



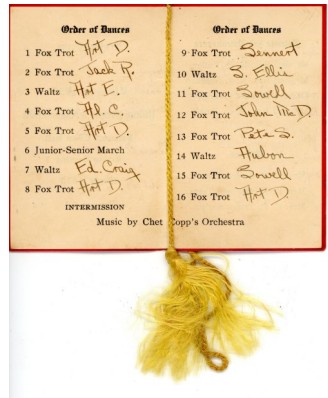
UNTOLD TALES OF FALMOUTH

from the archives of Museums on the Green

Save the Last Dance for Art D.

by Meg Costello and B. Grant Willis

Kathryn Swift Clapp was no wallflower—just look at this dance card from her senior prom in 1930, where she was never without a partner. Her favorite was clearly a fellow named “Art D.” Four times, Kathryn and Art D. fox trotted around the dance floor in the old Falmouth town hall. They were together for the first number of the evening at nine p.m., and again for the last dance at one in the morning.



We found Kathryn’s dance card while we were organizing the Swift family collection at Museums on the Green. Much of that collection consists of dry business documents, so the dance card was a welcome surprise. We thought it would be fun to learn more about Kathryn and Art D. Were they childhood sweethearts? Did they end up married to each other? Back issues of the *Enterprise*, available online at the public library website, gave us a lot of information.



Kathryn, we discovered, was born in Falmouth in 1912. She was an only child, a cousin of the Swift clan, and lived on Locust Street. When Kathryn was five years old, she was knocked down by an automobile on Main Street, but the high-wheeled car passed over her without harm. Her father died when she was nine.

Kathryn was an ace achiever who excelled in her

studies. She won a \$5 gold piece from the St. Barnabas Men’s League for an essay on church service, and won an art contest sponsored by the Rotary Club for her drawing of an old sea captain. She aspired to be an illustrator.

“Art D.” was Arthur Dunham, another member of the graduating class. He was relatively new in town, having moved from Nantucket to Falmouth in the middle of his junior year. He had a bit part in a school musical, but he generally kept a low profile. When Art got written up in the newspaper, it wasn’t for winning an award, but for crashing his car.

Six months before the prom, Art was driving a sedan containing three of his buddies when the car skidded and overturned at 1:30 on a Sunday morning. One passenger cut his fingers on broken glass; the rest were unharmed.

Art D. wasn’t exactly a “bad boy,” but as an outsider with a reckless streak, he would have stood out from the other fellows in the senior class—especially the valedictorian, E. Prescott Tripp. Prescott was a straight arrow from a respected family. He’d been a classmate of Kathryn’s since the first grade. However, Kathryn didn’t dance with Prescott at the prom, not even once.

At graduation on June 12, 1930, Kathryn gave the salutatorian’s speech, titled “Our Modern World’s Need of Art.” Of course she meant “art” as a creative endeavor, but among her classmates there were probably winks, nudges, and suppressed giggles when Kathryn spoke lines like, “Art is the greatest thing in the world,” and “the highest ideals of men . . . [are] embodied in the form of Art.”

After graduation, Kathryn and Art D. took different paths. Kathryn got a



degree from the Vesper School of Art. She helped out at her aunt's Falmouth real estate office. Eventually she married John Andrews, a draftsman for the A&P company, in 1936. They settled in Longmeadow, Mass. and had a daughter. There is no evidence whether Kathryn ever worked as an illustrator, as she'd planned.

Art D. stayed at the high school for a year of post-graduate study, stepping in as a substitute science teacher when needed. He also wrecked another car. Eventually Art went to Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Newspaper accounts show that he married twice. In 1942 he was living with his second wife, Dorothy Wells, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and working for the Aluminum Company of America.

So, the 1930 prom didn't result in a fairy tale ending for Kathryn and Art D. Still, Kathryn saw fit to keep the dance card as a cherished memento of the evening. If only we knew what song was playing during their last dance!