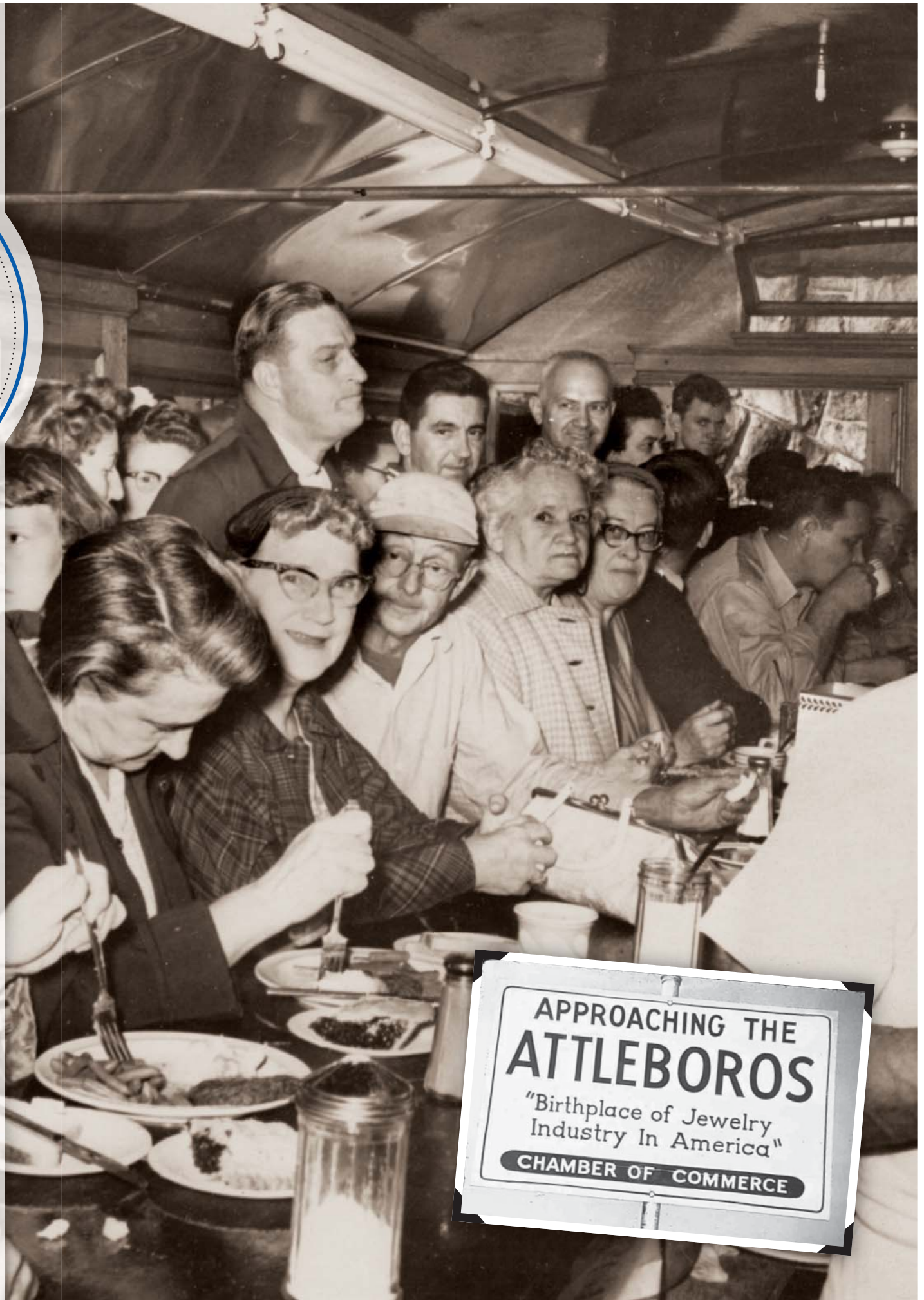


ATTLEBORO

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1914 - 2014
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THE
MAKING OF
a City

1 of 3



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THE BEGINNING

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This is the first of three special sections marking Attleboro's centennial as a city.

Coming in August will be a pictorial history of the city along with front pages of historic significance.

And early in September, look for a special section previewing the Sept. 6 picnic, parade and fireworks. That section will also include commentaries from city officials, dignitaries and ordinary citizens on "Why I love Attleboro."

The Sun Chronicle wishes to acknowledge Mayor Kevin Dumas as a major sponsor of this special section. His message to the city appears on the back page.

Photos used in this section are from the archives of the Attleboro Area Industrial Museum; the Attleboro Public Library and The Sun Chronicle



Shown are two views of old-time Attleboro. Above, Park Street looking toward the Bronson Building at what is now known as Charles Fiske Square and at right, the old Briggs Hotel on South Main Street.

On the cover: The Mill Street Diner, which was also known as the Franklin Street Diner, in 1961



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THE BEGINNING

A town becomes a city

A slow and frustrating start to a municipality's future finally gets moved along by the governor

BY MARK FLANAGAN | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

Amidst an incredible boom of factory creation and population growth in the first decade of the last century, the idea of converting the town of Attleborough into a city took hold. Voters agreed with the idea at two town meetings. They agreed again in a special election. All three times the board of selectmen refused to advance a city charter.

The wheels toward cityhood for Attleboro finally stopped spinning shortly after 5 p.m. June 16, 1914.

That, according to the next day's Attleboro Sun, was when Gov. David I. Walsh signed an essential piece of paper.

"The Attleboro city charter is now a law," said the lead headline of the June 17, 1914 Sun. The story below it reported "Gov. David I. Walsh affixed his signature and the bill now awaits approval or disapproval of the town."

The road to this juncture had been slow and frustrating for charter advocates. Backdropping the two town meeting votes and the special election had come two years of study by a "Committee of Seven" and another year of study by a "Committee of 26" — all to no avail.

But traction was provided by the governor's signature. And it

came in a surge.

► Less than five months later, on Nov. 3, some 80 percent of the eligible voters turned out for the state election and accepted the referendum to accept the city charter by a 2-1 margin.

► Five weeks after that, a nearly unbelievable 96 percent of the eligible voters participated in Attleboro's very first city election. On Dec. 8, they chose Harold E. Sweet as the first mayor, by a 3-1 margin, and selected a panel of industrialists, lawyers, businessmen and professionals as the first city council. Hundreds of them celebrated that night in a torchlight parade to Sweet's home.

► A month later, a thousand residents packed into the then new Attleboro High School on County Street to see Sweet and the first city council inaugurated. The first council meeting followed. Cityhood had arrived with the Nov. 3 charter vote. City government first went to work with full authority on Jan. 5, 1915.

The runup

The pen that Democrat Walsh had used to sign the Attleboro city charter legislation was presented to Attleboro's Republican state representative, George Worrall, in recognition of his efforts in advancing the bill. But for Worrall grab-



View of the Common and Old and New Second Congregational Churches. Attleboro, Mass.

View of the Attleboro Common and the old and new Second Congregational Church.

bing the bull by the horns, there's no telling how long Attleborough would have remained in a cycle of voting for cityhood while remaining a town.

When the 20th century arrived 14 years earlier, it brought a host of new pressures on a town government in which the legislative powers were invested in town meeting — open to any registered voter; meaning, at the time, any male over age 21 who had his poll tax paid up to date — and the executive powers were shared by three members of the board of selectmen and by such other officials as the school committee, board of fire engineers and the overseers of the poor, all of them subject to an-

nual election.

In the first decade of the 1900s, the number of factories in the town soared and the manufacturing output doubled. The work force attracted to the industrial dynamo located where the main railroad line along America's Eastern Seaboard crossed the Ten Mile River, boosted the population by 43 percent — a town of 11,000 residents had grown to more than 18,000 by 1914. They called it "the Hub of the Jewelry World," but jewelry accounted for only half the output, with textile manufacturing, tool manufacturing and other industries accounting for the rest.

Accommodating this indus-

trial and population growth involved tremendous changes in what would be called the infrastructure of the city today. On his re-election as president of the Attleboro Board of Trade in early 1914, famed inventor and industrialist Frank Mossberg noted that this "city-sized town" had built a new high school and Capron Park, while also eliminating grade crossings, which involved elevating the railroad tracks on arches built in the center city. A "well-equipped" Sturdy Memorial Hospital had opened the year before. The YMCA had developed a "splendid" reputation and The Sun was "a live and hustling newspaper."

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THE BEGINNING

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Mossberg might well have also mentioned that the Attleboro Public Library and Attleboro's red-brick elementary schools — Bliss, Richardson, Finberg, Tiffany, Lincoln and Washington — were also built during this period. But while the selectmen/town meeting system was getting the tasks done during the Attleboro boom, many leaders were thinking "there has to be a better way."

The idea of cityhood had gained force by 1911, when the town formed a "Committee of Seven" to study the question of a charter. A year later, the seven were supplanted by a "Committee of 26." Between them, the two committees put forth three charter questions to the town. All were passed. All ended up in limbo.

Town meeting had approved pro-cityhood articles on Dec. 30, 1912, and again on Jan. 6, 1913. The third approval came in a special election on Dec. 9, 1913. Out of the town's approximately 3,400 voters, some



Hayward & Briggs factory in 1875 before the town became a city.

1,156 participated in the referendum. They backed cityhood decisively, 760 to 396 votes.

But a menu of three different city government styles had been placed before the voters. A mayor-council proposal was backed by 311 voters, while 307 backed a slightly different proposal. The other 142 pro-city votes went to a plan that would have kept the

board of selectmen, but empower it to appoint a city manager.

Nothing happened. In subsequent editorials, The Sun rued that the election registrars had refused to certify the vote and selectmen refused to fulfill the voters' wishes, contending that arguments about "the definition of majority" prevented implementation of the vote.

The deadlock would be broken by the town's Republican state rep by taking the question out of the town hall arena and into the Statehouse. On Jan. 16, 1914, a front-page headline in The Sun read "Worrall files city petition." The rep had beaten that year's Jan. 17 deadline for filing new legislation by submitting a petition for a city charter, though it was not accompanied with a specific "advertised" bill, as required by the rules of the Legislature.

Only a week later, a Sun headline read "Attleboro charter gets by rules." The committee had met behind closed doors and voted to suspend the rule requiring the advertis-

ing of the specific bill. The Sun's explanation from Worrall: The bill was not advertised because there was no one in authority in the town to attend to it in detail.

In the interim, The Sun had made note that state Rep. Joseph Martin, R-North Attleboro, was House chairman of the committee on cities and a member of the committee on rules, the two panels that were most crucial to advancing Worrall's petition. As publisher of The North Attleboro Chronicle, Martin might be perceived as a likely rival, but he had started his career on the public stage as a Sun reporter and throughout the career that would see him rise to the position of speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives he was wildly popular with local voters. Martin wasn't outspoken about cityhood, but it was clear that the advocates of a charter for Attleboro had a friend in high places.

In short order, the committee on cities scheduled a hearing in Attleboro on the city

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HAPPY 100th ANNIVERSARY ATTLEBORO

Having grown up in the restaurant business, owners Antony Canova and his wife Kimberly knew at an early age that this was what they wanted for a career.

Antony's father, Luciano Canova of Luciano's Restaurant in Wrentham, was the driving force in rejuvenating The Colonel Blackinton Inn in 2003. Luciano instilled in his son the importance of cleanliness, upkeep of the gardens and the inn and staff commitment to an exclusive dining experience.

The Inn, created from a historic landmark known as the Blackinton Double House (circa 1850), currently has 11 rooms to accommodate overnight guests and a carriage house, which holds up to 55 guests for exclusive gatherings. The historic, colonial charm provides a comfort-

able, cozy atmosphere for guests seeking a pleasant alternative to large hotels.

In the dining room almost everything is made from scratch, including sauces and dressings. The Canovas use local companies and farmers delivering fresh produce whenever possible, and all ground beef is prepared right here daily.

This past October, Antony and Kimberly celebrated their 10th anniversary as owners and they would like to thank the community for their support. The Colonel Blackinton Inn is a historical building and they feel it is an honor and an obligation to preserve its appearance and its integrity.

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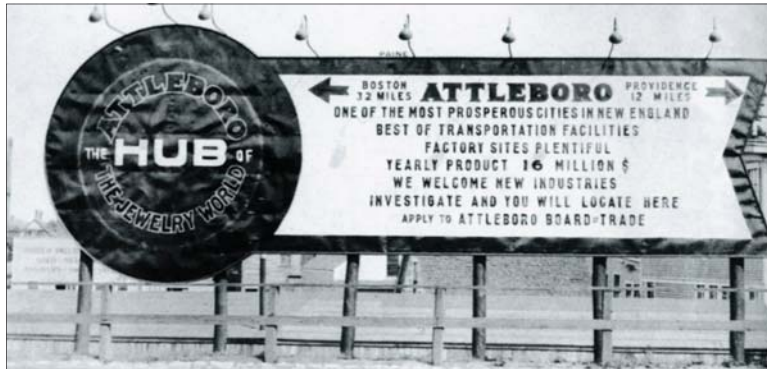
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THE BEGINNING

FROM PAGE 4

charter question for March 13. While it would encourage a large turnout for the meeting, The Sun editorially regretted the chosen date, noting it could conflict with town meeting, set to start March 9 and expected to continue for several sessions.

When state Sen. Andrew Doyle of New Bedford and the rest of the committee on cities held their hearing in the Attleboro Board of Trade Hall, they faced an audience of 80 people. Not one quoted in the next day's Sun favored retention of the status quo. The closest was Attorney Walter A. Briggs. "If the change to a city means what it has in other places, let us stay a good town," he said, but his remark came while he advocated that either the highest



Attleboro welcoming sign sat at the train depot proclaiming the city as the "Hub of the Jewelry World" in 1917.

vote-getter among selectmen be named mayor or that the three selectmen appoint a town manager.

Members of the Board of Trade favored a council-mayor plan. Industrialist S.O. Bigney spoke out for an elected city assembly, as did William King. W.C. Coley said the board of selectmen "would

have a different history" if expanded to five members. Bigney countered with a proposal that a five-member city council be elected, then elect its chairman to serve as mayor.

An editorial the next day, headlined "The City of Attleboro," said that the panel would be

framing a charter proposing "a real mayor with power and a small assembly." None of the backers of alternate plans would be getting all that they wanted, said the editorial, but all would be getting something in terms of improved central authority and consolidation of services.

Over the next three months, the Legislature would propose, adopt and send to the governor a bill for an Attleboro charter that was a revised version of the last city charter adopted in the state, for Westfield in 1899. It would call for a strong mayor and an 11-member city council.

Meanwhile, The Sun's editorial fears about town meeting conflicting with the city charter hearing would prove groundless. The town meeting of 1914 would prove to be the greatest ally that city

government advocates could have hoped for.

Each of the several sessions featured motions to reconsider articles passed at a previous session. The two most contentious items strongly supported the argument that central authority was lacking.

Fisticuffs were actually threatened at one town meeting session, where a motion carried to rescind the appointment of Selectman Millard Ashley as building inspector. The appointment had continued a practice of naming one selectman to carry out the day-to-day duties of the board at town hall and to hold a second town post so that he would receive adequate compensation. This had worked without complaint when a former selectman had also served

SEE 100TH, PAGE 7 ►

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FROM PAGE 6

as an assessor, but local builders revolted over the idea of selectman as building inspector, calling it a conflict of interest.

More complicated was the matter of buying the police department its first car. Town meeting first rejected the proposal. At a subsequent session, it was reconsidered and passed, and the car was purchased. At yet another meeting, voters reconsidered again, rejected the purchase and ordered selectmen to sell the police car at auction.

Ultimately, the motions were ruled out of order. Ashley stayed as building inspector. The police department kept the car.

Town meeting had proved itself contentious but toothless. As Gov. Walsh was signing the Attleboro

charter bill, the image of town government was that of — as a Sun editorial put it — “the vaudeville stage.”

The Charter Election

On the eve of the state election of Nov. 3, 1914, state election, in which Attleboro’s ballot included a referendum on whether to accept a city charter, The Sun reported that “indications point to the largest vote in Attleboro’s history.”

The superlative had to be amended in the Nov. 4 paper. Participation by 2,520 represented about 80 percent of the 3,400 registered voters, but fell a couple of hundred votes short of the record set in 1912. Still, it constituted the “largest number outside of a presidential year.”

But they passed the charter by a more than 2-1 margin, 1,581 to 754.

And that fact, coupled with an announcement on Page 1 of the Nov. 4 Sun, set the stage for Attleboro’s first city election to be held on Dec. 8 — just five weeks later — and for the first to be the most engaging election in city history.

The announcement so critical to this groundswell came under the headline: “Harold E. Sweet enters mayor’s race.” It was a statement signed by Sweet saying that he had been asked during the spring if he would consider running for mayor if the charter passed. He believed it would have been inappropriate to say before the question was settled but “now that the charter has been adopted I may say in all frankness that the possibility of becoming the first mayor of Attleboro appeals to me ... as a call to service in behalf of the community in which I have al-

ways lived.”

Sweet, treasurer and manager of the R.F. Simmons Co. and a school board member, went on to declare that he would be aligned with no clique or faction, that he would give “careful and economic consideration of the city’s affairs,” that he had no long-term political ambitions and would not be establishing a political machine.

Pretty standard stuff for an announcement of candidacy, but The Sun — which had floated Sweet’s name as an attractive candidate in a March editorial and described

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A clipping from The Attleboro Sun announcing the opening of Sturdy Memorial Hospital, which began operations 101 years ago, in 1913.

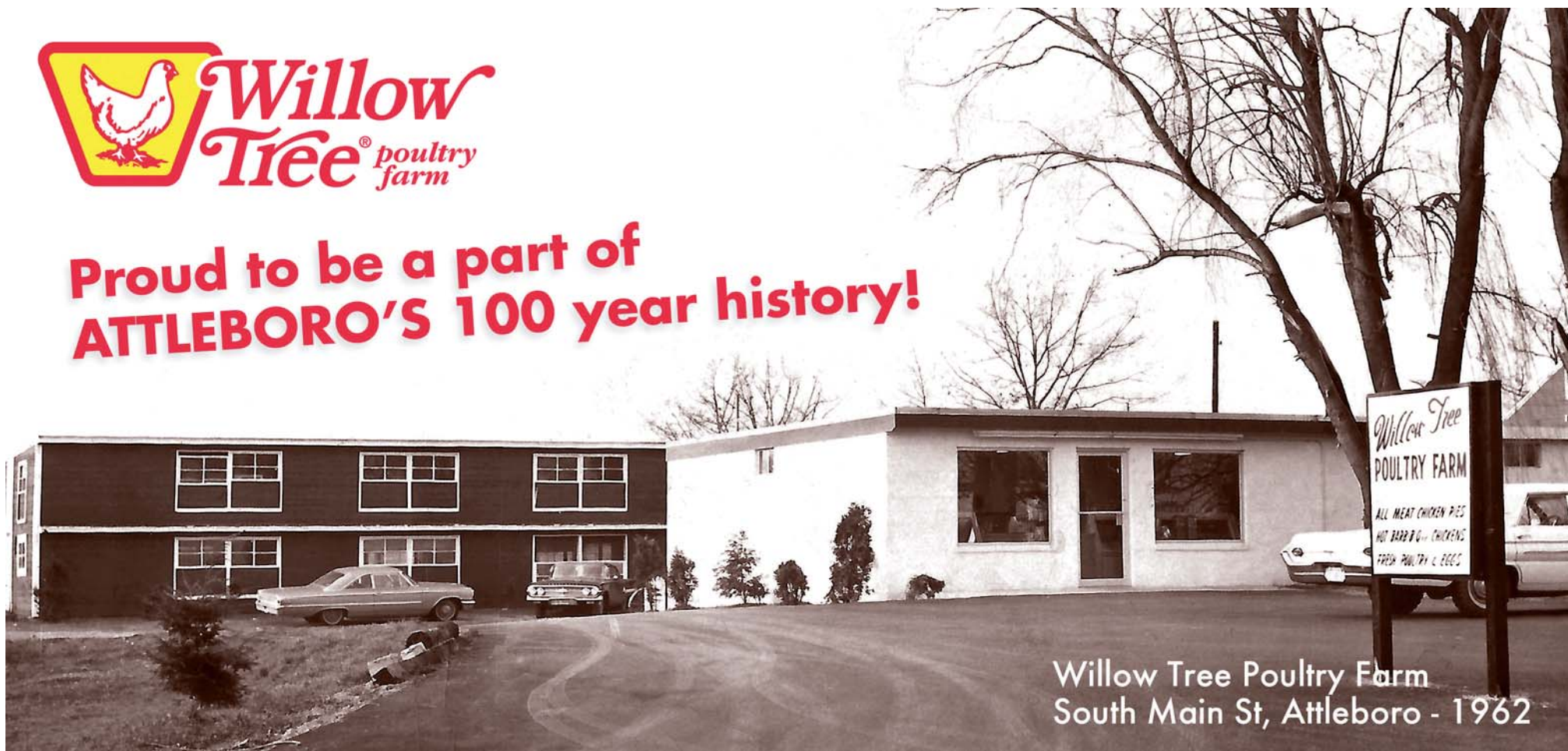
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April 5, 1913

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If present plans materialize, the Sturdy Memorial hospital will be opened Monday, April 14. It is planned to have doctors' day, Thursday April 10, and an opening to the public Saturday, April 12. The opening for business will be on the following Monday. Miss G. G. Rice, the superintendent, has been in town for the past two weeks preparing for the opening, and the hospital has been fitted according to her ideas. Thursday next, the physicians from



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FROM PAGE 7

him as a perfect match for the mayor's job in a May editorial — gushed over the announcement in a Nov. 5 editorial: "The City of Attleboro will be frankly puzzled tonight whether the news of its acceptance of the charter or the news of Harold E. Sweet's candidacy for mayor is of more importance ... Mr. Sweet combines the qualities of Attleboro's first mayor to such a degree that arguments seem vain ... Attleboro is fortunate that this first test of the charter has proved so successful. It will be well if the council candidates appear as promising."

On the same front page as Sweet's announcement appeared a story speculating on who else might run for mayor. Ten names were floated. The story also

named 10 potential candidates for the first city council.

First City Election

Following acceptance of the charter, town officials had to race to re-divide the three voting precincts into five wards and to appoint election officials for the first city election. While that was quickly being done, the list of 10 potential challengers for mayor shrank to one. James H. Leedham, a lawyer, first-term selectman and former water commissioner, would ultimately offer himself up as the sacrificial lamb to the Sweet juggernaut, an army that ranged from his fellow members at Highland Country Club to wage-earners who admired his company's treatment of workers. The list of 10 potential council candidates would rise and rise and rise and fall, leveling out at 30 vying for five ward



The J.M. Bates Watch Case Factory in Attleboro was among the many buildings destroyed in the Great Fire of 1898.

seats and six at-large openings.

Election day was ushered in on a series of rallies. Every night candidates and supporters were gathering in rented halls or on street corners to press for votes.

Sweet vs. Leedham was the main event on Dec. 8, 1914, even if there was little if any doubt

about the outcome. Voters also faced a no-license referendum, one that would impose a prohibition on sales of alcohol in the city, as well as another on whether to allow one day off in five for firefighters, a question described as moot because permanent firefighters were going on Civil Service as

a result of the city charter passing a month before.

The turnout was nothing short of amazing. Out of 3,554 registered voters, 3,442 cast ballots. Even though the campaigns had lasted but a month, election day was rainy and the polls were only open from 6 a.m.-4 p.m., 96 percent of Attleboro's eligible voters participated in its first city election. And illness or absence from the city surely accounted for many of the 112 who skipped it.

"Sweet and no-license carry city," said the lead headline in the next day's Sun. It noted that the new mayor had won by a 3-1 majority and carried every ward in the city, two of them by approximately 5-1 margins and none by less than 2-1.

Named as the city's first at-
SEE 100TH, PAGE 10 ►

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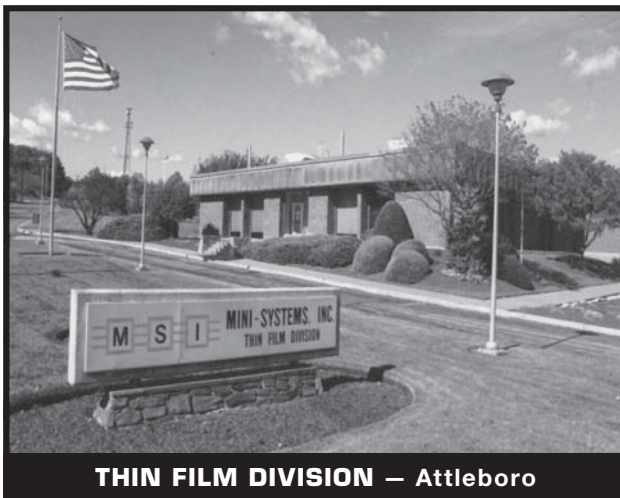
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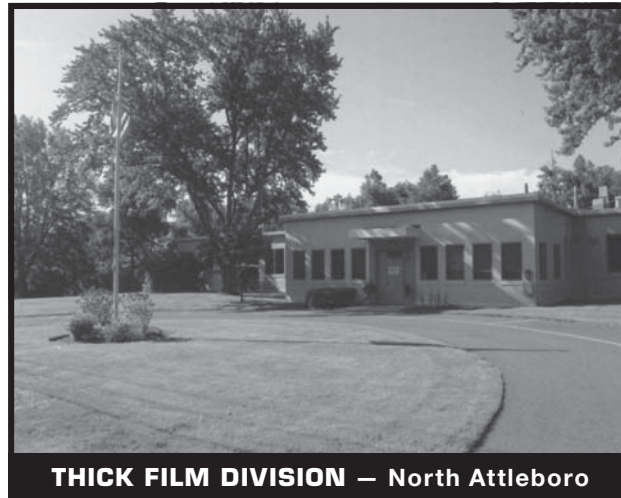
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large councilors were Philip Brady, a judge at Fourth District Court who would succeed Sweet as mayor; William H. Saart, a jewelry manufacturer; Oscar Wolfenden, operator of a textile factory, which a few years before had been ranked as the world's largest dye house; Charles O. Sweet, jewelry manufacturer; Harry P. Kent, jewelry manufacturer, and Stephen H. Foley, an undertaker and another future mayor. Elected as ward councilmen were Ward 1, William Garner, former superintendent of the Dodgeville Mill and father of a co-founder of Leach & Garner; Ward 2, William Spier, jewelry inventor and manufacturer; Ward 3, Solomon Jacobs, a clothing merchant; Ward 4, Samuel Holman, in the real estate and related businesses, and Ward 5, Joseph Gaynor, a

lawyer.

The 265 women who voted that day could only participate in the school board election and helped choose Edwin Thayer, district court clerk, to a one-year term.

About 8 o'clock that night, LeClair's Orchestra began to form in front of the Bates Theatre at North Main and Park streets. A delegation in Oriental costumes fell in behind the band. Then came the newly-formed West Side Club and then, The Sun reported, "came hundreds in a long line."

Followed by a motorcade carrying Edward A. Sweeney, a co-author of Attleboro's initial charter proposal and referred to as "father of the charter," selectmen chairman Millard F. Ashley and others, "red fire lighted every step of the way" as the procession headed up the 150 yards or so to Sweet's home.



Workers in the Wolfenden Dye House in 1915, a year after the Town of Attleborough became the City of Attleboro.

The crowd packed Sweet's lawn and cheered for the winning candidate. Sweeney presented a copy of the charter to Sweet on behalf of himself and co-writer John Coady. As if to symbolically hoist Sweet onto the voters' shoulders, he was motorcaded through the city center to answer waves from other sup-

porters. The rally went on until 11 p.m.

"I am very grateful tonight," the mayor-elect told his well-wishers, "but I am very tired after a hard week of campaigning. I ask you to excuse me with the very brief statement that I more than appreciate your hearty support today."

The first inauguration

While they would not officially have power until they were sworn in, Attleboro's newly-elected city leaders had to go to work right away in order to make plans for their own inauguration. Controversy was already bubbling up over compensation to some of the town officials who had been duly elected to terms ending in March, but ousted through adoption of the charter. And controversy would erupt over initial plans to reserve 350 tickets for the new office-holders. It was squelched by cutting the number of reserved seats to 117.

On the night of Jan. 5, 1915, 1,000 people squeezed into the auditorium of Attleboro High School to see Sweet and the new council sworn in.

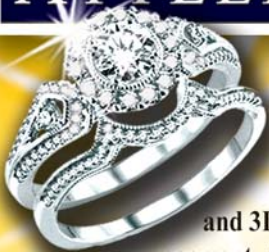
SEE 100TH, PAGE 14 ►

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THE BEGINNING

FROM PAGE 10

In his inaugural address, Sweet spoke of adding three night police patrolmen and reorganizing the suburban fire companies.

He proposed that the city create a central charity bureau, advocated better milk inspections and said the city deserved more state highway funding and better telephone service. He urged the council to create policies to attract more industry to the city. He insisted on a “pay as you go policy” on city finances and urged the council to be economical.

As its first order of business at the meeting that followed, the council elected Brady as its first president.

The city government that Attleboro had strived for since 1911 was, at last, finally in place on Jan. 15, 1915.

“If a good beginning counts as much toward the result as the old adage indicates,” said an editorial in the next day’s Sun, “Attleboro may well be satisfied with the start her new city government has made.”



Harold Sweet, the city's first mayor, served from 1914- 1918



The Park Hotel decked out in patriotic glory in 1917 to mark the United States' entry into World War I. More than 1,000 service men from Attleboro fought in the war, and many women from Attleboro, including the legendary Ruth Holden, went overseas as Red Cross nurses.

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All roads, and tracks, lead to Attleboro

City became hub of transportation

BY **STEPHEN PETERSON** | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

Forget about Boston being a Hub. For the past century, Attleboro has also been a transportation center.

From the railroads and street cars in the early years to the interstate highway system that cut through the city in the 1960s, transportation has played a key role shaping Attleboro.

With the city rebuilding its center around the rail system in recent years, transportation — and the railroad system — are again in the limelight.

The railroad came to Attleboro in the 1850s, essentially creating what's now downtown Attleboro.

It had a crucial role distributing goods manufactured in city factories, including jewelry products.

Interstate 95 opened in 1964, and many city streets were relocated and homes moved as the highway divid-

ed the city.

With Attleboro strategically located between the major cities of Providence and Boston, the highway enabled Attleboro to grow.

In recent years, the transportation center at the downtown train station has been developed as part of the city's downtown revitalization project. A bus stop is a key part of that. However, a large building for residential and commercial uses being built next to Christopher Heights assisted living on South Main Street is also a spinoff of the train station. The residential units are expected to be marketed to train commuters. A similar building is planned by the same developer across Wall Street, closer to the MBTA parking lot and bus stop.

Along with the South Attleboro train stop, the stations are among the busiest in Massachusetts.

Then again, the Prov-



The Attleboro train depot as seen in the winter of 1902, 12 years before the town became the city.

idence to Boston rail line is among the most heavily traveled in the country, with MBTA, Amtrak and its high-speed Acela trains, and overnight freight trains frequenting the tracks. The story of transportation told in "A Pictorial History of the Attleboros" begins, literally, in the "horse and buggy days," the book says.

"Railroads were a dominant feature. Together with trolleys, they united the towns of the area. Attleboro was a transportation hub and also had a special link to North Attleboro in the form of the Gee Whiz line" railroad.

"Trolleys hauled passengers everywhere — from

Norton to Mansfield, from North Attleborough to Attleboro or Pawtucket, from Plainville to Franklin and beyond. But train and trolley tracks also divided the towns. Movement through the area was often slow and dangerous," the book, published in 2002 by The Sun Chronicle, adds.

The book features pictures of "main streets being shared by trolleys, cars and horses. That arrangement didn't last for long. Railroad lines were elevated. Trolley tracks were removed. The buggies...well, they went the way of the horse and buggy," author Mark Flanagan, a retired Sun Chronicle editor, wrote.

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LIFE'S CALAMITIES

The trials of life over 100 years

BY DAVID LINTON | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

City public safety and public works officials have seen their share of disasters and crimes over the years and have mustered through to perform their duty, sometimes in the face of severe obstacles.

One of the city's biggest disasters — and certainly its deadliest — occurred 50 years ago, when the Thompson Chemical Plant at the Attleboro-Seekonk line blew up in what is con-

sidered one of the state's worst fires.

Seven people were killed and 40, including six firefighters, were injured in the Jan. 12, 1964, blast and fire. The inferno burned for 4 1/2 days.

Newspapers reported the explosion could be heard as far away as Boston and the fireball could be seen from Woonsocket. A thick pall of smoke blew over North Seekonk so thick that residents who

evacuated their homes were unable to grope their way back.

Six hundred homes were evacuated from a mile-wide radius of Hebronville. For blocks in all directions, the concussion shattered windows of homes and cars. Walls buckled and some homes shifted on their foundations.

The explosion triggered the largest mobilization of fire and rescue personnel in Southeastern Massa-



The Thompson Chemical Plant burns on Jan. 12, 1964.

chusetts since the great Fall River Fire of the 1920s, and the tragedy ushered in a new era of fire safety and other regulations.

More than 500 firefighters, police, civil defense and rescue personnel responded to the incident.

The cause of the blast remains a mystery, despite extensive hearings by the state fire marshal's office and an investigation by a joint committee of the Legislature.

The plant had six buildings on 15 acres in 1964, and the blast occurred in a building where polyvinyl chloride was manufactured.

The building contained twenty 2,000-gallon processing tanks, each with 800 to 900 gallons of polyvinyl chloride, a chemical used to manufacture plastic products such as shower curtains, electrical insulation, phonograph records and shoe soles.

All that is known is that there was an apparent leak

of polyvinyl chloride gas. The explosion was triggered by "an outside source of ignition," officials told The Attleboro Sun at the time.

The plant met the highest safety standards of the day. It was supposed to be vapor-proof. Even the telephones were grounded in such a way to prevent electrical sparks.

"They are a safety-conscious outfit," Deputy Fire Chief Frank Streeter Jr. later testified at a fire marshal's hearing. "Anything we asked them to do, they did."

Police and fire officials worked feverishly to make sure people got to safety after the blast.

Police made block-by-block sweeps to make sure everyone was out. Doors were left open and half-filled cups of coffee and plates of food remained on tables.

"It was like the day the world stood still," Seekonk

Patrolman Everett Kandarjian Jr. told The Attleboro Sun at the time.

Firefighters poured more than a million gallons of water on the blaze in the first night, alone. Attleboro Fire Chief Merton Churchill, father of recently retired Fire Chief Ronald Churchill, worked through the night and was hospitalized with chest pains early Monday morning. He had to remain at Sturdy Memorial Hospital for a week.

After the blast, a snow storm hit, hampering firefighters who had to battle up to a foot of snow and temperatures in the teens.

A whole new era of fire safety and environmental safety was ushered in after the fire.

Fire officials say standards have dramatically improved. Water is no longer used in fighting chemical fires and Attleboro's first foam fire truck was

SEE **DISASTER**, PAGE 17 ►

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LIFE'S CALAMITIES

FROM PAGE 16

purchased as a result of the Thompson blast.

The state now has regional hazardous materials teams and equipment and a state agency, the Department of Environmental Protection, that responds to serious environmental or health threats.

At the federal level, the Environmental Protection Agency was created in the 1970s, and the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration responds to workplace fatalities and serious injuries.

The memory of the 1964 blast still lingered over an Attleboro zoning board of appeals hearing in 2010, when it granted a

special permit allowing Roberts Chemical Co., a chemical storage and distribution firm from Pawtucket, to move to the former Thompson site just off Oakhill Avenue.

Sixty-six years before that, the center of the then-town of Attleborough, was pretty much wiped out in what became known as The Great Attleboro Fire. On May 18, 1898, fire swept through town's downtown, incinerating four acres of prime downtown real estate and almost obliterating its thriving jewelry industry.

In just under three hours, it wiped out 16 factories and threw 1,500 men and women out of work.

Newspaper accounts of



The center of Attleboro after the Great Fire of 1898. The city we know today rose from the ashes of this disaster.

the day called it a "fiend," a "roaring volcano," a "crushing calamity."

And there were plenty of others. In 1917, flames con-

sumed a number of buildings at the corner of Park and South Main streets. It was known as Herrick Corner fire.

On Oct. 29, 1912, several buildings on North Main Street were destroyed in what was known as the Watson Block fire.

And along the way, in the city's last 100 years, there have been numerous other blazes that destroyed various factories and some of the city's once grand hotels. And then there were the disasters the city incurred thanks to Mother Nature. They included the Hurricane of 1938 which left large swaths of land denuded, and of course, the famous Blizzard of 1978, which paralyzed the city for weeks on end, along with numerous floods.

But, not all tragic news came with a blast, a spark or fierce winds.

Sometimes it emerged slowly, after meticulous investigation.

In late 1999 and the early 2000s, an Attleboro religious sect made up of close family members made headlines for several years after a 6-month-old boy was reported missing and was later determined to have died of starvation as a result of a bizarre religious directive from one its members.

The clan, made up of family members of leader Roland Robidoux and his friend Roger Daneau, called themselves "The Body."

The group rejected modern medicine and insti-

SEE **DISASTERS**, PAGE 18

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LIFE'S CALAMITIES

FROM PAGE 17

tutions and refused to cooperate with authorities when the boy, Samuel Robidoux, Roland's grandson, was reported missing in November 1999.

An investigation by city police, state police assigned to the Bristol County District Attorney's Office and a grand jury determined that the boy was starved for 51 days.

He was later found buried five months later in Baxter State Park in Maine with another sect child who was still-born.

Samuel Robidoux died because of a "religious prophesy" of one of its members that the boy only be breast fed by his moth-

er who was unable to lactate because she was pregnant again.

The boy's parents, Jacques and Karen Robidoux, battled with a state agency now called the Department of Children and Families, a juvenile court judge and the grand jury while the boy was missing.

Jacques Robidoux and other family members eventually went to jail on contempt charges before one sect member decided to cooperate and led authorities to the boys' graves.

Jacques Robidoux, who also served as one of the sect leaders, is now serving a life sentence without parole for first-degree murder.

At a separate trial, Karen Robidoux claimed she



Jacques Robidoux

was brainwashed and was acquitted of murder. She was released from jail after two years with time served after the jury found her guilty of assault and battery on a child.

In 2007, the state Supreme Judicial Court upheld Jacques Robidoux's murder conviction, ruling that "the record is replete

with evidence" that Robidoux knew he was wrong to starve his son Samuel to death in order to obey another cult member's bizarre religious vision.

"As Robidoux stated at trial, 'No one can make me do anything.' Regarding his responsibility for Samuel's death, he testified that 'the buck stops here,'" the SJC wrote in a 12-page decision.

Other sect children were taken away from their parents because state social workers found evidence of abuse, and members had refused to cooperate with authorities to find Samuel.

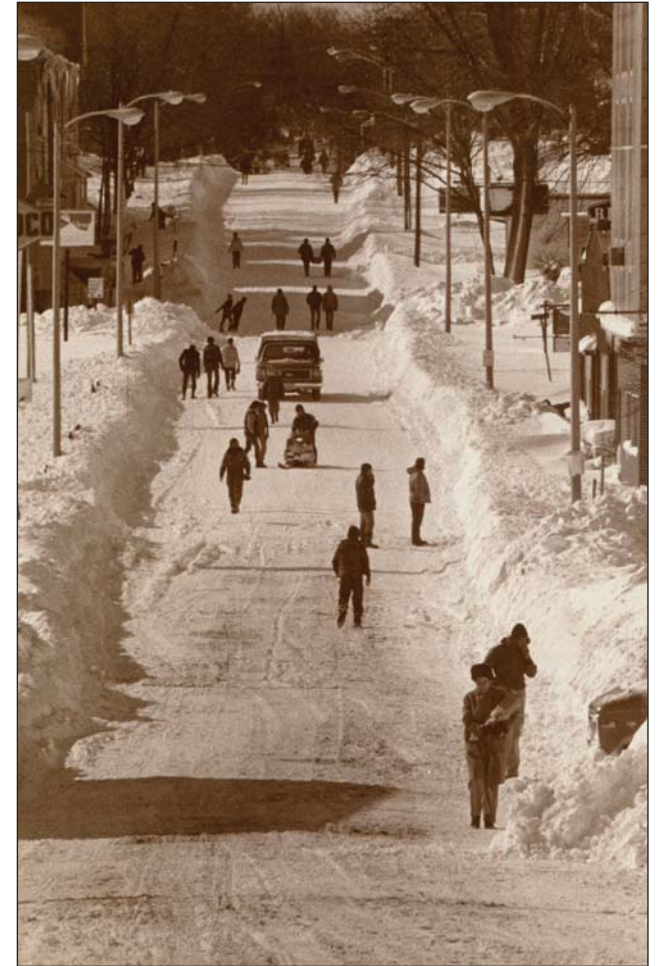
At the time, Attleboro Detective Sgt. Arthur Brillon, who led the intense investigation for local police, called the SJC ruling "a win not only for the investigators who put a tremendous amount of time into that case, but it's also a win for the memory of Samuel Robidoux."

Walter Shea, who led the grand jury investigation to break the insular cult's code of silence and prosecuted the Robidoux, said he thought the SJC decision was no surprise.

"Anybody who had any contact with this guy knew he wasn't crazy. He might have been bizarre, but he wasn't crazy," Shea said.

"It's a sad commentary, the more we got into it, that nobody in that family really cared for that child," Shea said.

Tragedy struck again on March 4, 1998, when two city highway department workers were killed when a natural gas explosion leveled a house on George



This scene from the Blizzard of 1978 shows County Street looking down from Attleboro center.

Street, where the men were working on the street outside.

Three other highway department workers were injured, as well as two residents in the home.

The workers who were killed, Larry Poncin and Bernie Hewitt, were popular and well-known city employees who had volunteered as coaches in youth baseball.

Their deaths and the explosion cast a pall over the city that those looking back on the events said was not lifted until the high school basketball team won the state championship nearly two weeks later.

The Poncin-Hewitt Athletic Fields off Oakhill Avenue were created after the accident and were named in memory of the beloved employees.

The public works department suffered another loss when water department worker Jeffrey Burgess was struck by a passenger van while working on South Main Street on Aug. 31, 1989.

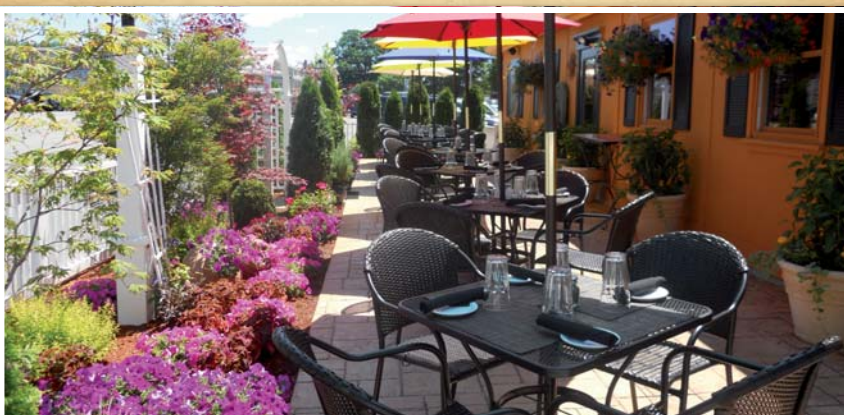
Burgess, the son of former water department Superintendent Michael Burgess, was part of a crew repairing a water main break. He was closing a water gate valve near Bayberry Road when he was struck.

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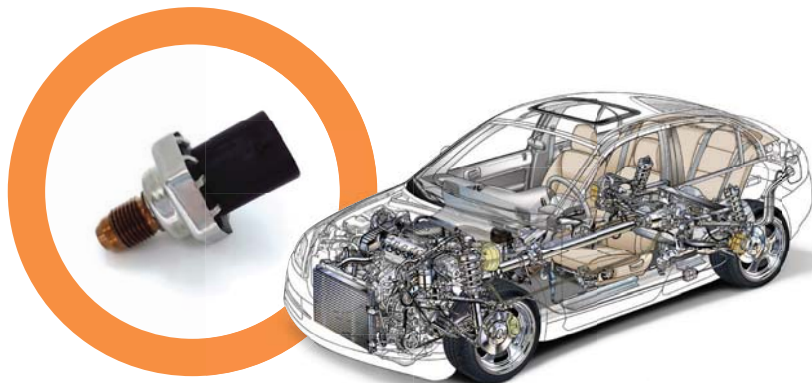
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Sensata Technologies was founded in 1916 when businessman Rathbun Willard founded the General Plate Company in Attleboro to provide gold plate to the jewelry industry. L to R: Ed Schissler, Harold Griffith, Ralph Rooks, and Lawrence Money.

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THE WAR EFFORT

Playing a part in victory

Jewelry City shifts gears to buttons, more during wartime

BY PAIGE ALLEN | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

Attleboro has long been known as the Jewelry City but the local jewelry industry shifted gears during war. Attleboro already was producing metal buttons long before the Civil War began, with more buttons being produced in the Attleboro area by 1834 than anywhere else in the country, according to historical accounts.

But, when the Civil War broke out, metal buttons and

badges were needed for uniforms, and Attleboro area companies quickly ramped up production to meet the demand.

D. Evans produced many buttons for Civil War uniforms, as did R. and W. Robinson and the James E. Blake Co., which largely profited from the production of war products like army badges and regimental insignia.

George Shelton, director of the Attleboro Area Industrial Museum, said brass buttons were popular around that time, and though the area was already set up for producing buttons,

the war gave it a boost.

“The demand was enormous for all those uniforms,” Shelton said.

During World War II, Automatic Machine Products made munitions for the war, employing 300 people. The company was commended by the military for its excellent products.

Some jewelry companies got in on the war effort, as well,



Company 1 lines up on the streets of Attleboro around 1918, during World War I.

SEE WAR EFFORT, PAGE 21 ►

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THE WAR EFFORT

FROM PAGE 20

and Shelton said it wasn't much of a leap from making jewelry to making metal pieces for war.

"It's not too far removed from what they were doing," he said.

Much of the machinery used to make jewelry was also used for small casings and fuses, he said.

"Like all industries, they wanted to make money. Any kind of contact they could get, that's what they were going to do," Shelton said of the jewelry industry.

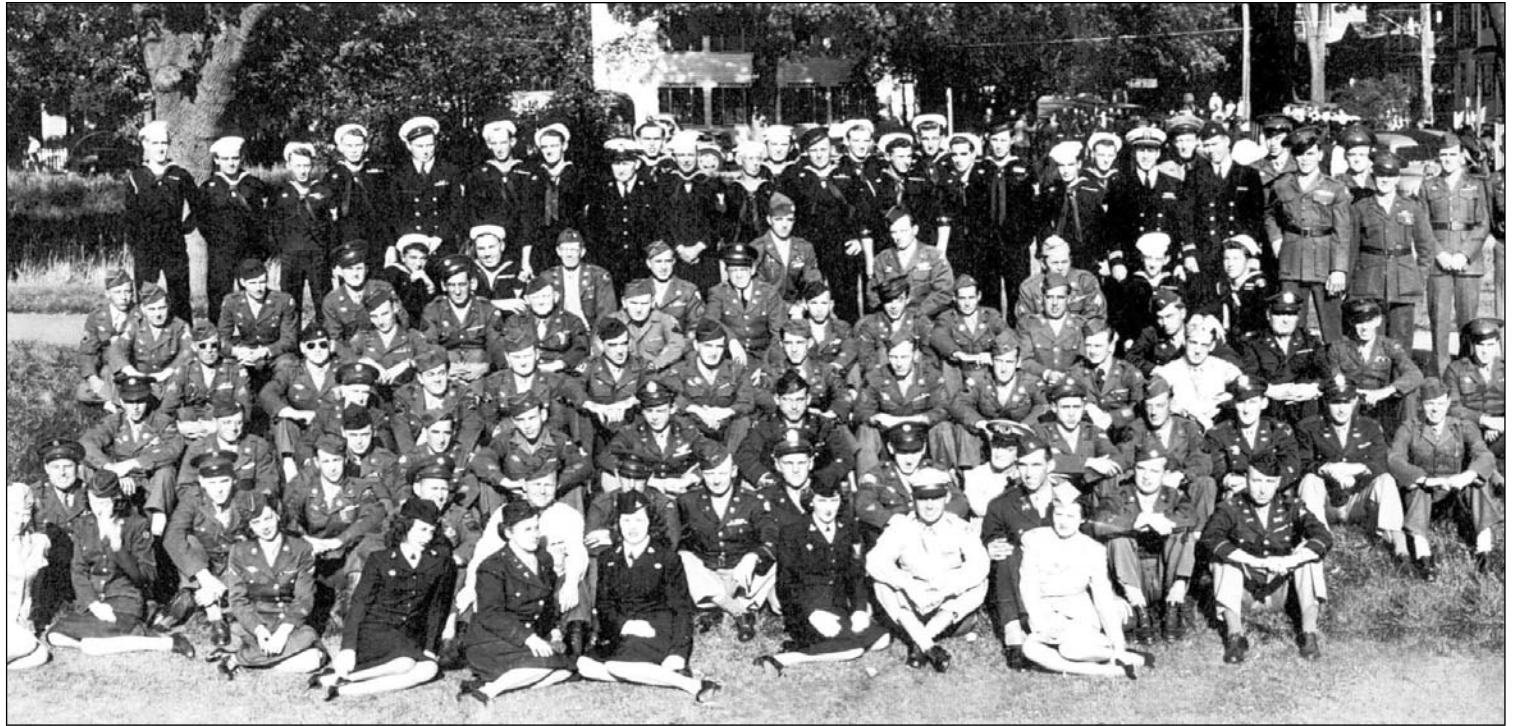
Attleboro also contributed by sending its own to war.

Carl Bradshaw, Attleboro's veteran's agent, said the city doesn't have a record of exactly how many Attleboro residents went off to war, but did keep track of the veterans who submitted their names to be placed on a memorial in town.

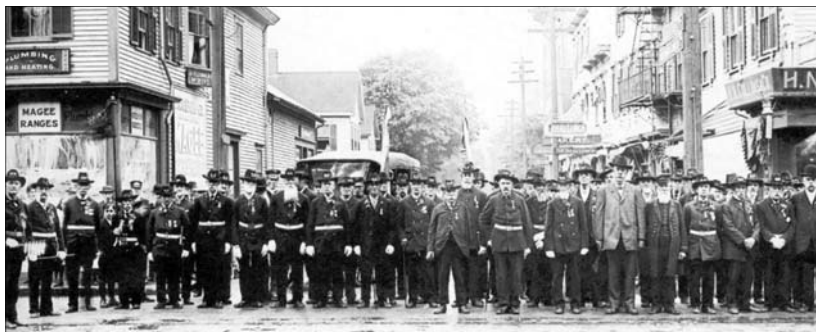
There are more than 7,300 names on the memorial representing World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

According to Bradshaw, there are 1,551 veterans of World War I, 3,277 from World War II, 1,126 from Korea and 1,411 from Vietnam who hail from Attleboro.

Bradshaw said those numbers are the minimum, as they only reflect the number of veterans who came into the office with the proper documentation to be put on the memorial, and the number of Attleboro residents who served probably is much higher.



World War II servicemen and women pose for a photo in Attleboro on Oct. 5, 1946.



Union soldier veterans gathered more than 40 years after the Civil War to pose for a photo at Bank and Park streets.



Red Cross nurses advertise for a fundraising drive to help World War I soldiers in June 1918, months before the war ended.

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ATTLEBORO HIGH SPORTS MEMORIES

Sporting lessons

Some of Attleboro High's best student-athletes recall what they learned while playing and practicing

BY PETER GOBIS | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

Once a bombardier, always a bombardier. Some of those lessons learned on the football, softball or baseball field, on the track or tennis courts, in the gymnasiums have lasted a lifetime. So too,

have some of the friendships.

"Now remember that we are talking about AHS sports 50-plus years ago, and everything was different," said Jim Gravel, one of the all-time great three-sport bombardier student-athletes. "I think what I learned the most about sports in high school that would carry over to anything you might do in life was to set individual and team goals and never give up.

"I learned to bounce back. Don't get too high or too low. If you lost a big game, you just had to try even harder the next game. Life is going to knock you down, but you still have to play the next game and give everything you've got."

'I think that being involved in any sport sort of molds you into the type of person you are going to be later in life.'

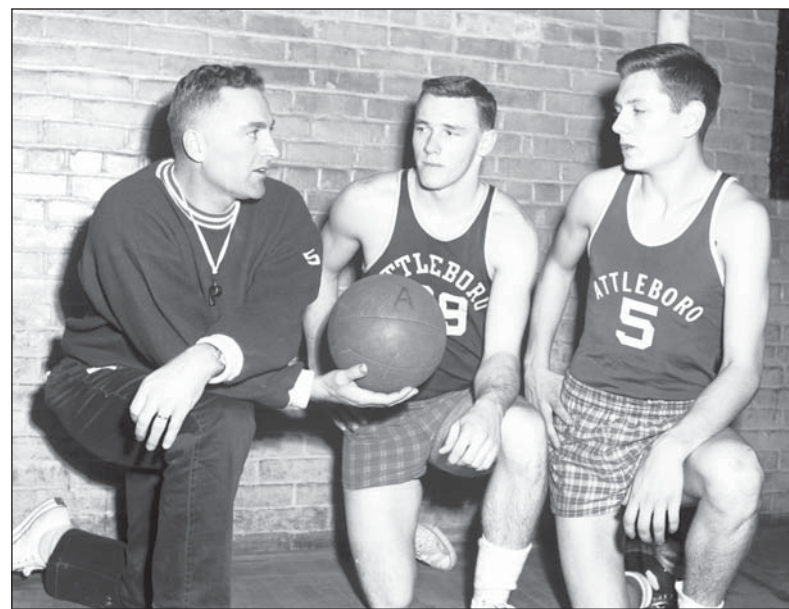
Jimmy Hanewich

For Gravel, playing for legendary Attleboro High coaches like Howard Tozier and Jim Cassidy, well prepared him for competing collegiately at Holy Cross and in the classroom.

"That brings up the two differences that I notice about sports today, versus 50 years ago," Gravel said. "No. 1, we played two to three sports, and today everyone specializes. No. 2, today's athletes, at every level, celebrate every little thing, especially those things you are expected to do.

"We would never dare to celebrate until after the game because you knew you would always meet up with someone who was better than you."

It was taught at a very early age to Jimmy Hanewich, one of the bombardier all-time great football quarterbacks and baseball players to respect friend and foe, to never commit any act, on or off the



Attleboro High School basketball coach Jim Cassidy chats with co-captains Jim Gravel (center) and Charlie Grochmal in preparation for the season opener against an alumni team in Dec. 1960.

SEE SPORTS, PAGE 24 ►

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field, that would detract from your mission of competing well.

After all, his dad was another legendary AHS coach Chet Hanewich.

“I have great memories of playing football and baseball for my dad at Attleboro High,” he said. “I think that being involved in any sport sort of molds you into the type of person you are going to be later in life.

“Playing sports provided structure and taught discipline which helps me to this day. “Athletics played a big role in getting me into a very good college (Bowdoin), which helped me prepare for life after sports.”

Hanewich remembers his first varsity football game as a sophomore, against Dartmouth, as it was yesterday.

“I think that they had won 27 games in a row, and the previous year had won the Super Bowl. And we beat them under the lights at their place,” he said. “You could hear a pin drop after the game. I’ll never forget the bus ride home.”

On the baseball field, during Hanewich’s junior year in 1987, the bombardiers advanced to the MIAA Tournament quarterfinals and lost to Braintree.

“That was a fun year from start to finish. We had guys on that team like George Sells and Tom Kelleher, who were not only very good players, but even better kids,” he said.



The 1954 Attleboro High School football team. Front row, from left: first two unknown, Dave Jenson, Dick Pariseau, Bernie Barrett, Joe McKenna, unknown, Rollie Kerkoff, next two unknown, Frank Zarek. Middle row, from left, one of the Ellison brothers, Carl Frova, Howard Tozier Jr., Ron Bovin, Russ Richardson, John Colman, next two unknown, Ron Salley, Bruce Rigby, Al DeLutis. Back row, from left, Kent Frazier, next two unknown, Paul Jost, unknown, Pete DeLutis, next three unknown, one of the Ellison brother, unknown.

“I remember looking forward to practice just as much as the games. I still remember counting the baseballs in the bucket before practice was over. If we started with 50 balls, we did not go to shower until we had all 50 balls.”

“I can’t speak for today, but back then you played football in the fall, basketball in the

winter and baseball in the spring and summer. Now it seems as if you need to do all three 12 months of the year with travel and AAU teams,” he said. “It was probably more fun and less stressful back then than I imagine.”

Current Attleboro High softball coach Deb Carreiro played volleyball and soft-

ball as a bombardier, and thinks the student-athletes of yesteryear might have been better pure natural athletes, compared with the year-round prepared athletes of today.

“I just think that the athletes themselves, the competitiveness was better — but, it was a different generation, too,” said Carreiro, a

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1. "The Attleboro city charter is now a law," said the lead headline in the Attleboro Sun on what date?
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3. Who was the first mayor of the City of Attleboro?
4. On what date did the City government first go to work with full authority?
5. The pen that Democrat Walsh had used to sign the Attleboro city charter legislation was presented to whom in recognition of his efforts in advancing the bill?
6. By 1914 the town of 11,000 residents had grown to _____.
7. Attleboro was called " _____ ", but jewelry accounted for only half the output, with textile manufacturing, tool manufacturing and other industries accounting for the remainder.
8. Who was re-elected as president of the Attleboro Board in early 1914 and was a famed inventor and industrialist?
9. What percentage of eligible voters participated in its first city election?
10. Who was referred to as "father of the charter," a co-author of Attleboro's initial charter proposal?

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 34

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ATTLEBORO HIGH SPORTS MEMORIES

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1982 graduate. “The clinics do help the kids now, but when we compare teams, it was different.

“We didn’t have the opportunities, all the clinics, all the AAU and traveling teams that the kids do now. When we were in school, there were a lot of naturally good athletes.”

Carreiro recalls growing up, and along with Kim Harrison, were the only two girls to play Little League baseball in Attleboro.

“I had played baseball, not softball, until high school,” she said.

That’s when she came under the influence of then AHS coach, and Hanewich disciple, Jay Gilmore.

More than anything, though, Carreiro recalls her current bombardier assistant coach Helen Geisel mentoring her as an incoming freshman, of gaining a life-long friendship with Alyssa Hosford and Ninette Ralston.

“We talk about this all the time, when we look back. Those years were the best years of our lives, playing for your high school team,” she said.

Gravel said that during the 1950s and 1960s, Attleboro was very much a basketball town.

“Although we had some very good football teams throughout the years, some very good players, it was the basketball teams that



The Attleboro High School boys' basketball team in 1941. The team recorded 16 wins and two losses in the '41-'42 season.

generated the most consistent excitement and enthusiasm among the students and in the community,” he said.

“If you made the basketball team, you could almost be assured of playing in the old Tech Tourney at the Boston Garden. Because of our legendary coaches Howard Tozier and Jim Cassidy, we played at the

Class A level from a Class D school, based on our enrollment.

“We played in the very tough Bristol League against Durfee, New Bedford, and always had a good record,” he said.

“One thing I remember most is the unwavering, unconditional support of the student body and the community as a whole. And

you need to realize that we got total support from the local media,” he said. “In addition to The Attleboro Sun, WARA radio had just hired a very young and very enthusiastic radio sports broadcaster, Walter Cryan, who brought every AHS football game and basketball game into the homes of everyone who couldn’t get to the games.

“Everyone in town knew the athletes and supported them in any way they could. I know winning brings joy and excitement to the local community, then and now.

“We played our home basketball games at the old armory on Pine Street, and it was like playing in a cave with the noise bouncing off the stone walls,” he said. “The gym held about 900 spectators, and if fans and students didn’t get there by 5:30, you would not be able to get in.

“Workers from the local factories would stop briefly at one of the several diners and then walk to the games. The students would pack one whole side of the bleachers and they would stamp their feet on the old bleachers, and the noise was deafening.

“There were a lot of great memories in basketball but the one occurrence that stuck with me the most occurred in 1961 after we lost a semi-final Tech Tourney heartbreaker to New Bedford and returned home late — well after midnight.

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ATTLEBORO HIGH SPORTS MEMORIES

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“The bus was stopped about three miles from the YMCA, where we traditionally met the bus for away games. A police officer entered the bus and spoke quietly to coach Jim Cassidy, and then left.

“We had no idea what was going on. But when we arrived at the YMCA parking lot, there were 750 screaming fans there to greet us,” he said. “And we lost the game! That symbolized to me what it was like to play sports and grow up in Attleboro.

“The football game I remember most during a great 1960 season was a game against Mansfield which was billed as the “game of the century” because I was having great year at AHS and my good friend Ron Gentili of Mansfield was tearing up the Hockomock

League. We lost 16-14 but it was a great game and a great experience.”

“The wins and losses and all the records, success, pales in comparison to the friendships and camaraderie that teammates experience, whether they are the stars or the backups.

“Everyone learns to work together and pull for each other,” he said. “I love that expression that there is no I in team, and that’s what I remember most. My experience has always been that teammates play for their teammates and are driven more by not letting them down than by gaining any recognition for themselves.

“And, I can tell you that even after 50 years, those friendships are still very strong. And it doesn’t matter how many points you scored, they are still your friends.”



Attleboro High School football team in October 1956. From left are Head Coach Bill Madden, Brad Pitman, Spencer Frazer, Eddie Calesa. Assistant Coach Bob Bray (who would become a principal at the school), Jim Cassidy (future Attleboro High coach and athletic director), Lou Governo, Guy Liberatore and Johnny Morin.

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ONE SWEET VICTORY

A city stands as one

AHS boys' state basketball title helps lift spirits after tragedy

BY MARK FARINELLA | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

When the sports world and the “real world” intersect, tragedy is often the cause.

So it was in Attleboro late in the winter of 1997-98, when a championship basketball game — a noteworthy occurrence in its own right — was magnified in its importance to a community mourning the sudden and tragic deaths of two popular city employees killed in the act of doing their everyday jobs.

It was precisely at 10:03 a.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 1998, when a catastrophic gas explosion leveled a house at 57 George St., not far from Finberg Field. The shockwaves from the explosion were felt in a several-mile radius throughout the city and beyond, but the deepest shock felt by the city was that two well-known and popular public works employees had been killed in the blast.

Lawrence Poncin, 48, and Bernard Hewitt, 47, were working an excavation at the site when the explosion occurred, presumably caused when a natural gas pipeline to the house was dislodged by a backhoe and gas that filled the basement of the nearby house ignited with terrifying force.

Hewitt was killed instantly and Poncin died in the emergency room at Sturdy Memorial Hospital in Attleboro. Six others, including five city workers, were injured.

It was a sudden and heartbreaking interruption of life in Attleboro.

Poncin and Hewitt were well-



Attleboro High School spirit was at an all-time high on March 10, 1998, during the boys' basketball semi-final game against Medford at the Fleet Center in Boston. The team went on to win the state title against Milford.

known and well-liked, having volunteered their time as coaches for the city's youth sports leagues.

The city mourned, as it needed to do.

But, the efforts of a talented group of Attleboro High School basketball players helped to restore a sense of normalcy to the city, and eventually bring it a joyful outcome that had not been experienced in 55 years.

“Sometimes it still feels like yesterday,” said Mark Houle, the boys' varsity basketball coach at Attle-

boro High for the past 19 years, who was in just his third season of coaching in 1998. “It was a sad time for the city, and we did talk often about what we were doing and what it meant to the city after the tragedy struck.”

At the time, the bombardiers were already well along in their quest to win the MIAA Division 1 basketball championship. Blessed with some of the finest talent in the state in a pair of juniors, center Leland Anderson and guard Derek Swenson, the bombardiers had

earned the Eastern Athletic Conference championship, and simply kept on winning.

The EAC was not very highly regarded in state basketball circles, but the bombardiers kept finding ways to confound their critics and dismiss their competition.

On the very same night as the explosion, the 6-foot-7 Anderson scored 32 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to lead AHS past Boston English, 79-77, in the Division 1-South semifinal at Taunton High.

“Everyone knew the men that

were killed,” said Houle, a 1990 AHS graduate and member of the school's 1,000-point club. “They were fans of the team. They had been to the games. And even as we were going to the game in Taunton that night, the bus passed close to where the explosion had happened. Everyone got the sense that this had happened so close to home.

“They had a moment of silence before the game in Taunton,” Houle added, “and it was very well-received.”

That victory, in which the bombardiers fended off a late Boston English comeback, sent them to a sectional final at UMass-Boston the following Sunday against Brookline. They trailed by three points early in the second half, but responded with a 19-4 run over a 3½-minute span and won going away, 72-58. Swenson led all scorers with 22 points, followed by Anderson's 18 and 12 apiece by Jason Case and Chris Downing.

The next stop was the Fleet-Center (now the TD Garden) for the state semifinal, often called the mythical Eastern Mass. title game. Division 1-North champion Medford provided stiff competition, but Attleboro prevailed 64-61 in overtime to win the school's first state title since former Mayor Kai Shang and his 1943 teammates won the Class A Tech Tournament, fore-runner of today's postseason playoffs.

Case, the senior captain (who would, years later, become the win-

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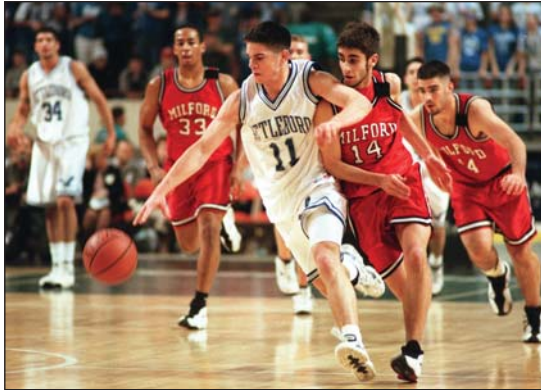
ner of CBS-TV's reality show, "The Amazing Race"), hit a three-point basket with 2:42 left in the extra period to give Attleboro the lead for good.

Along the way, the bombardiers noticed a phenomenon taking place in the stands.

"It was like a sea of blue," Houle said. "You'd look up even into the second deck of (the FleetCenter), which was usually closed for most of the high school games, and it was amazing. There was plenty of blue and white in the upper deck. It was the same thing in Worcester.

"There was an outpouring of support from the city," Houle continued. "People just wanted to be a part of it. They wanted to see us through. They said they needed something to cheer for, to bring them some joy ... there was a sense of a rallying cry for the city."

The final step up the ladder came at what was then called the Worcester Centrum on Saturday, March 14. In the final game of the



Attleboro High's Derek Swenson races for ball with Milford's Joe Colelli during first half of the state basketball final in 1998 at the Worcester Centrum. AHS went on to win the title.

six-game championship program, the bombardiers faced Central Mass. champion Milford — now, ironically, a fellow member of the Hockomock League with Attleboro — with more than 2,300 advance tickets having been sold at Attleboro High.

Admittedly, city basketball fans had a good feeling about the matchup. The bombardiers had won a regular-season game against the Scarlet Hawks, 89-63, with Anderson scoring a season-high 42 points in the win. But on the Centrum's hardcourt, Milford put up a battle worthy of a championship game.

The score was tied (28-28) at half-time, and while Attleboro ran off 15 unanswered points at the start of the second half, Milford valiantly battled back to within a point, 54-53, with just over four minutes left. Swenson countered with a three-pointer and Chris Downing followed with a lay-in off an assist from Anderson to create a six-point lead with 2:25 to go.

The Scarlet Hawks could not mount a significant challenge the rest of the way, and the ultimate prize belonged to the 25-1 bombardiers. Anderson finished with 29 points and 14 rebounds, and Swenson scored 11 of his 18 points in the second half

to keep Milford at bay.

"One thing I remember about that team above all else is that as talented as our juniors were, we had a great senior class," said Houle, who will begin his 20th season at the bombardiers' helm in late November. "Kids like Jason Smith, Jason Case, Matt Trabucco, Eric Taylor, John Mangiaratti ... they pushed that class of juniors to be the best they could be. Every practice was like an absolute war."

An early-season thigh injury to Anderson the following year sabotaged the bombardiers' chances to repeat as champions in 1999, but they did reach a sectional semi-final to secure their place in city basketball history.

But, the 1998 team provided so much more to a city in its time of need.

"Even to this day, people remember it," Houle said. "People still come up to me and tell me they were there at the championship game and how much it meant to them to cheer for Attleboro and to be happy again."

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SPORTS MEMORIES

When Babe came to Attleboro

A reader's request sparks memory of when Babe Ruth played in the city

BY EAMON LEVESQUE | THE SUN CHRONICLE

When The Sun Chronicle this past spring put out a call for local legends of which our readers may have fond memories, Instagram user mbaldwin85 suggested we look into a famous bit of local lore: that baseball great Babe Ruth once played a game at Attleboro's Hayward Field.

As many local legends are, this tale was fraught with conflicting information and varying accounts. Fortunately for us, George Kelleher-Bianchi, who has done exhaustive writing and research in this area, stepped up to the plate in order to help us get our facts straight.

While the Bambino's stop in Attleboro is a quite famous — and very true — story, many may not know that this visit was far from a chance occurrence.

"What I found was an amazing story about some of the best ballplayers who ever lived," said Kelleher Bianchi, "lo-

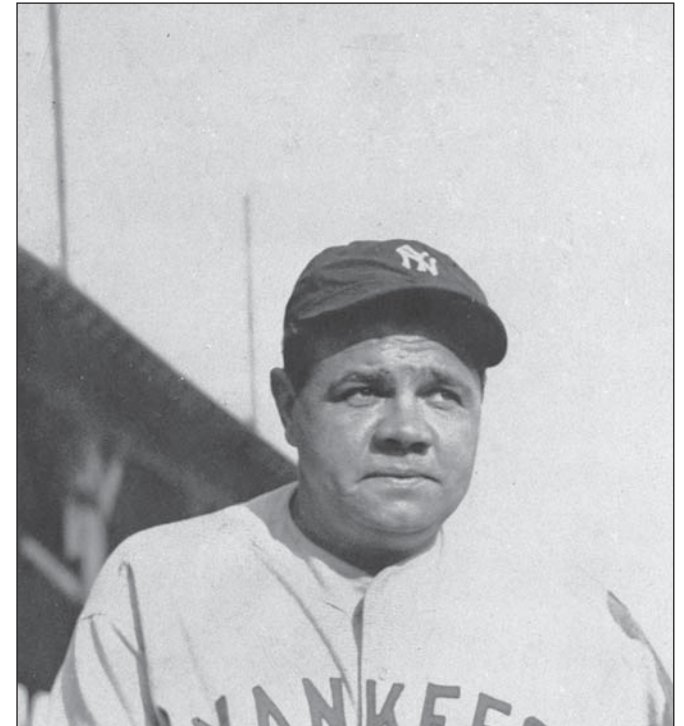
cal men who loved their community, and an incredible chapter in baseball history."

Anyone who has driven down County Street, near downtown Attleboro, will have noticed three Victorian houses with circular terraces and impressive spires. A Sun Chronicle article from July 3, 2010 notes that these were constructed by Robert Wolfenden, founder of Robert Wolfenden and Sons, one of the biggest dye companies in the United States during the '20s and '30s.

During the 1920s, Attleboro and North Attleboro played a yearly baseball series against one another. In the years of 1919, 1920 and 1923, some competitive spending by Oscar Wolfenden and his contemporaries would turn these games into what was billed as "The Little World Series."

According to the Babe Ruth biography "The Big Bam,"

SEE THE BABE, PAGE 31 ►



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

Babe Ruth

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SPORTS MEMORIES

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by Leigh Montville, it was during this year that Oscar Wolfenden decided that his town was not to be outdone by North Attleboro. Backed with the aid of several other local businessmen, Wolfenden decided that Attleboro's local players could use some assistance.

Here's where things get tricky. The Sun Chronicle's archives contain an editorial, detailing an eyewitness account of Babe playing for North Attleboro, on Attleboro's Brady Field. The location of his appearance has been verified, but — perhaps unsurprisingly — conflicting information exists regarding for what team Babe Ruth made his appearance.

"The 'local legend' and the focus on Babe Ruth as the center of the 'Little World Series' has led to significant distortions of fact," Kelleher-Bianchi said.

"As I went back and began researching the Little World Series, I discovered that most secondary reporting contained a

number of significant factual errors about the number of games, who won, the dates of games, and players who participated."

For instance, Montville's biography states that Ruth was recruited by Wolfenden, who gave Attleboro baseball manager Dan O'Connell a great deal of cash in order to "get some better ballplayers" after losing the first game of the series.

We can be sure O'Connell did exactly that: He not only picked pitcher Carl Mays (who has the unfortunate legacy of throwing the beanball responsible for the only on-field death in Major League Baseball), but also Joe Connolly, league-leading hitter for the 1914 Boston Braves, among many other impressive players.

However, Ruth, the rapidly aspiring pitcher-turned-sluggler, was not among those picked for Attleboro's squad. After viewing "the original articles about the Little World Series in the Attleboro Sun, North Attleboro Chronicle, Providence Journal, and Boston Globe," Kelleher-Bianchi said that Ruth was picked and paid for by a number of smaller

fundraisers from North Attleboro.

In hindsight, the Babe is absolutely the most notable player to have taken part in the Little World Series. Yet all accounts of the single game he played in note a fairly lackluster performance.

Performance was 'nothing special'

Montville's biography notes "nothing special" from the Bambino's performance. Former Sun Chronicle managing editor and columnist Bill Hannan recalled "one single in four trips," which differs only slightly from Kelleher-Bianchi's record of 1 and 5, (the discrepancy may be caused by the fact that Babe was intentionally walked during one at bat.) Yet while the appearance of baseball's most venerable player in Attleboro is certainly historic, Kelleher-Bianchi maintains that it's important not to let this detail prevent us from seeing the forest for the trees. According to him, Many other incredible stories contributed to the Little World Series and its mythic status.

"My favorite fact that I've unearthed dur-

ing my research is that future Hall-of-Famer Rabbit Maranville of the Boston Braves was willing to accept a \$500 fine from the Braves' management to play for Attleboro..." said Kelleher-Bianchi (This sum would equal about \$6,850 today, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.)

"Even after being fined \$500, Maranville refused to accept any pay for playing for Attleboro. He genuinely loved the city and loved the fans. I wish that we had a street named after him in Attleboro. He earned it."

"My hope is to complete my research and publish a book about the Little World Series," Kelleher-Bianchi said. "I think that baseball fans will appreciate how special the Little World Series was in the history of baseball and how important Attleboro is in understanding that history."

Thanks again to mbaldwin85 for the great suggestion. For more on this story, and the many other stars that the Little World Series brought to town, visit Kelleher-Bianchi's website, attleborolittleworldseries.blogspot.com.

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SCHOOLS

A greater focus on education

As town became a city, more emphasis placed on schools

BY RICK FOSTER | THE SUN CHRONICLE

Education in Attleboro has a long history, dating back almost to the founding of the community in 1694.

There is no record of schools in Attleboro before 1716, according to A. Irvin Studley in his History of Attleboro, more than 20 years after the town's incorporation. One Deacon Daggett was appointed the first schoolmaster, according to historical accounts.

At first, classes were split among various sections of town, seven months at a time. Some years, no school was held.

Progress toward what is today's modern school system began in the 1800s when the town authorized money for the building of individual school houses. They were mostly one-room affairs with multiple grades.

Long before the population explosion that would require the construction of large school buildings, classes were conducted in small buildings in various neighborhoods. Town records from 1846 count no fewer than 23 schools.

The town's first high school, divided into two parts, came into being in 1867, with one school on South Washington Street in what is now North Attleboro and the other on South Main Street, opposite what is now The Sun Chronicle.

In the 1870s, North Attleboro split from Attleboro and became a separate municipality with its own school system.

By the 1880s, school enrollment in Attleboro proper had reached 1,500 and climbing, paving the way for a building



SEE **SCHOOLS**, PAGE 33 ►

Students at the Bank Street School in Attleboro in 1926.



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SCHOOLS

FROM PAGE 32

boom to accommodate an expanding number of schoolchildren.

The first decade of the 1900s saw the construction of Farmers, Richardson, Briggs Corner, Washington and Bliss Schools, followed by Tiffany School in 1912.

The burgeoning school population demanded a modern high school, and a site was selected for a three-story, Greek revival structure on County Street.

The building, completed in 1914, continued in service until the early 1960s, when a new structure was built on Rathbun Willard Drive.

With growing opportunities for jobs in the local jewelry industry and an expanding business community, manual training became a function of the school department.

At first, a “trade” school was established in the Ingraham Building on Union Street. The commitment to technical education would eventually culminate in a massive career and technical education component of the present high school, offering training in disciplines ranging



from health care to auto mechanics.

As the 20th century progressed, the city was confronted by a need to modernize its existing collection of school buildings. Older buildings including Farmers, Bliss, Lincoln and Washington were closed or converted to other purposes.

The “new” high school on Rathbun Willard Drive would double in size by 1975, following an expansion prompted by increased enrollment. Later, twin elementary schools, Hill Roberts and Hyman Fine, and two new middle schools, Brennan and Wamsutta, were added to the existing high school, Coelho Middle School and Thacher, Willett and Studley elementary schools, creating the current line up of nine public school buildings.



Above: The Bishop Street school bus in Attleboro on June 22, 1925. Mr. Kellogg was the driver. Above left: The Academy seen in the late 1800s. The school gave Academy Street its name. The children in the photo were probably pupils at the Sanford Street School, which was next door and had a large playground.



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Musicians, writers, actors and artists

Attleboro's influence on American culture reached far and wide over 100 years

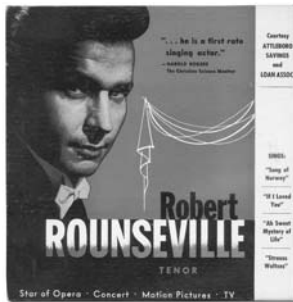
BY RICK FOSTER | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

From authors to actors and bandleaders, Attleboro has contributed its share to the molding of popular culture over the past 100 years.

Notables include Grammy winning hitmaker Ray Conniff, Broadway, movie and opera star Robert Rounseville and biographer and novelist William Manchester.

But the Attleboro area's part in America's artistic legacy isn't just a recent development.

One of the most influ-



One of tenor Robert Rounseville's albums

ential early American composers during the late 1700s and early 1800s, Daniel Read, was born in Attleboro, although most of his working life was spent in Connecticut.

Read, who served in the

Revolutionary War, was a prolific writer of hymn tunes, which also formed the basis for the popular music of the time.

The contribution of Attleboro-born artists to music would remain a strong theme throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Rounseville, endowed with a remarkable tenor voice, applied himself to a career as an opera singer, but eventually found himself in even greater demand for Broadway musicals, as well as on the silver screen and eventually in television.

In 1956, he reached the pinnacle of his career, starring in the movie version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's stage musical "Carousel" and on stage in the original production of Leonard Bernstein's Candide.

Rounseville returned to a major Broadway production in 1965 when he played the priest in the musical "Man of La Mancha."

Another Attleboro artist would have an even bigger impact on American music.

Joseph Raymond "Ray" Conniff, born in 1916 to a musical family, found initial success as a big band trombonist with Artie Shaw and other orchestras.

But his talents as an arranger, composer and innovator raised his status to a

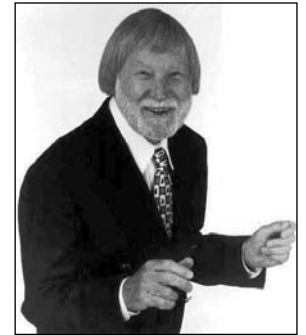


A young Ray Conniff in the studio.

musical visionary.

He eventually would produce some of the biggest hits of the 1950s, boosting the careers of a number of legendary artists.

Following service in the Army in World War II, Conniff was hired by Mitch Miller of Columbia records arranging tunes and working in the studio with such



Conniff in his later years.

recording stars as Rosemary Clooney, Marty Robbins, Frankie Laine, Guy Mitchell and Johnnie Ray.

Using his orchestra to back popular recordings, Conniff helped to engineer a string of hits by popular artists of the day including Don Cherry's "Band of Gold," "Just Walkin In The Rain" by Johnny Ray, "Moonlight Gambler" by Frankie Laine and "A White Sportcoat and a Pink Carnation" by Marty Robbins.

Conniff struck real gold, however, when Miller paired him with then-unknown singer Johnny Mathis. "Chances Are" and "It's Not For Me To Say" were just two of the legendary hits crafted under Conniff's supervision.

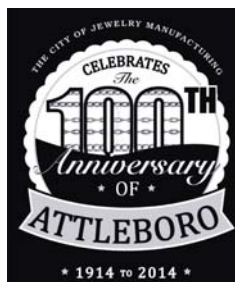
But Conniff was just getting started.

With Miller's encour-

SEE CULTURE, PAGE 35 ►

Answers to Trivia Questions from page 25

- 1). June 17, 1914
- 2). Governor David I. Walsh
- 3). Harold E. Sweet
- 4). January 5, 1915
- 5). Republican State Representative George Worrall
- 6). 18,000
- 7). "The Hub of the Jewelry World"
- 8). Frank Mossberg
- 9). 96%
- 10). Edward A. Sweeney



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100****CULTURE****FROM PAGE 34**

agement, Conniff began recording in his own right, both as a leader of orchestra and choral groups.

His easy listening formula struck a chord with the Greatest Generation and sold tens of millions of records throughout the '50s and '60s.

Conniff's crowning honor came in 1965 when he and his chorus won a Grammy award for the record version of "Somewhere My Love," the theme from the hit movie "Doctor Zhivago."

A famous author

Author William Manchester experienced the 20th century as few other Americans had — coming to grips with its gritty reality as a Marine in the battle for Okinawa, and later writing intimate biographies of some of the century's most influential figures.

Manchester, born in 1922, served in both Guadalcanal and Okinawa during World War II, where he was wounded in action.

He later wrote about his wartime experiences in "Goodbye Darkness: A Memoir of The Pacific War."

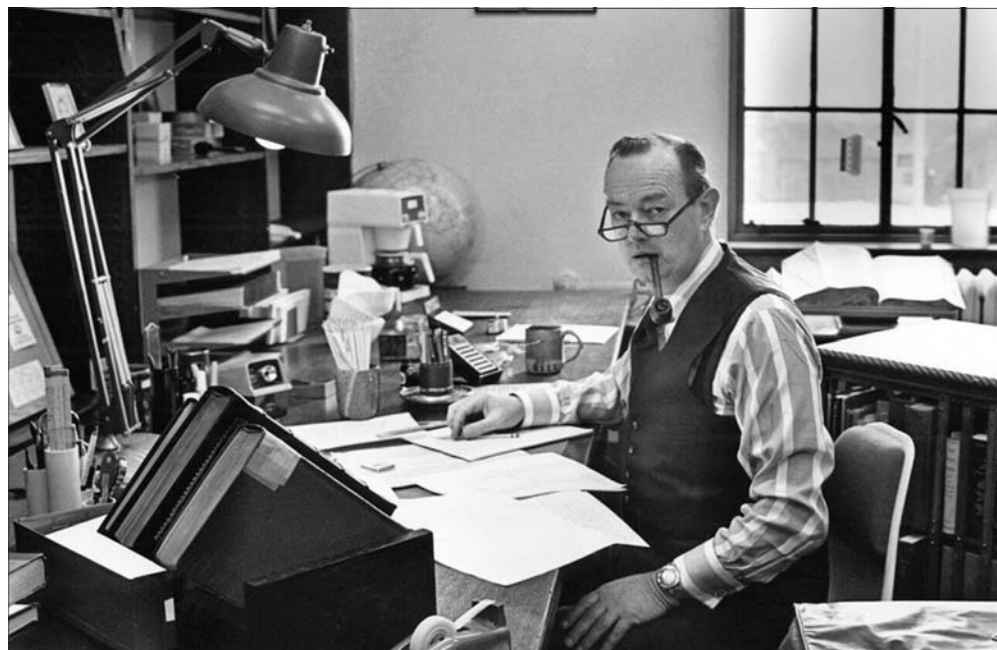
But Manchester, who moved from Attleboro to Springfield, is better known for his books dealing with historical figures who shaped the 20th century.

After returning from World War II, Manchester joined The Baltimore Sun where he met H.L. Mencken and wrote a biography of the legendary journalist.

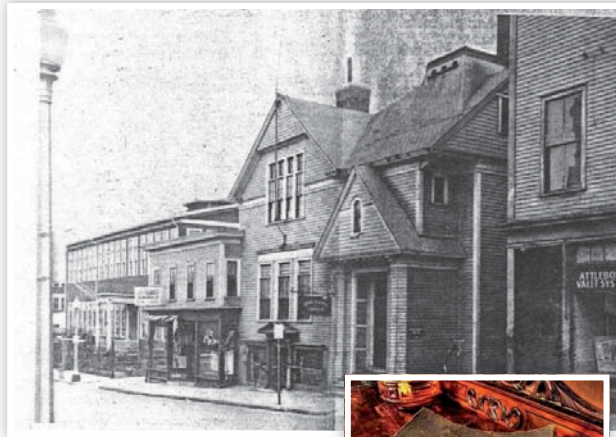
He later wrote hefty biographies of controversial Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur and former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

But the Attleboro-born author is best known as the author of "The Death of a President," dealing with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Widow Jacqueline Kennedy sued to prevent publication of the book, but later relented — reportedly after Manchester agreed to remove some portions of the manuscript dealing with Kennedy's personal life.



Attleboro native William Manchester in his Wesleyan University office in Middletown, Conn., in 1979. Manchester was the award-winning author of popular biographies on Winston Churchill and Douglas MacArthur and the controversial chronicler of President Kennedy's assassination.



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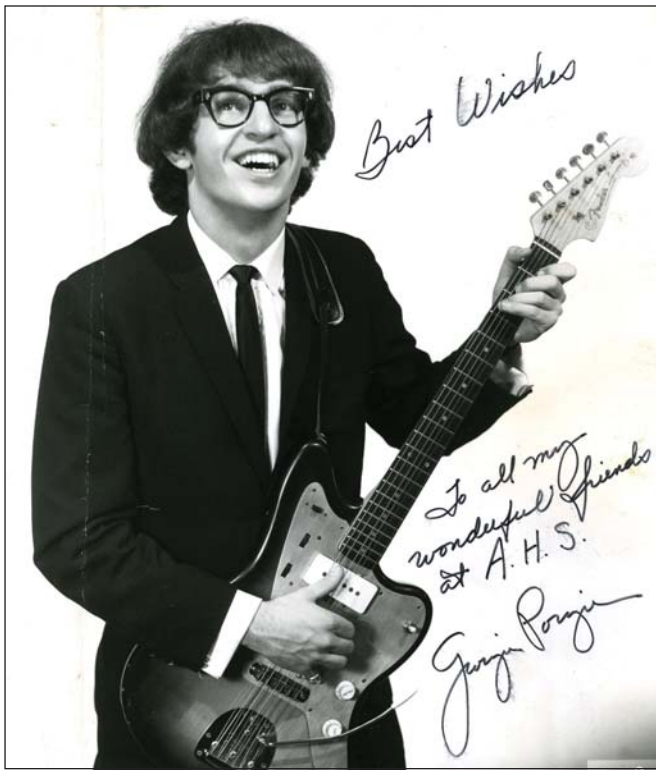
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CULTURE



Much like the rest of the country and western world, Attleboro culture in the 1950s and 1960s underwent a dramatic change thanks to the influence of rock 'n' roll. At left is George Leonard, better known as Georgie Porgy, who's Beatle-like haircut got him tossed out of Attleboro High School and led to a lawsuit that almost made its way to the Supreme Court. Leonard, a musician, remains involved in the arts today. At right, some impromptu dancing in the streets of downtown Attleboro brought traffic to a halt.



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CAPRON PARK

Attleboro's emerald gem

Capron Park has been a city institution for more than a century

BY SUSAN LAHOUD | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

Before there was the City of Attleboro, there was Capron Park. September 2001 marked the 100th anniversary of the park's dedication after about 30 acres was conveyed to the then Town of Attleborough by the Capron family in honor of Dennis Capron.

The town paid \$1 for the land, which was to carry the Capron name.

The first building erected in the park was the Casino in 1902, which later served as the site for the Attleboro Museum and now houses offices for the park and forestry department.

The bandstand followed in 1908; the Newell Shelter in 1910.

SEE CAPRON PARK, PAGE 38 ►



The iconic entrance arch to Capron Park was erected in 1937 and appears to be brand new in this photo.

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CAPRON PARK

FROM PAGE 37

The first zoo on site was built in 1922 through donations from Attleboro schoolchildren in a campaign spearheaded by The Attleboro Sun.

That gave rise to a more elaborate zoo in 1937 under a fund established by a Capron family member, followed by a four-year restoration project in the late 1980s.

Capron Park continues to draw people from far and near with its zoo, playground and paths around the monument studded grounds.

The Attleboro Garden Club and the city have joined to restore the Anderson Rose Garden in the park. And the site, along with the Hagopian walk, including a gazebo, have served as the backdrop for many wedding pictures over the years.

Once complete, the restoration project will be dedicated to the city as a gift in honor of its 100th anniversary of incorporation, though it is not scheduled to be completed until 2015, which will mark both the rose garden and the garden club's joint 60th anniversary.



Above: What appears to be a bear roams in an animal display at the park around 1937.



Right: The duck pond at Capron Park was a popular place to go ice skating during the winter in the city for many years. This photo is likely from the early 1960s.

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CAPRON PARK



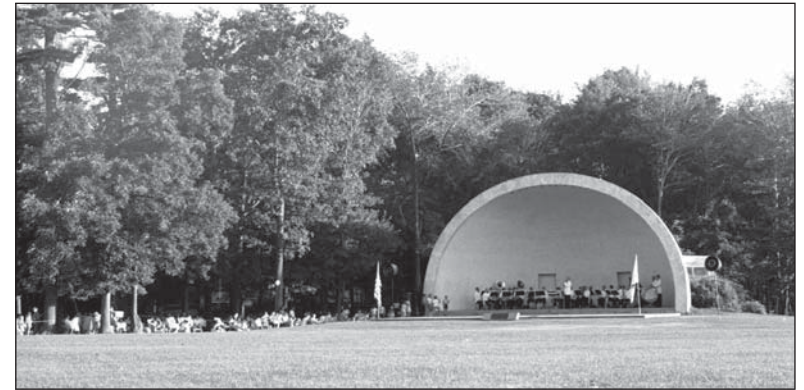
Above: The Braves posed for a photo at Capron Park (note the road around the duck pond to the right) as the Little Attleboro League champs in 1955.



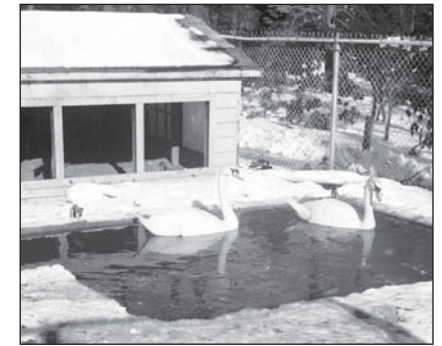
Left: The Hunton Pool at Capron Park as it looked in 1962.



Frosty the polar bear explores his ice-covered cage at Capron Park in December 1959.



Above: The Attleboro Concert Band performs in the music shell at Capron Park on the July 4th holiday sometime in the early 1960s.



Right: Swans splash around the Hunton Pool at Capron Park on a snowy day in January 1961.

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STURDY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Hospital helps establish Attleboro as a city

Sturdy Memorial got under way one year before Attleborough became Attleboro

BY EMILY O'DONNELL | SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

It's 7:30 in the morning on April 14, 1913, and Robert Schofield is in pain.

Schofield is suffering from a double inguinal hernia, a condition a bit too graphic for print.

Suffice it to say, he really needs a doctor.

Luck is on his side, though, because Sturdy Memorial Hospital just opened on Park Street, only a streetcar ride away from Schofield's home in Attleboro's Hebronville section.

He is admitted as the hospital's first patient in its 15-bed facility.

Two hours later, nurses administer a welcome mix of morphine and atropine, and Schofield is knocked thoroughly unconscious as Dr. John Arnold Reese performs the surgery to repair his hernia.

Afterward, he's put on a liquid diet of water, beet juice, coffee and eggnog before being switched over to corn chowder, macaroni and malted milk.

Twelve days later, Schofield pays his \$35 bill and walks out

a healed man. Sturdy Memorial Hospital is officially in business, a success that began three years earlier.

Faced with a booming jewelry manufacturing market and a growing population at the turn of the 20th century, a group of businessmen, doctors and volunteers decided Attleboro needed a hospital.

They formed a non-profit organization called the Attleborough Hospital Corporation in 1910,



Sturdy Memorial Hospital opened its doors in Attleboro in 1913, a year before the town became a city.

SEE STURDY, PAGE 42 ►



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STURDY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

FROM PAGE 40

headed by Dr. Laura Gustin Mackie and prominent businessman Joseph Lyman Sweet, the head of the R.F. Simmons Co.

The group struggled to secure funding for the establishment of a hospital until 1911, when Ellen Winsor, heiress to the estate of James H. and Adah S. Sturdy, left a large bequest to the town to build a hospital in memory of her parents.

The gift included the former James H. Sturdy homestead and \$93,000 of personal property in an investment trust.

It was approved by town meeting voters in May 1911, and Thomas Marsden of Providence began working on building plans the following summer.

Sturdy Memorial Hospital opened in April 1913 under the motto: "It is an honor to serve."

Sweet headed the hospital as its first president and brought in Dr. Joseph W. Battershall Sr. as medical staff president and Gwendolyn Rice, a graduate of the first nursing school organized by Florence

Nightingale, as superintendent.

By the end of 1913, some 183 patients were admitted and 130 operations were performed, according to a report filed by Rice.

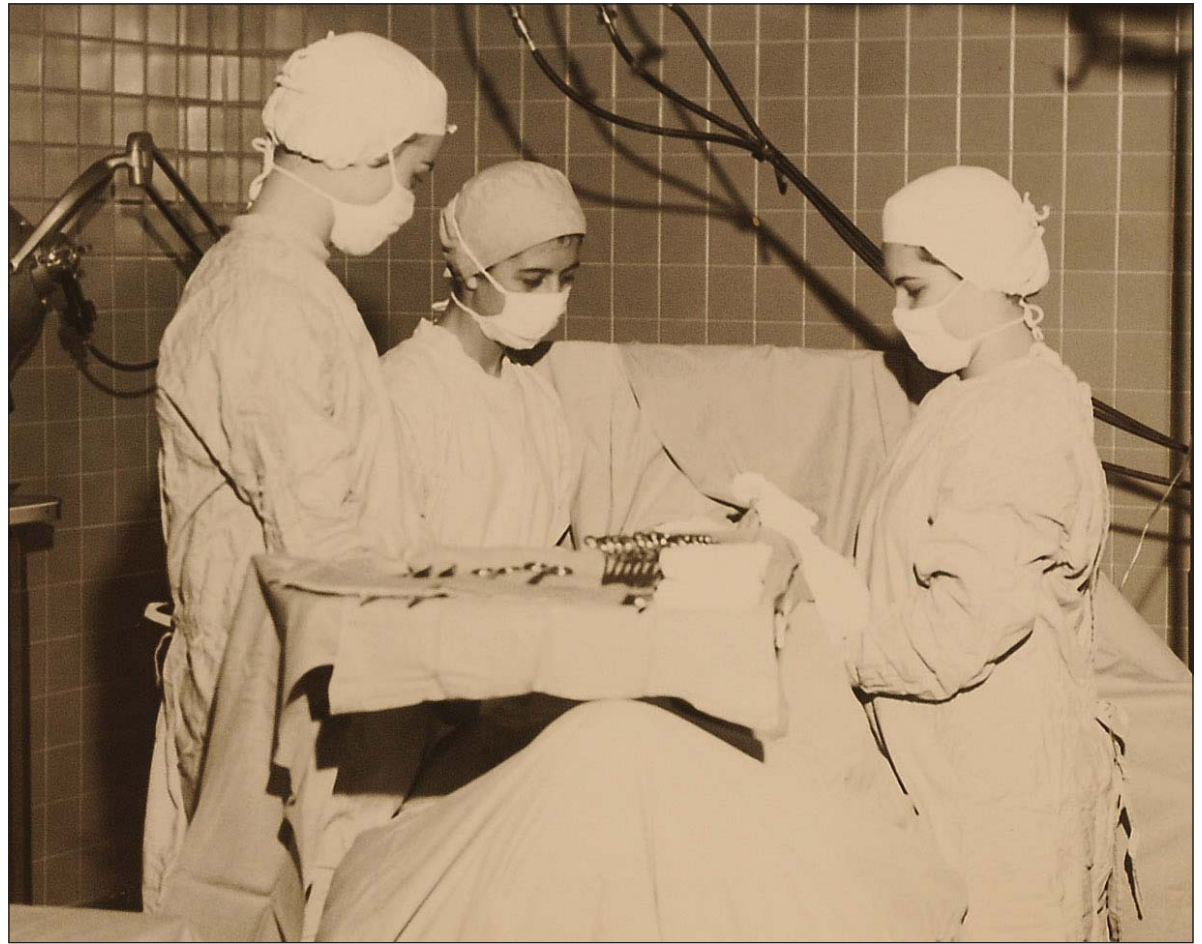
Fast-forward to a century later, and those numbers seem infinitesimal.

Under a new motto, "Amazing Medicine, Surprisingly Close," Sturdy admitted 6,697 patients, about 18 patients a day, and recorded 751 births in 2013.

Today, the hospital offers cancer treatment, plastic surgery, cardiac catheterization, a highly regarded maternity program, a sleep lab and a pain management clinic.

The hospital consistently exceeds the national average of days to healing and the percent of wounds healed, and has amassed a number of top honors.

Sturdy earned the designation of Top Performer on Key Quality from the Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation, one of only 10 hospitals in Massachusetts to earn such a distinction. The Massachusetts Hospital Associa-



An old operating theater at Sturdy Memorial Hospital.

SEE STURDY, PAGE 43 ►

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STURDY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



Sturdy Memorial Hospital's Florence Heyward Sweet maternity ward opened in 1923.

FROM PAGE 42

tion ranked Sturdy in the top quartile for staffing of medical/surgical units and pediatrics.

The hospital has accomplished quite a bit since the day Robert Schofield walked in.

And, perhaps the best source to encompass the hospital's history comes from Sturdy itself in report published by the hospital in 2003.

"Throughout Sturdy Memorial Hospital's 90-year history, its leaders have built a financially cost-effective, high-quality, and technologically superb hospital that far surpasses the vision of its founders," the report reads. "The next 90 years will hold even greater opportunities, accompanied by extraordinary challenges. The members of our communities can rest assured that there is unwavering commitment by today's leadership to ensure quality care for generations to come."



Just as Sturdy Memorial Hospital today looks nothing like it did in this postcard from shortly after its 1913 opening, the Attleboro facility will likely change greatly in the next century.



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THE SUN CHRONICLE

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TharpeTRRobbins

To the citizens and craftsmen of the greater Attleboro community: You've personally played an enormous role in our growth and success. We wouldn't be where we are today without you. We "thank you" and we tip our hats to the city of Attleboro as it celebrates its 100th anniversary.

> Working together every step of the way!

Rich in history and expertise, The Robbins Company was established in 1892 by Charles Robbins, a prominent jeweler in Attleboro, Mass. In a shed near his home, he produced his first piece of jewelry, a campaign button to promote Benjamin Harrison for president.

Things have evolved since 1892. In 2007, The Robbins Company merged with Statesville, N.C. business, The Tharpe Company to form The TharpeRobbins Company, further strengthening the services offered. While our name has changed, what we do has not. We continue to manufacture jewelry and awards in our ISO-certified facility in Attleboro, Mass.

Our manufacturing facilities have been offering our clients world-class design and craftsmanship for over 100 years. Our history ranges from casting a gold medallion in 1927 to honor Charles A Lindbergh's first solo transatlantic flight, the 1950's cereal box "decoder ring", Olympic Medals, World Series Awards and 9/11 Medals of Honor and Heroism to NASA Flight Medallions.

*Being in the awards and recognition business, we'd like to say...
Congratulations Attleboro!*

TharpeRobbins prides itself on its history and the legacy it continues, including the citizens and craftsmen of the greater Attleboro area that we employ. The talented people in our manufacturing department have been with us an average of 15 years and many of them live in the city or surrounding communities.

Today, we are regarded as an innovative, dynamic force in the recognition industry, with a client list that includes many Fortune 1000 companies. Our manufacturing facility incorporates cutting edge technologies and strategies that unite our old world craftsmanship with the 21st century. We can create custom client award from the ground up to fashion jewelry crafted from precious metals. The goal is to be the best at what we do – from design to manufacturing, quality, and value – all made here in the U.S.A, but more specifically in Attleboro, Mass.



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ORIGINS OF A CITY

Taking Attleboro to another level

A call for reform moved municipality from a town to a city

‘C’ity title would sound bigger.”
Stuck in the middle of an editorial in The Attleboro Sun of Nov. 2, 1914, endorsing the city charter that would be voted the next day, that assertion looks like a throwaway line.

Transforming from a town to a city form of government had to be more than a matter of pride, didn't it?

And spokesmen for the charter movement — mainly Frank Mossberg, president of the board of trade, and Attleboro Sun editor Charles Cain, in brief unsigned editorials — did make a strong case that local government was sorely in need of reform:

► The town meeting and board of selectmen system was lacking in central authority.

► There was a lack of consolidation “to save salaries.”

► “The trouble here is that the civic bur-

den has grown so great,” said one of The Sun’s many pro-city charter editorials.

It noted that town meeting, held at the State Armory (now recreation center) was overcrowded. The warrant for the 1914 meeting included 86 articles. The number of candidates in the town election that year had grown to 62 candidates, it observed, describing the ballot as “unwieldy.”

► While town meetings were crowded, drawing more than 800 voters to one session in the year of its finale in Attleboro, Mossberg noted there were then “3,400 voters, to which we add several hundred every year.” This meant, he said, that it is “usually left to comparatively few people” to make the town’s decisions.”

► “The town auditing is a joke,” said an editorial, while a news article asserted the accounts of nearly every department in the

SEE REFORM, PAGE 47 ►



Frank Mossberg, at left in second car, then president of the board of trade, rides in the first electric car made by his company with James E. Blake. He and the others in the photo are on their way to the Powham Club on Aug. 14, 1900.

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‘A city title would sound bigger.’

A line from an editorial in The Attleboro Sun on Nov. 2, 1914

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ORIGINS OF A CITY

FROM PAGE 46

city were in arrears.

► The fire chief faces annual election “as do very few chiefs in sizable communities.”

For all of that, the question of cityhood would always return to arguments that it was something that Attleboro deserved, having earned it through a show of industrial dynamism and resulting population growth.

Speaking in the spring of 1914, Mossberg noted the town’s population was about 18,000, up from 11,000 in the 1910 census.

The manufactured product had doubled in the period 1900-1912 and was greater than half the cities of the state. Attleboro was producing \$1 million worth of goods, more annually than nearby Taunton, a city.

And during this remarkable period of growth, he noted that the town had built a new sewer system, and a \$175,000 high school.

The herculean task of eliminating grade crossings in the center of town by elevating the railroad tracks on arches had been com-

pleted “and nearly paid for.”

The town had well-equipped hospitals and parks, a splendid YMCA “and a live and hustling newspaper.”

Mossberg, an industrialist who was recognized at the 1939 World’s Fair as one of America’s greatest inventors, might well have also noted that a public library and several elementary schools had been built during the same period.

Even so, he had made his point: “Then, too, undoubtedly the time has come when the Town of Attleboro should be ranked as a city.”

But the litany of public works projects that Mossberg cited could just as easily be used by advocates of maintaining the status quo of township as evidence that the town meeting-selectmen system was working. The town system had gotten some very big jobs done.

That wasn’t convincing to town meeting voters, who passed cityhood motions in December 1912 and January 1913, or to voters at large, who expressed a preference for city-

hood in a Dec. 9, 1913, referendum.

But the ranks of charter advocates were split among fans of a mayor-council form, as opposed to an elected assembly as legislature with a board of selectmen, the elected chairman of which would wear the title of mayor, and for other hybrid plans.

Some reservations

Even the pro-city Sun would express reservations about the power that would be entrusted to a mayor — until Harold Sweet formally entered the race on Nov. 9, 1914, the day after voters adopted the charter.

By early 1914, outward opposition to the idea of a change of government was nearly mute, at least in the pages of The Sun, with an occasional exception.

“A few are clamoring for more meetings and that the selectmen draft a city charter to be submitted to the Legislature...,” said Selectmen George A. Sweeney in a Jan. 2, 1914, letter to The Sun written from St. Petersburg, Fla., where he had gone to attend to his health. “I wish to be recorded

as against the selectmen taking part in any business not referred to them by the town in either a regular or special meeting. It costs the taxpayers money to humor a few, yes, a very few, faddists...”

It was a last hurrah for the foes of cityhood. Ten days later Sweeney, a leading merchant and real estate owner, would announce he would not seek re-election because of failing health.

He would die on March 27. His March 30 funeral would be described as the largest ever in the town. Sweeney got a memorable show of respect, even if his “very few faddists” missed the mark by a mile.

By then, legislation to grant a city charter to Attleboro was already speeding through the Statehouse. It would be signed by the governor on June 16 and set the stage for charter adoption through a referendum on the Nov. 8 state ballot.

That, in turn, set the stage for the first city election on Dec. 8. The turnout in that first election was 3,442 — 96 of the electorate of the City of Attleboro.

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1914



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Sturdy Building, Park Street and Railroad Avenue circa 1900.
The Sturdy Building housed the First National Bank as well as the Town and City Offices which were Located Upstairs.

Attleboro City Hall,
77 Park Street.



A Bit of History...

Attleboro, a city in Bristol County, was once known as the “Jewelry City of the World” for its many jewelry manufacturers.

The City is located 10 miles north of Providence and 39 miles south of Boston. It has a population of approximately 44,000.

In 1634 English settlers arrived in the territory which is now Attleboro. The settlers were soon disconcerted by the poor soil, lack of water-borne transportation and all around poor living conditions. They declared the conditions here unfit for human existence and resolved never to return!

Despite their dire predictions, the town of Attleboro thrived and was incorporated as a City on June 16, 1914 by then-governor David Walsh.

In 1914, Harold Sweet was elected its first mayor.

In 1949 Cyril Brennan was elected to the first of his record 8 consecutive two year terms as mayor.

In 1983, School Committee Member Brenda Reed was elected first woman mayor of Attleboro

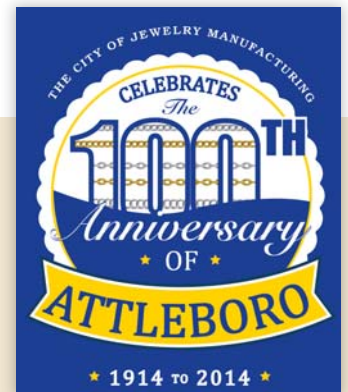
In 2003, At age 27, Kevin Dumas became the youngest person ever elected mayor of Attleboro.

Other than being known for jewelry manufacturing, Attleboro has several points of interest including Capron Park Zoo, La Salette Shrine, The Attleboro Arts Museum and Attleboro Area Industrial Museum.

In December 2011, the City of Attleboro was awarded 5.4 million in state and federal funds

to support revitalization efforts for the city’s Historical Downtown area. Also, this project includes transportation improvements to both MBTA and GATRA.

Congressman Jim McGovern highlighted the importance of this project in 2011 by saying, “This transformative funding presents a landmark opportunity for Attleboro to reshape its downtown and make a strong community even stronger.”



www.cityofattleboro.us

WE HONOR ATTLEBORO ON ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY!