

A Thread In Time

Newsletter of the
National Association of Textile Workers of America, Inc.
Volume I Issue 4 June, 2012

President's Message

Wonderful news, our Society continues to grow! Our last assigned membership number is 33. Our members are from all across the United States and our honor roll reflects the pride we have in our ancestor's or our own contribution to the Industrial Revolution.

Our annual meeting in March saw us increasing our annual scholarship by \$50. We have a new vice president, Greg Thompson. Michael Steinberg continues to support us by writing articles for our newsletter.

A policy of a waiver of one year's dues for every 5 members you recruit was put into effect. If you are a life member, a donation of the equivalent of one year's dues shall be made to the scholarship fund in your name.

I encourage you all to plan to attend our 2013 annual meeting which will be held March 10, 2013 at the Willimantic Brewing Co. in Willimantic, CT. More details will be sent after the beginning of the year. We continue to review our progress and plan our next goals for the growth of this society. Your input, even from afar is always welcome. If you cannot attend, but have some concerns, ideas, suggestion, or comments, please send them to us for consideration and possible implementation.

I invite you all to contribute to our newsletter. Please send me your articles, information, bulletins, etc.

Regards,
Mary Brown

Calendar of Events

October 28, 2012 - Massing of the Colors 3 p.m.
St. Stephen's Church, East Haddam, CT

March 10, 2012- Annual Meeting 12:30 p.m.
Willimantic Brewing Co., Willimantic, CT

Insignia

You may order or insignia for \$45 including shipping and handling. Send a check made out to NSDTWA to William A. Warner, P. O. Box 232, Thompson, CT 06277. All proceeds from the sale of this medal are placed in the dedicated scholarship fund.

Membership Notice:

The opportunity to enjoy life membership is now offered at

Under age 50 - 30 times the annual dues

Age 50 and older - 20 times the annual dues

Currently, the annual dues are \$10. We know that we can't keep them at that level for long, so it may behoove you to purchase a life membership now. If you have already paid your 2012 dues, deduct them from your life membership check. Checks should be made out to NSDTWA and mailed to Gail Rebello, treasurer, 4 Village Hill Rd., Lebanon, CT 06249.

Scholarship

A goal of our Society is to provide scholarships to Vocational School students. The scholarship does not have to be used for college. It can be for licensing fees, tools, etc. *Daniel Livingston*, who has graduated fourth in his class from Windham Technical School in Willimantic, CT met the following criteria:

1. Exemplary work ethic
2. Respect for self, family, peers, and persons in authority
3. Strong background and interest in American History
4. Good academic performance
5. Attendance record indicates no suspensions or unexcused absences

Congratulations Daniel and best wishes for a successful career.

Website

Please visit our outstanding website at www.textileworker.com. This website was designed and is maintained by Tracy Crocker. You will notice that some of the honor roll members have special attachments with anecdotes about their life. You are welcome to submit material about your ancestor. Please contact or Tracy Crocker at Tracy@tracycrocker.com or Mary Brown at mbrown51@snet.net for submission of this material.

Jim Donahue and the Buckland Mills

By Michael Steinberg

Recently I had the good fortune of reading the diary of James Anthony Donahue, oldest brother of my mother, Margaret Eleanor Donahue Steinberg. Making him my eldest maternal uncle, of course.

Jim



Jim, as everyone called him, wrote the diary in 1924. That was the year he turned 12. He listed his address at 144 Adams Street, Buckland, Ct, and his phone number as 155-14. Buckland is now part of the city of Manchester, which is east of Hartford. The diary indicates that the 1923 population of Manchester was 20,075, and that of Connecticut as 1.38 million.

Among “Things of Paramount Importance” in the diary, Jim listed “Father McCann asked me to be an altar boy,” April 6, “Ma had her teeth pulled,” April 9, and “I won the first prize in the spelling contest,” May 16.

For most days of the year Jim wrote one or two sentences to report things he considered noteworthy for the day. For example, “Sent a letter to John McKenna,” on New Year’s Day,” and “Earned ten cents by going to store for Mrs. Bryan,” January 3.

Throughout the diary Jim noted who he worked for and how much he earned. In the back of the diary he listed all his earnings and expenses for the year. Most of what he made he deposited into his savings account.

By all indications he was quite the bright young lad. Besides winning the spelling contest, other entries tell us that his “Mark was 94%,” on his January 7 report card, and on February 7 Jim “Had my examination in Geography. My mark was 98%.”

He also seems to have been quite the voracious reader. On March 19 he wrote, “I took ‘Dogs Of Boystown’ from the library.” On May 21 he reported, “Finished ‘Dogs of Boystown.’ ” He reported similar quick reads in his diary.

Church was an important part of his life. On February 1 he wrote, “Went to Holy Communion to-day.” On the next day he wrote, “Went to church and got a candle,” And, as noted above, he became an altar boy that year.

Through Jim’s entries we learn of other family members, and sometimes about their work.

“Pa worked overtime tonight and got home at seven P.M.” he wrote on Saturday March 15. On May 19: “Today is Grace Marie’s (his sister’s) birthday.” From February 25: “Uncle John (his grandmother’s second husband) went to work at the warehouse this morning.” “Pa, Joe and Jack (his brothers) went to a baseball game,” on June 22.

And, on that particularly caught my eye, from Monday, April 7: “Grandma got a pro?y caught in her hand at the mill.”

Buckland Mills

“Grandma” was my great grandmother, Mary Ann Tammany Donahue Carroll. Mary Ann, born in Norwich, CT, married Cornelius Donahue, who came from Ireland. Cornelius first appeared in the 1870 Census at age 23. He “works in a paper mill,” the Census reported then. That most likely was the Peter Adams Paper Mill, which was a ways down Adams Street from the Donahue home at 144 Adams.

Mary Ann and Cornelius had three sons, William and Charles, who Jim wrote of, and “Pa,” Francis Joseph, my maternal grandfather, who went through most of his life thinking he was Joseph Francis.

Cornelius died at age 41 in 1892. My mother told me the dyes in the paper mill killed him at that relatively early age. Mary Ann subsequently remarried John Carroll, “Uncle John.” Mary Ann would have been in her mid-60s when something got “caught in her hand at the mill.” Whatever that was, it couldn’t have been too pleasant.

Remember, this was way before the days of Social Security and Medicare. Elders had to depend on the support of family and whatever, if any, work they could find to sustain themselves.

The mill was likely the EE Hilliard woolen mill, “perhaps the oldest woolen mill in the US,”

according to the December 1994 Buckland Times, a newsletter put out in that decade by Manchester's Sue Way. The paper mill had burned down in 1897.

The woolen mill's history largely paralleled that of Buckland itself.

The Connecticut General Assembly originally granted land in the area to John Allen in 1672 "near his saw mill." Allen was "the first white settler" in the area, according to the issue of the Buckland Times cited above.

A century later Aaron Buckland established a cloth mill there and the settlement took on his name.

The Hilliard family took over and expanded what had become a woolen mill, and by 1924 still ran it. It has since ceased to operate.

A descendent of one of the Hilliard owners wrote this account of life in the mill town of Hilliardsville, as the southern part of Buckland came to be known. This also appeared in the Buckland Times:

"The mill 'hands,' English and Irish, lived in the village in company houses and their welfare as well as their wages were a charge upon the purse and energy of the owner. It was feudal on a small scale. The supervision of a sick family was part of the duty of the employer, and when the children were still young, after a few terms at the District School, they were taken into light work on the farm and in the mill."

Jim's father, my grandfather, was working in the mill at age 14 as a carder, and his older brother William, was 16 and had been a worker there two years, the 1900 Census reported. This likely was necessitated because their father had died from his work at the paper mill, throwing the family into distress.

But somehow "Pa" escaped mill work and his efforts promised Jim and his family a better future.

Jim's diary doesn't indicate if his "mill hand" grandmother received any care or compensation from her employer after her injury. We do know that she lived on for another 20 years or so.

Unfortunately this was not so for James Anthony Donahue. On July 4, 1925 he was injured in a fireworks explosion. This led to his contraction of tetanus, known as lockjaw in those days, and then to his untimely death.

He is buried with his parents in St. Brigid's Cemetery in Manchester. My mother was three month's old when Jim died.



Francis, Jim and Grace Donohue

But Jim's diary has left us some bright sparks of a young life beginning so beautifully, and with so much promise. And of glimpses of a time long ago now, but that has brought us all to where we are now.

And maybe something more. As I read through Jim's diary, I couldn't help but notice that his cursive writing bore a close resemblance to mine.

Or maybe it was mine to his. I picked out his sentence "I went to Manchester," went into another room without the diary and wrote the sentence on a blank piece of paper in my cursive.

Most of the lettering was virtually the same. I showed this to my sisters. They agreed.

Many thanks to Sue Way for her many contributions to this article

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