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Continuing the Tradition ~ Preserving Our History

bvhsri.org ♦ 1873 Old Louisiquett Pike (Rte 246) ♦ PO Box 125, Lincoln RI, 02865

Central Falls ♦ Cumberland ♦ Lincoln ♦ North Smithfield ♦ Pawtucket ♦ Woonsocket

SAVE THE DATE!

**OCTOBER 16
2:00 P.M.
@ NORTH
GATE**

Raymond Wolf Lecture

Ray Wolf will discuss his latest book, written from the personal log of John E. O'Hara during his service to the Navy during World War II (1942-1945).

**NOVEMBER 19
10A.M.—3P.M.
@ NORTH
GATE**

Holiday Craft Fair

For the benefit of the Valentine Whitman House

**NOVEMBER 20
2:00 P.M.
@ NORTH
GATE**

C Morgan Grefe, R.I. Historical Society

Lecture concerning history of the triple decker building.

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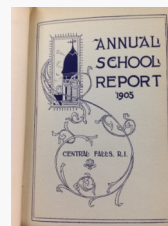
Great Road Day!

**Saturday
September 24!**

**Great Road Day Open House
11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**

Bakery will be open 11:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

There will be an exhibit from the archives,
"Central Falls Annual School Reports,
1904-1916, and 1929-1934:
Unexpected and Unseen Photos
and Artwork."

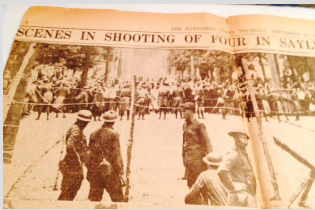


Thanks to generous donations, we have purchased the sign that used to hang on the little Arnold's Lonsdale Bakery, and it will be on display.



.... In honor of Labor Day and Glenn Laxton :

THE STORY OF THE SAYLESVILLE STRIKE



The shocking battle at the Sayles Finishing Plant in September 1934 was one of the more dramatic events in the Textile Worker's Strike of 1934. **It was the largest strike in the history of the United States at that time, and involved more than 400,000 workers from the South, mid-Atlantic and New England states.** Although wartime demand helped keep the mills profitable longer, by the 1920s, foreign competition was also cutting into the market. Mill owners north and south tried to get more work from fewer employees by increasing the number of machines each person tended and paying workers by piece rates, limiting breaks and ordering stricter supervision, a system which the workers called "the stretch-out". The depression arrived, and many New England and mid-Atlantic mills went into bankruptcy, while others laid off more workers and intensified the stretch-out.



In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which was to create codes of conduct for industries, control hours of work, and guarantee the right of workers to form unions, but the provisions were not enforceable. The textile mill owners, who sat on the boards, frequently managed to turn the codes to their advantage and in many places, working conditions actually worsened. But the right to form unions had a powerful effect: the United Textile Workers (UTW) had 15,000 members in February, 1933, and nearly 250,000 by June 1934. On August 13, the UTW called a special meeting in New York City. The delegates voted to strike the cotton mills on September 1 if their demands were not met. The employers refused to meet with the union, and the strike spread through the southern cotton mills and up to the north. Local workers formed "flying pickets", where groups of strikers traveled from mill to mill by truck calling the workers to strike. Mill owners took the position that these flying pickets were coercing their employees. The speed and scope of the strike led the authorities to describe it as bordering on civil insurrection.

In New England, the climax was the 36 hour battle at the Saylesville Finishing Plant, which started on September 10 when approximately 600 picketers tried to close the mill, which was guarded by state troopers with machine guns. The next day it was estimated that at least two or three thousand people had surrounded the mill, imprisoning several hundred strikebreakers. When they surged forward, the deputies fired buckshot into the crowd. Governor Green sent in the National Guard. Picketers deployed in the cemetery and fought the National Guard, which was armed with guns and tear gas, with rocks, broken tombstones, and flowerpots from the cemetery. The Governor declared martial law. One person was killed and three people may have been critically injured. The factory was shut down. The following day, there was another bloody confrontation at the Woonsocket Rayon Plant, where the National Guard fired into a crowd attempting to close the plant.

The textile strike was soon over, and historians generally conclude that it was a failure. The union's demands were never met, although the mediation board appointed by the president urged studies of the textile worker's grievances. Most textile work eventually moved overseas. The strike may have led to signing of the Wagner Act in 1935, which created the National Labor Relations Board, which can require employers to bargain with unions.



The above was gracefully written by Lori Melucci. Photographs above right scanned from Pawtucket Times papers in Glenn's collection. Photograph credit : Susan Clarke.