

— HISTORY —

# ATCO publication a valuable document

*Part one of three*

Twenty short years ago, the American Thread Co. was still playing an integral part in the community life of Willimantic. The city's major employer, formed in 1898, had published a magazine over the years to keep employees up to date with ongoing events.

It went under several names, but by the 1980s it was an eight-page illustrated magazine aptly named *The Yarn*.

Company publications such as this are valuable documents of social history. For example, an issue of the *American Thread* magazine from 1938 provides detailed information of all the company's mill housing which was being sold off to the private market.

A 1982 issue of *American Thread's Yarn* magazine contains features on employees' suggestions for improved productivity,

attendance awards, long service awards, retirement presentations and parties for both management and workers, an article on a new canteen in Mill No. 6, a promotion for ATCO's credit union, and first aid course details.

A sports section provides details about ATCO basketball and bowling leagues, and a section is devoted to trucking safety.

The issue was published just three years before the ATCO plant closed down, and it reveals how closely connected the historical company was to the cultural life of the community.

It also provides a snapshot of the city in 1981-82, and names of dozens of employees. There are



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also some interesting photographs of local people and company events.

Included on cover of this particular issue of *The Yarn* is a photograph of the flag-draped ATCO plant taken on July 4, 1915. Major sections of the issue dealt with floods at the plant.

Spring 1982 had been one of the wettest on record, and many departments in Mill Nos. 1 and 2 suffered from serious flooding. Manager Andy Sabo, in a column entitled "Andy Speaking," explained that the high levels of the Willimantic River were at last subsiding, and that sand bags were being removed from threatened areas of the plant.

The University of Connecticut, Agway and the Willimantic Lumber Co. had provided the sandbags, which kept the river at bay. Sabo thanked the work of the maintenance staff, the city fire department and the Cliff Green

Construction Co. for providing the pumping equipment, which saved the boiler house from being swamped.

An accompanying photograph shows ATCO employee Dave Lee looking out of a window of Mill No. 1, where torrents of water are cascading over the dam next to the old Route 32 stone bridge.

Another picture shows Libby Mauretti and the maintenance staff in the boiler house discussing the flooding.

Page 2 of the magazine gave details of ATCO's annual summer outing for 1982 at Ocean Beach, New London. Employees were reminded to ask their supervisors for application forms and questionnaires.

On the same page a brief article includes Ann Heon, a floor person and scheduler in the finishing department, who had won \$50 in the latest suggestions award competition.

She suggested to management that her department's shelves should be organized by colors and numbers that depicted the various colors available for thread, thus making it easier to set up orders. She is pictured being presented her award by Fred Kilgus and Bill Lovejoy.

*Continued next week*



*Willimantic employee Dave Lee pictured in Mill No. 1 during the flooding.*

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