

History

The people who made American Thread run

Part one of three

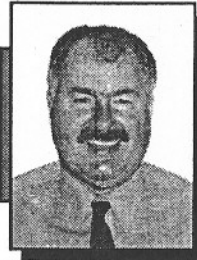
Commencing in February 1955, the American Thread Co. launched an advertising campaign entitled "The People Behind the Products." Over a two-year period, Willimantic's major employer ran an occasional full-page feature in the monthly magazine, Connecticut Industry.

It featured individuals and families employed at American Thread's Willimantic mills, under the headline, "Probably the most important factor in the quality of any product is the people who make it."

"This series is designed to let you meet some of the citizens of Willimantic who have been asked to help make the thread and yarn products which are considered among the finest made anywhere in the world."

Almost half a century later the series provides an interesting social and industrial history of the city.

The first full-page ad featured Herman and Florence Colorado, who had worked at American



Tom Beardsley

Thread since 1925. Herman worked on a Meihle vertical printing press used for printing forms too small for the larger presses.

The Meihle press was used for color work and produced 5,000 impressions per hour. Herman's wife Florence worked in the spooling department from 1938 until 1949.

Included in the feature were photographs of Herman at work on the press, the Colorado family and their English setter in their home at 213 Mansfield Ave., and Herman involved in his hobby, trap and skeet shooting.

The Colorado's son, Herman Jr., was in his second year at Providence College and worked in the summers with his father in ATCO's printing department.

In June 1955, the spotlight fell upon sisters Blanche and Isabelle Augur. They were winders whose job involved winding single cotton yarn from spinning bobbins to wooden cones. The sisters had begun work at ATCO in 1942 as learners on combers in the Carding Department.

Blanche was born in Hardwick, Vt., the daughter of Canadian-born Charles Augur and Massachusetts-born Lucille Augur.

Charles had worked as a Blender tender at American Thread from 1941 to 1947, but was now the manager of a retail store. Photographs included the Augur family gathered around the piano in the living room of their home at 19 Valley St., Blanche at work on a winder, and also with palette in hand enjoying her favorite hobby, painting. Blanche had studied art under John Levitsky at Windham High School and Langdon Khin at Willimantic State Teacher's College.

She was currently taking a correspondence course in art at the famous artist school at Westport,



The Augurs, Blanche, Isabelle, and their parents, gather around the family piano at their Valley Street home in Willimantic.

Conn.

In September 1955 one page in Connecticut Industry was given over to James Gerald Hooper, a box maker at American Thread.

Hooper began working at ATCO in 1952 after previously working at a gas station in Coventry, and as a tester at Electro-Motive.

In his spare time, Hooper helped his father-in-law with car bodywork. Hooper, a keen sportsman, was also a member of ATCO's basketball team.

He had won awards at school

for basketball and swimming, and currently enjoyed swimming, ice skating, fishing and hunting.

Photographs included Hooper at work on a "single-ending box making machine," at home with his wife Shirley, at 73 Ives St., and making a shot for a basket during a basketball training session.

Continued next week

Log onto www.Tom@threadcity.com for more stories and pictures about early Willimantic.

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Special to the Chronicle

I was a high school kid full of

the anguish and temperament of the '60s youth driven culture and

inevitable hassles. She was open and spontaneous enough to put

her personal diary into my hands

attempts to