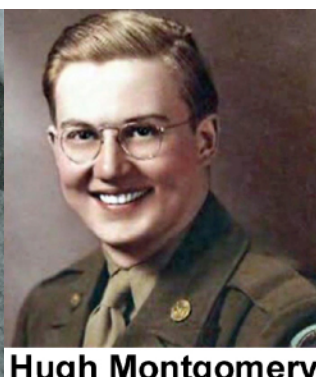




Dr. Ettore Carniglia



Hugh Montgomery



Ella Grasso



Wilson Taylor



Charles Kaman



Ray Roncari



Fay H. Osborne



Tommaso Zaccheo

Extraordinary Windsor Locks Accomplishments and the People who Made Them

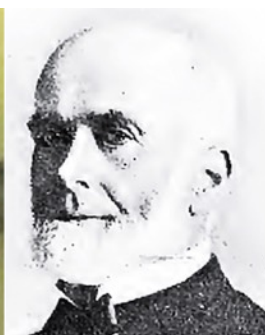
by Melvin D. Montemerlo



Natale Tambussi



Erick Knickerbocker



**Jabez Haskell
Hayden**



Finton Wallace

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CHAPTER 1

The Accomplishers and The Accomplishments (in Categories)

Why should we read history? History lets us stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. It allows us to learn from what they did, so we can avoid past mistakes, and learn from past successes.

This book is based on a six-year study of the history of Windsor Locks which produced six books. This book is the seventh in that series. It takes a different approach. This book presents a brief summary of a manageable number of events that span Windsor Locks history. To do this, 63 important achievements in our town's history were selected, and divided into 12 categories. Each of the accomplishments, and the person who accomplished it, are described in two-page chapters. Here are the twelve categories.

12 CATEGORIES INTO WHICH 163 ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE DIVIDED

- **Business**
This is, by far, the largest group.
- **Business/Philanthropy**
This has highly successful businessmen who donated a great deal.
- **Education**
Those who have greatly enhanced education.
- **Musicians, Actors and Entertainers**
Windsor Locks has more than its share
- **Public Servants**
The fact that there is only one in this category is thought-provoking.
- **Sports**
Includes Owners and Enablers as well as sports stars
- **Military**
Medal of Honor recipient, and man responsible for building Army airfield
- **Newspaper People**
Two very influential people
- **Historians**
Without historians, we can't know our town's past.
- **People from outside Windsor Locks**
Out-of-towners did much to enhance the Windsor Locks experience
- **Things done before Windsor Locks Became a town.**
Early actions shaped Windsor Locks
- **"Larger than Life" persons**
A few people whose lives have to be looked at as a whole

Below is the list of the 163 accomplishments divided into the above 12 categories. Following each of the names of the accomplishments is the number of the page on which you will find the two-page description of the accomplishment and the person or persons who did it.

LIST OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS DIVIDED INTO 12 CATEGORIES

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There is no need to read the chapters in the order they are listed. Scan the list of accomplishments and the people who did them. Then read the chapters that are the most interesting to you.

Here is a final note of explanation. The above list consists of the 12 categories in which the 63 accomplishments were made. **It is not a list of the careers of the people in each category** For example, some of the people with accomplishments in Sports were businessmen, not athletes. One of the accomplishments in Education was by an engineer, while the others were made by teachers.

CHAPTER 2

Dominic Alfano and Leo Viola Created the Rialto Theater Block

Dominic Alfano and Leo Viola were two of the early Italian immigrants who opened “confectionary stores” on Main Street. In 1905, Dominic Alfano had ads in the Windsor Locks Journal for his confectionary store in the Barrett Block, which was on the southwest corner of Church and Main Streets. The new Alfano-Viola block initially was a one-story building, to which they added an upper floor for a theater. See photo below.



The Rialto Theater, Main St. Windsor Locks, Conn

According to the Oct. 25, 1922 issue of the Springfield Daily News, Alfano and Viola had added a second floor which contained a magnificent movie theater that held 625 people, a stage with an asbestos curtain, a fireproof projection room, concrete floors and stairways. It was all built to the latest safety standards. It also had two stores to rent on the street level. There is one store on each side of the theater entrance. Mr. Viola had his confectionary store in the one on north side.



New one-story Alfano-Viola Block includes the new Post office

The theater also had a stage, which was used for putting on plays and musicals. It was often used for high school plays. Fraternal organizations used the stage for shows to raise money for charitable works. It was used as a place for politicians to give speeches, and for meetings of both the local Democrat and Republican parties. The stage was used for school graduations. In the World War II years, there were stars such as Kate Smith and Joan Fontaine, who came to the Rialto and did war bond rallies.

According to the October 20, 1929 issue of the Springfield Republican, there were two movie theaters in Windsor Locks. One was the Rialto, and the other was the Palace theater on the North side of Grove St., near Main St. The Palace Theater was previously called the Princess Theater. The owners of the Rialto Theater, Leo Viola and Dominick Alfano, bought the Palace theater and closed it down. That was in 1927. The reason was that the competition was making it unprofitable for both theaters. They then sold the Palace theater to Harold Lavigne, the husband of Blanche Bianchi, who turned the building into a bowling alley.

Dave Magliora managed the Rialto Theater for 25 years. He also owned the Brown Derby for eight years. He died on June 18, 1973. (Springfield Union, Jul 19, 1973)

Leo Viola and Dominick Alfano owned the Rialto from 1922 until Leo Viola died in 1930. The Rialto Block was sold to Mr. Natale Tambussi in 1947. Mr. Tambussi owned it from 1947 to 1960. After that, it was owned by Michael Halperin of Hartford. The Rialto Theater, along with all of the businesses on Main St. were demolished in the mid-1970s during the redevelopment of the Main Street area.

The Rialto theater was one of the most well-known, most visited business in the history of Windsor Locks.

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CHAPTER 3

Rocco Bellini: Immigrant, Businessman & Leader of the St. Oronzo Society

Mr. Bellini was born in Turi, Italy in 1892. He arrived in the United States in 1909. We know from his Draft Registration that in 1917, he was working as a shipping clerk for the J.R.Montgomery Company, and living at 17 Whiton Street with his wife, Constance.

During his life, he started and ran three different businesses. He started his grain and farming supply business in 1933 on 9 Spring St. Rocco's first ad in the Windsor Locks Journal was on May 18, 1934. He moved to a larger store in the McGuinn building at 230 Main Street. In 1939, Rocco built a new, larger building on Main Street, north of the freight station. The opening of the store was "a big production". Entertainment included dancing, music, fireworks and refreshments. That was a great way to open up a new place of business. The name of his business was "The Windsor Locks Grain Company". He was selling everything you need to raise chickens on your farm or in your back yard. His business grew in size and scope. In his 1939 ads, he was selling cow food, books about farming, roofing materials, paint, fertilizer, wire, and all types of farm animal food. He had parties at his store and invited the public to come in and join the fun.

In the 1940s, Rocco Bellini was expanding into newer high-tech farm products, such as "electric brooders". He added products for taking care of your farm buildings and your home. He had expanded his products to the area of home, lawn, landscape and garden care.

Rocco Bellini sold the Windsor Locks Grain Company. After selling his farming supply business, he started a real estate business, which he ran from 1947 to 1952. There were weekly ads in the Windsor Locks Journal in which he sold houses, land, restaurants, and businesses.

In July of 1954, Mr. Bellini opened up a new retail paint and wallpaper store on West Spring Street. The new store was set up to sell the latest nationally-advertised paints and wall papers. Then he further expanded to include selling windows, doors, floor coverings. That continued through 1959.

Rocco Bellini was the president of the St. Oronzo Society for 22 years. He advertised the annual festivals up until 1962. The festival was one of the biggest and most popular annual events in the town of Windsor Locks for four decades. The last St Oronzo festival was held in 1962. Mr. Bellini was the power behind the annual St. Oronzo festival, which he knew from his youth in Turi, Italy. Below is a photo of the St. Oronzo celebration in front of St. Mary's Church.

Rocco Bellini and his wife took a trip back to Italy to see his hometown for the first time in 54 years. When he returned to the United States, he moved to Florida. He died in Hillsborough, FL in December, 1972. He was buried there.

While being a successful Windsor Locks businessman, Rocco Bellini was also a leader of the St. Oronzo Society for more than two decades. **He received a letter from the Pope, recognizing his accomplishments for the Society.** Mr. Bellini had a large and positive effect on Windsor Locks for a very long time.



*St. Oronzo celebration, St. Mary's Church, Windsor Locks, Conn.
Vito Colapietro, President of St. Oronzo Society standing in front of statue*

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FamilySearch.com, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/>

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Rocco Bellini Florida Death Record

Rocco Bellini 1917 US military registration

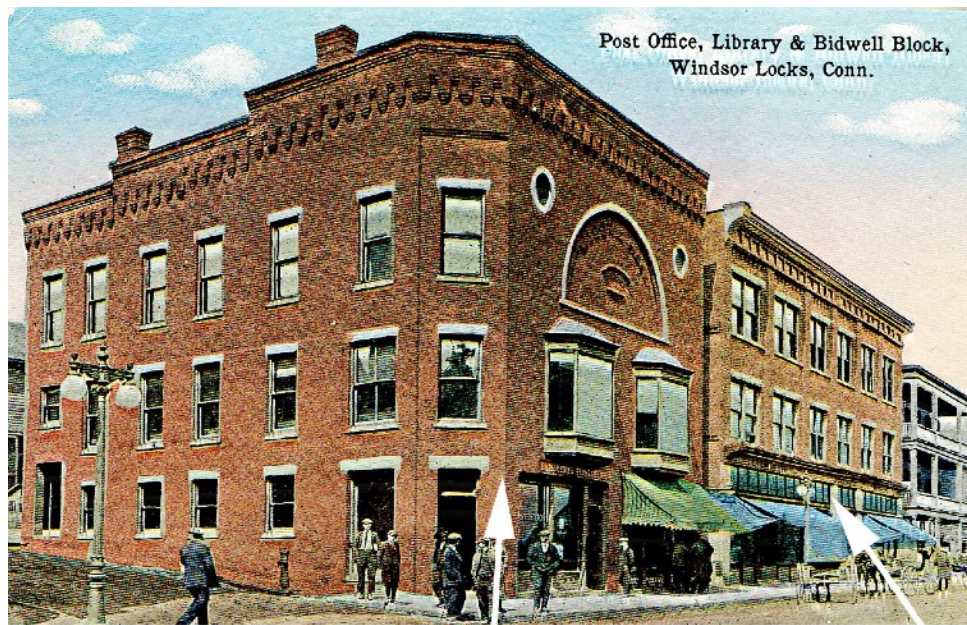
CHAPTER 4

Mr. F. S. Bidwell Jr. and His Lumber Company

Frederick S. Bidwell, Sr. was born in Hartford on June 24, 1848. He went to work for his uncle, Theodore Pease, who owned the Pease & Sons Company. Mr. Bidwell went to work for his uncle as manager of the lumber company. A few years later, Mr. Bidwell moved to Windsor Locks. In about 1877, he bought the business from his uncle.

Frederick S. Bidwell, Jr. was born in Enfield on Nov. 12, 1878 to Frederick S. and Annie (Steele) Bidwell. Annie Bidwell died the day after giving birth.

The Bidwell Co. purchased the building at 136 Main Street property from A.W. Converse in 1911. That old wooden building was replaced by a modern three-story building, which housed the hardware and farm implements departments for many years. See photo below.



Converse Block Bidwell Block

Frederick S. Bidwell Sr., a Windsor Locks resident for 50 years, died on January 6, 1928 at the age of 79. He managed his company until 1927.

Frederick S. Bidwell Jr. became the president of F. S. Bidwell Co. in 1932. Frederick continued to serve as President of the F.S. Bidwell Company until his retirement in 1950. Like his father, he was active in town life during his career. He had been president of both the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club,

and a Master of the Euclid Lodge of Masons. Frederick S, Bidwell, Jr. died on Feb. 9, 1965.

The F.S. Bidwell Co hardware store at 136 Main Street closed in March of 1959. (Springfield Union March 6, 1959). The company transferred the hardware section to the lumber division on the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets.

In 1961, The Bidwell Co sold its building at 136 Main Street property to Henry Graziani. The three-story building on Main St had been badly damaged by fire in September 1960. The two upper floors were not repaired. The assets of the Bidwell Co. were liquidated in 1960 when the lumber and hardware business on upper Main Street was sold to a Springfield lumber company which continued to operate that business. (Springfield Union, Oct. 7, 1961)



Bidwell Lumber Co. (Main & Chestnut Sts.)

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CHAPTER 5

Dr. Sidney R. Burnap: Surgeon and Businessman

Dr. Sidney R. Burnap had a big effect on Windsor Locks. He was born in Root, NY in 1833. He graduated from medical school 1862. He came to Windsor Locks in 1862, and spent the rest of his life there. He married Clara A. Converse. They had three children, including Dr. Sidney R. Burnap Jr., who became a world-class runner while at Yale University. Dr. Burnap held several positions of responsibility in town affairs. In 1865, just a few years after he arrived in town, he bought a large building on the northwest corner of Main and Oak Streets, which became known as "The Burnap Block". He owned that building for the rest of his life.



Dr. Sidney R Burnap

What made the Burnap Block so fascinating? The answer is that it was the center of Windsor Locks social life, sporting events, and business. It housed a large room whose floor was built over steel springs, which were installed to enhance the experience of dancing. It was known as one of the best dance halls in the area. That same room was also used for operas, movies, theatrical shows, musicals, large meetings, basketball games and boxing matches. It was called the Burnap Opera House. This room was a center of cultural, social, business and political life in Windsor Locks.

The Burnap block was a large building which housed large companies such as the Telephone Co. and the Telegraph Co., and also the Windsor Locks Journal. It also contained many small stores such as T. F. Carroll's millenary shop, W. A. Dwight's jewelry store, and James D. Outerson's mens furnishings shop. The Burnap block also had a Polish rooming house.



Burnap's Block is red brick building with chimneys to the left of Coly's Hotel, about 1920

Above is a photo of the central part of Main St. The arrow points to the Burnap Block, which is the building with four chimneys on the roof. The building to the right of that, with the Mansard roof, is Coly's Hotel. The building on the left is the railroad passenger station. You can see the trolley on Main Street.

On the right is photo of the Dr. Burnap's home in Windsor Locks. Dr. Sidney R. Burnap's estate was called Maple Hill. It is an 8,800 square foot Victorian Italianate-style structure which was built about 1863 Dr. Sidney R. Burnap purchased the house and the land. The main house has 27 rooms. The Burnap mansion is the only vestige of very wealthy citizenry that remains in Windsor Locks. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the extravagant parties of the very rich were chronicled in the society section of Springfield newspapers, including the lives of Dr. and Mrs Burnap.



The Burnap Mansion

Dr. Sidney R. Burnap was a towering figure in Windsor Lock's history. He was an exceptional surgeon and physician. He owned the biggest commercial building in town, which was not only the center of much business, but the social center of the town. He had a Opera House in that building, that showed not only opera but all types of music, and then showed movies. He can only be described as "Larger than Life". Being a surgeon is difficult enough, but he ran a large business building. He was a town leader who was educated, wealthy, and motivated. He showed Windsor Lock a very high standard of business and social life.

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CHAPTER 6

Charles E. Chaffee and the Memorial Hall

The Memorial Hall building is the most recognizable building in Windsor Locks. It is a three-story building made of granite, and is located at the corner of Main and Elm Streets. The Memorial Hall was dedicated in 1891. Charles E. Chaffee, the owner of the Medicott factory, donated the money for the building of Memorial Hall. He provided \$30,000 to the GAR Post, and was significantly involved in the design and construction of the building. This chapter describes the five phases of its history.



Memorial Hall

1) Memorial Hall owned by local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic

After the Civil War, a group of Civil War veterans in Windsor Locks formed a "Post" of the "Grand Army of the Republic". It was the "J. H. Converse Post 67" of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was named after a Windsor Locks citizen who died in the war. The group wanted to build a memorial to those who had served in the war.

The GAR Post was a social group. The building was their place to gather, enjoy each others company, and enjoy meetings, meals, reading and other activities. The "Grand Army of the Republic" is referred to here as the GAR.

In 1889, Jabez Haskell Hayden, who was a mill owner and a historian of Windsor Locks, sold the piece of property that the Memorial Hall is now on, to GAR Post 67 for \$1,500. The deed specified that the building to be constructed on that property be used as a Soldiers' Memorial forever. This deed created a "charitable trust".

As time went on, more and more of the veterans of the Civil War passed away. As that happened, there was less and less need for a social hall for veterans. Then the following happened.

2) Control of Memorial Hall moved from the GAR to Congregational Church

In the late 1930s, before World War II, the last two members of the GAR turned Memorial Hall over to the Congregational Church. The use of Memorial Hall changed. The Congregational Church used it for social activities for the people of the town of Windsor Locks, and for their own needs. That included: church suppers, high school dances, Boy Scout meetings, speaking contests,

junior proms and senior balls. The Congregational Church used the Memorial Hall for their purposes and rented it out for anyone else in the town to use. The Memorial Hall was also used for town affairs. Then World War II came along.

3) Memorial Hall during WWII

During World War II, the Memorial Hall was used by “the Rationing Board”. There was a desire by the government of the town of Windsor Locks to turn the Memorial Hall into the Windsor Locks Town Hall. Architectural drawings for the revamping of the Memorial Hall were developed for that purpose

4) Control of Memorial Hall Went to Windsor Locks War Veterans Trust Co.

In 1947, a group of veterans of later wars wanted the Memorial Hall to stop serving the citizens of Windsor Locks. They wanted to end the use of the building by the Congregational Church, the town government, and the people of Windsor Locks. On April 14, 1943, a legal suit was brought by the American Legion against the Congregational Church. The court ruled for the group of veterans, and against the Congregational Church and the town of Windsor Locks.

In 1947, the trusteeship for the building was taken away from the Congregational Church and given to the “Windsor Locks War Veterans Trust Co.” This new company limited the use of the Memorial Hall to organizations representing military veterans. That included the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Disabled American Veterans.

5) The American Legion Becomes the Tenant of the Memorial Hall

The American Legion became a “tenant” in the Memorial Hall, which was owned by the “Windsor Locks War Veterans Trust Co.” They hold their meetings and their social events there. The American Legion Gensi-Viola Post remains the tenant of the Memorial Hall as of this writing (2023).

SOURCES

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Sabotka, Edward V., J.H.Converse Post No. 67 Minute Books Grand Army of the Republic, Notes compiled from the G.A.R. Minutes.

Memorial Hall Museum, October, 2017

<https://www.ctmq.org/memorial-hall-museum/>

Chapter 7

Dexter D. Coffin: Saved Windsor Locks in 1942

Windsor Locks started off as a place where “settlers” came to live in the mid 1660s. It was the Pine Meadow section of Windsor, Conn. It was uninhabited except for occasional Indians at the time. By the Revolutionary War in 1776, there were only nine families in the area. However, a canal was built along the Connecticut River, and the lower end of the canal was in Pine Meadow. When the Canal was finished, mills were built along it, to take advantage of the water power that it offered. Of course, the mills had to pay the owners of the canal, which was the Connecticut River Company, for the use of that water power.

Things went well for a long time. Windsor Locks was born when many people came to work in the mills along the canal. It was incorporated in 1854. It grew fast. There was a Main Street, which went along the canal, and a long strip of retail stores and housing was built along the west side of Main Street.

As the song says, “All good things must end someday”. The United States began to shift from a manufacturing economy to a service economy in the early 1900s. Manufacturing was being shifted to foreign countries. What happened to manufacturing towns throughout the United States happened to Windsor Locks. The manufacturing plants along the canal began to close down. Manufacturing along the canal reached its high point in 1875 when thirteen of the manufacturing sites along the canal were occupied. By 1900, there were 11. By 1950 there were 8, and by 1975, there were 3. By 2000, there was only 1. (Montemerlo, 2017)

World War II had come to Europe by 1939. America was building up its defenses. In Windsor Locks, CT, Dexter D. Coffin, the president C.H. Dexter and Sons, heard that the Army was going to build an airfield in Hartford. Dexter D. Coffin wanted it built in Windsor Locks. He went to the Connecticut Governor and got him interested. He convinced the Army and the State of Connecticut to build the Army airfield in Windsor Locks. They, in turn, got the United States Congress to appropriate the needed funding.

Construction began in March 1941. The airfield was finished by July 1941. Windsor Locks Airfield was built in less than a half a year.



Dexter Drake Coffin 1898-1966

Mr. Coffin worked a miracle. His interest in aviation, and his ability to work with high level leaders in government and the military caused the airfield to be built in Windsor Locks, and it all happened in a very short time.

The honor of landing the first civilian aircraft at Bradley Field was given to Mr and Mrs. Dexter D. Coffin. That was on September 8, 1941.

By 1947, Bradley Field became a commercial air field. Hamilton Standard and, Kaman Aircraft and other industries opened factories in the Bradley Field area. New jobs were available

Slowly, Bradley Field became a commercial air field. The first major airline flight to arrive at Bradley Field was an Eastern Airlines flight on April 1, 1947. A new terminal was built, named Murphy Terminal. It opened in September 1952.

Then Hamilton Standard Division of United Technologies moved into the area, and the number of new jobs that was created was phenomenal. Between 1950 and 1970, the land between West Street and Bradley field, which had been mostly agricultural, became filled with houses for those working in the Bradley area. Windsor Locks became a boom town again,

Who caused all of this to happen? It was one man. Dexter D. Coffin.

Meanwhile the Main Street area, which had been the economic engine of Windsor Locks since its inception, was out of business. All of the mills along the canal, except two, were gone by 1970. The retail stores on the other side of Main Street were all torn down during the Main Street Redevelopment Project of the 1960s and 1970s. If it wasn't for the economic boom of the Bradley area, Windsor Locks would not have had an economic engine any longer.

That is another way of stating the importance of what Dexter D. Coffin did in single-handedly getting Bradley Field built in Windsor Locks. He single-handedly kept Windsor Locks' alive by providing an alternative source of jobs.

Sources

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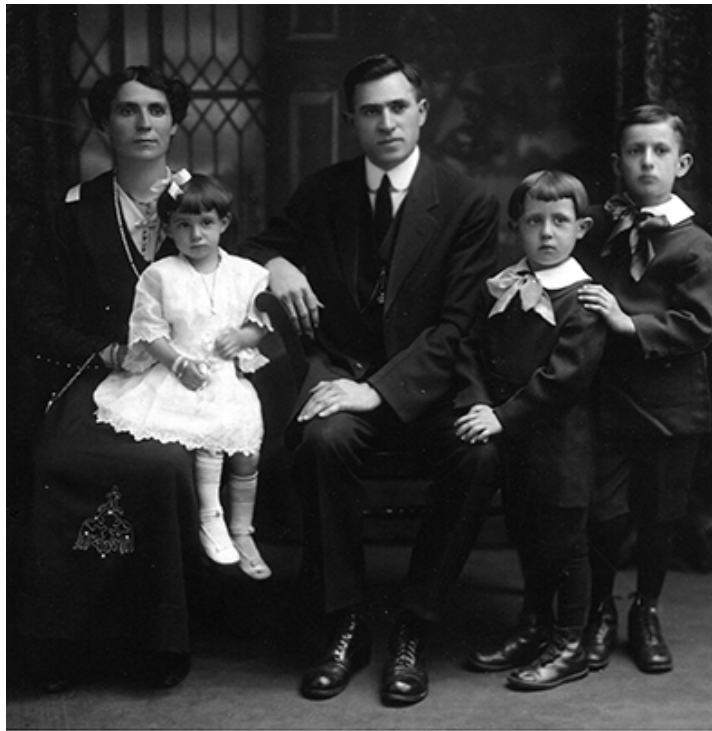
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Chapter 8

Leonardo Colapietro: Windsor Locks Macaroni Company & Supermarket

Leonardo Colapietro was one of four Colapietro brothers: Pasquale, Leonardo, Vito and, Giovanni. They came to Windsor Locks from Turi, a small town southeastern Italy. Leonardo set up his own shop in the Mather Block. He started a factory for manufacturing macaroni. It was called the **Windsor Locks Macaroni Manufacturing Company**. His factory was under his confectionary store. A telephone conversation with John Zaccheo, the oldest son of Tommaso Zaccheo, who had the Pontiac dealership across from the bridge, turned up the fact that Leonardo's macaroni business was not a small-time operation. He used to have large amounts of high-gluten flour shipped in from Nebraska, Wisconsin and New York. Here is a photo of Leonardo and his family.



*Stella (Romito) and Leonardo Colapietro
with their children Esther, Armand and Tony, about 1921*

In 1919, Leonardo Colapietro filed for brand name for his macaroni. The application was filed with the Patent Department. In 1924, there was a fire in the Mather building that started in Leonardo Colapietro's macaroni factory.

Soon after the fire, Leonardo Colapietro took what was left of his factory and store, and moved them to 878 Main St., in the Italian district of Springfield, Mass. He opened up the **Windsor Locks Supermarket**, and the **Windsor Locks Macaroni Manufacturing Co.**

The January 30, 1927 issue of the Springfield Republican says: "The Windsor Locks Macaroni Manufacturing Company plans to enlarge its quarters by occupying the vacant store immediately alongside its present store, and will install a glass partition so that the operation of the machinery can be observed from the front of the establishment. A new preliminary drying process was recently introduced, embodying an improved method of treating the product by the warm air circulating system, reducing the duration of the drying process by about 48 hours." The business reported a 33 percent increase in business over the previous year.

In 1958, Leonardo's Windsor Locks Supermarket applied for and got a liquor license. His business continued to do well. Leonardo Colapietro died in January of 1961. The Springfield Union issue of Jan. 22, 1961 had his obituary. It said: "Mr. Colapietro was born Sept 29, 1896, in Turi, Province of Bari, Italy, son of the late Antonio and Pasqua (Lerede) Colapietro. He came to this country 55 years ago and settled in Windsor Locks, CT, where he started his macaroni firm. This was the first business of its kind in the Connecticut Valley. Mr. Colapietro moved the plant to this city in 1924. He stopped the manufacture of macaroni at the outbreak of World War II. His company is still located at 878 Main St., and is operated by his two sons, Anthony and Armand, as the **Windsor Locks Super Market.**"

SOURCES:

Springfield Union issue of Jan. 22, 1961.

January 30, 1927 issue of the Springfield Republican

Montemerlo, Melvin D., Windsor Locks History, Chapter 19: The Windsor Locks Macaroni Manufacturing Company Self published, 2017, Bel Air, MD

CHAPTER 9

Vito Colapietro: Owner of the Hotel On Main Street

Vito Colapietro was one of the thousands of immigrants who came to Windsor Locks in the 1880-1920 timeframe. He arrived in 1904. He was short. He only had one good eye. He had no money and he didn't speak English. But he had a brother, Pasquale, who was already in Windsor Locks, and he had high hopes. He came from Turi, a small town in southern Italy. He worked for his brother, Pasquale Colapietro, who went by the Americanized name of "Patsy Coly". Patsy had confectionery store on Main Street which had one of Windsor Locks' early ice cream counters. Vito also worked on the Bridge to Warehouse Point. While working on the bridge, he fell off, and was rescued by a man in a boat. Later, when Vito owned his own store on the ground floor of his hotel, the man who rescued him sometimes stopped in. Vito never let the man pay for anything.



Vito Nicola Colapietro, 1913

Vito worked a number of menial jobs at first, as did all of the immigrants. But he had BIG dreams. He was lonely. In 1909, he returned to Italy to find a wife. He married Anna Lefemine, and they returned to Windsor Locks in 1910. Soon he had a small confectionary store with his brother, Leonardo. Then he had his own confectionary store. Seven years after returning to Windsor Locks with his wife, HE OWNED THE ONLY HOTEL IN WINDSOR LOCKS. To say that he was both capable and ambitious would be an understatement.

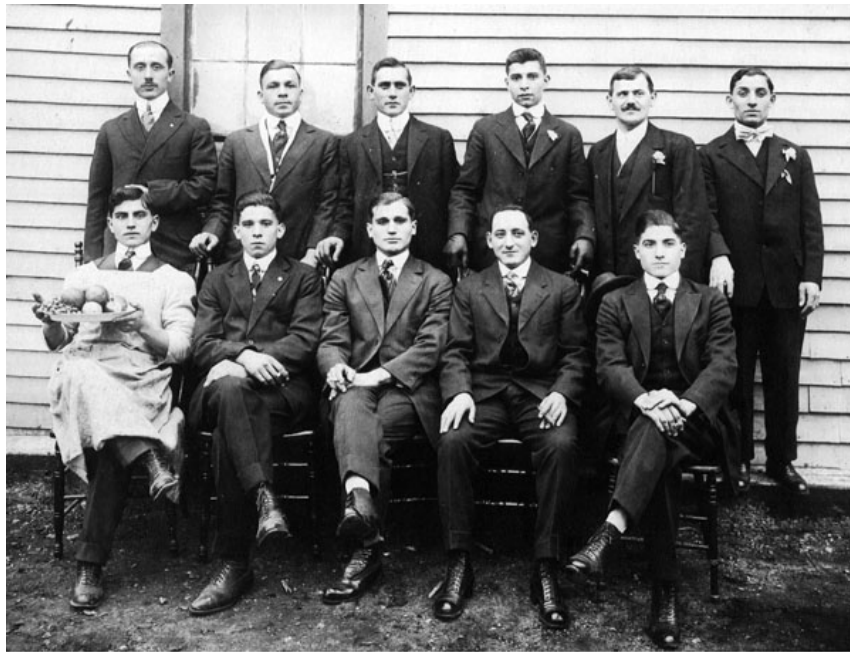
The hotel business did well for a while, but while rebuilding the hotel in 1926,, there was a massive fire. He had to rebuild it again. He did. Below is a photo of the hotel in 1927, after it was rebuilt.

Vito was instrumental in getting others from his hometown of Turi to come to Windsor Locks. When they arrived here, he helped them get



1927 advertising photo of Windsor Locks Hotel, After the 1926 fire and the 1927 reconstruction

settled into their new homeland. Here is a photo of a group of them,, having a party. They are standing in back of Vito Colapietro's hotel.



*Back: Joe Natale, Biaggio Cozzolingo, John Gasparro, Leo Lefemine, Vito Colapietro, Tonino Bellini
Front: Giovanni Valentino, Raffaele Lefemine, Raffaele Iacovazzi, Nick Bellini, Nick Divenere*

The group of immigrants from Turi brought over the festival of St. Oronzo, the patron saint of Turi, Italy. Vito was central to that. He served as President of the St. Oronzo Club.

Vito rented out two stores in the hotel, on the Main Street level and operated the other, which was the headquarters for the hotel. First, he operated a confectionary store. It became a bar that served liquor, and later a beer hall. Finally it returned to a confectionary store. His son, Tony, ran that store for a long time. It was known as "Tony's Soda Shoppe". Vito ran the hotel through the Great Recession, and World Wars I and II.. He and his wife, Anna, raised five children. Their four sons served in WWII, and all returned safely. He put his five children through college. Vito was very close to his brother, Leonardo, who had the Windsor Locks Macaroni Company, and then moved the business to Springfield. The hotel business and land was forcibly bought from him by the town during the Main Street Redevelopment Project. He died in 1972. Vito was a major force in Windsor Locks during the Golden Era of the town's Main Street.

SOURCE:

Montemerlo, Melvin D., Windsor Locks History, Chapters 15 and 32, Self-published, Bel Air, MD. 2017

CHAPTER 10

Charles Colli - Grocer, Entrepreneur and Civic Leader

Charles Colli was one of the most successful and fascinating immigrants who came to Windsor Locks. He was born in Italy in 1882. Charles arrived here in 1890, when he was 8 years old. He married Lena Massini. The 1910 U.S. Census said that he was 28 years old and his wife was 34. He was listed as a "Head of Household" in Windsor Locks. He and his wife had three children: Irene (8), Eva (7) and Charles E. (5). His occupation was "Merchant" and his business was "meat".

He was already a naturalized citizen. In 1910, at the age of 30, he owned his own home, free of mortgage. Below is a photo of Charles with his business wagon. Notice the sign on the house, which was on Oak Street, says: "C. Colli, Meat and Groceries".



Charles Colli, Meat and Groceries Cart Store

Mr. Colli advertised his meat and grocery business in the Windsor Locks Journal and the Springfield Republican often, and his advertisements show that he had the very best machines for processing meat.

In 1911, Charles was already running for public office in Windsor Locks. His power base consisted of the Italian immigrant population of the town (Springfield Republican, 9-12-1911). His influence over this community came into play in 1912, one of the most difficult years in Windsor Locks History. In 1912, it was found that The Windsor Locks Savings Bank had \$185,000 embezzled from it. The investigation went on for a long time before it was found that Alfred Wood Converse was the man who embezzled the money. In the meantime, there was a good deal of pain and suffering by the citizens who had lost much of their life savings. Mr. Colli was the person who translated the meetings and documents for the Italian immigrants of Windsor Locks, and who

helped them understand what had happened. (Springfield Republican, 02-10-1912)

In 1912, Mr. Colli bought a tenement house to use as rentals. (Springfield Republican, Aug. 31, 1912) In 1913, Mr. Colli bought another tenement house (Springfield Republican, 08-09-1913). He was in the business of owning rental properties. In 1913, he was listed as one of the largest taxpayers to the town of Windsor Locks (Springfield Republican, 01-19, 1913). He continued to be for many years.

In 1914, he was deeply involved in town government. Also in this year, he bought the Central Cafe Company on Main Street. He sold his meat, grain, and grocery business to one of his employees. (Springfield Republican, 05-10-1914). Also, he became an official in the Fire Department. He was deeply into community service.

By 1916, he had become Chief of the Windsor Locks Fire Department (Springfield Republican, 07-01-1916). To the right is his photo as Fire Chief.

In 1918, Mr. Colli bought the Burnap Block from the estate of Dr. Sidney Burnap. This was the largest commercial building on Main Street. It housed the Opera House, retail stores, a rooming house, and some major corporations, such as the telephone company. Under Mr. Colli's ownership, it became known as "Central Hall". The third floor was used for basketball games and boxing matches. That is where two of the Marconi brothers boxed.

In 1918, he resigned as the Federal Explosives Agent for the town. He was just too busy to do that job too.

Charles Colli was superb entrepreneur in the meat and grocery business, in rental housing, and in owning the town's largest commercial building, which held a movie theater, a dance hall, sports arena. He also rented space to large companies in his Central Hall, which had been the Burnap Block. He was deep into community service with town posts and as Fire Chief, and he was a leader in the Italian American Community.

Charles Colli died in 1938, at the age of 56.



*Charles Colli
Windsor Locks Fire Chief
1916 - 1922*

SOURCES:

The information for this article came from issues of the Springfield Republican newspaper and from the Windsor Locks Journal. Whenever information is shown from one of these issues, the date of issue is given in parentheses.

CHAPTER 11

L.D. Cutler - Multi-Talented Businessman

L.D. Cutler was one of the most creative businessmen in Windsor Locks history. His path to success was unique. Born in Massachusetts in 1875, he arrived in Windsor Locks in 1900.

Everyone has to start somewhere. Mr. Cutler started off in Windsor Locks as a barber in 1900, but that didn't last. He opened a jewelry store in the Coogan Block. He had an advertisement in the Dec. 10, 1905 Windsor Locks Journal that said:

"I have opened a Jewelry Store next door to Coogan's Pharmacy, opposite the Warehouse Point bridge on and will carry a large line of watches, diamonds, Jewelry, silverware, clocks and everything usually found in any up-to-date Jewelry Store. Expert repairing of watches, clocks, jewelry etc. All work guaranteed."

In 1908 he went to Philadelphia Optical College and took a course in vision testing, and in making lenses for glasses. This is a big step for a person who was a barber, and switched to selling jewelry and fixing clocks and watches. His desire and ability to learn and apply difficult skills was astonishing.

In 1918, he bought Frank G. Burt's store, which sold men's and women's clothing and shoes, and took over Mr. Burt's store on Northwest corner of Oak and Main Streets. He had developed a department store. He was selling jewelry, gold-ware, silverware, clocks and watches, and men's and women's clothing and shoes. He also did watch and clock repair. He was an optician and he also made glasses. There are not many people in the world who could do all of that. And he just kept growing his business.

The April 12, 1937 Springfield Republican said that L.D. Cutler had made one of the largest property purchases that Windsor Locks had seen in several years. He purchased the Mather Block, a three story mercantile building with apartments on the second and third floors. It said that having started in the old Coogan Block in 1905, he was now going to take over the entire first floor of his new Block because his business needed more space.

His purchase of the Mather Block included a large piece of land behind the building, which Mr. Cutler sold to the Bidwell's for their expanding supply of farm machinery. Mr. Cutler was an insightful businessman.

In 1938, there was a massive hurricane. There was much damage in Windsor Locks. The top was blown off of Mr. Cutler's Block. He had it repaired.

The Windsor Locks Journal of July 7, 1945 said that Mr. Cutler sold his Block to "the People's Cooperative", which planned to turn Mr. Cutler's store into a grocery store. The Springfield Republican of June 29, 1945 said that Mr.

L.D. Cutler, the proprietor of the oldest mercantile establishment in town, had retired.

Mr. Cutler died at his home on Center Street in January 1950, following several months of illness. He was a charter member of the Windsor Locks Chamber of Commerce, and of the Windsor Locks Rotary Club.

CONCLUSION

L.D. Cutler was unique. He owned one of the 15 Blocks of Windsor Locks. He became a very successful businessman in a very unconventional method. He started off as a barber. He learned the difficult art of repairing clocks and watches. Then he opened up a store that sold and fixed watches and clocks and also sold jewelry, silverware and gold-ware. He became an optician. He could evaluate your need for glasses. He learned how to grind the lenses for glasses. Then he added men's and women's clothing and shoes. The variety of wares that he sold and the services that he provided were either rare or unique. He needed more space for his store so he bought the Mather Block. His building endured the hurricane of 1938, which took its roof off. He had it rebuilt. He continued running his store until he retired a few years before he died in 1950. He had started in business in Windsor Locks in 1900 and retired almost a half century later. He was also a founding member of the Windsor Locks Chamber of Commerce, and of the Rotary Club. Mr. L.D. Carter set a high standard for success in Windsor Locks. He developed his own distinct vision of what he wanted to do, and he was successful in making it happen. He did it his way.

SOURCES:

Springfield Republican, April 12, 1937
Springfield Republican, June 29, 1945
Windsor Locks Journal, Dec. 10, 1905
Windsor Locks Journal, Dec. 11, 1910
Windsor Locks Journal, Sept. 23, 1938
Windsor Locks Journal, Jan. 12, 1950

CHAPTER 12

Philip Del Nero creates the Villa Rose Restaurant

Philip Del Nero was a long-time resident of Windsor Locks. In 1941, he built a restaurant which expanded in size and features in its years from 1948 to 1993.

The Villa Rose opened on November 6, 1941. Philip Del Nero, and his wife Rose (Sasali) Del Nero, advertised that they specialized in Italian and American food, and that you could come for just a sandwich, or for a full meal. On the right is the first advertisement of the Villa Rose in the Windsor Locks Journal



In 1941, there were restaurants on Main Street, but Windsor Locks did not have a large restaurant/meeting place in the area of Spring Street, or near the Army Air Field. At that point, the airfield hadn't yet become Bradley Field. World War II was underway and things were difficult in the United States. But Philip Del Nero had the fortitude to give it a try.



**The Villa Rose Restaurant
West Spring Street, Windsor Locks, CT**

How popular did the Villa Rose get? How big a deal was it? The Springfield Union, had 1,123 ads, articles and bowling results for the Villa Rose between when it opened in 1941 and when it closed in 1989!!!! It started as a place to get American or Italian food, from a sandwich to a full meal. It changed owners a few times, and ended up as a combination restaurant, bowling alley, and place where weddings and large meetings took place.

Philip Del Nero sold the Villa Rose to Jim Castellini and Joseph Quagliaroli in 1947. They made a big addition, and installed a bowling alley in the lower level. The bowling alley opened in 1953. Al Kone bought the Villa Rose in 1953, and closed it down in 1993. Over the years, the Villa Rose became sort of an “institution”. Many who worked at Bradley Field or the neighboring businesses went there to eat. Meetings and weddings happened there weekly and the Bowling alley scores were in the Windsor Locks Journal and the Springfield newspapers for decades. There were bands and dancing there every weekend.

As we have seen, there were a number of people who enlarged the Villa Rose and added new features, but the person who came up with the idea and made it happen was Philip Del Nero.

Philip Del Nero died in 1959. He was born in Springfield, Mass. He lived in Windsor Locks for about 25 years. He created something new, which grew, and made the town more diversified and more fun. The business he created during wartime became an iconic Windsor Locks institution.

SOURCE:

Montemerlo, Melvin D. “The Villa Rose”, Chapter 10 of Windsor Locks History, Sell Published, Bel Air, MD, 2017

CHAPTER 13

Charles Haskell Dexter:

- Saved the Windsor Locks from Collapse in 1855**
- Founded the C.H.Dexter company in 1847**

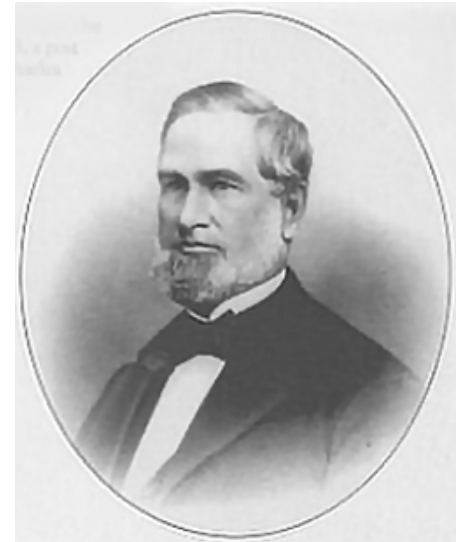
Charles Haskell Dexter is often referred to as C.H.Dexter. The historian, Jabez Haskell Hilton said in 1900: “He was a central figure in all the best activities of this community for thirty years. And his life, taken in all its bearings, was by far the most influential that Windsor Locks has known...” C.H. Dexter has a long list of big accomplishments. The following summarizes the most important of his accomplishments.

Charles Haskell Dexter, who is often referred to as “C.H.Dexter” was the son of Seth Dexter III. He was born in 1810. He succeeded his father, Seth Dexter, in running the business. With his brother in law, Edwin Douglas, C.H.Dexter reorganized the business under the new name “C.H. Dexter & Company” in 1847.

About 1836 Charles Haskell Dexter began, in a small way, the manufacture of wrapping-paper in a basement room of the grist-mill, in which water-power was supplied by Kettle Brook. Being hampered for room and power, he moved his paper-making into a frame building which was erected across the canal from the grist mill. That building housed the Dexter’s main business venture. While that research did not result in a new product for manufacturing at that time, it laid the foundation for the future of the Dexter company — research which leads to new products.

About ten years later, in 1847, C.H. Dexter built a new mill on the ground which later housed the C. H. Dexter & Sons' paper-works. There, because of the improved methods that he developed, the business became highly profitable, and the products of the mill came to rank among the best goods in the market.

C.H. Dexter was Windsor Locks’ first postmaster. In 1855, in addition to running his own company, C.H.Dexter became president of the Connecticut River Company, which was the Hartford-based company that built, owned and ran the canal. That gave him control over the canal, which provided the water-power to all of the mills along the canal, including his own. That was immense power. It also provided a BIG challenge.



Charles Haskell Dexter
~1833

The Canal was built to make a profit both by charging boats to use the canal, and by charging the mills along the canal for the water power that it provided. The Connecticut River Company had invested a great deal of money in building the canal and expected to make a big profit from both. Things didn't work out that way. Within a few years after the Canal opened, the railroad came through Windsor Locks. It was cheaper and easier for the trains to transport both goods and passengers between Hartford and Springfield, so all profits from charging boats to use the canal ceased to exist when the railroad came through.

Then things got even worse for the Connecticut Canal Company. The profits from selling water power ceased to exist. It fell on C.H. Dexter, whose company used that water power, and who was president of the Connecticut River Company, to find out what was wrong, and find a way for profits from water power to be generated again. If he failed to do that, his C.H. Dexter & Sons company would fail and the Connecticut River Company would fail. Further, the town of Windsor Locks, which became a town one year earlier, in 1854, and whose existence depended on the canal, would cease to exist.

Mr. Dexter, who was a creative and capable engineer, devised and implemented methods of making the power generation capability profitable. The canal then became a financial success. This in turn made Windsor Locks grow and prosper. **In short, C.H. Dexter saved the Connecticut River Company, his own company, all of the mills along the canal, and the fledgling town of Windsor Locks.**

He died the 29th of August, 1869, at the age of 59. As Jabez Haskell Hayden said, C.H. Dexter was, by far, the most influential person in the history of Windsor Locks. He said that in 1886. The statement is still true.

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CHAPTER 14

Graziano Graziani: Biggest Investor in Windsor Locks

No Windsor Locks citizen has owned more of Windsor Locks than Graziano Graziani, an Italian immigrant who became a contractor and an investor in Windsor Locks. He owned four of the largest commercial buildings on Main Street. He built and sold high quality houses, and he also built both houses and tenements as rentals. He paid more annual tax to Windsor Locks than any other individual for decades. The total value of his properties were close to the value of C.H.Dexter & Sons' properties.

He was born in Italy in 1890, and arrived in the U.S. in 1911. He quickly learned the skills to become a contractor. The Windsor Locks Journal (WLJ) of Oct. 3, 1919 said that he had been paid for repairing a house. After that, his name showed up in the Windsor Locks Journal 179 times. Many of those were his advertisements. Many were about his investments on Main Street. Many were of his work on the Board of Directors of the Windsor Locks Savings Bank.

In the 1930s, his career took off. Besides building houses, he bought two of the 15 Blocks (large commercial buildings) on Main Street within five weeks of each other. He bought the two big buildings on the north and south corners of Oak and Main Streets. They were the Pease Block on the southwest corner, and the Burnap Block, on the northwest corner.

Allen Pease and his three sons had a large store in the Pease Block for 56 years. The property had been badly damaged by the 1938 hurricane. Mr. Graziani turned the three-story Pease building into a two-story building, (WLJ Dec 2, 1938) First it was rented to Mr. Kamin. Then it became the home of Sid Portnoy's Modern Drug Store.

Mr. Graziani completely razed "Central Hall, and built a single-story building with three stores. The store on the "north" side, closest to the hotel, became the A&P Supermarket. That became Windsor Locks' primary grocery store for a long time. There were two smaller stores on the south side of the A&P. The one next to the A&P was the A&P Package Store. The store on the corner of Oak and Main was Don LaRussa's electronics store.

The Windsor Locks Journal of Feb. 22, 1940 described Mr. Graziani's purchase of the Burnap Block and the Pease block. It said: "Ownership of these two business sites, together with much other property in the town makes him the largest individual taxpayer, and shows that at least one builder-contractor has faith enough in Windsor Locks to own and remodel existing property within the town both for business and home ownership."

Mr. Graziani did not stop with those two Blocks. The December 3, 1942 WLJ tells us that he bought the Outerson Block, which is on the Northwest corner

of Main and Church Streets. That building housed the office of the Town Clerk, as well as a number of businesses. Mr. Graziani was then the owner of three of the 15 Blocks of Windsor Locks.

Mr. Graziani didn't stop there. In 1961, he bought the Bidwell Block, which became his fourth Block on Main Street.

CONCLUSION

Graziano Graziani's effect on Windsor Locks was unique. Other leading businessmen owned a single one of the 15 Blocks on Main Street. Mr. Graziani owned four of them. He rebuilt the ones that needed rebuilding. He improved downtown Windsor Locks. The A&P re-shaped grocery shopping in Windsor Locks. Mr. Graziani's rebuilt Pease Blocks housed Sid Portnoy's Modern Drug Store. Sid's Modern Drug store was a unique shopping experience.

Mr. Graziani had FAITH in Windsor Locks. He believed that it had a big future, and that he could help it achieve its potential. He not only owned much of Main Street, he owned many houses and tenements in town which he rented out, and had had built and sold countless homes in town. He paid more town taxes than any other individual for a long time. He didn't just build things, he was a longtime member of the Board of Directors of the First National Bank.

When the Windsor Locks Government did the Main Street Redevelopment Project, which tore down all of the commercial buildings on Main Street, it was saying that our Main Street didn't have a future. Mr. Graziani felt the opposite. He believed in the town and its Main Street. He had more invested more in Main Street than anyone else. He fought the demolition of Main Street, but lost.

Considering the history of Windsor Locks from 1663 to the present (2023), Graziano Graziani did more to develop the town than anyone else. He had the desire, the ability and the drive to make make the down grow. He had a positive view of the future. He worked hard to make it happen. Mr. Graziani wasn't one of the immigrants who went to work in the mills. He wanted to be a contractor. He wanted to build. He did build. Graziano Graziani is a man to be remembered.

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Windsor Locks Journal articles issues noted in the text.

Other Windsor Locks Journal articles dated

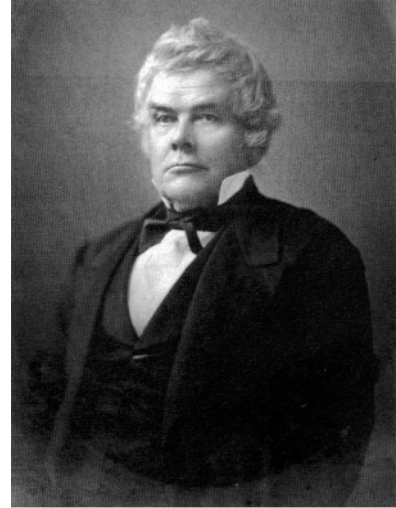
1917 05 04	1918 09 06	1919 03 14	1919 10 03
1925 05 15	1928 01 13	1938 11 25	1938 12 02
1940 02 23	1940 05 03	1940 08 02	1940 12 03
1961 10 05	1974 08 01	1974 10 31	

CHAPTER 15

Eli Horton: His Chucks Changed The World

Eli Horton is one of a very few Windsor Lockers who changed the world. He made a new part for holding workpieces in place on tools, which changed the world.

Mr. Horton's came up with a new and revolutionary design for "chucks" which affected everyone in the world who uses tools. Chucks are used on lathes, drills, and many other tools for holding a work-piece or a tool, such as a drill. The problem was in adjusting the chuck so that the workpiece was in the correct position. Previous to Mr. Horton's "universal chucks", adjusting a chuck was difficult, time consuming and frustrating.



Eli Horton 1803-1878

If you are operating a lathe, your workpiece has to be attached to the lathe. The workpiece is attached by two clamps, which are called "chucks". A chuck has two or more "jaws" which form a clamp to hold the workpiece. In the early 1800s, these jaws had to be adjusted individually, which often caused the workpiece to be "off-center", and a re-adjustment had to be made. Often, many readjustments had to be made.

Then, someone came up with an idea of making all of the jaws open and close with a single screw. This would ensure that the workpiece was always "centered". If a workpiece is not centered, it will wobble when the lathe is turned on. If the wobble is too great, the workpiece could be thrown off of the lathe, causing injury. So the idea of a chuck which is easy to use, and guarantees that the workpiece is centered was a big step forward. A self-centering chuck that can be adjusted with a single screw is called a "scroll chuck" or a "universal chuck".

Other manufacturers were designing and manufacturing "Universal chucks", but **Mr. Horton's design actually worked!** When he produced them, he affected world markets for such tools. In 1851, he started to manufacture them in a small shop along the canal with only his son and one other employee. The quality of his chucks exceeded all others, and the demand for his products rose. In 1873, he formed the E. Horton & Son Co. Inc. His chucks won worldwide praise. He received awards from across the globe. He ran his company until a few years before his death in 1879. The company was a remarkable success. The company remained remarkably successful through

World War I . By the end of World War II, things were going downhill. Here is a summary.

About 1879, after the death of Mr. Horton, Mr. Ezra B. Bailey, who was Eli's son-in-law, assumed charge of the business. He was an excellent manager. He replaced the old machinery with automatic machinery, and greatly increased the variety of chucks that the company produced.

In 1909, Eli Horton's grandson, Sidney E. Horton, took control of the company. Sidney E. Horton ran company during World War I. He expanded the line of products that the company manufactured.

In 1948, a new group took control of the Horton company. They wanted to become more diverse. In 1949, they merged with the Gabb Manufacturing Co, and soon it became a division of Gabb Special Products. By 1959, the Eli Horton company was no longer in existence. It had a long and powerful run.

Windsor Lockers should have great pride in the accomplishments of Eli Horton. Not only did he change the world of tools, he provided jobs to townspeople for a century!

CONCLUSION

Eli Horton's business changed the world. He was an incredible engineer and business leader. He achieved a level of success that only a few people do. He deserves credit for that. It had a large and beneficial effect on Windsor Locks.

From his successful business, we see that he had an incredible mind for engineering. Many tried and failed to make a universal chuck. He succeeded. He had the intelligence, the sense of inquisitiveness, the technical skills, the drive, and the management and business skills to make his company a success. We need to learn from that.

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, "Eli Horton and his Lathe Chuck Company", in Windsor Locks History:Volume II, self-published, Bel Air, MD, 2019.

CHAPTER 16

Don LaRussa - A Forward Thinking Businessman

Don LaRussa started his career in Windsor Locks by managing the Carlisle store for one year. Then he opened a Western Auto store at the corner of Oak and Main Streets. In 1947, he replaced his Western Auto store with his own "D.F. LaRussa" appliance store at the same location.

He started selling televisions in the 1947-1949 timeframe, when television was being introduced to the nation. The number of homes with TVs increased from 0.4 percent in 1948 to 55.7 percent in 1954 and to 83.2 percent four years later. No other household technology, not the telephone or indoor plumbing, had ever spread so rapidly into so many homes. It would be an understatement to say that he sold a lot of TVs! Below is a photo of his store.



Don LaRussa

While he initially did well selling TVs and other electronics, an unexpected problem arose. The TVs had more problems than he expected. He had to have them repaired. That ate up his profits. He had a idea to overcome that problem. He wanted expand into selling furniture and other household goods that would not need to be repaired as frequently. He bought a piece of property on the corner of the five acre plot of land that the Ashmere Estate was on, and build the store with financial help from James Castellini.



D.F. LaRussa's First Store

Don was just getting started. He had a bigger plan. He wanted to turn the five-acre plot that the Ashmere Estate was on into the first outdoor shopping mall in the area. Don was way out in front of other local businessmen. He needed money to buy the land. He got Windsor Locks "investors" Jim Castellini and Jack Quagliaroli to help him out. The three of them bought the Ashmere Estate and the five acre tract that it was on. They found another investor who was willing to build the entire shopping center that Don had laid out. The Ashmere estate was demolished, and the shopping center was built, which butted up against Don

LaRussa's store. Don leased a large section of that adjoining building, and subleased it to other businesses. Don was way ahead of his time in doing that. The official opening of the Dexter Shopping Center's official occurred on April 19, 1961. Below is a photo of the new Dexter Plaza.



Dexter Plaza, 1965

CONCLUSION

Dominick “Don” LaRussa was an energetic, creative, far-thinking businessman whose initial store introduced Windsor Locks to televisions, went far beyond that. He came up with the idea of building the area's first outdoor shopping mall. He found investors and he made “Dexter Plaza” happen. In 1965, people did not know that Windsor Lock would lose all of the retail stores along its Main Street within a decade. If it weren't for Don LaRussa, Windsor Locks would have had no shopping area left in town. Don was also a leader in the community. He was a president of the Rotary Club, a president of the Knights of Columbus, and a leader of the Windsor Locks Little League. He was generous in helping those who were less fortunate. He spent a good deal of time and money in helping the children at the County Home in Warehouse Point. Unfortunately, Don LaRussa died much too early, at the age of 49 in 1964. He left his mark on Windsor Locks. Windsor Locks was very lucky to have had Don LaRussa, even for such a short time. Don was also a leader in the community. He was a past president of the Rotary Club, a past president of the Knights of Columbus, and a leader of the Windsor Locks Little League. He was generous in helping those who were less fortunate. He spent a good deal of time and money in helping the children at the County Home in Warehouse Point.

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, “D.F. LaRussa and His Appliance Store”, in Windsor Locks History, Self published, Bel Air, MD, 2017

Montemerlo, Melvin, “Dominick F. “Don” LaRussa: The Man Who Created Dexter Plaza”, Windsor Locks History: Volume IV, Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2023

CHAPTER 17

Dan Leach: Extraordinary Businessman and Citizen

The Windsor Locks Journal of 1880 to 1975 sometimes wrote an editorial about an extraordinary citizen of Windsor Locks. Rarely did any one individual get more than one such editorial. DAN LEACH GOT 10 OF THEM! That might be the strongest positive statement ever made about a Windsor Locks citizen. It was not only his accomplishments that made him what he was, it was how he lived his life. It is hard enough to be sufficiently gifted, focussed, and capable of building an important business. Rare is the person who not only has that business acumen, but who lived a life focussed on taking care of others.

In 1892, Dan went to work in the Montgomery cotton mill, and then in the Medlicott Co. In 1898, he went to work for Lock Barrett, in his horse stables on State St. Dan loved horses, and was very good with them. When Lock Barrett built the massive “Barrett Block” on the corner of Main and Church Streets, Dan was put in charge of the the livery stables, the horses and equipment. Dan was starting to move up in the world.

Lock Barrett owned a small shed in the old freight yards with scales, on the canal side of northern Main Street, about where Windsor Locks Commons shopping center is now (2023). Dan Leach was put in charge of compiling all orders for coal, and to see that they were delivered.

In July 1901, Dan Leach left Mr. Barrett and went to work for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, where he was the “freight yardmaster”. He remained there until 1914, when Lock Barrett died. Dan Leach and James Barrett, son of Lock Barrett, took over Lock’s coal and trucking business. Two years later, in 1916, James Barrett sold his share of the business to Dan, and Dan was the sole owner of the coal and trucking business.

In 1919, Dan Leach leased land from the railroad for a real “coal yard”, on the site of the “Lower Basin”, which had been filled in. When he opened his new enlarged coal yard, he had one large coal shed with a barn attached, and seven horses for hauling the coal and for “trucking purposes”. By May of 1924, he sold the horses and was using motorized trucks. He was “modernizing” the coal business. By 1934, Dan had storage for 500 tons of coal, and bin and silo storage for another 1,000 tons. In addition, he had tanks with 25,000 gallon capacity for fuel oil. He not only increased the amount of coal that he could store, but he added the ability to sell the new heating product, “oil”.

Loading of coal had been done by shoveling it. This was back-breaking work. Dan installed a conveyor system to easily load trucks with coal. This made it both easier and faster to get coal to the homes that needed it. The trucks dumped the coal into the cellars of homes. Homes had windows near the

ceiling of the cellar, through which the coal could be dumped via a “chute”. This was all in place by 1939. He continued to modernize.

Dan loved horses and horse racing. He also got into politics. He held the office of Windsor Locks town Registrar. According to the Windsor Locks Journal, he did a good job of it. By 1944, World War II was underway and there were shortages of coal and heating oil. Dan worked hard at getting enough coal to deliver to Windsor Locks homes. Dan was very good at finding and “snapping up” loads of oil and coal in this timeframe.

Times were changing in the coal/oil business. In the early days, the roads were “dirt roads”. Getting the horse-drawn and later truck-drawn loads to Windsor Locks homes was difficult. By 1950, roads were macadam or concrete.

According to the Windsor Locks Journal, Dan took it personally when a homeowner said they really needed coal or oil, and he went out of his way to fill those orders. The Windsor Locks Journal of Aug. 3, 1950 said “One of the finer traits of this business man is a willingness to put himself out to do favors for other people, a trait so sadly missing in the wild and woolly world of today. The Journal salutes Dan Leach as a star in the firmament of Windsor Locks business life.”

The April 9, 1959 Windsor Locks Journal said: “Fitting testimony was accorded one of Windsor Locks’ ablest citizens last night by the Chamber of Commerce. A gathering of over 100 friends of Daniel F. Leach, attended the testimonial which the chamber had arranged for the dean of the town’s businessmen.”

Dan Leach retired in 1964. Over the years, coal was replaced by oil. Dan’s two large coal storage sheds were demolished. The Windsor Locks Journal of Dec. 11, 1969 mentioned that the the former Leach coal and oil supply yards have disappeared from the Windsor Locks business area, and the former office, which was a sort of social gathering center is no more - bringing back memories of days gone by, plus an amiable and friendly proprietor who was a hive of information on all topics of the day.”

In 1965, Dan Leach died at the age of 87. He had a long career in Windsor Locks, rising up from a worker in the mills to run a livery business for Mr. Lock Barrett, to owning the coal business that Mr. Barrett started, and to expanding it through times of changing methods of heating, of changing methods of storing and transporting coal and then oil, by working through the days of scarcity during World War II. As changes in the world happened, Dan Leach coped and made things work. His business wasn’t just a business. He took the responsibility of getting town citizens the coal or oil they needed to stay warm. That approach to work and life made him beloved as well as admired.

SOURCES

The Windsor Locks Journals of: 1939 03 31, 1943 02 18, 1944 09 14, 1950 08 03, 1954 04 14, 1959 04 09, 1959 04 16, 1963 06 13, 1965 09 16, 1969 12 11

CHAPTER 18

Marconi Brother's Luncheonette

The Marconi Brothers Luncheonette, often called “Wuzzy’s”, was on the corner of Spring Street and Main Street. It was a lot of things to a lot of people. Teenagers remember it as a hangout. The booths in the back were a great place to relax with friends. There was a time when Ella Grasso, who later became the Governor of Connecticut, often had breakfast there. The singer, Gene Pitney, went there a number of times, always without advance notice. The popular radio announcers, Bob Steele and Brad Davis often visited Marconi’s and then mentioned it on their radio shows.



Marconi's Luncheonette on corner of Spring St. and Main St., Windsor Locks, Conn., was usually called “Wuzzy’s”. A great Ice Cream Store and teenage hangout .

The Marconi brothers were Johnny, Louie and Angelo. Angelo’s nickname was “Wuzzy”. There is a story about how he got his nickname. On one particular Sunday morning, Angelo was supposed to serve Mass at St. Mary’s Church, but he didn’t show up. Father Grady wanted to find out why, so he asked some of Angelo’s friends: “Angelo wasn’t sick, was he?” The “was he” sounded like Wuzzy, and it became Angelo’s nickname.

Two of the Marconi brothers were amateur boxers as young men. The January 20 and 23, 1929 issues of the Springfield Republican had articles showing that Angelo and Louie Marconi were in boxing matches in Central Hall. Central Hall was the building which preceded the A&P, across Main Street from the Railroad Station.

A discussion in 2016, among people who used to frequent the Marconi Brothers’ Luncheonette led to some interesting memories. One remembered that

guitar lessons were given on the floor above the Luncheonette. A few remembered that their parents told them that they weren't allowed to go to Marconi's. Some remember playing "church hooky" on Sunday morning, and going to Marconi's instead. One remembered the Saturday night ritual of standing in front of Marconi's, trying to get a group together to go to Riverside Park. A few, who worked as paper boys while in high school, remembered going to Marconi's on payday, and spending too much money on the pinball machine. All of the Marconi brothers had been alter boys at St. Mary's.

In the 1960s, the town of Windsor Locks decided to redevelop the Main Street area. It required all retail business owners along Main Street to sell their businesses to the town. Some of the businesses did so readily. Some fought it. The Marconi brothers held out the longest. Eventually they and the rest of the holdouts lost the battle, and had to sell. The three brothers were rightfully proud of having fought the good fight. The Marconi Brothers moved their luncheonette to Suffield.

John, Angelo and Louie were different than most "teams". They operated as a threesome. There was no "leader". They just made things work. Every night, one would stay and work late, and the other two would go home. They were unique. (Email from Louise Marconi O'Boyle, June 7, 2023)



John, Angelo and Louie Marconi

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin D., Marconi Brothers Luncheonette (Wuzzy's), Chapter 8 of Windsor Locks History, Self published, Bel Air, MD, 2017

CHAPTER 19

J.R. Montgomery - Success via Product and Process Innovation

John Robert Montgomery was born in 1845. At the age of 16, he went to work in a cotton mill. Six years later, he was superintendent of this mill. He said that “the way for a young man to succeed is by having some definite object in life and sticking to it.” This was a man to learn from.

In 1871, he came to Windsor Locks from Housatonic, MA and founded a company to manufacture “cotton warps”. At first, Mr. Montgomery bought cotton that was already dyed. Soon, he started to dye his own product. Mr. Montgomery continually examined the methods used, and he continued to develop newer, better tools and techniques to produce the products. In 1876, his company was the the first in the United States to manufacture what were called “novelty yarns”, which were made up of threads of cotton, silk, wool and other fibers, which were twisted in intricate ways to produce novel effects. By 1891, the Montgomery firm had grown from only a few to 200 employees.

In 1880, Mr. Montgomery purchased all of the property that he was using. He also bought and adapted machinery to manufacture all kinds of plain and fancy warps. At this point, he had two mills making cotton warps.

In 1885, J. R. Montgomery took on his younger brother, George M. Montgomery, as a partner, and bought out his two original partners. He changed the name to the “J. R. Montgomery Company.” J. R. and George were the active managers of the company. A new cotton warp mill and an addition to the novelty yarn mill were built. At this time, \$950,000 was invested in enlarging the scope of the business. That was the equivalent of \$30 Million dollars in 2019 dollars. That was a massive infusion of new money.

In 1887, the company built a large dye-house, and equipped it with modern, improved machinery. They bought their cotton by the bale and sold their finished product throughout New England states and the West.

In the late 1880s, the J. R. Montgomery Company figured out how to make metals such as gold, silver and copper into long thin, narrow strips, which they called “tinsel”. They developed methods of mixing these metal tinsels with cotton and other types of yarns, which really made the resulting cloth stand out. Their novelty yarns, including the ones with metal tinsel were used in making dresses, upholstery, drapery and other things. In 1896, they introduced mercerized cotton yarn. This process produced a high luster and a silky feel to the yarn. The resulting yarns turned out to be very popular.

They made yarns out of fibers of gold, silver and copper copper tinsel, in whatever form that the industry required. In 1920, the J.R.Montgomery workforce grew to 500.

The J. R. Montgomery Company was the first in the United States to make tinsels. A large part of the machinery used in the mills had to be especially adapted to its purposes, such adaptation calling for quite as much mechanical ingenuity and inventive skill as the designing of an entirely new machine. The company had a laboratory to make these developments.

In the years leading up to World War I, there was a need for Montgomery's tinsels for use in electrical devices. These included both metallic threads and the cords which were used on telephone switchboards. In 1922, the J. R. Montgomery Company's metallic tinsel began to be used for radio cords. At first, they provided electric cords to the radio industry and later to the television industry. Their products were used in: electric razors, hearing aids, radar, electric blankets, walkie-talkies, and more.

J.R. Montgomery passed away in March of 1930 at the age of 85. He had created Windsor Locks' second largest manufacturing company. He did it by analyzing, innovating, and improving production processes and equipment were made. He also thought of the future and had his brother, George as his deputy - ready to take over from him

In the 1930s, Montgomery got into the manufacturing and marketing of Christmas garlands, and decorative ribbons which were made from their "lamé" product. Lamé is a type of fabric which is woven or knit from thin ribbons of metallic fiber of a gold or silver color.

George Montgomery passed away in 1947. The company was still going strong. The company thrived through World War II. However, the United States had been moving from a manufacturing economy to a service economy since the early 1900s. The manufacturing towns like Windsor Locks saw their mills fall into hard times. The J.R. Montgomery company was sold to a German company in the 1980s, and ceased to exist in 1989.

CONCLUSION

J.R. Montgomery focussed on making diverse, complex products that people wanted, and on improving the processes and machinery to do the manufacturing well. He moved into difficult new product areas, and succeeded both in fashion and with the military. Anyone interested in success in industry would do well to study the life and work of J.R. Montgomery

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, The J.R.Montgomery Company and its Buildings, Chapter 7 of Windsor Locks History: Volume II, self published, Bel Air, MD, 2019.

CHAPTER 20

John E. Mooney: Entrepreneur and Inventive Block Owner

Mr. John E. Mooney was major force in the development of the town of Windsor Locks in the years from 1850 to 1935. He was born in Suffield in 1835, and moved to Windsor Locks when he was a boy. While still a boy, he went to work in the mills. He learned the tinning trade from Mr. C. E. Chaffee, in the shop later owned by the Allen Pease Company. While working at the Seymour Paper Company in 1887, he went into business for himself. He opened a tin shop on Grove Street, and a few years later, he added the furniture business and the undertaking business.

He was an ardent Democrat and had been elected chairman of the Board of Selectmen. He was also a member of the Board of Education, and a charter member of the Riverside Council of the Knights of Columbus. He was a member of the Business Men's Association, which became the Chamber of Commerce, and a trustee of St. Mary's Church. (Springfield Republican, October 31, 1935). One could only describe Mr. Mooney as a "Mover and a Shaker".

He built a very successful business in both the furniture and the Undertaking businesses in his Block on Main Street. It was on the southwest corner of Main and Grove Streets. The term "Block" is an archaic term that was used in the late 1800s and early 1900s to mean "a large, multi-purpose commercial business". Windsor Locks had 15 such "Blocks" on Windsor Locks, and Mr. Mooney owned one of them. That was no small feat for a boy who went to work in the mills at a very young age, and learned a variety of skills (selling furniture, making tinware, and undertaking).

The forward-thinking Mr. Mooney moved his furniture and mortuary business to the new building that he built on the northeast corner of Oak and Center Streets because he felt that there was far too much horse and buggy traffic on Main Street.

On May 4, 1898, Mr. Mooney opened his new business location at the corner of Oak and Center Streets. It had a room for his furniture business, a



JOHN E. MOONEY

room for his tin work, a hall that would be rented out for meetings, dances, socials, etc. and room for his mortuary business. The 1913 Aero Map said that Mr. Mooney sold stoves and ranges, plumbing and heating materials, and his mortuary business.

Mr. Mooney's business continued until his death in 1935, when the building became the Johnson Funeral Home. In 1969, it became the Kania



J.E.Mooney's Block, Oak & Center Streets

Funeral Home. Sometime after that, it became a two story apartment house.

Mr John E. Mooney was a self-taught businessman who ran four different businesses simultaneously, and he did it well. He was an ardent community leader as well as one of the most forward-thinking businessmen. His is the only one of the original 15 blocks that is still in existence. The rest were on Main Street, and were taken down during the Main Street Redevelopment Project. Mr. Mooney moved from Main Street to the corner of Oak and Center Streets. His building there is still in use at the time of this writing (2024), although the third floor has been eliminated, and it is now an apartment building.

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, "John E. Mooney's Building: Corner of Oak and Center Streets", January 2023, Bel Air, MD

Montemerlo, Melvin, "15 Blocks of Windsor Locks", in Windsor Locks History: Volume I, Self published, Bel Air, MD 2017

CHAPTER 21

Fay H. Osborne: Dexter Corp's Master Product Developer

The Dexter Corporation was Windsor Locks' biggest and oldest company for a long time. It was the town's largest employer for almost a century. C.H. Dexter founded the company in 1847 based on research he had done in the basement of his grist mill. He successfully made wrapping paper from Manila rope by employing the waste power from the mill. Then he built a mill to produce paper. It was the biggest long-term, successful business in Windsor Locks history.



Fay H. Osborne

For a long time, the Dexter company stayed in the hands of the Dexter family. In time, control moved to the Coffin family. The Coffin family had a summer home in Sunapee, N.H. in the 1910s. Mr. Arthur D. Coffin met a young man there named Fay H. Osborne, who was headed off to M.I.T for college. Mr. Coffin suggested that Mr. Osborne specialize in the chemistry of paper at M.I.T. He did, and he went to work for the Dexter company in 1923, where he set up a laboratory. According to the Windsor Locks Journal of July 26, 1962, it was the first laboratory in a paper mill. It set the standard for paper mills which followed.

At that time, the products made at Dexter's were based on "short-fiber" papers, such as condenser tissue and wrapping tissue. Mr. Osborne had seen some very thin Japanese paper which was made from Mulberry bark. He worked on a way of making that paper. He came up with a silky-textured paper that was made of Manila hemp fibers. The company found it could sell that paper for "meat casings". This type of paper was informally referred to by Windsor Locks residents as "baloney paper". Surprisingly, that paper caused Dexter company to become the leading manufacturer of mimeograph paper.

By 1938, Mr. Osborne had developed a type of long-fiber paper for use as tea-bags. Prior to that, Dexter's tea-bag paper was one-percent of the company's output. By 1962, it became 60 percent of the company's output. Mr. Osborn's tea-bags were outstanding. Only professional tea-tasters could tell the difference between tea made using his tea-bags and tea made from loose tea. He further developed the quality and manufacturability of the tea-bag paper.

Mr. Osborne also developed a type of paper that could withstand a welder's torch. Such paper was manufactured and sold for making the heat-shielding for the nose-cones of military missiles.

Mr. Osborne rose up the ranks in company. It turns out that he was not only a highly successful researcher and product developer, he was an outstanding manager. When he retired in 1962, he was Executive Vice President of the Dexter Co. After retirement, he stayed in Windsor Locks and made himself available to the Company whenever they wanted his help.

After 233 years, the various divisions of the Dexter Corporation were sold in 2000 to Loctite Corporation, Ahlstrom Paper Group, Invitrogen Corporation and others. The Windsor Locks facility became part of the Ahlstrom Paper Group. The Alstrom Company still makes paper. Susan Bergeron Reardon said (2023) that the Alstrom company still makes "casing" paper, which is known in Windsor Locks as "baloney paper", in its plant in Chirnside, Scotland. She also said that the heat-sealable teabag that Fay Osborne developed in 1946 is still made by Alstrom in 2023.

Another successful type of paper developed by Fay Osborne was a blue paper called "surgical drape". It was used for disposable operating room scrubs.

How big a success was the work of Fay Osborne? The answer was provided by Dexter D. Coffin, Sr., who said: **"It is seldom that the principal stockholders or owners of a business can point to one man who without question has contributed more to the success of a company than any other individual in a generation. Mr. Osborne's concept of a long-fiber paper, and his development of it changed the course of the Dexter Company's activity"**

In other words, Fay Osborne was one of the top echelon of Windsor Locks people who had the largest effect on the development of the town.

SOURCES:

Bergeron, Susan Bergeron, Facebook post on Nov. 28, 2023 provided the information that types of papers developed by Fay Osborne, are still being manufactured (2023) by the Alstrom Paper Group.

History of C.H. Dexter and Sons, Inc., <https://connecticutmills.org/find/details/c.h.-dexter-and-sons.-inc>

Pearl-Hommel, Jayne A. Comes the Revolution at Dexter Corp.
FamilyBusinessMagazine.com.

<https://www.familybusinessmagazine.com/comes-revolution-dexter-corp-0>

Windsor Locks Journal of July 26, 1962

CHAPTER 22

Sid Portnoy Had the Town's First Modern Drug Store

Sid's Modern Drug Store started in 1952. His first ad was in the May 8, 1952 issue. It is on the right side of this page. Notice in the ad that it was Walgreen's franchise. The store was at 142 Main Street, at the corner of Oak and Main Streets. See photo below. Sid Portnoy ran ads almost weekly in the Windsor Locks Journal throughout the life of his store.



Sid's Modern Drug, 142 Main Street

The early pharmacies in Windsor Locks were owned and operated by local pharmacists. Sid Portnoy started up Windsor Locks' first pharmacy that was part of a national chain. It was called the "Modern Drug Store", but it was part of the Walgreen chain. Sid was a unique character. He was very friendly and very personal. Everyone knew him as "Sid", but many never knew his last name. He didn't just sell drug store products. He had all sorts of things that you might use as gifts or personal items. If you asked for something that he didn't have, he'd say: "I don't have it now, but I'll have it by next Tuesday." He would get you what you wanted. If you needed to have your prescription filled, but you didn't have your prescription with you, he'd just fill it anyway, if he knew you. His store had all

CANDY BY
WHITMAN SCHRAFFT'S
CANDY CUPBOARD

Cosmetics By
LENTHERIC
HELENE RUBENSTEIN
LUCIEN
Le LONG
REVLON
SHULTON
EVENING IN PARIS

SOPHISTICATED SCENTS!
Like a subtle, sweet scent? You'll fall in love with *Heaven-Sent*, the new de toilette that's as heavenly as its name. **1.25**
Are you after a really captivating fragrance? *Command Performance* eau de parfum is the perfect answer. **1.75**

LASTING LIPSTICKS!
Helena Rubinstein's new lipstick last longer and look more radiant than any lipstick you can imagine! *STAY-LONG* lipstick is indelible—comes in 10 wonderful reds. *SILKEN LIPSTICK* is extra-creamy—in 16 fabulous reds. each **1.00**

LASTING FLOWER FRAGRANCES!
Looking for a heady fragrance that really clings? You'll want Helena Rubinstein's *White Magnolia*—one of the most lasting colognes. Or, do you prefer a fresh, light, delicate scent? Then famous *Apple Blossom* cologne is made for you. each **1.25**

The Modern Drug
Walgreen Agency Drug Store
142 Main Street Tel. 2-3123 Windsor Locks

sorts of interesting things. He had a round tub with a small board in the middle of it, which spun when you pressed a button. You attached a piece of paper to the board in the middle of the tub. Then you squirted paint at the piece of paper as it spun. It was “new”. It was fun. It was always a pleasure to go into Sid’s Modern Drug. He knew his customers.

He opened his “Modern Drug Store” at on the Southwest corner of Oak and Main Streets in 1952. Like Wuzzy’s, the Donut Kettle, Bianchi’s Restaurant, etc, Sid’s Modern Drug Store was a local “institution”. All went well until a massive fire burned his store to the ground in 1965. A photo of the fire is below.

After the fire, Sid’s opened his Modern Drug Store in a building near the north end of Main Street, across from Windsor Locks Commons shopping center. It closed in 1974. Sid was unique. His Modern Drug Store was unique. Sid’s style was unique. He added character, and “local color” to Windsor Locks’ Main Street, back when the town had a Main Street that was populated by locally-owned small businesses.



Fire at Sid’s Modern Drug, May 3, 1965

SOURCES:

Montemerlo, Melvin D. Chapter 8: “Main Street During Redevelopment: 1955-1975” of Windsor Locks History: Vol II, Self-published, Bel Air, MD. 2019.

Journal Inquirer, Feb. 19, 1975. Photo of Main Street during redevelopment.

Windsor Locks Journal: issues as shown in the text.

Hartford Courant, May 5, 1975

CHAPTER 23

Patrick Shea and the “Beehive Building”

Patrick Shea was one of the early Irish immigrants to Windsor Locks. He was born in Ireland in 1856. His wife, Nora, was also born in Ireland. After they got to Windsor Locks, they had five children.

A search of the Windsor Locks Journal archives showed 50 references to “Patrick Shea” from 1890 to 1912. Many of them were annual applications for liquor licenses starting in 1891 and ending in 1892, the year of his death.

The April 18, 1890 Windsor Locks Journal had an article saying that John Shea of Springfield, MA, bought the “Shannon and McCann” building on the corner of Main and Grove Streets, and paid \$8,500 for it. However, the deed was made out to John and Patrick Shea jointly.

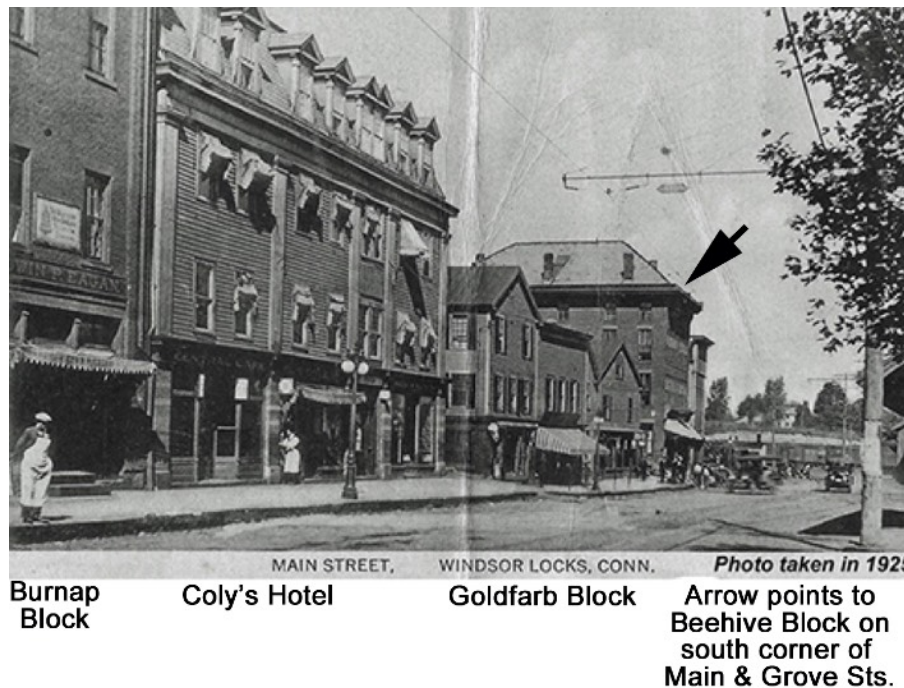
This block was referred to in Windsor Locks as “The Beehive Block”. It was a tenement building which had a few stores on the street level. The people who lived there were Italian immigrants. The name “Beehive Block” came from the constant “buzz” of sound emanating from the Italians who lived there. There was no air conditioning at the time, so the doors and windows were open much of the time, and there was usually a good deal of action.

We can tell from the annual “town tax list” in the Windsor Locks Journal that business was good for John Shea. He (and later his estate) owned the block from 1890 until about 1912. He died in 1902, but the Windsor Locks Journals were showing his taxes for years after that. His taxes were \$6000 in 1901, \$7000 in 1902, \$5500 in 1904 and 1905. Mrs. Shea paid \$8000 in 1908. How could taxes have been paid after he died? How did this happen? Patrick Shea had an “estate” in which his holdings were kept after he died, and it was his wife who was the holder of the estate. We can see that the Beehive Block lasted from 1890 until his wife disposed of the estate which was in about 1908. Mrs. Shea died in Dalton, Massachusetts in December of 1912.

The April 10, 1898 issue of the same newspaper described a knife fight between two Italians. One of the men was slightly injured. The other was taken away by the Police. The August 26, 1898 issue of that paper described a “free for all” fight that took place at an Italian christening party after midnight. Several people were severely pummeled. The August 18, 1907 issue of that newspaper said that a fire broke out in the Italian meat market of Pauline Bottasso on the ground floor of the Shea Block.

The building was knocked down in the 1930s or 40s. Later, this location had Red Leary’s hardware store on it, as well as the Mayflower Restaurant, Mac’s Package Store and Ray’s Lunch. Over the years, those stores changed hands a number of times. When it was the Beehive building, it was a multi-purpose building, with stores on the street floor, and rental apartments on the

upper floors. Patrick Shea died in his apartment in his building in June 1902. He is buried in St. Mary's Cemetery



CONCLUSION

Patrick Shea was one of the early owners of a big commercial building on Main Street. They were called "Blocks" and there were 15 of them. He emigrated from Ireland and quickly went into business. He owned the "Beehive Block" from 1890 until his estate divested the property in about 1912. He was quite creative. Somehow this Irish immigrant came up with the idea of having a tenement building which he would rent to Italian immigrants. He must have seen the need, and figured out a way to fill it. The annual tax payments show he was one of the highest individual payers of tax in Windsor Locks in the 1890-1912 timeframe so he was able to make good on his idea for a business. He was successful in getting his tenements and stores rented. Mr. Shea deserves congratulations on undertaking a creative approach to business, and on making it a success. It shows that the different nationalities in the Windsor Locks of the turn of the century worked together.

SOURCES

Montemerlo, Melvin D. "The Beehive Building", Chapter 13 of Windsor Locks History, self-published, Bel Air, MD 2016

Information sent by mail to the author by Patrick Shea's grandson, Michael Shea

CHAPTER 24

David Sisitzky: Highly Successful Windsor Locks Entrepreneur

David Sisitzky is one of the most fascinating of the early Windsor Locks entrepreneurs. Windsor Locks had a number of immigrants who arrived here with nothing, but who developed business empires quickly. Most immigrants worked in the mills. Some got into farming. However Windsor Locks had more than its share of immigrants who quickly started retail businesses, and then expanded their business empire into acquiring buildings and renting out stores and apartments. They included: David Sisitzky, Charles Colli, Graziano Graziani, Natale Tambussi, and the Colapietro brothers (Vito, Leonardo and Pasquale).

Most immigrants took a while to settle into their new homeland. They joined fraternal clubs of people from their country. These clubs existed for Polish, Italian and Irish immigrants. They spent time with the people from their homeland, because it was comforting. It helped ease the pressure of trying to fit into a new way of life. That was not the case for David Sisitzky. He was from



Sisitzky's Market, 108 Main St, Windsor Locks, Conn

Russia. His family members were the only Russians here. That didn't hold back David Sisitzky. He started his life in Windsor Locks at full throttle.

He was born in Kovno, Russia in 1893. He arrived in the United States in 1908. His name at birth was "David Jusitzky". In the US, he changed it a few times. It became Sissitzky and finally Sisk. However, the newspapers continued to refer to him as Sisitzky. He had a wife and three children.

David Sisitzky opened his store, "Sisitzky's Market", in 1915, when he was only 22 years of age. The other entrepreneurs who are listed above, opened stores at about the same age. There were a number of grocery stores in Windsor Locks at that time. Like the other entrepreneurs, he quickly went beyond just operating his store. He got into the same business that made the other entrepreneurs successful, that is, buying, owning and renting property (stores and apartments). He did it quickly. By 1920, HE ALREADY HAD OVER 150 TENANTS. That was an incredibly fast rise in becoming a major real estate mogul.

Mr. Sisitzky is remembered as a very nice, friendly store owner, who treated his customers well, and kept his market well-stocked with quality produce. However, his interest quickly turned to his growing rental market.

Mr. Sisitzky hired Bill Buckley and James Price, both of Windsor Locks, to work in his Market. Bill was an experienced butcher. James was brought on to be a delivery boy. Bill taught Jim the butcher trade, and he later bought the grocery business from David Sisitzky. They kept the Sisitzky name. Later, James bought the business from Bill. The Sisitzky Market existed from about 1915 to the early 1960s. It did not change its name even though ownership changed. The store closed in about 1961.

Mr. Graziano Graziani was a well known investor in Windsor Locks. He had been buying and renting property for quite a while. In 1957, Mr. Sisitzky joined with Mr. Graziani to sell adjoining pieces of land to the town of Windsor Locks for use as a parking lot behind the First National Bank building. (Springfield Union, April 22, 1957)

David Sisitzky died on October 7, 1979 at the age of 87, while living in Bloomfield, Connecticut.

SOURCE:

Montemerlo, Melvin D. "Sisitzky's Market", Chapter 5 of Windsor Locks History, Self published, Bel Air, MD, 2017.

CHAPTER 25

Natale Tambussi: Successful Businessman and Community Leader

Natale Tambussi was born in Perletto, Italy in 1898. Two of his brothers, James and Elisio, came to Windsor Locks with their parents in 1904. Natale emigrated to Windsor Locks in 1909. He was six years old at the time.

Natale was the only one of the Tambussi children who got an education. He went to grammar school in Windsor Locks. Natale stayed in school until he was 16. In 1914, he went to work at the Montgomery Mill, oiling pulleys for \$5 per day. He left and became an apprentice cigar maker. In Suffield and in New Haven, he was making \$35 a week. Using money that he had saved up, he opened a pool hall on Main Street, across from the train station.

In 1920, he opened the Tambussi Bakery Shop on Spring Street, along with his brother, James.

Natale bought a house at 10 Olive St. He married Rose Ferretti when she was about 20 years old.

In 1940, Natale and James sold the Bakery, and opened the T & T Tavern. Natale was active in the Windsor Locks Italian-American community. He was a charter member and President of the Italian Progressive Club, treasurer of the Soccorso Di Mutuo, and a member of the Senior Citizen club.

Ten years later, in 1948, the brothers sold the tavern. James opened a machine shop, in which he was still active in 1954.

In 1947, Natale invested some of the proceeds from the sale of the bakery in a partnership with an Italian family from Suffield. They bought the Rialto Theater on Main Street in Windsor Locks.

James Tambussi, Natale's brother, had a daughter named Ella, who became governor of the state of Connecticut. As all Windsor Lockers know, she was the first woman to become a state governor on her own.

The Windsor Locks Journal of Feb. 1, 1951 said that a new firm by the name of "The Windsor Locks Machine Company, Inc. was taking over a building on South Main Street. The president of the company was Thomas Grasso, the son-in-law of Natale Tambussi. Natale Tambussi was the Vice President. The Secretary was James Tambussi.



Natale Tambussi

In 1960, Natale Tambussi sold the Rialto theater, which he had owned since 1947, to Mr. Halperin of Hartford.

Natale Tambussi died in January of 1986 at the age of 77. His obituary was in the January 5, 1986 issue of the Springfield Union. It said:

“Natale V. Tambussi, 89 of 10 Olive St., operator of the Windsor Locks Lumber Company, died Saturday at home.

“Born in Perletto, Italy, he lived in Windsor Locks for 77 years and retired in 1960. His business career started with the Windsor Locks Bakery and later the T&T Tavern, which he operated with his brother. He operated the Rialto Theater, Windsor Locks Machine Co., and the lumber company from 1947 to 1960.

He was a charter member and president of the Italian Progressive Club, treasurer of the Soccorso Di Mutuo, and a member of the Senior Citizen club.”

CONCLUSION

Natale Tambussi was an Italian immigrant who arrived at Windsor Locks with no money, and no ability to speak English. He had the intelligence and the ambition to succeed. He had a large effect in making Windsor Locks grow in the 1900s with his bakery, his tavern, the Windsor Locks Machine Company, his lumber company, and his ownership of the Rialto Theater. He was also an active and enthusiastic leader of the Italian-American population of Windsor Locks. He provided a model for future leaders of Windsor Locks.

SOURCES:

“The Tambussi Family - 50 Years of Success”, an article in the Hartford Courant of May 23, 1954.

A number of articles from the Windsor Locks Journal and the Springfield Union were used as sources. The issue dates of each of those sources is listed in the text of this chapter.

CHAPTER 26

Moses Wing (1760-1804): Master Clockmaker, Goldsmith & Silversmith

Moses Wing is one of the most fascinating citizens in the history of Windsor Locks. Mr. Wing was a “goldsmith” who made grandfather clocks in 1785, in a shed that he built on West. Street. He had to design and make the brass “clock works” as well as design and make the fancy wood cases for the clocks. At the time, there probably fewer than two dozen clockmakers in the United States. Some of his clocks are still excellent timekeepers, and still show up in the shops of high-end antique clock dealers.

Moses Wing was born in Rochester, MA, on April 25, 1760. The Wing family moved to the Pine Meadow section of Windsor, CT in about 1767. Moses served in the Revolutionary War. In 1777, he enlisted as a private in the Connecticut militia. When he left the military, he had attained the rank of Major. That reveals much about Moses Wing.

Moses Wing built a house and a shop on West Street. He made tall case (grandfather) clocks, silver teaspoons, shoe buckles and other items from precious metals in his shop. Making clocks in 1785 was only for the most industrious, clever and hardworking people. He opened a shop in about 1804 with a Mr. Geer Terry in Hartford, CT. They advertised in the *Hartford American Mercury* (Hartford CT), 3 Mar 1803 as “*Makers of all kinds of gold and silversmith work.*” He moved to Worcester, MA, in 1805 and worked there until 1809.

On the right is a photo of a grandfather clock (tall-case clock) made by Moses Wing in Pine Meadow (which became Windsor Locks in 1785). On the following page are photos of the face and the works of the clock. The clock has a cherrywood case and an engraved silvered brass dial. The dial was made from a sheet of brass. The dial is signed: “Moses Wing / Windsor,”





Mr. Wing was an outstanding craftsman. However, he was also an industrious businessman. It probably occurred to him soon after he made his first clocks in Windsor Locks, that the local customer base for such products was small. The only persons who could buy “tall case” clocks, and jewelry made of precious metals were the very wealthy. He had formed a business with a partner in Hartford. However he decided to move to Worcester, MA in 1805, where he set up a shop, and focussed on selling clocks, watches, and fine jewelry. He also did repairs. He did very well in that shop.

The October 25, 1809 Worcester, MA newspaper announced that Mr. Moses Wing had passed away. It had the following statement:
 “ In this town, on Monday morning last, Major Moses Wing died. In the death of Mr. Wing, society has been deprived of a valuable member.

Sources:

“Moses Wing of Windsor and Hartford Connecticut and Worcester, Massachusetts.” website of Delaney Antique Clocks.
<https://www.delaneyantiqueclocks.com/clocks/maker/moses-wing-windsor-and-hartford-connecticut-and-worcester-massachusetts>

“The Moses Wing Collection”, Worcester History Museum,
<https://worcesterhistory.pastperfectonline.com/archive/8D36BD77-7999-40B6-B98D-333307156511>

Invaluable.com, Bourgeault-Horan Antiquarians
<https://www.invaluable.com/v2/auction-lot/1072-connecticut-federal-cherry-tall-case-clock-m-1072-c-4aqt0beuy4>

Jabez Haskell Hayden, Historical Sketches, published by the Windsor Locks Journal, 1991.

CHAPTER 27

Tommaso Zaccheo: Italian Immigrant Became an Auto Dealership Owner

Tommaso Zaccheo was born in Turi, Italy in 1893. He emigrated to Windsor Locks in 1910. He had a fruit and vegetable store in the Mather Block, on the southwest corner of Main and Spring Streets. No information could be found on when he started it, but he sold it to Vito and Leonardo Colapietro in 1917 (WLJ 10-20-1916). The two Colapietro brothers owned the store jointly until Vito rented a store in the Hotel on Main Street, which he later bought.

Tommaso Zaccheo bought the Coffin building in 1917. According to his son, John Zaccheo, his father started business in his new building which was called "an armchair restaurant". The chairs had one arm with a small table, so that you could bring your food to your chair and eat it there. That eliminated the need for waitresses.

In 1922, he closed the restaurant, and started "The Bridge Auto Service Station". John Zaccheo said that his father came up with the idea of having an awning overhead at the gas station, which made it more comfortable for customers both in the rain and under the hot sun. Others copied him on that.

Mr. Zaccheo had frequent ads in the Windsor Locks Journal from the time the service station opened. They showed changes over the years. In 1926, he ads said that he started selling stoves and other kitchen appliances.

In 1929, Tommaso Zaccheo started an automobile dealership in his building. He sold Pontiacs, and another brand of cars, called "Oakland". You can see that in the photo on the next page.

In 1939, he sold his business and his building to Frank Dowd and Raymond Balboni, who ran it as an automobile service station.

Mr. Zaccheo sold the property in 1937, and moved to Westfield, MA, and became a "gentleman farmer". He died in 1975 at the age of 82.



Tommaso Zaccheo 1925



**Tommaso Zaccheo's
Auto Dealership Jan. 4, 1931**

CONCLUSION

Tommaso Zaccheo, like a number of other Italian immigrants of the 1900-1920 timeframe, came to Windsor Locks with no money and no ability to speak English. Most of the immigrants came to Windsor Locks to work in the mills. Many worked in the mills during their entire careers. Mr. Zaccheo quickly started up a grocery store which was so successful that he was able to sell it and buy one of the 15 large commercial buildings on Main Street that were called "Blocks". He tried a few different businesses before getting into the repair and finally into the sales of automobiles. That allowed him to retire comfortably at the age of 40, and move to Massachusetts to become a "Gentleman Farmer". His oldest son became a medical doctor and his second son owned a large Italian restaurant in Salt Lake City, Utah. He left his mark on Windsor Locks. He started out with nothing, and ended up owning one of the 15 "Blocks" of Windsor Locks.

SOURCES:

Montemerlo, Melvin, D. "The 15 Blocks of Windsor Locks", Chapter 32 of *Windsor Locks History*, Self Published, Bel Air, MD 2017.

Private telephone calls with Dr. Thomas Zaccheo and John Zaccheo, sons of Tommaso Zaccheo.

CHAPTER 28

Herbert Raymond Coffin, Sr. and his Wife, Julia (Dexter) Coffin: Created and Ran the Lincoln Institute

Herbert R. Coffin, Sr.

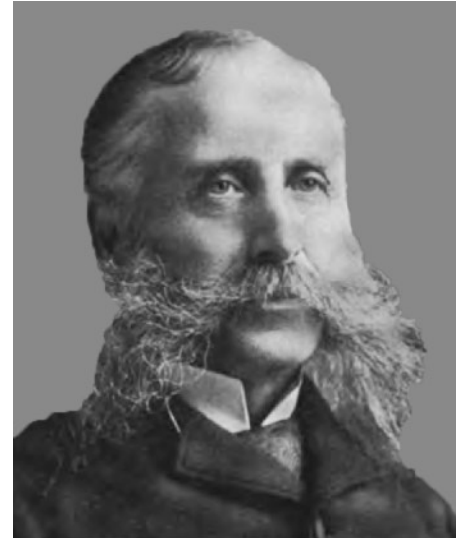
This chapter celebrates both Herbert R. Coffin and his wife, Julia Dexter Coffin, for outstanding accomplishments in Windsor Locks.

Herbert R. Coffin Sr, was born in New Hampshire, in 1840. He was well-schooled in his youth. He and his father came to Windsor Locks and started a wool processing mill. He married a daughter of C.H.Dexter in 1866. He sold out to his father in 1867, and went to work as a clerk for the Star Paper Mill, which was established by C.H. Dexter. He worked there for one year.

C.H.Dexter brought his son, Edwin D. Dexter and Herbert R. Coffin Sr. into the company. When Edwin died, Mr. Coffin took on full leadership of the company. The “ Story of Windsor Locks 1663-1976” says: “Mr. Coffin greatly increased the size and capacity of the mills, and began the manufacture of high grade tissues and various paper specialties.”

His products consisted chiefly of copying, tissue, and typewriting papers, which did well in the market, and the surplus power at his plant was used for grinding flour and grain. He was a Director of the Connecticut River Banking Company and a Director of the Medlicott Company, Vice-President of the Windsor Locks and Warehouse Point Bridge Company, and President of the Connecticut River Company, which owned the Canal.

He was one of the few leaders of a mill along the canal who also bought one of the 15 large commercial buildings along Main Street which were known as “Blocks”. They were large buildings. The owners profited by renting out spaces in the building as stores, headquarters of local clubs and even as apartments. The Coffin Block was a Greek Revival style



Herbert Raymond Coffin Sr.



Coffin Block

Barrett Block

building with a portico, and was painted white. It was across the street from the canal bridge. It was on the South Corner of State Street and Main Street.

The tenants of the Coffin Block were: The Lincoln Institute, the C.W. Watrous furniture store, James E. Carroll's harness shop, and Henry Spenkoch, a baker.

Mr. Herbert R. Coffin Sr. was responsible for a massive increase in the size, capability and earnings of the Dexter Company, and for the success of his Block tenants.

Mrs. Julia (Dexter) Coffin

Mrs. Julia (Dexter) Coffin had a large effect on the town of Windsor Locks. The town had a large number of Italian immigrants. Julia Coffin and her husband, Herbert R. Coffin Sr., wanted to do something to help them assimilate into life in Windsor Locks. Through the Congregational Church, she founded and led "The Lincoln Institute". They were the largest tenant of the Coffin Block.

The Lincoln Institute was well described in the Feb. 16, 1908 issue of the Springfield Republican newspaper. Here are some excerpts from that article: "The Lincoln Institute started with the idea that the Italians were infinitely more in need of instruction in the language, customs and institutions of this country than of religious instruction. ... It is realized that the first desire of the young Italian immigrant is to learn our language ... Therefore the Institute tries to get hold of young Italian boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 22 or 23 years as soon as possible. The Institute occupies two floors of a building on Main St. First comes a reading room and library with books and American and Italian newspapers, then a general classroom with blackboards,... On the top floor are the rooms of the Lincoln club and the rooms of the superintendent."

The Lincoln Institute not only taught English to the Italian immigrants, but also taught music, and had an orchestra. They gave sewing lessons to the Italian girls. This was a large organization which occupied a large space in the Coffin Block. It was still going strong in 1913.

Mrs. Julia Coffin and her husband deserves recognition and gratitude for organizing, funding and leading the Lincoln Institute in providing long-term, real education for the Italian immigrants.

SOURCES:

Montemerlo, Melvin D., "The 15 Blocks of Windsor Locks", Chapter 32 of Windsor Locks History, Self Published, Bel Air, MD 2017.

Montemerlo, Melvin D., "The Dexter Dynasty", Chapter 31 of Windsor Locks History, Self Published, Bel Air, MD 21017

Herndon, Richard, *Men of Progress*, published by the New England Magazine, Boston, 1898

CHAPTER 29

Charles Kaman: World-class Engineer, Businessman, Billionaire and Nice Guy

Charles Huron Kaman was one of the leading aviation pioneers of the 20th Century. He changed the world of helicopter design. His helicopter company turned into a multi-billion dollar success. He created a radically new design for a guitar, which turned into an international business. He raised seeing-eye dogs, and was a well known humanitarian. His list of awards includes:

- National Inventors Hall of Fame (2003)
- Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy (1997)
- National Medal of Technology (1996)
- Honorary Fellow of the American Helicopter Society (1950)
- Naval Aviation Hall of Honor at the National Naval Aviation Museum (1996)
- Department of Defense Distinguished Public Service Medal (1995)
- Honorary Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society (1995)
- Kaman's K-225 helicopter is displayed in the Smithsonian.



Charles Kaman

Mr. Kaman started his company in the garage of his mother's home in West Hartford, CT. **In 1945, he founded Kaman Aircraft Co. in Windsor Locks, when he was just 26 years old! In 1961, Charlie started a second aviation business at Bradley Field.** He founded AirKaman Inc., which provided fixed-base operations at Bradley. Below is a photo of AirKaman Inc. headquarters, near Bradley Field.



AirKaman Inc., Bradley Field

Kaman Aircraft and Hamilton Standard helped change Windsor Locks from a small manufacturing town into a town which had major aircraft engineering firms such as Kaman Aircraft and Hamilton Standard. In 1950, our population

about 5,200. In the late 1960s, the population grew to over 15,000. The southwest section of town grew from farmland to a sea of new houses.

A pioneer in rotary-winged flight and one of Connecticut's great inventors and innovators, Kaman's helicopters achieved many breakthroughs, including the first gas turbine-powered helicopter, the first twin-turbine-powered helicopter, the first remotely controlled helicopter and the first all-composite rotor blade. Over the years, his helicopters set numerous records for performance and altitude.

Charles Kaman not only revolutionized the helicopter industry, he revolutionized the music industry. 1966 was a slow year for aviation, so Mr. Kaman put a group of his helicopter engineers together to design a new guitar. A guitar's sound comes from vibration. Helicopter engineers know how to reduce vibration, so Mr. Kaman figured they could do the opposite and maximize vibration, which would improve guitars. They came up with the unconventional idea that the back of the guitar should be not only thin, but it should have a rounded, parabolic shape. To make that happen, they developed a new synthetic fiberglass material called Lyrachord. It worked! The Ovation guitar made its debut in 1966, with unprecedented projection and sustain. Glenn Campbell introduced it on his TV show in 1968. A key figure in his Ovation Guitar Company was Jim Gurley, who owned a music store in Windsor Locks and had designed and built steel-guitars.

Charlie not only changed the design of guitars, he changed the way guitar manufacturers distributed their wares. He saw the importance of efficient distribution in the music industry, and acquired two instrument distributors, which provided the basis for Kaman Music Co to establish a national network while growing into the largest independent distributor of music accessories. In 2007, Kaman Music Corporation was sold to Fender Musical Instruments.

He had a long, extraordinary career in aerospace. He kept buying companies and integrating them into his. **By 2012, Kaman Aircraft Corp. was on the New York Stock Exchange, had 241 offices worldwide, revenue of \$1.59 Billion, and a total equity of \$42.1 Billion.**

Charles Kaman was one of the greatest of those who affected Windsor Locks. . He was a gifted guitar player who turned down an offer to play for the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. He was an engineer of the highest order. He was gifted as a natural leader. He just did world-class things again and again. He achieved wonders in engineering, music and in business. People loved to work for him. He made billions more than anyone else who graced Windsor Locks. Above all, he was a good and nice man. He was a person to be emulated.

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, "Charlie Kaman", Chapter 9 of Windsor Locks History: Volume II, Self published, Bel Air, MD, 2019,

CHAPTER 30

Ray Roncari: Businessman and Philanthropist

Ray Roncari was a very special person. He was the child of Italian immigrants. His father was a laborer who became a cobbler (shoemaker). He entered Windsor Locks Elementary School in 1930 and graduated in 1938. His name was in the *Windsor Locks Journal* at least a dozen times while he was in grammar school, and even more often when he was in high school.

When Ray was seven years old, he rescued six year old Buster White from drowning. Buster fell into the ice pond on North Street, and landed face down. Ray waded into the water and pulled the youngster to the bank of the pond where adults who lived nearby took him home. (*Windsor Locks Journal*, May 23, 1930)

In elementary school, Ray was given perfect attendance awards five times in eight years. He developed a love of performing on-stage at an early age. He was in numerous plays and musicals. In high school, he was often on the honor roll. He continued participating in dramatic and musical plays. He graduated from Windsor Locks High School in 1943.

Ray immediately joined the Army, and went to Italy where World War II was in full swing. He wrote a number of letters home which were published in the *Windsor Locks Journal*. He received the Purple Heart for bravery after he was wounded. He was captured, and was missing in action for a while. He was found to be a Prisoner of War. He wrote letters from the German prison camp. He was released from that Camp by the Russians. When he got back home, he participated in more musicals and dramatic plays.

Ray joined his brothers in their construction company. Windsor Locks was in the middle of a house-building boom, and a boom in construction in the Bradley Field area. The housing boom was caused by the arrival of big companies such as Hamilton Standard.

The Roncari business was construction. They specialized in the “aggregate business” — that is, the materials such as sand and crushed rocks of different sizes that go into the making of asphalt and concrete. At first, they developed sections of Windsor Locks, such as the land near Ahern Ave, off of North Main Street, and land in the Southwest section of the town. They had the materials for roads, driveways and basements. In one of neighborhood off of North Street, near Bradley Field, Ray named the streets after his children (Robin Road, Deborah Road, Leslie Street, Dale Street, and Alicia Terrace).



Pfc. Raymond A. Roncari

At first, the Roncari company developed properties. Then they focussed on selling aggregate materials to house and road builders. The company bought their own mining facility, the Roncari Quarry in East Granby, CT. While they built some small homes on concrete slabs in the Southwest section of Windsor Locks, their specialty was large projects, such as roads.

The three brothers, Ray, Al and Angelo worked together. Angelo was the president. He was also a whiz with machinery. He ran the quarry. Al was the construction site specialist. Ray was the businessman. He was the person who dealt with the banks, the lawyers and the government. To say the very least, the Roncari company did very, very well. Ray was a precocious businessman.

In about 1991, after over a half century in the business, Ray sold Roncari Industries to Galasso Materials LLC.

Ray Roncari and Simon Konover teamed to build the Sheraton hotel at Bradley Field. This was then leased to the Sheraton chain on a long term basis. Another of Ray's businesses was Roncari Air Cargo, at Bradley Field. Later, Ray was president and owner of Roncari Express Valet Parking in Windsor Locks.

Ray gave generously to St. Mary's church, to the town, and to individual people in need. Much of Ray's generosity was never made public. He helped families of people who worked for him when they needed it. Those families will never forget what he did for them. When St. Mary's School needed new sidewalks and paving, Ray took care of it. He was generous to the Catholic churches of the town. He was generous in sports and in town projects. In 2012, a street clock that is 14 1/2 feet tall was installed on the corner of Main and Elm Streets, and dedicated to Ray Roncari for his devotion to the town of Windsor Locks.

CONCLUSION

Ray was an exemplary Windsor Locks citizen. Everything he did was outstanding: school, military, business, sports, philanthropy and family-man. Besides that, he was well-liked. His love of being on-stage both in dramatic and musical programs never waned.

AUTHOR'S NOTE; As a teenager, I was a member of the Golden Lancers Drum Corps. I asked where the money came from for the instruments, uniforms and the bus. The answer was: Ray Roncari. While at Cathedral High School, I got a journalism assignment to interview a successful local businessman. Mr. Roncari accepted my request for an interview. It was a pleasure to interview him.

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, "Ray Roncari: A Windsor Locks Original", in Windsor Locks History, Self-published, Bel Air, MD 2019.

CHAPTER 31

Ben Boyer: Windsor Locks' First Bowling Alley



Windsor Locks' First Bowling Alley
Ben Boyer's Candlepin Bowling Alley
1909-1917 68 Center Street

The is the story of Windsor Locks' first bowling alley. In 1909, the new "Boyer Bowling Alley" appeared on Center Street. It contained two pairs of alleys. (Windsor Locks Journal, Sept. 3, 1909) A new bowling league started the next week. There were six teams of six members each. They played at "Boyer's alleys" on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights. (Sept. 17, 1909). It was Candlepin style bowling. (Nov. 12, 1909)

Mr. Boyer added another second level to his bowling alley building, which will be his apartment. (Feb. 2, 1911) This tells us that the original building was a one-story building, and that the bowling alley was on the first floor.

Mr. J. B. Dowling and Mr. L. S. Sheppard leased the bowling alley from Mr. Boyer. (March 3, 1912). Mr. Boyer took over management from Mr. Dowling and Mr. Sheppard. (Sept. 11, 1911) From 1910 to 1917, the Windsor Locks Journal printed the scores of all matches.

Mr. Boyer erected a shop across the street from the Bidwell Lumber yard on upper Main Street, as the headquarters of his woodworking and house-building business. (March 14, 1913) This tells us how Mr. Boyer made his living.

The scores of the matches kept showing up in the newspaper as the league went on through the 1914 and 1915 seasons Mr. Boyer kept putting up ads for the bowling alley. (Dec. 18, 1912) Starting in 1914, Mr. Boyer also put advertisements for his woodworking and general contracting business in the Windsor Locks Journal.

The lot on Main Street which had had been Mr. Boyer's woodworking shop was bought by the F.S.Bidwell Co. (Feb. 16, 1916) However the bowling scores, the Bowling Alley ads, and the general contracting ads kept showing up in the Windsor Locks Journal. The candlepin league was going strong. (Jan. 1, 1917) The 1917 bowling league's season ended well. (Jan. 12, 1917) However, there were no more sets of bowling scores or of bowling alley ads after January 12, 1917.. **From this, we know that 1917 was the end of the Mr. Boyer's candlepin bowling alley and bowling league.**

The Windsor Locks Journal articles said that the bowling alley was "on Center Street, at the end of Oak Street". They didn't say that it was on the corner of Center and James Streets, because James Street didn't exist yet. It was built years later, and Mr. Boyer built many of the houses on James Street. It should noted that the early Windsor Locks Journal articles did not provide the street number of the Bowling Alley. This is because the bowling alley was built in 1909, but Windsor Locks did not start using house numbers until 1915. That was done in order to deliver mail.

The Feb. 11, 1938 obituary for Mr. Boyer's wife provided important information. It said that Mrs. Emma Boyer, aged 74, widow of the late Belani (Ben) Boyer, died at her home on Center Street. It said that her husband was a well-known contractor and builder, who had erected most of the homes on the new street which he opened up in the mid 1930s. That was James Street. It said that Mr. Boyer had built many other houses in Windsor Locks and in nearby towns. It said that the funeral was held at Mr. and Mrs. Boyer's home, at 68 Center Street. That is how we learned the address of Boyer's Bowling Alley.

The photo at the top of this story shows a 2023 photo of the house at 68 Center Street. We know that it started off as a one story building, and that Mr. Boyer then built his own apartment in the floor above the bowling alley.

SOURCES:

All of the sources of the section on "Windsor Locks' newest Bowling Alley" are from issues of the Windsor Locks Journal Archives which are found in the following website

<https://windsorlocks.advantage-preservation.com/>

the specific issues for each source is listed in the body of the chapter.

The photo of the Mooney Building is from the 1913 Aero Map of Windsor Locks.

CHAPTER 32

Harry Brusie: Nationally Known Sulky Jockey and Horse Trainer

Henry Brusie was born in Egremont, MA in 1876. He died in 1947, at the age of 41. **When he died, his obituary was found in 253 newspapers in 23 states across the United States. He may well be the most widely-known person who ever lived in Windsor Locks.**

The Windsor Locks Journal article of October 15, 1915 said that the largest and fastest group of sulky horses would be racing in Windsor, and the best drivers would be racing. They included Harry Brusie.

The Windsor Locks Journal of Dec. 8, 1916 said that Mr. John J. Byrnes, owner of the hotel on Main Street, leased his hotel to Mr. Harry Brusie, along with all of its furnishings and equipment, and the cafe connected with the hotel. Mr. Brusie changed the name of the hotel from "Hotel Byrnes" to "Hotel Brusie".

The *Windsor Locks Journal* of May 8, 1917, said that Mr. Byrnes sold the Hotel that he had been leasing to Mr. Brusie, to Mr. Vito Colapietro. So Mr. Brusie was out of the hotel business, after just two years. Apparently, he was trying to expand from his enterprises in sulky racing to something else. He tried the hotel business, but gave it up rather quickly.

The Windsor Locks Journal of June 9, 1918 said that Mr. Brusie was a popular driver of trotting horses throughout the East, and that he made a grand showing during the past weekend. He won eleven first-places, which gave him a total of 25 for the season. He didn't drive in all of the races. He had other drivers, including his son, Lymon.

The *Boston Herald* of August 22, 1921 said that Mr. Brusie had won \$8,369 on the Bay State Circuit that year. In 2023 dollars, that would be the equivalent of \$142,000. Those were not his total winnings for the year. They were only his winnings from a single racing circuit.

The *Boston Herald* of July 27, 1925 said that Brusie was the fourth leading money winner, with winnings of \$7,307, which in 2023 dollars is \$127,000 in 2023 dollars. Mr. Brusie was continuing to make a very good living.

The Nov. 24, 1922 issue of the *Windsor Locks Journal* showed that Mr. Brusie was selling racehorses, and was using the hotel address to do so. Mr. Brusie remained in Windsor Locks until 1926. He lived in town for nine years.

Harry got other members of his family into racing trotters. A 1933 photo of Harry and his son, Lymon, is shown on the next page. They often competed in the same races. Harry's brother, Fred Brusie, was also into racing.

Due to poor health, Harry returned home to Egremont, where he died on June 12, 1932. (Springfield Republican of June 12, 1932)

The *Windsor Locks Journal* issue of June 14, 1941 had the obituary for Harry Brusie. Harry died in Boston after a long illness. It described Harry's

interest in the hotel on Main Street, and said that Harry was well-known throughout the country as a harness racing driver. It said that several years before, Harry switched to become a trainer of trotters when running tracks became popular in the East.



Harry Brusie and son, Lyman

The *Windsor Locks Journal* said that he was one of the finest drivers in the country, and that during the 1929 season, he won the country win/race record with fifty-one races to his stable's credit. The funeral was in East Hartford, and that is where he was buried.

The Harness Racing Hall of Fame elected him to the status of "Immortal" in 1978. The inscription reads: "He trained and raced around New England for forty years. He developed many good half-mile horses, including Minor Hal, Quite Sure and Sturdy. Brusie was much loved by sportsmen because of his native wit and personality. His son, Lyman joined him at the stable for some time but then resigned to go with the thoroughbreds."

<https://harnessmuseum.com/content/harry-brusie>

The book, *The History of Harness Racing in New England*, by Robert Temple, 2010, said: "For more than 40 years, Harry Brusie (1876-1941) who was born in Egremont, Mass, developed, trained and drove some of New England's finest horses both on the old Bay State Circuit and throughout New England. Amongst his best were Sturdy, who set a world record for two-year-old trotting colts (2.06 1/2), Quite Sure, Minor Hal, and Tippie Volo, a brown filly who gained national notoriety by winning 13 straight races." **In short, Harry Brusie was the most successful sportsman from Windsor Locks throughout its history. No-one else came close. Also, it is doubtful that other Windsor Lockser was as widely known across the United States as Harry Brusie.**

SOURCES:

The History of Harness Racing in New England, by Robert Temple, 2010,

[https://books.google.com/books?](https://books.google.com/books?id=q88nir3ldlwC&pg=PA78&lpg=PA78&dq=harry+brusie&source=bl&ots=pTENDbrJIX&sig=ACfU3U1MqtJ2nOcwBlvOlA75Qke49z7Cg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewi7vJnZvPHgAhUytIkKHfI0C1QQ6AEwB3oECAMQAQ#v=onepage&q=harry%20brusie&f=false)

[id=q88nir3ldlwC&pg=PA78&lpg=PA78&dq=harry+brusie&source=bl&ots=pTENDbrJIX&sig=ACfU3U1MqtJ2nOcwBlvOlA75Qke49z7Cg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewi7vJnZvPHgAhUytIkKHfI0C1QQ6AEwB3oECAMQAQ#v=onepage&q=harry%20brusie&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=q88nir3ldlwC&pg=PA78&lpg=PA78&dq=harry+brusie&source=bl&ots=pTENDbrJIX&sig=ACfU3U1MqtJ2nOcwBlvOlA75Qke49z7Cg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewi7vJnZvPHgAhUytIkKHfI0C1QQ6AEwB3oECAMQAQ#v=onepage&q=harry%20brusie&f=false)

Harness Racing Hall of Fame

<https://harnessmuseum.com/content/harry-brusie>

Numerous newspaper articles were referenced above, and the specific date of each article was given.

CHAPTER 33

Dr. Sidney Burnap, Jr. World-class runner and Physician to the Stars

Sidney Burnap, Jr. was born in 1833. He was born into wealth. His father, Sidney Burnap, Sr. , was the owner of the Burnap Block on Main Street, which housed a number of stores, companies, and the Burnap Opera House. He was also a surgeon. The family lived in the largest home in Windsor Locks, which was called Maple Hill, on Maple Ave. At the time, their estate was over 100 acres which was just a short way north of the Train Station.

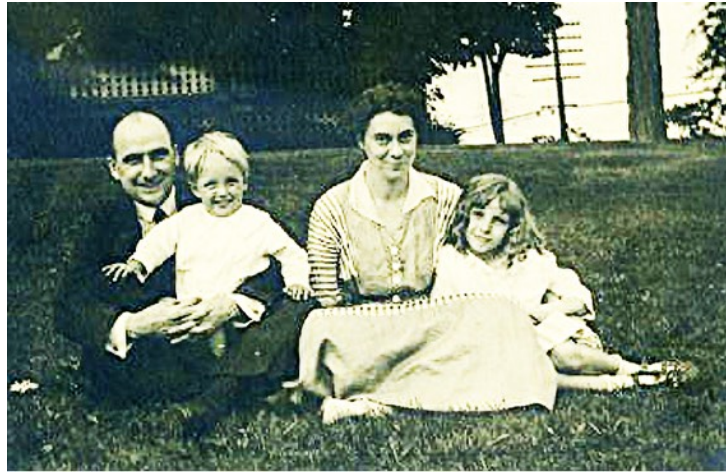


Sidney Burnap, Jr., in front of his parents home

Sidney Jr. became a phenomenal runner while he was at Yale University. During his college career, he became a world-class middle-distance runner. **In 1904, he was ranked 7th in the world in the 400 meter run. At the New York Athletic Club's invitational meet at Madison Square Garden in March of 1904, he was a member of the Yale relay team that broke the world's record for the indoor two-mile relay with a time of 8:09 and 3/5ths of a second. On May 26, 1909, Burnap was again part of a relay team that lowered the outdoor 2-mile relay world's record to 7:58 and 2/5ths of a second at the IAAAA championship meet in New York.**

After graduation from Yale in 1905, he attended Columbia University, and became a surgeon, like his father. He remained in New York City for over 20 years, both as a surgeon and as a member of the faculty of the Columbia Medical School.

Then he moved to Los Angeles, where he became a “surgeon to the Hollywood “stars”. In 1933, he performed an appendectomy on actress Jean Harlow, who was one of the hottest stars in Hollywood at the time. . In a recent biography of the famous actress, Jean Harlow was quoted as saying she had “a worshipful confidence” in Dr. Burnap.



Family of Dr. Sidney Burnap, Jr.

**Jean Harlow Stricken
With Appendicitis**
Hollywood Cal., Oct. 15 (UP)—
Jean Harlow, platinum blonde screen
star, was stricken suddenly with
appendicitis today and underwent
a successful operation.
Dr. Sidney Burnap, who performed
the operation, reported tonight that
Miss Harlow's condition was “ex-
cellent under the conditions.”

**SUNBURN PUTS
HARLOW IN BED**
By Associated Press.
HOLLYWOOD, Calif., Aug. 15.
—Jean Harlow's hypersensitivity
to the sun confined her to bed to-
day with second-degree burns, Dr.
Sidney Burnap reported.
The blond actress, who suffered
a similar experience last year, had
been warned by her physician to
forego beach lounging. When she
went to Catalina island this week
she forgot.

Dr. Sidney Rogers Burnap, Jr. died in 1950 and is buried in Los Angeles.

SOURCES

Devlin, Philip, Sidney Burnap, Jr., Windsor Locks Sports Hall of Fame.
<http://www.windsorlocks-hof.com/sidney-burnap-jr/>

Montemerlo, Melvin D., The 15 Blocks of Windsor Locks, Chapter 32 of Windsor Locks History, Self published, Bel Air, MD, 2016.

CHAPTER 34

Alexander Jarvis Created the “Bradley Lanes” which became “Bradley Bowl” which became ‘Sparetime Entertainment’

Bradley Lanes was built on Turnpike Road, across the road from the entrance to Bradley Field in 1962. The land was owned by Alexander Jarvis. The bowling alley was owned by Melvin Blatt and Philip Sachs.. They sold the Bradley Bowl business to Mr. Jarvis, who already owned the land and the building. In the 1960s, there was a rush to take advantage of the bowling boom that was fueled by the bowling shows on television at the time.



Things were changing in bowling. In the 1960s, “duckpin bowling” and “candle-pin” were popular. When the TV bowling programs started, they showed the new “Ten Pin” style of bowling. Soon duckpin and candlestick bowling was just about dead. Bradley Lanes (later named “Bradley Bowl”) led that movement in Windsor Locks.

The problem at Bradley Lanes was that the original “semi-automatic pin setters” were of an early type, and they were problematic. The semi-automatic



Bradley Bowl (~ 2017)

pin-setters were replaced with the latest fully automatic pin-setters, and the problems disappeared. The crowd-size increased.

Things really improved in 1974 when the Pro Bowlers Tour came to Bradley Lanes. It came back every year from 1974 to 1999. It came back one more time in 2003. Having the Pro Bowlers Tour come to Bradley Lanes was a

BIG THING in Windsor Locks. The Pro Tour was televised. Windsor Locks' Bradley Bowl got some nationwide publicity.

Bradley Lanes was a very popular place. Numerous leagues were formed by workers at Bradley Field and at the large aeronautics corporations at Bradley Field, such as Hamilton Standard. The bowling league scores were in the Windsor Locks Journal and in the Springfield newspapers weekly. They usually took up a whole page.

Sonya and Ken West, of Windsor Locks also played a big role in this boom. Ken was involved in the original promotion of the Professional Bowlers Association tournaments. He started tournaments in Rhode Island, and moved them to Windsor Locks in 1974. In that year, he had two tournaments at Bradley Lanes. One was for the summer tour and the second was for the winter tour. That continued until 1999.

In conjunction with the PBA tournaments at Bradley Bowl, Ken and Sonya organized pro-am leagues (**bringing in 800 to 1500 people**) throughout the New England area, giving adults and children the opportunity to bowl with the best.

In conjunction with the PBA tournaments at Bradley Bowl, Ken and Sonya organized pro-am leagues (bringing in 800 to 1500 people) throughout the New England area, giving adults and children the opportunity to bowl with the best.

The bowling boom started to decline in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s. There were fewer bowling shows on TV. Mr Jarvis passed away. In 2018, Bradley Lanes was sold to a chain called Sparetime Entertainment, which has multiple games for people to play.

Mr. Alexander Jarvis built the bowling alley building which still exists, and it still includes a bowling alley. The building that Mr. Jarvis built is the most visited entertainment center in Windsor Locks history, and the longest-lasting. Windsor Locks has had two long-lasting entertainment centers: the Rialto Theater and Bradley Bowl. Mr. Jarvis had a large, positive, long-lasting effect on the town of Windsor Locks.

SOURCE:

Montemerlo, Melvin D. "Bradley Bowl", Chapter 12 of Windsor Locks History: Volume II, Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2019.

CHAPTER 35

Jack O'Hara: Entrepreneur Brought Professional Baseball to Windsor Locks

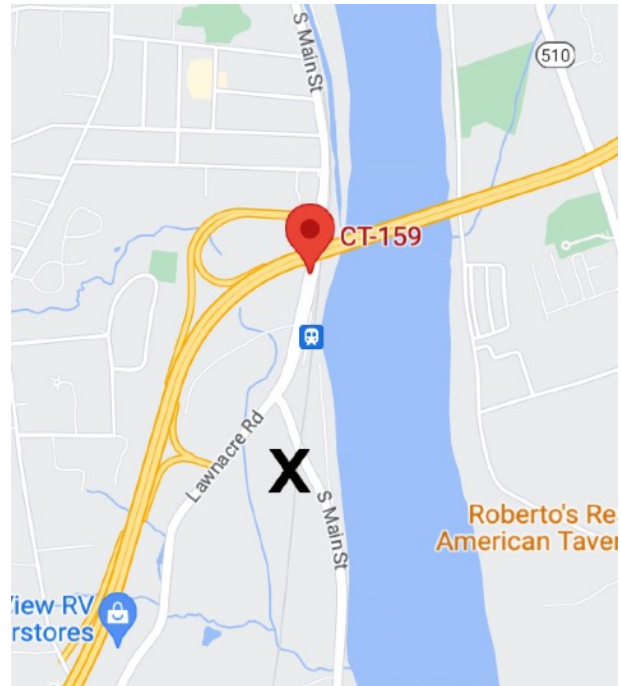
Not everyone who made big things happen in Windsor Locks was from Windsor Locks. Jack O'Hara, a Springfield man, came up with a grand plan to get professional baseball teams to come and play a local team in Windsor Locks. He leased some land from Pietro Paganelli, who had a farm in the south end of Windsor Locks, on which he would build a LARGE baseball stadium. It was called "The South End Stadium."

You can see the location of that stadium on the map on the right. It was about where Route 159 goes over the railroad tracks. Mr. O'Hara was ready to put a considerable amount of money into the stadium.

Mr. O'Hara also put together a team of players from Holy Cross College, which had a very strong college baseball team. It was a time when professional baseball teams "barnstormed" towns and cities as a way of increasing the amount of money that the players could make. Mr. O'Hara had a plan for Sunday afternoon games. The first game to be played on the field was on June 19, 1921. Nearly 3000 people attended. It was between the Windsor Locks team and a team from Ware, MA.

On June 26, 1921, Over 5,000 people showed up for the game against the American League Philadelphia team. Philadelphia won by 3 to 0. On July 21, the Windsor Locks team defeated the Pittsburgh National League team in front of 7,500 people. On July 29, the Windsor Locks team lost to St. Louis Cardinals by 2 to 0. On August 21, the Windsor Locks team beat the Pittsburgh Pirates.

John O'Hara enlarged and enhanced the stadium prior to the 1922 season. A second full season of baseball was played in 1922. However, there were no games in 1923 because of a legal suit against the professional teams for such games. However the games were back in 1924. In the weeks leading up to June 29, 1924, the Windsor Locks Journal and other newspapers had been



**Location of Paganelli's
baseball field in 1920s**

posting articles about the upcoming game between the New York Yankees, starring Babe Ruth, and the Windsor Locks All Collegians for many weeks.

In the weeks leading up to June 29, 1924, the Windsor Locks Journal and the Springfield and Hartford newspapers had been posting articles about the upcoming game between the New York Yankees, starring Babe Ruth, and the Windsor Locks All Collegians for many weeks. New grandstand and bleachers were erected on South End Park, and there was standing-room available for many more. That tells you about the size of South End Park, and the fact that the grandstands were just built.

Finally the New York Yankees versus Windsor Locks game happened, and WINDSOR LOCKS WON by 3-2. The Windsor Locks team held Babe Ruth hitless in four at-bats. How 'big' was that game? It was big enough that the results showed up in the New York Times on the day after the game.

The June 29, 1924 game between the Windsor Locks All-Collegians and the New York Yankees was probably the last of the exhibition games played in Windsor Locks. No later articles about these games could be found in the Windsor Locks Journal after the June 29, 1924 game.

CONCLUSION

Looking back over Windsor Locks history from 1863 through the present day (2023), it is not possible to find anyone who had a bolder idea for making Windsor Locks a more interesting place to live, than John O'Hara's brought major league baseball to town. He built a massive stadium. Some games had over 7000 in attendance. While professional baseball at that stadium only lasted for a few years, Mr. O'Hara proved that you can do big things if you think big thoughts, and find ways to make them happen. He was extremely creative in making a local team out of college baseball players, and in getting the stadium built, and in getting professional baseball teams to play games in our town. **John O'Hara's idea of bringing professional baseball to Windsor Locks was probably the most aggressive move in the history of Windsor Locks to make the town more exciting.**

SOURCES

Montemerlo, Melvin D., Windsor Locks History: Volume IV, Chapter11 Jack O'Hara Brought Major League Baseball to Windsor Locks
Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2021

CHAPTER 36

Ken and Sonya West Put Windsor Locks Bowling in The Spotlight (1975-1994)

Windsor Locks got its first Bowling Alley in 1929. Blanche Bianchi Lavigne opened a small bowling alley on lower Grove Street in the early 1930s. In the 1960s, the Villa Rose restaurant opened a Bowling Alley, and Bradley Lanes bowling alley opened on Route 75, across from Bradley Field. After a while, it changed its name to “Bradley Bowl”. Bradley Lanes gave rise to a large number of bowling teams, mostly from companies in the Bradley Field area. Bowling, as a sport, had been around for a long time in America, but in the 1960s, it became a national obsession.

Bowling was growing rapidly in Windsor Locks in the 1960s and early 1970s. Then two Windsor Locks citizens decided to take Windsor Locks bowling to a higher level. They were Ken and Sonya West. They brought the Professional Bowlers Tour to Bradley Lanes. That gave Windsor Locks a big boost in visibility and in prestige! It also brought more money into the town and put a spotlight on Windsor Locks.

Ken and Sonya were bowling promoters. Sonya was also a professional bowler. Ken was involved in the original promotion of the Professional Bowling Association’s tournaments. He started the tournaments in Rhode Island and later got the Tour to include Bradley Lanes to their Tour in 1975. In that year, he had two tournaments at Bradley Lanes. One was for the summer tour and the second was for the winter tour. That continued until 1999. Sonya worked closely with Ken in this endeavor. On the right is a photo of Sonya. No photos of Ken were available.

Sonya served as tournament director for the New England Women’s Bowling Association, and ran tournaments for over 20 years. She also worked as the office manager for the Professional Bowlers Tour stop at Bradley Bowl.



Sonya West

Because of initiative of Ken and Sonya, Windsor Locks bowling greatly increased in visibility and in popularity. Windsor Locks bowling was on television. The Professional Bowlers Tours were major “draws” for the sport.

In conjunction with the PBA tournaments at Bradley Bowl, Ken and Sonya organized pro-am leagues, bringing in 800 to 1500 people throughout the New England area, and giving adults and children the opportunity to bowl with

the best. Ken and Sonya put Windsor Locks in the spot-light by bringing professional bowling to Windsor Locks. The Professional Bowling league tour put Windsor Locks on TV, and greatly increased the popularity of bowling in our town.

SOURCES

Montemerlo, Melvin, "Bradley Bowl" Chapter 12 of Windsor Locks History; Volume II, Self published, Bel Air, MD, 2019

, "Sonya West", Windsor Locks Athletics Hall of Fame website,
<http://www.windsorlocks-hof.com/sonya-west-pohorylo-macierowski/>

CHAPTER 37

John Gionfriddo and Neil Rinaldi:

This is the story of two Windsor Locks High School music teachers in the 1984 -1995 era, who took the level of student performance to new heights. Their students won many prestigious music contests. Many of their students became professional musicians. Their names are Neil Rinaldi and John Gionfriddo. They arrived at WLHS in the mid 1980s and left about a decade later.



Neil Rinaldi & John Gionfriddo 1984

NEIL RINALDI

Neil Rinaldi joined his first band as a freshman at WLHS in 1968.. He met Mr. James Gurley, who was the father of one Neil's friends, Ladd Gurley. Mr. Gurley gave Neil advice on how to play drums in a band. Helping a young musician learn how to play in a band increases not only their skill but also their confidence. When Neil was a junior at WLHS, Mr. Gurley asked him to join his country/ western band, which was known as "Jim Gurley and the Oklahoma Jamboree". Neil went to the Berklee College of Music in the fall of 1971. He was lucky to have Alan Dawson, who was the drummer for the Dave Brubeck Quartet, as his private lesson instructor at Berklee.

Neil became the WLHS Band Director in about 1978 . It was there that Tom, Mark and Stephen Savage were members of his high school band, and also of the WLHS Jazz Band. Tom graduated during Neil's first year teaching at WLHS. One year later, Michael Savage was in the high school band. Tommy started the Savage Brother Band at that time. Today (2024) it is one of the most popular and longest lasting bands in Windsor Locks history.

Neil taught a number of WLHS students who went on to become professional musicians, including

- Dan Castonguay, who now goes by the name of Dan Tracy,
- Tom O'Leary, who played the lead role in "Phantom of the Opera".
- Deanna Johns and Guy Drapeau, who formed Accidental Groove.
- Tom Culcasi, who became a singer, actor, musical director and producer in Texas and then in Florida.

Neil had two things that made him a great teacher. He had the "chops" of a professional musician, and he understood that to bring high school musicians to their full potential, he had to have those students meet and compete with the best high school musicians in New England. He got his students to set high standards for themselves, and to work hard to achieve them. He had the

students compete in the best high school band competitions in the New England. That resulted in three first-place finishes at the Berklee College of Music Jazz Festival, and the Connecticut Marching Band state championship.

JOHN GIONFRIDDO

In 1984, Neil Rinaldi was the Band Director and the Choral Director at WLHS. He was overloaded. John Gionfriddo, who had been teaching at Enfield High School, was hired. John started off as the Assistant Band Director and the Choral Director, but Neil's specialty was bands, and John's was Vocal, so they split the work that way. John's specialty was the Choirs. John developed and recruited students to build a large concert choir. He started with 12 students and ended up with 130. In addition to that, he held auditions for a new group which performed precision choreography in addition to singing.

John succeeded in his goal of getting his students excited about this Show Choir named "Vocal Motion". John was responsible for the establishment of the Nutmeg Show Choir Festival, which brought show choirs from the surrounding areas to WLHS for competitions. This festival became an annual event.

John scouted Connecticut and the surrounding states for the best Vocal Choir programs and the best competitions. He took his show choir, Vocal Motion to compete at Waltham High School, Oliver Ames High School in Easton MA., the Central Massachusetts Show Choir Festival, and the University of New Hampshire annual music festival, as well as other events in the high school show choir competitive circuit.

John had other ways of getting and keeping the students excited about the program. He and band director, Neil Rinaldi, took all the students in the music department on annual excursions to music festivals in places like Toronto, Canada, Washington DC, Annapolis, Hersey PA, Disney World and Virginia Beach. John was also the vocal music director for the annual Senior Class Play and Neil Rinaldi was the pit orchestra director.

Neil Rinaldi and John Gionfriddo were two exceptional music teachers at Windsor Locks High School. They took the teaching of music, both instruments and vocals to new heights. They got both students and parents involved and excited. They put together new musical groups which have lived on. A number of their students became professional musicians.

SOURCES:

Montemerlo, Mel, Windsor Locks Middle and High School Music Programs, which was Chapter 6 of Windsor Locks Musicians, Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2021

John Gionfriddo and Neil Rinaldi provided information in phone interviews and in the four drafts that this chapter went through. The photos came from Neil Rinaldi and John Gionfriddo.

CHAPTER 38

Erick Knickerbocker: Outstanding Middle School History Teacher

Good teachers teach well. Outstanding teachers are those who motivate their students to take charge of their own learning. Mr. Erick Knickerbocker was an outstanding teacher. He taught history in Windsor Locks Middle School.

He started a Middle School History Club, which held an annual history contest, and a day of festivities at the Middle School which went on from 2015 to 2019. It was called "Heritage Day", and was held on the first Saturday of June each year. The students in the History Club organized the entire affair. It was a BIG affair, with much of Windsor Locks showing up at the Middle School for the festivities. There was food, games, speakers, and music in the outdoor area of the Middle School. There were displays by the Fire Department, and booths manned by various clubs. It was an all-day affair.



Erick Knickerbocker

The history contest consisted of students, some individually, and some in small groups. Each prepared a display on a Windsor Locks history topic, and made a presentation to teachers who were the judges. The History Club was in charge of organizing all aspects of the contest and the outdoor activities for Heritage Day. The students contacted the vendors and the clubs, and set up the places for the various groups and vendors, who spent the day there. While Mr. Knickerbocker was in charge, he delegated the work to the history club members, who had to contact the various groups who were involved, make sure the tents were set up as planned, and that the activities of the day went well. Mr. Knickerbocker was there in case he was needed.

In the June 2017 Heritage Day, they had 60 sponsors and vendors for their Heritage Day event. The History Club members were responsible for getting all of the sponsors and vendors, and insuring that everything was set up for then on Heritage Day

In 2017, the Middle School History Club collected and donated \$2,500 to the town toward the restoration of the old passenger station.

In 2018 Windsor Locks Middle School won a Red, White and Blue Award from the Connecticut State Department of Education, for its outstanding performance in teaching History. The award was for:

- innovative approaches to teaching social studies
- student involvement with the community in social study projects
- student participation in the running of the program

- extra curricular activity by the students in such programs

Below is a photo of the History Club during a trip to Washington, DC,. The annual Heritage Day events were held annually from 2015 to 2019. It was



planned to be an ongoing event. Unfortunately, COVID struck in 2020, and the planned June 2020 event was cancelled. At the end of the 2019-20 school year, Mr. Knickerbocker left Windsor Locks Middle School, and took position teaching History and being Head Football Coach at Rockville High School. He had been a teacher at Windsor Middle School for ten years.

Mr. Knickerbocker was a very special teacher,

SOURCES

Windsor Locks Heritage Day, a Twitter website that the Windsor Locks Middle School History Club used to keep a record of the Heritage Day work that went on from 2015 to 2020

<https://twitter.com/wlheritageday?lang=en>

Students Present Check From Heritage Day, Hartford Courant, June 13, 2019.

<https://www.courant.com/2019/06/13/students-present-check-from-heritage-day/>

Windsor Locks Middle School To Celebrate Heritage Day, April 11, 2016,

<https://www.courant.com/2016/04/11/windsor-locks-middle-school-to-celebrate-heritage-day/>

Heritage Day Shines Brightly in Year 3, Windsor Locks Journal, June 8, 2018.

CHAPTER 39

Mr. Leenhouts: Founder of the WLHS “Aces High” FIRST Robotics Team

In the spring of 1995, Mr. Dave Leenhouts attended an extra-curricular fair at Windsor Locks High School. He was an engineer who worked at Hamilton Standard. He had mentored a FIRST robotics team in a nearby town and wanted to start a team in Windsor Locks.

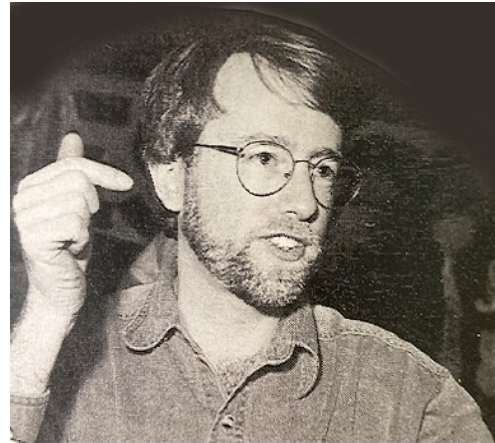
FIRST stands for: “**F**or **I**nspiration and **R**ecognition of **S**cience and **T**echnology”. He brought the robot that the other team had built. Mr. Leenhouts and the robot made a **BIG** impression. He volunteered to be the head mentor for a new FIRST team, if Windsor Locks High School would sponsor the team. Hamilton Standard provided the funds for the team to buy the robotics kit from the FIRST organization each year. However the FIRST competitions were held in other towns and cities, which involved significant travel costs for the students. The team found town businesses which served as team sponsors, and provide the necessary funding. Soon the Windsor Locks FIRST team joined up with Suffield High School to form a single team representing both schools.

While the mentors and members of “Aces High” changed over time, the group is Windsor Locks’ premier advanced technology teaching program for high schoolers.

It is impossible to overstate the the importance of Windsor Locks involvement in FIRST. FIRST is a contest between groups of high school students who are highly intelligent and highly motivated. That championship brought honor and recognition to Windsor Locks and Suffield, CT.

The list of awards won by Aces High from 1996 to 2023 fills many pages. The awards won by the Aces High team for all years from 1996 to 2023 are on the following website. <https://www.thebluealliance.com/team/176/history>

FIRST teaches high school students about robotics by giving them hands-on experience in designing and building robots with help from experienced engineers. There is no cost to the students. Individual teams are formed in towns and cities around the world. They get “mentors” and funding from local engineering companies. The goals and rules for each year’s



Dave Leenhouts

competition are distributed to all teams. The funding provided by local organizations pays for the “robot kit” and to send the members of the local team to the Division competitions and possibly to the International Championship Competition.



2023 Windsor Locks - Suffield FIRST Robotics Team 176



Aces High (Team 176) 2023 robot

SOURCES

Emails and telephone conversations with Marilyn Gragnolati (May 2023).

Aces High Robotics: Who We Are. <https://www.aceshigh176.org/who-we-are/>

Team 176, Aces High, History <https://www.thebluealliance.com/team/176/history>

For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

[For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/)

CHAPTER 40

John A. Chapman: Medal of Honor Recipient

John Chapman was born on July 14, 1965, and grew up in Windsor Locks. He went to Windsor Locks High School, where he was a stand-out sportsman in both soccer and diving. He led his school's team to the Central Valley League championship one year, and he earned winning spots in the Interscholastic Athletic Conference in all four of his high school years (1980 through 1983). He won Class S events in 1982 and 1983, and he placed second in the State Open in 1983. In his high school yearbook, he had the words: "Give of yourself before asking of someone else". He was known as a team player.

After high school, John attended the University of Connecticut, and was on the diving team. Following his first semester at UCONN, he returned to Windsor Locks, and got a job in an auto body shop. He found that wasn't for him, so he joined the US Air Force.

John enlisted in the United States Air Force on September 27, 1985, and was trained as an Information Systems Operator. Chapman's first assignment was with the 1987th Information Systems Squadron at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, where he served from February 1986 to June 1989. He then cross-trained into the Combat Control career field and served with the 1721st Combat Control Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, from August 1990 to November 1992. His next assignment was as a Special Tactics Team Member with the 320th Special Tactics Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, from November 1992 to October 1995. Chapman's final assignment was with the 24th Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base.

There are two important points in the above description of his training. The first is that he was well trained over a period of ten years. The second is that he switched specialties from that of an Information Systems specialist, which is a "desk job," to that of a Combat Controller, which is a very important and dangerous job that is done in the field. He wasn't happy with the desk job and made the request to become a Combat Controller.



John A. Chapman

On March 4, 2002, Chapman was on an assignment with an elite Navy Seal Team in Afghanistan. He was killed in the battle which took place that day. Sixteen years after John Chapman's death, the Air Force awarded John Chapman the Medal of Honor for his actions on that day.

On August 22, 2018, President Trump posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor to John A. Chapman for his actions in the Battle of Takur Ghar. The medal was presented to his widow, Valerie Nessel, in a ceremony in the East Room of the White House. John's mother, Terry Chapman, and John and Valerie's two daughters, Brianna and Madison were at the presentation ceremony. On the day after the award ceremony, Chapman was inducted into the Hall of Heroes, which is in the Pentagon. On the day after that, he was posthumously promoted to Master Sergeant. He was the first airman to receive the Medal of Honor for actions since the Vietnam War. He was the 3,503 recipient of the Medal of Honor.

CONCLUSION

John Chapman was a military man, a husband and a father. He is a source of pride for the town of Windsor Locks.

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, "John A. Chapman: Medal of Honor Recipient" in Windsor Locks History: Volume II, Self published, Bel Air, MD 2019.

CHAPTER 41

Malcolm Moore: Responsible for Building the Windsor Locks Army Air Base in Five Months

The US Army and the State of Connecticut decided to build an Army Airfield in Windsor Locks in January of 1941. In March of 1941, the US Congress appropriated \$2.6M to construct the airfield. In July of 1941, with the construction phase nearing completion, military command and logistics personnel began to arrive.

That meant that the airfield had to be built between March and July of 1941. Construction began in March, 1941. Thirty Army engineers and 1800 laborers was put together to build the airfield. They were under the direction of **Malcolm Moore**, the Chief Engineer. Let's look at the job he was asked to lead.

Construction began on March 7, 1941. The work went on, night and day, seven days a week. Grading was done from March to May. Route 20 had to be closed and rerouted. A number of houses on site had to be relocated to North and Elm Streets. Drainage was installed in April and June. The woods were cleared for the station hospital, and tracks for a spur line from Suffield were installed by the New Haven Railroad.

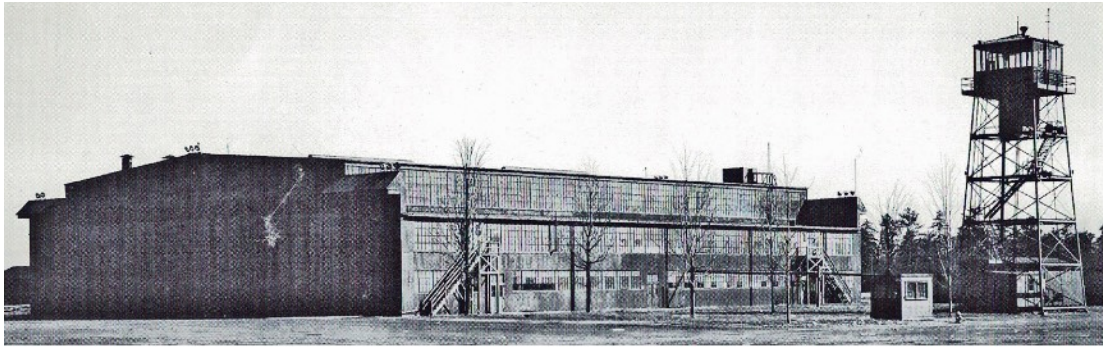
A contract for runways was given to the John McCourt Co. of Boston. The runways were completed by July.

The plan called for 36 barracks, 9 day rooms, 8 mess halls, 5 officers quarters, a commissary, a 17-building hospital, and infirmary, one recreation building, a movie theater, 10 supply buildings, four ammo magazines, one motor pool, a utility shop, a parachute building, a radio station, six administration buildings, a guard house, six operations buildings, and a control tower.



Bradley Field's original barracks buildings, 1941

The base was completed with 124,000 square yards of taxiways, 26 miles of roads, 19 miles of water mains capable of 600,000 gallons per day, sewer lines with a capacity to serve 25,000 people, and housing for up to 8000 enlisted people. Aircraft would be serviced from a 350,000 gallon aviation gas system.



Bradley Field: Initial Wooden Main Hangar & Control Tower

The work had to be done “so as not to be visible from the air”. This was achieved by leaving surrounding farmlands as intact as possible, complete with their old barns and farmhouses. The runways and taxi aprons were painted with a simulated patchwork of crops and country lanes to match the surrounding landscape. The camouflage was so effective that many arriving pilots had trouble finding the airfield. This problem continued after the war when commercial airline pilots occasionally found it difficult to find the airport.

In July 1941, with construction nearing completion, the military began to arrive. On August 18, 1941, three squadrons of the 57th Pursuit Group arrived from Mitchel Field with their P-40 Tomahawk fighter aircraft. **On August 18, 1941, just five months after construction began, the Windsor Locks Army Air Base was officially declared operational.** This phenomenal transition from tobacco field to air base was a testimony to the team who built it. The management of constructing the Army Airfield was outstanding. Malcolm Moore did a phenomenal job of managing that process and making it a full success. That may have been the toughest job in the history of Windsor Locks.

SOURCES

Montemerlo, Melvin D, “Bradley Field”, Chapter 4 of “Windsor Locks History: Volume II, self published, Bel Air, MD, 2019.

Palshaw, Thomas C. Bradley Field: The First 25 Years. New England Air Museum, 1998

Roberts, Jerry, Connecticut Explored, “Windsor Locks Bradley International Airport”. 2016,
<https://www.ctexplored.org/windsor-locks-bradley-international-airport/>

CHAPTER 42

Jabez Haskell Hayden: Windsor Locks' First Historian And Owner of a Silk Mill

Jabez Haskell Hayden was born in Windsor, CT on December 20, 1811. From 1838 to 1881, he was a manufacturer of sewing silk in Windsor Locks where he resided until his death December 1, 1902. After his retirement from business he devoted himself to genealogical and historical research and writing, and became Windsor's leading authority on local history. He contributed largely to Dr. Stiles' set of books on the history of Windsor and surrounding towns. He was published a book called "Historical Sketches" in 1900, which covered the history and prehistory of Windsor Locks from 1663 to 1900. He also wrote many essays and papers on Windsor Locks history.

Jabez Haskell Hayden will always be remembered as the man who wrote the history of Windsor Locks from the days of its earliest settlers, when it was the Pine Meadow section of Windsor, to 1900. He also provided history material to Dr. Stiles, who lived in New York City, and depended on Mr. Hayden for information about Windsor Locks and surrounding towns for his books. If it wasn't for Jabez Haskell Hayden, we would not know much about the history of Windsor Locks from 1663 to 1900.

He not only wrote Windsor Locks history, he made Windsor Locks history. He had the mind and the spirit of a businessman. Together with his business partner, Mr. H. Haskell, he set up a gin mill in 1811. He went to Hartford to work for the Connecticut Silk Manufacturing Company for three years. He studied the process thoroughly, and moved to Windsor Locks, where he and Mr. H. Haskell, turned the gin mill into a silk mill. The silk mill lasted for 43 years. At the age of 70, he retired in 1883. They sold the silk mill to Mr. Arthur H. Bottum who continued its operation. Below is a photo of the Haskell and Hayden Silk Mill, on the banks of the canal.



Jabez Haskell Hayden



Haskell and Hayden Silk Co.

He had made sufficient money to do what he loved in his retirement - to research and write the history of Windsor Locks. He produced many chapters for various books, and gave many talks on town history. He integrated those works into a single book, "Historical Sketches", which was published by the Windsor Locks Journal in 1900. Two years later, Jabez Haskell Hayden died on Dec 1, 1902. During his retirement years, he not only developed his own material, he also provided a great deal of information to Dr. Stiles for his set of books on the History of Windsor, CT and surrounding towns. Dr. Stiles wrote a three volume set of books on the history and genealogies of Windsor and surrounding towns. He published them in 1853, and then updated them and published them again in 1893. In 1893, he was going to write a chapter on Windsor Locks, but after seeing what Mr. Haden had done, he used one of Mr. Hayden's chapter's on Windsor Locks instead. He said that he couldn't do as well as his friend could.

Jabez Haskell Hayden had three big achievements in Windsor Locks. The biggest was writing its early history. The second was in starting and running a gin mill and then a silk mill. The third thing that he did is not well known. His grandfather had owned the parcel of land that the Memorial Hall is now on. It had passed in to his hands. When the local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic was looking for land for the Memorial Hall that he wanted to have built, he sold them that plot of land for a very reasonable price.

Jabez Haskel Hayden is one of the few people that Windsor Locks couldn't have done without.

SOURCES:

Hayden, Jabez Haskell, "Historical Sketches", Published by the Windsor Locks Journal, Windsor Locks, Ct. 1900.

Holcombe Genealogy File; <https://www.holcombegenealogy.com/g0/p905.htm>

CHAPTER 43

Melvin D. Montemerlo: Windsor Locks Historian

In 2016, Mel Montemerlo decided to write the history of Windsor Locks. He realized that the history of Windsor Locks hadn't been updated since Jabez Haskell Hayden wrote "Historical Sketches" in 1900. Over a century had gone by, and much had happened in Windsor Locks. In 1900, the mills along the canal were still growing, and European immigrants were still flowing into Windsor Locks. The Main Street shopping area was growing fast. The era of Bradley Field and the big businesses around it needed to be covered. So he began the task of updating Windsor Locks history. It took seven years.



Mel Montemerlo

He had retired from a 30 year career with NASA, and was looking for a challenge. It led to his publishing seven books on the history of Windsor Locks from 1663 to 2000. As he wrote each chapter, he posted it on Windsor Locks Facebook group pages, in order to get Windsor Locks people involved, to get feedback, and to a further check on accuracy. He found that many people who are interested in Windsor Locks history didn't live there any more. They had left town for education, employment, the military or retirement. Using "social-media" to get the information out to the Windsor Locks community allowed him to reach those people too. People sent photos and information. Mr. Montemerlo kept posting his chapters every week or two from 2016 through 2024.

His first history books covered the individual people, places and events of town history. One of his books focussed on Windsor Locks Musicians. He found that the town had turned out a large number of musicians, and many of them had successful professional careers. His later books focussed on understanding Windsor Locks history. For example, he found that the town's long history consisted of four distinct but overlapping phases.

Finally in 2023, he wanted to finish his seven years of writing town history by writing a special book, which is the one you are reading now. His goal was to write a brief history, which focussed on the most important accomplishments in Windsor Locks history, and the people who made them. Hopefully, its brevity and focus on importance would encourage more people to read it.

Mel Montemerlo's research on town history used modern tools that are now available, but which were not available to early historians such as Jabez Haskell Hayden. He was able to find town history in newspapers that were

available on the internet. He was able to search online databases for information on people from as far back as the 1600s and up to the present day.

All of his Windsor Locks History books have been published, and are on the internet, so that anyone, now or in the future, can download them easily, and at no cost. He had his first four books printed, and he sold the printed copies at his cost. Those books and the later books were all put online. The Windsor Locks Public Library has all of his books listed on its website, so that anyone can download them.

His seven books are:

- | | |
|---|------|
| • Windsor Locks History | 2016 |
| • Windsor Locks History: Volume II | 2019 |
| • Windsor Locks History: Volume III | 2020 |
| • Windsor Locks Musicians | 2021 |
| • Understanding Windsor Locks History | 2022 |
| • Windsor Locks History: Volume IV | 2023 |
| • Extraordinary Windsor Locks Accomplishments
and the People Who Made them | 2024 |

In 1960, during his first year of college, Mr. Montemerlo took a one-year college course from a professional historian, on how to write history. All of his books adhere to the accepted professional rules of the American Historical Association.

Mel Montemerlo received a good deal of help from other Windsor Locks historians: Mickey Danyluk, Bill Fournier, Bob Pearce, Chet Pohorylo, and Frank Baron. He made use of the massive on-line data-base of historical information developed by Jerry Dougherty.

CONCLUSION

Mel Montemerlo made the work of future Windsor Locks historians easier, just as Jabez Haskell Hayden had made his work easier. He wrote and published Windsor Locks History from 1663 to 2000. His books include more than 250 chapters, over 2000 pages and more than 1500 old photographs and images. He provided weekly posts about Windsor Locks history on four Facebook Windsor Locks group websites from 2016 through 2024.

SOURCES

This chapter was written by Mel Montemerlo, the author of the book.

CHAPTER 44

Cyrus Glenn Flanders : Founder of the Senior Citizens Club



Cyrus Glenn Flanders

Cyrus Glenn “Cy” Flanders was a longtime civil servant, and a longtime resident of Windsor Locks. He was born in Des Moines, Iowa in 1895. He moved to Windsor Locks in 1920, and married Mary Celia Lynskey in 1921

He had been the executive secretary of the Governor’s Committee to Hire the Handicapped. Mr. Flanders was a veteran of World War I and was a member of the War Manpower Commission during World War II. Initial plans were being made for a mini-bus to take the seniors to and from the their planned “get-togethers”, which were going beyond just the weekly luncheons. (May 25, 1972 WLJ)

The April 20, 1972 Windsor Locks Journal said that Cyrus Flanders, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Aging, was holding luncheon get-togethers for the town’s senior citizens at the Union School. The group was trying to find drivers who would take Seniors to and from the luncheons. 72 Seniors

attended the first such Senior luncheon. 85 Seniors showed up to see movies of the Centennial.

By Aug. 17, 1972, the Seniors were trying to make a "Drop-in Center" at St. Mary's School. Card playing and games were on the agenda. Cy Flanders was organizing music recitals for the Seniors, who were asking for courses in music, photography, handicrafts and home repair. The move was on to provide an array of such services.

The May 31, 1973 Windsor Locks Journal had an article on the Advisory Committee on Aging, saying that although it was very young compared to most organizations in town, it had done a great deal in advocating for the Senior Citizens of the town, which included: Thursday lunches, a min-bus that takes seniors to and from their houses to the Senior Citizens to get out, and for the "drop-in center". It attributed all of that to the work of Cy Flanders, the Chairman of the Committee.

The Windsor Locks Journal of November 11, 1973 described the first installation of officers of newly instituted "Senior Citizens Club" at the Union School Cafeteria. At that meeting Chairman Adrian Keevers thanked Mr. Flanders for his role in creating the Senior Citizen's Club.

Mr. Flanders was the moving force behind organizing the Senior Citizens of Windsor Locks for a wide variety of get-togethers, which started with luncheons and expanded to movies, music recitals, training programs and even weekend trips.

Later, that movement inevitably led to the Windsor Locks Seniors getting their own building, which turned out to be the Senior Center named for Dr. Carniglia. That happened in 1978. It was at the Oak Street building that had housed the Police Station until about 1974.

Cy Flanders wasn't just a hard-charging member of the Advisory Committee on Aging, he was a tireless Windsor Locks town leader. He served as a member of the board of education, president of the library board and was a founder of the Senior Citizens Club. Mr. Flanders was a veteran of World War I and was a member of the War Manpower Commission during World War II.

Cyrus Flanders died in Windsor Locks in 1993. He helped shape the town for the better.

SOURCES:

Obituary, Hartford Courant of Jan 12, 1993.

<https://www.courant.com/1993/01/12/cyrus-g-flanders-sr-club-founder/>

Windsor Locks Journals as noted in the text.

CHAPTER 45

James D. Outerson: Public Servant and Businessman Extraordinaire

James D. Outerson was the son of Andrew and Aileen Outerson of Windsor Locks, CT, who had eight children, two of which became physicians. James D. Outerson was born in 1872. According to the September 18, 1936 issue of the *Windsor Locks Journal*, Mr. Outerson was one of the best-known residents of the town. He was well-known throughout the county and the state. He spent his life in Windsor Locks. After graduating from Windsor Locks public schools, he took a business course in a Hartford school. After graduation, he briefly took a job in a Hartford department store, and then in a commercial grocery business in Hartford.



Brick building on left is the Outerson Block. Notice the “Town Clerk” and “Tax Collector” signs on the windows. It is on the North corner of Church and Main Streets, facing Main St.

Mr. Outerson was just 23 years old when he moved back to Windsor Locks. His career took off. **In 1895, he was elected to THREE Windsor Locks town government positions: town clerk, town treasurer and town registrar!!!!** He held all three of those jobs until he died forty years later in

1936. During those 40 years, he was endorsed by both the Democrat and Republican parties! That makes him unique.

In 1895, he bought a shoe store which was located in the Burnap Block. The Burnap Block was a large building which housed the offices of the telephone company, the telegraph company, the *Windsor Locks Journal*, the Opera House, and shops such as Mr. Outerson's store, and a Polish rooming house.

Later, he moved his store from the Burnap Block to his father's Outerson Block on the corner of Church and Main Streets. The move enabled him to have a much larger store. By then, he had added the sale of men's and women's clothing to his shoe business. While in the Burnap Block, Mr. Outerson kept all of his Windsor Locks files in his store, which also served as his office. When he moved to the Outerson Block, he had a separate office for his town duties. In the photo of the Outerson Block (on the previous page), you can see the sign for his government office on the windows.

Mr. Outerson's obituary in the *Windsor Locks Journal* said: "He was ever interested in civic affairs, and took part in local public affairs of many kinds. With a keen sense of humor, Mr. Outerson could tell a good story and relate many interesting incidents in his official life."

We already know about Mr. Outerson's three jobs with the town government, and his ownership of a men's and women's clothing store. That was only part of his career. He was also:

- secretary of the Building and Loan Association,
- owner of a local agency for accepting payment of gas, electric and water bills,
- owner of an insurance and bonding agency,
- member of the Chamber of Commerce.
- member of the Riverside Council of the Knights of Columbus,
- member of the Hartford Lodge of Elks, and
- an accomplished pianist and director of the Outerson Orchestra.

(information from the *Windsor Locks Journal* of Sept 18, 1936)

His death in 1936 took was a shock to the citizens of the town. He was taken to St. Francis Hospital in Hartford, where he stayed for a week. His condition was not known when he went to the hospital. He died of kidney failure. He passed away in his sleep. The life and career of James D. Outerson can only be described as incredible.

SOURCES

Montemerlo, Melvin D., Windsor Locks History: Volume IV, Chapter 31, James D. Outerson: Extraordinary Public Servant and Businessman, Self published, Bel Air, MD, 2023

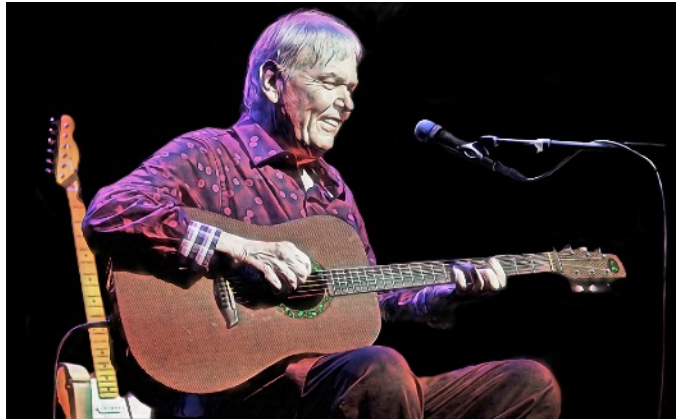
CHAPTER 46

“Big Al” Anderson: Guitarist, Songwriter, Star

This is a book about Windsor Locks individuals who have had major accomplishments. Al Anderson is from Windsor. Windsor Lockers love Big Al, who often played in Windsor Locks. He is the most successful musician to come from this area.



Al Anderson



“Big Al” Anderson

He was listed as one of the greatest guitar players of the 20th Century by Musician Magazine. He has over 900 recorded songs. He is accomplished in many genres of music. He was influenced by Hank Williams, the Everly Brothers, the Ventures, Chet Atkins, Elvis, Little Richard, and Ray Charles.



Big Al Anderson & the Wildweeds - 1968

His first band was “The Wildweeds”. They had a regional hit: “No Good to Cry”. Then he joined the NRBQ (New Rhythm and Blues Quartet). He had over a dozen albums with them. He wrote many of the band’s greatest songs: He spend more than two decades with the NRBQ.

Around 1989, Al wrote a song for Carlene Carter, “Every Little Thing”, that rose to Number 5, on the worldwide chart. He left NRBQ and signed with music publisher, Pat Daniel McMurry. His songwriting became prolific, and he rose to the top of the songwriters world. He moved to Nashville and became a legend in the music world. His songs have been recorded by almost 900 artists including: Vince Gill, Bonnie Raitt, Trisha Yearwood, Jimmy Buffett, Martina McBride, Patty Loveless, George Jones, Sheryl Crow, Leann Rimes, Tim McGraw, George Strait, Rascal Flatts, Zac Brown, Anthony Hamilton, Harry Connick Jr and many others.

He also put out a dozen of his own albums.



Al keeps on performing on stage. Here is is performing with Vince Gill.



Vince Gill and Al Anderson

SOURCES:

Big Al Anderson, <https://bigalanderson.com/bio/>

Montemerlo, Melvin D., “Al Anderson”, Chapter 14 of Windsor Locks Musicians, Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2021.

CHAPTER 47

Johnny Menko: His Polka Band Played for 70 Years

Any list of highly successful people from Windsor Locks must include Johnny Menko. Johnny was the leader of a Polka band that lasted for 70 years. He was not only the band's organizer and leader, he was a prolific songwriter, arranger and musician. He was elected to the International Polka Association's Hall of Fame in 1987. His band played all over Connecticut and Massachusetts, and amassed a fiercely loyal following over the decades.



Johnny Menko 1915-2009

Johnny was born in Windsor Locks on June 13, 1915. He grew up in Warehouse Point. He worked at in the quality control department of M. H. Rhodes, Inc. in Hartford. When he was only nine years old, he could play the violin along with records of Polish music on a record-player. He attended Enfield High School, and then studied music at the University of Kansas. He switched to Bay Path Institute in Springfield, MA, where he majored in Business.

In 2006, there was a special event to celebrate the Johnny Menko band's 69 years existence. It was held in St. Joe's Polish Club in Colchester, CT. That night, at the age of 91, Johnny was asked when he would retire. His answer was: "I'm not going anywhere. I still want to play". (Olszewski, 2006)

Johnny originally formed his band in 1936 along with his brothers, Joe and Tony, and one of their neighbors, Ted Wezowic. It was called the "Menko-Wezowic Orchestra." The band achieved quick success in its performances in

Connecticut and Massachusetts. In 1938, two more members were added, and the name was changed to the "Blue Bells Orchestra." The new members were Wasyl Szykula, the "Singing Carpenter from Windsor Locks," and Charlie Polisky. Wasyl stayed with the band for over 50 years.

In 1949, the band changed its name to "The Johnny Menko Orchestra - Hartford's Smartest Polka Band."

The band was known as a group of musicians who were good friends and who had a great relationship.

Johnny Menko and his orchestra had their own radio show from 1949 to 1955. It was sponsored by Balch Motor Sales of East Windsor, CT, and it aired from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on Sundays.

In 1951, the band broadcast from the Pine Meadow Restaurant in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, for 26 weeks on Wednesday evenings. Wasyl Szykula produced these shows.

The orchestra started to record their music in 1950 for Karo Music Co. of Manchester. Two of their hits were "Our Special Polka" and "Fireside Polka." In 1955 and 1956, their first two long-playing records were released by Fiesta Record Co. of New York. Later they recorded on a number of other labels.

A very popular spot at which the orchestra played frequently was the Quonset Restaurant in Hadley, Massachusetts. They played in the Catskills, at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, at the Kielbasa Festival in Chicopee, MA, at Riverside Park in Springfield, MA, Mountain Park in Holyoke, MA, and at Lake Compounce in Bristol, CT. They also played at countless weddings, birthdays and anniversaries. They even played at one christening. The group went out of their way to gain wider popularity with the younger crowd by playing modern music for school and sports dances and carnivals.

CONCLUSION

Johnny retired as leader of the orchestra on March 6, 1977, and his brother Joe, without missing a beat, took over the responsibilities of the band under the name of The Menko Orchestra. Johnny Menko continued playing in the Menko Orchestra. His band played professionally for 70 years! Johnny died on July 10, 2009, at the age of 94. He lived his life to the fullest. Like Frank Sinatra, "He did it his way."

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, "Johnny Menko: Windsor Locks' Most Prolific Musician", in Windsor Locks History: Volume II, Self Published, Bel Air, MD 2019.

CHAPTER 48

Kathryn Morris: Professional Actress



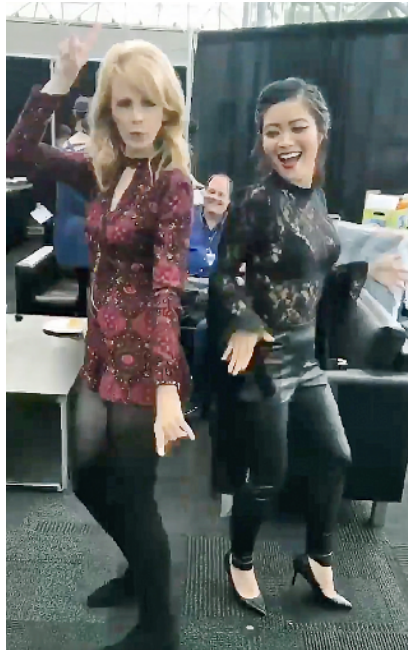
Kathryn Morris
WLHS 1987

From age 6 to 17, Kathryn Morris and her family travelled the southern “Bible Belt” as a gospel group called The Morris Code. She had substantial musical “chops” when she was in grammar school. She was heavily involved in music and theater in Windsor Locks High School. She was president of Windsor Locks High School’s chapter of the National Honor Society, co-captain of the girl’s field hockey team, and a member of the NCCC All-Conference Chorus. She was very active in music and theater in college. Kathryn went to two colleges, Northeastern Christian Junior College and Temple University.

She had musical roles in three movies. She was in a Japanese music video based on the musical “Grease”. In 1991, she played the role of Jen in the romantic musical comedy film “Cool As Ice”.

In the 2001 movie, *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence*, she played a rock star. That required her to take intensive singing and guitar lessons. Unfortunately, those scenes were cut from the movie. That was a Steven Spielberg film. Spielberg also cast Kathryn in his next movie, *Minority Report*, in which she played Tom Cruise’s wife.

From 1991 to 2018, she was in more than 25 shows on television, and in 25 movies. Kathryn's acting career skyrocketed. She played opposite such stars as Tom Cruise and Ben Affleck. She was in two consecutive movies by Steven Spielberg. She is most well-known for her starring role in the TV series, *Cold Case*, which was a hit from 2003 to 2010, and which ran for 156 episodes.



Kathryn Morris 2017
New York Comic Con



Kathryn Morris as Lilly Rush
in *Cold Case*

SOURCES

Kathryn Morris, Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathryn_Morris

What is Kathryn Morris doing now?

<https://affairpost.com/what-is-kathryn-morris-doing-now-wiki-bio-johnny-messner-net-worth/>

[#:~:text=Kathryn%20Morris%20Net%20Worth,-](#)

[Her%20career%20started&text=So%2C%20if%20you%20ever%20wondered,through%20her%20successful%20acting%20career.](#)

Kathryn Morris Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/officialkathrynmorris/>

CHAPTER 49

Thomas James O'Leary: Singer, Actor, Stage Director



Thomas James O'Leary in
You Never Can Tell
Yale Repertory Theatre 2001

Thomas James O'Leary was born in 1956. He graduated from Windsor Locks High School in 1974. He was in the National Honor Society during his last two years, and he was a straight-A student. That was a hint that he was headed for great things.

Fast forward to October of 1995, when Tom came back to his high school alma mater. He addressed a group of music and theater students and told them about his career in musical theater. He had been the lead in the best-selling musical "The Phantom of the Opera". The play had just ended a seven-week run at the Bushnell in Hartford. Music teacher, Cindy Latournes reminded him that they had performed together in a band called **Sound Power** more than 20 years previously. Tom gave a serious talk to the aspiring performers about the combination of talent, luck, perseverance and timing that had propelled him to the top rung of his profession. He had been sitting in that same classroom when he was in high school and a teacher asked him to sing in a school variety show, which was his first performance. He had the lead in "Dracula, Baby" during his senior year.

After high school, he went to the University of Connecticut, and majored in acting. From there he went to the Trinity Rep Conservatory in Providence, R.I. Then he moved to New York to look for acting jobs. He appeared in "Miss

Saigon”, “Chess” and “Les Miserables”. He auditioned twice as an understudy for “Phantom of the Opera”, but was turned down both times. He auditioned a third time, and was chosen as the Phantom in the touring company production. He said: “A lot of people are very talented, but there are not a lot of people who have the talent and the perseverance.” My story has been: “I persevere. Now, I’m glad I did.”

He played the Phantom in the Broadway production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* for three and a half years. He was chosen by Harold Prince to perform the title role for the 10th anniversary celebration in 1998. Tom O’Leary has come a long way since graduating from Windsor Locks High School. However his career didn’t end with *The Phantom of the Opera*.



**Thomas James O’Leary in
*The Phantom of the Opera***

Tom O’Leary has come a long way since graduating from Windsor Locks High School. He was in *Miss Saigon*, *Les Miserables*, *Chess*, *The Last Sunday in June*, *You Never Can Tell*, *Two Rooms*, and *Medal of Honor Rag*. He has won numerous professional awards. As of 2020, Tom’s was a full-time member of the faculty at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) College of the Performing Arts in Hollywood. He has also been teaching master classes all over the country and coaching privately in the Los Angeles area. Tom O’Leary has had a phenomenal musical career on both sides of the United States. From New York, he moved to Los Angeles, and became an award winning stage director.

SOURCE:

Montemerlo, Melvin D., Windsor Locks Musicians, Chapter 11: Thomas James O’Leary, Self Published, Bel Air, MD 2021.

CHAPTER 50

Dick Robinson: the Friday Night Dances at the Knights of Columbus Hall



**Knights of Columbus Home
332 Elm St. Windsor Locks, CT
Home of Dick Robinson's Friday Night Dances**

In the late 1960s and early 1970, the "Friday Night Dance" at the Knights of Columbus home was the place to be. It was emceed by the popular Disc Jockey, Dick Robinson, of the AM radio-station, WDRC, which was known as "The Big D".



Dick Robinson

The Friday night dances at the K of C hall were crowded, lively and exciting. Dick Robinson was the best-known and best-liked DJ in the area. He

knew how to draw a crowd on the air, and at a record hop. He was a tall guy with an outsized personality. He was great with words. He knew how to relate to teenagers and to bands.

He often brought great bands to the Friday night dances. The list of the bands that he took to Windsor Locks for the Friday night dances was impressive. They were “up and comers” who became big names. . They included: Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs, Question Mark and the Mysterions, and the Cowsills.

Dick Robinson was larger than life. He knew the biggest names in popular music. Dick Robinson was an amazing guy. He was not content to just be one of the best DJs around. He wanted to teach others to become broadcasters, so he opened up the Connecticut School of Broadcasting in 1964 in the Hotel America in Hartford. Over the years, it grew to encompass twelve campuses.

Throughout the sixties and into the seventies, Dick Robinson ruled the airwaves in Southern New England. He was the confidante and friend to tens of thousands of teenage listeners at a time when radio personalities were major celebrities. Eventually, Dick Robinson became Vice President and Station Manager of WDRC AM and FM, Hartford, CT, and eventually moved into station ownership by purchasing WRCH and WRCQ. Under his direction, WRCH became the #1 Adult Standards station in Southern New England. He moved to Florida and became a fixture in Palm Beach, where he continued to work and to become a well known philanthropist.

Yet, in Windsor Locks, he is remembered as a great DJ on WDRC and for the dances he presided over at the Knights of Columbus Hall on Friday nights.

Sources:

Dick Robinson.com. WDRC.
<http://www.wdrcobg.com/robinson.html>
<http://www.wdrcobg.com/robinson2.html>

Dick Robinson: American Standards by the Sea
<http://yachtamusic.com/about.html>

The Robinson Media Group
<http://therobinsonmediagroup.com/aboutus1.htm>

CHAPTER 51

Mike Savage and the Savage Brothers Band

The Savage Brothers Band is a popular and enduring Windsor Locks group known for their mix of rock, funk and horns. The band played their first show on June 1, 1984 at J.D. Magnum's in Windsor Locks. As of this writing (2024), **the band has been going strong for 40 years.** Prior to the COVID pandemic which started in 2020, the band played over 6,000 shows across New England as well as a two in Mexico and a Carnival Cruise. They have performed at private events such as weddings, proms, holiday parties, fundraisers, and nightclubs, and at large public events such as the Windsor Locks summer concert series, the Irish Festival in Glastonbury, the Fourth of July celebration in Enfield, and the Big E in West Springfield, MA.



**Savage Brothers Band 2012.:Steven Savage, trombone;
Mark Savage, trumpet; Joe Savage,Tom Savage, tenor sax.
Back row: Michael Savage, drums; Keith Kruser, keyboard.**

The four brothers, Tom, Mark, Steve and Michael, played music since they were little boys. Their father, Joe Savage, a native of Warrenpoint, Ireland had a Dixieland dance band that toured Ireland in the 1950's. He and his wife fostered the boy's early music learning. The early practice that the boys had was evident as they moved through Windsor Locks Middle and High School. The brothers were in the award-winning Windsor Locks High School Jazz Band, which earned awards at a number of high school jazz festivals. Michael was a multi-award winner. He was recognized as an outstanding soloist three years in a row at Berklee College of Music's High School Jazz Festival. He received the top

trophy at the Hartt School of Music's Jazz Festival, and won a scholarship to the Berklee College of Music.

The first "Savage Bash" was Tommy's High School graduation party in 1981. The band was not official at that time. The "Savage Bash", which was a big party in the family's yard, became an annual event. Eventually it got too big. As a result, the "Savage Splash" was born. It was held on a large boat which docked in New London, CT. One "Savage Splash" had 10 Greyhound buses leaving Windsor Locks with the band following in a VIP bus. Over 1200 people left the dock in New London for a three-hour booze cruise on a chartered ferry boat called the "Anna C". It was an annual event until it got out of control.

The band started playing at local clubs and quickly branched out to nearby cities and nearby states. They played in venues such as the Russian Lady in Hartford, and many colleges and universities. They played in Nantucket, Block Island, Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod and Killington, VT. They quickly acquired a devoted following, and their shows often sold out. Fans arrived very early to get in. Twice the band leased an airplane and took 200 people to Cancun, Mexico.

Tom passed away in 2014. Steven passed away in 2022. Mark is no longer with the band. Mike Savage has kept the Savage Band going strong. The Savage Brothers Band is a well known, well loved Windsor Locks institution and tradition. It is a thing of great pride in Windsor Locks.



Mike Savage

SOURCE:

Montemerlo, Melvin D, "The Savage Brothers Band", Chapter 46 of Windsor Locks Musicians, Self Published, 2021, Bel Air, MD, 2021

CHAPTER 52

Daniel Tracey Castonguay (Dan Tracey): Internationally Successful Rock Musician



Daniel Tracey Castonguay is, without a doubt, Windsor Locks' most accomplished and most well-known guitarist. For over a decade, he has played, sung and written music for the internationally acclaimed band, the **Alan Parsons Live Project**. He has played for audiences of more than 60,000 people. He has written music for movies, TV shows, advertising jingles, and rock albums. He has performed all over Europe and the United States.

Dan Tracey Castonguay was born in Windsor Locks in 1965. Dan became interested in music when he was about two years old. His older brother had a drum set. Dan taught himself to play drums on that set. After his mother showed him a few chords on the piano, he taught himself to play piano. After an uncle showed him some chords on the guitar, he taught himself to play guitar. All of his early music learning was "by ear". He took to the instruments naturally and with gusto.

Dan had two music teachers in Windsor Locks High School were Neil Rinaldi and John Gionfriddo. A number of their students became professional musicians. Dan was one of them.

In high school, Dan joined the a band called "**Airborne**" which later became the "**Savage Brothers Band**". At the age of 14, he was playing most Friday nights at the Copper Lantern Bar in Granby, where he sang, and played

guitar and keyboards for the band. That lasted about two years. Dan worked in a number of other bands over the years.

A big step in Dan's career was his move to Nashville, which is where many aspiring songwriters and musicians go to seek their fortune. He started by visiting a friend named Donald Main, Dan got the feeling that Nashville is different from places like New York City, where the competition among musicians is cut-throat. In Nashville, the musicians seemed to be willing to help one another out. He described this as "healthy competition". Dan decided to continue working in Nashville, and see what he could make happen.

THEN CAME THE BIG BREAK. Dan got a chance to do some work for the well-known **Alan Parsons Live Project**. Dan got a job working for Alan as an equipment technician. Alan had seen Dan play. One night, Alan asked Dan to sing with his band. Dan sang "*Immigrant Song*", and the crowd loved it. Alan saw that and asked him to join the "**Alan Parsons Live Project**". That was in 2009.

For over a decade, he has played, sung and written music for the internationally acclaimed band, the Alan Parsons Live Project. He has played for audiences of more than 60,000 people. He has written music for movies, TV shows, advertising jingles, and rock albums. He has performed all over Europe and the United States. In high school, Dan joined the a band called "Airborne" which later became the "Savage Brothers Band". As do all budding professionals, Dan went through a number of bands as he tried to find his place in the music industry. His big break came when Alan Parsons heard him sing and play the guitar. In 2009, Dan Tracey became a full fledged member of the "Alan Parsons Live Project". Dan Tracey had achieved what all aspiring musicians aspire to, but very few ever achieve. The Alan Parsons Live Project does about 80 to 150 shows a year. They usually go out for about three weeks and then go home for a week or two. Alan Parsons has a cult following in Europe. When the group plays in the United States, they usually fill arenas which have about 5000 seats, but in Europe, they fill arenas with 20,000 to 60,000 seats. Few make it to the heights of the music industry that Dan has.

SOURCES

1) The source of the information for this chapter was Dan Tracey. He provided a long detailed description of his musical life along with the photos.

2) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Alan_Parsons_Project
This provided information about the Alan Parsons Project.

CHAPTER 53

John Crand's Candy Castle



Folks who live in Windsor Locks don't spend all of their time in Windsor Locks. There were many nearby attractions that are part of Windsor Locks life. They include: Riverside Park, Enfield Mall, Babb's Beach, Railroad Salvage, East Windsor Drive-In, the department stores in Hartford and Springfield, and *Crand's Candy Castle* in Enfield! Crand's was very special. It was a small, local "Mom and Pop" shop that proved to have a great attraction of both adults and children. It was in an unassuming, white-washed brick building with red shutters, situated at 1684 King Street in Enfield, near the East Windsor border.

The business was founded by Greek immigrant, John Crand, in Gardner, MA. He moved his business to Enfield in 1953. His family lived on the second floor, and they sold candy on the first floor. John Crand passed away in 1963, leaving his sons, Robert and Tom in charge. Tom retired in 1990, leaving Robert as the sole proprietor until the business closed in 2001. (Throwback Thursday, Enfield Patch, by Tim Jensen, May 3, 2018)

The Springfield Union did an article on local candy stores in their December 19, 1982 edition, which featured a writeup on Crand's. Tom Crand said that the last two years were their most profitable, and that Crand's was open seven days a week. At the time, they had gone heavily into moulding novelties out of solid chocolate. The Christmas season is the big one for

Crand's, which does a great deal of business by mail order. Two and five pound boxes of chocolates were popular. One time, a single customer bought 400 pounds of chocolate to use as gifts. Their three most popular fillings were: nougat, butter crunch and caramel. Crand's did not use any synthetic fillings. For example, their strawberry cream-filled chocolate is made with a strawberry puree rather than an imitation flavoring.

The *Hartford Courant* had a story on June 11, 2001 which foreshadowed the end of *Crand's Candy Castle*. In it, Robert Crand gave a little history about the store, and the reasons why he was about to close the business. His father, John, learned how to make fudge and candy while working at ice cream and sandwich shops around the Northeast. In 1935, he started his own business, the Priscilla Candy Shop, in Gardner, MA, and moved it to Enfield in 1953. The store had its busiest seasons around Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Christmas, Easter and Valentine's Day. In mid-December, the shop was open 10 hours a day, and extra workers were hired for evening work.

By this time, Robert was the proprietor of the shop, and he was getting tired of the heavy workload. He said: "This wasn't bad when my brother was here working with me, but now I'm down here all the time. I'm 66. I want to travel. I want to get out and do something else. In 2001, a long-established and well-loved business came to an end. We all miss *Crand's Candy Castle*.

CONCLUSION

Folks from all around Enfield, including Windsor Locks, often made the pilgrimage to *Crand's Candy Castle* for handmade chocolates and candies. Those who shopped at Crand's will never forget the building, the people, the aroma and the excitement. The Crand family ran their business from 1953 to 2001. For decades, Crand's Candy Castle made Windsor Locks a better place to live. John Crand developed a very special business, and deserves to be recognized for it.

Sources:

Montemerlo, Melvin, "Crands Candy Castle", Chapter 19 of Windsor Locks History Volume II, self published, Bel Air, MD, 2019

(Throwback Thursday, Enfield Patch, by Tim Jensen, May 3, 2018)

Springfield Union, Dec. 19, 1982

The *Hartford Courant* , June 11, 2001

CHAPTER 54

Fred Marsh and the Marsh Motorcycle Company

The philosopher, Georg Hegel, said: “Nothing great has ever been accomplished without passion.” For some, motorcycle riding is fun. For others, it is a profession. For Fred Marsh, it was a passion. As a young racer, he acquired the nickname “Demon”. He owned motorcycle dealerships for 77 years, from 1926 until he died in 2003. He raced during seven different decades. He was rode in hill-climbing events until he was 89 years old. There was a large celebration at his dealership on his 100th birthday in 2000. He even received a birthday present from the President and the First Lady (Bill and Hillary).



**Fred Marsh on his
100th Birthday**

He was born in Italy in 1900. In the United States, his parents struggled to make a living. His mother died when he was 12. He went to work on a 100 acre farm. The farmer had a motorcycle, and let him ride it. He went to work as a streetcar conductor, and saved up his money to buy his first motorcycle. It was a Harley Davidson. He went to work for Harley Davidson.

In 1922, he built his own motorcycle to ride in 500 cc class races. In 1926, he quit his job at Harley Davidson, and started his own business selling Indian motorcycles. They were made in Springfield, MA. As a dealer, he was able to get Indian motorcycles for racing. Back then, motorcycles were not “hi-tech”. To slow down going into a turn, the rider would turn the motor off.

He opened his Marsh Motorcycle Co, in a small store on Bridge Street, near the bridge from Warehouse Point to Windsor Locks. For decades, starting in the 1950s, that store had a beautiful Indian Motorcycle in its front window.

He was inducted into the Motorcyclist Hall of Fame in 2002, when he was 102. He rode a small Harley every morning at his dealership until he died in 2003 at the age of 103. Right until the end, he rode 75 laps a day around his dealership, and did “figure eights”, spirals and tight circles .

Fred advertised in the Windsor Locks Journal. The ads show a side of Fred’s business that hasn’t been discussed so far. His shop sold bicycles. His first ads in the Windsor Locks Journal were in 1949, and only mentioned bicycles.

Fred Marsh was not an ordinary person. His passion for motorcycling was extraordinary. His accomplishments were extraordinary. He never married, and he lived in his motorcycle shop



Fred Marsh at his dealership on 100th Birthday

Although Fred’s shop was not in Windsor Locks, and he didn’t live in Windsor Locks, he will be remembered by the people of Windsor Locks of the 1950-2000 era. Bicycle buyers and motorcycle aficionados loved to go to Fred’s shop. He had the best equipment, and repairs were well done.

SOURCES:

Montemerlo, Melvin, Windsor Locks History: Volume IV, Chapter 34, Fred Marsh and His Motorcycle Company, Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2023

CHAPTER 55

Ruby Vines and Railroad Salvage

Ruby Vines brought change to the world. He tried something new. He sold merchandise that other stores had too much of. He started a company called Railroad Salvage which eventually had about ten stores. One of them was in East Windsor, next to the East Windsor Drive-In Theater. Folks from Windsor Locks flocked there to buy rugs, beds, outdoor furniture, CB radios, and lots more. Ruby's Railroad Salvage was one of the first chain-stores that sold merchandise which it bought from manufacturers and stores which were overstocked. Up to the 1960s, many stores were "Mom and Pop shops" which were locally run and locally managed. In the early 1950s, a few outdoor malls were seen. Windsor Locks had one of the first - Dexter Plaza. Then came places like Railroad Salvage, Odd Lots, Ocean State Job Lots and more. But Railroad Salvage was one of the first.



Ruby Vines



East Windsor Railroad Salvage



Ruby Vines and his wife Choo-Choo in a Railroad Salvage TV commercial

Ruby and his wife Sharon, who was known as “Choo Choo”, spent time in each of their stores. They were often in the East Windsor store. He began to learn his trade as a child, when he sold pots and pans on the street. He started his first business in 1951. Later, he had stores in: Groton, Bristol, West Haven, Waterbury, East Windsor, and Meriden, and Turners Falls, MA.

He and his wife did folksy commercials on TV. Ruby was a World War II prisoner of war, who was captured at the Battle of the Bulge. He started his Railroad Salvage business in 1951. He was well-known and well-liked in his home town of New Haven. He was a kind and generous man. He died in 2011 at the age of 86.

CONCLUSION

Ruby Vines was a “born salesman”. He was selling pots and pans on the street when he was a kid. As an adult, he started selling merchandise that other companies had too much of. He had one of the first “close-out stores” or “salvage stores”. He didn’t stop with one. He grew it into a chain. Luckily for Windsor Locks, he put one of them in East Windsor. Windsor Locks folks truly enjoyed the experience of this new way of shopping. We went there searching for BIG SAVINGS and we were proud of getting them. We went there because it was “cool”. Ruby Vines made Windsor Locks a more interesting, more exciting place to live. More than that, he gave us himself as an example of how to make it big in the world. All you need is a good idea and the will to make it happen. He showed us how to be creative, how to get people’s attention, and to get them to want what he was selling. One of the reasons we study history is to find people like Mr. Vines, who made big changes in the world.

SOURCES

Journal Enquirer, Oct 26, 2011

https://www.journalinquirer.com/towns/east_windsor/owner-of-salvage-store-chain-ruby-w-vine-dies-at-86/article_68b90079-eb81-5fd4-a0e3-d7de346022f8.html

Connecticut Licenses and Credentials, [OPENGOVUS.COM](https://opengovus.com)

<https://opengovus.com/connecticut-license/140>

Rueben Vines Obituary, *New Haven Register*, Oct 13, 2011

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/nhregister/name/rueben-vine-obituary?id=20039192>

CHAPTER 56

Seth Dexter I and Ephraim Haskell Purchased Half of What Later Became Windsor Locks

Seth Dexter I, was the seventh child of Benjamin and Sarah Dexter. He was born in 1718. He married a woman named Elizabeth. They had nine children. Seth was a successful clothier. He was also a community leader. In his community, he was a member of the town's Committee on Correspondence in 1772-3, a member of a committee to supply families of soldiers in the army, a church deacon, and the town clerk in 1750-1756. He lived in Rochester, MA, which is where he died in 1793.

Seth Dexter I passed his skills in the area of making cloth for clothes to his son, Seth Dexter II, who had moved from Massachusetts to Connecticut in 1767. There are three persons in this lineage named Seth Dexter. For clarity, we will refer to them as Seth Dexter I, Seth Dexter II and Seth Dexter III.

Seth Dexter I and Ephraim Haskell purchased what became “Downtown Windsor Locks” in 1770

The first major accomplishment in Windsor Locks' pre-history in Pine Meadow was made by two men who lived in Rochester MA, where many of the Pine Meadow settlers came from. In 1770, Seth Dexter I and Ephraim Haskell, of Rochester, MA purchased a large tract of land in Pine Meadow. The tract of land went from from what we know as Grove Street on the north to School Street on the south, and from the Connecticut River on the east to Center Street on the west. They deeded that land to their children, Seth Dexter II and Jabez Haskell, who were already living in Pine Meadow. Seth Dexter II was married to Ephraim Haskell's daughter, Deborah. Buying that parcel of land was one of the most important steps in the formation of the town of Windsor Locks. Few can claim to have had a larger effect on the history of Windsor Locks.

You can learn more about the entire Dexter family in Chapter 31 “The Dexter Dynasty” in the book “Windsor Locks History, by Melvin D. Montemerlo. It can be read and downloaded at archive.org, Google Books, Apple Books and the Windsor Locks Public Library website.

CONCLUSION

While Seth Dexter I and Ephraim Haskell existed long before Windsor Locks existed, they had a massive effect on how Windsor Locks turned out. The piece of land they bought and gave to their children, who were settlers in the Pine Meadow section of Windsor, turned out to be the area in which Windsor Locks was “born”. It is the area in which all of the initial commercial and population growth was in. It contained the Main Street area which was the real “center” of population, shopping, living, entertaining, etc. of the town from the time it

became a town until the Windsor Locks Town Government executed the Main Street Redevelopment project, which ended up wiping out the vibrant Main Street, and insured that it could never be restored.

SOURCES:

Montemerlo, Melvin D., Windsor Locks History, Chapter 31 - "The Dexter Dynasty", Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2017.

CHAPTER 57

Seth Dexter II (1743-1793): Founder of Multiple Businesses

Seth Dexter II was the first child of Seth Dexter I and his wife, Elizabeth. He was born in 1743 in Rochester, MA. He married Deborah Haskell who was also born in Rochester, MA. They moved to the Pine Meadow section of Windsor, Connecticut in 1767. Pine Meadow later became Windsor Locks. Jabez Haskell, Seth's brother in law, moved to Pine Meadow with him. The two were life-long business partners, They operated a number of successful businesses ventures.

According to page 126 of Jabez Haskell Hayden's book, "Historical Sketches", Ephraim Haskell and Seth Dexter I, of Rochester, Mass., bought the land lying east of Center Street, and from School Street on the South to Grove Street on the North, and still further North on Center Street. They bought 160 acres for £340 (\$7.08 per acre), including the saw-mill and an old house. The purchase took place in 1769. This purchase by Haskell and Dexter was made for their sons, Seth Dexter II, whose wife, Deborah Haskell was Ephraim's daughter, and Jabez Haskell, who was Ephraim's son.

In 1770, Seth Dexter I deeded his land in Pine Meadow to his son Seth Dexter II, who was also a clothier, and who set up the first "clothier works" in this part of the country. (Henry R. Stiles, The History and Genealogies of Ancient Windsor, CT, vol. 1)

The following four paragraphs are from "The Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1633-1884, vol. 2," by Trumbull, 1886.

"The first school-house was built about 1776, largely if not entirely by Jabez Haskell and Seth Dexter II. It stood on the southeast corner of Elm and Centre streets, on Mr. Dexter's land; and they were probably the parties responsible for the support of the school..."

"For many years, woolen cloths were subjected to no finishing process after being taken from the loom. The first mill for cloth-dressing in this part of the country was set up here. Mr. Seth Dexter II brought the art with him from the eastern part of Massachusetts, and set up his mill in 1770. ... Dexter's clothier works were run here about sixty years..."

"Water-power was first used to run a saw-mill on Kettle Brook, which was being built, or rebuilt, by the Denslow family in 1742; at that date, half of it was sold to Daniel Hayden, and afterward the other half was sold to his brother Isaac Hayden. About twenty years later, Daniel Hayden had failed, and in 1769 it passed into the hands of Haskell & Dexter, whose families operated it jointly three quarters of a century, when the Dexter family became sole owners, and they still continue it in operation."

"In 1784, Haskell & Dexter built a grist-mill below their saw-mill..."

From the above, we see that **Seth Dexter II set up the beginnings of the Dexter company, and that it was already thriving. He also set up a "Clothier Works" and a mill for dressing wool.** Those were the first major accomplishments in the history and prehistory of Windsor Locks. They were made by Seth Dexter II. Seth

Dexter II and his wife Deborah, had nine children between 1770 and 1789. All were born in Windsor, Conn. Seth Dexter II died in Windsor, Conn in 1797.

SOURCES:

Montemerlo, Melvin, Windsor Locks History, Chapter 31 "The Dexter Dynasty", Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2017

CHAPTER 58

Alfred Smith: The man who Created and Named Windsor Locks



Alfred Smith

Alfred Smith, President of
The Connecticut River Company
and
The Connecticut River Banking Co.

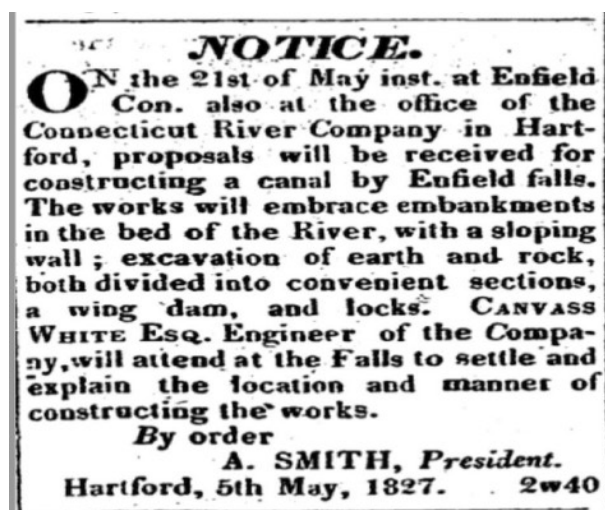
The story of the Connecticut River Company and the man who led it, is not well known in Windsor Locks. In the 1820s, there was a man in Hartford, CT who led a group of wealthy Hartford businessmen on a quest to greatly increase their wealth. The plan was to enable the members of the group to ship and sell their wares all the way up the Connecticut River, as far as Canada. There was a problem. There were rapids in the Connecticut River near Enfield, which prevented their ships from getting any further North. This group of men found the financial backing to build the canal around the rapids, and got the State of Connecticut to allow them to build the canal.

The Members of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut River Company were among the wealthiest and most powerful merchants in Hartford. Mr. Alfred Smith, the President of the Connecticut River Company, was a prominent lawyer, who was involved with a number of enterprises. He was Judge of the County Court, and represented the City in the General Assembly.

Alfred Smith knew that the building of the canal would lead to the development of a town at the lower end of the canal. He had even selected a name for the town. It was a name which would be advertise the canal, and thus increase the revenue that the company would make from the canal. He came up with "Windsor Locks" as the name for the town. When the first Post Office was set up in Pine Meadow, it was Alfred Smith who named it "The Windsor Locks Post Office".

The Connecticut River Company received a charter from the Connecticut General Assembly in May, 1824, for the purpose of "improving the boat navigation of the Connecticut River". Below is a Hartford Courant notice about the Connecticut River Company's progress in building the Canal, which was signed by Mr. Alfred Smith, the President of the company.

The work started in 1827, and it was completed in 1829. A settlement grew up near the south lock of the Canal. it became its own town in 1854, and it was named "Windsor Locks" as Mr. Smith predicted. He is arguably the most important person in the history of Windsor Locks.



Hartford Courant, May 14, 1827

SOURCES

Hayden, Jabez Haskell. *Historical Sketches*, Windsor Locks Journal, Windsor Locks, CT., 1900.

Erving, Henry W. *The Connecticut River Banking Company: 100 Years of Service 1825-1925*. Hartford, CT. 1925

Hayden, Jabez Haskell, "Windsor Locks", a chapter in the book, *The Memorial History of Hartford County, CT*, Edited by J Hammond Trumbull, LL.D, Published by Edward. L. Osgood, 1886.

Love, W. DeLoss, *The Navigation of the Connecticut River*, The Antiquarian Society, 1903

The Hartford Courant, May 14, 1827

CHAPTER 59

Jack Redmond: Windsor Locks Journal Columnist



Jack Redmond

Jack Redmond was a well-known and beloved member of the Windsor Locks community. He was born in New Haven in 1922. He worked at Combustion Engineering for 21 years, and served on the Windsor Locks Fire Commission for 5 years. He lived in Windsor Locks for 48 years. He was such a passionate basketball fan, that he was made a member of the Windsor Locks Sports Hall of Fame. While Jack did a lot for the town, the thing that he will always be remembered for is his weekly column in the Windsor Locks Journal, named “Cabbages and Kings”, which ran for 24 years. (<http://www.windsorlocks-hof.com/jack-and-rita-redmond/>)

In his first column, on April 24, 1975 Jack laid out his vision for his series of columns beautifully, simply and with elegance. He said: “The time has come, the walrus said, to talk of many things: of shoes, and ships, and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings. And why the sea is boiling hot, and whether pigs have wings”. (a quote from Lewis Carroll’s Through the Looking Glass Darkly).

He continued: “Move over, Earl Wilson, William Buckley, Bill Lee, Art Buchwald, Erma Bombeck, a novice is endeavoring to break into the big leagues. I do not, in my wildest dreams, ever hope to attain the writings of the above-mentioned writers of the fourth estate, however, a guy has to start somewhere, and what better place than Windsor Locks.”

That was an elegant piece of thinking and writing. He had both high hopes and a self-effacing style. He was obviously well-acquainted with literature, and he was going to take high-style writing to a small town setting. What he said next showed a great deal of insight into the soul of Windsor Locks. He said: “But enough about the writer ... people want to hear and read about people - people who make up the news in Windsor Locks and Connecticut, people who have made their marks in our town by way of the political, civic, fraternal and coaching circles. Mr reasons are very simple.... people make the best stories.”

Jack's weekly column, "Cabbages and Kings"

- ran for 24 years.
- covered approximately 1,200 columns, and thus about 1,200 individuals.
- is organized into 28 volumes in the Windsor Locks Library.
- is available in hard-copy at the Windsor Locks Public Library.
- is available on-line via the Windsor Locks Public Library website.

<http://www.windsorlockshistory.org/cabbages-and-kings>

Jack Redmond's weekly series of columns on local individuals provides a unique history of the town from 1975 to 1999. It is not a history as would be found in a history book. It is a more personal view of recent Windsor Locks' happenings as seen through the eyes of the citizens being interviewed. He wrote about history as it was happening.

Jack's final column was as poignant and thought-provoking as his first. He wrote with charm, wit, insightfulness and wisdom. In that last column, he looked back over his 24 years of writing columns for the Windsor Locks Journals and said: "I have had the honor and sincere pleasure of meeting so many fine people in town ... the clergy, politicians, coaches, teachers and students and just regular folks that made up this fine town."

It is important to read Jack's last column closely and carefully. Jack did not want to stop writing. He stated why he was ending his long series of columns when he said: "It's not my age. I have not lost the ability to write or to type, or meet people face to face for an interview, ... Frankly, it is just too difficult to find new people to interview for their stories. At times, I had 10 or more intended interviewees, but the list is disappearing."

Jack left it to the people of Windsor Locks to figure out why he was having a hard time finding more people that he wanted to interview. Yet it would behoove anyone interested in the future of the town to try to figure out what he meant.

Jack didn't think of himself as a historian. Historians write about the past. Jack wrote about the people that he interviewed. Of course, many of those interviewees talked about their past, but Jack's focused on the people he was interviewing. Jack left the town with a treasure trove of information that historians can examine and interpret. He passed away there on September 1, 2014.

Sources:

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Windsor Locks Hall of Fame writeup on Jack and Rita Redmond

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John P. Redmond Obituary, Hartford Courant, Sept, 3, 2014

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"Cabbages and Kings" introductory page at the Windsor Locks Public Library website

<http://www.windsorlockshistory.org/cabbages-and-kings>

Listing of the volumes of "Cabbages and Kings" columns on the Windsor Locks Public Library website.

CHAPTER 60

J. Finton Wallace and the Windsor Locks Journal

Citizens of all towns have “town spirit”, that is, a “sense of belonging” and of “pride in one’s town”. It is an emotional bond between human beings and the place they live. It tends to be greater in small towns because the smaller the town, the more experiences the citizens have in common, and the greater the percentage of other residents that they know. The goal here is to put a spotlight on this special bond between our citizens and our town, and on a man who fostered it.

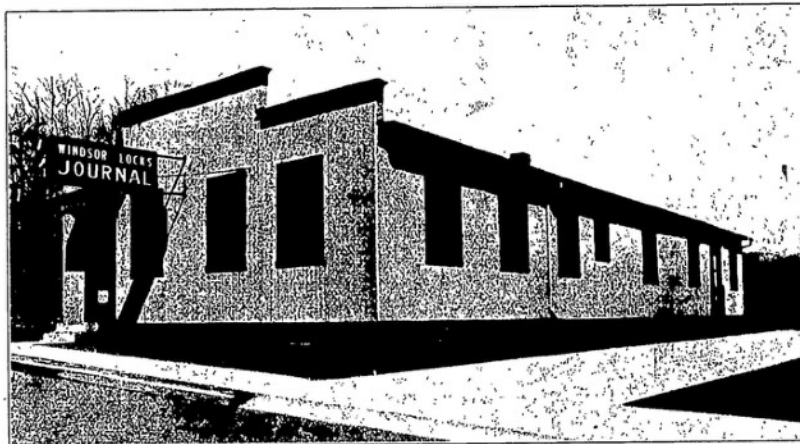
When the topic of Windsor Locks’ town spirit comes up, there is one person whose name stands out as having had a large effect on it. He was a man who took great pride in fostering a sense of belonging in the town’s citizens. The man’s name is J. Finton Wallace. He was the editor and owner of the town’s newspaper, *The Windsor Locks Journal*, from 1937 until he retired in 1969.



J. Finton Wallace
Editor
Windsor Locks Journal

What was so special about Finton Wallace and his newspaper? The Windsor Locks Journal was unlike other newspapers. Other newspapers looked alike. Their formality made them seem aloof from the reader. The Windsor Locks Journal, on the other hand, was more like a “Family and Friends Newsletter”.

Below is a photo of the Windsor Locks Journal building at 11 Spring Street.



THE HOME OF THE JOURNAL

Important local, political and town business news was included. Then came editorials, births, obituaries, weddings, and engagements. Then there were the “for sale” ads, and the advertisements for local businesses.

The paper was written in town, printed in town, and delivered to your house by a newspaper boy or girl that you knew. In short, reading the Windsor Locks Journal that was run by Finton Wallace was not like reading the Hartford Courant. It was a personal experience. The newspaper made you feel like a town resident who was keeping in touch with rest of the town.

How did Finton Wallace come to design for such a unique newspaper? The answer is that he didn't "put it on", "he lived it." He was involved in Windsor Locks organizations throughout his life. The January 27, 1974 issue of the Windsor Locks Journal had both his obituary and an editorial about him. The editorial said: "Some might contend that he tended to overemphasize the good, but no-one can say that he did not have the the interest of the town at heart." It went on to say that Windsor Locks was his community, and he took an active role in it. He was one of the organizers of the local bank, one of the founders of the Rotary Club, and a leader of the Knights of Columbus. He was president of the Library Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the high school building committee. He was also a Board Member and Past President of the Windsor Locks Public Health Nursing Association.

J. Finton Wallace's work on enhancing town spirit was a family trait. He took over the editorship of the Windsor Locks Journal from his father, George Wallace, when he passed away. After J. Finton Wallace died, his son, Finton Wallace, gave permission for the entire set of Windsor Locks Journals, to be digitized, and put on-line for anyone to use, at no cost. The Windsor Locks Journals were never copyrighted. You can now search the entire set of issues of the newspaper from 1880 to 1974 for any topic. The website is: <https://windsorlocks.advantage-preservation.com/>

There is no doubt that J. Finton Wallace's Windsor Locks Journal had a major effect on magnifying citizens' pride and their "feeling of belonging" to Windsor Locks. He knew what he wanted to do, and he did it well..

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Personal phone call with J. Finton Wallace's son, Finton Wallace, on August 6, 2022

The on-line Archive of the Windsor Locks Journal:
<https://windsorlocks.advantage-preservation.com/>

CHAPTER 61

Ettore F. Carniglia: Windsor Locks' Most Beloved Son

Dr. Ettore F. Carniglia is Windsor Locks's "most beloved son". Dr. Carniglia is the only person from Windsor Locks who had a book written about his life. He was a precocious student at St. Mary's Elementary School, where he even skipped a grade. After graduating from St. Mary's in 1917, he entered the Loomis Institute in Windsor. There was an election for the brightest member of his class. He got all the votes. He was voted as: Most Likely to Succeed, Most Energetic, and Biggest Grind. He was second in two categories: Most Conscientious and Most Literary.



Dr. Ettore F. Carniglia
1904 -1970

Ettore won a college scholarship from the Loomis Institute. The award said that his college entrance scores were not only the highest achieved at Loomis, but were among the highest in the country. In 1921, he went to Harvard with that small scholarship from Loomis. He acquired three more scholarships, which enabled him to get through his undergraduate years without having to find a job. He wore clothes that his mother made.

Ettore majored in medicine. His graduation class had 572 students. Fifteen students graduated *Summa Cum Laude*. Ettore and J. Robert Oppenheimer, who invented the atomic bomb, were among those 15 students. After graduating from Harvard in 1925, he went to Harvard Medical School. He took extra courses, and could have graduated in three years. He stayed and took more courses in his fourth year. He graduated at the top of his class.

After his internship, Dr. Carniglia went to Baltimore's Union Memorial Hospital to serve as a staff doctor. He was there for five months. He left because he felt that Baltimore had many doctors, while his hometown, Windsor Locks, was badly in need of a doctor. He returned to Windsor Locks, and set up a practice at 4 Oak Street. Dr. Carniglia also became the doctor for the County Home in Warehouse Point, and the American School for the Deaf in West Hartford. He was appointed the Town Health Officer in 1933.

World War II brought a great increase in activity at Bradley Field. Dr. Carniglia was called to go there whenever an airplane crash occurred. The airfield was named for Lt. Eugene Bradley, who crashed his P-40 on August 21, 1941. Dr. Carniglia signed his death certificate.

Dr. Carniglia maintained a presence at Hartford Hospital. He was famous for his ability as a diagnostician. A diagnostician has to have an immense amount of information in his head, along with the ability to spot things that others

might ignore. Here is one example of his diagnostic capability which took place at Hartford Hospital. A young boy was feverish and lethargic, and he had a rash. Dr. Carniglia looked at the boy's hands, and then he pulled down the lower lid of one of his eyes. There were tiny hemorrhages in his fingernail beds and in his lower eyelid. Based on that, Dr. Carniglia correctly diagnosed the boy as having meningitis. The other doctors didn't think to look in those two places.

Dr. Carniglia worked 20 hour days, day after day, with no vacations. He held office hours and made house calls every day. He didn't exercise much, and he constantly had a cigarette in his mouth and a Coca Cola by his hand. It was a different world. Back then, most doctors smoked. He was not an exception. Dr. Carniglia was wearing himself out.

He continued to make house calls into the mid 1960s. In 1966, he had a stroke but continued to work six hours a day. On Saturday, October 23, 1971, at the age of 67, Dr. Carniglia suffered a massive stroke, and died.

Dr. Carniglia was a selfless man. For most of his career, he charged \$3 for an office visit, and \$50 for delivering a baby. He instructed his bookkeeper to send a bill out only once. If payment was not forthcoming, she was not to send out a second notice. He gave money to patients who couldn't afford medicine.

After he passed away, his wife asked a friend to clean out his desk. One of the desk drawers was jammed. The jam was caused by a large over-stuffed envelope. In the envelope were checks for deliveries of Windsor Locks babies. He hadn't cashed the checks of those that he didn't think could afford to pay.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Ettore F. Carniglia was an extraordinary man. He had no use for the normal pleasures that most people treasure, such as nice clothes, a 40 hour work week, an annual vacation, and retirement. His goal was to provide needed medical services in his hometown, regardless of whether people could afford them or not. There are few people who would have been willing to work the number of hours that he did. He didn't make excuses. There were times he was called to deliver a baby in a snowstorm, when his car couldn't get through, so he just trudged through the snow, on foot. He was a "giver," not a "taker." He had a level of intelligence that few people have. He worked incredibly hard at his education and his job. He broke all of the rules for getting ahead in this world. He did it his way. What did it buy him? It bought him the undying love and respect of the people of Windsor Locks. No one who knew him will forget him.

SOURCE

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CHAPTER 62

Ella Grasso: Connecticut State Governor

Ella Grasso is one of Windsor Locks' best-known and most admired citizens. She was born in Windsor Locks to Italian immigrant parents, James and Maria Oliva Tambussi, in 1919. Her father owned and operated the Windsor Locks Bakery, and her mother was a mill worker.

Ella attended St. Mary's School in Windsor Locks, and then went to the Chaffee Institute in Windsor. After high school graduation in 1936, she entered Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. She graduated *Magna Cum Laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in economics and sociology, with minors in history and political science. Her academic accomplishments were many. She earned a Phi Beta Kappa key her junior year. Yet schoolwork was not enough to keep Ella busy. During her junior and senior years at Mount Holyoke, she held positions as a part-time assistant and teacher for the Department of Economics and Sociology. In 1942, Ella received a Masters of Arts degree in economics and sociology from Mount Holyoke.

After graduating in 1942, Ella Tambussi married Thomas Grasso, a schoolteacher and principal. They raised two children, Susanne and James.

In 1943, Ella's longtime life of public service began with a position at the Connecticut State Department of Labor. A year later, she became the Assistant Connecticut State Director of Research for the War Manpower Commission, where she served until 1946. In 1952, she was elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives, where she served until 1957. She became first woman to be elected "Floor Leader of the House" in 1955. In 1958 she was elected Secretary of the state of Connecticut, and she was re-elected in 1962 and 1966. In 1970 she was elected as a Democratic Representative to the 92nd Congress of the United States. She won re-election in 1972.

In 1974, Ella chose not to run for reelection to Congress. Instead, she opted to run for the position of Governor of Connecticut. In January 1974, she announced her gubernatorial candidacy, which ensured that by the following January she would retire from the House. Ella won the gubernatorial race against GOP House colleague, Representative Robert Steele. She became the first woman to be elected a US governor without succeeding a husband. Grasso's four-year term commenced in January 1975. The fiscal problems of Connecticut forced her to follow a far more conservative policy as governor than



Ella Grasso

she had as a Member of Congress. Despite budget cuts, Ella maintained her popularity and won re-election in 1978.

Ella Grasso was described as a symbolic rather than a doctrinaire feminist leader. She opposed legalized abortion, but did not actively support affirmative action. She supported the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, but did not campaign for it. In 28 years as a public figure, Ella never lost an election.

Sadly, on December 31, 1980, Governor Grasso resigned her office due to illness. She passed away several weeks later on February 5, 1981, at the age of 61, from ovarian cancer. Her accomplishments however, remained intact. She is remembered for bringing the state of Connecticut out of debt, and for creating an open government, which gave ordinary citizens easier access to public records.

President Ronald Reagan posthumously awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and said: "Long before the women's movement had gained prominence, Ella Grasso had already begun the long, hard ascent to distinction as an elected public servant. A fond wife and mother, she proved that it is possible to reconcile a full family life with a long and eventful political career... [she] won the respect of fellow citizens of both parties. Tireless in the pursuit of duty and courageous in the face of illness, Ella Grasso has earned the admiration of all Americans as a legislator, a governor and a woman of outstanding character and achievement."

Ella developed the reputation of being a real leader. A good example of this was the blizzard of 1978, which dumped several feet of snow on Connecticut. She made a controversial decision to close the state down. She shut down the roads by proclamation in order to minimize accidents and make way for emergency vehicles. As a result, storm-related fatalities in Connecticut were much lower than in surrounding states and ultimately, Grasso's decision was recognized as a wise one, and it set the basis for future emergency response situations.

CONCLUSION

Ella Grasso was special in many ways. One could see, when she got into the very difficult area of politics, that she was not only bright and hardworking, but that she also had the ability to look at difficult situations, and figure ways to turn them into a "win". She "thought outside the box" when necessary. She handled the feminist movement of her time in an unconventional way. She just didn't think that gender was a pressing issue. She remained "Ella" throughout her life. She opened up new paths for young women, and was a role model who showed that one didn't always have to take the path that was well worn. Ella often referred to Dr. Carniglia as "My hero".

SOURCE

Montemerlo, Melvin, Ella Grasso: "Windsor Locks Woman Becomes Governor", in Windsor Locks History, Self Published, Bel Air, MD, 2017

CHAPTER 62

Hugh Montgomery: Linguist, Soldier, Spy, CIA Leader

Hugh Montgomery is one of the most extraordinary persons ever to come out of Windsor Locks. Hugh's father was John Robert Montgomery (1890-1967), who was the son of George M. Montgomery (1857-1947), the brother of J.R. Montgomery, who founded the J.R. Montgomery company in 1871.

The J. R. Montgomery firm was not an ordinary company which produced ordinary things. Its owners were creative, risk-taking innovators who vastly increased the kinds and numbers of specialty yarns that were available, and who made advances in the use of metals both in combination with yarns and for use as electrical components. The Montgomery family, which founded and grew this company, consisted of highly motivated, highly intelligent, highly creative individuals.

Given that background, it was not surprising to find out that Hugh Montgomery turned out to be an exceptional person. He might have been the most important person who ever came out of Windsor Locks.

According to the June 17, 1937 issue of the Springfield Republican, Hugh went to Windsor Locks public grammar school. He then went to high school at the Loomis academy, an exclusive private high school in Windsor, Connecticut.

After graduating from Loomis, he went to Harvard University for one semester. He was called to active duty in 1943, and received initial training at Fort Bragg, NC (Windsor Locks Journal, 07 10 1943). He became a member of the 82nd Airborne Division. On D-Day he parachuted into Normandy.

Montgomery was wounded while serving as a paratrooper in World War II and joined the Office of Strategic Services's counter-intelligence branch, known as X-2. His fluency in a seven languages, including German, served him well in the special counter-intelligence detachment of the Office of Special Services (OSS), the wartime spy organization. He was often called upon to go behind German lines to find and bring out Germans who could provide valuable information.

In April 1945, he was on a mission with five other OSS operatives to find a nuclear physicist in eastern Germany, when they happened upon the Buchenwald concentration camp. When they arrived, the survivors had just taken over. The war was over. Montgomery's team saw a group of German guards who were trying to surrender. One of the inmates asked Montgomery to leave the guards to them. Montgomery replied: "They're yours."

During his OSS operations in WWII, he met the woman who he eventually married. He was on a covert mission in Austria, when the German Army moved into that area. A young woman hid him in a barrel. A German officer checked the barrel by tapping it with his swagger stick, but did not open the barrel. Hugh later married Annamarie Janek, the Viennese girl who hid him in the barrel.



Hugh Montgomery, about 1945

After the war, Hugh Montgomery returned to finish his education at Harvard. He earned a B.A. in 1947, an M.A. in 1948, and a Ph.D. in 1952. According to the Springfield Union of July 25, 1951, Hugh won a Woodrow Wilson Scholarship from Princeton University for a year's study in South America.

After returning to Harvard to earn his Ph.D., he joined the newly formed CIA, where he led spying operations against the Soviets in Rome, Paris, Vienna, Athens and Moscow. He went to Berlin where he worked on a secret tunnel designed to tap Soviet communications. He learned to speak the language of each of those countries fluently. By then, he spoke eight languages fluently.

In the early 1960s, he was the Deputy Station Chief In Moscow. One day, he was to retrieve a message left by the agency's top Soviet informant in a high toilet tank during a dinner party at the American ambassador's residence in Moscow. The Soviet informant was Col. Oleg Vladimirovich Penkovsky, who provided information that helped President Kennedy diffuse the Cuba Missile Crisis. In 1962, the Russian government accused Hugh Montgomery and six others with espionage with regard to Col. Penkovsky. All got out of the country before the situation got worse.

Montgomery temporarily left the CIA in 1981 when President Ronald Reagan nominated him as Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the United States Department of State. He held that office from October 19, 1981 until January 6, 1985. From 1985-1989 he served as a deputy U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. He returned to the CIA after this assignment and served with the Agency until he retired in 2014. In 2014, **CIA director John Brennan, awarded him the Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal, and called him "one of the greatest American heroes of our time."**

Hugh Montgomery's service to the CIA spanned the years from 1953 to 2014. That is an incredible 62 years. **He retired at the age of 91. Leon Panetta said: "I'd call him one of the founding fathers of the CIA,"**. Panetta consulted Montgomery occasionally when he was director of the spy agency. Hugh Montgomery's life and career is nothing short of astounding. On the right is a photo of him at about the time of his retirement in 2014.



Hugh Montgomery, about 2014

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CHAPTER 64

Wilson Taylor: President and Chief Executive Officer of CIGNA Corporation



Wilson H. Taylor

Wilson Henry Taylor is a true son of Windsor Locks. He was born on November 17, 1943. He is a product of Windsor Locks schools. He went to St. Mary's Elementary School in 1949 and graduated in 1956. He got through eight grades in seven years by skipping the third grade. Bill, or Billy, as he was known back then, went on to Windsor Locks High School, where he made the honor roll every marking period. In his senior year, he won a scholarship from the National Honor Society. He won it over 55,000 other members of the National Honor Society. (Springfield Union, May 19, 1960)

In High School, Bill was Secretary of the Literature Club, associate editor of the school yearbook, manager of the varsity baseball team, a member of the Language Club, and a member of the Mathematics Club. (Springfield Union, May 19, 1960)

Bill Taylor attended Trinity College in Hartford. He was on the Dean's list every semester. Bill was the valedictorian of his class, and he graduated Phi Beta Kappa in Mathematics. (Springfield Union, October 26, 1964) In addition, he was a member of Sigma Pi Sigma, the national physics honor society. (Springfield Union, June 17, 1964)

After graduating from Trinity College in June, of 1964, Mr. Taylor went to work in the actuarial department of the Connecticut General Life Insurance Co. in Bloomfield. He started off as an actuarial trainee at Connecticut General. At the age of 27, he became the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Connecticut General's biggest business (Healthcare) in 1971. Three years later, in 1974, he became the CFO of the Property and Casualty Division, which was the company's biggest money loser. Mr. Taylor turned that Division around, and made it the company's biggest money maker. (The New York Times, Oct 29, 1987) In 1980, Bill became the CFO of Connecticut General. In 1982, eighteen years after he went to work at Connecticut General, the company merged with

INA Corporation to form CIGNA. At that time, he was named Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of the new CIGNA Corporation.

Mr. Taylor was 43 years old in 1986, when he was named Vice Chairman, Chief Operating Officer and a member of the board of CIGNA.

In 1988, he was named President and Chief Executive Officer of CIGNA, becoming the youngest CEO of a major US insurance company at that time. He retired in 2000. How well did CIGNA do under Mr. Taylor's leadership? Over the 13 years that he was CEO, the average annual return to shareholders was 23%. It is worthwhile to re-read the last sentence. His achievement was nothing short of astounding.

So what exactly is this CIGNA corporation that Bill Taylor headed up?

Cigna Corporation, through its subsidiaries, provides group life and health insurance, managed care, retirement products and services, and individual financial services worldwide. The Company also sells individual life and health insurance and annuity products in selected international locations.

How big was CIGNA?

- It has \$38 Billion in annual revenue
- It is ranked number 90 on the Fortune 500.
- It has about \$12 Billion in shareholder equity.
- It has about 90 million customers
- It has assets of \$57 Billion
- It has more than 39,000 employees

(<https://www.cigna.com/about-us/cigna-fact-sheet>)

To get an idea of how big CIGNA is, let's compare it with the state of Connecticut. Cigna takes in about \$38 Billion a year. Connecticut's annual budget is about \$8 Billion a year. We can see that Bill's company annually took in about five times as much as the state of Connecticut did. Bill Taylor managed CIGNA well for a long time.

That is not all he did. He was also:

- a trustee of Philadelphia's Regional Performing Arts Center
- a trustee of the Philadelphia Orchestra.
- a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Enterprise Institute since 1989, and Board chairman from 1994 through 1998.

To say that Wilson (Bill) Taylor had an outstanding career that brought pride to his hometown of Windsor Locks is an understatement

SOURCES:

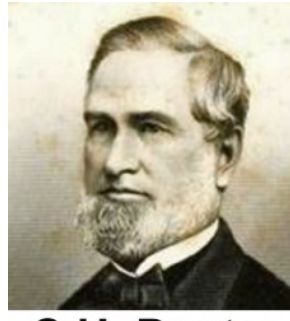
The sources of information are listed above, next to the information that they provided.



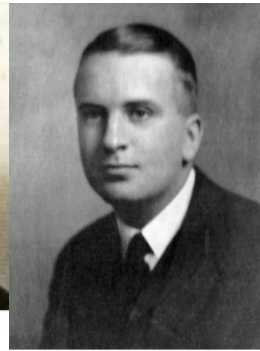
Jack Redmond



Ruby Vines



C.H. Dexter



Dexter Drake Coffin 1898-1966



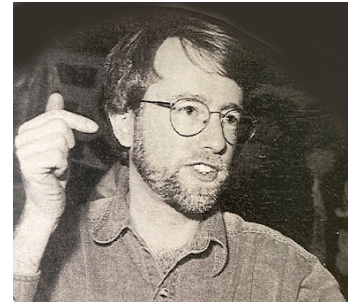
Thomas O'Leary



Neil Rinaldi



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Dave Leenhouts



Dr. Sidney R Burnap



Dr S. Burnap Jr



Fred Marsh



Dan Tracey



Johnny Menko



"Big Al" Anderson



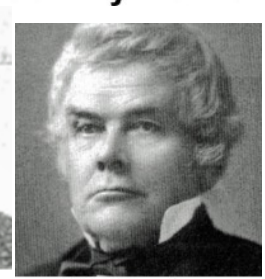
Kathryn Morris



John Chapman



Harry Brusie



Eli Horton



Herbert R. Coffin Sr.



Charles Colli



Vito Colapietro



Sonya West



Mike Savage