

East Falls Past -- Pearl Harbor Memories

The Fallser, December 2012, by Wendy Moody

June Drumheller Miller grew up in East Falls and was 16 when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Fortuitously, she chronicled on index cards what transpired during the first days of the U.S. entrance into the war. Some excerpts:

Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941:

Went to church (Falls Methodist) as usual, hearing nothing of the war. At 6:45 Grace Thorpe called for me on her way to Epworth League (at the church) and told me about the war. Webbie Gotwals asked if all the girls would kiss him goodbye when he goes. During the sermon, newsboys could be heard outside shouting the latest news. It gave me a strange feeling.

December 8:

Went to school (Philadelphia High School for Girls) on the late train. Everyone in school is expressing her opinion about the war. We heard the President's speech. Congress has formally declared war on Japan. The vote was 388 to 1 with Miss Jeanette Rankin the sole opposer. The newspapers say that 1500 have been killed and 1500 wounded in Hawaii. There were reports that 50 planes were sighted off the California coast, heading for San Francisco. The city was in a complete blackout, all broadcasting stopped. Believed to be just an air raid test. I didn't do any homework tonight, but listened to the radio instead.

December 9:

On the way to school today, in the train, I could see several newspapers. From the headlines I could tell the San Francisco incident of last night was not as it was first believed – a test – but was really an attempt to raid the city. The planes, however, were driven off. There have been several air raid sirens in San Francisco today. There was a false rumor in school that Germany had declared war on the U.S. There was a “phony tip” that enemy planes were sighted off the eastern coast.

We have been given air raid instructions. There has been news that Tokyo, Kobe and Formosa have been bombed. This has not been confirmed. At 10 o'clock I heard the President's “Fireside Chat.” He told us to be patient, buy Defense Bonds, and do without things that the government needs.

December 10:

I made the train today! It was very cold and I was glad to get into school. There was not much talk about the war; I guess the novelty is wearing off. The teachers had a special faculty meeting – probably getting air raid instructions. I read that schools will be equipped with food and sleeping accommodations for emergencies. I heard a broadcast that all hope of a short war is given up. I did lessons till very late, took a bath and went to bed. Motto of the nation is “Remember Pearl Harbor.”



Note: Dec. 10 was a Wednesday. In those days Wednesdays and Saturdays were bath nights. I'm glad to see I was on schedule.