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**DENTIST,**  
No. 108 HOPE STREET, - - BRISTOL, R. I.

Work in all branches of Dentistry promptly and satisfactorily attended to.



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YOU CAN DODGE AN  
**ELEPHANT**

But You Can't Dodge The

**BRISTOL AUTO CO.**

AGENTS FOR The Northern Cars

GARAGE

REPAIRING

AUTOMOBILES TO RENT



**LOST**

**MAIN**

MOM & POP BUSINESSES  
OF BRISTOL'S PAST

**STREET**



**BEEF**

R. N. CHURCH, Agent,  
DEALER IN  
Fresh & Salt Meats,  
ALSO,  
Vegetables, Produce, &c.,  
HOPE ST., cor. Wardwell,  
BRISTOL, R. I.  
Marketing delivered in any part of the town.

158 WOOD STREET

C. F. DIMOND, Prop.

WHEN YOU ARE DRY STOP AT  
**BRUNO BROS**  
COOL AND REFRESHING DRINKS  
Narragansett Lager and Hanley's Peerless Ale  
SULLY, Bartender  
157 BRADFORD STREET

**PIANOS**  
WALDRON & SPENCER,  
— DEALERS IN —  
**FURNACES, RANGES & STOVES,**  
HOLLOW WARE,  
TIN and JAPAN WARE,  
Flaming, Steam and Gas-Fire Fitting.  
Special attention given to the introduction of the  
Kitchenette Stove Range.



Agents for the Page Steam Heater.  
A GENERAL LINE OF  
**HOUSE-FURNISHING GOODS.**  
Letter than any other house in Bristol.  
REPAIRING and JOB WORK PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO.

No. 15 Bradford Street, near Hope, Bristol, R.I.

**Dimond's Grocery and Market**

Cor. High and Constitution Streets  
(Formerly Lake's Grocery)  
Complete Stock of  
Groceries, Meats and Provisions  
Goods delivered to all parts of the town. Telephone 112.  
C. F. DIMOND, Prop.

WHEN YOU ARE DRY STOP AT  
**BRUNO BROS.**  
COOL AND REFRESHING DRINKS  
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SULLY, Bartender  
157 BRADFORD STREET

POOL — BOWLING  
**STAR LUNCH ROOM**  
HASBROUCK BLOCK  
LYNCH & BUCKLEY, Props.

The disappearance of many “Mom and Pop Stores”—small, independently-owned, family-oriented, retail businesses—from Bristol has resulted from a complex set of historic and modern-day economic trends.

While it is easy to point fingers at the big box stores, steadily increasing rent, and insurance costs, other changes have also impacted these businesses.

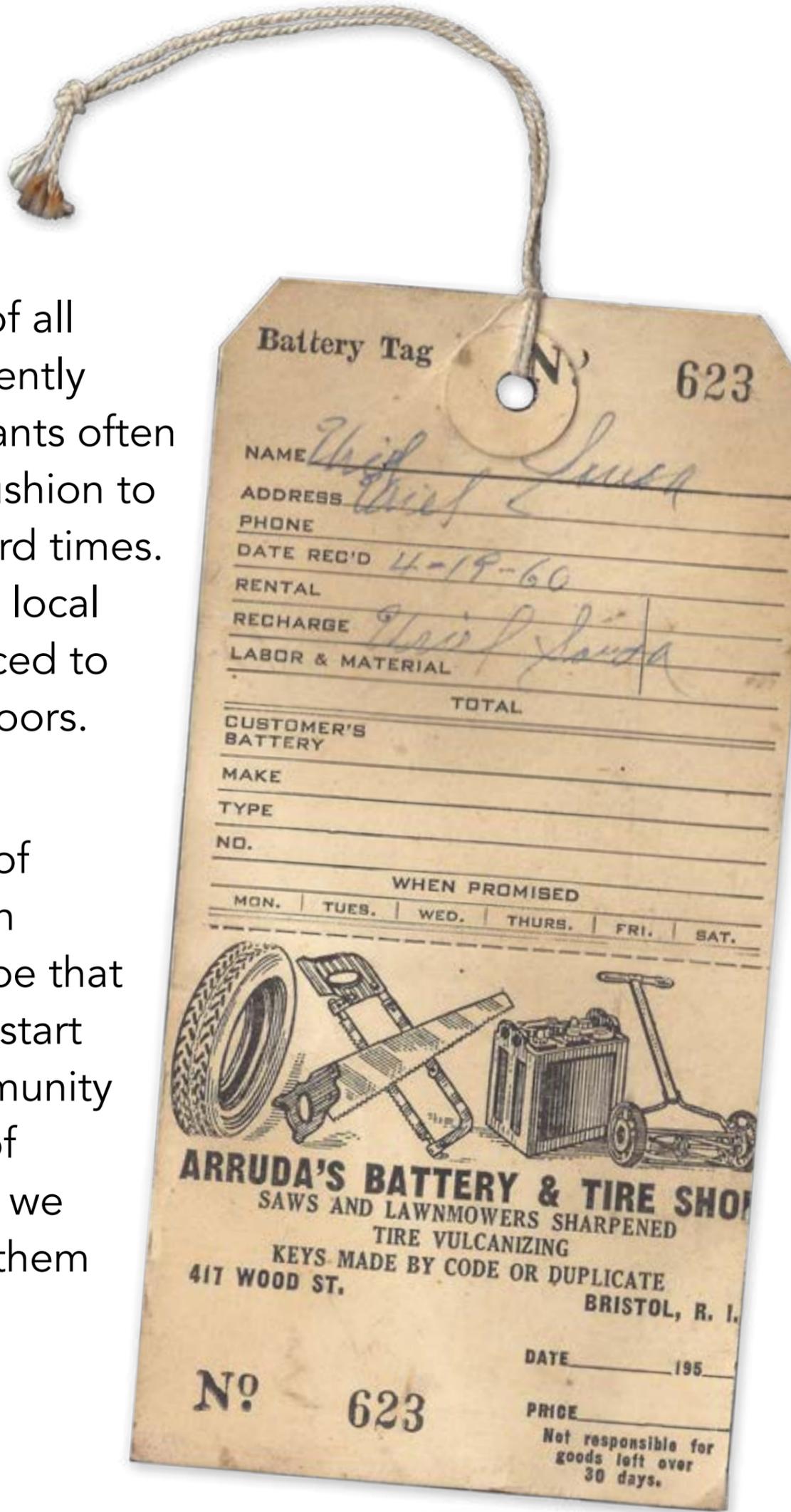
For example, in previous centuries, travel was not as easy as it is now. Dry goods, grocers, and drug stores were located on almost every corner because you had to carry your purchases back home.

New immigrants often faced bigotry and resistance. It was easier to shop at a business run by someone with a similar background and language who lived in your own neighborhood and who could provide you with products that were important to your culture.



Certainly, cultural changes caused by the recent pandemic have created great hardships for businesses of all sizes. However, independently owned shops and restaurants often have a smaller financial cushion to help them get through hard times. As a result, many beloved local businesses have been forced to permanently close their doors.

Through this exhibit, we celebrate the rich history of independent businesses in Bristol's past. And, we hope that this information will jump start conversations in our community about the changing role of small businesses and how we as a community can help them survive in the present.



# EXPLORE BRISTOL'S LOST BUSINESSES



Click the **business name** below to go directly to the page,  
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VERMETTE ICE

WARDWELL LUMBER

ABOUT BRISTOL HISTORICAL AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

# BALZANO'S FAMILY RESTAURANT



Also known as "Tweets"

**Type:** Restaurant

**Location:** 180 Mount Hope Avenue

**Original Proprietor:** Anthony T. "Tweet" Balzano

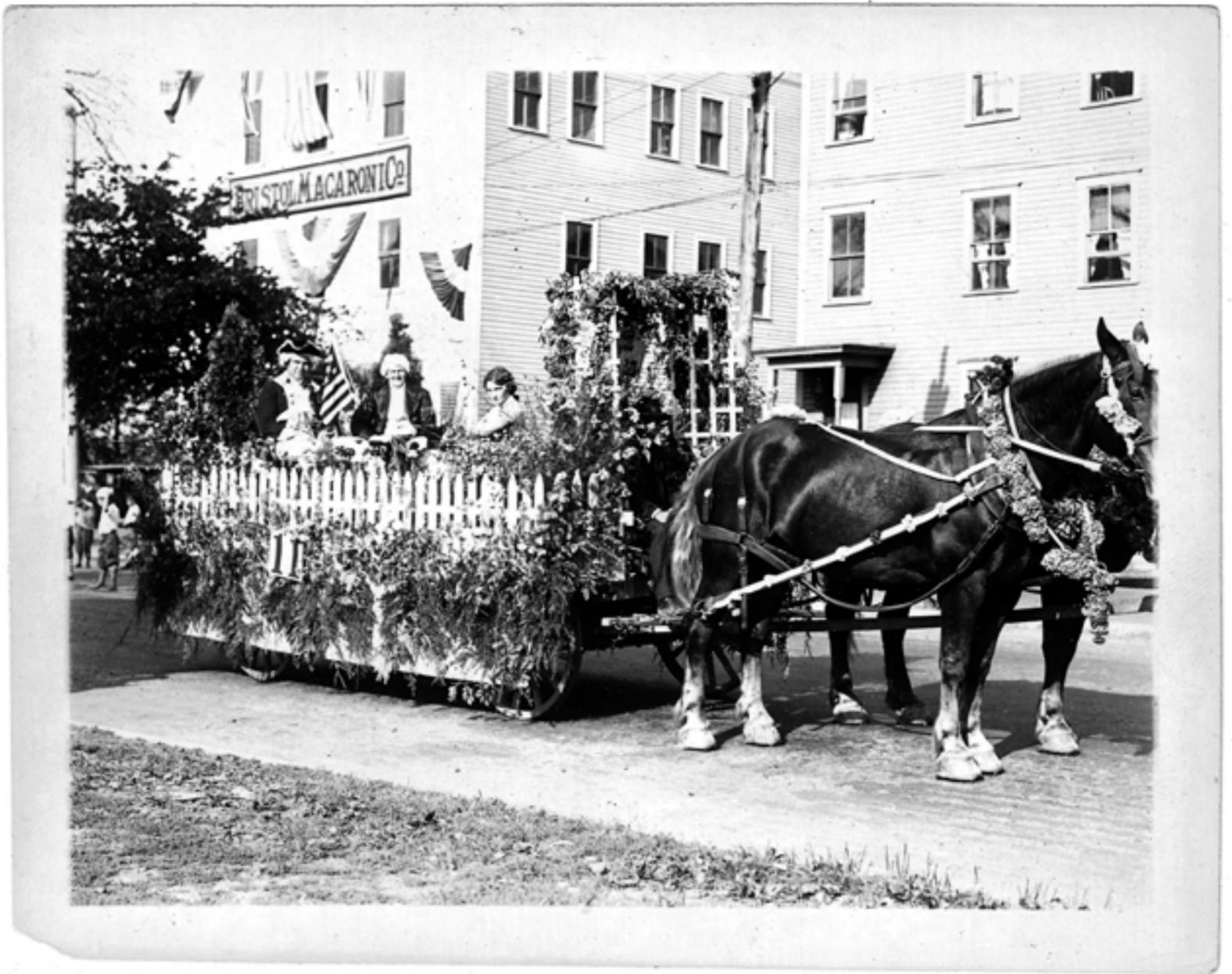
**Dates of Operation:** 1960 - 2014

In 1954, John Balzano turned an old chicken coop on Mount Hope Avenue into a gentleman's club. His son, Anthony "Tweet" Balzano, and Anthony's wife, Millie, purchased the club in 1960 and established a thriving seafood and Italian food restaurant.

Due to the restaurant's immense popularity, they soon needed more space and, after trying out another location on Metacom Avenue, in 1987 they built a large addition to the original restaurant.

Beloved in the community, the restaurant closed its doors in the fall of 2014 after more than 54 years of great food and wonderful memories.

# BRISTOL MACARONI COMPANY



**Type:** Macaroni

**Location 1:** Corner of High and Washington Streets

**Location 2:** 430 High Street

**Original Proprietor:** Gaetano Lombardi

**Dates of Operation:** circa 1917-1951

The origin of the Bristol Macaroni Company is not known but the earliest reference in the *Bristol Phoenix* dates to September 7, 1917. Shortly after 10 pm that night, a fire began in the factory at the corner of High and Washington Streets.

Unfortunately, no hydrants were near the building and when the fire company managed to get a hose to the site, the connections leaked. It took over 45 minutes to put the fire out. The damage was quite severe. After the fire, proprietor Gaetano Lombardi decided to move to a larger space at 430 High Street.

In its new location, the Bristol Macaroni Company successfully served the Bristol community for more than three decades. It closed in 1951.

# BUFFINGTON'S PHARMACY



**Type:** Pharmacy

**Location:** 42 State Street

**Moved to:** 458 Hope Street

**Original Proprietor:** W.H. Buffington

**Dates of Operation:** 1868 -1995

On Christmas Day, 1868, William "Doc" Buffington opened Buffington's Pharmacy on State Street. Buffington had begun his career as a clerk for a local doctor but was not actually one himself.

By 1892, he had moved his expanding business around the corner to a larger space on Hope Street, where he offered many extra services, such as a soda fountain, an ice cream counter, and the ability to pay phone bills and send a Western Union telegraph; the New England bus terminal also operated there.

In 1910, William, Jr., took over the business, as did subsequent generations. Buffington's continued to operate until July 31, 1995, when it closed for good after over 126 years in business.

# DEL'S PRIDE POTATO CHIPS



**Type:** Potato Chip Company

**Location 1:** 23 Catherine Street

**Original Proprietor:** Andrew Del Toro

**Dates of Operation:** circa 1960-1967

Bristolian Andrew Del Toro (1929-2009) was a sergeant and medic in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict, where he received two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star.

Although he had a career as a nursing supervisor for the Rhode Island prison system, the food business was in his blood. His mother, Virginia, ran a very successful grocery at 23 Catherine Street and sold homemade sandwiches (sometimes 200 per day!) to local customers.

Andrew's brand of chips honored the Del Toro name and were sold wholesale to local sandwich shops and grocery stores. After closing the business in 1967, Andrew retired to Florida and passed away in 2009.

# DIGATI'S BICYCLE



**Type:** Bicycle Sales & Repair

**Location:** 43 Bradford Street

**Moved to:** 13 State Street

**Original Proprietor:** Leonard DiGati

**Dates of Operation:** circa 1912- circa.1946

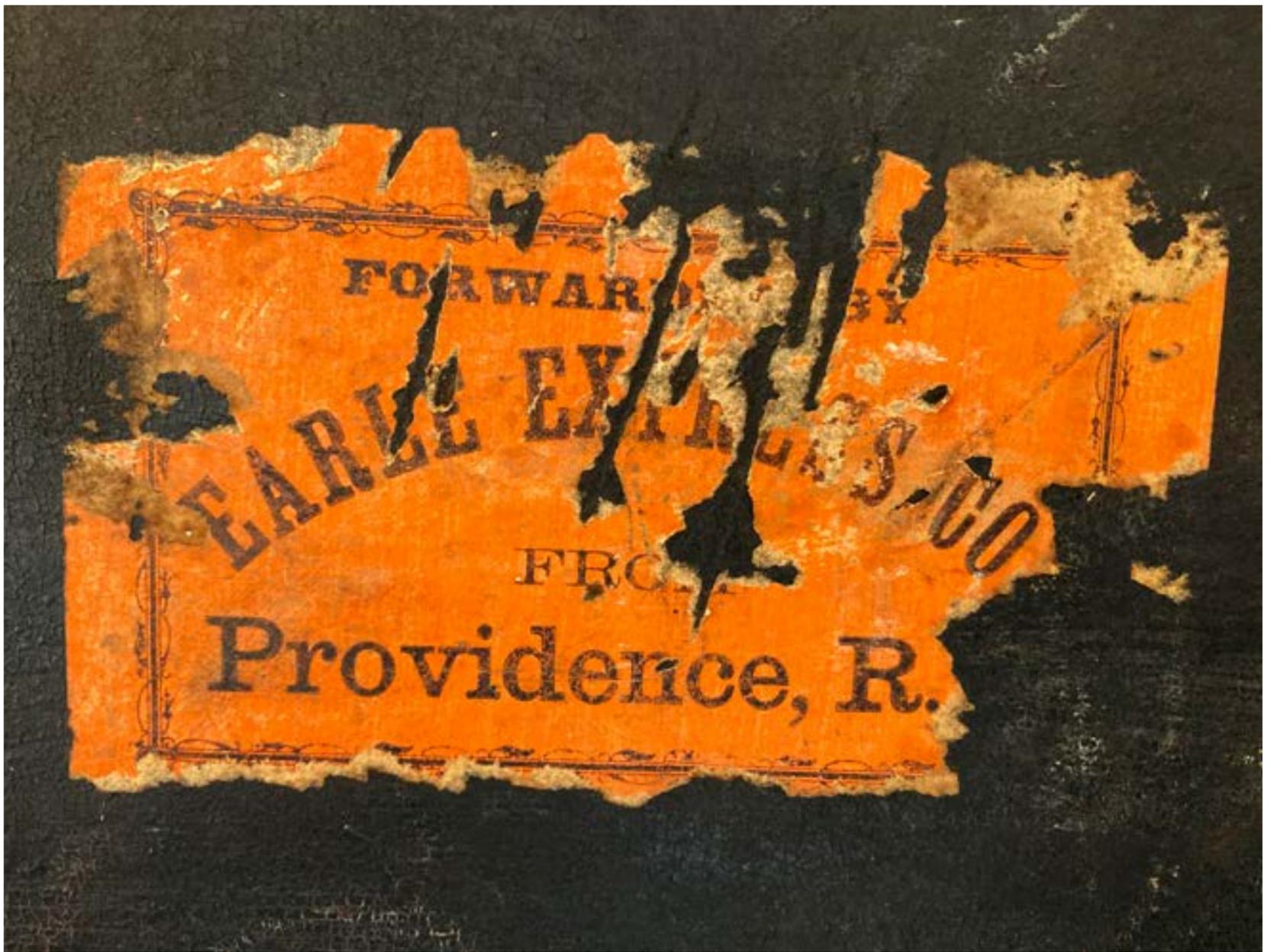
DiGati also owned State Street Bowling Alley & Pool Parlors circa 1920-1940

Leonard "Ned" DiGati was born in 1884 in Palermo, Italy. He came to Bristol in 1893 at the age of 11 and remained here until his death in 1966. DiGati was a well-known sight around town, riding his own bicycle.

A hard worker, DiGati owned a bicycle sales and repair business, which worked on bicycles, baby carriages, and other wheeled carts. He also ran a bowling alley and pool parlor, and even briefly ran a restaurant on State Street.

DiGati's businesses were in operation until the 1940s, but he, himself, remained a fixture in the community until his death in 1966.

# EARLE & PREW



**Type:** Expressmen

**Location:** State Street near Hope Street

**Original Proprietor:** George Warren

**Dates of Operation:** 1871-1910

An Expressman's job was to pack, manage, and ensure the delivery of any cargo. In the late 1800s, during the heyday of the railroads, Expressmen ensured the safe delivery of anything being shipped by railroad. The cargo often included gold or currency.

The Expressman's job included guarding parcels, strongboxes, and even safes against outlaws. They memorized the safe's combination to use at delivery. They were often seated in their own cars, known as an "express car", for their protection and that of the cargo they were guarding.

Bristol's Expressman services were provided by Earle & Prew, under the guidance of proprietor George Warren. They operated for forty years, closing in 1910.

# ENRICO TOPAZIO & SONS DOLCE E PASTECIERIA



**Type:** Bakery/Ice Cream

**Location:** 141 Bradford Street

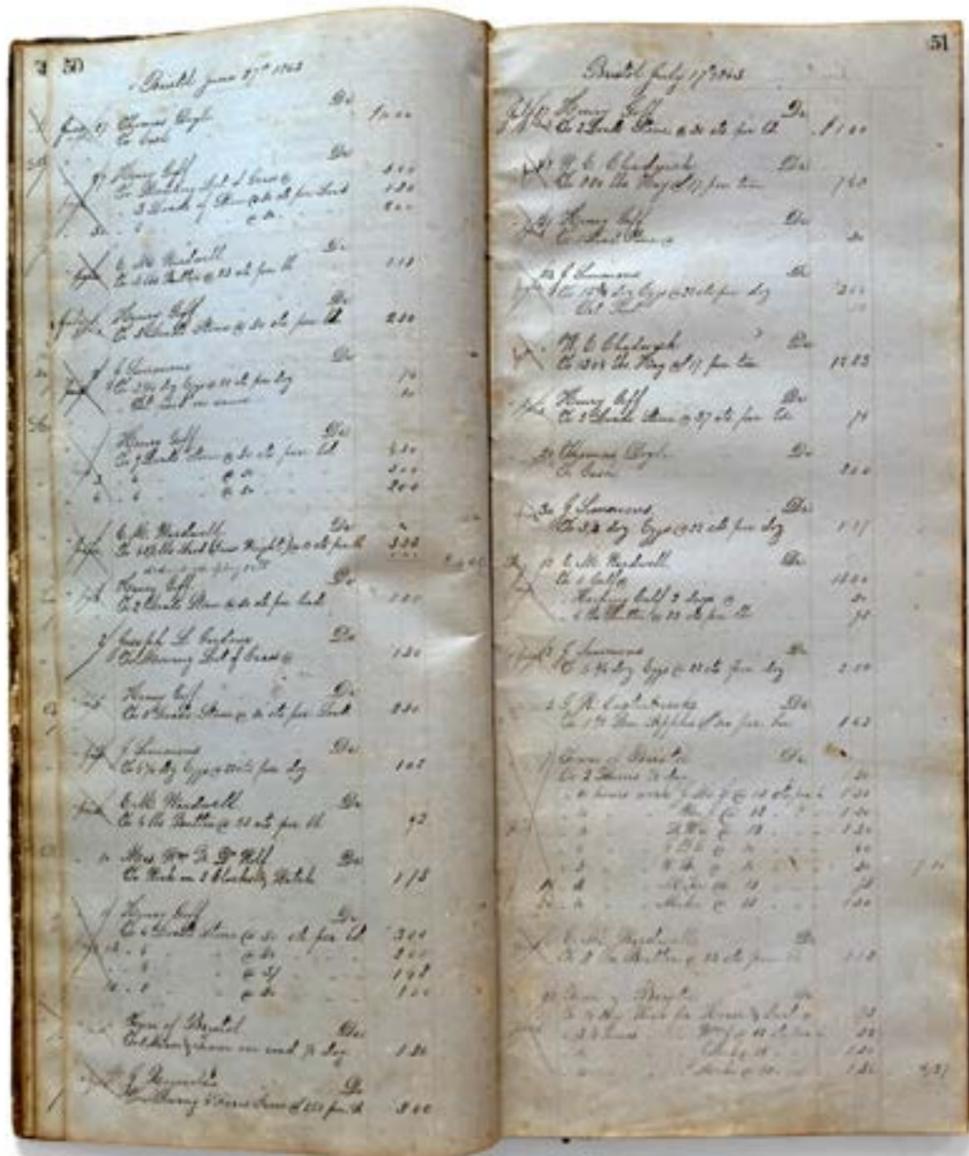
**Original Proprietor:** Enrico Topazio

**Dates of Operation:** 1929-1965

Enrico Topazio (1884- 1965) moved to Bristol from Amalfi, Italy, in 1907. For over 35 years, he owned and operated a confectionary shop at 141 Bradford Street that served Italian pastry, spumoni ice cream, and wedding cakes. However, he was best known around town for his pony-drawn ice cream and lemonade wagon.

According to his son: "After a brief, ill-fated experiment with a new-fangled motor truck, Papa decided to get a pony drawn wagon, which he employed for a long, long time..." Many generations of Bristol children, including our own Rei Battcher, have fond memories of "the pony man." Topazio's cart was seen around town until his death in 1965.

# J.M. GOODING



**Type:** Jack of All Trades

**Location:** Around Bristol

**Original Proprietor:** Josephus M. Gooding

**Dates of Operation:** circa 1857-1884

Father to 11 children, Bristolian Josephus Gooding (1817-1914) was a jack-of-all-trades-type of proprietor. In 1834, he travelled to Boston to learn the watchmaker's trade, then returned to Bristol to start his own jewelry repair business. By 1857, he had expanded the business to sell just about everything, including ice, books, cutlery, scissors, china, and glassware; he even sold butter and onions on the side.

A skilled musician (he played organ at the Congregational Church and sang in the St. Mary's choir), Gooding also sold and repaired all types of instruments, including violins, flutes, organs, pianos, and melodians. With energy to burn, Gooding even found time to plant about 3,000 saplings around town. He died in 1884, having worked hard to make Bristol a better place.

# MOUNT HOPE PARK



NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

## MOUNT HOPE,

### THE HOME OF KING PHILIP.

**THIS WORLD RENOWNED** historical Resort will be opened July 1st, 1880, for Excursion Parties. The best of Shore Dinners served every day. The prettiest place, the best grove, the highest point of land in the State of Rhode Island. Splendid accommodations for

### FISHING, BATHING, BOATING.

New Dance Hall with a living Fountain of Water in the center. New Bowling Alleys, Ice Cream and Tea Room, New Dining Hall that will seat 1000 people. King Philip's Spring and seat in Rock, where gallant Philip assembled and addressed his warriors, and where he met his death from the hand of a traitor from his band. Rustic Seats, Arbors, Swings, Zigzag Paths up the Mountain, with a beautiful Rustic Bower on the top where a splendid view of the whole State of Rhode Island and a part of Massachusetts is obtained.

### Good Music furnished for Dancing.

Steamer Bradford Durfee will leave Bristol at 10 o'clock, A. M., returning leave Mount Hope at 3, P. M.

The Proprietor, Mr. T. A. CARPENTER of the Bristol Hotel, will spare no pains to make this the favorite resort for first class excursions.

**Type:** Amusement Park

**Location:** North of Mount Hope Farm

**Original Proprietor:** Mount Hope Park Company

**Dates of Operation:** 1880-1881 and 1898-1901

During the Gilded Age resort era, there were three different versions of an amusement park on the Mount Hope lands. The first, constructed in 1880, consisted of two large buildings housing a bowling alley, ice cream parlor, dance hall, and dining hall; it closed in the summer of 1881.

The second opened in 1898 with amusement rides, a water chute, pony track, circus, striking machine, photograph gallery, merry-go-round, soda fountain, and cigar stand. Unfortunately, due to the sale of liquor at the park, behavioral problems, including a small riot, kept the police busy and the townsfolk up in arms; this version of the park closed in 1901.

In 1903, the Mount Hope Reservation Park was formed, but never came to fruition.

 **LOST**  
**MAIN** MOM & POP BUSINESSES  
OF BRISTOL'S PAST  
**STREET**

# PASTIME MOVIE THEATRE



*Changed to: Bristol Cinema, Pastime Cinema*

**Type:** Theatre

**Location 1:** 63 Bradford Street **Location 2:** 91 Bradford Street

**Original Manager:** Charles H. Steadman

**Dates of Operation:** 1912- 2003

In 1913, the old Congregational Meetinghouse was reopened as the Pastime Theatre, bringing movies to Bristol for the first time. Unfortunately, this building was destroyed by fire on February 5, 1934. Despite Depression-era economics, theater manager Lon Vail purchased new land on Bradford Street and opened a new, 600-seat theater, also called The Pastime Theatre, on December 7, 1934.

This Pastime operated until 1978, when its main space was divided into a two-screen layout. In the 1980s, it was repurposed into a second-run movie house, but, being unable to compete with modern multiplexes, it closed in the late 1990s. In 2000, a community-led effort reopened the building as a first-run theater, but it was not enough to save the building.

The Pastime Theatre was demolished in 2006.

# VERMETTE ICE



Also known as N.J. & H.W. Vermette, Inc.

**Type:** Ice

**Location:** 410 Thames Street

**Original Proprietor:** Alphonse Vermette

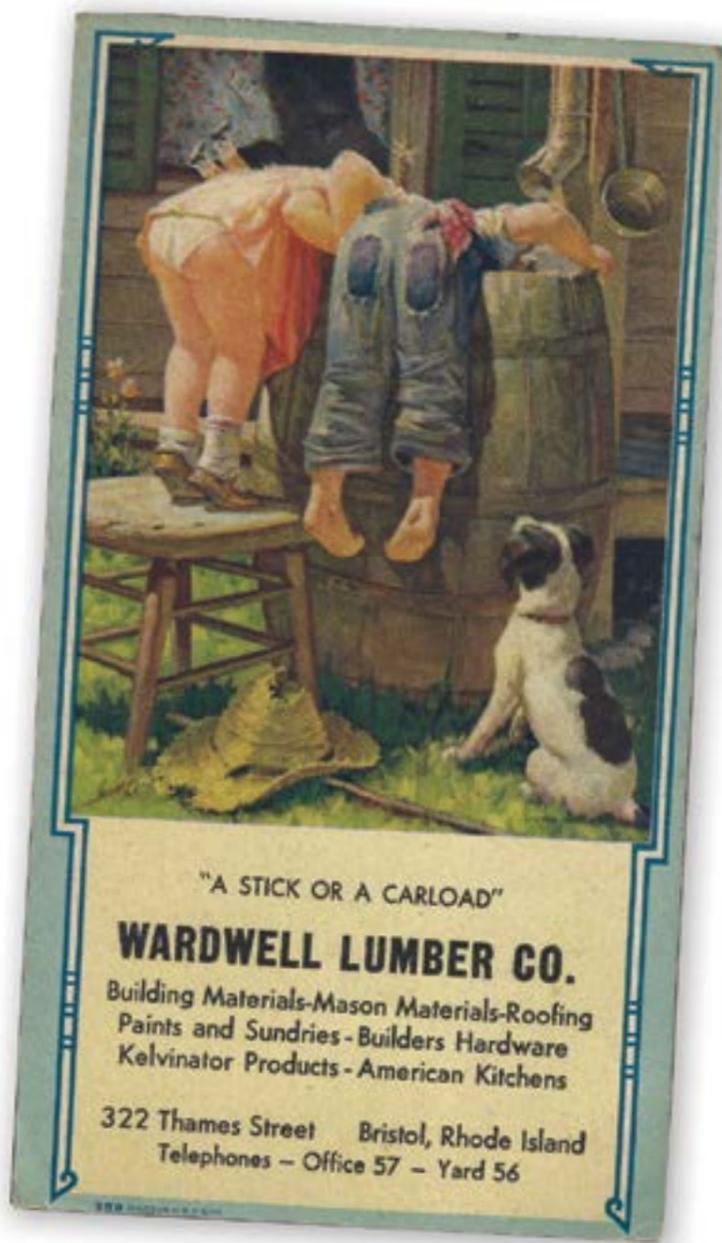
**Dates of Operation:** 1909 - circa 1953

At age 15, Alphonse Vermette (1878-1931) took a job at Bristol's John Post Reynold's Ice Company. It was a difficult job, using unwieldy 6 ft long saws and heavy metal tools to cut and haul ice.

In 1910, he formed his own business, the Vermette Ice Company. The business flourished, and his children, Norman and Herman, joined the company in 1927.

Alphonse worked until his sudden death in 1931 at age 53. After their father's untimely passing, the brothers built an ice plant on Thames Street and began to sell refrigerators, or "coolerators" as they were called, out of a display room at the front. The business closed its doors in 1954.

# WARDWELL LUMBER



**Type:** Hardware/Lumber

**Location:** Corner of Thames and Bradford Streets

**Location 2:** 319 Thames Street

**Original Proprietor:** William T.C. Wardwell

**Dates of Operation:** 1830-1993

Wardwell Lumber, Bristol's oldest business, opened its doors on Thames and Bradford Streets in 1830, selling coal from schooners that docked in Bristol.

The business did well and soon expanded to sell wood and paint. During its 163 year history, six generations of Wardwells continually grew the business while keeping service to the community as one of their main goals. They sponsored local projects and generations of Little League teams.

Unfortunately, the popularity of large building supply stores, like Home Depot and Walmart, combined with a tight economy and a second location that underproduced, led to the downfall of this Bristol icon in 1993.

r. Preston E. Day,  
DENTIST



The Society seeks to stimulate interest in the history of Bristol, Rhode Island, through education, outreach, research, and the collection and preservation of historic objects. We hope this publication & companion exhibit inspire you to think more about Bristol's Mom and Pop businesses and how you can support this important part of our community.

 LOST  
MAIN MOM & POP BUSINESSES  
OF BRISTOL'S PAST  
STREET



**Bristol Historical and Preservation Society**  
48 Court Street, PO Box 356, Bristol RI 02809  
401.253.7223 • [www.bhps.org](http://www.bhps.org)



RHODE ISLAND  
COUNCIL ON THE HUMANITIES

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