



The Bridge

Electronic Newsletter from the Naugatuck Historical Society: July, 2011

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July, 2011

Uniroyal Remembers

By Lisa Prior



Within the vast hall of the old Naugatuck Train Station, a small group huddled around a solid oak table laden with audio recording equipment and a box of Dunkin' Donuts Munchkins. Mary Doback, untiring contributor to the Naugatuck Historical Society, had gathered them. I had come to hear their stories. They had been rand-makers; industrial engineers; supervisors. They produced Gaiters; Keds; gumshoes. They were retirees who once worked in Uniroyal's factories. Some started as early as 1939. Most were there through 1977, when the factories began to close their doors for all-time. They had toiled together; bowled together; they spoke warmly as they remembered working with one another's parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts.

"Talk about being the best place to work," Rita Ruggiero chimed in, high

cheekbones and energetic smile belying eighty-nine years of age. "They had the best and kindest people... We felt so secure in Naugatuck with Uniroyal here – we never imagined it would go out of existence." New York native George Passabet relocated to Naugatuck in 1947. "My wife and I came to Naugatuck with all our belongings on the train," he remembered. George was drawn into Naugatuck's factories by career opportunity and Uniroyal's loyalty as an employer. "At that time, Naugatuck Footwear had a reputation for not shutting down during the Depression. They provided work for everybody, staggering people's schedules." Joan Rossi, whose family once owned the respected Rossi's Shoe Store on Church Street, worked for the company for seventeen years. "My grandfather worked so many hours at the 'Old Shop' he had his own vegetable garden

there," she grinned. "People used to call him 'Rosie' because he also grew beautiful roses. They'd say to him, 'Give me a rose for my wife for tonight'."

To see the full story pick up a copy of our quarterly newsletter at the Museum or stay tuned to the next issue of The Bridge.

If you or someone you know has a Uniroyal story from the footwear or chemical operations to share, please contact the Naugatuck Historical Society or lisa@priorconsulting.com.

Lisa Prior grew up in Naugatuck and now lives in Newton, Massachusetts, with her husband Jack and their two teenage children. She is Principal Consultant and founder of Prior Consulting, LLC, an eleven-year old, Boston-based firm focusing on leadership effectiveness and organizational change.

Naugatuck Historic District

The Naugatuck Center Historic District encompasses the institutional, commercial and residential nucleus of the Borough of Naugatuck. Located on the west side of the steep Naugatuck River Valley, the center consists of a grid of north-south streets that parallel the river. The district rises in stages from Water Street, which runs along an embankment above the river, to a fairly level narrow plain occupied by Church and Meadow streets, the principal downtown thoroughfares. On the slope of the hill that borders the western side of the district, Hillside Avenue

winds its way up to Terrace and Fairview avenues, where most residential properties are confined to the west side of these streets and overlook the downtown some 150 feet below.

The Railroad Station and home to the Naugatuck Historical Society Museum is located in the historic district. It's architect was Henry Bacon, famed architect of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. Recently one of our volunteers and docents wrote an article for our

quarterly newsletter about the work of Henry Bacon.

If you would like more information about the Historic District, Henry Bacon or are interested in a self guided walking tour of Naugatuck please call or stop by today. We also have limited supply of Historic District Plaques on sale at the Museum.



Naugatuck Historical Society Museum
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July's Events: time/date

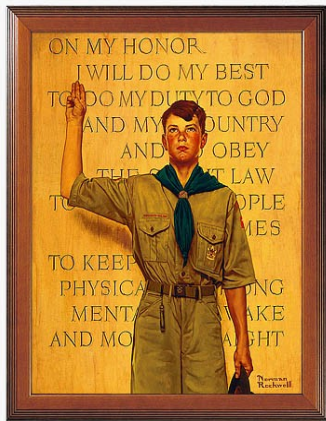
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|---|--------------|-----------|
| First Thursdays | 6-8pm | 7 |
| Beads, Buttons, & Rubber Bands | 11-12 | 8 |
| Something Fishy | 11-12 | 15 |
| BOD Meeting | 7pm | 20 |
| Upside Down Painting | 11-12 | 22 |
| Shoemakers' Shoes | 11-12 | 29 |
| Roaring 20's Car Show | | 29 |

Coming Soon

- ◆ First Thursday in August
Magic Show at 7pm
 - ◆ Teen Theater production
 - ◆ Education Fair on the Green
 - ◆ Harvest Moon Festival - September
 - ◆ Civil War Songs –October
- Look for our events on Facebook, Patch and the Borough website.

Facebook

The Naugatuck Historical Society is now on Facebook look for our group page, non-profit page or friend Charles Goodyear.



*"It is well that war is so
terrible, else we should
grow to fond of it."
General Lee to
General Longstreet*

Looking Back...Looking Forward: Scouting and Troop 102

Troop 102 has a rich heritage in the history of Scouting. Starting in 1913, it is one of the longest running groups in the country. How many of you knew it was initially chartered as Troop 2, part of the once Naugatuck Council? Did you know that the eighteen year old age limit to earn an Eagle Badge didn't exist in the early years?

We had representatives from our troops at all of the BSA's earliest National Jamborees.

Scouting in general has changed with the times. No longer is semaphore and Morse code required, or the

ability to set a snare. Who would have thought, back then, that there would be a scout requirement to show a proficiency with a small fueled backpacking stove?

The key to the success of the scouting movement has been its willingness to change with the times, without giving up the core values we recite every week in the Scout Oath and Law.

We also need to remember how much thousands of Naugatuck's young men's lives have been influenced over the years with twords of encouragement, the top notch pro-

grams, the Jamboree at Philmont and snorkeling in the Coral Reefs. How many scouts would never have taken that first step growing up with their first week away at camp Matatuck?

Looking forward, we need to remember the past. We need to continue to be flexible and change with the times, while maintain the dedication to scouting's basic values.

One hundred years from now, when someone looks back at us, will they say we were successful with out turn of carrying the torch?

Community Connections

School Connections

Welcome Andrew Avenue School, the latest school to become one of our organizational members. The Parent Group's membership allows students and parents from that school all the benefits of membership while supporting our educational programming.

Connecticut Connections

We recently welcomed Elizabeth from the Connecticut Historical Society. She came to offer her help and support. Her suggestions and comments were helpful as well as good validation for all that our volunteers and members do for the Community.

National Connections

We have joined the Blue Star Museum initiative offering free admission to activity duty military and their families this summer. We have already welcomed one family visit through this new initiative. Please call or email if you have any questions.

Colette's Craft Program - Summer 2011

A hands on approach to history



Are looking for something to do with your children this summer?

We are proud to announce this summer's programs. All programs are held on Fridays at 11am. Registration is recommended there is \$2 per child material fee.

***July 8 - Ages 7+**
"Buttons Beads and Rubber Bands"

Learn about the early industries of Naugatuck and create objects from buttons, beads and rubber bands.

***July 15 - Ages 5+**
"Something Fishy"

Hands on experience with Joe Pereira, Marine Biologist, NOAA, and his creatures from the sea.



***July 22 - Ages 8+**
"Upside Down Painting"

Learn about our own Salem Bridge Clocks and the use of reverse painting on glass, and try your hand at reverse painting technique.

***July 29 - Ages 7+**

"The Shoemakers Shoes"

Discover the history of shoemaking in Naugatuck and try your hand at making a pair of Keds.

***August 5 - Ages 5+**
"Yesterday's Toys and Games"

Become a colonial child and create toys from everyday objects: pick up sticks, buzz saws, and rag dolls.

Call 203 729 9039 or email naugatuckhistory@sbcglobal.net to register.

