife was Mary Ann deWardt b.1821 and lived at 26 Terrace St. Gravesend, England.

Years ago, I had the opportunity to see a copy of a British book on their Peerage. I found reference to the deWardts in this volume, as it contained the names of people who had been awarded the Order of the British Empire. "DeWardt, Robert George, C.B.E., son of the late John Isaac deWardt, O.B.E. Officers of the British Empire of Sidcup. Born 1887 is an Electrical Engineer, late Dep. Regional Director of London Telecommunion."



Order of the British Empire

My Grandmother, Elizabeth Mary Ann (Beal) Lane, a widow, remarried John Holmes McLeod, a Scotsman, living in Boston. They had one son John Holmes McLeod Jr. We have a picture of the family.

In 1945 my Uncle Jack corresponded with his cousin in England, Bob deWardt, Son of the late John deWardt of 12 Highview Road, Sidcup, Kent, England.

We have a letter from England during World War II telling us about the "Blitz."

A few years ago, I researched the Internet for the family name - deWardt and located two e-mail addresses. John and Susan deWardt of Colorado Springs, Co. and another "relative" in Australia. E-mail correspondence started with Mrs. Susan deWardt. My story intrigued her, so she started contacting family still in England. She sent me quite a family history. As sometimes happens, a few years later, I lost my hard drive, without any backup of these details. Later, I renewed contact with Susan and she added some information for my story. I sent her a copy of Bob deWardt's war-time letter.

She wrote me in response: “John’s father lived in Sidcup and was named Robert Hugh deWardt, but it was John’s grandfather who wrote the letter - his grandfather’s full name was Robert George deWardt and John knew him only as George. John believes that his grandfather received the Victoria Cross for his service to the Crown. John Isaac deWardt is a son of the original Dutchman, who jumped ship and settled in Gravesend. He is the one who went to Australia to the Bellarat gold fields during the gold rush there - then returned to England to open a pub - The Amsterdamer. My husband’s family is directly descended from John Isaac deWardt.”

Susan also wrote that she and John had taken a trip to Gravesend to see the place where the family pub used to stand and to learn about the history of the area. Unfortunately the public works department tore down the old Amsterdamer pub a few years ago, so they could make a roundabout in the road. They had lunch at a pub next door, which also dates back to the 1700’s and was typical of the style of that time.

As another point of interesting history, Susan writes - “Pocahontas is buried at Gravesend! I didn’t know this until our recent visit - apparently she died aboard ship while it was still anchored at the mouth of the Thames - and as was the custom, they carried her body ashore to be buried. Anyone who died aboard ships anchored at the harbor in those days was ferried ashore in long boats and buried on this last bit of land before reaching the open sea and that is why the town is called Gravesend. The early deWardts were famous for their rowing and earned a good portion of their money by transporting goods and people to and from the ships. The customs house was just a few feet down the road from the site of the Old Amsterdamer.

“John’s Dad also worked for the Telegraph company as a messenger during the war and then went on to get his Electrical Engineering degree from Imperial College in London - Since John is also an engineer, Grandpa deWardt thinks it runs in the genes!”

Bob deWardt - WWII Letter

12 Highview Road, Sidcup

December 15, 1940

Dear Jack(McLeod):

I am afraid I have been a long time in replying to your last letter, my only excuse is the conditions under which we have been living during the last few months. All my brothers and their families have so far survived Hitler's "Blitz". My wife and son and daughter are now away in the country but have only recently gone, not because the raiding was too bad but because I have to live and sleep at the office¹, so I thought they might as well go and stay at home by themselves. We saw the first three months of it through London and like the rest of the Londoners became acclimatized to bombing. We are all looking forward to the day when Germany is whacked and we can all resume normal lives. I got into touch by letter with Major Howard and asked him to visit us but up to the present, have not been able to arrange it. My elder brother, Jack, who is 55, has join up and is now serving as a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. I am having a busy time. My day commences about 7:00 a.m. and finishes any time after midnight, but as I just roll into bed at the office it doesn't matter much. I hope to pay a visit to my wife and family at Christmas and spend two or three days with them, the first break I shall have had from a seven day's week for six months or so. Even though we are "starving" according to German reports we shall still have our Christmas puddings and mince pies and most of our usual Christmas fare. I don't know what sort of reports you get in America about conditions over here, but I can assure you they are not at all bad. We get plenty to eat and drink without any difficulty and without paying exorbitant prices, and apart from the blackout and the nightly attention to the Hun have very little to put up with. The attitude of the people of this country to the war must appear strange to foreigners although not to Americans. The worst the bombing, the more determined the people and the indiscriminate bombing of small houses only unites everybody in a determination to see it through. One thing the war has done is to break down some of the reserve and insularity of the Englishman, neighbours combine to form fire patrols and that sort of thing, and generally work together in a way never possible before the war. We have all watched with very great interest the way in which America has rallied to our aid and although we may have been impatient with the slowness or apparent slowness with which she has moved the average man realized, I think, the difficulties she has had to contend with in her internal affairs. The only wonder we have is that it is possible for man to be able to plunge the world in all this misery after two thousand years of Christianity and hope with the aid of your country to see that such a thing is not possible again. I am afraid this is rather a rambling letter so will conclude with best wishes to yourself and family for the New Year.

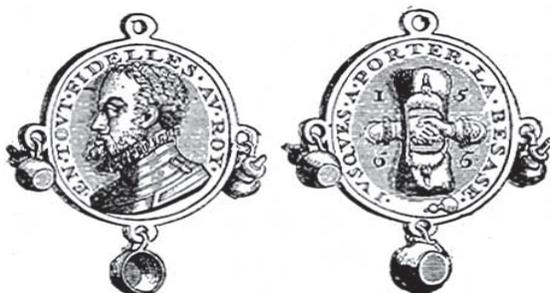
Yours sincerely,

Bob (deWardt).

My Uncle Jack McLeod, received the World War II letter from his Cousin Bob deWardt, who was stationed in London in 1940. He passed the letter on to his Brother Andrew. I transcribed it from the war time onion skin paper, now a little yellowed, as shown on the previous page.

My father, Andrew Lane, told me Bob deWardt was the head of the London Telephone Company during to World War II. Many years later I found a listing in the English peerage book of both Bob deWardt, and his father John deWardt. My father told me John had served the Government as head of the British Censors during WWI. Via the Internet, we have located Bob [Robert George] deWardt's Grandson John deWardt, who now lives in Colorado, U.S.A.

MEDAL OF THE "BEGGARS"



MEDAL OF THE "BEGGARS"

Line drawing from the old book

Mutt was leafing through an old book from *The Story of the Greatest Nations* series, published 1901 by F.R. Niglutsch when he noticed a line drawing of a medal as clip art to fill out the page. The only identification was the caption MEDAL OF THE BEGGARS.

As readers of the Mutt and Jeff stories know, Mutt will spend hours on the Internet tracing down the identification of a medal. A search on *beggars medal* did produce some information, all in Dutch. The translation of some of the words didn't produce much clarification, until a search on the word *geuzen* found the details shown here.

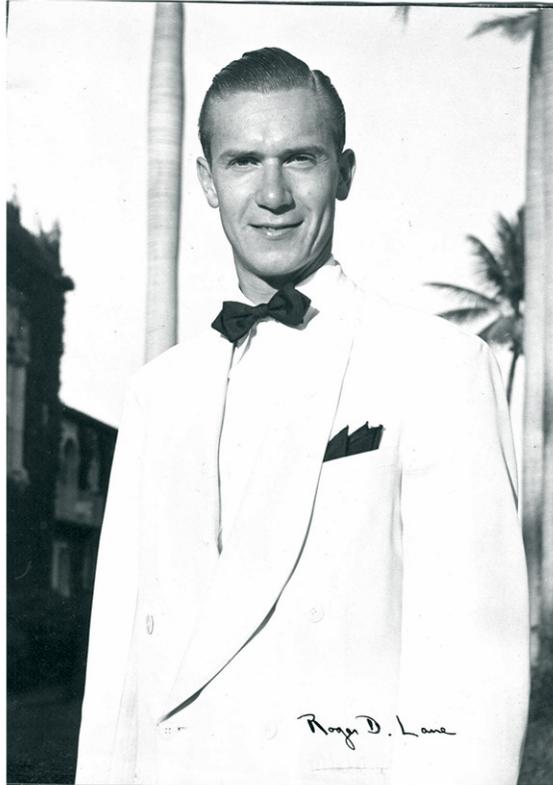
Bowls, flasks and badges were all symbols of the Sea Beggars during the Dutch Revolt. In April 1566 a group of several hundred noblemen presented a petition to Margaret of Parma, regent of the Netherlands, asking for greater tolerance in religious questions. But instead of being treated seriously they were ridiculed as 'gueux': beggars. Taking the French epithet (bastardised into 'geuzen') as an honorary title, they adopted the beggar's insignia. The badge is the sign which cities gave those they permitted to beg. The wooden bowl and the pumpkin-shaped flask were the accessories of the indigent pilgrim. Adorning the front of the medal, giving it the appearance of a heraldic symbol, is a portrait of King Philip II with the inscription *en tout fideles au roy* (faithful in every way to the king). On the reverse are two hands in a beggar's wallet, and, to continue the motto ironically: *jusques a porter la besace* (up to the wearing of the beggar's wallet) and the date 1565. Jeff was able to add a little history to the story. "In the period 1550-1560 the Dutch Provinces were trying to gain their independence from the Spanish empire of King Philip II. Consequently many Dutch people, including noblemen were persecuted, because they committed treasonous acts against Spain. They were Protestants that lived in the Netherlands and were hounded by the Spanish Inquisition, which often confiscated the properties and titles of those it convicted. The Spanish rulers used the Blood Council to try and convict those that they considered guilty of treason. About this time, groups of people began wandering and started robbing and plundering. Often monasteries and clerical travelers were their targets. These roving bands came to be known as the *wild beggars* or *forest beggars*. For a while the Spanish army managed to suppress them, but in the latter half of the decade

they resurfaced as the *sea beggars*. The *sea beggars* were comprised of adventurers, pirates and patriots, fighting against the Spanish rule in the Dutch provinces. At sea they proved to be even more successful than on land, though not unbeatable. For several years their bases of operation included the ports of Emden, on the coast of the Dutch Province, Friesland, La Rochelle, France and Dover, England. The sea beggars attacked vessels of almost any nation as well as fishing villages and towns on the coast of the Dutch Provinces.”This uprising was the beginning of the 80-year war for Netherlands’ independence from Spain. There is a museum in the Netherlands with a picture of the medal shown below.

As Mutt said, “Even in an old book, you can find an interesting story from only a picture of a medal.” “But it takes the Internet to find the rest of the story.” Mutt and Jeff are active members of the Ft.Lauderdale Coin Club. Mutt can trace part of his family back six generations to a **Dutch seaman who jumped ship in Gravesend, England**. An old family legend, refers to the joke that there were pirates as ancestors in the family. ***“Maybe they were the sea beggars.”***



Beggars Medal from a Dutch Museum



Roger deWardt Lane as a young man at Boca Raton
Hotel & Club 1949