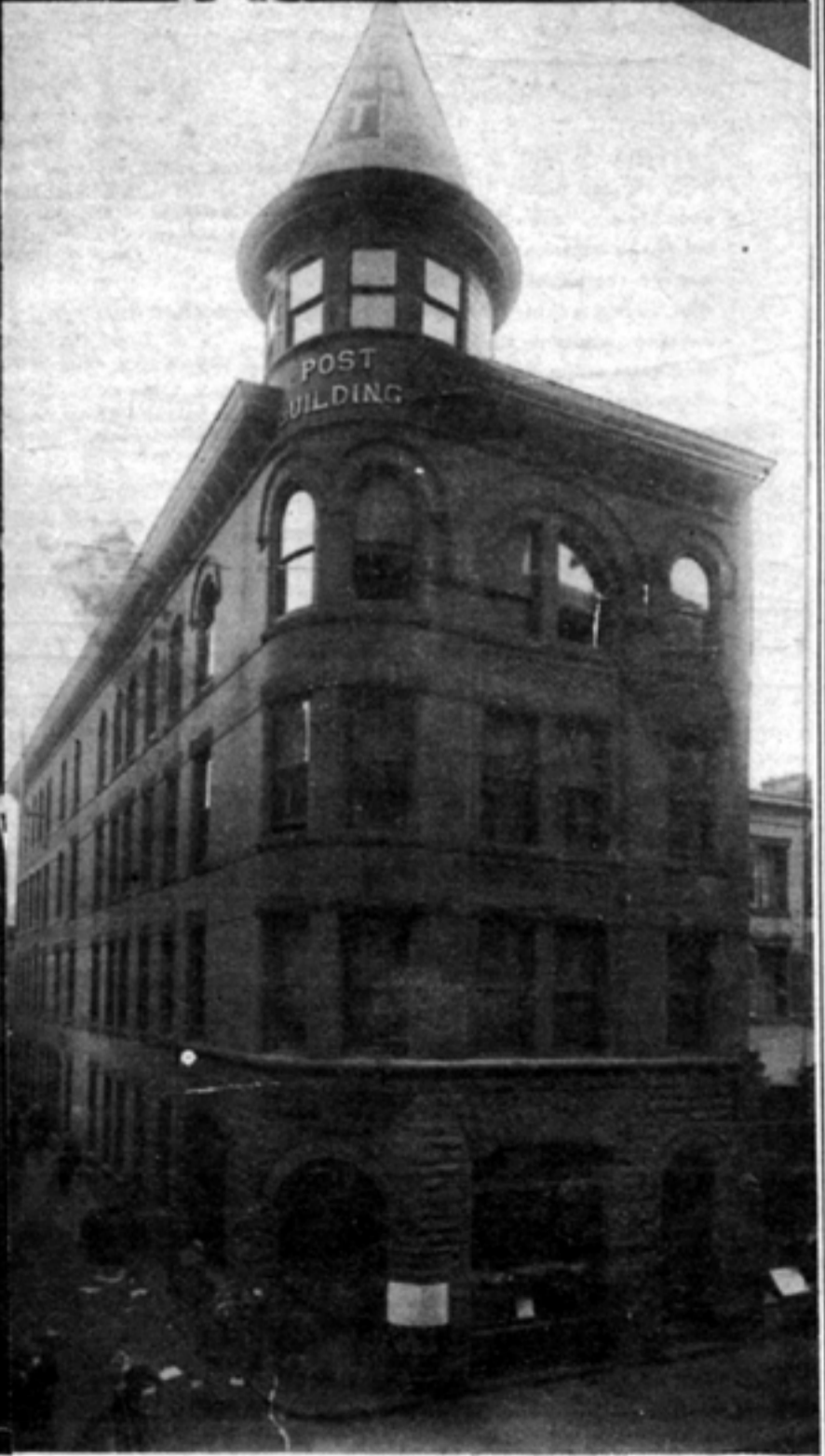




The Bridgeport Post
Centennial Edition

Part One February 7, 1983



DAILY POST.

THE ONLY ONE CENT DAILY IN CONNECTICUT.

No. 1.

EAST BRIDGEPORT, CONN., WEDNESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 7, 1883.

PRICE, ONE CENT

The "Daily Post"

The only One Cent Daily in Connecticut.

G. W. HILLS,
Publisher & Proprietor,
304 E. Main St.

Advertisements at very low rates, for particulars apply at the Office.

INTRODUCTORY.

IN making our bow to the public, it is but natural that we should be expected to announce the principles upon which the "DAILY POST" will be conducted.

The low price of *One Cent* at which it is published, places it within reach of all, so that no family need be without their daily paper, and although it cannot be expected to deal as fully upon matters, as newspapers which have far more space at their disposal, it will contain the latest information of importance, in this country, and all parts of the world.

Local news will of course receive the largest share of our attention, and every event of any import whatever, in the city or suburbs, will be chronicled as fully as possible.

In politics it will be independent. It will, without regard to party, comment upon the acts of our legislators, and will not fail to condemn, in the most emphatic manner, the methods of those politicians who, merely seeking their own gain, are not above attaining their ends by fraud. Such cases are not infrequent, and have oftentimes been the means of bringing the politics of the country into disrepute. On the other hand it will advocate to its utmost, purity, economy, and justice in the government of the City, the State, and the Nation.

It will defend the interests of the workmen as against the interests of monopolists and capitalists, and its opinions will be fearlessly given.

Acting upon the foregoing principles we hope to merit and obtain the support of the public.

STATE NEWS.

Gov. Waller has nominated William Parsons, a New Haven editor, for Insurance Commissioner.

Chief Bolles of the Meriden Police force has resigned and been appointed a patrolman. This sounds like a conundrum but it is not.

In the House of Representatives yesterday, a bill was introduced to increase the Governor's salary from \$2000 to \$5000. A bill was also introduced to revive a law allowing divorces to be granted for misconduct.

The new chief of police in Meriden yesterday morning, went for all parties whose sidewalks have been notorious during this winter for their want of shovel and brush. Some of our Bridgeport citizens had better take warning.

A Cocking main took place Monday night at a well known resort not 100 miles from Waterbury, between Connecticut and Massachusetts. The main was close, but whisky getting the upper hand of the majority, a rough and tumble fight between the two States ensued, resulting in a drawn battle, broken noses and sore heads.

NEWS OF THE WORLD.

A Bad Shot.

NEW YORK, FEB. 7.

Quite a sensation was caused last night on Fourteenth street, by a girl's attempt to kill an officer of the twenty-second regiment. She fired five shots, none of which took effect, and it is surprising that none of the passers by were struck. The girl's name is Lottie Raina; the man she tried to kill is George E. B. Hart, first Lieutenant Co. K, 22nd. Regt. She sent him a despatch to meet her on Fourteenth street last night, and his presence there was due to this appointment. It is the old tale of slighted love, and attempted revenge, but neither Lieut. Hart nor Lottie would open their minds much on the subject, she remarking that "it was only a love affair, and she would say no more." She is in custody.

Uxoricide and Suicide.

LOWELL, MASS., Feb. 6.

A shocking tragedy occurred here this evening. Robert Smith, a carpenter, shot and killed his wife Mary in the Noyes House, shooting himself in the breast immediately afterwards. Noyes was a worthless drunkard, and his wife had so much trouble with him of late, that she applied for his arrest, but he eluded the vigilance of the police. She was employed at general housework, at the Noyes House. The wife died in about five minutes, Smith surviving till very near midnight.

Brutally Murdered.

BERLIN, MASS., Feb. 6.

James Livingston, a farmer, yesterday morning killed his wife Mary Ann, by hacking her with a blunt blingling hatchet. The cause of the quarrel is believed to be jealousy, but Livingston is notorious for his brutality and continuous drinking.

Another Shocking Tragedy.

LOUP CITY, NEB., Feb. 6.

Charles Walte, Sheriff of Sherman county, shot and killed his mistress, Mrs. Ryan, a boarding house keeper, last night. He then killed himself. Jealousy was the cause of the act.

GENERAL NEWS.

A cocking main near Troy, N. Y., between Hudson and Troy birds, was won by Troy, four victories to two.

Two boys were drowned by breaking through the ice on a pond near Attleborough, Mass.

General Butler's proposition to abolish the poll tax qualification for suffrage in Massachusetts has been defeated in the Legislature.

The Mardi Gras Festival passed off brilliantly yesterday at New Orleans, the only drawback being that the ship Dryburgh Abbey, with the splendid Parisian costumes, had not arrived, and home made dresses were used.

A banquet was given in New York to Police Justice Duffy last night by Tammany Hall. John Kelly presided. Kelly eulogized Duffy and Duffy eulogized Kelly, and the Mayor and Tammanyites went home satisfied.

Funnygraphs.

What is the boundary that separates a smile from a tear? The nose.

When a man goes out with a lantern at 9 p.m., to see what time it is by the sun dial, you may be fairly certain that the liquor saloons in his neighborhood have been doing a flourishing business that day.

Dabba went to the dentist the other day and had a tooth extracted. Dabba is a very obliging sort of fellow. The dentist's charge was a dollar. Dabba had nothing less than a five dollar bill, which the dentist could not change. "Never mind" said Dabba, "I will sit down and have four more taken out and that will make it all right."

FOREIGN.

County Wicklow is trying to clear off the mortgage on Parnell's estate.

The arrest of Messrs Davitt, Healy and Quinn was ordered yesterday.

Mr. Healy intends to resign his seat in Parliament pending his imprisonment.

Report says that Count Spruzenstein will succeed Count von Wimpffen as Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to France.

The Prince of Wales has been gazetted Honorary Colonel of a German Regiment—Blucher's Hussars.

It is rumored that Vignaux, the French expert billiardist, has decided not to come to America.

The chief of the Russian police asserts that he has discovered and destroyed the entire Nihilists organization in Russia.

The Grand Jury in Dublin yesterday returned a true bill against the editor of *United Ireland* for seditious libel, and against Bowling for the murder of Policeman Cox. The trial begins to-morrow.

It is probable that Mr. Chas. S. Parnell will contest the election in Dublin county vacant by the death of the Conservative member, if a suitable candidate can be found for his present seat—Cork city. The Conservative candidate will be E. Cecil Guinness of the firm of brewers.

"Is your father in?" asked an Austin landlord in search of back rent. The little boy, who was sitting on the steps devouring a large slice of bread and butter, replied between bites: "No, he ain't in town."

"Suppose you go and ask him if he is not in."

"He ain't awake yet."

It is evident there is a lie out somewhere.—[*Texas Springs*]

A learned doctor of New York declares that very small feet on a woman means a fiery temper and a prevaricating tongue. St. Louis editors will declare that this is a roundabout way of saying that the women of Chicago have the sweetest tempers and are the most truthful in the world.—[*Northwestern Herald*]

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EAST BRIDGEPORT.
Brewers of Superior

Lager Beer,

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He runs the finest wagons of any butcher—clean and neat—and cuts his own pork.

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HOMOEOPATHIC PHYSICIAN and SURGEON,
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YOU CAN SAVE MONEY BY BUYING YOUR CLOTHING!
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Any person wishing to buy a New or Second-hand **STOVE** Will Save Money by calling on **L. W. LEAVENWORTH.**
163 E. Washington Ave.
Special Bargains in **LADIES' GOLD PLATE, LACE PINS, RINGS, NOVELTIES, Etc.** at the **Consignment Sale.**
43 FAIRFIELD AVENUE.

The Nearest and Cheapest Market in the City to buy your **FISH, OYSTERS, etc.**

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East End, Railway Bridge.

Use **LEE'S WONDERFUL PILE OINTMENT,**
For Sale by all Druggists, and at 449 MAIN STREET.

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187 Noble Street, and 830 Main Street.
Has constantly on hand a full line of Crockery, Glass, Tin, Wood-willow, Iron Stone and Silver-plated Ware, Cutlery, Notions, Fancy Goods, Groceries. The Prices are Way Down. Satisfaction sure.

THE LITTLE CLAYT BIRD CREAM
Gives a Splendid Finish.
Is a good protection against water, and does not rub off like many other dressings. A trial will convince you of its good qualities.
For Sale by all Druggists and Retail by I. C. PEEK, Gen. Agt., the Wright Dressing Co., 173 East Washington Avenue.

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Sittings, - \$1.00.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
January 6, 1983



The Bridgeport Post Centennial Edition

February 7, 1983

Part One

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I welcome the opportunity to congratulate The Bridgeport Post on the occasion of its 100th anniversary.

A free and responsible press is one of the bulwarks of our society. If American citizens are to participate effectively, they must be fully informed.

The decisions you make daily about what will appear in your newspaper are vital to supplying information to your readers. Your judgement is constantly tested, not only in the selection of local, national and international news, but in the range of opinions you present. Indeed, yours is a heavy responsibility which makes a valuable contribution to your community and to our nation.

My best wishes for continued success in publication.

Ronald Reagan

Publisher's message

One hundred years ago today, a man driven by his own determination to defend the interests of Bridgeport's growing working class printed the first edition of The Daily Post. Publisher and Proprietor George Washington Hills introduced the only one-cent daily in Connecticut so that "no family need be without their daily newspaper."

We are celebrating the tradition born that day. The Post grew to be the favored newspaper of not only the working class, but eventually all quarters of the city and the surrounding towns. With that universal support as our heritage, we enter a second century committed to defending the interests of all the people of southwestern Connecticut.

Today and tomorrow we present our readers with this special two-part Centennial Edition. It is a look back at the people and events that have left their impression on the Greater Bridgeport area over the past 100 years. In today's issue, the challenges of our newspaper, of industrialization, war, leaders, and dealing with crimes and disasters are addressed. In tomorrow's issue, our area's ethnic heritage, growth, leisure activities, sports, and the arts will be covered.

Every story in the Centennial Edition was written by a Post Publishing reporter or editor. Many of the photographs, including the old ones, were taken by our photographers.

These people, as well as all the reporters, editors, photographers, ad salesmen, circulation personnel, graphic artists, pressmen and business personnel of the past century, are greatly responsible for the position we hold today as southwestern Connecticut's leading newspaper. But you, our readers and advertisers, are equally responsible. It is for you that we present this look back.

The Bridgeport Post is proud to have served you for the past century. We pledge to continue to serve our readers and advertisers to the best of our ability, to print the news fairly, and to keep our readers informed and intelligent on issues of the community.

JOHN E. PFRIEM

President and Publisher
Post Publishing Company

For the Centennial Edition

Publisher

John E. Pfriem

President and Publisher
Post Publishing Company

Executive Editor

Charles A. Betts

Managing Editor
Post Publishing Company

Editor

Sean Finnell

Promotion Director
Post Publishing Company

The cover: Clockwise from top, a Post pressman in 1958; The old Post Building on Cannon Street, around 1910; Post bundlers and stereotypers in 1916. Top photo and bottom right photo from Post files; photos at left courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library. Centennial logo designed by Tony Klaric of Bridgeport. **Thanks:** Our most sincere thanks are extended to the following for their extraordinary assistance in compiling this edition: David Palmquist, curator of the Bridgeport Public Library Historical Collections, and his staff at the Bishop Room, Burroughs Building; Edmund Bond of

Trumbull; and Jim O'Brien, member and past president of the Connecticut Post Card Club. **Pictures:** Photos credited to the Bridgeport Public Library are from the Historical Collections there. Many of the oldest pictures were reprinted at an earlier date by Bridgeport photographer Lewis Corbit, whose father, Lewis Corbit Sr., photographed many turn-of-the-century scenes. Photos credited to Jim O'Brien are post cards or reproductions of post cards he has collected. **Stories:** All stories were written specially for the Centennial Edition by past and present Post reporters and editors.

THE POST



In 1885, The Evening Post occupied the new Winton Building (left), which still stands, at 216-218 Middle Street. The 1929 photo at right



shows the newly constructed 410 State Street building, which the Post Publishing Company still occupies.

The working class is given a voice

By HERBERT F. GELLER

Early the cold morning of Feb. 7, 1883, a 22-year-old man walked from his home on Bridgeport's East Main Street to a small wooden building across the road. He unlocked the front door, lit a fire in the stove, and began to set type by hand. The Bridgeport Post was born.

The man was George Washington Hills. He had operated a printing shop at 304 East Main Street for a year and was now ready to launch his dream - a newspaper he would call The Daily Post. It would be the only one-cent daily in the city, inexpensive enough for any family to afford in a city growing more and more working class oriented.

It began as a newspaper for East Bridgeport, the part of town now called the East Side. The area was home to many factories, including the huge Wheeler and Wilson sewing machine plant where Hills had worked; and multi-family wooden houses built to accommodate the growing population of workers in the autumn of Bridgeport's Yankee aristocracy era.

Bridgeport's population of nearly 50,000 supported four daily newspapers and a number of weeklies before The Post was born. The most prominent were The Standard and The Farmer, both sober, conservative supporters of the city's business and Yankee aristocracy. There were also The Leader and The Morning News, but neither was destined for a long life in Bridgeport's newspaperdom.

Hills' newspaper was going to be different. It would be independent in politics and would "defend the interests of the workingman against the interests of monopolists and capitalists, and its opinions will be fearlessly given." Hills wrote in the premiere edition.

The young man going out to fight the city's newspaper establishment had little to help him besides his own skills and determination. He had less than \$100 in capital, (some biographers say it was \$6) and an old footpowered Universal press capable of printing 150 copies of a four page, four column newspaper. He was the printer, editor, reporter, advertising salesman and circulation manager of that first issue.

He did have one helper that day. He was Charles R. Clarkson, a 22-year-old woodworker, who worked all day helping Hills get the newspaper out. In the evening Clarkson went over to Washington Park Methodist Episcopal Church, and after a long, hard day at the shop, he got married.

The new newspaper won a hearty welcome at the East Bridgeport factories where Hills had made many friends while conducting a job printing business.

Nonetheless, the first few months were tough. Hills worked 20 hours a day, barely bringing home enough money to keep the newspaper alive. He realized he needed help and hired his first editor, Vincent Dawson, who was to be succeeded by Louis C. Prindle, a former city editor of The Standard. Frank W. Bolande, who later became managing editor and publisher, was another early employee.

After its initial hard times, Hills' newspaper quickly picked up circulation and advertising. By 1886 it was described in Orcutt's History of Bridgeport as "a handsomely printed daily, exactly the same size as the New York Sun."

Hills' brother Henry joined the paper as a 50 percent partner in 1885, and the paper became known as The Evening Post. That same year the newspaper gained enough support to make its big move from East Bridgeport to downtown. In September of that year The Post began publishing at a four-story brick building at 216-218 Middle Street, which is still standing.

By the end of the decade, The Post had become one of the major newspapers of Bridgeport, and every evening sold as many papers as the combined circulation of The Standard and The Farmer. It claimed 40,000 readers in 1890 and had a special edition printed for Norwalk at 3 p.m. each day. The Post was delivered by carriers in Bridgeport, Stratford, Milford, Long Hill, Sandy Hook, Newtown, New Milford, Fairfield, Southport, Saugatuck, Westport, South Norwalk and Norwalk.

In 1891, Hills founded The Post Publishing Company and began construction of a new building at 49 Cannon Street to house all the production facilities of the newspaper. The four-story brownstone building, which still stands, was topped

with a distinctive cupola with a sign that said "Evening Post" on it.

Two new presses and a typesetting machine were installed in the new building. Seven linotype machines were installed in the printing department in the 1890s, and by the turn of the century the newspaper was being printed with hot lead type in essentially the same way it would be until 1977.

Hills believed strongly in using the most modern methods to produce his newspaper. Long distance telephones were installed and state, national and international news were received by telegraph. The Post newspapers became members of the Associated Press in the 1890s.

During the middle 1890s, Hills looked for new worlds to conquer. He established another newspaper, which he called The Bridgeport Morning Telegram, to compete with the Morning Union, the city's only morning newspaper.

The Telegram was more heavily oriented towards national and international news than the Post, which focused on local news. It printed many special editions and even used color on its front page before the turn of the century.

In 1901, the Post Publishing Company bought The Morning Union and merged it with The Telegram, creating The Morning Telegram and Union.

In 1906, after long negotiations, Hills sold his interests in the Post Publishing Company to Bolande and Blakeslee, retaining control of The Telegram, which he continued to publish through the Morning News Company.

Bolande became president of the Post Publishing Company and continued as managing editor. Blakeslee, who started as a bookkeeper in the early days, was general manager. William H. Comley, a Bridgeport attorney and former judge, was vice president; and Levi S. Cobb, who operated one of the largest and most prosperous newspaper routes in Bridgeport, was secretary.

In 1913, The Bridgeport Sunday Post was launched. The first edition was printed May 28, 1913, with Managing Editor Bolande as its editor and Cloe Arnold as women's editor.

That same year, George W. Hills left the newspaper field, selling his interest in The Telegram to Kenneth and Archibald McNeil. Hills' mission had been

accomplished: Bridgeport had the working class newspapers he had worked so hard to nurture.

When World War I erupted, great change came to Bridgeport. Its factories hummed in the manufacture of arms, munitions, and other materials of war from the start of the conflict in August, 1914. The Standard, The Post's chief rival at the time, made an heroic effort to keep up with the changing habits of its readers but struggled nonetheless. In need of new life, it was purchased by Walter B. Lashar, president of American Chain and Cable Company (now ACCO).

Soon, Lashar acquired a controlling interest in the Post Publishing Company, and for a time operated both the Standard-American, as that paper became known, and the Post newspapers. In 1918 he completed the transaction by officially purchasing The Post, The Telegram, and The Sunday Post. The Standard-American finally ended its existence by merging with the Post newspapers, and George C. Waldo Jr., managing editor of the Standard-American, became editor in chief of the three Post newspapers.

That same year Hills died at age 58. An era had ended, as two years earlier Frank Bolande had died.

The new publisher, Lashar, apparently disliked the life of a newspaper mogul, as he offered the three newspapers for sale only months after he purchased them. His offer was accepted by Edward Flicker of Cincinnati, Ohio, who had been general manager of The Cincinnati Enquirer. He had also been with The Cincinnati Commercial Tribune and The Washington Post.

One of the first moves of the new owner in 1919 was to sell the Post Building at 49 Cannon Street and move into a new building at 140 Middle Street, now the site of the city's main post office.

Flicker and Waldo became good friends, and Waldo continued as editor-in-chief of the three papers. For the next 30 years Waldo alone handled the task of producing the editorial pages.

Under Waldo's guidance, the newspapers continued to expand their news coverage, eventually dominating the entire daily newspaper field in the Bridgeport area.

In 1929, Flicker decided that the Post needed a new building where all depart-

ments of the newspapers could be housed. A four-story brick and steel building was constructed at 410 State Street. It remains the main office of the Post Publishing Company today.

The 50th anniversary of the Post was observed on Feb. 7, 1933 during the height of the Great Depression, but there was little fanfare because of the bleak economic conditions. Half a page was devoted to a reprint of the first newspaper and to a story about Hills' original helper, Charles R. Clarkson, who was celebrating his golden wedding anniversary with his wife.

Publisher Flicker died at his home in Black Rock in 1939, and was succeeded by Waldo as president of the company.

World War II exploded and again global conflict had Bridgeport booming as an "arsenal of democracy." The Post newspapers soon had many employees in the armed forces. Many saw combat, and some were wounded in action.

In the 1950s and 1960s, highway construction and urban renewal eliminated large housing and commercial areas, changing the face of the city. Through all this the Post Publishing Company remained in downtown Bridgeport.

In 1943, Andrew H. Lyon, who started with The Post in 1914 as a city hall reporter, succeeded Charles J. McGill as managing editor. McGill had succeeded Louis J. Reilly as managing editor when Reilly died in 1938. McGill later became associate editor under Waldo.

Lyon guided the course of the Post newspapers for 18 years until his death in 1961. He was succeeded by Leonard E. Gilbert, the city editor, who had been associated with The Post since his high school days as a Junior Post reporter in 1931. Gilbert held the position until 1981, when he was assigned to form a promotions department for the company. Charles A. Betts, the current managing editor, succeeded Gilbert, who retired in 1982.

The newspaper began to broaden its suburban coverage in the years following the war in order to serve the many former residents of Bridgeport who moved to the growing towns of Fairfield, Stratford, Trumbull, Monroe, Shelton, Easton and Milford. The towns had been covered since Hills' day, but now the coverage became even more intense. News bureaus were soon established in the larger towns.

Waldo died in 1956 at age 68. He was succeeded as president of the company

A newspaper born of one man's toil

George Washington Hills, the founder of The Bridgeport Post, was a man of the people.

"He thought the same thoughts they did, saw things through their eyes, and felt the same feelings they did," a Post editorial said on his death in 1918.

And the amazing thing is he started the newspaper at age 22 with less than \$100 to his name.

Hills was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., on Feb. 20, 1860, and as a boy sold copies of the Brooklyn Eagle on the streets there until his family moved to Bridgeport when he was 10.

He began a business printing cards when he was still in school, and it grew to an extent that he had agents taking orders for him in many East Side factories.

But to support his widowed mother, Hills had to take a higher paying job at the Howe Sewing Machine Company, and later Wheeler and Wilson Sewing Machine Company. The Crescent Avenue factory, the largest in the city, employed 2,100 at the time.

Even so, Hills was able to continue his card-printing enterprise. He would work 10 hours at Wheeler and Wilson and run home to gobble down a meal so he could get to his press. He would labor there far into the night, with his neighbors often complaining of the "thump, thump, thump of the foot-worked machine."

He left Wheeler and Wilson in 1881 to devote his whole attention to his expanding printing business. He rented a small, frame building at 304 East Main Street, across the street from his home, and set up shop.



G.W. HILLS

At about this time, some East Bridgeport merchants, feeling neglected by the city's newspaper establishment, began speaking of the need for one that met their needs in stories and advertising. Hills thought about it, and after a little more than a year as a full-time job printer, he started his paper. On Wednesday evening, Feb. 7, 1883, the first issue of The Daily Post rolled off the press.

Hills was jack-of-all-trades on his newspaper, which debuted as "the only one-cent daily in Connecticut," the low price being the key to reaching the city's growing blue collar popula-

tion. He sometimes worked as many as 20 hours a day during the early months. His efforts were not rewarded at first, although the newspaper was well-received by the factory workers of the East Side.

"Hills often went home on a Saturday night without a cent to pay him for his tremendous labors," a biographer wrote.

Physical and financial assistance came when his brother, Henry, joined the paper. That made the difference. Soon the Daily Post outgrew its strictly East Bridgeport orientation and expanded to serve the entire city and outlying communities.

And so the Post continued to grow. Through Hills' ability to recognize skilled and talented people and his true 19th Century sense of progress through machinery, he established his newspaper as a professional, modern operation. He steadily enlarged it — and later, The Telegram — distributing it throughout Fairfield County and into Litchfield and New Haven counties.

Hills died on March 26, 1918 and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Boston Avenue, next to his wife. On his death, The Bridgeport Post paid tribute to its founder in an editorial that included this passage:

"The principles of fearlessness in the public cause, of independence of action, of determination to serve the people will ever be the watchword of the company's newspaper, which of itself is the greatest monument to Mr. Hills.

—HERBERT F. GELLER

by Edward Flicker's son, Walter Raymond Flicker.

Under Flicker's direction the company progressed through a series of expansions. New presses were installed in 1958.

The City of Bridgeport also went through great change in the late 1950s with the construction of the Connecticut Turnpike. Along with the Route 25-8 construction in the 60's, it eliminated large housing and commercial areas, changing the face of the city. Many buildings were razed in the massive urban

renewal project, and new ones were built. Many more residents moved to the suburbs.

Through all this the Post Publishing Company remained in downtown Bridgeport. It expanded its headquarters in 1966 by erecting a two-story, modernistic addition. A one-story printing plant was built at 600 State Street in 1970 and new high-speed presses were installed.

Ray Flicker died in 1971 at the age of 73. He was succeeded by the present publisher, John E. Pfriend, who assumed the office of president, treasurer, and general manager of the Post Publishing Company. He is the son of the late Alma Flicker Pfriend, who had served as secretary and assistant treasurer of the company.

In 1977, the newspapers went through

a complete change in production methods and appearance.

The old method utilized lead type set first by hand and later by Linotype machine, and required casting mats from the metal. The change to the photo offset process brought extensive use of computers into the newspaper. Stories are written and edited on video display terminals and are printed by computer onto photographic paper. This printed material is laid out on grid sheets, and is then photographed onto light, aluminum plates from which the newspaper is printed on high speed presses.

The production change required the retraining of the company's entire printing department. Linotype operators learned to operate computer equipment; lead-type compositors learned to use knife and wax paste to make up pages; and hot-type printers were retrained on new, sophisticated presses.

The company continued to expand its facilities at the beginning of the 1980s by building a warehouse at 585 John Street.

On March 15, 1980, the company launched its fourth newspaper, called SATURDAY. It replaced the Saturday editions of The Telegram and The Bridgeport Post with an emphasis on lifestyles, weekend entertainment, expanded sports and the latest news.

Hills' promise to defend the interests of the working class has been kept over the century through the newspaper's editorial pages. In recent years, The Post has educated voters to flaws in a proposed new city charter, which was ultimately defeated in referendum; helped bring about repeal of a hastily passed State Income Tax bill in the General Assembly; and initiated legislation to name the State Police complex in Meriden after the late commissioner and Bridgeporter Leo J. Mulcahy.

And so the Bridgeport Post enters its second century. It has stood the test of time by changing to meet the needs of a changing community. It remains committed to informing and serving southwestern Connecticut for many more years to come.



The method of printing newspapers went unchanged for decades. Compositors placed lines of metal type in locked vices in 1916 (left) just as a new generation did in 1958. Photo at left, which was taken at The Post's Cannon Street building, is courtesy of the Bridgeport Public Library.

'Pogo' of comics had roots at Post

Among the many talented people who have worked at The Bridgeport Post, perhaps the most well known was cartoonist Walt Kelly, creator of the comic strip, "Pogo."

By BRIAN MURPHY

It is impossible to find anyone with a bad word to say about Walt Kelly, creator of "Pogo." Kelly was beloved among the people of the comic strip world. The stories of Kelly standing old friends to dinner and drinks, of his hospitality, his generosity and his sparkling good spirits are a part of the folklore of the trade.

Kelly was a transplant; born in Philadelphia, he moved to Bridgeport with his family and attended Harding High School. There he cartooned for school publications and, in his spare time, contributed to The Bridgeport Post.

"Walt was one of those boys," wrote The Post on June 8, 1941, "who just naturally hung around a newspaper office from his high school days here, when he wrote the high school notes. 'I think,' he said, 'that the school page and the juvenile page of a daily newspaper are one of the greatest incentives to budding talent. I shall always remember that I got my first inspiration from it.'"

After Kelly finished high school, he gravitated to The Post, where he went to work full-time covering welfare, emergency room news and the police beat as a general assignment reporter. As he ground out his stories, he continued to work on his cartooning and eventually managed to interest the management in his work.

After leaving the paper, Kelly served for a brief time in the Department of Social Welfare. In the meantime he continued his cartooning, sending his samples to, among other places, the Walt Disney Studios in Hollywood. One day he received the summons to drop everything and see Disney himself. Kelly wasted no time.

The Disney studio took him in hand, reteaching him art from the ground up. Kelly's angular style was smoothed out; hard thin lines were replaced by soft, full strokes of pen and brush.

Kelly was ready for the animation team when production began on Disney's first big cartoon feature, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves." Acquitting himself well on that project, he was given important responsibilities in the subsequent animation of "The Reluctant Dragon," "Pinocchio," and "Fantasia," in which the pastoral scenes with the humanoid fawns are largely his.

It was in the same period that Kelly began his excursion into comic book art, and the seeds of an idea that was later to blossom as "Pogo" were planted. He eventually gave up working for Disney and moved east to New York to work on comic books and to draw political cartoons for the New York Star. It was while he was at The Star that he began the comic strip.

There had been comic strips about animals before, but nothing quite like Pogo. The art was a mixture of the contemporary and the smooth roundness of the Disney style. The characters and the dialogue were the main attraction.

Kelly was a fan of wordplay, and he indulged himself to the fullest, creating a special southern dialect for his cast of swampland characters. He peppered their dialogue with puns, rhymes, malaprops and other devices to keep things lively and fun.

From time to time Pogo the Possum and one or more of the "Pogo" cast would engage in a philosophical conversation, such as follows:

Pogo: How can you stand there an' claim taxes should be done away with?

Churchy: (reclining) Who's standin' I'm lyin'.

Pogo: Probably true. . .

Churchy: There's better things to spend our money on than taxes. . . All them billions for WHAT?



Kelly often used the names of friends in his comic strip. Len Gilbert, whose name appears on Pogo's scow, was managing editor of The Post and The Telegram from 1961 to 1981 and was a reporter when Kelly worked at The Post.

Pogo: For defense, for tribute, for flyin' to the moon. . . for guns. . . for butter. . . for better poverty. . .

Churchy: For BUTTER! How STUPID!

Pogo: What d'you wanna do? Spend more on GUNS?

Churchy: NO. But d'you got any idea what four billion dollars worth of chonk-lit ice cream would do to spruce up this country?

For all his nationwide fame, Kelly never forgot his friends, or his adopted hometown. He would often breeze back into Bridgeport for a visit, round up a few old friends and bring them over to the Ocean Sea Grill for food and drink — all on Kelly, of course, who breathed fire if someone tried to snatch away the tab.

Bridgeport was memorialized in his strip from time to time via his favorite billboard, Pogo's flatboat. The boat would be depicted bearing the name S.S. Bridgeport or the name of an old local friend. The boat also bore the names of cities where the strip ran.

There are echoes of Bridgeport in Howland Owl's first name and, most of all, in the character of P.T. Bridgeport, the bear who has a more than passing resemblance to P.T. Barnum. Kelly never forgot where he came from. He never resented it either.

One of the strengths of "Pogo" was its well-defined characterizations. Take Howland Owl, feathered philosopher. Just how wise this ol' owl was can be seen in this exchange with Albert the Alligator after a night of overindulgence:

Albert: OOG . . . If I felt any better I'd be Dead!

Howland (after a pause): Well, death is something you learn to live with. . .

Pogo himself was a mediator and a moderator. He was always capable of saying something profound in a single sentence:

Mouse: P.T. want his candidates to write a book. . . to impress the egg-headed squares. . .

Pogo: They stil votin'?

Mouse: Who knows? He wants to call this here book "The Feasibility of Economic Discretion." As an ol' advance publicity man, I says the word 'PEACE' is shorter!"

Pogo: Peace is always shorter.

The most memorable Pogo epigram was at the end of the strip on Earth Day in April, 1971, as Porky Porcupine and Pogo tiptoed through a litter-strewn swamp:

Porky: Ah, Pogo, the beauty of the forest primieval gets me in the heart.

Pogo (walking on debris): It gets me in the Feet, Porkypine.

Porky: It IS hard walkin' on this stuff.

Pogo: Yep. Son, we have met the enemy and he is us."

Kelly's high standards as an artist and a writer of dialogue earned him fame, but his political courage in taking on such formidable quarries as Sen. Joseph McCarthy and Vice President Spiro Agnew won him respect for his courage.

Kelly's attack was more direct than fellow cartoonist Al Capp's, who gave stock character Sen. Jack S. Phogbound many of McCarthy's lines to mouth in "L'il Abner." Kelly painted McCarthy's face onto the head of a bullying, sneaking bobcat named Simple J. Malarkey. The protest from some editors this generated prompted Kelly to a masterstroke. He acceded to the editors' request to remove McCarthy's face from the strip by having the character pull a Ku Klux Klan-style hood over his head.

More telling was the series of blasts leveled at Spiro T. Agnew, whom Kelly portrayed as a jackal wearing the comic-opera uniform Nixon designed for the White House guards. The Agnew character was a self-appointed dictator who locked up everyone in sight until he was the only one left.

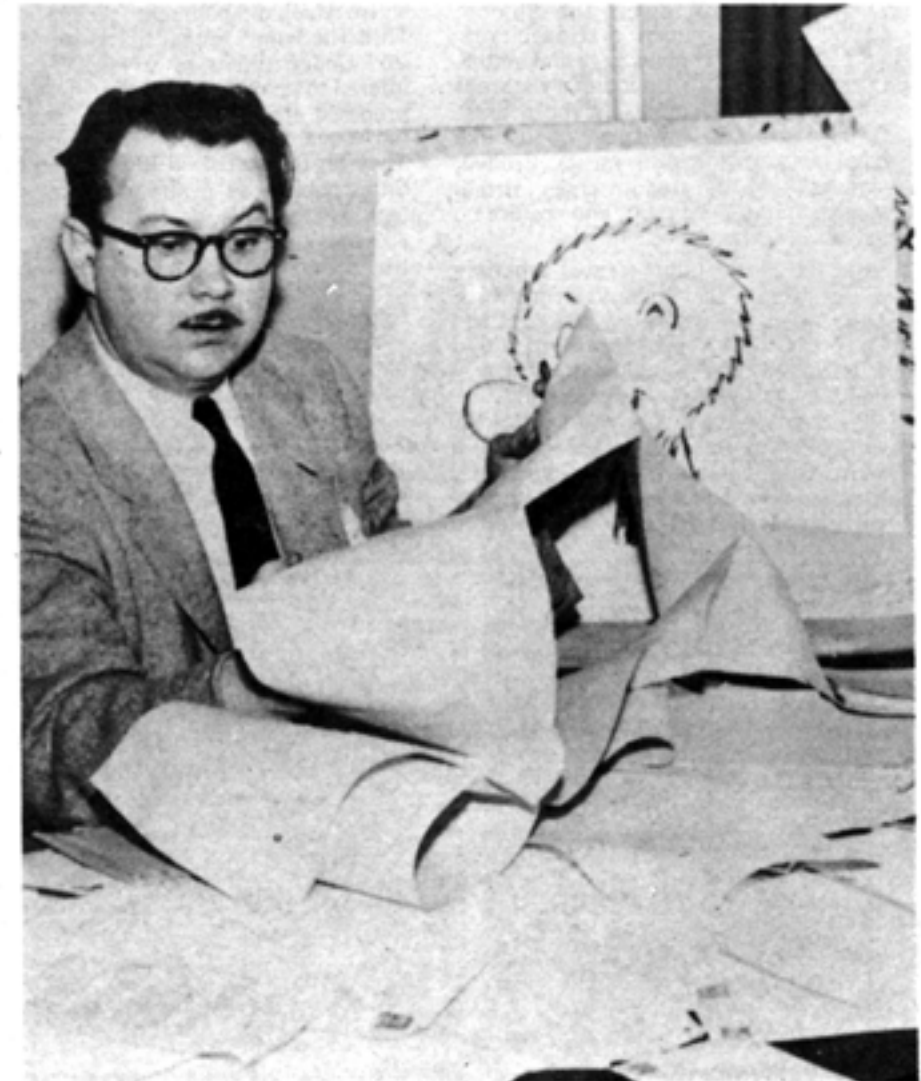
Other prominent figures to make appearances in the Kelly strips were Nikita Khrushchev, Fidel Castro, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon, not all of them subject to the same treatment, to be sure. The best time for celebrity spotting in the strip was during presidential campaigns. One could expect to see a variety of the contenders lampooned in "Pogo" during the political season. Kelly's campaign sendups were a much looked-for part of the continuity of the strip.

Kelly, like Al Capp, was a master of promotion. He managed to get his picture or that of his comical cast into the papers frequently, but no one can match the wonderful promotion of the 1952 and 1956 "Pogo for President" campaigns. As college kids organized "I Go Pogo" rallies, other people began to sport Pogo buttons.

In 1968 there was talk of another campaign — and Kelly had the perfect slogan for that chaotic year: "In 1968 it is wise to run — and maybe scream a little."

Kelly began to turn the work of the strip over to assistants as he grew ill during the last two years of his life. But just before the end, there was a brilliant, final glow of creativity. It was not only the time of his best political work (the Agnew continuity), but the time of his best artwork. More and more, he would create two panel strips, giving him the room to flex his muscles and show what he could really do. The backgrounds and the perspectives were drawn with lyrical grace and creativity. Pogo's world became lush and wistful, as if Kelly sensed the approaching end and wanted to make a last great statement in his dialogue and in his art. The 1970-71 panels are a tour de force of Kelly's skill.

In 1973, after a long illness, Kelly died. "Pogo" was discontinued in 1975, but the memory of the Possum Philosopher from Okefenokee — and the boy artist from Bridgeport — lives on.



Cartoonist Walt Kelly digs through fan mail and story ideas as friend Pogo looks on. Photo from Post files.

Bridgeporter Capp gave us 'Abner'

By BRIAN MURPHY

Larry, don't cut any more paper." With those words, the career of Al Capp, one of America's greatest humorists, came to a sad, even tragic end. Al Capp was born Alfred G. Caplin in New Haven and was raised in Bridgeport. Elliott Caplin, his brother, says Capp spent much of his time as a young man hitching rides near the family home on Washington Place off Park Avenue. One of those rides changed Capp's life.

He and a friend had walked around the corner one day to get cigarettes. They decided to hitch a ride because Capp, who had lost a leg in a trolley accident years before, liked to ride whenever he could.

The driver of the car that finally stopped for them said he was going in their direction, and for about 600 miles more. Capp and his friend had a few dollars in their pockets, were feeling adventurous, and decided to go to the end of the line. When the ride was over, they were in Memphis, Tenn. On the way, Capp had seen some of the hill folk of rural Kentucky and Tennessee.

His vivid impressions of their insular lives became the basis for a comic strip, and "half from remembrance, half from imagination, he conceived the hillbilly character of L'il Abner," reported the *The Sunday Post* of Nov. 11, 1943.

Having attended Harding and Kosuth high schools — and allegedly flunking geometry nine times — Capp went on to receive formal art training and then to attempt his own comic strip, "Mr. Gilfeather."

But the Gilfeather strip was not a roaring success, and Capp accepted a job offered by Hamilton "Ham" Fisher, the creator of "Joe Palooka." Capp was to be the art assistant; he was to share in the glory of "Palooka" and become wealthy, or so Fisher promised. What happened was that Fisher gave Capp most of the work to do, including some of the writing and character creation, and, in cartoonist Mort Walker's words, Fisher "took all the bows."

While he was slaving on "Joe Palooka," Capp developed a storyline with a hillbilly family led by a character named "Big Leviticus." Sensing that he was on to a good thing, Capp left Fisher, developed a strip around a hillbilly family called the Yokums, and "L'il Abner" was off and running.

The artwork of the strip was always first quality, causing people to ask who the characters were modeled on. Elliott Caplin says that Abner was in fact a self-portrait of Capp as a young man, at least from the neck up. . . . Daisy Mae? Caplin says that she was modeled after no one specifically: "Daisy Mae was just everybody's idea of a luscious dream girl."

And what of the other smouldering sextop of the strip, the sensual Moonbeam McSwine? Caplin's surprising answer is that she "resembled Al's wife, Katherine Wingate Cameron," whom he describes as a very refined, very distinguished Bostonian light years away from McSwine in personality, not to mention background.

Abner hasn't graced the comic pages since 1975, but Capp, through the Yokums of Dogpatch, is still credited with having created a whole new folklore.

Central to the legend was the chase of L'il Abner Yokum by eligible bachelorette Daisy Mae. Every Sadie Hawkins Day (in memory of Sadie Hawkins, who was given the opportunity to marry any man she could outrun and grab) the single men of Dogpatch were matched in a race against the single women, who ranged from the grotesque to the sublime (as in Daisy Mae). Virtually any bachelor in town would have loved to have been captured by Daisy Mae, except the bashful L'il Abner.

Ever failing to land Abner on Sadie Hawkins Day, Daisy would devote the



Al Capp in 1964. Post photo by Al Mathewson.

rest of the year to trying to get Abner to notice her. Abner remained perpetually unaware of her considerable charms, devoting himself instead to his hobbies of feasting on Mammy's pork chops and caring for his pet pig, Salome, the sole remaining Hammus Alabammas.

Pansy Yokum, Abner's mammy, was in turn devoted to her son, providing him with mounds of pork chops and shielding him from such harmful influences as Evil Eye Fleegle, the Brooklynite practitioner of the Whammy, Double Whammy and dreaded Triple Whammy. The good-hearted Pansy could always defeat Fleegle because, as she put it, "Good will always be stronger than evil because good is nicer."

In the environment of Dogpatch were many educational sights to see. On an adjacent mountain there was the cave of Lonesome Polecat and Hairless Joe, brewers of Kickapoo Joy Juice. Occasionally, the potent juice would turn Polecat the Indian into a statue.

Then there was the Valley of the Shmoon, wherein dwelt the Shmoos, Capp's master creation. A strange creature is a Shmoos. It gives eggs and butter. If you glance at it with a hungry stare it will leap with a smile into the nearest frying pan where it will cook up just like fried chicken (all white meat). Broiled, shmoos are like lean, tender sirloin steaks. Shmoos don't eat, and require no upkeep. They make terrific pets.

In the 1940's, Capp created a parody of the "Dick Tracy" comic strip, which Capp titled, "Fearless Fosdick." It ran as part of "L'il Abner" as a strip within a strip. Fosdick was Abner's "ideal," and Abner tried to do as Fosdick did.

Life was not all beer and skittles for Fosdick, who worked for about \$22.50 a week. Criminals were always outwitting him, led by a crime mastermind, Sidney the Parrot. Fosdick's love life revolved

around Prudence Pimpleton, his fiancée of long standing. She kept him alive by frequent feedings of steak, which he couldn't afford on his cop's salary.

Abner tried to copy everything Fosdick did. Once, when Fosdick was wired with dynamite and blown up by hoods, Abner got the Scragg boys to do the same thing to him, to find out how Fosdick escaped. After the "real" explosion Abner learned that Fosdick's predicament had all been a dream.

In 1944, Fosdick finally married Prudence Pimpleton. Abner, who had vowed to copy Fosdick in all things, followed suit with Daisy Mae. The next day's comic strip revealed to Abner that Fosdick had only been dreaming — again! — and that although Fosdick was still a bachelor, Abner was well and truly wed to Daisy Mae. The epic chase was over.

The news, next to D-Day, was the biggest story of 1944. It even made the cover of *Life* magazine. The public was shocked. Why did Capp do it?

"He was bored with the chase," Elliott Caplin says. "He knew he could get enormous publicity by marrying off Abner, and he did! He was on the cover of *Life* for that. Later, he might have thought it was a mistake . . ."

Capp's comic strips dealt not only with Dogpatch topics. Abner and company made frequent forays into the outside world and, from time to time, the outside world would attempt to change Dogpatch. Inevitably, political themes and personalities would work their way into the strip.

Less famous than fellow cartoonist Walt Kelly's "Pogo" attacks on Sen. Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s, Capp nonetheless had his say. Unlike Kelly, who drew a McCarthy look-alike for Pogo, Capp turned stock character Sen. Jack S. Phogbound ("There's no Jack S. like our Jack S.") into a McCarthy parody, with devastating results.

Capp's satires came to appeal to the liberal anti-fascism of the 40's and 50's. They also neatly skewered popular fads and culture.

Once or twice, Capp's satires landed him in difficulties; as Caplin recalls, they could be "poisonous." One such sendup was "Gone With The Wind," a satire which did nothing to please "Gone With The Wind" author Margaret Mitchell. Under threat of a lawsuit, Capp offered to apologize. Caplin says that the proposed apology was itself a masterful burlesque of Mitchell's writing style. They let the suit drop rather than have Capp publish so destructive an "apology."

Capp made vast amounts of money on his comic strip and through business deals in which "Abner" generated the funds. There were times of trouble, however. One such period was when Capp's old boss, Ham Fisher, tried to have Capp prosecuted for obscenity.

Cartoonist Mort Walker, in his book "Backstage At The Comics," tells how Fisher apparently prepared redone dialogue balloons and figures clipped from Abner strips, rearranged them in lewd

positions, and then photographed them as evidence for the prosecution. The New York State attorney general wasn't convinced. No action was taken against Capp, but Fisher was expelled from the National Cartoonists Society. Soon after, Fisher committed suicide.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time when Capp lost the love of his liberal following. Always seeing himself as an enemy of totalitarianism, fraud, and demagoguery — from whatever quarter — he turned his sights on the youthful radicals of the Vietnam era. Whether it was Nazis burning books in the streets or radicals burning college libraries, it was all the same to Capp. He burlesqued the radicals in a heavy-handed way, portraying them as members of a group called SWINE (Students Wildly Indignant About Nearly Everything). His satires of weak-kneed college administrators giving in meekly to the barbarian hordes did nothing to endear him to the academic establishment.

Capp found the controversy profitable on the college lecture circuit. His lectures turned into shouting matches, with the students snarling at Capp and Capp destroying them with his witty epigrams.

Leonard Starr, current creator of "Annie" and a Capp fan, recalled one telling quip: "You know what makes me sick about you kids is, you sing songs about work you've never done and wars you never fought." Stan Drake, creator of "The Heart of Juliet Jones," recalls Capp telling a hostile college crowd: "Why should I let you run my country when I wouldn't let you carry my luggage?"

The unfunny thing was that Capp retained his sense of humor about the continuing confrontation while the students showed none. Their bitterness remained long after Capp stopped touring.

"It hurt his feelings that he couldn't keep these kids (as an audience for "Abner")," according to Drake. "There was no rapprochement. It stayed bitter . . . but he never complained."

Instead, the life seemed to go out of the strip as more and more it was drawn by assistants. Capp's health had declined sharply in the 1970s. He contracted emphysema, and walking on his wooden leg remained painful and difficult. Getting "L'il Abner" done had ceased to be fun; now it was a chore.

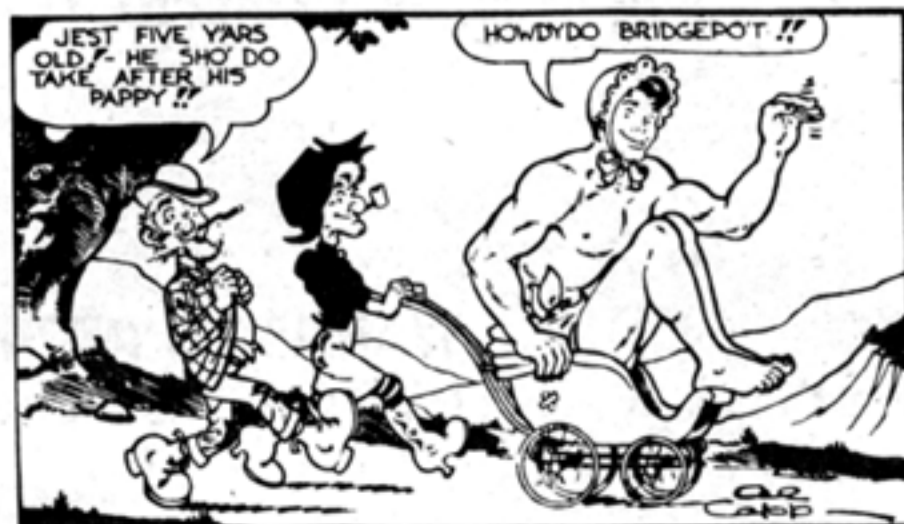
Drake was shuttling between Westport and Boston helping Capp with the strip in 1975. He was there when Capp was reeling from a big shock: the New York Daily News had dropped "Abner."

"He just sat in his studio one day," Drake recalls. "He turned to his assistant, who was cutting paper into strips, and said, 'Larry, don't cut any more paper.'"

Said Caplin: "He thought he had created a great entertainment. He knew he had done a superb job." Novelist John Steinbeck once said, "He should be given a Nobel Prize."

For those who didn't live through the time, it is hard to imagine how much adulation Capp received. For a long stretch of his career, he was a darling of liberals and intellectuals. He lost them and he lost the kids.

But the Capp cartoons, viewed without taking politics into consideration, are great examples of American humor at its finest. The great mass of his readers weren't concerned with Capp's opinion of Joe McCarthy or Teddy Kennedy. They worried how the Sadie Hawkins Day race would come out; whether or not Lonesome Polecat would recover from his last Joy Juice binge; and whether Pansy Yokum could cure Abner of the effect of an Evil Eye Fleegle Triple Whammy. People liked these things, first and foremost, because Capp made them very, very funny. Capp spent his life dishing out smiles and laughter. Someday, perhaps, a kinder generation will review his work and honor him as the great American humorist that many believe he was.



"L'il Abner" creator Al Capp drew this cartoon specially for The Sunday Post in 1939.

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INDUSTRY



PROGRESS

A 1908 woodcut from the 25th Anniversary Edition of The Bridgeport Post depicts Progress pointing the way to the booming industrial city of Bridgeport. Filled with the smoke of trains and factories, the blackened sky was welcome proof of prosperity. The smoke, however, parts for the shining sun, harbinger of a bright future. The sledge hammer, gears, and compass at the bottom of the cut are homage to the city's laborers and craftsmen.

Industry and civic leaders at the turn of the century continually promoted the benefits of locating a factory in Bridgeport. Almost yearly, either through the city's newspapers or in independent publications, special industrial reviews were printed. They all sang the praises of "Bridgeport — The City of Opportunity.

Industry thrived and still survives

America was becoming an industrial giant in the 1880s, and Bridgeport was a vital gene in its growth. As the slogan "Made in U.S.A." was appearing more and more on the counters of world trade, local industries were stamping "Made in Bridgeport" on their goods with pride. The city's reputation as a manufacturing center of quality goods was swelling as much as its population.

In 1870, the Park City was a small town of 19,835. By 1890, the population more than doubled to 48,866, and by 1910 there were more than 115,000 living here.

The essential ingredients of the industrial world, such as electricity, the telephone, and the internal combustion engine, were being developed. Steam replaced water power as an energy source. Factories grew larger and more efficient.

Locally, the huge Wheeler and Wilson sewing machine factory was the city's largest plant. It employed more than 2,100 people and was so important that one historian said Bridgeport was "an obscure town" until the company's arrival here.

Warner Brothers (now Warnaco), which became the world's largest manufacturer of corsets, established its factory on Lafayette Street in the South End in 1889. The Bullard Company was founded in the West End by Edward Payson Bullard in 1881. Bridgeport Brass, founded in 1865, developed the light socket in the 1880s, and Harvey Hubbell Inc. developed the pull chain light. The Bryant Electric Company was also founded during this period.

The Southern New England Telephone Company opened its office at Fairfield Avenue and Water Street in 1882. The area's other public utilities — United Illuminating and Bridgeport Hydraulic, as well as the predecessor of the Southern Connecticut Gas Company — were well established.

The Frisbie Pie Company, which baked pies in tins that gave their name to the Frisbee brand flying disc of today, was turning out pies on Kossuth Street.

By the turn of the century, factories large and small rumbled in the production of goods large and small, from lock nuts to corsets to rolled steel to munitions. Among the city's manufacturers were these names from the past: Bridgeport Crucible, Canfield Rubber, Eaton, Cole, and Burnham; Holmes, Edwards, and Seton; American Graphophone; Connecticut Web; American and British Manufacturing; Columbia Phonograph; and Bridgeport Brass.

According to the Manufacturers Association of Southern Connecticut, several of its current members were well established by 1883: The Coulter-McKenzie Machine Company, Dresser IIO in Stratford, Jenkins Brothers, Rem-

ington Arms (Union Metallic Cartridge), U.S. Baird in Stratford, and Cornwall-Patterson were among the companies which thrive even today.

By 1916, the largest company in Bridgeport was Remington Arms. It swelled to 22,000 employees in 1916.

The maker of shotguns, ammunition, sporting arms, clay targets and military small arms hired a new employee every 20 minutes from late 1915 until early 1916, history books tell.

In May of 1920, General Electric leased the 77.6 acre property off Boston Avenue from Remington Arms for manufacture of wiring devices and fractional horsepower motors. GE bought the facility in June of 1922.

Manufacturers of national recognition still make the Bridgeport area their home, including Carpenter Technology, Sikorsky Aircraft, Avco-Lycoming, Bas-sick Division of Stewart Warner, ACCO, Raymark, MK Labs, Handy and Harman, Bic Pen, Producto Machines, Moore Tool, Bridgeport Machines Division of Textron, and many others.

Throughout Fairfield County, many of the nation's largest businesses have settled their corporate headquarters. General Electric, General Telephone and Electronics, Stauffer Chemical, Pitney-Bowes, Perkin Elmer, Chesebrough-Ponds, Champion International, Xerox, Union Carbide all make their homes in the bedroom communities of the county.

At the early part of the century, major retailers included Meigs & Company, Smith, Murray Company, and Moss & Kreiger. But the real leaders in the field still serve the area today: D.M. Read's, Howland, Skydel's, Nothnagle's furniture store, Clark's furniture store, and Breiner's. Even smaller businesses, such as Reid & Todd Jewelers, have withstood the tests of a century.

While banks with names like Bridgeport National, First National, and James Staples have come and gone, People's, Connecticut National, Citytrust, City Savings (now BancOne) continue as major regional operations.

In a special edition of The Bridgeport Evening Post March 10, 1905, the industrial leaders of the city collectively wrote about the great benefits of doing business in "the metropolis of Western Connecticut." They hailed the desirable qualities of the city's people, the skills of her workers. They predicted the city would become one of the leading manufacturing centers of the nation. They wrote:

"We manufacturers and citizens who have participated in Bridgeport's growth and prosperity confidently predict even greater accomplishments for the city and are glad to invite all, be they far or near, to come and share the blessings that flow with this great and strong current of industrial life."



Sikorsky's first public flight of his VS-300 helicopter was recorded by Post photographer Al Mathewson in 1940. The flight took place off Sniffen's Lane in Stratford.

Igor Sikorsky realizes his dream

By BRIAN J. MURPHY

In the late 1920s, when Bridgeport was building an airfield in former marshlands and pastures in Stratford near the Housatonic River, the activity attracted the attention of an engineer from Long Island who was looking for more space for his seaplane factory. He inspected the field and found it had possibilities. He went to the banks of the Housatonic and surveyed the ample space there and the deep waters of the river beyond. Igor Sikorsky liked what he saw.

The Sikorsky story had begun two decades earlier in Russia. After a trip to Germany with his father, and having seen the newspaper accounts of the early flights of the Wright Brothers, Sikorsky decided that what he wanted to do was build flying machines.

His first experiments, financed by his family, involved building the first of two experimental helicopters, which he began in 1909. Helicopter number one might have flown, had it a powerful enough engine; but it didn't, and the experiment failed. In 1910, Sikorsky began work on a second helicopter and his first fixed wing aircraft, the S-1. Neither flew. It was the fourth attempt, the S-2, that earned Sikorsky his wings.

Despite the inauspicious beginnings, Sikorsky's engineering work attracted the favorable attention of the Russian Baltic Company of St. Petersburg (now Leningrad), which imported him 800 miles from Kiev to build airplanes for them. What he did was merely build a plane, called the Grand, in which all Russia took pride.

The Grand was light years removed from Sikorsky's first experiments, and was way ahead of its time. The first four-engine craft to fly, it had excellent handling characteristics and the ca-

capacity to carry a payload of passengers in comfort. When Czar Nicholas II inspected it personally, Sikorsky's reputation in Russia was golden.

The Russian Revolution put Sikorsky out of business. Men he knew and respected, including the military pilots of a squadron of Sikorsky bombers (The "Squadron of Flying Ships"), were executed out of hand by the Bolsheviks, whom Sikorsky came to detest. He quietly left Russia, never to return.

He came to America, just in time for the post-World War I slump in aviation. After a stint teaching classes of Russian immigrants in New York, a group of emigres backed Sikorsky in an airplane building venture, and he set up shop on a chicken farm in Roosevelt, Long Island. He was off and running again, and by 1926 was back in the big leagues.

Sikorsky scored his first real success in the New World with the S-38 amphibian seaplane. Described by one aviator

as "a collection of airplane parts flying in formation," the parasol-winged, twin-engine monoplane may have looked unusual, but it delivered the goods in terms of range and payload.

For Pan American Airways, the nine-to-12-seater was just what was needed to blaze new trails to the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. The Army, the Marine Corps, the Navy, private companies, airlines, African explorers and private individuals all queued up to buy the S-38.

It was at this juncture that Sikorsky decided he needed more space than was available at his plant on Long Island. He chose Stratford.

Suddenly, the sleepy aviation scene here livened up, as a succession of increasingly advanced Sikorsky seaplanes began to make their appearance at the mouth of the Housatonic.

Building the plane for Pan Am, Sikorsky came into close contact with another giant of the aviation scene, Charles A. Lindbergh, who contributed much during the design phase of the S-40 amphibian with suggestions Sikorsky found valuable and practical.

Sergei Sikorsky, Igor's son, told how, on an early proving flight of the S-40 for Pan Am, Pilot Lindbergh and designer Sikorsky formed a fast friendship while touring the Caribbean. The two would fly only by day; by night, they would seek out quiet restaurants and cafes where Lindbergh, still a celebrity, stood a chance of being let alone to talk flying with his friend. They would trade ideas on what the next great seaplane would be like until late at night, drawing up a vision of a trans-Atlantic, passenger-carrying craft.

The result of these visionary evenings was the S-42 flying boat project, in which Lindbergh played an important role in the design stage. This was the most beautiful airplane that Sikorsky had



Aviator Charles Lindbergh (left) became a close friend of Sikorsky, with whom he is standing, during development of the latter's seaplanes. Undated photo from Post's files.

built to date. The smooth design, the massive size of the craft, the clean lines — everything just looked right.

The S-42 proved to be the summit of seaplane building at Sikorsky, but as it turned out, none of the Sikorsky amphibians after the move to Stratford was as popular as the twin-engined S-38.

During the years of World War II, Sikorsky worked on the dream of his youth: a helicopter. It had been nearly 30 years since he had assembled his first two experimental helicopters in Kiev, and a lot had changed in that time. Principles of aeronautics which were basic to the 1930s were unknown when the young Sikorsky first set to work. Moreover, engines had improved vastly, both in reliability and in the most important way — horsepower. Sikorsky knew that if he could come up with a basic, practical design, there would be no real problem finding the right plant to power a later production model.

It was in 1939, 30 years after helicopters one and two, that Sikorsky began design work. It was known that the principle of the rotating wing would lift an aircraft. German experiments earlier in the decade had proven this. The question was whether to build one or two sets of rotors.

Sikorsky preferred one set of rotors, the logic being that since a rotor was a complicated mechanism to begin with, supporting the craft with one set reduced the risk of mechanical failure. The final design of the first Sikorsky helicopter, the VS-300, had a single set of rotors and, at the end of a tail boom, a two-bladed tail rotor. The tail rotor prevented the main rotor from spinning the craft around on its vertical axis and also supplied rudder control.

The airframe construction for the VS-300 was relatively simple. It was made of aluminum pipe, without covering. As new configurations were desired, the pipe was simply rewelded into the desired shape.

More critical were the problems of control. No one knew how to control a helicopter in flight, and Sikorsky knew that he would be writing the helicopter pilot's manual as he test-flew his machine.

On September 14, 1939, Sikorsky and his engineers wheeled out the VS-300 to a clearing behind the Sikorsky plant in Stratford. In his book, "Igor Sikorsky," former Bridgeport Post reporter and, later, Sikorsky publicity chief Frank Delear, describes the moment of the first flight:

"When Igor started the little 75-horsepower engine, the VS-300 vibrated and the controls shook in his hands. He increased the power and the shaking became worse. But he could feel that the craft had enough power to rise, so he pulled up on the pitch control, increasing the bite of the rotor blades. One wheel inched clear of the ground, then another. He added more power and suddenly all four wheels hung clear of the ground. Igor quickly reduced power and pitch and the ship rested again on its wheels. That was it for the day, a total of about 10 seconds in the air."

Concerned with the problem of control, Sikorsky undertook major redesign work, adding two extra secondary rotors to the tail. These modifications stabilized the craft, and it was in this one that Sikorsky made the first flight without restraining tethers in 1940.

It was at about this time that the helicopter came to the notice of the military,

which had been studying a variety of unpromising autogyro designs. Capt. H. Franklin Gregory, U.S. Army Air Corps, was an early and influential helicopter convert. Gregory continued to observe for the Army as Sikorsky began to perform a number of helicopter "firsts" as he continued VS-300 development. The craft became the first amphibious helicopter when Sikorsky put floats on it and took off from the Housatonic River. And he caught up with the Germans in the nip-and-tuck battle of helicopter development when he broke the time aloft record set by a Focke-Wulf craft, beating the Nazi machine's record of 1 hour, 20 minutes and 39 seconds by almost 12 minutes.

Flights like this were gaining national publicity for Sikorsky and his pioneering work. The Army, at the prompting of Capt. Gregory, took notice and ordered a helicopter, designated the XR-4. In it, Sikorsky returned to the single secondary tail rotor configuration. The new arrangement, once perfected, gave the helicopter excellent control and, just as important, more speed in forward flight.

The Army liked the XR-4, deleted the "X" experimental designation and gave Sikorsky a production order. By this time Chance Vought Aircraft had been separated from Sikorsky Aircraft, and the Stratford plant was turned over to Corsair production. Sikorsky took over a refurbished plant in Bridgeport's South End, and it was there that the R-4, R-5 and R-6 helicopters were built. Meanwhile, the VS-300, its usefulness as an experimental craft ended, was retired to the Edison Institute Museum in Dearborn, Mich.

In a modest way in World War II, and then to wide publicity during the Korean and Vietnam wars, the helicopter gained

a reputation as a life saver. In the actual conflict there were a good many Sikorsky craft involved in air/sea rescue and medical evacuation. Soldiers who would have died of blood loss or shock while being transported to mobile surgical hospitals by ambulance were evacuated right off the battlefield by intrepid "chopper" pilots and taken virtually to the doorstep of the operating theater. U.S. pilots shot down behind enemy lines could hope to escape the horrors of Communist prison camps because helicopters were available to grab them out of the grasp of the enemy. There seemed to be no end to the purposes to which the helicopter could be put.

After moving to a spacious new plant "up river" in Stratford, some helicopter classics were produced by the Sikorsky team: the Sea Stallion, the Flying Crane and more recently, the Black Hawk, which represents the first of a new generation of high-tech military helicopters.

When Igor Sikorsky died in 1972, his record of achievement was longer than any of aviation's pioneers. He had built the first four engine plane; the first experimental, powered helicopter; the first transcontinental seaplane; the first practical helicopter; the first airline helicopter; the first twin-engine helicopter; and the first helicopters to cross the Atlantic.

But most satisfying to Sikorsky, according to son Sergei, was the role of helicopters in saving lives. Sergei noted that industry sources have estimated that 1 million persons worldwide had been saved by helicopter. During his life, Sergei said, Sikorsky took pride in the all helicopter achievements, whether they were his or not. And rightly so: He had invented it.

Whitehead: The quest for a place in history

Man's first flight in a powered, heavier-than-air craft took place in 1903 at Kitty Hawk, N.C. — or so the history books tell us. There is a body of tradition hereabout that a German immigrant, Gustav Whitehead, beat the Wrights into the air by about two years with a craft he is said to have flown off Tunxis Hill in Fairfield, at Lordship in Stratford, and in Bridgeport.

Whether the story of local aviation is in fact the beginning of the story of world aviation hangs on lamentably thin threads of evidence. The major question revolves around whether Whitehead's Plane Number 21, his first to fly, got off the ground under its own power.

"Only a handful of friends and curious persons gathered at Lordship Manor on the morning this much-disputed flight was supposed to have taken place," The Sunday Post reported on August 18, 1940. "There weren't any photographers, newspapermen or other writers present, for Whitehead had never announced his plans beforehand, but only wanted to pacify his thirst for flying..."

The testimony of witnesses to Whitehead's work at the turn of the century conflicts. John H. McCall, a former official of the First National Bank and Trust, declared that as a boy he witnessed Whitehead's flights in Bridgeport (made in the vicinity of Hancock Avenue), claiming to have seen one of Whitehead's craft operating 20 feet off the ground.

There is nothing to indicate that the flights didn't take place. On the other hand, looking through the testimony, neither McCall nor a John Ciglar, another boy who claimed to be a witness, were questioned as to whether the flights they saw were powered. At the time, the Wrights were making unpowered glider flights, as had other aviators. It is not inconceivable that the Whitehead flights witnessed by those boys were in fact unpowered glider flights.



Front view of Gustav Whitehead's No. 21 aircraft, which he is said to have flown in Fairfield in 1901. From "History by Contract," with permission of co-author William J. O'Dwyer.

One contemporary, cited in a 1945 article by Orville Wright, was Stanley Y. Beach of Stamford. Beach, having written an article on Whitehead's experiments for Scientific American, induced his father, the editor of the magazine, to fund the experiments.

"Beach has said that he does not believe that any of Whitehead's machines ever left the ground under their own power," Wright wrote, "in spite of assertions of persons 35 years later who thought they remembered seeing them. Beach's nine-year association with Whitehead placed him in a better position to know what Whitehead had done than that of other persons who were associated with Whitehead but a short time. If Whitehead really had flown, Beach, who had spent nearly \$10,000 on the experiments, would have been the last to deny it."

Wright also produced evidence that an account in The Bridgeport Herald purporting to describe a powered flight by Whitehead on Aug. 14, 1901, was inaccurate. In a 1937 affidavit, James Dickie, mentioned in the Herald story as a witness of the flight, said: "I believe the entire story in The Herald

was imaginary, and grew out of the comments of Whitehead in discussing what he hoped to get from his plane. I was not present and did not witness any airplane flight on Aug. 14, 1901. I do not remember or recall ever hearing of a flight with this particular plane or any other plane Whitehead ever built."

Dickie was in a position to know: he apparently worked with Whitehead when the inventor was constructing airplanes.

But there is the testimony of a Junius W. Harworth, cited in The Bridgeport Post of Aug. 13, 1953:

"Junius W. Harworth, formerly of Bridgeport and now residing in Detroit, stated in a letter that he assisted Mr. Whitehead in the construction of his airplanes and engines, and that he witnessed Mr. Whitehead's Stratford flight in 1901... It is claimed by several witnesses that Mr. Whitehead made two flights Jan. 17, 1902, in a monoplane powered with a kerosene burning engine. One flight covered two miles and the other a distance of seven miles, mostly over the waters of Long

Island Sound.

One thing is lost in all the controversy: It is a sad fact that, aside from the lost recognition, Whitehead's flights were of no real significance, even if they did take place. It is as if someone had discovered America before Columbus and then kept the secret to himself. Whitehead, if he did fly, did nothing to document his flight. There are no photographs of a plane in flight, no contemporary newspaper accounts except the questionable Herald story. Unlike Whitehead, the Wright brothers issued press releases, gathered reliable persons from a nearby Coast Guard station to witness their flight, and even arranged a device that would trip a camera shutter the instant their flyer left the ground.

The Wrights — not Whitehead, even if he was first — are the starting point of the development of modern fixed wing, powered flight. It was from their beginning that all else has come. If Whitehead was indeed the first to fly, then that is the true tragedy. He planted a seed that never sprouted.

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Aviation growth brought derring-do

Flying sweetheart's challenge ended here in near-disaster

By HERBERT F. GELLER

It was an era when the world was still large enough to make flying across the ocean a high adventure.

It was a time when people could be thrilled by the courage of a beautiful young woman and her handsome husband who dared to fly a small airplane thousands of miles across the Atlantic from Great Britain.

It was the era of the British "Flying Sweethearts," Amy and Jim Mollison, who crash-landed their plane, the Seafarer into the Stratford marshes on the night of July 23, 1933, after a 37-hour non-stop flight from Pendine, Wales.

The crash brought hundreds of press and radio reporters to Bridgeport Hospital where the two recuperated the day after their accident. They were flown to New York for further treatment, but two weeks later they returned to Bridgeport where they were welcomed as heroes.

Fifty years ago, flying across the Atlantic, particularly from Europe to North America, against the prevailing winds, was a dangerous and arduous adventure. Only a few flyers had crossed the widest expanse of the Atlantic before the Mollisons, without stopping to refuel. Charles Lindbergh made his famous flight from New York to Paris in 1927 but traveled from west to east, with the prevailing winds helping him along.

Capt. James A. Mollison of the British Royal Air Force was the first pilot to make an east-west trans-Atlantic solo flight when he flew from Dublin, Ireland, to New Brunswick, Canada, in August 1932.

His wife, Amy Johnson Mollison, was a London typist who became interested in flying in 1929. She made a solo flight after only a few weeks of instruction, and in May 1930, at the age of 22, she flew alone from London to Darwin, Australia, in 19 days. Her feat brought her a purse of £10,000 from the London Daily Mail.

Mollison had started flying in 1923 at the age of 18 when he received his com-

mission in the RAF as the youngest pilot officer at that time. Amy and Jim were married in 1932 and together made a record-breaking flight of 22 hours from England to India. Soon after their marriage they became known as "England's Flying Sweethearts."

Their venture in the summer of 1933 was to fly the twin engine Seafarer from Wales to Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, N.Y. The Daily Mail and the British government provided backing for the flight.

They took off from Pendine Lands Beach in Wales about noon, July 22. The weather was terrible, and they almost didn't make it past the Irish Channel. They flew on instruments for almost all of their 22-hour flight.

"We only saw the sea for three out of the 22 hours we were actually over the Atlantic," Amy Mollison later told the London Daily Mail. "If you can't see the sea it is impossible to estimate the wind and allow for drift. We flew high. Sometimes we were actually in the clouds; at other times we were in between layers of clouds. Sometimes we were over the clouds, but we were never below them," she said.

"We had no alternative when we left the Irish coast but to push blindly into the fog because it would have been impossible with our heavy load (of fuel) to make a successful landing anywhere," Jim Mollison said.

The sky cleared the next morning after the sun rose and they were able to see the water, which was dotted with icebergs and floes. They knew they were near Newfoundland or Labrador.

They sighted Newfoundland a short while later. They still had 1,100 miles to go to New York and the question became one of sufficient fuel. They checked and found they had used more than they had anticipated in their struggle against the Atlantic headwinds. They decided that by running the engines at very low revolutions per minute they might just reach New York. "But we knew it would be touch-and-go," Amy recounted.

The fog cleared over Portland,



Flyers Jim and Amy Mollison during parade in their honor in Bridgeport in 1933. Sunday Post photo by Mangner.

Maine. The Mollisons flew south to Boston, then followed the coastline of Rhode Island and Connecticut.

That night when he saw the lights of a small airport — Bridgeport Airport in the Stratford marshes — Mollison checked his fuel gauge and discovered that only a few gallons were left. It was unlikely they would reach New York.

They circled the field several times, "but it was frightfully hard to see from which direction the wind was coming," Mollison recalled. After three trial approaches he came in from what seemed like the best direction. "The lights seemed to throw the boundary of the airport into complete darkness," he said. "To add to our difficulties, there was a considerable ground fog which almost completely obscured the runway."

Mollison spotted an airplane which appeared to be taxiing and preparing for takeoff. The plane was actually landing, they later learned — a mistake that led Mollison to incorrectly estimate the wind direction, and the Seafarer came down

in the Stratford marshes 25 yards short of the airfield boundary.

The plane's wheels caught the mud and the Seafarer made a double somersault before it came to a halt. Mollison was thrown through the plane's window and suffered many facial cuts and abrasions. Mrs. Mollison found herself hanging upside down inside with her head in the water. She could hear her husband feebly calling to her.

"I had the feeling of being completely trapped, knowing that there was a possibility of fire. I don't know how I got out but it is amazing what one can do when one has to," she said.

She managed to get out and struggled over to her husband through the marshes. She was holding his bleeding head on her knee when the rescuers came plunging through the mud and water.

The couple were taken to the emergency room of Bridgeport Hospital. Mollison was treated for facial cuts and a scalp laceration that took 30 stitches to close. His wife suffered some leg



The wreckage of the Mollison's plane, the Seafarer, in the Stratford marshes near Bridgeport Airport. Courtesy of Morgan Kaolian.

bruises, but aside from shock and exhaustion, they emerged from the accident relatively unscathed.

Their plane, however, was a wreck. Despite Mollison's hope to retrieve it, the Seafarer was soon stripped to the bone by souvenir hunters. Their personal possessions were saved, and eventually, the Seafarer's wing and a cot from the plane's cabin were given to the Barnum Museum where they were placed on exhibit several years ago.

News that the flying Mollisons had crashed near Bridgeport just 20 minutes from their goal was relayed all over the world via Post/Telegram dispatches within a few minutes of their arrival at Bridgeport Hospital. Soon newspaper, magazine, and radio reporters thronged there to see the famous couple. A "No visitors" sign had to be placed on their door.

Despite Dr. Isaac Harshberger's advice that they remain at the hospital for another night, the Mollisons decided on the evening of July 24 to leave for New York City via a Sikorsky seaplane.

The Flying Sweethearts recuperated there for several more days, and a week later were off to Hyde Park, N.Y., accompanied by the aviator Amelia Earhart, to meet Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt. "Well, well," said the President, "you are both looking fine in spite of your accident."

Other trans-Atlantic flyers had been honored by ticker-tape parades through New York City, but the Mollisons were to receive their reward in Stratford and Bridgeport.

The great day was Friday, Aug. 4, 1933. About 15,000 people, including officials of Bridgeport, Stratford and surrounding towns and the state anxiously awaited the more successful return of the Mollisons to Bridgeport Airport.

One of those who waited to greet them was Lt. Commander Frank Hawks, a U.S. Navy air ace who had just flown 1,700 miles from Regina, Saskatchewan to Bridgeport Airport in 7 hours and 50 minutes. Hawks, who was to die later in an air crash, averaged 219 miles per hour in an all-metal plane that was about the most advanced craft of its time. Also greeting them was a group of women aviators who were admirers of Mrs. Mollison. They had all flown to Bridgeport in their own planes.

The Mollisons and their entourage were conducted to a speaker's stand, and the field was renamed Mollison Airport in their honor. James L. Dunn, acting for Mayor Edward Buckingham, told the couple, "I am sure you will bring back to England the assurance that Bridgeport is a hospitable city and its people are of a generous nature."

A parade up Main Street to the Stratfield Hotel followed visits to the Stratford American Legion Hall and Bridgeport Hospital. The parade was led by motorcycle police followed by the Mackenzie Highlanders of Stamford playing bagpipes and the degree team of the Clan Campbell of Bridgeport, in honor of Mollison's Scottish heritage.

There were more speeches at a giant reception at the Stratfield Hotel, and Mrs. Mollison said she was more weary from the six receptions that day than from her oceanic flight. The Mollisons left the banquet and slept at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Daniel C. Patterson of Black Rock before flying to New York the next morning.

The Bridgeport reception was the high point of the Mollisons' flying career. They made one more endurance flight together in their next aircraft, Seafarer II, before their marriage broke up.

Each continued to fly in air competitions, and they flew for Britain's Royal Air Force in World War II, Amy as a non-combat volunteer. She was killed on Jan. 6, 1941 after her plane developed engine trouble and she bailed out over the Thames Estuary east of London.

In World War II, Jim Mollison served in the RAF's Air Transport Command and retired as a flight captain. After the war he lived in Canada for a time and returned to England where he wrote his autobiography, "Death Cometh Soon or Late." He died of pneumonia on Nov. 1, 1959 at the age of 54.



When aviation was young, even The Bridgeport Post got into the act. The Post sponsored a contest in which the winners were taken on a flight with daring Bridgeport aviator Lincoln Beachey on May 11, 1911. In photo above, Marguerite M. Shea, one of the winners, holds on tight as pilot Beachey prepares for takeoff. At left, Mayor Edward T. Buckingham gets behind the controls for the photographers. Post photos by Corbit, courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

Monroe's Hurd ran out of luck

By JOHN BURGESSON

In the morning of Aug. 30, 1955, Benjamin Hurd, at the controls of his Stinson Reliant monoplane, took off from Monroe Airport with four passengers and a cargo of experimental agricultural chemicals, bound for Manchester, Vt.

The plane never reached its destination. While en route over Dover Plains, N.Y. and apparently searching for a place to land, Hurd crashed the powerful gullwing, fabric-covered aircraft into a hillside, killing everyone aboard.

Some say that Hurd was lost on the fog, which was reported to be very heavy that day. Others say he had engine trouble, and was trying to land at an airstrip in nearby Wingdale, N.Y. But most people who knew Hurd say that his luck simply ran out.

"We all knew he would crash someday," said one local aviator who asked not to be identified. "The only question was how many people he would take with him."

Hurd, the son of a Monroe farmer, is perhaps best known as the founder of the now-defunct Monroe Airport, a 2,000-foot unpaved landing strip he converted from a motor speedway he operated on Moose Hill Road. He also sold lumber, built houses and paved several roads in Monroe, endeavors that supported his penchant for flying.

"Old Ben was a good pilot — a great pilot, but he just took too many chances," said John Yaros, Hurd's best friend for almost 20 years. "Even while he was building the airport he took chances. 'He said to me one day, 'C'mon John, let's move some boulders.' So we climbed into this big Caterpillar bulldozer that Ben had picked up someplace.



Flyer Ben Hurd, courtesy of Martha Hurd DuBair.

He fired the thing up and drove it full tilt into a rock about half the size of my dining room. That sent me flying into the mud. I was as mad as hell — then I looked up at Ben sitting up on that big Cat laughing his head off. But that's the kind of guy Ben was."

Yaros shook his head. "I took more chances with that guy. One time Ben comes up to me and says, 'C'mon, let's do a little ice flying.' So we took off in his (Piper) Cub J-3. He was flying about 15 feet over the ice of Lake Zoar. He cut the throttle, pushed the stick forward and BOOM! He came down on the ice so hard I thought we had lost our landing gear back there. He climbed up a few feet and says to me, 'You see any water where we hit? That's how you tell whether or not the ice is thick enough.' There was no

water, so we landed. I became a pretty good ice flyer after that."

Yaros worked for Hurd as a machinist for about two years. "All Ben ever gave me during that time was \$20 and six basement windows for a house I was building. He was the sort of guy who could get \$100 from you just by looking at you. But he had a big heart. If you ever wanted to fly one of his airplanes, he'd say 'Sure, go ahead. Take it up.'

"But would he take chances! One time we were flying west to Pennsylvania. When we got to the Hudson, we hit a wall of clouds. We should have turned back; but not Ben. No sir. He just pulled back on the stick and started climbing. I said: 'What do you think you're doing?' He said, 'I'm going to climb over this.' I told him he'd never make it. But he did. But how would we get down? We had no instruments. We couldn't see a thing below us. Then Ben spotted a Cessna Twin flying over the clouds. He says to me, 'I'm gonna follow that guy.' There were beads of sweat on my forehead. But the plan worked — the Cessna had instruments. Ben got us down, all right. He just loved to scare people."

Yaros' memories are typical of those in Monroe who knew Ben Hurd, including his sister, Mrs. Martha DuBair.

"I remember on the Fourth of July when we were kids he would light firecrackers and toss them under the dinner table," she said. "But that's the kind of guy he was. He liked to scare people."

Today the airstrip and hangar are gone. The property on which the airstrip was situated has been purchased for use as a cemetery.

"Poor Ben," said one old-timer who lives near the property. "If he knew that they are turning his airport into a cemetery, he would turn over in his grave."

Locomobile: lots of class, a little flash

November 9, 1908 was one of those days when Bridgeport civic pride rose to a fever pitch. It wasn't a war hero or aviator who had so stirred the emotions of the populace; it was a car. It was the victorious Locomobile racing car, which on that day was celebrated by the city in which it was built.

Three weeks earlier, Old No. 16, as it was affectionately called, had defeated the finest racing cars of Europe in the prestigious Vanderbilt Cup race on Long Island, the first time an American car had succeeded against open foreign competition.

Mayor Henry Lee proclaimed Monday, Nov. 9, a holiday, and factories and schools were closed. Main Street between the Locomobile plant in the South End and the Bull's Head neighborhood in the vicinity of Catherine Street was "turned into a racecourse" as over 30,000 people lined the street to watch Old No. 16 race by at speeds exceeding 60 mph.

The street was festooned with flags and banners, and a heavy police presence was ordered to prevent the wildly

cheering spectators from walking into the path of the speeding car. After leaving the factory at the foot of Main Street, the car, piloted by George Robertson with mechanic Glen Etheridge at his side, sped north on Main Street to Bull's Head, turned around, and then sped back to the factory along the same route.

It was understandable how the citizenry became so excited about a machine. Bridgeport was riding the crest of the machine age; most of its workers were employed in a machine trade of one sort or another. Old No. 16 was in spirit their creation, and they were proud of it.

Handbuilt at a cost of \$20,000, the car was powered by a 90-horsepower engine with a bore of 7 1/4 inches and a 6-inch stroke. As with all gasoline-powered Locomobiles, the rear wheels were chain driven. It was capable of 120 mph.

The winning of the Vanderbilt Cup was the zenith of the company's 37-year history. Founded in Massachusetts at the close of the 19th Century, the Locomobile Company of America moved to Bridgeport in 1900.

The company was founded by "Cosmopolitan" publisher John Brisben Walker and Amzi Lorenzo Barber, one of

America's first asphalt-paving contractors. Between 1899 and 1903 the company manufactured 5,200 steam-driven cars under patent rights purchased from the Stanley Brothers, makers of the Stanley Steamer.

These steam vehicles, in large measure, were inexpensively priced and cheaply made. Most were priced between \$650 and \$900, although several luxury models went for over \$2,000. Across the board, their biggest drawback was that drivers had to refill the boiler with water every 20 miles or so.

In 1902, the company hired a prominent electrical and automotive engineer, Andrew L. Riker, who immediately began working on developing gasoline-powered vehicles. Riker was made vice president of the company in August of that year, and in November, the first gasoline-powered Locomobile rolled out of the factory gates.

No longer would the company manufacture inexpensive steam cars for the masses. The least costly of the new Locomobiles sold for about \$5,000, and the custom built ones were priced in excess of \$10,000. In its magazine advertising, the company proudly proclaimed

the Locomobile as "America's finest and most expensive motor car."

By the start of World War I, there were three standard models produced: the four-cylinder 30 Type L; and the six-cylinder 38 Type R and 48 Type M. All were made of the finest materials, and none was intended for the economy-minded.

The chassis was pressed out of heat treated chrome-nickel steel. The body was made of sheet aluminum panels supported by a skeleton of wood. The engine cylinders were cast in pairs from grey iron that was aged before being machined.

As with most luxury cars of the day, the Locomobile wasn't designed for the owner lacking a mechanic-chauffeur. There were 32 points of lubrication along the chassis alone — eight of which required daily attention. Each car came with a 120-page instruction book, eight pages of which were devoted to starting the engine.

The headlamps were fueled by acetylene gas, created by mixing calcium carbide and water in the car's gas generator. This was a shoebox-sized device located in the engine compartment. It had to be refilled with calcium carbide and water after every 30 hours of headlamp operation.

In 1912 the company began production of a five-ton truck, which later bore Riker's name. It was a success, as Britain, France, Russia, and the United States ordered hundreds of them for use in World War I.

But the truck market — and the luxury car market — evaporated in the post-war recession, and in 1920, Locomobile joined an automobile group, headed by Emlen S. Hare, that included the Simplex and Mercer automobile companies.

Hare had hoped to reduce the price of the Locomobile by increasing production. But in 1921 the group collapsed, leaving Locomobile an independent firm with grave financial difficulties. The company went bankrupt in 1922, and was then purchased for \$1.75 million by William Crapo Durant, an ousted executive of General Motors. This arrangement left the company's creditors with 35 cents for each dollar owed.

Durant resumed production, but the market for Locomobiles remained weak through the 1920s. Production halted on March 5, 1929, leaving most of the company's 800 employees without a job.

For about five years, Durant used the factory to overhaul taxicabs. In 1936, bankruptcy was declared for the second and last time as Durant faced a \$5.9 million debt with assets of \$3.1 million. The 10-acre, 13-building plant was finally sold to a real estate firm in 1948 for \$500,000.

Between 1940 and 1963, a number of firms occupied the plant, including Remington Rand, Panettiero Shirt Company, Dictaphone Corp., United Slipper Company, and Smith Comstock Company. The property was sold to United Illuminating in 1963, and the buildings were razed in 1967 to make room for UI's expansion of its Bridgeport Harbor Power Station.

But whatever became of Old No. 16? Following the celebration in Bridgeport, the car was sent on a national tour of auto shows, after which it was displayed prominently in the Locomobile plant. After several years it was moved to a garage on company grounds, where it lay neglected. In 1915 it was purchased by Bristol industrialist Joseph P. Sessions, owner of the Sessions Company foundry, which had made a number of castings for the car.

Sessions restored the car to its pre-race condition, and in 1939 drove it from Bristol to Fairfield. The trip took only one hour, 45 minutes — an excellent time considering the roads of the day.

After Sessions died in 1941, Old No. 16 was purchased by Peter Helck, a successful artist and illustrator who was present at the 1908 Vanderbilt Cup race. Helck, who lives in Boston Corners, N.Y., still owns the car.



The *Locomobile* Co. of America.

OFFICES AND FACTORY:

BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

A 1903 advertisement promotes the luxurious Locomobile, built in one of the South End's sprawling factories. Ad is from the city's Old Home Week souvenir edition published in 1903. "Ol' No. 16" (below), the racing car that became the pride of Bridgeport, was probably Locomobile's best known — and fastest — car. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



Fuller's Dymaxion car dream fizzles

By JOHN BURGESON

In late 1933, R. Buckminster Fuller was piloting a three-wheeled car of his own design south on New York's Fifth Avenue with several magazine editors as passengers.

The car's design, with its single rear turning wheel, enabled Fuller to execute a complete circle around every traffic cop between 57th Street and Washington Square, carefully grazing each of their uniforms during the complete duration of the turn. To a one, the thrilled officers asked to be orbited again.

The vehicle looked like a cross between a scarab beetle and a DC-3 airplane. This Dymaxion car, as it was called, was developed and built at the foot of Bridgeport's Main Street in the former Locomobile factory.

Three Dymaxion cars were produced in Bridgeport by Fuller and his team of 27 engineers and mechanics between 1933 and 1935. The project was one of several of Fuller's that bore the Dymaxion name. "Dymaxion," a Fuller trademark, is a word he defined as "yielding maximum performance with available technology."

The Dymaxion car was much more than a strange-looking automobile. As with most of author-inventor-mathematician Fuller's projects (such as the geodesic dome), the Dymaxion car was a cog in his grand concept of a highly-mobile society with access to prefabricated housing that could easily be transported to remote places. The reason the Dymaxion car looked like the fuselage of an airplane was because it in fact was a prototype of an "auto-airplane" that was never constructed.

The Dymaxion car was a sort of jet plane with a 90 horsepower Ford V8 in place of gas turbine engines that were never to be. Its shape was determined by aerodynamics. The car could achieve 120 miles per hour; a Ford powered by the same engine could only hit about 80 mph.

There were other advantages to the Dymaxion's unusual design. Its rear turning wheel, operated by steel cables extending from the steering wheel, could turn a full 180 degrees. The car, therefore, could execute a 180-degree turn on a road no wider than its length without ever engaging reverse gear. There was no need to "parallel" park; all the driver had to do to get into a tight parking space was to nose the front of the car in, turn the rear wheel so it was nearly perpendicular to the curb, and pull forward slightly. The tail of the car would then swing into place. A parking space only a few inches longer than the car itself was all that was needed.

The Dymaxion had front wheel drive and a three-piece chassis that was designed to enable the car to negotiate the bumpiest of roads at high speed with ease. One frame component supported the engine and running gear. The second frame component was connected to the first by a system of springs and hinges, and was supported by the steerable rear wheel. The third frame member carried the body and passenger compartment,



Buckminster Fuller's three-wheeled Dymaxion car rolls out of the old Locomobile factory in the South End, where it was built, in 1934. Courtesy of the Fuller Archives.

and was supported by the front drive wheels.

Directing the construction of the vehicle in Bridgeport was Sterling Burgess, a naval engineer. He was the designer of two successful defenders of the America's Cup, and had also developed and flown the first successful delta-wing airplane, the Burgess-Dunn. Fuller selected him because Burgess had the skill and the know-how to construct the Dymaxion so that it was both functionally and mechanically as elegant as Fuller's original design. This was important to Fuller, because he believed that a new invention could never be successful if the public was distracted by "shoddy, makeshift irrelevancies."

The first of the three Dymaxions rolled out of the Locomobile building under cloudy skies on July 12, 1933, Fuller's 38th birthday. A crowd of several hundred witnessed the event as Car No. 1 was tested on the former Locomobile proving grounds. On the nose of the car was situated a single, large recessed headlight and a Connecticut marker plate.

Chicago, 1933. The site of the World's Fair, showcase of things futuristic. The Dymaxion car was an invited guest. It was there for another reason. A group of British automobile enthusiasts had commissioned the construction of a second Dymaxion and had sent Col. William Francis Forbes-Sempill to the United States to test-drive Car No. 1. Forbes-Sempill crossed the Atlantic in the Graf Zeppelin, which was bound for the World's Fair.

Williams, who was the owner of Car No. 1 at that time, sent his Dymaxion to Chicago, piloted by a racing car driver by the name of Turner, with instructions that the car be placed at the disposal of the colonel.

This complicated turn of events was the prelude to disaster. With Turner at the wheel, and the colonel as his passenger, Car No. 1 was struck from behind within a few hundred yards of the front gates of the World's Fair. Turner was killed, and Forbes-Sempill was seriously injured. The car that caused the accident was driven by a Chicago parks commissioner, and was towed from the scene almost immediately, before the newspaper reporters arrived. Fuller supporters have pointed to the park commissioner's political connections in this matter.

The headlines were unkind to the Dymaxion, which had performed so admirably. The newspaper accounts made no mention of the other car's involvement. One headline read: "Three-Wheeled Car Kills Driver." Another read: "Two Zep-Riders killed as Freak Car Crashes."

A coroner's inquest later acquitted the Dymaxion of any fault in the accident. But by that time, the headlines had done their damage. Although Car No. 2 was completed in January, 1934, it was no longer desired by the British auto enthusiasts.

Car No. 1 was repaired, and later sold by Williams to the director of the automotive division of the U.S. Bureau of Standards. The car was destroyed in the 1940's in a fire at the bureau's Washington, D.C. garage. Records indicate Car No. 2 was sold by Fuller to a group of his mechanics from the Bridgeport operation.

The third and last Dymaxion was purchased by conductor Leopold Stokowski and his wife, Evangeline Johnson. It made it to the Chicago World's Fair in 1934.

History books are unclear as to the

amount of money each of the three vehicles was sold for, except that since they were experimental models, they cost Fuller much more to produce than the amount he received for them. It is known that the construction of Car No. 3 left Fuller nearly broke, forcing the end of the Dymaxion car project.

Fuller then went to work for the Phelps-Dodge Copper Company, where he developed the Dymaxion bathroom, a prefabricated aluminum and steel unit that could be installed in minutes. It consisted of four sheet metal stampings, plumbing fixtures and an air conditioning unit; it occupied a floor space of five by five feet and weighed 420 pounds.

As with the Dymaxion car, the Dymaxion bathroom never saw general use, in part because of the "inertia of the building world," according to Fuller.

His Dymaxion house met a similar fate. Designed by Fuller in 1927, a prototype eventually was constructed in 1944. It was a circular house which was constructed of sheet aluminum. It was supported by steel cables that were strung from a central kingpin. Fuller theorized that once in mass production, the "Dymaxion Dwelling Machine" could be purchased for about the same price as a Cadillac. The entire structure weighed about 6,000 pounds, and no single component weighed more than 10 pounds, making it possible, in theory at least, for the building to be constructed by a single man or woman.

But Fuller's forte was structural engineering; he is the inventor of the geodesic dome, the tensegrity mast and the octet truss, three lightweight structural designs with almost unbelievable load-carrying capacities. These and other Fuller developments will benefit future generations for centuries to come.

The Great Depression socks a booming city

By VICKI J. EPSTEIN

Although the stock market crash came on Oct. 29, 1929, the effects of the Great Depression were not felt here in the state's largest city until February of 1930 and its full effects didn't reach the city until 1931, history books claim. But when it was felt, it was really felt.

From 912,381 man-hours worked by employees in 1923, the rate fell to 493,176 man-hours at the city's 30 largest factories in 1931. Unemployment hit the 25 percent mark in the spring of 1932.

The case load at the city welfare department grew to 1,809 in 1930 and 2,942

in 1931.

One history book even claims that the city's added borrowing to meet the welfare crisis pushed Bridgeport close to the statutory limitations on municipal debt, and that at the start of 1933, all city employees were forced to take a 20 percent pay cut.

Two of Bridgeport's banks were closed on Aug. 30, 1933 by the state banking commissioner — The Commercial Bank and Trust Co. and American Bank and Trust Co.

The Commercial Bank and Trust Company had opened its doors in 1919 and moved into a new building at 1328 and 1334 Main Street (now the Ocean Sea Grill location) in 1923. To lure cus-

tomers to the new office, the Commercial Bank gave out free money — a total of \$1,050.

A statement in the papers of the day from State Banking Commissioner Walter E. Perry explained the reasons the bank for a long time have been and still are being depleted by steady withdrawals by depositors; securities held by the bank have depreciated heavily from their book value and the defendant has had to resort to heavy borrowings in order to meet its obligations.

Things got so bad in the city that then Mayor Edward T. Buckingham spent \$1 million putting the unemployed to work building a new Yellow Mill Bridge and

repairing the Stratford Avenue Bridge.

He also asked the utilities for a loan, but they refused and instead paid their taxes a year in advance.

In the spring of 1933, the Bridgeport Medical Society set up a committee to investigate the many cases of malnutrition and scurvy as the relief rolls hit 80,000.

Bridgeport turned to Socialist Jasper McLevy in the mayoralty election of 1933 and along with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the outbreak of World War Two in 1939, the city returned to its predepression manufacturing strength.

St. Vincent's Medical Center

80 years of Commitment To The Community
 1903 - 1983 a celebrated history of caring and compassion



Main Street, Bridgeport, was a horse 'n' buggy-traveled dirt road back in 1905 when St. Vincent's first opened its doors. The hospital, chartered in 1903 and conducted by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, grew in response to the medical needs of the burgeoning region and, in 1976, celebrated a new chapter in its history of health care with the opening of the new St. Vincent's Medical Center.



The St. Vincent's Medical Center School of Nursing's first graduating class assembled for this commencement photograph in 1908. According to archives' reports, the School was established in 1905 "to help recruit trained hands to assist the medical staff . . ." To this day, the School of Nursing continues to be a most valuable source for recruitment of skilled nursing professionals by the Medical Center . . . one of the important reasons why St. Vincent's has not experienced a nursing shortage as have so many facilities throughout the country. Celebrating its 75th commencement anniversary this year, the School of Nursing has a current enrollment of 147 men and women and an alumni roster of more than 2500 individuals.

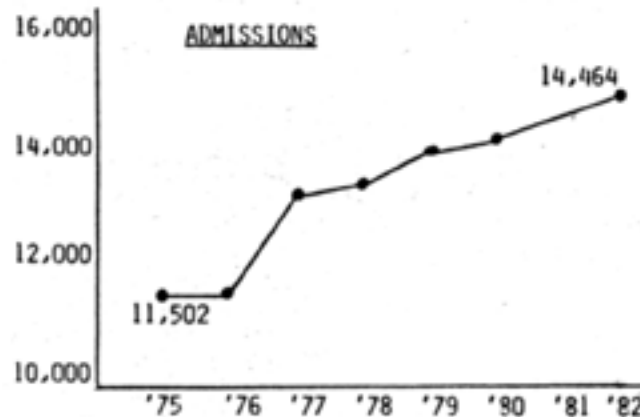


St. Vincent's has grown tremendously over the years as far as the physical plant is concerned, but more important has been the growth of technology, the quality of patient care, the sound training of nurses and technicians, and the education of physicians and house staff. The past 80 years have witnessed unparalleled advances in the field of medicine. New drugs, new diagnostic procedures, and new and life-saving surgical techniques have enabled more people to live longer and healthier lives than ever before. A simple example of the giant strides made in hospital care is in the area of surgery. Surgical mortality is as uncommon today as it was once commonplace at the time this 1906 photo was taken. Many surgical patients are today discharged the very same day. In fact, last year St. Vincent's in recent years did over 28% of all surgery on a same day basis.



Major strides in sophisticated diagnostic services took place at St. Vincent's where, as just one example, the pictured computerized axial tomography whole body "CAT" scanner was made available to patients in 1978 as the area's first such service.

Unprecedented Growth At St. Vincent's



... Since the opening of the new Medical Center in 1976, growth in utilization has been unparalleled. As the admissions graph in the chart above shows, admissions grew by almost 3,000 since 1976. Other charts would point out that emergency room visits grew from 27,000 to nearly 40,000 during the same time period, that short stay surgery more than tripled and that on many days during the year, beds are literally no longer available to accommodate new admissions. St. Vincent's has recently requested permission to add 64 beds to accommodate this demand from the community.



The care and dedication begun by the Daughters of Charity in 1905 when the hospital opened remains today, augmented by the commitment of caring physicians, nurses and others in the St. Vincent's "family". Kindness, love, respect and concern continue to infuse the spirit which is St. Vincent's Medical Center, as evidenced by Sister Marilyn Perkins, R.N., Director of Ambulatory Nursing Services, and Alicia Redgate, R.N., a pediatric nurse, as they share a moment with a young patient.

St. Vincent's Medical Center is a teaching affiliate of the Yale University School of Medicine and is conducted by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul

OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO THE POST PUBLISHING COMPANY ON ITS 100th ANNIVERSARY
 (This page made possible by a generous donation)



A lady didn't show her ankles in the 1860s, and it took a lot of calico at a nickel a yard to cover her hoops

Thirteen hoopskirt and corset factories in the Valley guaranteed you were up-to-date, and with cotton and woolen mills on the river, there was never a shortage of fabric.

You could order a sewing machine for \$12 from a mail order catalog, and pick it up at Charlie Bristol's Drug Store and Post Office down town.

Eleazer Peck sold buttons and pins, and for special occasions you wore a store-bought dress from Hooker's. Wooster's on Main Street sold jewelry. And you banked at The Savings Bank of Ansonia.

Since 1862 . . . a long time to be your bank. There must be a reason.

Offices in Ansonia, Seymour, Shelton,
Beacon Falls • Member FDIC

**The
Savings
Bank ***

*The Savings Bank of Ansonia

Trumbull: The lure of mining

By TOM STANTON

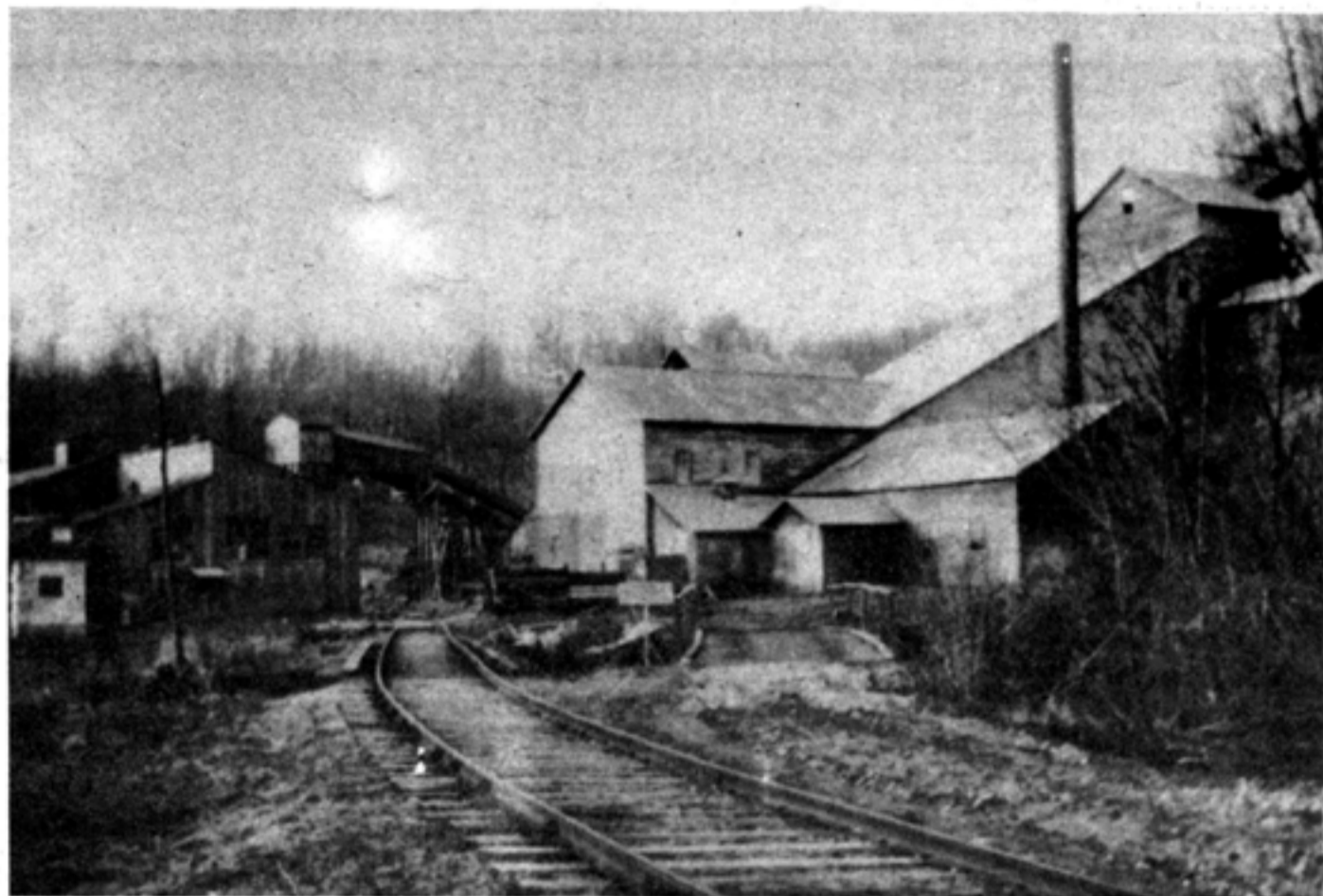
It was a time of speculation. Land was purchased by wealthy businessmen hoping to turn a profit; investors were talked into bankrolling strange new inventions. And in Trumbull there were the mines.

Tungsten was discovered, as was quartz and limestone. One after another, individual and industrial prospectors dug through the mines in the Old Mine park area and tried desperately to strike it rich. Several firms were lucky — one claimed a "Champion Lode" — while others spent a fortune on operations that just didn't pan out.

Records indicate that local mining activity began when the town was incorporated in the late 18th Century. According to local historian E. Merrill Beach, town resident Jonathan Nichols sold the mines to another resident, Elnathan Sherman, who prospected for quartz for use in papermaking.

Legend has it that Indians living along the Pequonnock River told area settlers about the shiny rock near Sagnewomps — Long Hill — near what is now Route 111. The Indians appeared to have little interest in the 61-acre tract, but Sherman evidently believed he was getting a bargain when he bought the land for \$10.

Sherman and his local miners went on to claim much quartz and limestone, but after several years he apparently felt the operation had reached its peak. He then sold it, thus beginning a string of ownership changes that continued through the 19th Century. Modest commercial successes were realized, still mostly in



The outbuildings of the American Tungsten Company at the mines in Trumbull, around 1900. Courtesy of Michael Sciortino.

limestone and quartz, but there were speculators who believed there was more to Trumbull's "holes in the ground" than most people thought.

Thomas Hubbard of Brooklyn, N.Y., was one of those speculators. He purchased the land from Ephraim Lane of Monroe in 1875 and began an ambitious exploration for silver, copper, and lead.

He never found it. Instead, deposits of pegmatite, used in the manufacture of porcelain; and silica, a wood and paper filler when pulverized, were uncovered in quantities large enough to be proclaimed "The Champion Lode."

Hubbard turned a profit, but apparently not enough to continue further operations on speculation. In 1897, the venturesome American Tungsten Company of New York leased the mining rights from Hubbard.

This time the search was for tungsten, a grayish mineral of new importance as the filament in the recently developed incandescent lamp, and as a strengthener for steel needed in the growing construction industry.

American Tungsten built a massive plant and employed large numbers of workers, but after several years the

company was ready to throw in the towel. The miners had found plenty of tungsten, but it was mixed in with worthless pyrite — "fool's gold." The company had no way to separate them, and by the early 1900's the plant shut down.

Still, there was something to be found in those shafts that cut through the long hills. Shortly after American Tungsten departed, an ornamental stone operation opened. The stone was used for building facades, and although it wasn't one of the more speculative or glamorous operations, enough was excavated to

Ansonia was born of industrialist's vision

By STEVE McIVER

The dreams of an ambitious industrialist and the greed of an opportunistic squire joined to create the manufacturing hub known as Ansonia, the Naugatuck Valley city of 19,000, which split from Derby in 1889.

If it hadn't been for an unsuccessful attempt at land speculation by an avaricious landholder in the 1840's, industrial pioneer Anson Green Phelps would have founded his company town in the area which now surrounds Griffin Hospital — across the river from Ansonia's eventual site.

Phelps (who gave the town a latinized version of his first name) personified the entrepreneurs who saw industrial gold in the rushing waters of the Naugatuck River.

Born in Simsbury in 1781, Phelps was a penniless orphan at 11. Leaving his hometown, he embarked on a path of hard work and enterprise which saw him making saddles in Hartford, trading as a merchant in South Carolina and, by 1815, importing metals in New York City.

By 1829, Phelps was successful, wealthy and seeking new opportunities. So he listened with great interest to the plans of Sheldon Smith, a business friend. Smith, who had made a fortune in New Jersey, had returned to his native Derby with plans to build it into the manufacturing village which became Birmingham (now downtown Derby).

At Smith's urging, Phelps started a mill for rolling copper in 1836 on what is now Derby's Main Street. The mill was the beginning of the copper and brass industry in the lower Valley.



Anson G. Phelps, Ansonia's industrialist namesake. Photo is from Derby's 300th Anniversary Commemorative Book.

Smith did not remain to see Birmingham grow. A string of lawsuits led him to sell out, but Phelps remained, becoming the area's leading industrialist and developer. Several downtown Derby streets — Olivia, Elizabeth and Caroline — today bear the names of Phelps' daughters.

By then, the village of Birmingham on the east bank of the Naugatuck was being built up extensively. Phelps "conceived the idea of using the waters of the Naugatuck for manufacturing purposes upon the west side of the river, and thus making one continuous village (and finally a city) from Birmingham north a

distance of two or three miles," according to Samuel Orcutt's "History of Derby."

Phelps gradually bought up all the desirable real estate on the west side of the river except for one key piece, an old farm. "Learning from busy rumor what was going on, Stephen Booth (often called Squire Booth) stepped in to play a sharp game at speculation, and bought the farm for \$5,000, a big price in those times, for agricultural purposes," Orcutt wrote.

Phelps — "not easily cornered," Orcutt reports — let things lie for a time, then had his nephew, Peter Phelps, approach Booth. Prices were suggested and agreements were neared, but they evaporated and the farm's value in Booth's eyes grew ever larger.

"This farm is the key to Phelps' adventure," Booth mused in Orcutt's account, "and to me these rocks are as diamonds of great value, and I will yet get my price."

Gossip flew in the small town; an influential committee from Birmingham tried to move Booth, but to no avail. When Booth's asking price hit \$30,000, Phelps' agents broke off talks. Phelps turned to the east side of the river. Booth, meanwhile, believed Phelps' threat to take his proposed village elsewhere was "merely a ruse."

But in 1844, John Clouse, Phelps engineer, surveyed what is now Ansonia from a high rock near where the Congregational Church stands today and found, in his words, "one of the finest places for a village in this Western world."

Phelps bought the Kinneytown Dam, just north of his planned village, and imported Irish laborers to begin a canal and reservoir from which he could draw waterpower to run mills. Completed in

1846, the canal became the power source for the Ansonia Manufacturing Co., which made sheets from the copper that became Ansonia's industrial cornerstone.

"Many implications were heaped upon Mr. Booth by the people of Derby, for being a stumbling block in the way of Birmingham progress, while the denizens of Ansonia may now rise up and call him blessed," Orcutt wrote.

Joined with the Birmingham Copper Mills (Phelps' earlier venture, which moved from Derby to Ansonia), Ansonia Manufacturing became the Ansonia Brass and Copper Company. Eventually the firm became part of Anaconda American Brass.

The forerunner of the Farrel Company, Almon Farrel and Company, was founded in 1848 to make brass and iron castings. Other business followed: Brass, woolens, the railroads, the Ansonia Clock Company and more.

Ansonia was chartered as a borough within the city of Derby in May 1864. By 1888 the movement for complete independence from Derby was growing. Petitions were drawn up and, despite opposition from Derby and Birmingham — not to mention some Ansonians — the city gained independence in 1889. In 1893, Ansonia became a city.

Phelps died on Nov. 30, 1853, well before Ansonia became a town, but well after it had become established as a manufacturing village.

In a sermon on Phelps' death, the Rev. Owen Street of the Congregational Church in Ansonia said: "The village owes its very existence and all its property under God to him; it bears his name, and his whole policy in regards to it has made him worthy of our admiration."

Commerce reborn in L.I. Sound

By BOB ZARNETSKA

once again make the mines successful. For uncertain reasons, though, it closed after several years.

This time it was the New Reform Tungsten Company that took up shovel and pick axe. With the American Tungsten buildings still standing, the means were already in place for another plunge for tungsten.

According to local history, New Reform did manage to find tungsten and sell it commercially for several years until it started to have financial problems.

In 1916 the plant, valued at between \$250,000 and \$300,000, was destroyed by fire, a blaze which local history buffs believe may have been deliberately set.

New Reform showed no interest in reviving the mines after the fire, and taxes the company owed the town went unpaid, according to Trumbull Historical Society information. In 1937 the town took over the 61-acre property, and in 1940 it became Old Mine Park, complete with natural swimming pool.

At best, the local mining industry was a gamble that paid off for few while seriously straining the finances of several. The town benefited marginally from the company's use of homegrown workers, according to local historian William Leopold, but other than that, the mines did little for the local economy.

The mines have been much more lucrative as a source of geological information and research. In the late 1700's, resident Benjamin Silliman, a Yale University professor, identified 65 minerals that are still being plucked 200 years later by geology classes. In addition, the first recorded find of topaz in North America was reported to be in Trumbull's mines, according to gemologist George Kunz.

Leopold reports that although no minerals may be taken out commercially now, rockhounds are welcome to explore the mine area at the intersection of Route 111 and Main Street. The town's Park Commission and Historical Society even provide maps, and visitors may keep what they find.

Leopold says the prospect of finding semi-precious stones and Indian artifacts is still very real. But is there gold in them thar hills?

Answers Leopold: "God only knows what comes from the bowels of the earth."



The Bridgeport Light in 1893 when the harbor froze. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

Oystering and commercial fishing from Bridgeport and Black Rock harbors were major industries for the area in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Old sailing oyster boats were familiar sites off Bridgeport shores, and vessels dragging nets through the waters off the Park City shores were frequently seen at the turn of the century.

Fleets of fishing vessels moved eastward on Long Island Sound to Stonington, where a large fleet of bottom-fishing trawlers now have their home port.

As new industry moved into Bridgeport, and harbor facilities for fishing vessels were replaced with docks for large freight and coal carrying vessels, the fishing boats all but disappeared from the waters of Long Island Sound off Bridgeport.

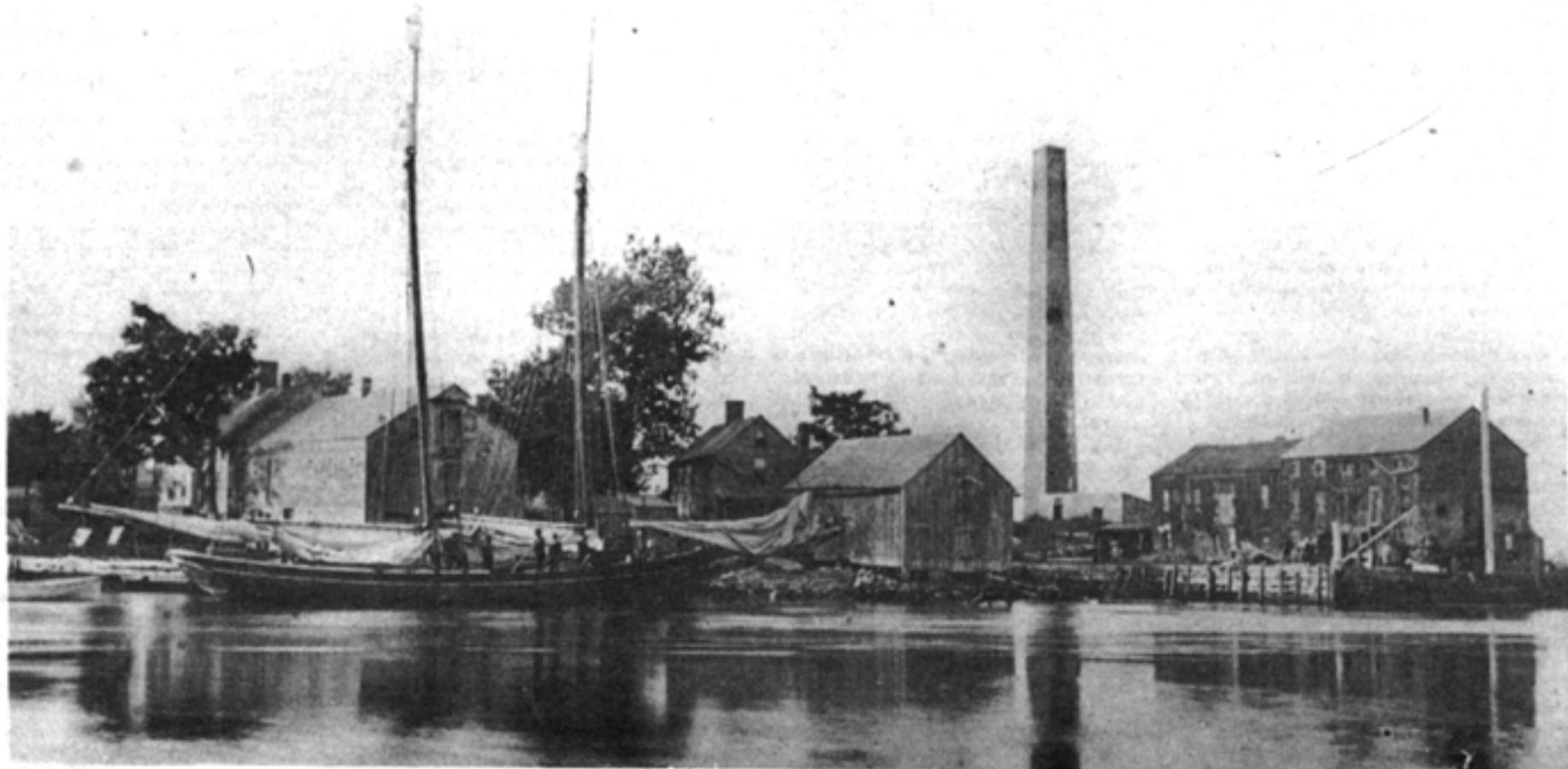
In the early 1900s oystering remained a major industry along Connecticut's shoreline, and the old sailing oyster boats were replaced by large diesel-powered craft that operated throughout the Sound during the 1950s.

Oyster and fishing dock facilities disappeared from Bridgeport and Black Rock harbors until last year.

In 1982 a commercial fish "packing-out" plant was constructed at the city-owned marina on Burr Creek at the north end of Black Rock Harbor.

The city marina for pleasure boats was leased to Black Rock resident Kaye Williams, whose lobstering experiences educated him in the need for commercial facilities for lobstermen and fishermen who catch bottom fish in western Long Island Sound.

Boxing and packing-out facilities were also built, and the wharf at Captain's Cove is now one of the busiest docks in Connecticut. Often as many as six boats can be seen at one time unloading lobster, cod, and flounder for packing and delivery to the Fulton Fish Market in New York.



The upper wharves of Black Rock at the foot of Brewster Street around the turn of the century. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

Unimaginative men stifled Simon Lake

By ROBERT C. BLEZARD

It was a balmy afternoon, Aug. 20, 1921, when about 5,000 spectators crammed the shoreline by the Lake Torpedo Boat Company at the foot of Seaview Avenue, near the mouth of Johnson's Creek.

They were there, as they had come before, to watch the latest Lake submarine being launched. But unlike other launchings, there were no bands playing cheery Sousa marches, and no singers.

At half-past noon, with the words "Good luck and Godspeed," the wife of a Lake executive smashed a bottle of champagne against the sub's prow. The 420-foot S-51, the largest submarine of its time and the last of four such subs the Lake Company would supply to the Navy, slowly slipped into the water.

As it did, several hundred homing pigeons were released at once in a burst of winged wonder.

The birds were a flashy touch, added no doubt by the flashy and flamboyant Simon Lake, inventor and manufacturer of the even-keel sub. He probably canceled the music thinking it would detract from the effect of the pigeons.

The birds weren't entirely designed for flash, however. Each was trained to "home in" on a senator, congressman, or naval official, bringing the message Lake had taped to their legs:

"Submarine S-51 successfully launched today; last of her type. Now ready for new construction which we believe Congress will provide."

But the message was in vain. The S-51 was the last big submarine Lake would ever build.

Throughout his life as the world's foremost submarine expert, Lake maintained that subs were more safe than surface ships and had many potential applications. But the world had never caught on to the idea.

Submarines — especially German submarines — had played a key and sinister role in the horror and destruction that marked the "Great War" — World War I. The war was still a shocking and bloody memory in 1921 America.

There would be no more subs built for some time, and none for trade, as Lake was to later recall with disappointment.

"We had a plant which cost over \$2 million and we didn't owe a cent," Lake told a reporter in 1939. "Then the disarmament conferences came. We thought we were going to have universal peace, so we stopped building warships. We waited for a long time for orders, and then we had to close up."

For the ruddy-faced inventor and entrepreneur, who bore a resemblance in spirit as well as looks to Teddy Roosevelt, the demise of the Lake Torpedo Boat Company did not become the personal tragedy which might have scarred a weaker man for life.

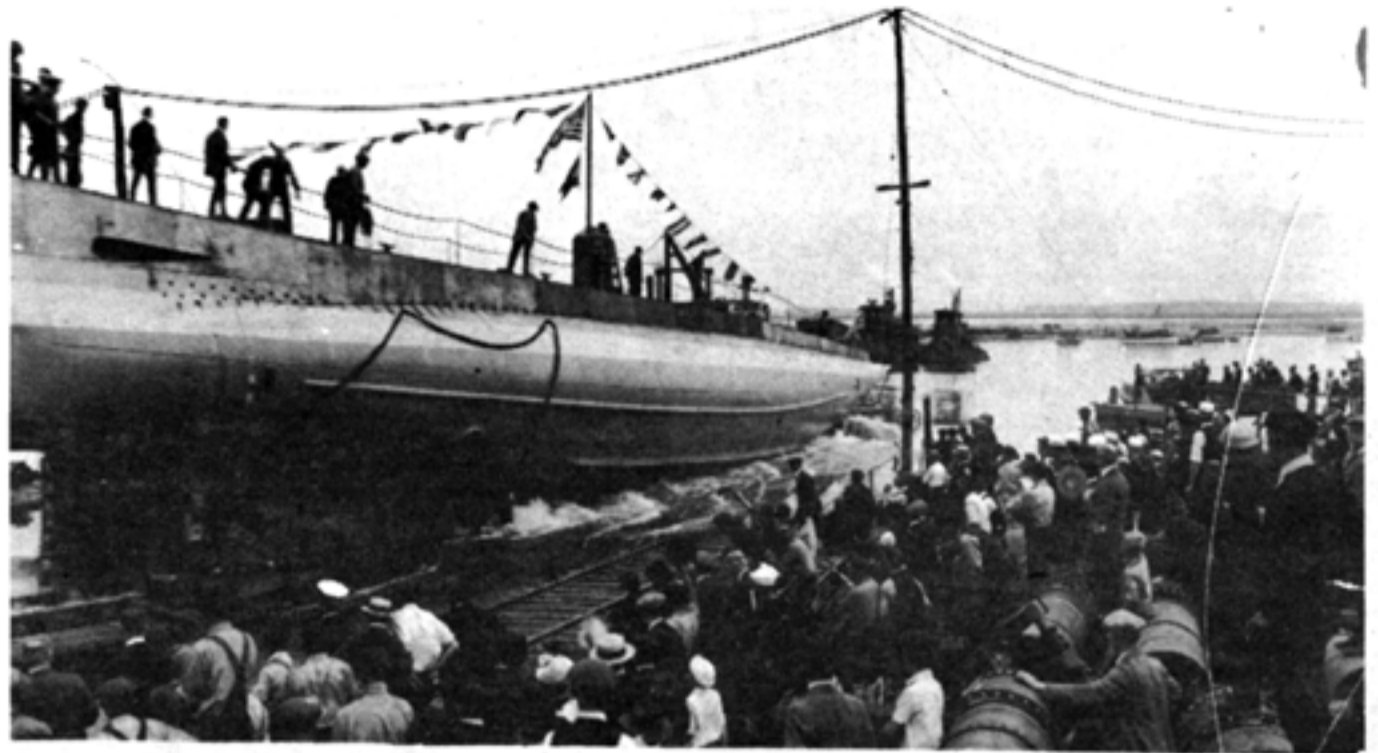
As it turned out, Lake was to remain a prominent citizen, a respected headline maker until his death in 1945. Simon Lake, more than any other single individual is credited with the invention of the modern submarine.

Lake was born a strapping red-headed boy on Sept. 4, 1866 in Pleasantville, N.J. He grew up when American ingenuity and invention seemed capable of conquering any frontier or problem.

Lake boasted of having taken apart, at age 9, his grandmother's sewing machine and putting it back together. His life was altered permanently however, when at age 11, he read Jules Verne's novel "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea." The story of the fantastic journey made Lake dream of undersea boats.

In 1881, Lake drew plans for a little wooden submarine, shaped like a flatiron and powered by a handcrank. The key feature of Lake's Argonaut, as he called it, was that it used tanks of air that were flooded to submerge the craft and then refilled with air to make it surface.

Lake later boasted that the crude de-



The launching of Lake Torpedo Boat's R-21 submarine from its Seaview Avenue yard July 10, 1918. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

sign contained elements of "every important development in submarining the past century has seen.

He continued to dream and to design subs as he worked in his father's New Jersey foundry.

In 1892, the U.S. Navy began to advertise bids for submarines. At the urging of his wife, Lake submitted plans for his second Argonaut, a 36-foot boat powered by a 30 horsepower motor. Lake was naive of Washington politics and could not get his plans, which he felt were superior, before the proper authorities.

Snubbed, he went to New York to raise private capital for the venture, only to find a cold shoulder there, too.

"It may be that the simplicity of my plans for a submarine — their absolute lucidity — frightened the moneyed men I approached," Lake wrote, adding with a philosophical note: "If I had been wiser in the ways of the world, I might have mixed a little mumbo-jumbo with my logarithms."

With money borrowed from relatives, Lake built his first submarine, a 14-foot affair made of pine and smeared with tar to seal it. He dubbed it the Argonaut Junior. The boat had to be paddled on the surface, but on the bottom, it was powered by a hand-cranked wheel and scurried around like a car.

Lake described his frustration with having a working sub, yet not being heard by the bureaucrats of Washington.

"I toiled around the Chesapeake Bay bottom... as though I were in a coach-and-four on Long Island roads, and no naval man would listen to my story."

Finally able to convince investors of the soundness of his plans, he obtained enough money to finance the construction of the 36-foot Argonaut, which was built at the Columbia Iron Works in Baltimore, Md., and launched in 1897.

Although no other submarine had shown its abilities to run both above and below the surface, Lake took his Argonaut on a grueling 1,000 mile voyage that proved to the world the validity of his ideas. When he completed the voyage and was safe and sound in New York Harbor, Jules Verne cabled congratulations:

"While my book was entirely a work of imagination, my conviction is that all I said in it will come to pass. A thousand-mile voyage in your submarine is evidence of this."

Despite the success, Lake could not get the Navy to consider his design. Later, he refused an offer of \$3 million in gold bonds from the government of Cuba for the ship.

Lake continued to conduct public demonstrations of the Argonaut, which was outfitted with a trap door from



Simon Lake, courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

which he could pluck oysters, shellfish and other treasures from the sea bed. One such demonstration led him to Bridgeport in 1900.

Why Lake eventually settled and formed his company in this city was never mentioned in his autobiography or other documents, but he said the reception the citizens gave him and his submarine touched his heart.

With Bridgeport as his base of operation, Lake ran a successful salvage operation with his Argonaut.

The second real sub Lake built was the Protector, 65 feet long and designed for coastal defense. The ship was constructed "on a city dock in back of the gas house on the Pequonnock River." Although the Protector performed flawlessly in trials in Newport, R.I., politics prevented Lake from obtaining a contract for them from the Navy.

It was Russia, embroiled at the time in a war with Japan, which became Lake's first big customer. They bought the Protector for \$250,000, and contracted for Lake to build five more in Russia for the same price.

The Russians made Lake an offer to run the entire ship-building plant at Revel, with \$50 million in capital to develop a whole fleet. He eventually refused, however, because of his contempt for the moral climate there.

In 1910 Lake bid for a submarine con-

tract for the U.S. Navy. He won it, but was in Austria at the time and was forced to design his S-4, the Seal, in only two weeks. It performed flawlessly, and the Navy ordered several. The ball finally seemed to be rolling for the Lake Torpedo Boat Co.

But Lake's life was filled with stories of refused or missed opportunities. While he built mighty warships, he always believed the peaceful use of the submarine offered greater potential. In 1916, a German freight company built two cargo-carrying submarines, the Deutschland and the Bremen, which subverted British blockades during World War I. The Deutschland's captain confided that they were copied after Lake's design.

Simon Lake settled in Milford, where he owned a large, stately house on Milford Green. The war brought with it much prosperity for Lake. But the financial tides turned with the launching of the S-51 in 1921. The commercial submarine business never took hold, and no other company besides the German one which built the Bremen had ever shown interest in Lake's design again.

The company closed shop about 1924, although Lake continued to speculate, building small subs for his own uses and ventures.

In the 1930s, he lost a fortune on a salvaging venture involving a small submarine connected to a larger ship. Originally, he had intended to recover gold bullion from sunken ships, including the Lusitania. A scheme to raise \$2 million in gold from the Hussar, which sank in 1780 in New York Harbor, flopped when a salvage operation yielded only a handful of coins.

Near-bankruptcy forced Lake to sell his stately house on Milford Green and move into humbler quarters a few blocks away.

In 1939, the City of Bridgeport foreclosed on the Lake Torpedo Boat Company property for back taxes.

But the inventor kept on dreaming. During World War II, when supply ships to the Allies were being sunk at a record clip, Lake was a consultant to Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Citing the success the Germans had had during World War I at sneaking through blockades, Lake proposed that the U.S. build a giant fleet of immense cargo subs.

The plan was refused by men who — as before — had little imagination.

Simon Lake died in St. Vincent's Hospital in 1945 at the age of 79. A giant in submarining, an immensely popular and insightful man, he is virtually unknown today.

In 1968, the Seaview Avenue complex of the old Lake Torpedo Company was razed to the ground.

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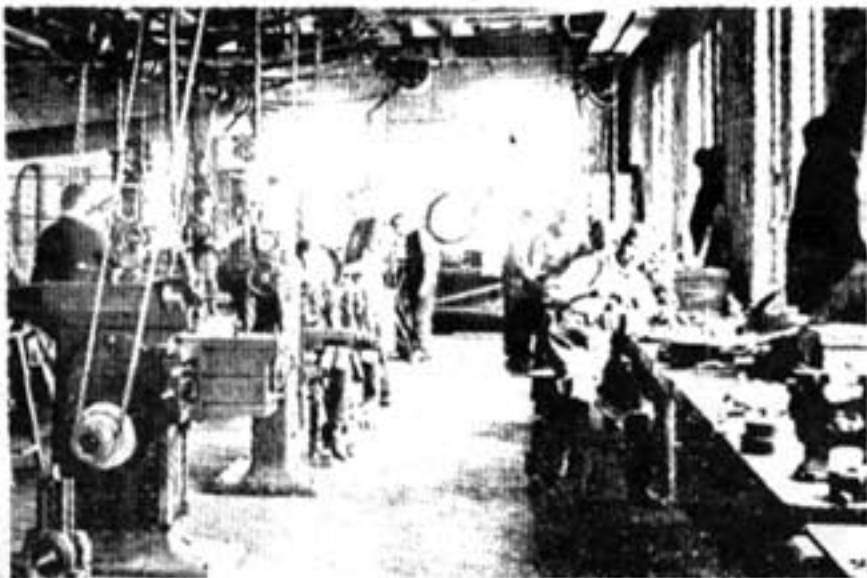
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Workers at Eden Company Machinists and Engineers in 1903.



Bridgeport Hydraulic Company workers tunneled 7,100 feet below the solid rock of Popp's Mountain on the Easton-Weston town line to connect the Saugatuck and Aspetuck reservoirs in the 1930s and 1940s. Courtesy of Bridgeport Hydraulic Company.



Crew at work on the huge gears of the old Stratford Avenue draw-bridge in 1917.



From the mailroom to the executive suite, whether in white collar or blue, Bridgeporters have always taken pride in their work. These photos show Bridgeport area men and women toiling at honest livings over the past 100 years. The woodcut above is reprinted from The Bridgeport Post's 25th Anniversary Edition, 1908.



Pile drivers strike an heroic stance during construction of the Connecticut Turnpike in Bridgeport in 1956. Post photo by Al Mathewson.



Women assemble bullets at Remington Arms c.1917. National Archives photo, courtesy of Remington Arms and Bridgeport Public Library.



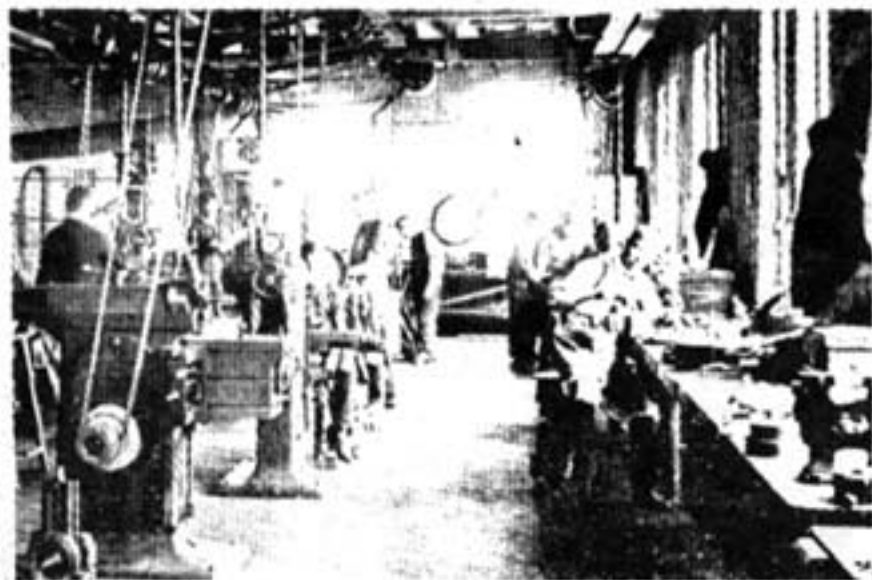
Frisbie Pie Company workers pose for a group shot outside their bakery in the 1930s. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



Rickard & Sons Trucking team on Housatonic Avenue outside the Bilton Machine Tool Company, now Producta Machines. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



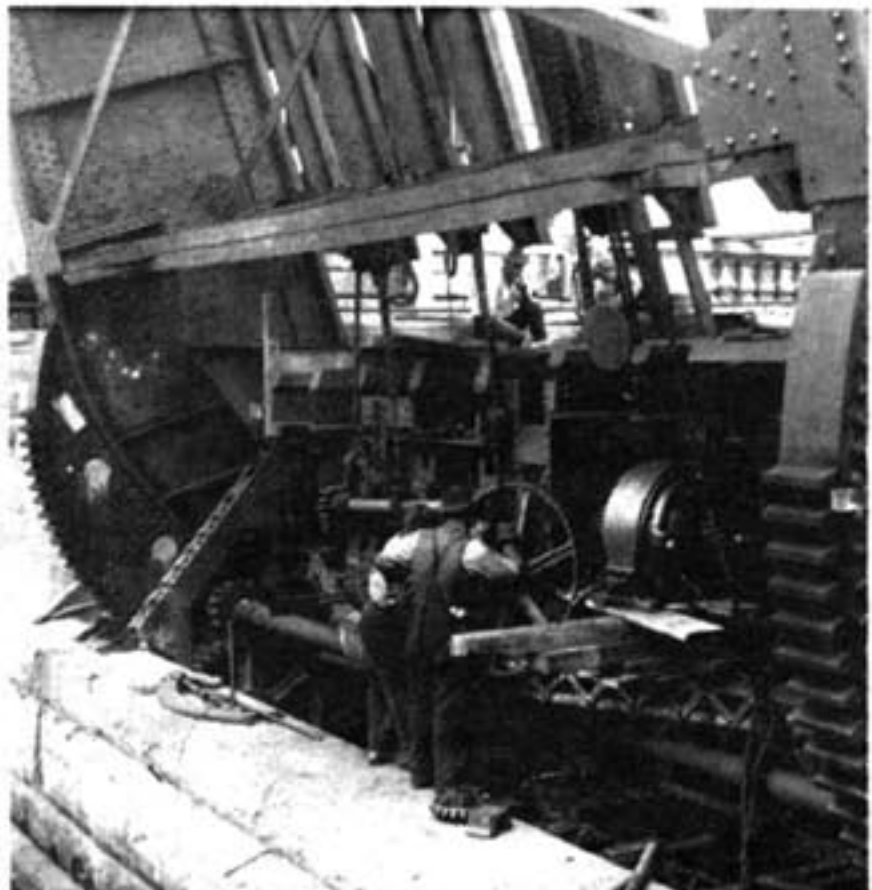
Craftsmen assemble luxury Locomobile coaches c.1912. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



Workers at Eden Company Machinists and Engineers in 1903.



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Rickard & Sons Trucking team on Housatonic Avenue outside the Bilton Machine Tool Company, now Producta Machines. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



Craftsmen assemble luxury Locomobile coaches c.1912. Courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

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WAR



1945 scrap drive at Chance Vought, which manufactured the Corsair fighter plane. Post photo by John Hayduk.

The Arsenal of Democracy hums

By TERE PASCONE

Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941. On that day more than 41 years ago, while thousands in Bridgeport and surrounding towns were blissfully enjoying their time off from work, the thunderbolt struck. Regular broadcasts were interrupted, shocking the nation and the world with the news that Pearl Harbor in Hawaii had been attacked by the Japanese.

It was called by President Franklin D. Roosevelt "a day which will live in infamy." The attack stunned the nation, but it aroused a patriotism and unity equally fervent.

It was a patriotism so strong that upon Roosevelt's declaration of war against Japan on Dec. 8 and against Germany and Italy on Dec. 11, there emerged a wave of emotion in which the men, women and children of the Bridgeport area rallied to do their part at home as their sons and brothers marched off to battle.

And almost overnight, lifestyles changed. Factories began extensive hiring as defense orders poured in. Chance Vought Aircraft in Stratford manufactured Corsair fighter planes. Remington Arms manufactured powder and shell casings and bullets for machine guns. The Bridgeport Brass Company made casings for high explosive shells; Norden in Norwalk manufactured a bombsight so secret it had an explosive device attached to it; bombardiers took an oath to blow up the bombsight if their plane were shot down so the enemy wouldn't

discover how it worked. General Electric manufactured aircraft altimeters and warning lights.

Bridgeport changed from a depression city to a boom town. The number of workers on relief dropped to a record low. Labor poured in by busloads from Danbury, where the hatting industry was seasonal and declining. Workers came from other the towns and from across state lines, boosting the population of the city as the defense industries grew.

Rooming houses filled and many families rented spare rooms to the laborers. Low-income housing was built to accommodate them. Millions were spent to build Success Park, Stonybrook Village, Canaan Village and other housing developments.

Women began finding their place in manufacturing — "Rosie the Riveter" appeared on the job. They took their place on the production line, slowly moving into phases of industry hitherto a man's world. They helped make airplanes, bullets, parachutes. They drove buses and worked around the clock.

With the influx and shifting population came the need for more schools and new roads in the newly built-up parts of Bridgeport. Woodrow Wilson and Thomas Hooker schools were built, and an addition was built on Edison School, all financed by federal and municipal funds.

The Army took over the municipal airport in Stratford and began an expansion program costing more than \$1 million. It was first used as an Army air base, and then Chance Vought used it to test Corsairs.

Suddenly, the knitting business boomed. People began knitting sweaters and socks for the boys away from home. As the help crunch was felt in the hospitals in Bridgeport, volunteers came to the fore. Classes were conducted for nurse's aides, and after three-month courses, the aides donated their spare time to the local hospitals.

A USO sprouted in the old YWCA at 1146 Barnum Avenue, manned by volunteers who served coffee, doughnuts and other snacks to soldiers and sailors who were either on leave or passing through.

In City Hall, one of Mayor McLevy's secretaries had a map of the South Pacific islands tacked to the wall. She followed daily reports of the Pacific campaign in the newspaper, moving little flag pins on the map to keep close watch on the movements of her husband, who was fighting there.

Trains, buses, and trolleys were always jammed with riders. Ration books were the only way to get gasoline — and sugar, meat, butter and coffee. The butcher was king. Even tires were rationed. But having the ration coupons did not necessarily ensure getting what one wanted after waiting hours in line.

But despite these problems — hardships which were considered minuscule compared to those of the boys on the fronts — the people of the Bridgeport area rallied to help as volunteers in any way they could. The Red Cross had afternoon sessions to fold bandages. Air-raid warden groups were organized, with volunteers scanning the skies for enemy craft day and night.

Boaters joined the Coast Guard Auxil-

iary, painting their boats grey and helping to patrol Long Island Sound. People who owned station wagons enrolled in the Red Cross emergency ambulance program. Airraid drills were conducted.

Bundles of food and clothing were gathered and sent to ravaged Britain. Victory gardens sprouted on lawns and backyards. Because lumber was hard to get, builders used second-hand wood for construction. Copper pennies disappeared and in their stead came iron ones which turned black. Area clubs conducted bond drives. In some high schools in the area, industrial arts classes made parts and tools for the armed forces. Army and Navy E's were awarded to factories whose production was considered excellent. Scrap drives were conducted; people saved and flattened cans; they collected copper wire, aluminum pots, and old tires — anything to help in the war effort.

The City of Bridgeport suffered. City employees left their municipal jobs for more lucrative work in industry. The turnover was great, affecting the Police, Fire, Sanitation, Park and Education departments. As an incentive, the city gave bonuses to those who stayed — \$100 the first year plus 3 percent of one's salary; then \$150 bonuses plus 6 percent. Civil Service laws were changed, and standards relaxed. The minimum wage was raised, and overtime wages were first paid.

And so it was during the war years. It was an era charged with feverish activity, patriotism, and willing sacrifice. And life would never be the same again.



The Chance Vought F4U Corsair, the "bent wing bird," was built in Stratford and played a major role in the U.S. victory in the Pacific during World War II. Chance Vought photo courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

The F4U Corsair was the area's pride

By BRIAN J. MURPHY

As production on Igor Sikorsky's highly regarded but slow selling amphibian planes continued to fall during the 1930s, parent company United Aircraft (now United Technologies Corp.) toyed with the idea of closing up the business for good. Instead, they merged it with another aircraft company in its stable: Chance Vought.

Vought, named after its founder, aviator Chance Milton Vought, was working on a shipboard fighter for the U.S. Navy. Their goal was to place the smallest airframe around the maximum amount of horsepower possible for a speedy, sturdy aircraft. The result was a classic — the F4U Corsair.

Without a doubt, the Corsair proved to be one of the most versatile aircraft built by any of the warring nations in World War II. On Oct. 1, 1940, the speedy Corsair, taking off from Bridgeport Airport, clocked 404 miles per hour, making

it the fastest U.S. fighter built to date. In time, improvements in the airframe and in the power plant increased the Corsair's speed to over 450 mph.

By early 1942, production models were rolling off the line in Stratford, with the U.S. Navy and the Marine Corps grabbing the lion's share. At first the Navy was reluctant to use the F4U on carriers. Pilots found the plane's long nose hampered visibility during landing approaches.

But the Marines put the "bent-wing birds" to good use in the Solomons and in the sweep across the Pacific, rolling up substantial scores against the Japanese Mitsubishi Zero. As it turned out, the Corsair could consistently outperform the Zero fighter in maneuverability and in speed.

Still, the admirals barred the Corsair from the flattops. The British, on the other hand, used their Corsairs from carrier decks right from the start, and with great success. In one of the crucial actions of the European war, a flight of Royal Navy Corsairs severely crippled

the German battleship Tirpitz in Norway's Alten Fjord, removing it for a time as a threat to Atlantic shipping lanes.

In 1944, the admirals relented and the Corsairs donned arresting hooks and went to sea. Flying from carriers at sea and Marine airstrips by land, the Corsairs flew 64,051 sorties against the Japanese targets from late in the Guadalcanal campaign until V-J Day.

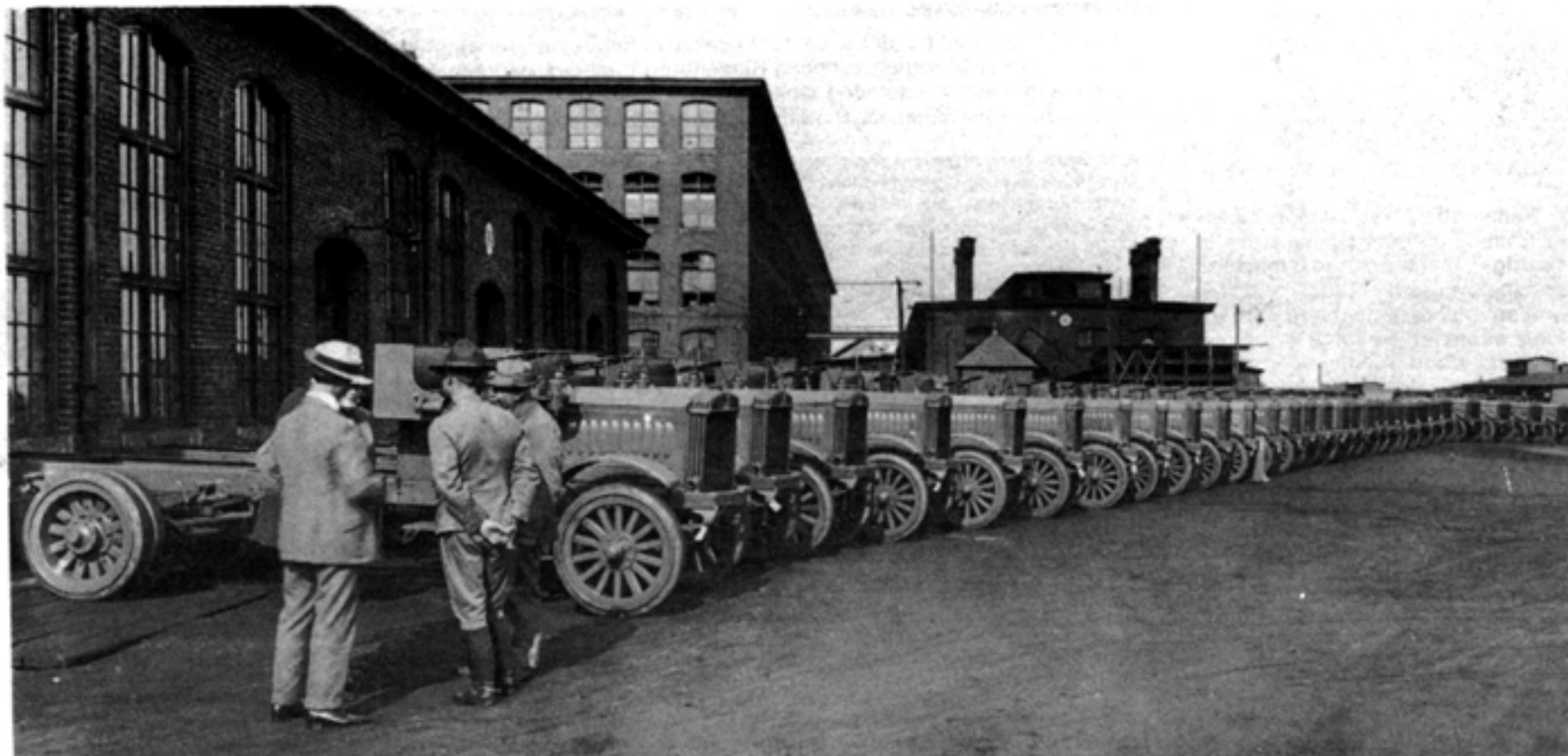
In round figures, 2,140 Japanese aircraft shot down against a loss of only 189 Corsairs. One Marine fighter squadron tallied 124 victories without losing a single pilot.

As Japanese air opposition became scarcer, the F4Us were given a job to do as an attack plane. The Marines found it well-suited for close-support of ground troops. In general bombing missions, the Corsair packed a singular wallop for a single engined plane. Aviator Charles Lindbergh, as a civilian adviser to the Navy, demonstrated that the Corsair could lift 4,000 pounds of bombs — the heaviest bomb load ever carried by a

single engined craft — and proved that the Corsair could drop them too, by bombing Japanese held Wotje Island.

The amazing saga of the Stratford-built Corsairs extended into the Korean War, when F4U's of all vintages were used in quantity to bomb and rocket communist-held positions in the battle zone. Still showing a nice turn of speed and maneuverability, a Marine Corps Corsair actually shot down a North Korean MIG-15 jet in a dogfight, to prove the point.

Back home in Stratford, the exploits of the "bent-wing birds" were a source of enormous pride. It was an era when the production line at the Chance Vought plant hummed day and night, producing thousands of Corsairs for the Allied war effort. It was a blow to local pride when, after the war, Chance Vought moved from Stratford to Dallas, Texas, having separated from Sikorsky. Jobs were lost, but so was a piece of the area's heart. The pride the people of this area took in the achievements of the F4U Corsair was never lost.



Bridgeport first earned its nickname, "The Arsenal of Democracy," in World War I when the city's factories turned out nearly one third of the nation's munitions. Among the locally built products then were Riker

army trucks manufactured by Locomobile. Photo courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

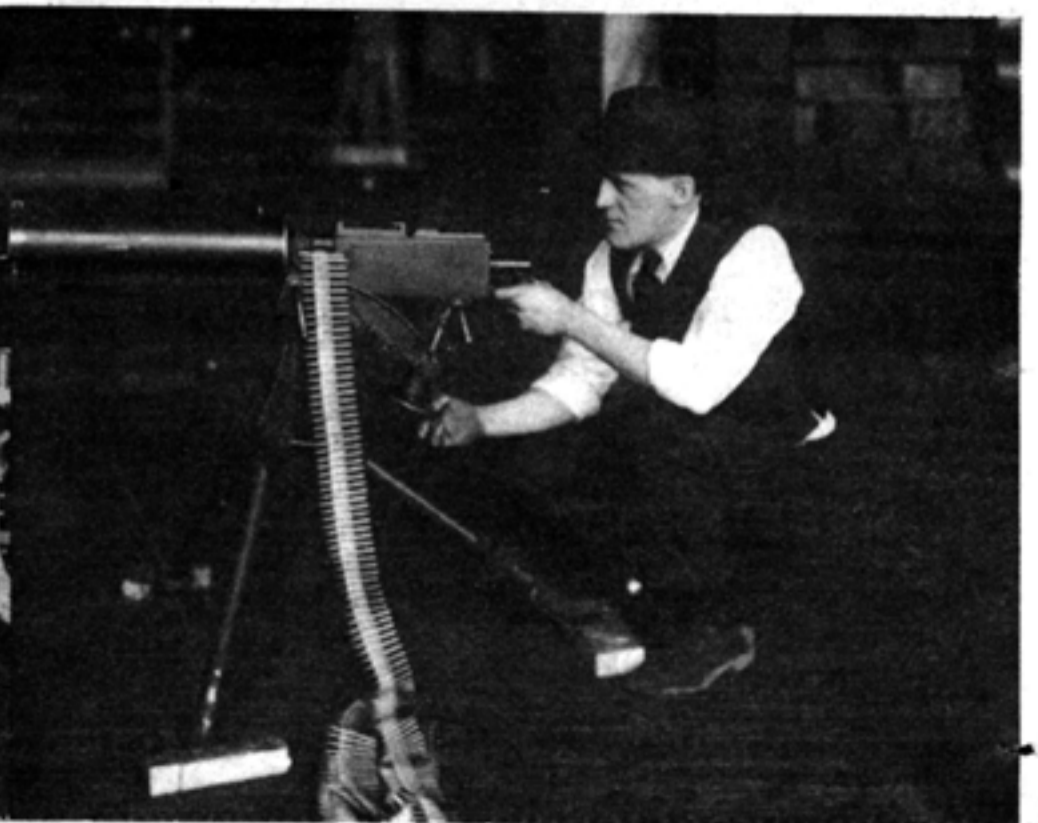
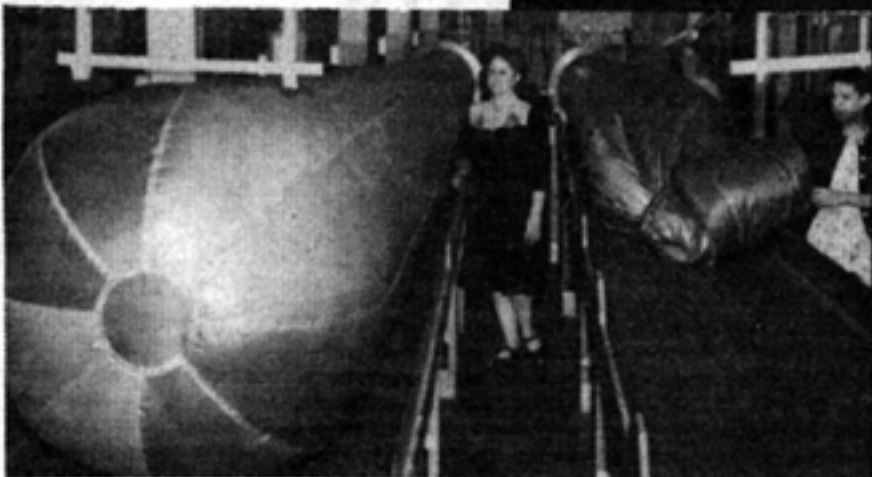


Ann Mayer of Bridgeport in 1944 sent what had to be one of the longest letters on record to her favorite serviceman. Post photo by John Hayduk.



Signs of impending global conflict floated in the skies over southwestern Connecticut during the 1930s as the swastika-embellished zeppelin Hindenburg made its periodic Atlantic crossings. The Hindenburg met its fiery doom when it exploded while mooring at Lakehurst, N.J., in May, 1937, not long after Sunday Post photographer Fred Schulze took this picture of the zeppelin over Bridgeport.

Remington Arms, earlier known as Remington UMC (Union Metallic Cartridge), manufactured a machine gun (below right) during World War I. Warner's manufactured 30-foot long airplane tow-targets (below) in World War II. Photos courtesy of Remington, through Bridgeport Public Library; and Warnaco.



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1943: The message was courage

By TERE PASCONE

From the little town of Waterloo, Iowa, on Feb. 7, 1943, there came to Bridgeport a couple — their self-appointed mission to spur war production and to see that their five sons, lost the previous November in the sinking of the U.S.S. Juneau, had not died in vain.

They were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sullivan, and their courage, simplicity and sincerity won the hearts of all who saw and heard them.

When their five sons said they wanted to join Uncle Sam's Navy after war was declared, they gave their consent. Mrs. Sullivan's grandfather had fought in the Civil War on Lookout Mountain. Mr. Sullivan's four grandparents had immigrated from Ireland. With that fighting spirit behind them, Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan were sure their sons would emerge victorious.

Then word came that the Juneau had been sunk off Guadalcanal by a Japanese sub on Nov. 13, 1942. Dazed, the Sullivans lived through those dark days in utter dismay. But out of their sorrow there rose a determination to do something for their boys. They vowed to challenge defense workers across the nation to work harder, to avoid absenteeism, to buy bonds, to save tin cans, to volunteer, and to donate blood to help bring the war to a swift end. The memory of the Five Fighting Sullivans was their mandate.

It was this message they brought to Bridgeport when they spoke on a flag-banked platform to the day and night shift workers at Jenkins Brothers.

Mrs. Sullivan spoke simply and directly.

"I want to ask a favor," she said. "It's for all of us mothers all over the country, not just those who have lost their boys, but also those who still have sons fighting. Whatever your jobs are, do them a little better, a little faster. . ."

Mr. Sullivan's message was brief. "Ma has said it all. You're doing your stuff, and I hope you'll keep on putting your best effort forward. . ."

What the Sullivans said paid off as workers took a pledge that day to work harder and to strive for perfect attendance. After the speeches, they lustily cheered the Sullivans and lingered to shake their hands and ask for autographs.

Later that day at the Stratfield Hotel, where they were staying, the Sullivans received a caller. He was Lt. Roger O'Neil, a Navy doctor, who knew the Sullivan boys when he, too, served aboard the Juneau. Formerly on the staff of the Bridgeport Emergency Hospital located



"The Four Battling Rogers," (from left) Joseph, James, Louis, and Patrick, were four Bridgeport brothers who fought with the Navy during World War II. Louis and Patrick were both killed in the sinking of the U.S.S. Juneau at Guadalcanal in 1942. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Rogers of Monroe.

in the old Welfare Building on Washington Avenue, O'Neil had left the Juneau an hour before it was sunk. He saw it go down.

"I attended your son Albert the day I left the Juneau," the doctor said. "It was for a minor injury." He also said he remembered all the boys when they attended the ship dances while in port. "They always had a grand time," he said.

After a short rest at the Stratfield, the Sullivans paid a visit to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Rogers, now of Monroe, who lived on Edwards Street. They were the parents of the "Four Battling Rogers" — Joseph, James, Louis, and Patrick. They were Bridgeport favorite sons, the latter two of whom also died aboard the Juneau.

Few words were spoken, but the Sullivans asserted their courage as they for-

got their own sorrow to comfort the devastated Rogers.

As the tears rolled down Mr. Rogers' cheeks, Mr. Sullivan's eyes watered. Still attired in his overcoat and clutching his hat, the Iowan drew Mr. Rogers to him. He kissed him on the temple and beseeched him to buck up.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Rogers wept on Mrs. Sullivan's shoulder. Although the boys were her husband's through a previous marriage, she had brought them up as her own.

"Keep your chin up," Mrs. Sullivan said. "It's the way our boys would have wanted it. Crying will do you no good." And she kissed Mrs. Rogers on the cheek.

Back at the Stratfield after the Rogers visit, the Sullivans had another visitor, a meek little man with a pleasant face and soft voice.

"I'm Edward McNally," he said. He was the father of Edward McNally Jr. of Anson Street, another Juneau casualty.

"I've come to comfort you," he said, "if that's possible, and to tell you how wonderful and brave you are to do all this."

The Sullivans welcomed him.

He told the Sullivans he was working at Remington Arms on the night shift, and in answer to their invitation agreed to stay for the dinner being given in their honor at the hotel.

Mrs. Sullivan showed him a big basket of flowers she had received from the Catholic Daughters of America. She then excused herself to dress for dinner while "Pa" straightened his tie and shined his shoes.

"This is the dress I wore when I met Mrs. Roosevelt," Mrs. Sullivan said when she returned. "I bought it in Chicago." It was a neat black trapunto edged with white piping around the neckline. She wore an orchid sent to her by a serviceman.

She told McNally how they had traveled to many defense plants. She showed him the gifts they had received the day before from Archbishop Spellman at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York — a silver medal blessed by the Pope and a gold rosary with pearls. She told him that a Mass for their sons had been said at the Cathedral.

On their way to the Stratfield ballroom, they were led into a little room where they were presented with a wrist watch as a present from Jenkins Brothers.

At the dinner, Gov. Raymond Baldwin paid tribute to the Sullivans. He told them the people of Connecticut were highly honored and proud to welcome them.

"As each day goes by," Baldwin said, "Americans are all coming to learn more and more what sacrifice means. . . Your great sacrifice and the noble way in which you have borne your heart-rending loss are, and will continue to be, an inspiration to every American."

On January 30, 1945, a group of U.S. Army Rangers from the 6th Ranger Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Henry A. Mucci, a Bridgeport native, staged what has been called one of the most daring rescues in military history. Mucci's 121-man force infiltrated Japanese lines on the island of Luzon in the Philippines and freed 500 Allied prisoners at Cabantauan. The attack was carried out with such speed and precision that all 223 Japanese guards were killed in 15 minutes, with only two Rangers and nine Filipino guerrillas killed. Not one Allied prisoner was lost. Five months later, Mucci arrived in town to visit his mother and was greeted with a hero's welcome, complete with parade in his honor. Thousands turned out to see the hometown hero, whose actions were rewarded with the Distinguished Service Cross.





During World War I, Bridgeport Mayor Clifford B. Wilson (at right, left photo) bid farewell at the train station to an unidentified man



going off to war in 1917. At right, the local militia was on the ready. Photos courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

Vietnam: a different kind of homefront

By JOHN F. HEENEHAN

It was a time of conscience and confusion.

Long hair, short skirts and wide ties were in. Conformity, authority and the Establishment were out. Blacks had made their greatest progress since Reconstruction, the environment was discovered, sex was rocketed from the closet and a lengthy period of national affluence made idealism affordable.

The "baby boom" generation had come of age and only needed a cause to rally around — and found it in the Vietnam War.

The late 1960s to early 1970s was a period of social turbulence — euphemistically called unrest. It was perhaps the later months of 1969 and first few of 1970 when this unrest peaked. The events of these days are as much a local story as a national one.

More than one million people turned out nationwide Oct. 15, 1969 for the Moratorium — a well-organized demonstration against U.S. involvement in the war in Southeast Asia.

In Connecticut, 55,000 people participated in antiwar demonstrations at 35 locations. About 30,000 turned out at the largest rally in the state, at the New Haven Green.

Here at home, a "unity concert" was held at Seaside Park early that day, drawing about 1,200 people, mostly University of Bridgeport students. About 700 of these later marched to the U.S. Courthouse on Lafayette Boulevard, chanting "peace now" and other antiwar slogans.

A few words were spoken at the courthouse, candles were lighted and a wreath left before the crowd dispersed — a fairly standard statement against the war.

At the time, Police Supt. Joseph A. Walsh called the demonstrators "ladies and gentlemen," adding that "the peace protest was peaceful."

Later that day, about 1,000 students gathered at Sacred Heart University's soccer field for a candlelight ceremony and to hear the Most Rev. Walter W. Curtis, bishop of Bridgeport. Curtis urged that war be outlawed, certainly a lofty goal.

Even before the day's events were fully under way, Vice President Spiro Agnew and GOP Senate leader Hugh Scott claimed the Communists were exploiting the antiwar movement.

During his speech, Curtis took a moment to deny that the Moratorium was a "Red plot," a view that held significant support.

Bridgeport Mayor Hugh C. Curran denounced the protestors as a "vocal minority." He ignored the fact that the Moratorium was the largest demonstration of its kind in the nation's history.

Curran's remarks were made during the 21st anniversary of the Bridgeport

Gold Star Mothers — a group of mothers with sons or daughters who had been killed during any of the 20th Century wars involving the United States. Ironically, a short distance away, 20 mothers pushing baby strollers demonstrated against U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

The war continued as life went on. And so did death. U.S. casualties topped 39,000 as the '60s ended. About 17,000 more were to die before the United States withdrew from the war.

Discontent became more apparent as demonstrations became increasingly more common. And not just against the war. Numerous demonstrations, riots even, took place in the city, especially at Father Panik Village, P.T. Barnum Apartments and in the East Side.

Perhaps the worst riot occurred May 20, 1971 when an estimated 300 people rioted in the East Main Street area following the arrest of a leader of the Young Lords, a local and militant Hispanic gang, and dispossession of the group's East Side headquarters.

Two stores were firebombed and the windows of a dozen more were smashed as police, brandishing nightsticks and automatic rifles tried to disperse the mob and restore order. Twelve people were injured and 16 arrested that day.

On May 1 of that year, about 2,500 National Guardsmen joined 200 New Haven police while Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and other leaders of the anti-war movement spoke before about 7,000 demonstrators near Yale University. Hoffman and Rubin, fresh from their infamous Chicago 7 trial, came to support Bobby Seale and seven other Black Panthers on trial in New Haven for kidnapping and murder.

Sparse class attendance was recorded at Fairfield University on April 22, 1970 after the student government there called for the resignation of the school president, the Rev. William C. McInnes.

The students demanded a tripartite form of school administration — meaning the students would be granted equal say along with the administration and faculty in running the Jesuit university.

McInnes was the target of the students because, among other things, he was blamed for the cancellation of scheduled concerts by rock performers the Doors and John Sebastian and the Lovin' Spoonful. It was bad enough when school administrators attempted to bar Jane Fonda from speaking on campus, but to block the appearance of such eminent rock stars struck at the very foundation of college social life.

McInnes was also "the most visible symbol of authority at the university," said the students.

After 10 days of striking classes — absenteeism ran as high as 75 percent — the students voted 850 to 230 to end the protest. The price to the administration was an increased student membership on the school's Board of Trustees and the Administrative Board.

On April 30, 1970, President Nixon announced that U.S. forces had invaded Cambodia and the predominantly student-run antiwar movement shifted into high gear. Students rallied nationwide, stepping up the tactics of confrontation and violence.

After several days of turbulence, inexperienced National Guardsmen fired into a group of protestors at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four students and wounding several more. Many of the victims were innocent bystanders.



Flashing the peace sign, students protesting U.S. incursion into Cambodia occupy Fones Hall at the University of Bridgeport on May 8, 1970. Students held five buildings on campus for two days. Post file photo.

Campuses from California to Connecticut rallied and called for a national "strike protest" of classes. The move would free students from classes until November so they could work for antiwar candidates running in the fall election.

About 437 colleges and universities — about 30 percent of the nation's total — closed down or were on strike for the final weeks of the spring semester.

On May 8, about 500 students occupied five buildings at the University of Bridgeport to protest the war. Students moved radios, mattresses, cartons of milk, potato chips and peanut butter into the occupied buildings.

They vacated the buildings two days later, but effectively shut down the campus for two more days. The university dropped court proceedings it had begun against the students and granted them complete amnesty.

Not all of UB's 9,000 students endorsed the strike. About 2,000 students signed petitions circulated by a newly formed group calling itself "Students for Classes" urging resumption of normal academic activities.

Students there were eventually allowed to follow their conscience regarding class attendance without having their grades penalized. It was a victory for the antiwar activists.

Following the example of UB students, about 150 of their counterparts at Fairfield University took over the administration building and another on May 13 in support of the strike. They abandoned the buildings after two days and court injunctions sought by the school were dropped.

Sacred Heart University was one of the few schools in the state to oppose the strike as students there rejected it by a 677 to 341 vote.

About 80 students, apparently not content with campus takeovers, blocked both sides of the Merritt Parkway in Fairfield with their cars in early May in protest to the war. They were shooed away by state police after about 40 minutes.

The forces of loyalty weren't without their own demonstrations; they were just much quieter and harder to find. Thousands, for example, watched the state's "Loyalty Day Parade" May 3 in Danbury, led by Gov. John N. Dempsey.

From the beginning of U.S. involvement in southeast Asia until the fall of Saigon in April 1975, American government leaders struggled to convince their countrymen that the war was winnable and that victory was just over the horizon.

On the television program, "Face the Nation," Spiro Agnew claimed in early May 1970 that the North Vietnamese were all but licked. After hearing this refrain for the past several years, Americans were finally beginning to sense that this claim of impending victory was more fantasy than fact.

WEATHER FORECAST
Showers Tonight
Fair, Cooler Thursday

THE BRIDGEPORT POST

FINAL EDITION
LATE LOCAL AND WIRE NEWS

VOL. LXII, NO. 191 Leads in News, Advertising, Circulation BRIDGEPORT 2, CONN. WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1945 Bridgeport's Family Newspaper TWENTY-FOUR PAGES THREE CENT TWO SECTIONS

PEACE! 'CEASE FIRE!' ORDER GIVEN ENDING WAR



Cherishing through song and dance Bridgeport's main stem last night as the dramatic news of Japan's surrender spread like wildfire and jam-packed the sidewalks with the largest gathering in the city's history. Improvised parades early in the evening were followed by a triumphant procession to Seaside Park. For photo direction.

Gen. MacArthur Waits Japs' Formal Surrender

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15.—(AP) The world entered a new era today as the enormous battlefronts of the Pacific and Asia's nightmarish war ever assembled rolled to a victorious halt around the perimeter of Japan.

Throughout the Allied world, wracked by war as there had never been, peace was beginning to pile up.

"We are faced with the greatest task we ever have been faced with," Mr. Truman announced Japan's capitulation at 7 o'clock, a stress that the act marked the beginning of a peace that will last a few days until Douglas MacArthur, as supreme Allied commander, can accept formal Japanese terms on the basis of the Potsdam declaration.

DEFEATED JAP CABINET QUILTS

Members of the Japanese cabinet resigned today after the announcement of the Japanese surrender. The cabinet had been in session for several hours when the news was received. Many members were seen to be in a state of shock and confusion. The resignation was a sign of the complete collapse of the Japanese government.

While promising the Japanese a peaceful end to the war, this declaration lays down a hard future for them like that imposed on Germany, except that they have their own national government, including under rigid Allied control.

All means ever to make war again are to be barred. At advance Pacific bases military governments were ready to move in with occupation forces and to begin work.

More than four hours after Mr. Truman announced the news, the Japanese emperor was still on the radio. A broadcast from Tokyo reported that units of the Japanese army in the vicinity of Hsuehsu were being approached by Allied aircraft.

"Those that do us are being shot down," the broadcast said, adding that five had been destroyed since 11:30 p.m. (E.W.T. Tuesday night).

Radio Tokyo, however, waited another hour before Japanese time, to tell its troops of the surrender.

"We have come to a point where it is unwise to continue any longer," the broadcast said. "We have no choice but to accept the terms of the Potsdam declaration."

883 Lives Snuffed Out In Sinking of Cruiser

Indianapolis Sent to Bottom Off Leyte by Jap Sub

QUAM, Aug. 15.—(AP) The great explosion resulted out of her after she was hit by a Japanese submarine off Leyte in the Philippines. The cruiser was on her way to the Philippines when she was struck by a Japanese submarine. The explosion was heard for miles around. The ship sank in less than an hour, taking with her 883 crew members.

VICTORY FLAGS FLY OVER THIRD FLEET

WITH PALMETTO THIRD FLEET OFF JAPAN, Aug. 15.—(AP) Victory flags—the largest ever—were hoisted over the Third Fleet at 11:32 a.m. today, and the fleet sailed for the Philippines. The flags were hoisted by the fleet's flagship, the USS Missouri. The flags were made of cotton and were 100 feet long and 10 feet wide. They were hoisted by the fleet's flagship, the USS Missouri.

FAIRFIELD DOCTOR SURVIVED SINKING

Lt. Comdr. Lewis L. Haynes in Water 96 Hours Before Rescued

One of the survivors of the 16,000-ton cruiser Indianapolis, sunk by a Japanese submarine at midnight on July 30 in the Philippine Sea, is Lt. Comdr. Lewis L. Haynes, senior doctor, whose wife and three sons are in the hospital at Fairfield, Conn.

The doctor was among the 200 officers and men who were in the water more than 96 hours before they were rescued after being spotted by a Victory search plane.

Lt. Comdr. Haynes entered the Navy in July, 1940, following his graduation from medical school at Northwestern University. He took his pre-medical course at the University of Michigan.

The Navy family name in Fairfield Beach in June, 1945. Mr. Haynes has lived there since with his wife, Mrs. L. Haynes, and three sons, John, T., Henry, S., and Christopher, seven months old.

STOCK MARKET CLOSED
NEW YORK, Aug. 15.—(AP)—The New York Stock Exchange remained closed today and tomorrow in observance of the end of the war. The Curb Exchange also shut down for two days and other markets were expected to follow suit.

City's Leaders Hail Peace With Plea for Harmony

Adding to beautiful scenes for the city, Bridgeport's war-time leaders today hailed the news of Japan's surrender with a plea for harmony and peace.

The city's leaders, including Mayor McElroy, City Council members, and other officials, gathered in a public square to celebrate the end of the war. They spoke of the sacrifices made by the city's citizens and the need for peace and harmony in the future.

"When the good news of V-E day was approaching," Mayor McElroy said, "we strongly advocated the War, Victory and Peace Day, which we are now celebrating. We are proud of the fact that we had much work yet to do. The people of Bridgeport accepted this idea most graciously and we were grateful to them for their co-operation of common sense."

"In our place for V-E day we promised an all-out celebration when Japan, too, was defeated. We were indeed satisfied of the great joy that would be in everyone's heart at official word of the cessation of hostilities in the Pacific and the end of the war."

'MORNING AFTER' FINDS CITY QUIET

Most Followed Nobby Celebration of Victory Over Jap foe.

The morning after the biggest night in Bridgeport's history today found the "industrial capital of Connecticut" at peace with itself and the world as normal warlike activity was suspended in the wake of a triumphant, up-raising victory celebration touched off by the news of the Japanese surrender.

For the first time since Pearl Harbor, huge war planes stood idle in thousands of workers who flock here from all sections of the country early in the morning to work on the weapons which resulted in triumph for America's fighting men enjoyed the fruits of peace.

Stores Closed for 2 Days, Most Business Suspends

All department stores and specialty shops in the city will be closed today and tomorrow.

Some food and drug stores will be open tomorrow.

All legal, governmental, financial, and mercantile activity will be at a standstill today and tomorrow.

The Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce, meeting at 9 a.m. today, voted that all member stores observe the double holiday in accordance with the proclamation of Governor Baldwin.

Most factories closed today will operate tomorrow. Bridgeport Armory will close both days but the 11 p.m. shift will report tomorrow. The E. J. Carpenter Manufacturing Company, 1900 Railroad avenue, will remain closed until Monday morning. It was announced today. All city theaters will conduct performances as scheduled.

Howland's Postpones Style Show 2 Days

The Howland Dry Goods Company announced today that the college fashion show, scheduled originally for tonight in the Ritz ballroom, has been postponed until Friday night.

This action has been taken in accordance with the proclamation by President Truman and Governor Baldwin, declaring today and tomorrow legal holidays.

Invitations issued for the show should be served, to be presented Friday evening. The show will open at 8:30 o'clock.

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War's End May Free Score of Area Men, Jap Captives

Twenty-three Bridgeport, Fairfield and Stratford residents, sailors and Marines and a Bridgeport civilian are among men who fell into Japanese hands during the long years of war and, if all else may soon gain release from prison, will be free.

Reading a list of thousands of captives in List Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, who was taken at the time of the Philippine surrender. In addition the Japanese should have about 12,000 Americans in their power of war camps but only time will tell how many are released more than three years of incarceration.

16 From City Named
Sixteen Bridgeporters, five Fairfield residents and three Stratford residents are among prisoners from the area reported in various prison camps at various times since Pearl Harbor.

The Bridgeporters are as follows:
Staff Sgt. Joseph Anderson, U. S. Marine Corps, brother of Mrs. Joseph Yarga, 261 Hammett avenue, taken prisoner in the Philippines.
Eugene Arthur C. Beale, son of Mrs. Alfred Beale, 41 Russell street, taken prisoner at Cororua.
Pvt. Stephen Braden, brother of Mrs. Mary Braden, 214 38th Street, New York City, taken prisoner in the Philippines.
Pvt. August Origel, brother of Mrs. Benjamin Origel, 1000 Ridge street, captured in Philippines.
Lieut. W. B. Harrington, nephew of H. A. Walker, 900 Varna, captured.
Staff Sgt. George T. Mead, son of Mrs. George T. Mead, captured in the Philippines.

FALEO-CREAT!

It isn't that I want to be Just rude and impolite... It's simply that I didn't get A lot of sleep last night.

Revelry and reflection

The following is a Bridgeport Post editorial of Aug. 15, 1945, one day after V-J Day.

Our first, natural and healthy instinct on the news of peace is to celebrate. The terrible fear of losing more of those we love best has been lifted from our hearts. The crushing burden of war's imperative, daily demands has been eased.

So we make our brief thanksgiving to the Power which decreed that this nation should not perish from the earth, then we throng the streets to scream our happiness at each other and to let off steam. That's fine. But it had better not be prolonged too far, for it is time for us, as the French say, "Furiously to think."

How many Americans realize what has happened in the past four years?

We entered the war — or were pitched into it — as a fourth-rate military power only beginning to prepare. We have ended the war, not only as the foremost military power on land, sea, and in the air, but such a colossus as the world has never seen.

We entered the war as a nation torn between conflicting claims of isolationism and internationalism. We have ended the war so completely committed to participation in all the affairs of the world that even the shadow of isolationism is only a faint reminder of far-off and forgotten things.

If there were any lingering doubts, the atomic bomb has resolved them for us. The nations of the world must cooperate or perish.

And now or never, this nation must firmly assume the leadership which its achievements, its potentialities and military strength demand.

We must have what we have never had in the past — a genuine foreign policy.

And we must pursue it firmly and fearlessly and without vacillation or hesi-

tion or continual changes of heart.

Otherwise our assumption of our place among the other nations will be meaningless, and we shall eventually suffer the disasters which only our leadership, boldly assumed and firmly maintained, can prevent.

The atomic bomb for all its potentialities for evil may be actually the liberator of mankind. It ended one war in a great hurry. We have it on the publicly spoken word of one desperate, frightened little man — the emperor of Japan — that after just two samples of this horror the Japanese government could not sue for peace too soon.

All talk about keeping the atomic bomb secret is futile. We can maintain its secrecy only for a limited time. Having been discovered it can be rediscovered, and perhaps new horrors can be added to it.

All talk about outlawing it by international agreement and Geneva conventions and the like is equally futile. In the past, the world criminals have sought to attain their ends by weakening or disarming their intended victims through such agreements, then flouting the agreements in a surprise attack.

In brief, the atomic bomb has at last brought into sharp relief the inescapable conflict between the spiritual and physical worlds. Nothing can now control atomic power except the regeneration of mankind, and in such regeneration, this nation must take the lead — and soon. Even in this, the time is later than we think.

The only world which can now survive the catastrophe of self-destruction by the abuse of material power is a world dominated by the spiritual.

We have learned how to blow up ourselves and perhaps to blow up this planet with ourselves. The only question is whether we can — in time — rediscover our own souls.



V-J Day, Aug. 14, 1945: A sailor and a woman embrace amid revelers at Main and State streets in Bridgeport, while (below) a crush of revelers jam the intersection. Post photos by John Hayduk.



LEADERS

P.T. Barnum leaves a rich legacy

By LEONARD E. GILBERT

P.T. Barnum dressed as usual and rested the morning of April 6, 1891. He spent the day at home and was visited by his physician, who five months earlier had diagnosed "congestion of the brain" in his patient. After a quiet afternoon, Barnum became restless during the evening and had a very bad night. On April 7, the man who had spread mirth across half the face of the globe and who had given so much of himself to the Bridgeport community passed into a sleep from which he never awoke.

The news of Barnum's death resulted in worldwide expressions of sorrow. Newspapers devoted entire pages to reviews of the career, courage, enterprise, and business acumen of the man whose name left on Bridgeport an imprint so pervasive and profound that many facets of city life still are influenced by him nearly 100 years after his death.

Called the greatest of great showmen, Barnum was a civic leader in his adopted home of Bridgeport. He was one of its best known citizens — a politician and philanthropist whose good works continue to bless the city.

He was born in Bethel on July 5, 1810. Although his early life was spent in Bethel and Danbury, it was Bridgeport that Barnum chose to be his home after he had attained wealth as a successful showman in New York City. He desired a residence outside of the growing metropolis where his family could enjoy a quieter atmosphere. The Bridgeport of the mid-19th Century was his choice.

During his successful years he owned an imposing New York City residence on Fifth Avenue at 39th Street. But the four homes he built and occupied in Bridgeport over the years truly were mansions, each with a name he had chosen.

The first was Lindencroft, built on Fairfield Avenue in the West End, then a sparsely populated area still dotted with farms.

When Barnum decided his family needed more space, he selected a site facing Seaside Park, and there he had Waldemere constructed. Ever seeking the exotic, Barnum soon decided he wanted a more elegant residence, and the spectacular Iranistan was the result. Built in 1846 near the Waldemere site, Iranistan soared with sky-piercing Byzantine spires and towers. It was based on an ornate pavilion at the seashore resort of Brighton, England, which Barnum had visited on one of his European trips.

Waldemere was torn down when Iranistan was completed, but Iranistan was doomed to a more tragic fate: it burned to the ground on Dec. 18, 1857. The spectacular structure served as the Barnum family home only 11 years.

Still attracted by the cooling breezes off Long Island Sound, Barnum constructed another mansion facing Seaside Park. This home — Marina — was where he died.

In later years a part of Marina was detached and was floated across the harbor to Lordship where it is now the home of actress Nancy Marchand. The remainder of Marina existed as a dwelling until the University of Bridgeport established its campus along Seaside Park in the 1960s. Marina became successively a college dormitory, then a college office building. In the 1960s, it was demolished to make way for construction of a modern college building.

Once settled in Bridgeport, Barnum became a prominent figure in the community. He helped establish and was a major stockholder of the Pequonock



P.T. BARNUM

Bank, a forerunner of the Connecticut National Bank. He was the bank's first president, serving from 1851 until 1856. He was the first president of Bridgeport Hospital, holding that office from 1878 until his death. He was a member of the Connecticut General Assembly in the 1865-66 and 1878-79 terms.

In 1875 Barnum ran for mayor and was elected by a margin of 141 votes. In his inaugural address, his most startling admonition to the city fathers was that "Honesty is the best policy." The address extolled at great length the natural and physical assets of the city as he valued them. He served a one-year term as mayor and declined renomination, although it was likely he would have been re-elected easily.

The geographical layout of the East Side was his plan, a real estate venture unmatched by any other local developer. Some of the street names were designated by Barnum, including the main east-west route — Barnum Avenue — which perpetuates his family name. Other streets were named for his family members, including Hallett, his first

wife's family name; Caroline and Helen, named for daughters; and Hurd, named for the family of a son-in-law.

Bridgeport is known as the Park City because of the early dedication of space to park purposes, including Seaside Park on the shorefront and Washington Park in the East Side. Both tracts were the gifts of P.T. Barnum.

Mountain Grove Cemetery was a commercial project Barnum established for profit, although his deep religious convictions may have played a part in his decision to establish a cemetery. He and members of the Barnum family, including a number of his descendants, are buried there.

Opposite the imposing Barnum family monument is the statue of Tom Thumb, a native Bridgeporter who became world-famous with the help of Barnum showmanship. Tom Thumb performances in Barnum's Museum in New York City and on tours in the United States and abroad helped build Barnum's fortune which at the time of his death was estimated at \$5 million, an immense sum for that period. Barnum's



Ever the showman, Barnum herded several elephants and hundreds of citizens onto the new Stratford Avenue bridge in 1888 to demonstrate its strength. Barnum is the white-haired man just right of center. Courtesy of the Bridgeport Public Library.

showmanship also made Tom Thumb a wealthy man.

While Barnum's name is associated most often with the circus, he found fame and fortune in exhibit halls and traveling shows that bore no resemblance to today's circus under the big top. It was not until 1870, when he was 60, that he began shaping the contemporary circus world. He organized a touring circus that evolved through growth, mergers, and changing concepts into the Barnum & Bailey Circus, now known as the Ringling Bros., Barnum and Bailey Circus.

The Barnum and Bailey Circus had its winter quarters for many years in Bridgeport's South End. It was the scene of two disastrous fires; after the second, in the 1920's, it was moved to Sarasota, Fla., where the Ringling family had a palatial residence. A year later the winter quarters were moved a few miles south to Venice, Fla., its present home, where its buildings are visible to passers-by on the main highway through that city.

Barnum's final year of life was an active one as he continued personally to supervise all of his business interests despite deteriorating health. Then, in November, 1890, he was stricken with what his physicians diagnosed as "congestion of the brain." After three weeks, he began a slow recovery, but medical experts told his family that his illness was terminal.

In his final months, he spent much time resting in his bedroom, where he could look out the window across Seaside Park to Long Island Sound, and to the faint line of Long Island on the horizon.

Despite his illness, he displayed his usual generosity in the year-end holiday season. At Thanksgiving, he presented a parsonage to the Church of the Redeemer, of which he had been a member. In the Christmas season he made gifts to widows and orphans, to the ill and the poor. He donated liberally to various organizations aiding the needy in Bridgeport.

One of Barnum's final acts, characteristic of his philanthropic interests, was to sign, on March 16, 1891, the contract for construction of a building which was to be the home of the Bridgeport Scientific, Historical, and Medical Societies. He provided the site and the construction funds, but he did not live to see the start of the handsome brownstone structure at Main and Gilbert Streets which now is occupied by the Barnum Museum.

Death came quietly and painlessly. Barnum's widow, Nancy Fish Barnum, in a posthumous chapter she added to Barnum's autobiography, wrote that he never gave up hope of regaining good health. He would not speak of the possibility of his own impending death, but he expressed his philosophy on death with this comment: "It is a good thing, a beautiful thing, just as much so as life; and it is wrong to grieve about it, and to look on it as an evil."

His former circus partners, James A. Bailey, James L. Hutchinson, and W.W. Cole, commissioned a memorial to Barnum. It was to be a statue of the Great Showman seated in a great chair. The statue was created by the American sculptor, Thomas Ball, and was unveiled on July 4, 1893. It remains a landmark in Seaside Park, facing Long Island Sound as if continuing to look far over land and sea into the future. It is a constant reminder of a great figure in history whose business was to offer happiness.

Engraved on the base of the statue is one of Barnum's precepts: "Praise God and be merry."

He always did, and he always was.

Tom Thumb discovers dignity

By CINDY IZZO



Young Charles Stratton, better known as Tom Thumb. Courtesy of Jim O'Brien, Connecticut Post Card Club.

In 1883, Bridgeport's Charles Stratton — the circus star dwarf known as Tom Thumb — was finally enjoying the peaceful existence he had longed for away from the sideshows of Barnum's circus. His marriage to Lavinia Warren, herself a dwarf, was a happy one; but as life sometimes shows no tolerance for bliss, these quiet years ended all too suddenly with his death at age 45 on July 15, 1883.

During his twilight years "Gen. Tom Thumb" finally became the gentleman he wanted to be, not some freak of nature as he felt he was often portrayed. He once told a reporter that he enjoyed "being myself again. I can be Charles Stratton now, not Tom Thumb; although I enjoyed entertaining people."

Though he attempted to lead a normal life, he could never deny that his existence as a whole was far from ordinary.

In 1842, at the age of 4, he was discovered by Barnum, and from that time on, Stratton would experience life

as few could ever imagine. People all over the country and throughout the world would utter his name.

In his autobiography, Barnum recalled meeting Stratton for the first time:

"In Nov. 1842, I was at Bridgeport where I heard of a remarkably small child, and at my request my brother Philo F. Barnum brought him to the hotel.

"He (the boy) was not two feet high, he weighed less than 16 pounds and was the smallest child I ever saw that could walk alone," Barnum said.

"He was exceedingly bashful, but after some coaxing, he was induced to talk with me. . . After seeing him and talking with him I at once determined to secure his services from his parents (who were both of normal size), and to exhibit him publicly."

Barnum hired the young Stratton for four weeks at \$3 dollars per week, with all traveling and boarding expenses paid for him and his mother. He came to New York City on Dec. 8, 1842, and was announced on Barnum's bills as "General Tom Thumb."

After a short while, Barnum raised

Stratton's salary to \$7 dollars per week and for the next 20 years exhibited him across the country and in Europe.

In 1862, Barnum heard of another dwarf, Miss Lavinia Warren, who lived with her parents in Middleboro, Mass. She joined Barnum's show, and soon the well-publicized romance between her and Stratton began to bloom.

During a weekend in Bridgeport at Barnum's home, Stratton proposed to Lavinia. He introduced his prospective bride to his parents and then proudly showed her around the city, where by now he owned considerable property and several houses.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stratton enjoyed many happy years together. Towards the end of his life, Stratton was rarely seen in public, preferring to indulge himself in the luxury of privacy and self-accomplishment. Ironically, or perhaps justly, his death received little attention.

His widow lived on for a good many years, later remarrying and becoming the Countess Magri. She died at the age of 75. Both she and Stratton are buried in Mountain Grove Cemetery in Bridgeport.

The grand old game of city politics

By JOHN J. GILMORE

It is often said current Bridgeporters feed on a daily diet of election strategies, campaigns, and politics in general. Years ago, the names were different, but the game was the same. Politics in the Park City is an old tradition. The darlings and scoundrels of public life today are descendants of practitioners from years ago.

The personal style of city politicians over the years has varied back and forth between smooth and coarse, but the motivation to win at the polls — sometimes at all costs — has remained the same.

Frank McGee, a veteran member of the Democratic Party in this city, has watched the comings and goings of city politicians and their antics for many years. He has both won and lost his share of political battles. Overall, he believes the city has been pretty lucky in the caliber of men who have sought and held its leadership positions.

McGee first became active in Democratic politics during the tenure of Jasper McLevy, the famed penny-pinching Socialist Mayor who served between 1933 and 1957. But McGee and his family have long been familiar with Park City mayors, including Edward Buckingham, F. William Behrens, Fred Atwater, and Clifford Wilson.

Some were men of strength, McGee recalls, while others were political puppets. . . only there to do the bidding of an old-time political boss.

"Buck," as Buckingham was called, "was a nice guy," the Democrat remembers. "He had the disposition to be a candidate. . . His big sin was he had a Pierce-Arrow car and a chauffeur."

McGee pointed out that, although Buckingham was a Democrat, he was the last of the old-time Yankees to sit in the mayor's chair. After "Buck," the ethnic vote started to deliver the sons of immigrants to the chief executive's chair.

Political campaigns in the late 1920s and early 1930s were changing. McGee said that up to that time candidates brought their campaigns to the people on street corners where speeches were made from flatbed trucks. The voting public was treated to music from an accompanying band before the speeches started at those special, well traveled intersections: Cannon and Main streets; Shelton and East Main streets; and Stratford and Union avenues.

Up to that time, "it was practically all outdoor business," the political veteran said. But somewhere during Buck's term the change to more indoor events could be seen. The streetcorner campaign was starting to die.

And with it went some of the tricks of the time.

McGee recalls hearing from one of those truck musicians how one political group's truck would be waiting for its competition to finish up on a particular corner. When the first truck would leave, the second would roll up and start its pitch to the neighborhood residents.

It all sounds simple, but as McGee continues to explain, sometimes as the first truck was leaving "one of the guys (on the truck) with a BB gun would. . . BING. . . knock out he light."

One of the greatest political organizations in the city, in McGee's opinion, was headed up by Republican Town Chairman John T. King, shortly after the turn of the century.

The gentry, represented by the Republican Party, held political control of the city. Their control was based primarily in the political acumen of King, who managed to develop a "double machine."

A double machine results when both political parties are controlled, the opposition subvertly so, by one leader.

"He worked that double machine to a fair-thee-well," McGee said, offering the Democrats a portion of available jobs for their party members in return for support of specific Republican candidates.

But King's ambitions were larger than what Bridgeport could satisfy. He became a Republican national committeeman and started to get involved with the administration of Pres. Warren G.

Harding.

"King was just a high dealer, did most of his dealing outside of Bridgeport," McGee said. And in the end it started to catch up with him.

King's name started to become linked to the Teapot Dome scandal, a national news event of the time. Some members of Harding's cabinet were linked to improprieties involving the nation's oil reserves.

King's involvement was speculated but never proven, McGee said. And coincidentally, he died about one month after Harding. Rumors speculated both committed suicide.

Ballot box stuffing was a common practice.

McGee said in years gone by practitioners would send someone into a polling place armed with a piece of paper the exact size of the paper ballot. Once the person was given the ballot, they would go into a booth, draw the curtain, and put the real ballot in their pocket.

The blank piece of paper would be folded up and put into the ballot box.

But the voter would bring out the real ballot, and it would be marked and sent in with another person to be cast. The second person would come out again with another blank ballot and the process would be repeated and repeated.

"You could be voted right out of a district," McGee said. "There were some real artists of the game."



Four Bridgeport mayors march together during the city's Centennial Parade Aug. 4, 1936. From left are Jasper McLevy, who was of-ficeholder at the time; and his three immediate predecessors: F. Wil-

liam Behrens, Edward T. Buckingham, and Clifford B. Wilson. Post photo by unknown photographer.

JASPER

By TERE PASCONE

Almost everyone called him Jasper. He had dignity, but he was approachable, affable, informal. In 24 years as mayor, he was invited to weddings, christenings, and anniversaries; and there were those who said he set a record for going to more wakes than anyone in Bridgeport.

He was 5-foot-9, but seemed taller. His face was deeply-lined, and he was often likened to Abraham Lincoln, his idol. When his lean, sturdy figure entered a hall, the applause was thunderous, and he stole the show from everyone—even the bride at a wedding reception.

His hair was salt-and-pepper gray when he was first elected, but during his years in office, it turned a steel gray, accentuating his keen, blue eyes. He always wore a blue serge suit and white shirt, and his creaseless trousers always looked comfortable.

He was born March 22, 1878 of sturdy Scottish stock. He attended the old Oak Street School to the sixth grade, and at the age of 14 became apprentice to a slater, following the footsteps of his father and other relatives.

As he grew older and became a Norman Thomas Socialist, he read a lot and took college extension courses by mail.

His private life was his own and he didn't like any encroachment into it. In fact, it wasn't until 1933, when he was first elected mayor, that he announced he had been married 10 years to Vida Stearns, an artist. They maintained separate residences — she with her father on East Main Street, he with his sister at 463 Salem Street. But together they maintained a rambling country house upstate in Washington where they often spent the weekends together.

He had run for mayor eight times unsuccessfully, but in 1933, his voice resounded. Since 1911, Bridgeporters had put up with the machine politics and spoils system of the two established parties, which, along with the Depression, had put the city in a financial shambles. The voters, fed up, finally heard the critical voice of Jasper

McLevy and elected him in a spectacular victory.

On Election Night, he was up until 3 a.m. at his Salem Street home receiving congratulations from well-wishers. At 6 a.m., the phones began ringing again from New York newspapers and national news services. The news of the election of a Socialist mayor was heralded across the country. But two hours later, he climbed into his battered truck and went to Southport to finish a roofing job.

At the corner of State and Lafayette was Slim's Diner. Slim had a bet that Jasper would indeed win and promised him a free meal if he did. The new mayor took him up on it. After he was sworn into office, he walked to Slim's for his meal, turning down the chauffeured limousine which previous mayors had been wont to use.

One of his first actions, in fact, was to dismiss his two police chauffeurs and send them back with the limousine to the Police Department. He also got rid of the executive secretary for his office, calling both expenses a waste of taxpayer's money.

The mayor's office in the old City Hall, (now McLevy Hall) on State Street consisted of three drab rooms on the third floor reached by an elevator that Jasper never used. He managed his of-

fice from his vest pocket and was rarely late for an appointment.

He wasn't a desk mayor. He lunched at Van Dyke's on Main Street between State and Gold, always ordering a corned beef sandwich, tea, and a piece of apple pie. Then it was on to City Hall for a few hours to receive callers and confer with his staff.

His days were largely spent touring city buildings and projects, and he seemed to know the slightest detail of any city job in the works.

In education, reading, writing and arithmetic were what he cared about. If the schools were shabby, he'd say, "All the kids need is a desk and a good teacher and you won't have to worry."

During his 24 years in office, he was called both a penny-pincher and a wastrel. His answer to the penny-pincher critics was that he was only trying to keep the politicians from pinching the taxpayer's money. And to those who conversely charged that he wasted the taxpayer's money with the airport takeover and the sewer system, he pointed to the long-range benefits of the two projects.

And so, like Ol'Man River, Jasper kept on rolling into office until 1957. He may have drunk his tea with the teaspoon in the cup, but he left behind an enviable record.

'7 Little Mayors' set stage for McLevy

By TERE PASCONE

In 1924 a group of Bridgeport taxpayers and industrialists finally blew the whistle on taxation practices that had been strangling them for years. The state Tax Commission investigated, and what Commissioner William Blodgett found was a spending orgy that for 13 years had been fed by scandalous adjustments in assessment, overtaxation, and favoritism in abatements. Over the next nine years Bridgeport would pay dearly for the sins of the city fathers, and its tumultuous head start toward the grim days of the impending Great Depression set the stage for a most memorable character to rise to power.

At a hearing at the County Courthouse in October that year, Blodgett charged the Common Council's tax shenanigans were "an invitation for the boys to have some fun." Seven months later, upon his recommendation, the Ripper Bill — so-called because it ripped the taxation rights of home rule from the city — was drawn up and passed in the State Legislature.

The bill provided for a seven-member Board of Taxation and Apportionment for Bridgeport, a panel dubbed by city dissidents as "the seven Little Mayors." Four men from throughout the state were appointed by the governor and three by the mayor, and together the seven controlled all city finances and purchases.

No sooner had they taken office that it was discovered the first volume of the city's alphabetized tax rate book was missing. Although it was never proven, it was widely believed that the book was stolen to hide taxes owed by many city officials whose names were in that volume.

The new tax board did little to alleviate the escalating problem. Corruption and the patronage system continued to thrive. By Jan. 1, 1933, there was more government than the city could pay for.

The treasury was empty. The city deficit was nearly \$1.7 million with \$4 million in bonded indebtedness. Unpaid salaries amounted to \$500,000. The municipal payroll had defaulted in December, and 4,000 city employees were stiffed.

Mayor Edward T. Buckingham was desperate. He called on the public utilities to pay the next year's taxes in advance. He asked city workers to take paycuts ranging from 5 to 20 percent. He even issued scrip that looked like rent receipts. Teachers signed waivers giving



JASPER McLEVY

up three week's pay, even though they had received no raises in eight years. City workers who owned their homes were allowed to deduct salary due them from taxes they owed. By April, the city was faced with \$750,000 in unpaid salaries. Amid this growing turmoil rose the familiar voice of a fiscally conservative socialist who was seeking the mayoralty for the ninth time. Spilling from soap boxes in front of factory gates and on city streets, Jasper McLevy called for an end to the "invisible boss," machine politics, and the spoils system.

He campaigned for a pay-as-you-go policy and for the return of home rule. He charged that the tax board had issued bonds without submitting the question to the people, and had opened the floodgates of spending beyond sound reason and good faith.

He further charged that the state legislature had just made things worse by increasing the city's indebtedness from three to 5 percent. When that was not enough, he said, the grand list was inflated, with the proceeds of bonding used to build up patronage for both parties.

In 1933, there weren't enough socialists to fill two blocks in a parade; but by

November, the voters had had enough of the Democrats and the Republicans. In a shocking protest vote, Jasper McLevy, the roofer, found himself the Number One man in Bridgeport.

The news of a socialist mayor in Bridgeport was electrifying, and it spread across the nation. But the real drama was yet to come.

Elected with McLevy were three Socialists to the State Senate, and two to the House of Representatives. And when all the counting was done, McLevy, who was able to work with the Republicans, found himself the most powerful man in the General Assembly. With his three votes he was able to get rid of the Seven Little Mayors and have the Ripper Bill repealed. Home rule had been restored.

In addition, he was able to bring about passage of one of the most controversial bills in state history: the Civil Service Bill, which had long been declared a pipe dream, bringing an end to the spoils system.

In the years that followed the 1933 election, McLevy had to undo the acts of the previous 20 years. The tax rate was 29.9 mills in 1933, but the new mayor won a special levy to increase it to 34.5, charging his predecessors had set a dishonest rate.

Thereafter, until 1945, he established a mill rate of 28.3 as a major inducement for industrial development. He instituted reforms; paid city employees the salaries they were owed; wiped out the invisible boss, and the patronage system; and created a central purchasing department to eliminate waste. Little by little, the financial condition of the city was put back on sound footing.

Then McLevy went "underground." Raw sewage, industrial waste and oil flowed into Yellow Mill Pond, the Pequonnock River, Johnson's Creek and Long Island Sound. Fishing was a lost art. The rank odor at low tide was aggravated by the stench of the garbage plant on the East Side.

Taking advantage of federal funds, the mayor began to put through a \$3.5 million trunk sewer and treatment plant program. For many years, Bridgeporters put up with torn up roads, but block by block the pipe was laid and connected to two sewer treatment plants. The stench at low tide vanished and the fish soon returned.

During his tenure, the city emerged from bankruptcy. McLevy cut the city's debt by \$19 million, developed parks and the municipal airport, stabilized the tax rate, and modernized the police and fire departments — all through what his opponents called pinch-penny politics.

As much as the people liked him and voted for him, he had his share of critics — especially when the snow fell. Winter was a perennial nemesis for Public Works Director Peter Brewster. The streets were a mess after heavy snow storms, and if it hadn't been for the warmth of the sun they would never have been cleared. McLevy wouldn't spend the money to have them plowed.

"What can I do?" the exasperated Brewster would cry. "That's the way he wants it — he won't spend the money, and I haven't got the manpower or equipment to handle it." And many a newspaper cartoon would show McLevy and Brewster looking skyward for their old friend, Mr. Sun, to come out.

But whatever McLevy did paid off, because eventually he was able to have the city's credit rating boosted from nil to Tripple A.

McLevy spent a quarter-century in the office of mayor. It was a career filled with personal and political triumphs. And for Jasper McLevy, the socialist roofer, the greatest of these was the election of 1933 when the three little Socialists in the General Assembly turned the tide on the Seven Little Mayors.

Always controversial, always exciting

By JOHN J. GILMORE

And just remember," he told the crowd assembled below his podium. "A little powder and paint will make the lady what she ain't." The crowd roared its approval as the speaker moved away from the podium and towards the stairs on the side of the stage. Slowly the speaker made his way down the stairs to the crowds, shaking hands all the way.

It was 1975 and the speaker was City Clerk John C. Mandanici, a man well on his way to upsetting the party choice for the Democratic mayoral nomination. The hierarchy had looked to another, but Mandanici had looked to the people.

There was no doubt that the people in the East Side Knights of Columbus Hall were faithful followers of this man. There was little doubt he would capture the nomination.

Mandanici was indeed nominated and elected, and held the office of mayor for the next three terms. And perhaps more than anything else, the former A&P manager from Fairfield Avenue brought excitement to the office, because one never knew what he might do next.

Once, while at a long and boring meeting on Long Island about the possibility of building a bridge to Connecticut, Mandanici became the darling of the media by suggesting a tunnel. Nothing else from that meeting made the six o'clock news that night.

He brought controversy to the office because of his brusque behavior and demanding manner.

"Do you like your job?" he'd yell at an aide who didn't follow orders or get the desired results. The implications were clear. . . he expected certain results.

He had an administrative style that captured people's attention, but it ultimately cost him allies and a fourth term.



Mayor John Mandanici drives home a point in 1976. Post photo by Wayne Ratzenberger.

Controversy swelled up alongside the man like the tide. Federal investigations of a jobs program brought Mandanici and his style into question. He defied investigators to subpoena him before a grand jury, and when they did, he invoked the Fifth Amendment. He still defies investigators to accuse him of wrongdoing while in office.

Unlike elected officials in the past, Mandanici wasn't simply a representative of a more powerful powerbroker, nor did he rely heavily on a core of advisors. He brought into office his own followers and his own strength.

Mandanici tried to give the city that dose of "powder and paint," but he

never managed to get that major project off the ground that could catapult the city to the forefront of the development market.

It certainly wasn't for lack of ideas. Plans for a downtown hotel, a much ballyhooed civic center, and even a theme park at Pleasure Beach all failed to materialize.

But Mandanici doesn't view himself as lacking accomplishments. He proudly points to the Tedesco Annex of the Dinan Memorial Center; the construction of two new firehouses and two schools; and the creation of jobs through the development of industrial parks. One of his most satisfying accomplishments, he says, was increasing senior citizen housing.

Politically, "Mandy," a term of endearment used by both friends and foes, started his tenure as a populist. He courted people — average people — all over town. "Do you know how many two-dollar bettors there are in this city?" he'd ask rhetorically.

While he touted himself on one hand as an average man, he never let it intimidate him when dealing with people of a higher office. Several area people recall one day Mandanici sat on a dais with the late Gov. Ella Grasso. Her attention and conversation were divided between Mandy and another.

The mayor, trying to make a point with the lady he sarcastically called "Mother," grabbed at her toe, shook it and said, "Hey lady, I'm talking to you!"

But somewhere after his re-election to a second term, Mandy changed. He became "boss," and began enjoying the trappings of office, such as the sleek, black city-owned sedan he had generally refused during his first term.

He developed a cocky confidence which surprised close friends. That cockiness turned people away from him. In 1981 he was challenged for the mayoralty by Republican Leonard S. Paoletta in a hard-fought campaign. When the dust settled, Paoletta was a 64-vote victor.

"Is that a mandate?" Mandanici questions today. "I don't think so. . . All you have to do is turn some of those people around."

Looking back on his six years in office, the former mayor has no regrets. In fact, he is giving serious consideration to placing his name before the people again in the November elections.

Mandanici has passed up an opportunity to have his portrait painted and hung in City Hall, an honor bestowed on all former mayors.

"I'll start sitting next November," Mandy says.

Helen Keller effused courage and fortitude

By SHARON BUCKHEIT

Helen Keller walked in her flower garden at Arcan Ridge in Easton every morning. She walked without a cane and inhaled the fragrances of the garden's nearly 90 varieties of rose, her favorite flower. They had been planted particularly for their fragrance, and friends later recalled that Miss Keller, who called the town home from 1939 to her death on June 1, 1968, knew which rose she was touching by the feel of the leaf and the subtle differences in smell.

A rustic fence surrounded the Redding Road property and provided a balance and guidance for the internationally-known author, lecturer, and humanitarian who devoted her life to improving education and opportunities for the blind. Old neighbors say she would awaken early each morning, descend the back stairs, and walk the half-mile path through the roses to rejoice in the beauty she sensed.

Helen Keller was born a healthy baby to a wealthy family on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, Ala. At the age of 18 months, she contracted fever, and congestion of the stomach and brain were diagnosed. The child was not expected to live, but the fever disappeared as quickly as it came.

Soon her parents realized that the mysterious illness had left its mark: Their child could no longer see or hear. Specialists were called in, and after advice from Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor, Anne Sullivan was brought in to teach the undisciplined and often violent 7-year-old deaf, blind and mute child.

Miss Keller would later call the com-

ing of Anne Sullivan — "The Miracle Worker," as she was later called in the play and movie by that name — her soul's birthday.

Learning became the most important element of her life, and she and her teacher became inseparable. Miss Keller mastered the manual and Braille alphabets and learned to read, write, and then speak words she would never hear.

She attended schools for the blind in Boston and New York, and at 16 entered the Cambridge (Mass.) School for Young Ladies to prepare for Radcliffe College, from which she graduated cum laude in 1904.

While studying at Radcliffe, Miss Keller began to gain national acclaim. She

started writing, and in 1902, her autobiography, "The Story of My Life," was published as a serial in the Ladies Home Journal.

Other books followed, and Miss Keller became friends with some of the most famous authors of the time, including Mark Twain, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and John Greenleaf Whittier.

In 1924, Miss Keller started the work that would bring her to more than 35 countries and gain her fame throughout the world. She joined the staff of the American Foundation for the Blind and became its counselor on national and international relations.

She lectured and raised funds for the blind as she traveled to many corners of

the globe, meeting world leaders and several United States presidents.

At 74, she made a 40,000-mile trip to India, Pakistan, Burma, the Philippines and Japan. On June 28, 1955, a day after her 75th birthday, the five-month tour ended with a celebration of Helen Keller Day in Tuscumbia, New York City, and Easton. Messages of congratulations and gratitude poured in from around the world.

Easton had become her home after the death of Anne Sullivan, with whom she had spent her life even after Miss Sullivan was wed. Miss Keller wanted some privacy now, and moved from her home on Long Island to Easton with Polly Thompson, her new companion and secretary.

Gustave Pfeiffer of Easton gave her 4½ acres on Redding Road, and the colonial-style home was built. It was dubbed Arcan Ridge after a place Miss Keller visited in Scotland.

Tragedy struck once while Miss Thompson and Miss Keller were on an international tour in the late 1940s. The house burned to the ground. It was quickly rebuilt, but a nearly completed manuscript of Miss Keller's biography of Anne Sullivan was destroyed. It was later rewritten.

She spent the last 30 years of her life in Easton, which perpetuated her memory when it dedicated the Helen Keller Middle School.

In an article written for and copyrighted by The Atlantic Monthly magazine, Miss Keller had some advice for the sighted of the world:

"I who am blind can give one hint to those who see — one admonition to those who would make full use of the gift of sight. Use your eyes as if tomorrow you would be stricken blind."



Helen Keller at her home in Easton. Sunday Post photo by Al Mathewson.

'No. 1' Ray Baldwin upset Cross in '38

By WILLIAM J. WALSH

One of the narrowest victories for governor in modern Connecticut came in 1938 when Stratford's Raymond E. Baldwin, longtime Bridgeport lawyer and currently the state's "No. 1 citizen" by virtue of having held its three highest offices, upset incumbent Gov. Wilbur L. Cross in his bid for a fifth term.

In a real cliffhanger, the Democrat Cross actually edged the Republican Baldwin on the party-vs.-party vote but lost out by some 3,000 votes Baldwin polled on a minor party ticket on which he had been endorsed for governor.

Baldwin, now 89 and living in Middletown, is affectionately called Connecticut's No. 1 citizen by virtue of being the only winner of the "triple crown" in state history by serving as governor, chief justice of the state Supreme Court, and U.S. senator, according to officials at the state Library. He retains some judicial duties, serving in a part-time capacity as a state referee 19 years after he retired as a full-time judge.

Baldwin, who had crossed swords with Cross earlier as the Republican leader of the House in the General Assembly, was virtually dragged into the gubernatorial field. Twenty-four hours before the 1938 GOP convention opened he issued a public statement flatly declining to be the GOP candidate for the state's top office.

The only other candidate being talked up seriously was William J. Pape, a Waterbury newspaper publisher. He was a pleasant and likeable man, but was little known to the public and lacked governmental experience. Tremendous pressure was put on Baldwin overnight to change his mind and give the GOP a much younger and more politically viable candidate to head the ticket.

He finally yielded to the pleading of his many rank and file party friends from across the state, although few believed he could win, given Cross' long tenure and wide popularity.

Little did they (or Baldwin) know of the peculiar succession of events that would bring Baldwin to the governor's chair. Several months before the state party conventions of 1938, two major scandals had erupted: the Merritt Parkway land scandals, which involved a Republican land agent; and the much bigger Waterbury municipal corruption scandal that involved both Democrats

and Republicans at high local and state party levels.

In the parkway scandal, a grand jury in Bridgeport indicted the state's land agent, G. Leroy Kemp of Darien, for conspiracy to rip off funds paid to realty brokers and others in the \$6 million right of way purchases — nearly a quarter of the \$27 million cost of construction. Kemp had served two terms in the state legislature and had also served as Republican town chairman in Darien.

Several other persons were indicted in the case, some of them real estate brokers who turned state's evidence and testified that they had split their fees with Kemp on land deals they arranged with him at prices he approved. Kemp was sentenced to three-to-seven years in prison. The others involved were leniently dealt with. Kemp died in 1956.

The lengthy investigation of the parkway scandal was well underway when a grand jury was called in Waterbury to probe into claims of the Waterbury Republican-American, the papers owned by Pape, of a million-dollar corruption operation involving the city's Democratic mayor, T. Frank Hayes, who also was lieutenant governor under Cross.

The allegations were that Hayes and other city Democratic figures were involved in corrupt practices with the help of prominent Republican Party figures in the State Capitol who got legislation approval of funding bills, the proceeds of which were used to enrich the conspirators.

Hayes, who served four years as lieutenant governor, was sentenced to prison along with numerous other figures in the climax of a sensational case. Hayes refused to resign as lieutenant governor and completed his term in office. He was passed over for renomination, but finished his term in office before his appeal was denied. He was then taken to prison.

While neither Cross nor Baldwin had anything to do with either scandal, the news regarding the grand jury proceedings and the succeeding trials were prominently featured by newspapers throughout the state and widely read by the voters.

The scandals had erupted several months before the party state conventions, and the political consensus seemed to be that the impact at the polls would be minimal since both parties were involved.

The campaign got under way in due course with Bridgeport's Socialist mayor, Jasper McLevy, making his biennial pitch. Soon after, the fun started.

McLevy had been elected mayor in



Stratford's Raymond E. Baldwin (left) confers with outgoing Gov. Wilbur L. Cross in 1938 during transition period following Baldwin's narrow victory. Post file photo.

the Park City in 1933 for what turned out to be a 24-year tenure after many years of soapbox campaigning on the general premise that both the Republicans and the Democrats were solely devoted to advancing their own political and patronage interests while ignoring the public interest. Both parties were left in the lurch when the fed up voters put McLevy into office.

Baldwin strategists studied this pattern and correctly concluded that supporting McLevy in the gubernatorial campaign would help them. The theory was that defections inspired by McLevy would take more voters from Cross than from Baldwin.

A group of Baldwin supporters in Fairfield County joined in this ploy and raised a large sum of money, chiefly among Republicans in the Greenwich area, to finance a statewide campaign by McLevy, on which he embarked with zest.

On Election Day, McLevy polled 166,253 votes, setting a state record for a third party candidate. Political analysts

figured that his strength came more from Democrats than Republicans. This was not enough, however, to put Baldwin over the edge; the clincher came from another quarter.

In Redding, Albert Levitt had run in a prior election for judge of probate on a Union Party ticket. Levitt, who had conducted a running battle on utilities issues for many years and who had once served as a federal judge in the U.S. Virgin Islands, didn't win the probate post, but had polled enough votes to qualify the Union Party for a place on the 1938 ballot. Levitt put together a state ticket of his own that year with Baldwin for governor and Republicans and Democrats for other offices.

The question was raised as to whether Levitt could run a candidate for governor since the last Union Party ticket carried only a judgeship candidate. The matter was taken to Superior Court where Judge Patrick B. O'Sullivan, a close friend and adviser of Cross, and later chief justice of the state Supreme Court, allowed the Union Party to file its full slate.

This turned the trick for Baldwin's election. Cross polled 227,549 votes on the Democratic ticket, leading Baldwin's Republican total of 227,191 by 358, but lost the election by 2,688 on the basis of the 3,046 votes Baldwin polled on the Union Party ticket.

Cross supporters begged him to challenge the election on the basis that O'Sullivan had erred in his ruling on the Union Party. Cross flatly rejected their pleas and, with Baldwin's inauguration in January, 1939, smilingly slipped away from public life.

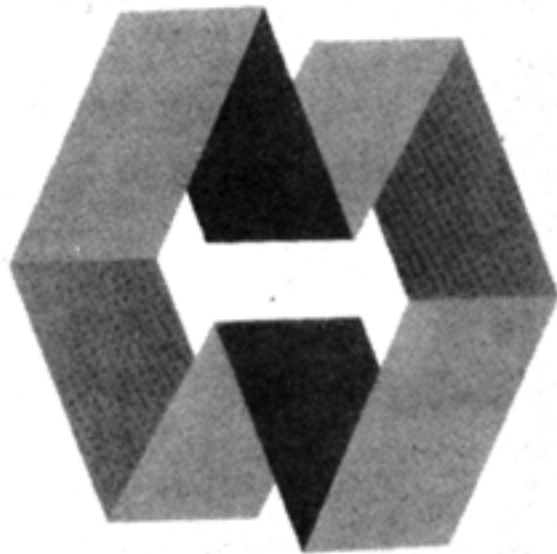
In the face of Franklin D. Roosevelt's third term victory in 1940, Baldwin lost his first bid for re-election as governor, to Robert A. Hurley of Bridgeport by 13,780 votes. He returned in 1942 to unseat Hurley and was re-elected in 1944.

He resigned as governor in the closing days of 1946 to take office as U.S. Senator. He resigned from the Senate Dec. 17, 1949, to accept appointment by Gov. Chester Bowles to the state Supreme Court bench. He was appointed chief justice in 1959 and reached constitutional retirement on Aug. 31, 1973, his 70th birthday.



John F. Kennedy was rousingly received by the Bridgeport area when he campaigned here for the presidency in 1960. Post photo by Ed Brinsko.

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CRIME / DISASTERS

Dutch Schultz: a welcome guest

By TOM HAYDON

Arthur Flegenheimer was one of the most notorious men ever to walk the streets of Bridgeport. He was so bold, according to stories from older residents, he once gave the Bridgeport Police Department 24 hours to get out of town.

Flegenheimer, better known as the infamous gangster Dutch Schultz, spent the spring and summer of 1935 in Bridgeport and surrounding Fairfield County communities, using southwestern Connecticut as refuge from persistent lawmen and enemy crime bosses alike.

His stay here was peaceful, albeit brief — perhaps a little too brief. Less than 48 hours after he left Bridgeport he was arrested on tax evasion charges for the second time. A month later he was dead.

His reported ultimatum to the local police may actually have been in jest, because Schultz was a welcome guest in the city. He was a celebrity, and if there was ever any trepidation over having one of the nation's most notorious criminals walking the streets, it wasn't evident. Even the mayor announced that as long as Schultz behaved himself, the police wouldn't bother him.

Many older residents of Bridgeport and surrounding communities still recall stories about Schultz staying in the Park City.

One who remembers is a veteran Bridgeport police officer. "First, two guys would come out of the hotel and look around," recalls the policeman, who asked not to be identified. "Then he would come out. Two guys would walk on the other side of the street, one a half a block ahead of him and the other half a block behind. And he had one body-guard next to him."

Schultz and his entourage lived well, staying in both the Barnum and Stratfield hotels where the best rooms cost \$12.50 a day. His notoriety gained him entrance to the shore society of Fairfield, Westport and Stamford, and his acceptance of a party invitation guaranteed a successful social event. He even took horseback riding lessons in Fairfield.

Born in lower Manhattan in 1902 and



Gangster Dutch Schultz, courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.

raised by his mother after his father abandoned the family, Schultz grew up on violent streets. He became known as the Beer Baron of the Bronx, because, during the prohibition era, he used strong-arm tactics to take control of all the speakeasy bars in that borough of New York City.

By the time of repeal, Schultz had used his mob to take over the illegal lotteries and numbers rackets in Harlem.

Schultz was arrested 13 times during his criminal career, but was convicted only once — on a charge of unlawful

Edgar Hoover reportedly became personally involved in the case, and twice the Treasury Department obtained indictments against Schultz.

In the spring of 1935, after his first tax evasion trial ended in a hung jury, Schultz made the first of his trips to Bridgeport. During this visit he spent most of his time with lawyers and henchmen, preparing for a retrial.

The following August, Schultz left Connecticut to face retrial of the tax evasion charge. He was acquitted. During that trial, however, Dewey led a team of

If there was ever any trepidation over having one of the nation's most notorious criminals walking the streets, it wasn't evident. Even the mayor announced that as long as Schultz behaved himself, the police wouldn't bother him.

entry. But the ensuing prison term proved advantageous, for by the time he was released, Arthur Flegenheimer had gained the notorious reputation that earned him his tough-sounding pseudonym.

Schultz reportedly was once identified by U.S. District Attorney Thomas E. Dewey (who later became governor of New York and ran unsuccessfully for president) as the "biggest gangster in the city" of New York. New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia requested the U.S. Treasury Department's aid in prosecuting Schultz. FBI Director J.

investigators who had gathered enough information to obtain an indictment on a second tax evasion charge.

To avoid arrest, Schultz again fled to Connecticut. It was during this brief second stay that Schultz reportedly uttered his threat against the police.

"He gave Bridgeport police 24 hours to get out of town," said the veteran Bridgeport police officer. The story of that threat has been recounted to many a Police Department rookie class.

Schultz left Bridgeport Sept. 24 to see the Max Baer-Joe Louis fight in Yankee Stadium. Two days later he was arrested

in New Jersey on the tax evasion charge.

That case never came to trial. On Oct. 23 Schultz and three of his henchmen were shot to death as they ate dinner in the Palace Chop House, Newark, N.J., in the largest multiple gangland slaying since the 1929 St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago.

Although the motive for the slaying was never clearly established, one prominent theory was that rival mobs feared Schultz was plotting to assassinate Dewey, a grave act that would have put the heat on every mob in town. As long as Dewey was aggressively investigating Schultz' financial records and preparing to prosecute him, other gangs were out of the spotlight. Gangster Charles "Lucky" Luciano was widely believed to have been one of those most in favor of having Schultz rubbed out.

Whatever the reason behind it, news of the execution of Schultz was reported across the nation. In The Bridgeport Post, stories about the murder and subsequent police investigation appeared on the front page four consecutive days. The tone was outrage, for the city's tie to a national folk hero had been severed.

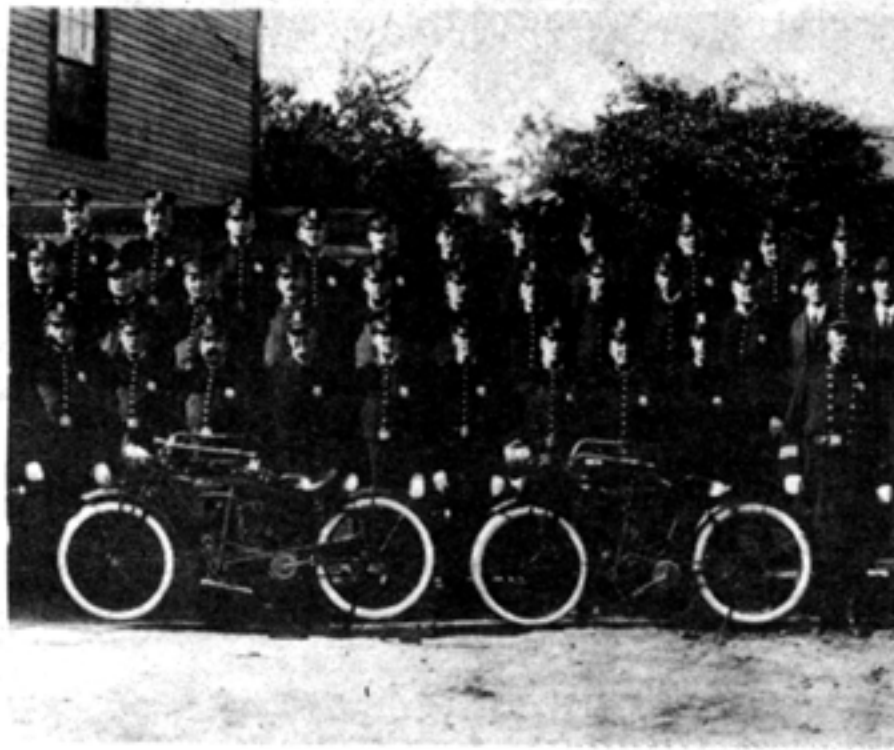
"Dutch Schultz," read the story of Oct. 24, "who was so liberally sprayed with machine gun slugs in the side room of a Newark saloon last night, is the same Schultz who used to stand in front of the Stratfield Hotel night after night and quietly watch the world go by."

According to the story, Schultz had sought in Bridgeport, "in his own unobtrusive manner, to escape the trumpeting of police reporters, the persecution of those busy-body federal men who were poking into his private affairs, and the possibility of untoward episodes such as occurred" in the New Jersey bar.

The story mentioned the quote of Mayor Jasper McLevy that all but welcomed Schultz to Bridgeport: "As long as he behaves himself, he won't be bothered."

Schultz was also quoted from a past interview: "I've been treated very kindly and have met some lovely people here."

The feeling, by and large, was mutual. The presence of a legend had added a little excitement to the otherwise dismal days of the Great Depression.



Bridgeport Police of 1914 were ready to pursue the day's criminals on foot and on motorcycle. At right is a Bridgeport Herald drawing of Jacob Scheele, a murderer who was the last man to be publicly hanged in the city. Photo and drawing courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



An \$87 million charade uncovered

By SEAN FINNELL

In Dec. 16, 1938, F. Donald Coster, president of McKesson and Robbins in Fairfield, shot himself to death at his luxurious Fairfield home. It was a sudden end to the long and mysterious career of a man who had achieved great wealth and reputation, only to be uncovered as one of the most notorious swindlers of his day.

The ruse of Philip Musica, Coster's real name, was mind-boggling. Only days before his suicide, it was disclosed that he had swindled banks and other institutions of \$87 million by faking assets, making up warehouse locations, forging audits, and trafficking in illegal drugs and alcohol while chief executive officer of McKesson, the giant pharmaceutical manufacturer.

Then the real bombshell: This was the same man who 25 years ago pulled a similar fraud against the U.S. government in the celebrated Human Hair swindle, and was tied to other underground activity as well.

Musica, an Italian immigrant, grew up tempted by the world of vast opportunity he saw while growing up in New York City. As a young man working in the importing business his father had established, he was convicted of conspiring to strip customs fees on imported cheeses. He served only a part of his jail term, receiving a pardon from Pres. William Howard Taft.

Somewhere along the way, he dreamed up the bizarre "Human Hair Swindle." It was the time of the "Gibson girl," when twirls and switches of false hair were fashionable. Musica set up the U.S. Hair Company, which imported hair for falls and wigs. At one point, he asked the Bank of Manhattan to discount a bill



F. Donald Coster, head of McKesson and Robbins, the Fairfield pharmaceutical firm (shown at right in a 1938 photo), was identified as convict Philip Musica in 1938. He engineered an \$87 million fraud against the company. Photos from Post files (left) and courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



of goods to the value of \$327,000, saying he had 216 cases of human hair worth that amount as collateral. After Musica accepted an advance of \$25,000, it was discovered the hair was worth barely \$250, and that he had bilked several banks out of \$2 million.

At his trial it was disclosed he had falsified bills of lading and had set up phony foreign offices, elements that would arise during the McKesson investigation.

Musica was convicted and was packed off to prison where he spent three years waiting to be sentenced. He finally was given a suspended sentence because of the time he had already served and because he had aided in federal investi-

gations while there, especially with an agent named Henry Unterweiser.

Musica then disappeared for several years, and he resurfaced in the offices of Fairfield investment banker Julien Thompson under the name of Frank Donald Coster — a name he borrowed from a grade school chum. Thompson, impressed with this man of high ideals and apparently considerable means, arranged for Coster to purchase 1 million shares of McKesson common stock in 1928, a purchase that made the man with the new identity the majority owner of the company.

Thompson made no investigation of Coster during the transaction, but be-

came increasingly perplexed when false items worth \$10 million began appearing in the company accounts. It became apparent that the warehouses listed for crude drug storage were merely addresses.

On Dec. 6, 1938, an application for receivership was filed by stockholders with the purpose of reorganization. Within the next two weeks, the Coster empire crumbled. Four separate investigations of Coster's activities were launched; and Coster and his assistant treasurer, George Dietrich, were ordered to resign. They did not. And as the story was breaking nationally, Henry Unterweiser, the federal investigator from New York, recognized F. Donald Coster as convicted felon Philip Musica.

On Dec. 13, Coster, Dietrich, and George Vernard, Canadian agent for the company, were ordered arrested. On Dec. 16, it was discovered that Dietrich and Vernard were the aliases of George and Arthur Musica — Philip Musica's brothers — and that one Robert Dietrich, a purchasing agent for the company, was yet another brother.

That day, F. Donald Coster, the immigrant who through brains and tact maneuvered his way to the top of the business world, shot himself in the head and killed himself at his beautiful Mill Plain Road home as federal agents waited to arrest him. For him, it was the end of an incredible story of deceit. Most of the other principles in the scandal were tried and convicted.

In his written police statement only days earlier, Coster had maintained his innocence, though he never denied his true identity: "As God is my judge I am the victim of Wall Street plunder and blackmail in a struggle for honest existence," he wrote. "Oh Merciful God bring the truth to light."



U.S. Deputy Marshal Stephen Lopresti (left) and George Dietrich, alias George Musica, were at Coster's home when he committed suicide. Lopresti was to have arrested both. Post file photo.

When suicide was a pasttime in Bridgeport

By TED SCALA

Some people form clubs to collect stamps; some people get together to play horseshoes; and some people, at least back in the Bridgeport of the late 19th Century, got together to kill themselves.

The story of Bridgeport's "suicide club" borders on the unbelievable, but the essential ingredients — a group of friends dissatisfied with their lot in life and a newspaper man's macabre imagination, mixed with some strong drink — gives the tale at least some credibility.

The story of a suicide club appeared in an 1894 edition of The Bridgeport Post, a time when newspapers in general were known to exaggerate, or at least embel-

lish, a story.

According to the account (which quoted the New York Recorder newspaper), a reporter for The Bridgeport Farmer, a now defunct competitor of The Post, told his city editor one day in 1883 that a man had killed himself in a Main Street saloon.

After leaving for the night, the editor, one George Leavenworth, dropped by the saloon to see if there was anything new on the death.

Upon hearing the assembled drinkers complain that unlike the dead man they were still captive to their troubles, Leavenworth invited them to meet him the next night at the saloon.

About a dozen men showed up. After several glasses of beer had been downed, Leavenworth made his pitch.

"Gentlemen," he began, "We are all tired with life. Why not form a suicide club? We will meet here once a month and have a jolly evening. Once every year we will draw lots to see who is to die. The chosen one must kill himself before the next yearly meeting."

The newspaper account says that Leavenworth then asked what the men thought of his idea, and half of those present shouted in unison, "I'm with you!"

Thereafter, once a year, the men met and cast dies to determine who would shuttle off this mortal coil that year. The first to go was Max Heisterhagen, a saloon owner, who left the meeting saying, "Be sure to keep your oaths as well as I keep mine."

Heisterhagen reportedly was found

dead the next morning with a gunshot wound to the head.

Hangings, slit throats, and various other mayhem followed as the charter members did themselves in one by one. Reportedly, the only man who escaped the undertaker was a Carl Roberts, who, it was said, went insane and was hauled off to an asylum the day before the third annual meeting.

Leavenworth, the founder, lost that year and poisoned himself.

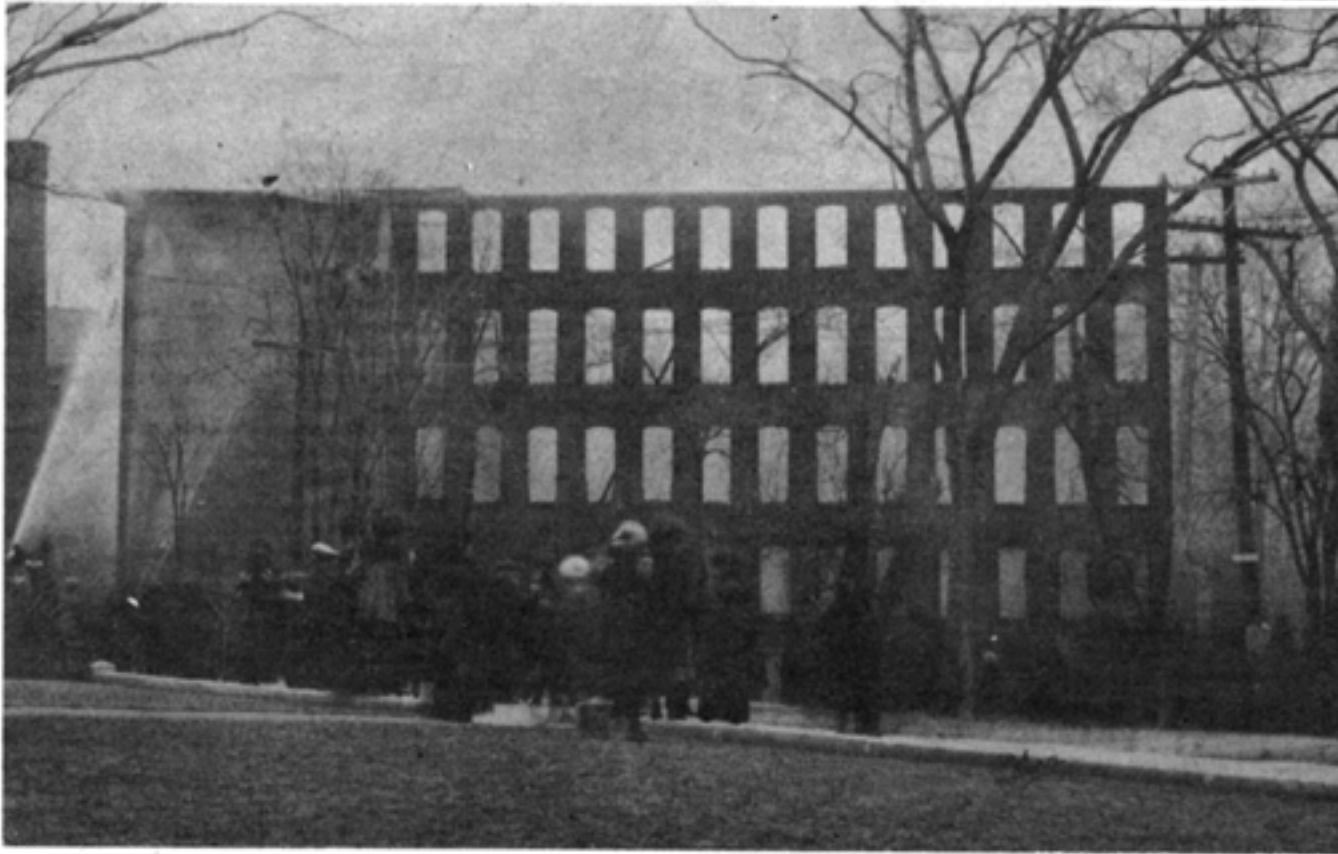
Although new members joined the club, the last original member to go was Otto Kemp. He lost at the May 1893 meeting; but after selling his business he announced that he was going to have a good time for as long as his money lasted. He reportedly hanged himself on Sept. 11 in Cincinnati.



In one of the more spectacular fires of recent years, Bridgeport's grand old railroad station was destroyed on March 20, 1979. Around the turn of the century, firefighters such as the unidentified ones below protected the city with equipment like that pictured at the Crescent Street station at bottom. Post fire photos by Bill McDonald; firefighters photo from Post files; equipment photo courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



There was "nothing in sight but a hole in the ground" after two buildings were leveled in an explosion at Remington UMC April 4, 1905, according to The Bridgeport Post report. The explosion, which killed three people, occurred in the cap drying room of the building on the north side of Barnum Avenue. It was reported the explosion was heard as far away as Greens Farms, Milford, and Shelton. Photo courtesy of Jim O'Brien, Connecticut Post Card Club.



Fire at the Star Shirt Factory, probably around 1915, though records are unclear. Photo courtesy of Jim O'Brien, Connecticut Post Card Club.

The Sponge Rubber Plant in Shelton was destroyed by a series of explosions and ensuing fire on March 1, 1975. A wide range of people were arrested in the case, including company officers and a psychic. Federal agents said it was one of the most extensive bombing and industrial sabotage investigations ever undertaken.





When the snows came, they really came, as shown in these photos of memorable area storms. In top photo, Bridgeporters make their way along East Main Street in the wake of the blizzard of February 1940. Directly above, trucks haul away some of the excess flakes from Lafayette Boulevard in 1978. At right, the snowbound view is Broad Street looking north from Gilbert Street after the legendary Blizzard of 1888. Below, an auto finds it rough going on Botsford Road in Newtown, again after the 1940 storm. Photos, respectively, by Al Mathewson, from Post files, courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library, and from Post files.



Brother skippers collided off Greens Farms

By C.S. LANG

The fog was dense off Greens Farms at 3 a.m. June 9, 1899. The sidewheeler C.H. Northam, commanded by Capt. Aaron Hardy, had left New York City bound for New Haven at midnight with 150 passengers aboard. The twin-screw Richard Peck had departed New Haven at about the same time, bound for New York with 125 passengers. It was captained by Edgar Hardy, brother of the Northam's skipper.

The captains knew their steamers, which were owned by the same line, would pass each other off Southport or Greens Farms as they did daily on this run. In this fog they could only listen for the sound of each other's vessel.

But out of the night, without warning, the prow of the Peck smashed full into the Northam's starboard side. Reports said the crews and passengers were sent spinning and that chaos reigned for several minutes. Finally, the passengers were transferred by gangplank from the more seriously damaged Northam to the Peck and were brought ashore. The Northam, listing a bit, became grounded in the shallow waters and was towed to port two days later.

When next the brothers Hardy met, it was reported, vituperations and fistcuffs were wantonly exchanged.



The C.H. Northam, courtesy of Pequot Library.



On July 11, 1911, the Federal Express (photos above) ran across a switch point at 60 mph at the Fairfield Avenue overpass in Bridgeport and derailed, killing 12 people and injuring 53. The Post reported that some 50,000 spectators descended on the scene. Members of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team, enroute to a game in Boston, were aboard the train. Team member Roger Bresnahan, a future hall-of-famer, was said to be "one of the most active in the rescue work." Photos courtesy of Bridgeport Public Library.



Freight train derailed in Darien due to a washout from the flood of October, 1955. Post file photo.



Floods and hurricanes have hit the area hard. Clockwise from top, floodwaters of July 29, 1905 carried this house and barn from its site near Bunnell's Pond in Beardsley Park nearly half a mile to this unidentified location; Hurricane Carol destroyed a beach refreshment stand in Lordship on Aug. 31, 1954; the clouds of Hurricane Donna gather over Black Rock Harbor on Sept. 12, 1960; and an unidentified couple evacuate Milford during Hurricane Donna. Courtesy of Jim O'Brien, Connecticut Post Card Club; Post file photo; Post file photo; Post photo by Art Plummer, respectively.





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