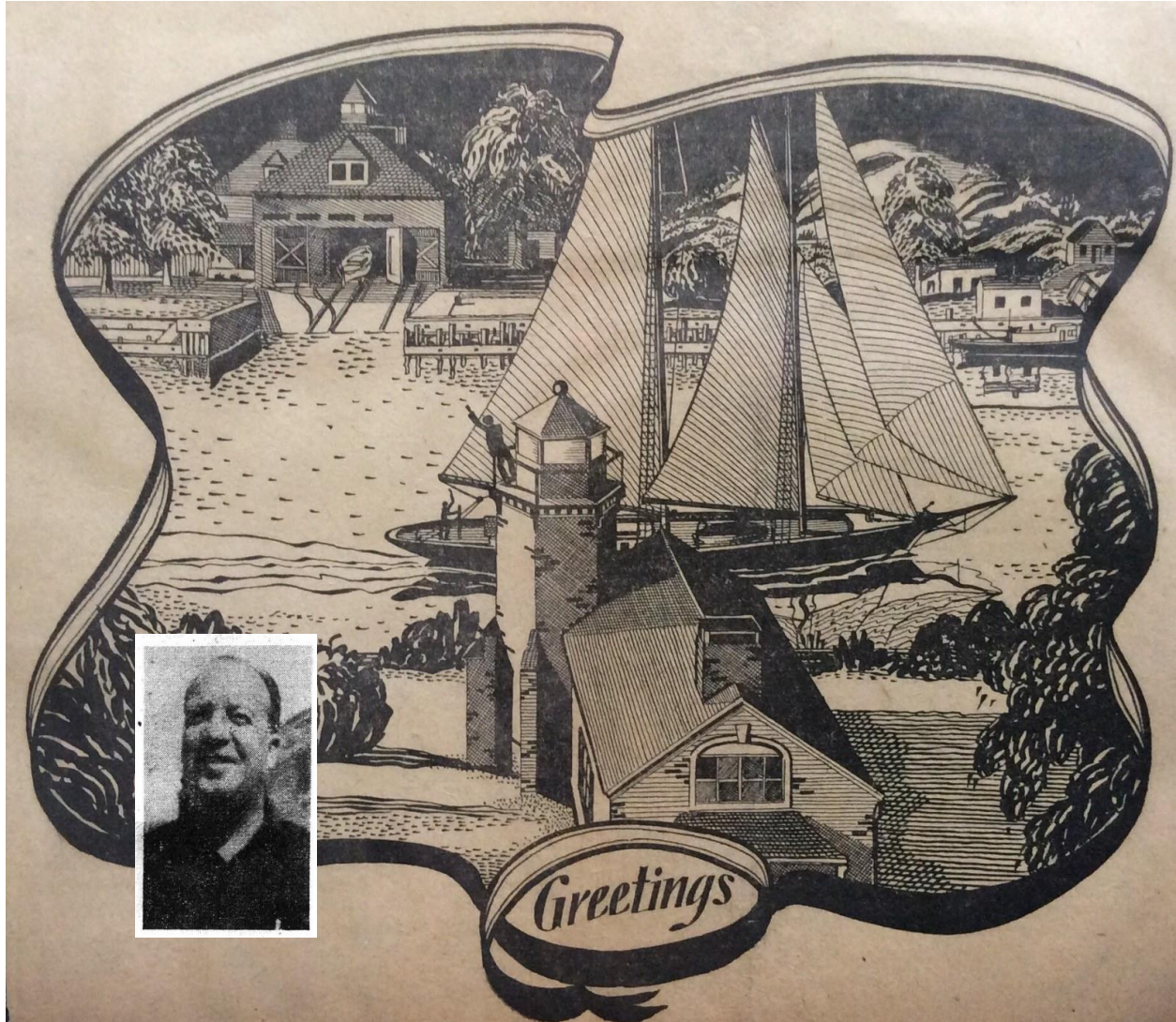


Citizens - Jack deFraga

By Barbara Bedau Brow  
White Lake Area Historical Society



Robert John "Jack" deFraga was born January 7, 1906, in Grand Haven to John and Louise deFraga.

He attended the local schools there and was one of the best-known skippers on Spring Lake at the time, competing in the sailboat races of the Spring Lake Yacht Club.

In 1935, with the help of deFraga, arrangements were made with the Coast Guard station to assist them with patrolling the WLYC racecourse on race day. It was agreed that if there was an emergency on Lake Michigan any time during the race, three guns would be fired off to notify the patrol boat to return to the station.

By 1938 various local news items referenced Jack deFraga as Harbor Master.

He enlisted in the Navy in October 1940 and executive officer of the schooner Atlantic, which patrolled in the Gulf of Mexico on anti-sub and weather observation duties. He also served on the Coast Guard Cutter Blanco out of New Orleans, LA.

He lived in the White Lake area at two different times – in the 1930s and again in the 1950s.

He was an instructor for the White Lake Yacht Club sailing school and was a member of the crew on the Sadony family boat, the Nemesis.

He was a gifted artist and did many pen and ink drawings over the years.

In 1940 he created a drawing which was used as a Tourist Information map. He also created the masthead for the WLYC newsletter and many other works of art.

In May 1946 while he was again the White Lake Harbor Master, deFraga was instrumental in getting two motor lifeboats assigned to the White Lake Coast Guard Station. One was a 36-foot life boat and the other was a 26 foot surf boat. Both of the vessels were self-righting and self-bailing and the finest boats of their kind ever assigned to White Lake. He also had two-way radios installed in the lifeboat.

Volunteers were also recruited from the WLYC and the community to stand watch on weekends during the summer season to promote sailing and swimming safety on White Lake. He also formed a Coast Guard Auxiliary in 1946. Early members of the Auxiliary included: Clarence Pitkin, Jack Butterfield, James and John Campbell, Jack Farmer, James Spencer, and Dr. Leland Holly.

Jack deFraga died in a Grand Rapids hospital on September 3, 1950, at the age of 44 years. He never married but was survived by his sister. He was buried in Lake Forest Cemetery in Grand Haven along with his parent.